

NATURALISING AESTHETICS: Beauty, Emotion and the Cognitive Sciences

ESTHETICA NATURALISEREN: schoonheid, emotie en cognitieve wetenschappen

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Abstract [Samenvatting].

In this thesis, I attempt to show how taking the naturalistic turn with regard to certain debates in aesthetic theory might result in philosophical progress. Specifically, I ask: are any of the entities that are the subject of philosophical debate in aesthetic theory – such as the aesthetic or related notions such as beauty – part of, or intimately related to, the furniture of human nature? Drawing on a range of anthropological data, I argue that a broad conception of beauty appears to pick out something natural on the grounds that this conception, along with a characteristic range of relevant folk beliefs, reliably appear across cultures. In attempting to account for these explananda, I consider two kinds of philosophical accounts of beauty – namely those that suggest that beauty might be intimately related to a commonplace mental state in a disinterested form, and those that suggest that beauty might be related to a *sui generis* mental state. Drawing on a range of psychological and neuroscientific data, I argue that the latter kind of account is correct. More specifically, I argue that beauty not only reliably causes a *sui generis* emotion – ecstasy – but is constituted by the disposition to give rise to this emotion. I go on to show how this claim can elegantly accommodate the explananda identified – including, but not limited to, the fact that moral traits are reliably found to be beautiful across cultures, beauty is reliably believed to be intimately linked to the divine and truth across cultures, and beauty is reliably believed to admit of a logical opposite – ugliness – across cultures. I conclude by suggesting directions for future work on beauty and related issues.

In deze dissertatie tracht ik aan te tonen hoe de naturalistische wende in de esthetische theorie voor filosofische vooruitgang kan zorgen in bepaalde debatten. Meer bepaald ga ik na of de entiteiten die het onderwerp vormen van filosofische debatten in de esthetische theorie -zoals het esthetische of noties als schoonheid- deel uitmaken van of gerelateerd zijn aan de menselijke natuur. Me baserend op antropologische bevindingen, beargumenteer ik dat een brede opvatting van schoonheid en daaraan gerelateerde folk-overtuigingen iets natuurlijk uitdrukken dat over verschillende culturen heen terug te vinden is. Als vertrekpunt beschouw ik twee filosofische benaderingen van schoonheid: de eerste ziet schoonheid als nauw gerelateerd met een veel voorkomende mentale toestand in gedesinteresseerde vorm. De andere suggereert dat schoonheid een *sui generis* mentale toestand is. Mijzelf baserend op een waaier aan psychologische en neurowetenschappelijke gegevens, beargumenteer ik dat de tweede benadering de correcte is. Meer bepaald, ik beargumenteer dat schoonheid niet alleen steeds een *sui generis* emotie veroorzaakt -extase- maar dat schoonheid geconstitueerd wordt door de dispositie die deze emotie doet ontstaan. Daarna toon ik aan hoe deze claim de geïdentificeerde explananda op elegante wijze ondersteunt- met name het feit dat morele karaktertrekken schoon worden bevonden over verschillende culturen heen, evenals de overtuiging dat schoonheid steeds nauw gerelateerd wordt aan het heilige en aan de waarheid. Tenslotte blijkt dat verschillende culturen een identieke logische tegenhanger van schoonheid hanteren, lelijkheid. Ik eindig mijn verhandeling met het suggereren van nieuwe onderzoekspistes in de studie en reflectie over schoonheid en aanverwante concepten.

ABSTRACT [SAMENVATTING].	3
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.	1
INTRODUCTION.	1
STRUCTURE.	2
PART I: CANDIDATE EXPLANANDA & UNSUCCESSFUL ACCOUNTS.	4
CHAPTER 1: DISENTANGLING THE AESTHETIC.	5
§1. INTRODUCTION.	5
§2. THE AESTHETIC: AN UGLY TANGLE.	5
§2.I. A BRIEF GENEALOGY OF THE AESTHETIC.	6
§2.II. WORRYING OVER CONCEPTUAL HISTORY.	10
§3. CONSTRUCTED CONCEPTS AND ANALYSIS – A POISONED LEGACY?	11
§3.I. CARROLL’S CONTENT-BASED ACCOUNT OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE.	11
§4. AVOIDING FLIPPANT AESTHETIC SCEPTICISM – THE PROMISE OF NATURALISM?	12
§5. CONCLUSION.	14
CHAPTER 2 – IN SEARCH OF AN EXPLANANDUM.	16
§1. INTRODUCTION.	16
§2. BEAUTY AS A CANDIDATE NATURAL CATEGORY.	16
§3. BEAUTY: HUMAN CONSTRUCTION OR NATURAL KIND?	17
§3.I. THE METHOD OF SIFTING: COMPARING CONCEPTS OF BEAUTY ACROSS CULTURES.	17
§3.II. DO DIFFERENT CULTURES HAVE A NARROW CONCEPTION OF BEAUTY?	20
§3.III. DO DIFFERENT CULTURES HAVE A BROAD CONCEPTION OF BEAUTY?	30
§4. EXPANDING THE SET OF EXPLANANDA: BELIEFS CONCERNING BEAUTY.	37
§4.I. BEAUTY, THE DIVINE AND TRUTH.	38
§4.II. BEAUTY AND UGLINESS.	42
§5. CONCLUSION.	54
CHAPTER 3 – TOWARDS A NATURALISED ACCOUNT OF BEAUTY I: ‘SPECIAL FORM’ ACCOUNTS.	55
§1. INTRODUCTION.	55
§2. ACCOMMODATING THE EXPLANANDA: TWO TYPES OF ACCOUNTS OF BEAUTY.	56
§3. THE ‘USUAL STUFF BUT SPECIAL FORM’ (USSF) VIEWS.	56
§3.I. DISINTERESTEDNESS AS PLEASURE ARISING FROM ‘TASTE.’	56
§3.II. ‘DISINTERESTEDNESS’ AS ARISING FROM AN <i>ATTITUDE</i> OF INTRINSIC VALUATION.	58
§4. TWO SPECIFIC PROBLEMS FOR THE DISINTERESTED ATTITUDE ACCOUNT.	60
§4.I. THE AESTHETIC ATTITUDE HAS NO, NON-TRIVIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY.	60
§4.II. THE NON-NECESSITY OF THE AESTHETIC ATTITUDE FOR EXPERIENCES OF BEAUTY.	62
§5. THE CASE AGAINST DISINTERESTED PLEASURE.	63
§5.I. THE PROBLEM OF HUMOUR.	63
§5.II. THE PROBLEM OF NON-IDENTICAL PHENOMENOLOGY.	65
§5.III. THE PROBLEM OF THE NON-FUNGIBILITY OF BEAUTY.	67
§5.IV. FURTHER OBJECTIONS TO EXPLANATORY SUFFICIENCY.	69
§5.V. THE ‘INTERNAL’ INTEREST OBJECTION.	72
§7. CONCLUSION.	73

CHAPTER 4 – TOWARDS A NATURALISED ACCOUNT OF BEAUTY II: UNIQUE ‘MENTAL EVENT’ ACCOUNTS.	75
§1. INTRODUCTION.	75
§2. CANDIDATE MENTAL STATES.	75
§3. DESIDERATA FOR AN ACCOUNT OF BEAUTY IN TERMS OF AN EMOTION.	76
§4. BELL’S ‘AESTHETIC’ EMOTION.	77
§4.I. A SOLUTION FROM WITHIN.	77
§4.II. CHARACTERISING BELL’S ‘AESTHETIC EMOTION.’	79
§5. BEARDSLEY’S TREATMENT OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE: TWO PUZZLES.	81
§5.I. BEARDSLEY’S ‘INTERNAL’ ACCOUNT OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE.	82
§5.II. BEARDSLEY’S ALLEGED PHANTOM.	83
§5.III. BEARDSLEY’S ATTEMPT TO BANISH THE SPECTRE OF METAPHYSICAL QUEERNESS.	84
§5.IV. BEARDSLEY’S SECOND PUZZLE: THE INSUFFICIENCY OF BEARDSLEY’S SOLUTION.	85
§5.V. BEARDSLEY’S FIRST PUZZLE: THE PHANTOM CONTINUES TO APPEAR.	87
§5.VI. A SECOND SOLUTION FROM WITHIN: BANISHING THE PHANTOM.	87
§6. CONCLUSION.	89
CHAPTER 5 – THE EMOTION ECSTASY: I.	90
§1. INTRODUCTION.	90
§2. WHAT IS THE ‘FORMAL’ OBJECT OF ECSTASY?	91
§2.I. THE NATURE OF THE REPRESENTATION OF FORMAL OBJECTS & THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN BASIC AND COMPLEX EMOTIONS.	91
§2.II. IS ECSTASY A BASIC EMOTION?	95
§2.II. HARMONY WITH THE SELF AS THE FORMAL OBJECT OF ECSTASY.	95
§3. WHAT ARE THE OTHER COMPONENTS OF ECSTASY?	100
§3.I. MARGHANITA LASKI’S DATA.	101
§3.II. CHARACTERISING ECSTASY IN LIGHT OF LASKI’S DATA.	104
§3.III. THE FACIAL EXPRESSION CHARACTERISTIC OF ECSTASY: A PROPOSAL.	112
§4. CONCLUSION.	112
CHAPTER 6 – THE EMOTION ECSTASY: II.	114
§1. INTRODUCTION.	114
§2. TEMPORAL LOBE EPILEPSY.	115
§2.I. TEMPORAL LOBE EPILEPSY & ECSTASY.	115
§2.II. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TLE FOR THE LASKIAN ACCOUNT OF ECSTASY?	118
§2.II.I. TLE AND THE ANTI-REALIST WORRY.	118
§2.II.II. TLE AND THE SUB-PERSONAL MECHANISMS INVOLVED IN EXPERIENCES OF ECSTASY.	120
§2.II.III. TLE AND BEAUTY.	122
§3. CHILLS.	125
§4. PROCESSING FLUENCY, FEELINGS OF TRUTH & THE APPRAISAL OF HARMONY.	130
§5. A MODEL OF ECSTASY.	133
§6. HOW DOES ECSTASY DIFFER FROM CLOSELY-RELATED EMOTIONS?	135
§6.I. AWE & WONDER.	135
§6.II. KELTNER AND HAIDT ON AWE.	135
§6.III. PRINZ ON WONDER.	137
§6.III. AWE (AND <i>PERHAPS</i> WONDER): EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE.	137
§6.IV. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WONDER / AWE AND ECSTASY.	140

§7. CONCLUSION.	143
CHAPTER 7 – IS ECSTASY CONSTITUTIVE OF BEAUTY?	144
§1. INTRODUCTION.	144
§2. A PROPOSED RESPONSE-DEPENDENT ACCOUNT OF BEAUTY.	144
§2.I. THE SUFFICIENCY OF ECSTASY FOR BEAUTY.	145
§2.II. THE NECESSITY OF ECSTASY.	147
§2.III. WHAT ARE THE STANDARD CONDITIONS AND SUBJECTS?	154
§6. CONCLUSION.	157
PART III – MEETING THE EXPLANANDA.	158
CHAPTER 8 – MEETING THE EXPLANANDA I: MORAL BEAUTY & THE CONSTITUTIVE THESIS.	159
§1. INTRODUCTION.	159
§2. THE MORAL BEAUTY QUESTION: IS VIRTUE <i>TRULY</i> BEAUTIFUL?	159
§2.I. VARIETIES OF THE MORAL BEAUTY THESIS.	160
§3. ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF MORAL BEAUTY.	161
§4. THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ECSTASY HYPOTHESIS.	171
§4.I. MORAL BEAUTY AND THE CONSTITUTIVE THESIS.	171
§4.II. ‘ELEVATION’ AS THE EMOTION THAT IS RESPONSIVE TO MORAL BEAUTY.	171
§4.III. ‘ELEVATION’ AS ECSTASY.	179
§4.IV. THE DOMAIN SPECIFICITY OF MORAL BEAUTY.	181
§5. CONCLUSION.	183
CHAPTER 9 – MEETING THE EXPLANANDA II: FOLK BELIEFS, BEAUTIFUL KINDS AND QUALITIES, AND UGLINESS.	184
§1. INTRODUCTION.	184
§2. EXPLAINING THE RANGE OF OBJECTS AND QUALITIES FOUND TO BE BEAUTIFUL.	184
§3. EXPLAINING FOLK BELIEFS ABOUT BEAUTY THAT APPEAR ACROSS CULTURES.	185
§3.I. FOLK BELIEFS ABOUT BEAUTY: BEAUTY ALLOWS COMMUNION WITH THE SUPERNATURAL.	186
§3.II. FOLK BELIEFS ABOUT BEAUTY: BEAUTY AND TRUTH.	186
§3.III. FOLK BELIEFS ABOUT BEAUTY: BEAUTY IS BELIEVED TO BE CAUSED BY THE SUPERNATURAL.	187
§3.IV. FOLK BELIEFS ABOUT BEAUTY: THE SUPERIOR VALUE OF BEAUTY.	188
§4. EXPLAINING THE LOGICAL OPPOSITION BETWEEN BEAUTY AND UGLINESS.	189
§5. CONCLUSION.	193
CONCLUSION.	195
REFERENCES.	209

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Introduction.

Philosophers have hoed over the plot of aesthetics often enough, but the plants they have raised thereby are pitifully weak and straggling objects. The time has therefore not yet come for tidying up some corner of the plot; it needs digging over afresh in the hope that some sturdier and more durable produce may arise, even if its health may be rude. (Urmson, 1957: 75).

Urmson was, of course, talking about the infamously lamentable state of philosophical aesthetics in the first half of the twentieth century. He promises, in no modest terms, that in taking the analytic turn philosophers might finally cultivate strong aesthetic theories. But whilst the plants that grew in the soil of analytic aesthetics may well have been stronger than their forebears, the philosophical climate has changed and, as I hope to show, some of those plants are showing signs of distress.

In the last two decades of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twentieth-first, philosophers have become less interested in creating theories that are aligned with the dictates of linguistic usage and have increasingly sought to bring their theories in line with a thoroughgoing naturalism. At a minimum, philosophers are increasingly committed to the idea that their theories should not posit any metaphysically queer entities and should at least be consistent with relevant empirical evidence. More radically, many philosophers have come to believe that empirical evidence is relevant in developing philosophical theories or even that philosophy and science simply emphasise different aspects of the same broad enterprise (see, for example, Prinz, 2007).

In aesthetics too, those philosophers who have taken the naturalistic turn have already made inroads into certain well-trodden problems. To take one example: in the debate surrounding the paradox of fiction – that is, how it is that we feel emotions in response to events and individuals that we know do not exist – philosophers such as Jenefer Robinson (2005) have drawn upon empirically-informed theories of the emotions to dissolve the paradox. Despite successes such as these, there has been less enthusiasm to court the core issues of aesthetic theory up until now: namely, the debate surrounding the nature of the aesthetic and related notions such as beauty. In this thesis, I attempt to come some way to fill this lacuna.

The method I adopt in this thesis lies on the more radical side of philosophical naturalism. I hold to the view that philosophical theories should not only commit themselves to only positing entities that are part of the natural order and to being consistent with relevant empirical findings (ontological naturalism) but should also proceed hand in hand with empirical methodologies (methodological naturalism).

In this regard, my methodological sympathies are close to those of Hume. As Hume makes clear in the *Treatise* ([1738] 1975a) and in his first *Enquiry* ([1748] 1975b), Hume thinks that progress in philosophical debates will only be made by making the empirical study of human nature central. Hume conceives of this empirical study of human nature as having two sub-projects: a descriptive project in which the distinct parts of the mind are delineated, and an explanatory project in which we try to discover how these distinct parts and powers work together.

The central questions that motivate this thesis are: Do any of the entities that are the subject of philosophical debate in aesthetic theory – such as the aesthetic or related notions such as beauty carve nature at the joints? Or, more specifically, are any of these entities part of, or intimately related to, the furniture of human nature – that is, as Hume put it, the geography of the mind? And, if so, how can this assist us in making philosophical progress?

As we will see, my answer to these questions is that the capacity to experience a *sui generis* mental state, or more specifically, an emotion, which is best labelled ‘ecstasy,’ is part of the furniture of human nature, and that this emotion is constitutive of beauty, such that:

Beauty_{Ecstasy}: x is beautiful \leftrightarrow x has the disposition to give rise to x -directed ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions.

Like Urmson, it is my hope that this plant will be sturdier than its forebears, even if nevertheless being of rude health in the form it takes here.

Structure.

This thesis is divided into three parts. In the first part, which is itself composed of three chapters, I pose the central question of the thesis, outline the explananda that need to be accommodated by a successful answer to this question, and consider one unsuccessful type of account of these explananda.

In the first chapter, I turn my attention to consider one of the central notions of aesthetic theory and the most obvious candidate for something that nature might have furnished our collective human natures with, namely, the capacity for a *sui generis* kind of experience – the aesthetic experience. I argue that the notion of the aesthetic experience is a culturally superficial construction that does not pick out anything natural, in the sense of an entity that is part of the ontology of the world – including human nature – independently of our conception of it. I argue that the failure to fully recognise this has ultimately led to scepticism about the aesthetic in certain quarters.

In chapter 2, I turn to consider a closely related notion to the aesthetic – namely beauty. I suggest that this notion does seem to pick out something natural, on the grounds that a remarkably similar conception of beauty is reliably found across cultures. From this, I suggest that a successful naturalised account of beauty should be able to accommodate this conception.

In chapter 3, I turn to consider and reject the most prominent group of accounts of beauty – namely those that claim that it is somehow constituted by pleasure with a certain aetiology: namely disinterested pleasure. I argue that whilst disinterested pleasure is not sufficient for experiences of beauty, pleasure is nonetheless necessary.

The second part of the thesis is composed of four chapters. In this part of the thesis, I offer a positive account of the *sui generis* mental state that is caused by, and constitutive of, beauty, by drawing on the findings of some of the cognitive sciences – namely philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience.

In chapter 4, I argue that three of the philosophers who have claimed that there is such a *sui generis* ‘aesthetic’ mental state – namely, Bell, Beardsley, and the Plato of the Phaedrus – claim that this mental state is an emotion, and they can best be thought of as proposing that this emotion is ecstasy.

In chapter 5, I attempt to develop and strengthen this characterisation of the *sui generis* state at the first personal level by drawing on empirical data on the experience of ecstasy collected by Laski and Brookover-Bourque and Back. I attempt to assuage anti-realist objections (of a Dickian nature) that may have been piqued by these data on *a priori* grounds.

In chapter 6, I draw on further data concerning ecstasy – specifically from investigations of temporal lobe epilepsy, chills and processing fluency – collected using a range of paradigms and samples, in order to both characterise the emotion ecstasy at the sub-personal level and to further assuage anti-realist objections. From the data concerning ecstasy in this chapter and chapter 5, I propose a working model of ecstasy in terms of its person-level components, and the sub-personal

components that might underlie them. Finally, having largely characterised ecstasy independently of other emotions in chapters 4-6, I consider how ecstasy can be distinguished from similar (and perhaps related) emotions, and in particular awe / wonder.

In chapter 7, I argue that ecstasy is not only reliably caused by beauty, but is constitutive of it, such that,

x is beautiful \leftrightarrow x is disposed to give rise to x-directed ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions.

To this end, I argue that ecstasy is sufficient and necessary for something to be beautiful, based on *a priori* and empirical grounds. I then highlight how one might determine what the standard subjects and standard conditions are, and suggest a few such conditions.

The third part of this thesis is composed of two chapters. In this final part of the thesis, I turn to consider how my account of beauty can be put to work to accommodate the explananda reviewed in chapter 2, and can help to resolve certain debates in philosophical aesthetics.

In chapter 8, I propose that the constitutive thesis can provide a direct argument in favour of the moral beauty thesis, and can accommodate the relevant findings outlined in chapter 2: namely, that manifestations of moral virtues are beautiful.

In chapter 9, I argue that the constitutive thesis can elegantly accommodate the other findings laid out in chapter 2: namely, the types of entities and properties that are reliably found to be beautiful across cultures, the beliefs about beauty that are reliably found across cultures, and the fact that beauty admits of a logical opposite – namely, ugliness. With regards to the latter explanandum, for example, I argue that ugliness is likely to be related to a disposition to give rise to disgust, and that one can explain the logical opposition between ugliness and beauty in terms of the opposition of the responses – disgust and ecstasy – that are linked to each.

In the conclusion, I briefly turn to consider outstanding questions that a research programme that centres on the constitutive thesis might wish to address in future.

PART I: CANDIDATE EXPLANANDA & UNSUCCESSFUL ACCOUNTS.

Chapter 1: Disentangling the Aesthetic.

§1. Introduction.

The project of this thesis is to bring the naturalistic enterprise, and more particularly, the Humean philosophical project, into certain central debates in philosophical aesthetics regarding aesthetic theory. To this end, I wish to answer the questions: do any of the entities that are the subject of philosophical debates in aesthetic theory – such as the aesthetic or related notions such as beauty – carve nature at the joints? Or, more specifically, are any of these entities part of, or intimately related to, the furniture of human nature – that is, the anatomy of the mind? And if so, how can this assist us in making philosophical progress?

So which of the subject matters of aesthetic theory should we attempt to naturalise? It would be remiss not to focus on the aesthetic since it has displaced beauty to become the central concept of the discipline of philosophical aesthetics and, arguably, is one of the most important in understanding our engagement with at least a good number of artworks along with a number of other kinds of objects that philosophical aestheticians are interested in, such as natural objects.

There are two further reasons to focus on the aesthetic, at least initially. Firstly, as we shall see shortly, despite being the central subject matter of philosophical aesthetics up until the latter part of the twentieth century, interest in the aesthetic has waned in recent years. This is, I will suggest, not because a given theory of the aesthetic is so strong that the debate has been resolved, but rather, as Urmson might (rather emphatically) have put it, that the existing theories are “weak and straggling.”

Secondly, one might think that the aesthetic is the notion that we are most likely to be able to successfully naturalise given that it is clearly grounded in the mind. As we shall see, we commonly talk about the aesthetic *experience*, the aesthetic *attitude*, as well as aesthetic *judgment*.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. I begin by noting that many philosophers have been skeptical about the very existence of the aesthetic, and go on to suggest that the reason why some might be skeptical is that the notion, and its derivatives, seem likely to be superficial human constructions. As a consequence, I suggest that the traditional philosophical task in this debate – namely, to provide a closed account of what the aesthetic is in non-aesthetic terms – is in all likelihood a poisoned legacy for aestheticians: it seems unlikely such an account could be found, and if it could, that it would provide any genuine philosophical insight.

I illustrate this problem in the contemporary debate by examining the account of aesthetic experience offered by Carroll. I go on to suggest that one need not, as a result, be led to skepticism about the aesthetic. Rather, I suggest that the aims of the debate can be retained by looking to see whether there is something natural within the vicinity of the concept of the aesthetic, and suggest a means of determining what might be given to us by nature – namely by looking at concepts across cultures. As such, in this chapter, I suggest that in taking the naturalistic turn we may be able to make progress in aesthetic theory.

I take up this latter task in the next chapter, and find that a remarkably similar conception of beauty is present across cultures, and as such, may pick out something given to us by nature.

§2. The aesthetic: an ugly tangle.

The aesthetic is a vexing concept. Philosophical aestheticians do not routinely talk about the aesthetic, as though it were a referential concept itself. Rather, it is commonly coupled with other terms, the most important of which are the aesthetic experience, aesthetic properties, the aesthetic attitude, aesthetic judgement and aesthetic value. This coupling brings the burden of having both to decide where to begin when venturing to offer an account of the aesthetic and to explain how these notions relate to one another.

One common thought with regards to the latter obstacle is to think that one of these notions is basic insofar as it can be used to define the others. If we suppose, for example, that aesthetic experience is basic, then we might roughly think that aesthetic properties would be those properties that give rise to aesthetic experience, aesthetic judgements would be judgements of aesthetic experiences (and, by extension, aesthetic properties), and aesthetic values would be aesthetic experiences that are valuable¹. All quite straightforward, one might think.

But the task of deciding which notion is basic – let alone characterizing that notion in non-aesthetic terms – is complicated by fact that all of these notions are controversial. George Dickie, for example, dubbed Bullough and Stolnitz’s aesthetic attitude a “myth” (1964) and Beardsley’s aesthetic experience a “phantom” (1965). Whether sound or not, one may not be moved to scepticism by such attacks, influential though they have undoubtedly been. After all, many philosophical theories are controversial, and even if one, or even all, existing accounts of something were shown to be false it wouldn’t follow that a true account cannot be found. Nor would such an outcome impugn the existence of the entities expressed by the notion under investigation itself.

The additional problem, however, is that many of these arguments do not just limit themselves to challenging *particular accounts* of the phenomenon, but also seek to cast doubt on the idea that there is a phenomenon to be accounted for at all. Whilst Dickie, for example, is ostensibly attempting to refute Stolnitz and Bullough’s specific accounts of the “aesthetic attitude” by showing that their defining characteristics – “disinterested attention” and “psychical distance” respectively – are either metaphysically spooky or reduce to trivialities, he also confesses that “an underlying aim of [his] essay is to suggest the vacuousness of the term ‘aesthetic’” (1964: 64). Dickie’s strategy here seems to be, at least in part, to show that the best accounts of prominent aesthetic concepts are confused in order to motivate doubt about the respectability of the aesthetic for philosophical enquiry altogether².

Some philosophers have even thought that certain aesthetic concepts can be dismissed out of hand without engaging in any substantive argument. Budd (2007: 29), for example, considers the notion of “aesthetic experience” to be too “nebulous” and “unclear” to warrant any serious philosophical attention. Perhaps more alarming still, one of the most prominent aestheticians of the twentieth century – Frank Sibley – has expressed a virulent skepticism regarding the disciplines’ eponymous notion. He writes,

There is no notion of the aesthetic; there are many criss-crossing ones, some very catholic, some merely stipulative, some merely prejudice, some hand-me-downs, many for which intelligible reasons are available but with which one need not sympathise. So the question what *really* constitutes the domain of aesthetic has no answer, unless there is one laid up in heaven. (Sibley, 2001a: 254).

Sibley’s scepticism here is not directed against the notion of the aesthetic *tout court*; but rather against the idea that the notion of the aesthetic picks out something which exists independently of our purposes. That is, Sibley is sceptical of whether the aesthetic refers to something furnished by nature, and *discoverable* therein, rather than *constructed* by us for certain purposes. As a consequence, Sibley can be said to hold the view that the aesthetic is a human construct.

§2.i. A brief genealogy of the aesthetic.

¹ Budd (2007) initially illustrates the interdefinability of the terms by taking aesthetic judgement to be basic (18), but ultimately argues that aesthetic pleasure is basic (27). For a similar strategy, see Stolnitz (1960). Stolnitz takes the aesthetic attitude to be basic, and claims that aesthetic experience is the total experience had toward which this attitude is adopted, and that aesthetic value is the value of this experience.

² Support for attributing this grander aim to Dickie can be found in Carroll (2001: 22).

Sibley's claim, among others, that the notion of the aesthetic, and its derivative notions, may be constructed gains traction when one considers the origin and development of the lexical item 'aesthetic.' It is notable that the term is relatively young. It was first coined by Baumgarten in the eighteenth century, who intended the term to mean sensuous knowledge; that is, knowledge that comes from the outer senses and/or from mental images produced by the imagination (Baumgarten, [1735] 1954). Baumgarten originally intended the category for epistemology, but as so many of Baumgarten's examples were drawn from poetry, it came to be associated with the impression that artworks make on the senses.

This simple fact should immediately lead us to question why the need arose to co-opt a new term. One possible answer to this question is that something new had been discovered, for which a term wasn't already available. This doesn't seem likely. The term was originally confined to German philosophy post-Baumgarten, and other terms with a similar meaning were used elsewhere. In Britain, for example, similar pre-occupations were discussed in terms of "taste," "pleasure," and "beauty." And in France, these pre-occupations were discussed by reference to "le goût." In his second critique, for example, Kant notes that "the Germans are the only ones who now employ the word "aesthetics" to designate that which others call the critique of taste" (Kant, [1781] 1996: 74).

Indeed, it is not clear that this new term has, for many, meant anything above and beyond sensuous pleasure, beauty and taste, which may themselves be synonymous. As the historian of philosophical aesthetics Tatarkiewicz (1980: 312) notes in his history of the aesthetic, "the experience which since the 18th century had been called aesthetic, in earlier centuries had been defined simply as the perception of beauty... even nowadays there is a belief that aesthetic experience and the experience of beauty are the same."³ Thus, when Urmson (1957) attempts to characterize what makes a situation aesthetic, his account concerns pleasing appearances, which is something that many would simply consider to be the beautiful. Similarly, writing a decade after Tatarkiewicz and over four decades after Urmson, Carroll (2001: 32) insists on calling aesthetic theory 'beauty theory.'

If the term 'aesthetic' was indeed synonymous with 'beauty,' as it seems to have been at least initially (and likely still is today for a portion of the folk, if they have such a notion at all), one might think that such lexical duplication is harmless. But in the case of the aesthetic, this duplication seems to have been instrumental in determining the contours of the field, and consequently, the philosophical cul-de-sacs that I hope to show that it has arrived at.

It is reasonable to suppose that we commonly hold a maxim of what might be called linguistic non-redundancy – that is, that where a new term is introduced we commonly assume that its meaning must nevertheless be distinct in some way from the meanings of existing lexical markers (otherwise, why coin or co-opt a new term at all?). As a result, this duplication may have provided the opportunity for the semantic field to be carved up anew by drawing semantic boundaries around and through those of the existing semantically-related terms such as 'beauty.' In the case of the 'aesthetic,' this process was likely made more flexible by the curious fact that the etymology of the term does not make reference to the existing semantically-related terms 'beauty,' 'art,' or 'pleasure.'⁴

In the eighteenth century, the referential boundary of the aesthetic domain came to be extended beyond that of beauty to create a superordinate category, such that all cases of beauty are cases of the aesthetic, but not all cases of the aesthetic are cases of beauty. In 1757, Burke ([1757]

³ A number of philosophers note that the aesthetic was considered to be the subjective *aspect* of beauty. Francis Kovach (1974: 274), for example, says that the question "what is an aesthetic experience?" can be understood as equivalent to the question 'what does beauty do to man?' Similarly, Tatarkiewicz notes that "For the last hundred years the majority of publications concerning the idea of beauty and art have been of a psychological character, their subject being the human response to beauty and art: what is called the aesthetic experience or sensation; its properties, elements and development have been investigated; the nature of the mental attitude required has been entered into." (1980: 311-2).

⁴ Noël Carroll (2001: 28) has posited a similar maxim may be in operation when he notes that the change in terminology from taste and beauty pre-Kant to aesthetic post-Kant, "may be significant... because in referring to beauty by means of the concept of the aesthetic, one may come to think that the two are distinguishable when one is really talking about beauty, narrowly construed, rather than something more encompassing."

1990) was one of the first to ostensibly enlarge and subdivide the aesthetic⁵ into the beautiful and the sublime. Seven years later, and no doubt influenced by Burke, Kant ([1764] 2011) similarly enlarges the aesthetic to include the beautiful and the sublime. With the (often implicit) creation of just such a genus, the ground was prepared for the admission of other properties into the aesthetic realm, such as, to borrow a list from Croce (1922: 87), the “tragic, comic, sublime, moving, sad, ridiculous, melancholy, tragi-comic, humorous, majestic, dignified, serious, grave, imposing, noble, decorous, graceful, attractive, piquant, coquettish, idyllic, elegiac, cheerful, violent, ingenuous, cruel, base, horrible, disgusting, dreadful, nauseating.”

One might wonder on what grounds the aesthetic proceeded from being identical with beauty to becoming a genus that *contains* beauty. There are a number of possibilities.

As mentioned earlier, it may be that the beautiful and these other properties were *discovered* to share some common essence. This seems unlikely.

Perhaps the most plausible (and certainly the most influential) suggestion is Sibley’s (2001b) that the aesthetic concepts all require ‘taste’ to apply: that is, the application of aesthetic concepts is not a matter of deciding whether the descriptive (non-aesthetic) conditions for their application are met, but is rather a matter of taste (indeed, Sibley claims that “there are no sure-fire rules” (107) by which one can infer aesthetic qualities from non-aesthetic ones)⁶. It wouldn’t be entirely anachronistic to think that this thought (or something close to it) might be responsible for the extension of the aesthetic genus: certainly, characterisations of, at least, the judgements of beauty and ugliness in terms of pleasure or displeasure (respectively) that arise immediately or in the absence of reasoning involving one’s desires were prominent in the eighteenth century. But, it is not clear that this can explain the extension of the aesthetic domain (nor that it is the right account of what makes something aesthetic), since the application of many concepts such as sweet, suspicious or enthusiastic require ‘taste,’ in both Sibley’s and the eighteenth century sense, but aren’t considered aesthetic concepts. (We return to the eighteenth century views, in the context of accounts of beauty, in chapter 3).

A second and more likely possibility is that the aesthetic genus was created because of a *resemblance* between the beautiful and these other properties along certain dimensions. To take the example of the sublime, there are many ways in which it is similar to the beautiful, as indeed would be expected if at least *some* philosophers think that they are linked⁷.

Experiences of both seem to be felt in response to nature and art and are thought to be values of both, both give pleasure (though this may be thought to be less obvious in the case of the sublime), and both seem to require a faculty or sense of ‘taste,’ insofar as the experience of them resembles intuitions and perceptions in not requiring a process of reasoning to arise, for example. This may be the explanation that Tatarkiewicz (1980: 313) has in mind when he writes that the aesthetic properties are “akin to beauty and yet unlike it.” But, of course, a resemblance relation does not, in itself, imply that a common aesthetic essence had been discovered, or indeed that there is any to be found and accounted for.

A third possibility is that through the constant conjunction of the beautiful and these other properties in treatises on beauty and the appreciation of the arts and nature gave rise to the

⁵ Though, of course, as one of the eighteenth century British aestheticians Burke does not speak of the aesthetic realm, but rather, of taste.

⁶ For example: “We see that a book is red by looking at it, just as we tell that the tea is sweet by tasting it. So too, it might be said, we just see (or fail to see) things are delicate, balanced, and the like.” (Ibid.: 13-4).

⁷ Aestheticians historically have not agreed on whether the sublime is simply beauty, a species of beauty or whether it is antithetical to it.

Fechner, for example, notes that,

Carriere, Herbart, Herber, Hermann, Kirschmann, Siebeck, Thiersch, Unger, Zeisig, believe that sublimity is a peculiar sort of modification of beauty... [whereas], according to Burke, Kant and Solger, sublimity and beauty are mutually exclusive, so that what is sublime can never be beautiful, nor the beautiful sublime.

(Fechner, 1876, II: p. 163; as cited by Tatarkiewicz, 1980: 142).

Carritt claimed that it was “hardly certain that we are offered in ‘sublimity’ more than the mere sum of the two qualities of beauty and power” and suspects that it is “only an unessential concept from which nearly any divergences from the normal types of beauty, that can from different points of view be detected, are arbitrarily put together.” (1914: 230-1).

assumption that they possess some common aesthetic essence that needed to be accounted for. This is the explanation favoured by Croce (1922: 87), who labels the sublime and other so-called aesthetic properties “pseudo-aesthetic,” and claims that they have been thought to belong with beauty in a superordinate aesthetic domain due to a “blind traditionalism which assumes an intimate connection between things fortuitously treated together by the same authors in the same books.”⁸

A fourth possibility is that the term aesthetic came to be extended for specific ends to be achieved. According to Noël Carroll (2008), the term ‘aesthetic’ came to be extended and assume the importance it did in part because of its usefulness as a gatekeeper for entry into the category “Art.” Carroll notes, following Kristeller (1951, 1952), that in the classical period, the arts were any practice involving skill. So, for example, the “arts” included navigation, charioteering, agriculture, engineering and medicine. Moreover, some of what we now call the Fine Arts were grouped in ways that would seem foreign to us today. Music, for example, was sometimes grouped with mathematics, and poetry was grouped with rhetoric. With the advent of the modern system of arts, Carroll notes that a philosophical pressure emerged to be able to explain the grounds on which the fine arts could be grouped which excluded those arts that did not number among the newly titled *Beaux Arts*. A certain notion of the aesthetic, or at least one of its derivative notions, seemed to provide such grounds. The fine arts were claimed to be those that provided experiences that are valued in themselves. Conveniently, this excluded those arts that provided experiences that are valued instrumentally, such as engineering, rhetoric or agriculture.

Fifthly, but linked to the third and fourth possibility discussed above, the term aesthetic may have been extended in an attempt to account for values of art *qua* art. E.F. Carritt notes, again with reference to the sublime, that,

It is significant for a historian of our concept that [the sublime] first came to prominence in the philosophy of a time perhaps unrivalled for the rapid reversal of artistic orthodoxy. A whole new world was being conquered for aesthetic satisfaction; but much of it was so Gothic, so rude, so shocking to the polite, the regular and the pastoral, that men hesitated to call it beautiful, could hardly believe, indeed, that they felt it to be so. (Carritt, 1914: 227).

Carritt is alluding to a pressure to account for the experiences people were having in response to new artworks, and it is not difficult to see that the creation of an aesthetic genus would have served this purpose well. Stolnitz (1961: 192-3) lends support to this idea when he notes, in relation to the consequences of Burke’s aesthetic theorizing that “[Burke’s theory of the sublime] admits into the realm of the aesthetic and legitimizes elements not only different from those traditionally associated with beauty but antithetical to it,” and that Burke “pushes back the boundaries of the aesthetic.” Indeed, Stolnitz suggests that the creation of the aesthetic genus, and its population with the sublime and the beautiful, among other concepts, was not sufficient to account for all the values people discovered in art, when he writes that the rarity of the sublime means that it “cannot, therefore serve as the garden variety predicate which designates the most frequent kind of aesthetic value.” He claims, however, that the property “expressive” “can function in this way because it has a much wider denotation” and “can be and is applied to works of art which are highly diverse in their scale, style and content” (ibid.).

One notable corollary of the extension of the aesthetic genus to parcel off the fine arts, as well as to create a single common value for these arts as arts, is that it allows theorists to separate out different aspects of a work of art and the value they are thought to secure. The term ‘aesthetic,’ Dickie

⁸ Croce also goes on to say that they are related to the aesthetic insofar as they “constitute the material of life” and so “can become the object of artistic representation” (ibid.: 92). This distinction can be seen as akin to the distinction between the representational content and formal properties of a work of art, of which the latter is commonly thought to constitute the aesthetic part of an object.

(1964: 64) claimed, for example, has been “selected” to nominally parcel off stylistic and formal features of the work from the representational and moral content of the work, as a result of a conception of the aesthetic as disinterested experience.

In sum, the ‘aesthetic’ is a term that seems likely to be polysemous. Certainly at the beginning of usage it was taken to be synonymous with ‘beauty,’ and this explains why beauty has and continues to feature most strongly in intuitions regarding the extension and meaning of the concept that it expresses – most obviously in the intuition that the aesthetic is simply the beautiful. However, the aesthetic came to be transformed from a synonym for the beautiful into a superordinate genus, encompassing a host of other properties ranging from the sublime to the comedic.

From the foregoing discussion of the origins and usage of the term ‘aesthetic,’ the reason for this transformation of the term can be explained by two broad classes of explanation. The first, which might be called the essentialist approach, supposes that the aesthetic was extended due to the discovery of an aesthetic essence in properties or experiences of properties not previously recognized as possessing that essence. As I noted in my discussion above, this doesn’t seem likely. Whilst this account of the aesthetic is not *explicitly* advanced by any aestheticians, it is commonly presupposed by aestheticians who advance accounts of the aesthetic experience, as we shall presently see.

An alternative approach suggests that the aesthetic is a human construct. As we see from the discussion above, this broad type of account of the aesthetic can explain the extension of the concept by appealing to (a) a resemblance between different properties or experiences of properties in the absence of a common essence, (b) a tendency to presume a common essence where two properties commonly co-occur, or (c) certain motivations: namely, for a concept to justify the parceling of Art from art, and the desire for a unified value which is distinctive of art. This kind of account seems to be the most likely.

§2.ii. Worrying over conceptual history.

The troubling consequences of the history of the term ‘aesthetic’ (and the concept it expresses) and the likely causes of its construction through time are cast in sharp relief when one considers what the task of philosophical aesthetics has been from (at least) the early twentieth century until the present. There is a widespread assumption among aestheticians that one of the jobs of philosophical aesthetics – indeed, arguably the most important job – is to give an analysis of the aesthetic, or, more commonly, at least one of the notions that derive from it. That is, to give an analysis of one of the aesthetic notions which will provide us with a means to include all of the instances that we commonly think are instances of those notions, and to exclude all of those instances that are not commonly thought to be instances of those notions.

The most common way of going about this is to propose a single or set of conditions for membership, ideally in terms of simpler conditions, and subject this to trial-by-counter-example. As Kennick (1958: 318) put it in the middle of the last century, when we ask questions like – “What is aesthetic experience?” – we are looking for the kind of response we would get to the question of “What is helium?” – that is to say, a request for a definition where a “definition is the formula of an essence.” In light of the brief genealogy presented above, we may worry whether such a task is even possible (if we do not allow disjunctive definitions), and, if it is, whether such an analysis would provide any philosophical insight.

The problem, to be clear, is not simply that the aesthetic, and its derivative notions, are most likely constructed, but rather that it is mostly likely constructed *and* that philosophical aestheticians attempt to characterize it as though it were not. If this is true, then it would pose a serious problem for philosophical aesthetics, as the mismatch between the task it has set itself and the nature of the thing being accounted for almost guarantees that all putative accounts will fall short.

§3. Constructed concepts and analysis – a poisoned legacy?

One can, I suggest, see this problem clearly in some of the most recent work in the debate surrounding one of the derivative notions of the aesthetic – namely the aesthetic experience. I focus my attention here on one contemporary account – namely that of Carroll (2002) – as this illustrates the problem well.

§3.i. Carroll's Content-Based Account of Aesthetic Experience.

Carroll (2002) has advanced what he calls the “content-based” account of aesthetic experience. He claims that aesthetic experiences are experiences of: formal properties, aesthetic properties, expressive properties, how the aforementioned properties interact, or how the aforementioned properties relate to our responses. In Carroll's own words, aesthetic experience is characterised by “attention with understanding to the work's formal and aesthetic properties and their interaction with each other and to the ways in which they engage our sensibilities and imagination” (167). Carroll arrived at his account “by thinking about the features of art works, attention to which are most likely to elicit consensus and least likely to spur controversy among people who talk about aesthetic experience” (164).

Carroll offers three reasons that, he claims, count in favour of his account. The first is that his particular account is most in line with what he claims is traditional usage and that “all things being equal, an account of aesthetic experience that better approximates traditional usage should be preferred, lest we run the danger of changing the subject altogether” (163). The second is it allows for further contents that are unrelated to those currently found in the account to be added to the list as it is already disjunctive. The third is that his account has the virtue of excluding some of what Carroll considers to be the more controversial candidates for aesthetic experience. Namely, the experience of simply recognising what is represented in an artwork, and moral experiences of a work of art.

Carroll seems to have simply provided an open-ended list of the kinds of experiences that *some* think an account of aesthetic experience should accommodate. That is, he has identified what he takes to be cases that need to be accommodated by a theory of aesthetic experience, rather than offering an account of how they form a unitary whole or how they differ from the myriad of other kinds of experience – such as the experience of redness or anger.

The inadequacy of Carroll's account, even by its own lights⁹ can, I suggest, be traced to the methods he used to arrive at it. Carroll claims that accounts of the aesthetic need to aim to accommodate the dictates of traditional usage or they will not be targeting the phenomenon in question. But, one might quite reasonably wonder, not least because Carroll cannot himself provide a closed account of the subject he presumes to address, firstly, whether the subject Carroll turns to address is, at root, a single subject; secondly, whether there is a single usage; and thirdly, if there is more than one usage, why we should think that accounts which are in accord with the ‘traditional’ usage are to be preferred.

In the face of the brief genealogy of the concept of the aesthetic offered at the beginning of this chapter, some of which was based on Carroll's own genealogy, one might say that it is simply not true that there is a single “traditional” usage of the term. And if that's the case, we might wonder *which* “traditional” usage is the right one to use as the benchmark against which proposed accounts should be assessed. Certainly, some of the aestheticians working in the eighteenth century tradition – such as Hume and Hutcheson, for example – would be quite unhappy with Carroll's list, as they include responses to moral actions within the domain of the beautiful (and if the beautiful isn't aesthetic,

⁹ Carroll himself considers his account incomplete as it does not yet provide such an account, but is at least sanguine about the possibility of finding such an account.

then it is hard to know what is). At the very least, it needs to be shown how a more “traditional” usage has a more privileged access to the truth of the matter than a less traditional usage.¹⁰

Carroll might respond to this worry by saying that one should favour his usage over that of, for example, Hume because good reasons have since been offered to extend and narrow the concept in the way that it has characteristically been understood since. But this just doesn’t seem to be true, even according to Carroll. Carroll himself argues that one of the most significant transformations in our conception of the aesthetic since the eighteenth century was a result of the emergence of a philosophical pressure to justify the separation of the fine arts from other kinds of art. The theory that was proposed to meet this demand – the aesthetic theory of art – was undoubtedly influential and has, as a result of this influence, indelibly marked our usage of, and intuitions regarding, the concept. But it is widely thought to be a false theory and Carroll himself numbers among the philosophers who believe that the theory fails. Indeed, in Carroll’s strategy of arguing against competing accounts of aesthetic experience mentioned earlier, Carroll argues that the aesthetic theory of art – or, more specifically, the disinterested theory – is also a false theory of the aesthetic experience. (We will return to the disinterested theory in chapter 3).

In light of this, it seems puzzling that, having traced the genealogy of the contemporary notion of the aesthetic in terms of the pressures that shaped its development, and argued that the theories that emerged to address these pressures are false, that Carroll should think that the “traditional” usage that he has in mind and which resulted in part from the influence of this false theory is the best candidate for accounts of the aesthetic to aim at.

In the face of the prospect of accepting an account that merely and, I suspect, necessarily stipulates a disjunctive set of contents according to a *certain* usage of the term, we haven’t thereby given up on what was at stake in the debate. To accept the items that Carroll thinks need to be accommodated, we are no longer aiming at truth in the sense of characterising something given to us by the world independently of our conceptions of it. That is not to say that there is no truthful account of why the concept of the aesthetic experience has the extension that it does. Clearly, there is. But as opposed to being a truth that consists in an essence, it will be a historical truth.

In sum, Carroll aims to provide a “definition for the formula of an essence” of the aesthetic, but fails to do this. The most that Carroll is able to do is provide a disjunctive list of the items that *some* think an account of the aesthetic should unify. The reason for this, which Carroll himself seems to have alluded to in his other writings, is that in all probability the concept that he seeks to address is a construction.

§4. Avoiding flippant aesthetic scepticism – the promise of naturalism ?

In the face of this, albeit brief discussion, we might think that these considerations, at least *prima facie*, naturally lead to the idea that the debate surrounding the aesthetic and derivative concepts such as the aesthetic experience should be abandoned, and that we should, like Sibley, Budd and Dickie, among numerous other philosophers of art who have jettisoned the debate surrounding the aesthetic, embrace aesthetic scepticism.

I think this would be too hasty. While we should embrace aesthetic scepticism with regards to the aesthetic, at least as it has been constructed, we need not reject the prospect of finding something within that constructed domain which picks out something that is furnished by nature rather than the human mind. That is, I think we should embrace what might be called moderate aesthetic scepticism, and not flippant aesthetic scepticism.

¹⁰ Alan Goldman (2013: 324) has also noted the inconsistency of Carroll’s claims regarding the nature of the aesthetic, when he writes that “In his latest paper on the subject, Carroll represents a view of aesthetic experience that excludes cognitive properties and moral insight as a matter of consensus, or “common knowledge,” rooted in a uniform or at least consistent history of philosophical linguistic usage. In an earlier paper, however, he describes the term “aesthetic” as a contested technical term from the beginning with shifting meanings.”

This would mean that the aims and process of the debate may need to be reconstructed. Arguably, we should not consider the failure to provide a closed analysis of the concept as a marker of failure. Indeed, if the different tokens of the aesthetic are only united by a historical relation (which I have suggested is likely), then we should recognize that even a successful analysis would itself be unlikely to provide any philosophical insight. A natural corollary of this, on the assumption that our intuitions regarding the extension of the aesthetic are governed by these different usages, is that we should not consider the failure of a given account to satisfy all of our intuitions a *fatal* failure.

One might be worried about abandoning the traditional project, and its standards of success, in so far as it is not clear what it would be replaced with. If we're not in the job of providing necessary and sufficient conditions by devising accounts and submitting them to trial-by-intuition, then, as philosophers, what are we doing?

The challenge is to construct a feasible project going forward. I propose that we attempt to naturalise the concept of the aesthetic. In this enterprise, we do not need to abandon our intuitions altogether. We should, I think, resist the idea that intuitions play an all or nothing role in philosophical enterprises. That is, that either we aim for an account which attempts to accommodate all of our intuitions, or we abandon our intuitions altogether. There is a middle way, increasingly common in many areas of philosophy, by which our intuitions act as a guide to our epistemic practices, but do not exhaustively determine the standard by which we assess the outcome of those practices. So what should be the standard?

One standard that we have already touched upon is to build an account based on intuitions as built into "traditional" usage. Carroll, for example, claims that his content-based account of aesthetic experience should be preferred in that it is more in line with traditional usage by excluding moral and cognitive responses from the aesthetic domain. Goldman (2013: 325) has claimed that Carroll's "main and most recent argument" for his content-based view is historical. In excluding responses to moral and representational content, Goldman notes that Carroll's account is consistent with the formalist tradition that runs from British sentimentalists through Kant to Clive Bell (though there is a question as to the extent to which Kant and the British sentimentalists were formalists).

Goldman (ibid.: 330) argues that "the argument from historical usage of the term 'aesthetic' fails in under-characterising early usage in Baumgarten, Hutcheson, and Kant and in omitting major later figures in aesthetics." Goldman suggests that his own preferred theory, which he calls the "broad view" of the aesthetic, enjoys the support provided by being in line with a greater volume of traditional views on the aesthetic. This means that his account needs to accommodate an even greater number of instances. This is not a worry for Goldman, as he is offering what he calls a "description" and not a definition.

Whilst Goldman is entirely correct in noting that Carroll's historical argument does not accurately represent the usage of the figures he cites, and ignores the usage of other figures, one might wonder why he thinks that the fact that an account is in line with traditional usage counts in favour of the account. After all, we are presumably aiming at truthfully characterizing something given to us as part of reality and not something constructed from it for whatever reason, and we have not been provided with a reason to think that traditional usage should be in line with this.

One might think that we have reason to believe that accounts that are in line with the usage adopted in influential accounts are to be preferred on the grounds that they are more influential *because* they are the best approximations of the truth. However, this thought is problematic. For one thing, if these influential accounts are the best approximations of some theory-independent state of affairs, then this state of affairs should presumably be able to be directly accessed by us all without the need to rely on the usage adopted in influential accounts (provided that we are not labouring under some epistemic defect).

For another, if we should trust theories that are in line with influential theories, then we might wonder why these apparently truthful accounts are mutually inconsistent. Indeed, that they have not

collectively converged on an account of what the extension of the aesthetic is and what unifies the various instances – as Carroll and, indeed, Goldman demonstrate – suggests that they are not theorizing over something which is given to them all in a simple manner.

More generally, one might think that if usage is tracking intuitions and, as philosophers such as Jonathan Weinberg (2007) have argued, that intuitions are one-bit signals – that is, informationally impoverished signals that gives us information about whether a given x is f but which do not tell us why this is the case – then we should throw out our intuitions altogether. After all, if that is true, then whenever we have an intuition about a particular case, we do not know whether this intuition is tracking the joints of nature or the joints of a construction.

But this does not need to be the case. There are rational strategies which one can use to improve one's sight of nature, and which can allow us to see which intuitions are the result of a construction and which are not. To do this, one can exploit certain behavioural properties of usages that track a construction and those that track something in nature, of roughly the following form:

Constructed conceptual boundaries: where these are the result of a culture-specific need – such as the need to parcel off Art from art, or to provide a single value of art as art; or the result of a culture specific happening, such as the frequent co-occurrence of beauty and other properties in treatments on the appreciation of art, one should expect these boundaries to be culture-specific.

Natural conceptual boundaries: where the boundaries of a concept are the result of a grouping that occurs in reality due to the operation of certain mind-independent causal laws, one would expect these boundaries to be culture general.

In this way, in spite of being informationally impoverished, usages and the intuitions that they express do not need to be thrown out altogether. One can begin, in the vein of Carroll, Goldman and Levinson, by looking at usages at various points in the same continuous cultural and intellectual tradition. But one should not stop there, as each snapshot of the understanding of this concept through time in a given culture is not normally independent of what came before it. That is to say, both nature and culture are inherited when looking within the same culture, or even closely related cultures. For this reason, we should look towards concepts cross-culturally. Here, our observations are independent; that is to say, we are more likely to see what is given to us by nature, as this is held constant (by its nature) whilst a good deal of what is culturally constructed will vary.

This method is, of course, still fallible, as our concepts may be overdetermined. Even if a particular usage is present across cultures, this may be an artefact of the operation of our common concept-forming mechanism, or a certain bias, rather than because that usage tracks the way the world is. But, this methodology is nonetheless an improvement.¹¹

§5. Conclusion.

In this preliminary chapter, I have begun to look at how the naturalistic enterprise might help to foster further progress in philosophical aesthetics. I have briefly suggested that the contemporary debate surrounding one of the central notions of aesthetic theory – the aesthetic experience – is in a lamentable state, and have attempted to diagnose the cause of that problem. I suggest that the

¹¹ One might think that I am presupposing a clearly delineated separation between nature and nurture here. A fuller discussion of the empiricism-nativism debate in the philosophy of psychology would take me too far off topic. But, briefly: I do not think that there is a clear delineation between nature and nurture, merely that we can get *closer* to what is in nature by using the rational strategies mentioned. As we will see in the next chapter, and in chapters 5 and 6, I emphasise how difficult it may be to separate culture from nature, and the role of culture in shaping the manifestations of human nature as it relates to the aesthetic. Thanks to Bence Nanay for raising this.

problem is twofold: the first is that the subject matter at stake seems to be a construction, and second, that aestheticians have taken themselves to be trying to cast light on the nature of that construction by trying to reveal its essence through conceptual analysis. I traced the influence of this mistake as it manifests itself in one contemporary philosophical account of the aesthetic.

I have concluded by suggesting that in taking the naturalistic turn, we might be able to steer a course away from what I have called flippant aesthetic scepticism. To do this, I have suggested that we need to restructure the methodology employed in the debate such that intuitions are not our sole compass in steering a course, but rather, should be used to give us a loose orientation on the subject of our study. Moreover, I have suggested that we should pay particular attention to concepts of the aesthetic across cultures to help us determine what might be natural. In the next chapter, we begin the search for just such an account of the aesthetic.

Chapter 2 – In search of an explanandum.

§1. Introduction.

In the last chapter, I began my attempt to suggest how taking the naturalistic turn in regards to aesthetic theory might result in philosophical progress. I suggested, albeit briefly, that it seems likely that the notion of the aesthetic, and its derivative notions, are culturally superficial constructions, and that, as a result, it is unlikely that the traditional task of providing an analysis of the aesthetic, or one of its derivative notions, will succeed or provide any philosophical insight. In order to avoid a flippant scepticism with regards to the aesthetic, I have suggested that we should attempt to find an entity within the vicinity of the aesthetic that is given to us by nature by looking at whether any notion in its vicinity reliably appears across cultures. In this way, philosophical aesthetics can, in part, benefit from taking the naturalistic turn by looking at the data provided by one of the cognitive sciences – namely, anthropology.

In this chapter, I argue that the concept expressed by ‘beauty’ might indeed pick out something that is common across cultures. I note that there are, in fact, two conceptions of beauty in the philosophical tradition: a narrow conception and a broader conception (which itself includes the narrow conception). I argue that the broad conception is present across cultures, and as such, that this conception might pick out something in nature. In addition, I also note that there are a number of folk beliefs about beauty that are common across cultures concerning the relationship between beauty, truth and the divine, and that as such, these may ultimately help to cast light on what beauty is. Finally, I note that beauty admits of an opposite across cultures, and that, given that there is no *a priori* reason to think that this should be the case, this should also number among the explananda of a successful naturalistic account of beauty.

§2. Beauty as a candidate natural category.

In light of the fact that it has been a common thought for many that the aesthetic is simply beauty, we might think that the concept of beauty picks out something in nature. So does it?

At first sight, one might have reason to worry that beauty does not pick out anything in nature on the grounds that a number of philosophers have expressed a similar scepticism about beauty as has been expressed about the aesthetic. In the eighteenth century, for example, Knight, Stewart and Gerard all variously argued that the word ‘beauty’ was loose and ambiguous, had no *particular* referent, and functioned as a general term of approbation (Tatarkiewicz, 1980: 144). This claim was echoed in the twentieth century by Clive Bell (1914), who, whilst acknowledging that his theory of aesthetic experience might sound like a theory of beauty, elects to label the phenomenon in question ‘the aesthetic’ on the grounds that the word ‘beauty’ is used as a general term of approbation.

It is certainly true that there is a sense in which ‘beauty,’ as a lexical item, has come to be used as a term of general approbation. But just because this is the case does not mean that we need to reach the same conclusion about all senses in which the term ‘beauty’ is used, anymore than the fact that ‘brilliant’ is used as a general term of approbation means that we do not have a concept of brilliance as brightness. So, where the lexical item ‘beauty’ has not been used as a mere term of approbation, how has it been used?

§3. Beauty: human construction or natural kind?

Excepting the use of ‘beauty’ as a general term of approbation, beauty has been conceived of in both a narrow and broad way. Both of these conceptions differ with regards to the range of things that can be found to be beautiful, and this, in turn, has consequences for what the respective proponents of these conceptions believe – implicitly or otherwise – beauty consists in.

The majority of philosophers prior to Kant ([1790] 2000) held a broad conception of beauty. For them, beauty was a quality that could be found in certain relations of sounds and visual forms, certain visual qualities, things that are apt to their nature or purpose, morally excellent actions and true theorems. Plato in the *Hippias Major* ([c. 390 BC] 2010), for example, offers examples of beautiful laws and characters. Similarly, in his *Enneads*, Plotinus ([c. 270 AD] 1976) wrote about beautiful sciences, laws and souls. This broad conception of beauty is found in the medieval period and was taken up by the majority of the British empiricists – such as Hume ([1738, 1751] 1975a, 1975b), Adam Smith ([1759], 1976), Hutcheson ([1725] 1973) and Shaftesbury ([1711] 1999). The broad of conception of beauty also includes instances where an individual expresses his emotional states in art – so called romantic or expressive beauty.

Others, however, have held a much narrower conception of beauty. For the Sophists of Athens, for example, beauty applied to “that which is pleasant to sight or hearing” (Tatarkiewicz, 1980: 122). This conception was taken up, to *some* extent, by Kant ([1790] 2000) in the eighteenth century, and by Bell (1914) in the twentieth century.

The question I wish to answer is: do either of the extensions of these different conceptions of beauty carve nature at its joints, or are we offered a construction of the human mind in both or each?

§3.i. The method of sifting: comparing concepts of beauty across cultures.

In the last chapter I argued that one way to test whether conceptions (and their attendant intuitions) are constructed is to look at conceptions cross-culturally. Where conceptions are taken within the same continuous tradition, there is a danger that they are not independent of the intuitions and theories of those that have come before – that is, we inherit both the world and the way it is partitioned by natural causal processes and any culturally specific ways in which we have carved it up.

To solve this problem, I have suggested that we look at the conceptions held by different cultures on the grounds that different cultures do not inherit the same culturally superficial conceptions but do inherit what nature has furnished us with. Broadly, the method assumes that those conceptions that are culturally superficial and those that track nature will differ in terms of the frequency with which they would be expected to occur, and exploits this difference to infer which conceptions track something in nature.

Before doing this, it is important to qualify the logic of this method of sifting the culturally superficial from the natural. From what I have already said, we might expect that this method entails that the following conditional holds:

- (1) If a conception tracks something in nature, then it needs to be observed across all cultures.

If this were true, then whether any given conception of beauty tracks something in nature would be hostage to one or more negative observations or lack of observations altogether. Fortunately, this conditional is not entailed, as there are a number of ways in which it is false.

Firstly, for many cultures, and even those where a large amount of ethnographic material is available, there is a lack of observations on beauty (and art) across cultures because anthropologists have simply not investigated the subject.¹ One of the most prominent reasons for this is that many anthropologists believe that beauty (and art as art) may be culturally specific to the West.²

Secondly, in those cases where anthropologists have investigated a particular culture's aesthetics or art, anthropologists own conceptions have at times led them to either falsely *assume* that certain cultures do not have concepts of beauty without investigating thoroughly or indeed at all, or misconstrue the observations they do make due to their own conception of beauty. In the late nineteenth century, for example, Pfiel argued that Bismarck Islanders did not have a sense of beauty. His grounds for this seemed to have been that the sense of beauty is, as Van Damme (1996: 27) puts it in his discussion of this case, "an achievement exclusively characteristic of some relatively elevated level of mental and cultural development." Similar assertions have been common even in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1971, Jopling notes that "until recently, it was believed that the peoples of tribal societies had no aesthetic ideas, that art was only a manifestation of religious and magical beliefs" (xi). Similarly, Denise Paulme, writing in 1973, notes that "the capacity to recognize and to appreciate what one must call beauty has long been denied to the pygmies of the Congo forest – to cite only one example: it was alleged that their ceaseless wanderings did not allow them this luxury" (11).

As these cases illustrate, some anthropologists' own conceptions of what beauty is, along with, in certain cases, prejudicial views of cultural evolution, have caused them to make false assertions: some seem to have falsely inferred from a culture's circumstances or from the fact that the kinds of objects that Westerners typically find beautiful have a function that they do not have a sense of beauty.

Thirdly, even where it has been investigated whether a given culture has a notion of beauty and where we can be confident that our knowledge of whether a given culture's conception of beauty is not subject to distortions of whatever kind, it would still not be the case that not finding a particular (or any) concept of beauty entailed that beauty did not track something given to us by nature. The claim that beauty might be something given to us by nature does not entail that it must

¹ Warren D'Azevedo (1973: 3) notes, for example, "a general avoidance of aesthetic and artistic phenomena by students of human behaviour in the mid-twentieth century" and Anderson (2004: 5-6) notes that "the cultural anthropologist who spends one, two or more years living in a society and who may eventually write hundreds of pages describing it often makes little or no mention of the society's art, much less the philosophical values that underlie the art."

² D'Azevedo (1973: 3), for example, suggests that "art and aesthetics, having been linked to the most speculative and inconclusive flights of earlier theory, seemed so interwoven with European romantic humanism that they were quickly relegated to low priority in research." Similarly, John Mueller (1938, as cited by D'Azevedo, 1973: 4) argues that anthropologists have "succumbed to ethnocentrism in accepting the romantic conception of artistic activity maintained by Western culture." In both cases, the suggestion is that notions such as beauty and the aesthetic will not be present in other cultures as they are the product of Western culture. Along similar lines, Forrest (1988: ix) has suggested that anthropologists have shied away from investigating other cultures' 'aesthetics' because the main concepts involved – such as aesthetic experience and beauty – seemed so indeterminate and controversial that anthropologists have felt that it is unlikely that one could find terms with "cross-cultural validity." Prominent anthropologists have noted three other reasons for the lack of observations: the first is that one's aesthetic responses are commonly thought to involve, as Forrest (1988: ix) puts it, "personal interior states that are notoriously difficult to fathom by ethnographic means." The second is that anthropologists feel unqualified in aesthetics to study the subject. For example, along these lines, Martijn (1967: 6; as cited by Van Damme, 1996: 13) has remarked that "[some art anthropologists are hesitant to investigate the aesthetic aspect of Eskimo art] due to a feeling of inadequacy on their part that stems from a lack of training in aesthetics." The third is that, as Wolfe (1967: 149-150) and Sieber (1973: 428-30) note, where anthropologists have sought to investigate a culture's aesthetics and art, the aforementioned considerations have meant that anthropologists have tended to focus on aspects of the art object such as style and techniques of production rather than the psychological and behavioural aspects of their creation and appreciation, which would involve, in part, conceptions of beauty.

manifest itself in all cultures irrespective of the conditions in which those cultures find themselves. Nor is it entailed that beauty must manifest itself in the same way in all cultures. It is consistent with being part of nature that it manifests itself under certain conditions and that, where it does, the way in which it does may vary. Indeed, where this is the case, it would need to be one of the facts accommodated by an account of what is given to us by nature.

Nonetheless, where this is the case, it might be thought that whether a concept tracks something in nature cannot simply be inferred from its frequency across cultures. In a sense this is true, further reasons for which will be discussed shortly. But it does not follow that the relative frequency of a conception across cultures does not *help* us to decide when taken together with other considerations, such as whether there are compelling alternative explanations.

In the face of these possibilities, the method is better thought to entail the following conditional:

(1*) If a conception tracks something in nature, then that conception will likely be observed across all cultures unless any negative observations are attributable to (i) some error on behalf of the culture being observed or the observer, or (ii) the nature of the natural entity in question.

With the logical importance of negative observations with certain causes clarified, it is quite possible that, (i) or (ii) aside, a certain conception or elements thereof will be discovered to be present across those cultures that have been studied. We might, as a result, naturally expect that the sifting method proposed entails, implicitly or otherwise, that these commonalities must track something in nature. That is to say, it might be thought that the method entails a second conditional:

(2) If a conception is observed across all cultures, then it must track something in nature.

As before, this is not entailed. Firstly, just as theories, and usages of the lexical items that express concepts, of the aesthetic and beauty spread through Europe in the way that has been briefly described in the last chapter, cultures may interact with other cultures and thereby come to appropriate their conceptual systems, passively or otherwise. Secondly, one might also think that cultures which are now distinct may have descended from a common ancestor from which they may have inherited their conception of beauty.³ Third, there may have been independent convergence towards this conception due to the operation of a common concept-forming mechanism along with common inputs to that mechanism, without the resulting concept tracking something in nature.

Again, one might think that these competing possibilities render the method proposed less than useful for helping to sift culture from nature. This isn't the case, as each of these possibilities

³ Both of these possibilities are structurally analogous to what is known as *Galton's problem* in anthropology. In 1889, Edward Tylor argued that marriage institutions changed their focus from the maternal to the paternal line as a result of societies becoming increasingly complex on the basis of a statistically significant correlation (or "adhesion" as he called them) between social complexity and parental focus in marriage institutions in 350 cultures. Tylor thought that he had discovered a sociological law by which, as the complexity of societies increases so too does the likelihood that their marriage institutions will have a paternal focus. In response, Galton pointed out that there may be no such nomological relationship and that the patterning observed could be explained by appealing to common descent or cultural transmission. That is to say, as many of the cultures may have interacted or descended from the same culture, we do not know how many independent cases we have in order to see whether there is indeed a statistically significant relationship. It may happen that many of these cultures have descended from the same culture or interacted, and have both similar levels of complexity and marriage institutions as a result. Although we are not occupied with examining the relationship between two variables, but rather simply whether different cultures hold the same notion of beauty, the problem is the same: where we observe a common conception of beauty, it is possible that this is due to common descent, cultural exchange, independent convergence or nature. On Galton's problem see, for example, Naroll (1961, 1965).

makes predictions that can be used to empirically distinguish between them. For example, if the frequency of a conception is due to cultural exchange or common recent descent, then one should expect that cultures that we are confident do not share a common recent ancestral culture and have remained isolated from one another should not share the same concept. Similarly, if each culture has arrived independently at the same concept through the operation of a common concept-forming mechanism, then one should in principle be able to specify the operations and inputs that would give rise to that concept and the evidence for such operations and inputs across cultures.

One tool that anthropologists use to empirically tease apart these possibilities is to compare cultural groups which are culturally independent of one another. Murdoch and White (1969), for example, categorised the 1,167 cultures in Murdoch's *Ethnographic Atlas* into 186 cultural clusters, and selected the best-described culture in each to create what has come to be known as the 'standard cross-cultural sample.' Of course, ultimately, these cultures will most likely have descended from one culture (so-called cultural monogenesis), and so cannot be entirely independent; but these cultures are certainly more likely to be culturally distant from one another than cultures within a given cluster.

This strategy of comparing distant cultures with regards to their conceptions of beauty, if they indeed have any, would provide us with better chances of finding what is provided by nature. As a result, whilst the aforementioned sparseness of data on conceptions of beauty may prevent us from being able to satisfactorily look at conceptions of beauty across the full range of cultures represented in the standard cross-cultural sample, it would nonetheless be helpful at least to look at conceptions of beauty from cultures across the globe.

In the face of these possibilities, the method is better thought to make probable the following conditional:

(2*) If a conception is observed across all cultures, then it most likely tracks something in nature unless this common conception is due to (i) cultural exchange or common descent, or (ii) the operation of a common concept-forming mechanism together with common input to that mechanism.

In all of these cases, as one can see from these qualifications, it is important to note that there is not a simple relation of entailment between the *mere* presence of a particular conception of beauty and a certain ontological claim about beauty (or what it adheres to). The rational strategy, rather, is abductive: given what we know about the occurrence of conceptions of beauty across cultures, what is the *most likely* ontology of beauty.

With these qualifications now made, we are now in a position to ask: Has a conception of beauty been observed in the cultures that have been examined? And is this conception of beauty the same?

§3.ii. Do different cultures have a *narrow* conception of beauty?

Those anthropologists who have investigated the 'aesthetic' systems of other cultures seem to have themselves held a narrow conception of the beautiful, as indicated by what many anthropologists have said they take the subject matter of aesthetics to be. Goldwater (1973: 6) pithily summarises most anthropologists' notions of beauty when he writes that aesthetics concerns "what in the discussion of our own art world would be called its 'abstract' aspects, i.e. those having to do with the pleasing distribution of formal elements."

Armed with this conception of beauty, anthropologists have proceeded to see whether this conception is present in hitherto unknown cultures' conceptual systems by looking to see whether they lexically mark this conception. They have discovered that a wide variety of cultures do indeed lexically mark a narrow conception of beauty.

More interestingly yet, the types of things that people apply the epithet beautiful to seem to be markedly consistent across cultures. Recall that, according to the narrow conception of beauty, beauty is reliably found in combinations of sounds that stand in a particular relation and in certain visual qualities, such as brightness and balance of visual forms. In the case of visual art forms at least, cross-culturally, beauty also seems to be found in brightness, clarity/distinctness, and balance or proportion among other things (as shown in table 1). Moreover, as can be seen from the table, it is also striking that the same kinds of qualities seem to be found to be beautiful across the different kinds of objects that tend to be found to be beautiful – that is, there seems to be at least some degree of domain generality.

Moreover, just as in the West, beauty seems to be typically found in human beings, nature, and a range of art forms including painting, sculpture, song and dance. This can be seen from the semantic field of the lexical items that mark beauty in many cultures. Ulli Beier and Peter Amis (1975: 22, as cited by Van Damme, 1996) note, for example, that in the language of the Murik people of Papua New Guinea, the word '*aretogo*' means beautiful, and may be applied to a sculpture, women and flowers. Similarly, Beier (1974: 36, as cited by Van Damme, 1996) observes that the Trobriand word for beauty – '*kakapisi lula*' – which literally means "it moves my insight," can be used to refer to a woman, flower or a sculpture. Nelson Graburn (1967: 28) notes that the Canadian inuit word for beauty – '*takuminaktuk*' – can be applied to sculpture and ornamented utensils, as well as natural phenomena such as the northern lights.⁴

In light of this, we can say that the weight of evidence considered thus far is that the narrow conception of beauty picks out something that is not constructed. As such, we might think that the narrow theory, at least, may refer to something natural.

⁴ Nonetheless, in the interest of not cherry picking data, it should be acknowledged that it has been argued that this is not the case in certain cultures. Up until the mid-twentieth century, it was long thought that Africans, at least, did not find nature beautiful. David Ames (1973: 142), for example, relates that he "can recall very little interest in the kinds of things Westerners consider beautiful in nature. Flowers are not highly valued as they are, for example, among the Indians of Southern Mexico. There was little evidence of interest in sunsets and beautiful landscapes." Similarly, Himmelheber (1935: 70, as cited by Van Damme, 1996) notes that for the Guro and Baule, "apart from the looks of fellow humans, beauty is seen only in what is man-made – the natives are completely indifferent to the scenery, flowers, and bird-song, as I was able to note again and again." In these cases, I would suggest that these negative assertions may be false. In the case of Ames (1973), for example, his assertion seems to be based on his memory, rather than something that he sought to establish and record at the time, which suggests that his evidence may not be sufficiently reliable to support the claim that the Hausa do not find beauty in nature. In the case of Himmelheber, we have even greater reason to be suspicious of his emphatic assertion that the Guro and Baule do not find beauty in non-human nature, as other evidence has since come to light that the Baule, at least, find beauty in nature. Specifically, Vogel (1986: 51) notes that the Baule find the weaverbird – which is brightly coloured – beautiful. More generally, the idea that Africans are unable to appreciate beauty has been challenged by Thompson (1973) and Murray (1961). Thompson (1973: 29-30), for example, notes that the Yoruba appreciate ephemeral beauty (leaves, flowers, rainbows) at its prime, and Murray (1961: 95) notes that the songs of birds inspired new dances among the Awka Igbo. It seems likely, in these cases, that some of the reasons for making false negative assertions discussed above may hold here: it may be that those anthropologists who have denied that Africans appreciate nature may have been led to make this assertion on the (false) belief that if something is thought to perform a function, then it cannot be beautiful.

People	Type of Object	Elicitor of beauty												Source & Notes		
		Purity domain					Vitality Domain				Order Domain					
		Brightness / Lightness	Shininess	Smoothness	Cleanliness / Purity	Clarity / Distinctness	Novelty	Vitality	Health	Youth	Moderation	Truth	Delicacy		Balance	
Africa																
West Africa																
Anang	Human faces & bodies															<p>Messenger (1973: 124) notes that Anang sculpture must be balanced and smooth. Messenger (ibid.: 119-23) notes that the <i>mfron ekpo</i> masker's masks, costumes and movements are considered beautiful: the mask is considered beautiful as it is light-coloured and has features such as a high forehead and thin lips (ideals of human beauty), the costume is considered beautiful because it is bright and light-coloured, and the movement of the maskers is considered beautiful as it is slow and graceful.</p>
	Anthropomorphic Art	✓		✓									✓	✓		
	non-Anthropomorphic Art	✓											✓			
	Nature															
Akan	Human faces & bodies					✓									<p>Warren & Andrews (1977: 36-37) note that '<i>kusuu</i>' means unclear appearance, and '<i>omun</i>' means an ugly person, or sculpture without well-defined features. The authors note that they also value smoothness (ibid.: 12). Among the Asante – one of the Akan peoples – distortion or exaggeration is disliked in the context of <i>akonnua</i> (sacred stools). Warren & Andrews (ibid.: 35) note that the Akan term '<i>haran</i>' means "to shine, be bright," but that there can be an excess of such a quality. Cole & Ross (1977: 104-5) and Antubam (1963: 164) note that <i>akuaba</i> dolls reflect female beauty in an exaggerated way, and thus, standards of female beauty can be inferred from these sculptures. Moreover, the function of these figures is to ensure the birth of good-looking children.</p>	
	Anthropomorphic Art	✓	✓	✓		✓										
	non-Anthropomorphic Art															
	Nature															
Dan (Ivory Coast; Liberia)	Human faces & bodies			✓									✓	✓	<p>Dan: <i>dean</i> masks, which reflect the ideals of feminine beauty (symmetry, high forehead, slit eyes, narrow nose, and full lips) (Fisher & Himmelheber, 1976: 31-34). Vandenhoute (as quoted by Gerbrands, 1971: 381) notes that Dan people value smoothness, especially in sculpture.</p>	
	Anthropomorphic Art			✓									✓	✓		
	non-Anthropomorphic Art															
	Nature															

	Anthropomorphic Art			✓		✓		✓	✓				✓	<p>(1982: 180) notes, in the context of the <i>mbari</i> houses that they must be "without blemishes" (purity) and "carefully finished" (delicacy). Cole (1989: 96) and Aniakor (1974: 10) note that in <i>Ikenga</i> sculpture horn embodies strength and power, due to its animal origins, and their up-thrusting sweep. The Igbo can be thought to find balance and smoothness in nature to be beautiful, as they find the rhythmic line patterns on animals such as the bush rat and plant tendrils and the swinging curves made by the movements of a snake along with gliding curvilinear forms more generally to be beautiful (Aniakor, 1974: 8, 11; 1982: 4-5; 1978: 46). Aniakor (1974: 5) notes that these forms suggest vitality to the Igbo. These elicitors are also found in body decoration and in wall decorations (Aniakor, 1974: 11, 13-4; 1982: 8).</p>	
	non-Anthropomorphic Art			✓	✓	✓		✓				✓	✓		
	Nature			✓				✓							✓
Yoruba	Human faces & bodies								✓					<p>Drewel (1980: 15) and Lawal (1974: 245) note that 'idogba' means balance and symmetry – as found in the balance between light and darkness and in incised designs. Thomson (1973: 56) notes that the Yoruba value youth. Thomson (1973: 33-4) notes that the Yoruba value clarity in their sculpture, and elsewhere (Thomson, 1974: 44, 259) that it is important in their dancing. Thomson notes that the Yoruba have at least four terms for delicacy (Thomson, 1973: 46-9). Thomson notes that the quality of <i>didón</i> (visibility) makes reference to both luminosity and smoothness (1973: 37-42). Yoruba also have been said to value moderation: excessive ornamentation is abhorred as it leads to confusion (Lawal, 1974: 239), dancing should be neither too slow or fast (Thompson, 1974: 26), sculpture should represent someone not too young or old (Thompson, 1973: 58). Thomson (1973: 29-30) also notes that the Yoruba appreciate "ephemeral beauty (leaves, flowers, rainbows) at its prime." Anderson (2004: 158) notes that having beautiful character is to maintain harmony in a number of ways: to "live in accord with the ancestors and storehouse of Yoruba tradition," "to maintain a co-operative spirit in dealing with others and to be submissive to legitimate authority," and to keep the emotions "in check."</p>	
	Anthropomorphic Art	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		
	non-Anthropomorphic Art					✓							✓		✓
Baule	Nature													<p>Vogel (1980: 13) notes that the Baule, like the Chokwe, equate newness with strength, youth and vitality. Baule also like some degree of "gentle asymmetry" in their coiffure, scarification patterns, textile designs, patterns from gold-covered objects, village lay-out and social and political structures (Vogel, 1980: 16; 1977: 13). Vogel (1979: 310-11) notes that clarity is appreciated in sculpture and in scarification and coiffure, as well as delicacy. Vogel (1980, 4-5, 12) also notes that moderation is important for the Baule: they do not like sculptural forms that are too fat or too thin, too tall or too short; coiffure that is too ornate or not ornate enough; a moderate number of scars. They like innovation, but not to excess. Vogel (1977: 121) notes that the <i>gba gba</i> dance represents ideal figures – portraying young beautiful people who move with the dignity of the elders, carrying a flywhisk, a symbol of respected elderhood. Thus, we can infer standards of human beauty from <i>gba gba</i> masks. Vogel (1986: 51) notes that at least the weaverbird is thought to be beautiful for its bright colours. Vogel (1980: 10) notes that Baule figures with signs of health and strength were thought to be beautiful, such as a straight long neck.</p>	
	Human faces & bodies	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		
	Anthropomorphic Art	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
	non-Anthropomorphic Art										✓				✓

Bini	Human faces & bodies															Ben-Amos (1976: 245-7) notes that the Bini find the following animals beautiful: the antelope (for its smooth gait and curving horns), the cow (for its rich, fat body), the mudfish (which represents prosperity, peace, wellbeing and fertility), the python (for its stature, coloration and power), the leopard (for its skin and graceful motion) and the pangolin (for its skin, though not the animal as a whole).
	Anthropomorphic Art															
	non-Anthropomorphic Art															
	Nature	✓	✓	✓				✓					✓	✓		
Bamana	Human faces & bodies															McNaughton (1979: 43) notes that ' <i>jayan</i> ' – "precision and clarity" – is important. McNaughton also reports that the Bamana value moderation insofar as they dislike excessive embellishment/ornamentation (1979: 43).
	Anthropomorphic Art					✓					✓					
	non-Anthropomorphic Art															
	Nature															
Mende	Human faces & bodies	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		Mende term for balance is ' <i>mbe ma</i> ' (Boone, 1986: 158, 160); Mende term ' <i>neku</i> ,' as a verb, means "to be smooth, shining," and as a noun it refers to the young growing leaf of a plant. The quality of ' <i>neku</i> ' suggests smoothness, freshness, cleanliness, vitality and youthful energy (Boone, 1986: 132-3). Boone reports that the Mende find beauty in a flower and field of blossoms, and in the farm "when rice is young and the whole plant is delicate and a brilliant lime green, each leaf still fresh and shining" (1986: 132). Boone notes that a women bathes, puts on oil or wears jewels should make herself ' <i>neku</i> ,' as does painting the house, or varnishing the floor. Boone reports that the <i>Sowo-wui</i> mask – which is considered to be very beautiful – must be sharply carved (1986: 160). Boone (1986: 160) also notes that the <i>Sowo-wui</i> must be ' <i>yèngèlè</i> ' – dainty or delicate. In judging their figural sculpture, the Baule prefer a smooth (' <i>treketreke</i> ') surface that they describe as clean (Vogel, 1980: 14, 24). Mende prefer moderation in female appearance: chin should not be sharp or spread out, eyes which bulge a lot are reported to be like frog's eyes, but eyes which do not bulge at all are said to be like having no eyes at all; lips which are thin are considered too simian but large blubbery lips are considered repulsive (Boone, 1986: 96-7). Boone (1986: 21, 23) notes that white clay – called ' <i>hojo</i> ' and which is used to paint Sande initiates' faces – is thought to be beautiful, as it is smooth, glossy and shiny, embodies immaculate cleanliness and delicacy (as the merest spot will spoil it) and is apt to stand for spirituality and helpfulness, fairness and justice, as it is pure and without blemishes. Whiteness also refers to the admired
	Anthropomorphic Art		✓	✓		✓		✓					✓	✓		
	non-Anthropomorphic Art		✓	✓				✓							✓	
	Nature	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓			✓	✓		

	non-Anthropomorphic Art																	
	Nature																	✓
Turu (Tanzania)	Human faces & bodies																	
	Anthropomorphic Art			✓														✓
	non-Anthropomorphic Art																	
	Nature																	
Central Africa																		
Fang	Human faces & bodies											✓						
	Anthropomorphic Art			✓								✓	✓					✓
	non-Anthropomorphic Art											✓						✓
	Nature																	
Chokwe	Human faces & bodies	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓					✓		✓
	Anthropomorphic Art	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓					✓		✓
	non-Anthropomorphic Art	✓				✓										✓		✓
	Nature																	
																	<p>Schneider (1966) notes that Turu value smoothness (158) and symmetry (156, 158). Schneider (1966: 156) also notes that the spots on giraffes and cows are regarded as beautiful. This may be because of the balance of the pattern, or the distinctness of its constituent parts.</p>	
																	<p>Fang term for balance is 'bipwe' (Fernandez, 1973: 219-220, n17), and this is the Fang's cardinal aesthetic principle, as it brings about vitality ('eniñ') which is, for them, beauty. Fang also value smoothness (Fernandez, 1971: 362). Fernandez (1971: 369) notes that the Fang appreciate a 'nyamoro' (literally 'real man' or mature man). Whereas young people tend to be too wilful and active and old people tend to be too tranquil and reflective, a 'nyamoro' strikes a balance between these extremes, and is believed to come about from a mixture of the traits of male seminal fluid and female blood (Fernandez, 1971: 369-70). It has also been noted that balance between female dancers and male drummers and the vitality that arises from this balance is beautiful.</p>	
																	<p>Crowley (1971: 323-325) notes: bright colours preferred to dull colours, new masks which are smooth and neat with carefully applied colours are preferred; in scarification men and boys expressed dislike of heavy raised welts and broad pyrography, instead preferring narrow lines picked out with colour or burning; neatest and smoothest masks with most carefully applied colours thought to be most beautiful; women similar to men in liking neat, balanced and precisely-spaced designs in basketwork. Crowley (1973: 246) notes that Chokwe artists and consumers prefer smaller, finely finished pieces over cruder designs. Crowley (1971: 324) notes that "the Chokwe join the many other cultures and epochs which have found their greatest inspiration in the face of woman." Gardens are kept neat, and flowers grown in them. "Chokwe standards of excellence are almost always exactly the same as those of the Western world – smooth finish, neatness, bisymmetry, efficient control of tools, and respect for the nature of the materials" (Crowley, 1973: 247). Also, Crowley (1971: 323) notes that new masks</p>	

																preferred because thought to have power that comes with youth, and that the Chokwe liken new masks to young men who are "strong and fine-looking" and an old mask to an old man who is "sick and broken." Bastin (1982: 181) notes that sculptural figures often represent the ideal of human beauty, and so it seems that the latter can be inferred from the former.
Lega	Human faces & bodies		✓	✓											✓	Biebuyck (1973: 178-179; 1986: 64). Biebuyck notes that the process of making art objects and their bodies shiny and glossy is called ' <i>kubongia</i> ' which means to "bring in harmony, to produce unison" (1973: 179). Moderation valued insofar as the Lega do not require excessive ornamentation (Biebuyck, 1973: 180). Biebuyck (1973) also notes that the Lega consider the white bubulcus birds (' <i>binyange</i> ') that follow the herds beautiful (179), as well as white mushrooms and the Bonga antelope (282). We can infer that the cattle egret and mushrooms are found to be beautiful for their pure white colours, and the antelope for its graceful movement.
	Anthropomorphic Art		✓	✓							✓			✓		
	non-Anthropomorphic Art		✓	✓							✓			✓		
	Nature	✓			✓									✓		
Southern Africa																
!Kung (Kalahari Desert)	Human faces & bodies	✓								✓	✓					Marshall-Thomas (1959: 232) notes that the !Kung distinguish between 'male rain,' which is violent and destructive, and 'female rain' which "beautifies the trees and grasses." We can infer from this that, like the Mende, the !Kung most likely find the brightness and vitality of growing plants and trees beautiful. Marshall also notes the centrality of bodily beauty to the San (another name for the !Kung), as indicated by their use of the lexical marker for beauty: "the San rarely apply the concept of beauty to things other than people. When they do, it is often by means of allusions to desirable qualities found in men and women" (232). San criteria of beauty are as follows. In women, light skin, good teeth, youth, and not being too thin or tall is found to be beautiful. In men, good teeth and a wide smile, straight and slender legs, a fluid swift walk and being a good hunter are all beautiful (Anderson, 2004: 19).
	Anthropomorphic Art															
	non-Anthropomorphic Art															
	Nature	✓						✓								
Oceania																
Aboriginals	Human faces & bodies															Anderson (2004: 69) notes that whilst the appearance of Aboriginal art varies regionally and between media, it is always graceful and economical, and "its makers used a 'subjective vision,' representing things not as they briefly appear to the eye but as the mind knows them to be."
	Anthropomorphic Art															
	non-Anthropomorphic Art											✓	✓			
	Nature															

Asia

Japan	Human faces & bodies				✓										Anderson (2004) reports that the Shintoists find beauty in cleanliness and purity.
	Anthropomorphic Art				✓										
	non-Anthropomorphic Art				✓										
	Nature				✓										

Table 1. Properties that are reliably found to be beautiful across cultures, adapted with additions, from Van Damme (1987: 48).

§3.iii. Do different cultures have a *broad* conception of beauty?

Since the broad conception already contains the narrow conception, we already have a candidate for something natural within the aesthetic – albeit one which we do not currently have an account of – but do all cultures have a broad conception of beauty?

In short, they do. Let us turn first to question of whether instances of moral goodness and character are thought to be beautiful across cultures. As can be seen by table 2, one can see that the majority of those for which data is available do.

People	Lexical item	Concept		Source & Notes
		Formal Beauty	Moral Beauty	
Africa				
West Africa				
Bamana	Nyyman	✓	✓	McNaughton (1979: 178).
	Tiègnâ	✓	X	Leiris (1967: 335; citing Memel-Fotê, 1967: 58).
	Kagni	✓	X	Leiris (1967: 50; citing Memel-Fotê).
	Konogni	X	✓	Leiris (1967: 58; citing Memel-Fotê).
Bini (Nigeria)	Mose	✓	✓	Ben-Amos (1976: 250; 252, n.23).
Mende	Nyande	✓	✓	Boone, (1986: 138). Notes: the Mende call a beautiful girl who does not have a good character <i>nyande gbama</i> - 'empty beauty' (Innes, 1969: 17). Mende assume that beauty is a reliable signifier of moral goodness and functionality (Memel-Fotê, 1968: 57).
Lobi (Burkina Faso)	Word not listed	✓	✓	Meyer (as quoted in Vogel, 1986: xvii).
Senufo	Nyo	✓	✓	Glaze (1978: 63; 1981: 239-240, n18); Richter (1980: 141).
	Kunyo	✓	✓	
Dan (Ivory Coast; Liberia)	Li	✓ (beautiful)	X	Fischer & Himmelheber (1976: 34).
	Se	✓ (pretty)	X	
Guro	Ezima	✓	✓	Fischer & Homberger (1985: 35).

Baule	Kpa	✓	✓	Vogel (1980: 2-12).
	Klanman	✓	✓	
	Fɛ	✓	✓	
Asante	Fe	✓	✓	Appiah (1984: 18).
Yoruba	Ewà	✓ Ewà ode (surface quality of things; outward appearance)	✓ Ewà inu (intrinsic worth of things; in the case of man – good character)	Lawal (1974: 239). Notes: like the Mende, inner beauty can compensate for lack of outer beauty; but outer beauty without inner beauty is considered repulsive (241).
Igbo	Mmá	✓ Mmá aru (“beauty of the body”)	✓ Mmá obi (“beauty of the heart (character)”)	Aniakor (1982: 5).
	Íma	✓	✓	Shelton (1971:131-2).
	Ímammá	✓	✓	
	Ómá	✓	✓	
	Chárá	✓	X	
Anang	Mfɔn	✓	✓	Messenger (1973: 121). Notes: Messenger refers to <i>Mfɔn</i> as a psychological state, which signifies beauty and moral goodness (124).
(Owerri-) Igbo	Nma	✓	✓	Cole (1969: 36; 1982: 175).
Susu (Guinea)	Tô fan	✓ (“good to see”)	X	Leiris (1967: 335).
Marghi (Nigeria)	Menagu anu li	✓ (“good to the eye”)	X	Vaughan (1973: 185).
Gola (Liberia)	Na tévi	✓ (“good to look at”)	X	D’Azevedo (1973: 307).
	E síé	✓ (“for our word beautiful, but it applies to anything which is good, fine, or attractive... The emphasis, however, is upon the remarkable or wondrous”)	X	
Bete (Ivory Coast)	Nane (o)	✓	X	Sylla (1983: 48-9).
	Nêni (ku)	✓	X	
	Ninigba (omrirêni)	X	✓	

Guro (Ivory coast)	Soe	✓ (beautiful)	X	Fischer & Homberger (1985: 35, as cited by Van Damme, 1996).
	Nomoni	✓ (pretty, beautiful)	X	
Igala (Nigeria)	Únyó	✓	X	Shelton (1971: 132). Notes: though etymologically related.
	Ényo	X	✓	
Idoma (Nigeria)	Ólòhìomá	✓ (“that which is good to seeing”)	X	Shelton (1971: 133).
Central Africa				
Fang	Mbung	✓	✓	Fernandez (1973: 219, n9).
	Mba/Mbamba	✓	✓	
	Mve	✓	✓	
Chokwe	Chibema	✓	✓	Crowley (1971: 323; 1973: 228). Notes: Crowley notes that “an ugly woman who is a faithful wife and good mother is ‘chibema,’ but so is a pretty but faithless wife” and that “this lack of linguistic distinction between the aesthetic and the moral became a favourite subject in the chota’s men’s house” (228).
Kuba	Bushek	✓	✓	Vansina (1968: 26).
Lalua (Zaire; Bantu language)	Word not listed	✓	✓	Maesen (as quoted by Vogel, 1986: 170).
Lega	Busoga	✓	✓	Biebuyck (1973: 129-131) Notes: “their ethics and aesthetics are completely blended” (1973: 178).
East Africa				
Turu	-ja	✓	✓	Schneider (1966: 156).
	Majigha	✓ (“beauty, a lovely thing”)	✓ (“a voluntary action which makes people happy”)	Schneider (1966: 158).

Pakot (Kenya)	Pachigh	✓ (solely used for embellishments that are pleasing to the eye; decoration)	X	Schneider (1971) Notes: 'Karam' – means good in a variety of contexts.
Rwanda	Mwiza	✓ ("Mwiza quant au corps")	✓ ("Mwiza quant au coeur")	Smith (1985: 15-16).
Madagascar (malagasy language)	Tsara	✓	✓	Rabemanajara (1975: 24). Notes: all terms have both formal and moral dimension, which can be specified by adding a modifier.
	Soa	✓	✓	
	Manja	✓	✓	
	Maeva	✓	✓	
Oceania				
Indonesia				
Various	Word not listed	✓	✓	Taylor (1991: 30). Notes: "terms used in Indonesian languages to describe beauty usually include a moral component."
Papua New Guinea				
Melpa	Kae	✓	✓	Beier (1976: 16). Notes: 'kae' may be translated as "good, beautiful, useful, clean, light" whereas 'kit' means "bad, ugly, useless, dirty, dark."
Murik	Aretogo	✓	-	Beier & Aris (1975: 22).
Iatmul	Yigen	✓	-	Bateson (1958: 141). Notes: Bateson translates 'yigen' as "beautiful, gentle, quiet."
North America				
Huichol	Xi'pane	✓	✓	Shelton (1992: 236). Notes: Shelton notes that the word for beauty has moral connotations.

Navajo	Hózhó	✓	✓	Witherspoon (1977) notes: Witherspoon notes that beauty is conceived of as a state of the world, which needs maintaining and renewing through the making of art, performance of songs, and actions.
Canadian Inuit	Pitsiark	✓	X	Swinton (1978: 81); Graburn, (1967). Notes that the first three are "exclamations or expressions of visual pleasure" whereas the last means "good to see and hence beautiful" (Swinton, 1978: 81).
	Anana	✓	X	
	Maitsaik	✓	X	
	Takuminaktuk	✓	X	
Asia				
Newal (Nepal)	Baalaa	✓ ("aesthetic quality of anything accessible to the senses")	X	Riley Smith (1983: 56).

Table 2. Semantic fields of lexical items marking beauty, adapted, with additions, from Van Damme (1987: 12).

That the majority of cultures around the world have been found to lexically mark both moral and formal beauty in the same way¹ is all the more remarkable when one recalls, as I have already noted, that the majority – if not all – of the anthropologists concerned entered the field with a narrow conception of beauty and discovered a broad concept of beauty in other cultures.

One may be tempted to simply dismiss this finding, as revealing little about the ontology of beauty. One might argue, for instance, that the notions of formal beauty – beauty in appearances – can be logically dissociated from moral beauty – that is, beauty for certain actions or virtues. One might further note that cultures themselves can dissociate them insofar as they know that the cause of the beauty is different in the two cases, even if this distinction is not neatly packaged lexically. Indeed, in the minority of cultures which do seem to mark the difference between moral and formal beauty, the lexical item for formal beauty is often a circumlocution which specifies a certain cause or modality of presentation. For example, among the Marghi of Nigeria, the lexical expression for beauty is ‘*Menau anu li*,’ which means “good to the eye” (Vaughan, 1973: 185).

But I would suggest that this kind of argument against the significance of linguistic data should not hold a strong sway over us. The fact remains, after all, that many cultures do not lexically distinguish based on the nature of the cause; and that they do not seem to classify what we might call beauty in the sense of appearances and beauty in the sense of moral character together. And facts call for explanations.

¹ Indeed, such is the strength of the evidence that some have proposed that the link between aesthetics and ethics is universal at least in African cultures (Vogel, 1986: xiii).

One might be tempted to try to explain this away by arguing that the word ‘beauty,’ for many cultures, is simply used as a general term of approbation. Or alternatively, that these anthropologists have recorded a mere metaphorical usage of the term. These explanations, however, don’t fare well in the face of the data. There are lots of things in these cultures which are valued and give pleasure but which are not referred to lexically as beautiful. Many cultures value food, for instance, but don’t seem to refer to it as beautiful.

To support the importance of this lexical fact, we can note that even in those cultures in which there is a lexical distinction between moral goodness and formal beauty, there is nevertheless evidence that there is a close conceptual link between moral goodness and physical beauty, as noted by Van Damme (1987: 14).

For example, the Bete lexically mark the distinction between moral goodness and formal beauty, but the conceptual link between the two is evident in their institution of *bagnon*, in which each Bete village nominates a *bagnon* to represent the community to the outside world. To be chosen as an ambassador for his village, a man must be both physically and morally beautiful. As Bony (1967: 2) notes, ideally,

...outer beauty underpins inner beauty, of which it is only its outward sign and expression. The beautiful man owes himself to be a beautiful soul also. Like other African cultures, the Bete do not separate the body and the spirit, the physical and the moral. Man is understood in his whole synthetic unity.²

In a similar fashion, in the Okorosia masquerade of the Owerri-Igbo, the masks of the *okorosia nma* masquerade are considered beautiful and are used to signify moral goodness, whereas the masks of the *okorosia ojo* masquerade are regarded as ugly and refer to manifestations of evil (Cole, 1969: 36-38).

This conceptual connection also seems to manifest itself in beliefs concerning how man-made beauty comes to be created in a variety of cultures. In Chinese culture, for example, it is thought that good artists need to be good people, which is here understood to mean that the artist is “at peace with nature” and that the artist’s “breasts must brood no ill passions” (Lin, 1935: 288).³

Defenders of the narrow concept of beauty might try to deflate the importance of this conceptual connection by arguing that the inferences that people make about beauty tell us more about the operation of the conceptual machinery than about what beauty is itself.

The narrow beauty theorist might argue in favour of a deflationary explanation by demonstrating that the conceptual association between moral and formal beauty evinced by the Bete

² A similar set of beliefs is found among the Yoruba and the Mende. As Lawal (1974: 240-1) notes “The person who is outwardly beautiful but inwardly ugly or lacks character is called ‘*awobowa*’ (literally skin covers character)... The physical beauty of such a person may be at first admired, but as soon as his inner ugliness surfaces he becomes repulsive. His beauty is immediately beclouded by the flames of his character: for the Yoruba see character as manifesting itself like a flame.” As Boone (1986: 141) remarks regarding the Mende, “Mende assume that a beautiful exterior enshrines the most beautiful something. In almost every discussion of beauty, someone would say how awful it is if a pretty girl is lazy or does not have fine character. Mende call this ‘*nyande gbama*,’ empty beauty, ‘*gbama*’ meaning ‘for nothing, in vain’ (Innes, 1969: 17). ‘*Nyande gbama*’ refers to functional and moral defects. It is ‘*gbama*’ for a good-looking girl to be rude, insolent and disrespectful. It is ‘*gbama*’ for her to be non-functional in the community: “She can’t work, can’t cook, can’t dance, can’t sing – of what use is she?” It is ‘*gbama*’ to be poor, of low status, living in coarse company although because of your looks you would be welcomed among those of refinement and prestige. It is beauty wasted. Beauty without a dimension of goodness is hollow, without substance, a deception.”

³ Harold K Osborne notes something similar when he says that the good Chinese artist “aims to bring his personality into keeping with the cosmic principle so that the Tao would be expressed through him” (Osborne, 1968: 107), where Tao seems to be understood as both a metaphysical and moral concept. Tao is the fundamental essence of the universe, and to bring oneself in line with this essence is to act in harmony with it, and thus morally.

and the Yoruba among other cultures may have arisen through the operation of general learning mechanisms. One might think, for example, that there might actually be some link between formal beauty and moral goodness such that formally beautiful people may be more likely to be morally good, and that, as a result of a simple general learning mechanism which creates a conceptual association between inputs that commonly occur in conjunction, they have come to be associated. Given that we have no reason to think that there would be such a connection, this explanation for the occurrence of this belief is unconvincing.

Another possible deflationary explanation that narrow theorists might avail themselves of involves general facts about the operation of attention. It seems plausible, for example, that the belief regarding the ontogeny of formal beauty might be accommodated by two general psychological dispositions: a general learning mechanism in addition to a valence sensitive attentional mechanism.

According to this explanation, seeing a formally beautiful person gives rise to a positively valenced affective response (i.e. it is pleasing), which modulates attention to any other positively valenced qualities that may be present such as morally good actions. In this way, these two properties may *seem* to reliably co-occur and, through the operation of a general learning mechanism, may come to be associated. In this way, even though formally beautiful people may not be any more likely to be morally beautiful than formally ugly people, we may come to think that they will be so.

But this explanation seems unsatisfactory in the face of the more general pattern of findings. For one thing, this deflationary explanation doesn't seem to explain why it is the case that a number of cultures do not lexically distinguish between moral and formal beauty. This would seem to require another, as yet unspecified, deflationary explanation. Moreover, it does not seem to explain why it is the case, as it is with the Yoruba and the Mende, that formally beautiful people who are discovered to be immoral are reacted to with disgust rather than mere disappointment, surprise, or indeed are unperturbed by this discovery and continue to value the person's beauty. If discovering that a person you considered beautiful was immoral were a mere violation of the expectation set up by an association, then one would simply predict disappointment or surprise. (We return to discuss the question of moral beauty in the context of the contemporary philosophical literature on moral beauty in chapter 8).

As I have noted already, the broadest conception of beauty includes not only instances of formal and moral beauty, but also instances of dependent and expressive beauty. With regard to dependent beauty, the data is a little scant. Certainly, some of the things reported to be found to be beautiful seem to be beautiful relative to some category or purpose. For example, Boone (1986: 141) notes that among the Mende it is widely held that a girl who is formally beautiful but functionally useless – because she is lazy, immoral or can't cook – has 'empty' beauty. Anderson (2004: 19) also suggests that, among the San, the beauty of some things, such as humans, may be constrained by the category to which they belong. In women, for example, light skin, good teeth, youth, and not being too thin or tall tend to be found to be beautiful; whereas, in men, good teeth and a wide smile, straight and slender legs, a fluid swift walk and being a good hunter are all beautiful.

Turning to expressive beauty, one might think that it is unlikely that non-Western cultures hold a conception of expressive beauty on the grounds that it has been suggested that this notion is a culturally idiosyncratic invention of the nineteenth century. Stolnitz (1961), for example, suggests that the notion of expressiveness emerged to accommodate the value of artworks which, he claims, came to aim at exposing the soul of the artist in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, the view that expressive beauty is a culturally idiosyncratic notion seems to be widely shared by anthropologists as well, and is (as we have seen, see footnote 2 of this chapter) commonly postulated as a reason for the dearth of data on the aesthetics of non-Western cultures.

In light of this, we should not be surprised to find no evidence of a conception of expressive beauty across cultures. But we should be wary of concluding that this belief is true on the basis of an absence. If it were the case that a conception of expressive beauty is absent in non-Western cultures, this may be because anthropologists have not searched for evidence of such a conception because they believe it to be culturally superficial.

Despite the beliefs of anthropologists, there is nonetheless some evidence that other cultures express themselves in their art, find such expression to be beautiful, and conceive of expression as one means of creating beauty. The Aztec philosophers, for example, claimed that the true artist needs to “maintain dialogue with his heart” and “draws out all from his heart” (Leon-Portilla, 1963: 167). Witherspoon (1977: 178) notes that “a Navajo experiences beauty most poignantly in creating and expressing it, not in observing or preserving it... Beauty is not to be preserved but to be continually renewed in oneself and expressed in one’s daily life and activities.” It has been noted that the San also seem to have expressive art which they find beautiful. Thomas (1959: 119) notes that the San create “mood songs” whose chief function is the expression of intimate feelings and the personal experiences of the composer-singer. Whilst we do not know whether San find these songs beautiful, this seems a likely possibility given that they seem to find expression in dance beautiful: Katz (1982: 127-8) notes that the San’s ritual healing dance “is a beautiful, sensitive art form, which becomes more exciting when the individual dancers imbue it with their own expressive manners.”⁴

In sum then, there seems to reliably be a broad conception of beauty across cultures. Beauty is, across cultures, something that is reliably found in certain kinds of objects – such as human appearances, nature, and artworks of a variety of kinds – and in certain kinds of properties (at least in the visual modality) – such as brightness, clarity, balance, and vitality – and also in the manifestation of ideals, moral or otherwise, and personal or emotional expression. To the extent that this is the case, it suggests that beauty is not a superficial construction, but rather may pick out something given to us by nature.

§4. Expanding the set of explananda: beliefs concerning beauty.

Up until this point, I have proceeded as though beauty were a phenomenon that can be exhaustively elucidated by accounting for how these different objects and qualities can all be beautiful.

But this may not be the only thing that needs to be done by a successful account of beauty. Beauty is also something that is experienced, and there may well be common ways in which the experience of beauty has been characterised across cultures. Moreover, certain beliefs may tend to accompany beautiful things or beauty itself cross-culturally.

One might worry about following this path, inasmuch as it might be thought that there is a danger that we might mistake the explanans for the set of explananda – that is to say, the way that beauty has been characterised for what it actually is. Nevertheless, notwithstanding this warning, where, for example, a characteristic belief about beauty or beautiful things is common across cultures, one might think that this requires explanation – whether that be by means of one’s account of what beauty is, or by some other (most likely deflationary) means.

⁴ It is also worth noting that whilst it is true that romantic or expressive beauty came to *prominence* in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Stolnitz is surely wrong to claim that it is an invention of the romantics. A similar conception of romantic or expressive beauty was put forward almost two millennia earlier by Plotinus ([c. 270AD] 1976).

In the Western philosophical tradition, a cluster of beliefs have been posited concerning (a) the relationship between the divine and beautiful (b) the relation of truth to beauty, and (c) the logical relationship between beauty and its opposite, ugliness. This cluster of beliefs also seems to be present across cultures. Let us first consider the relationship between the divine, truth and beauty.

§4.i. Beauty, the divine and truth.

Concerning (a), it has commonly been thought that beauty is caused by divine beings, and that divine beings are themselves beautiful. For example, as noted by Tatarkiewicz (1980: 130) Clement of Alexandria, for example, thought that “God is the cause of everything beautiful,” and Ulrich of Strasbourg that “God is not only perfectly beautiful and the highest degree of beauty, he is the efficient, exemplary and final cause of all created beauty.”

Similarly, in Socrates dialogues with the rhapsode Ion, Socrates claims that it is “not a skill but a divine force which moves you” (Plato, [c. 380 BC] 2010: 533d). The same, Socrates claims, is true of lyric poets, when they compose their poems, “whenever they embark on harmony and rhythm” (ibid.: 534a). When inspired, they are “not in their right minds” as is the case in religious rituals such as the Corybantic rites or Dionistic rituals. Indeed, Socrates goes so far as to claim that the poets themselves do not compose the poems themselves. Socrates says, “these fine poems are not human, nor produced by human beings, but are divine and produced by gods, and the poets are nothing but interpreters of the gods, each one possessed by the appropriate deity” (ibid.: 534e).

Socrates likens this “divine force” of inspiration to a magnetic stone, which “not only attracts iron rings themselves but also passes its force on to the rings so that they in their turn can do the same as the stone and attract other rings” (ibid.: 533d-e). And elsewhere, he claims that “sometimes there is a very long chain of rings and bits of iron, all attached to each other; the force which links them all together comes from that stone. In just this way the Muse herself makes people inspired, and they in turn inspire others, forming a chain of inspiration” (ibid.: 553e).

Socrates describes the god or Muse, who is the original author of the work of art, as the magnet, the poet as the iron ring closest to the magnet, the rhapsode as the next closest iron ring, and the audience as the furthest (ibid.: 535e-536a). The idea here is that the work of art, or more correctly the beauty of it, brings one closer to the divine, in attracting them to it. It allows them to act in synchrony with others and the gods: “by means of all of these rings the god pulls the souls of men whichever way he wants” (ibid.: 536a).

Concerning (b), it has commonly been thought that the perception of beauty gives us access to profound truths which lie beyond the world of appearances. As Tatarkiewicz (1980: 129) notes, according to Theon of Smyrnam, for example, the Pythagoreans believed that they had found in music the principle underlying the entire structure of the world. Many of the supporters of the Pythagorean theory of beauty thought that they had discovered “a deep law of nature, a principle of existence.” Similarly, Plato and the neo-Platonists such as Plotinus, Albert the Great and Pseudo-Dionysius believed that beauty, where it occurs, is a manifestation of ideas of the archetype – that is some higher truth. More contemporaneously, we can note Keats’ maxim in his *Ode to a Grecian Urn* that “beauty is truth, truth beauty” ([1820], 1912: 730).

This set of beliefs, whilst dissociable, may often be found in combination. In the romantic conception of beauty, for example, it is reported that in experiences of beauty we are able to get beyond the surface of things to some spiritual truth; or as Tatarkiewicz (1980: 197) puts it, to “penetrate the soul of the world.”

These beliefs are also evident individually, and in combination, across cultures that are geographically disperse.

Let us begin with the belief that beauty may allow us to commune with the spiritual realm. On the reasonable premise that much successful art in other cultures is beautiful, we find this belief in the perceived function of many artworks in other cultures. Indeed, in summarising his overview of aesthetic systems in other cultures, Van Damme (2008: 50) remarks that the arts, in part, “allow people to contact and be contacted by what they perceive to be realms beyond earthly human existence.”

One common belief is that beautiful artworks function as a locus of mediation between the spiritual and material world; beautiful artworks are a privileged means of communicating with, as well as influencing, the spiritual world. This takes on a different form in different cases, but in all of the cases the beauty of the objects seems to play a crucial role in mediating this function.

In some cases, beautiful artworks act as vessels for spirits. In the majority of the cultures in question, the beauty of the artworks is required to successfully bring the spirit into the world that humans inhabit.

In the Sande society of the Mende people, costumed dancers – called ‘*Sowo*’ – who perform in ceremonies act as conduits for the spiritual. Examples of one type of mask used by the dancers – known as the ornamented mask – embodies different spirits, and “it is extremely important that a new mask be attractive to the spirit, otherwise it will not choose to enter, and the helmet is useless” (Hommel, 1974: n.p., as cited by Boone, 1986: 163).

In the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea, it has been reported that a number of tribes believe that the spirits that are required for the success of certain rituals actually reside in artworks such as carvings, paintings and masks. Donald Tuzin (1980: 190), for example, reports that among the Arapesh, the paintings “do not merely represent *Nggwal* [spirits], they are *Nggwal*, they partake directly in the same essence.” Similarly, Newton (1971: 34, 52) reports that in the creation myths of the Upper Sepik region, the first flutes and slit goings magically played themselves because they were invested with spirits.

For the Yoruba, Cordwell (1952: 34-6) notes that beautiful images contribute to the maintenance of good relationships with the “supernatural realm” by acting as a vessel for the power of a given *orisha* (god). Similarly, the masks and dress worn in Yoruba masquerades should be as beautiful as possible to meet “the need for aesthetically pleasing the *orisha* by providing the most beautiful and symbolic costume possible...” (Cordwell, 1952: 36). Finally, in Yoruba divination, the beauty of the bowls and trays used serves to aesthetically please the gods (Cordwell, 1952: 49-50).

Among the Baule, beautiful figures are sculpted to attract nature spirits (‘*asie usu*’) that have been diagnosed by a diviner to be causing problems, and serve as a locus for contacting and appeasing the spirit (Vogel 1980: 2-3). As Vogel (1980: 4) remarks “a figure must be as beautiful as possible in order to attract and keep the spirit it was carved for: in some sense, the more beautiful the figure, the better it can perform its function of localizing and placating the spirit.”

Memel-Fotê (1967: 59) notes that both the Dogon of Mali and Agni of Ivory Coast use sculptural beauty to lure the spirits of the deceased, and suggests that this may be a more general function of beauty.

In the Ritual Healing Dance of the Northern San people known as the !Kung, the beautiful music is thought to be a vessel of the spirit (or ‘*num*’). Participation in the dance is believed to make the participant’s own spirit boil, sending them into a state called ‘*kia*’ in which they are able to see the, normally invisible, arrows which are thought to be cast by spirits and cause bad luck, death and disease. Healers in this state are thought to intercede with the spirits to protect people from these

arrows (Katz, 1982, and Shostak, 1981: 291-303, as cited by Anderson, 2004: 18). In addition, dances and rites performed as part of the rite of passage of young men and women are thought to induce spirits to look favourably on the participants of the ritual.

Paulme (1973: 23-4) reports that a dance performed by decorated and costumed Kissi (of upper Guinea) boys, brings about the visitation and placation of supernatural beings. In doing so, the dance is believed to bring “some order into the world of the living, to regenerate in an enduring manner the vital forces which animate it and inspire it anew.”

In other cases, as we have touched upon already, beautiful artworks provide a means of influencing the behaviour of the spirits, without necessarily bringing them into the human world.

Generalising on Liberian art in general, it has been observed that “the placation of and subsequent good will of the spirit is dependent upon its acceptance of the mask and costume” (Siegmann & Schmidt, 1977: 2).

Among the Dan of the Ivory Coast, it is believed that to please the ancestors and thus induce their favour, the face masks that serve as mediators between the living and the dead have to be as beautiful as possible: “Beauty thus performs a religious function and even becomes a vital necessity in a community that to a large extent depends on the goodwill of the ancestors” (Vandenhouste, as quoted by Gerbrands, 1971: 380-1).

The Navajo believe that by creating beauty through activities such as painting and singing, we can help maintain and restore the primal beauty of the world, and, in doing so, influence the world in a way which is in accordance with the individual or group’s desires, be they to cure the sick, bring rain during dry conditions or bring protection to group members from the ghosts of non-Navajos slain by Navajos in war (Witherspoon 1977; McAllester, 1954).

The Yoruba carve beautiful figures for their spirit spouses – ‘*blolo bian*’ and ‘*blolo bla*’ (‘*blolo*’ meaning ‘the other world,’ and ‘*bian*’ and ‘*bla*’ meaning man and women respectively) – in order to restore a good relationship with them in the event that the spirit spouses have become offended or jealous. To be effective, these figures must be as beautiful as possible (Vogel, 1980: 3-4). The Bini, which neighbour the Yoruba, believe that providing beautiful objects for the spirits of the dead will insure the goodwill of the deceased in looking after the welfare of the living (Cordwell, 1952: 60-70).

Cole (1975: 61) notes that during the Odwira festival of the Akuapem of Ghana – which includes song, dance and sculpture, the Akuapem “transform their community into an intensified idealized world of communion among gods and men. Peace and order prevail, and the atmosphere is charged with promise.”

For the Inuit, beauty in the form of music and visual art such as tattoos provides a means of influencing the spirits to cure illness, bring prosperity and cause harm to enemies. Among the Inuit of Cumberland Sound, for example, singing by Shamans is thought to marshal legions of good spirits to protect the group from evil spirits, and among both the Netsilik and Copper Eskimos, women’s tattoos are thought to ensure easier childbirth (Birket-Smith, 1933: 69; Carpenter, 1973: 160).

One of the Aboriginals’ axiomatic beliefs about the arts – of which much is likely to be thought to be beautiful – is that they allow communication and, sometimes, contact between the spirits of the Dreamtime and humans. In the case of communication, the performance of song and dance and creation of decorated objects are thought to be able to communicate the individual or group’s desires and needs to the Dreamtime spirits and secure their co-operation to achieve these (Anderson, 2004: 73). In the case of contact, it has also been reported that in some cases – such as for the Walbiri Aboriginals – the Dreamtime spirits are believed to be embodied by the decorative dancers that impersonated them (Munn, 1973: 198).

The belief that beauty originates with the divine is also common across a wide variety of geographically distant cultures.

The Navajo, for instance, believe that God created the world in beauty, and that this beauty needs to be expressed and renewed through ritual and, importantly for my purposes here, certain kinds of artistic activity – for instance, the creation of painting, dress and song (Witherspoon, 1977: 151). The Yoruba believe that their art – which is largely considered to be beautiful by the Yoruba – comes from a divine source (Anderson, 2004: 162). The Kwoma of the Sepik region believe that all arts were brought into existence by a supernatural being (Bowden, 1999).

The Aztec philosopher Ayocuin Cuitzpaltzin argues that beauty, which is referred to as ‘flower and song,’ is a gift from the gods (as discussed by Leon-Portilla, 1966: 51-2). Similarly, this appeal to divinity is echoed not only in the original creation of beauty, but also as the source of individual works of beauty. The Aztecs believed that the artist must, through meditation, achieve spiritual enlightenment, in order to create beauty.⁵

The Mende of the Sande society believe that the most beautiful *sowo-wui* masks used during the Sande ceremonies, are actually sculpted by water deities (Boone, 1986: 161), and retrieved by divers from the heaven that they believe exists at the bottom of rivers during public ceremonies (Boone, 1986: 230).

Similarly, the Maori believe that carving was invented by the gods, and that the creation of beautiful carvings requires the good will of the spirits, which can be obtained by observing certain rules – called ‘*tapus*’ (Chipp, 1971: 154). As Chipp (1971: 165) has also noted, many of the North American Indians’ artworks are derived from contact with the spirit world through dreams and visionary experiences.

The belief that supernatural beings and gods are themselves beautiful also seems to be present across a wide variety of distant cultures.

Among the Yoruba, for instance, the highest god, *Olodumare* (also called ‘*Olorun*’) is the source of all life and is thought to be the example of beauty par excellence (Anderson, 2004: 145). In the Navajo creation myth, the ‘First Boy’ and ‘First Girl’ gave rise to a benevolent woman called ‘Changing Woman’ who is the source of all human life and controls nature’s fertility. This First Boy and First Girl are said to be extremely beautiful (Witherspoon, 1977: 17). Among the Mende, perfect beauty is itself thought to be “divine, unearthly, from paradise, and thus can only be imagined” and that the water spirit *Tingoi* “is all that the mind can imagine as most beautiful; she has an ethereal, mystical aura of absolute beauty” (Boone, 1986: 137, 131). The Baule believe that their spirit spouses – who we have already encountered above – are extremely beautiful (Vogel, 1980: 3-4).

The broad link between beauty and the divine is also evident in the semantic fields of some of the lexical markers of beauty in other cultures. The aboriginals of Northeast Arnhem Land’s word ‘*mareiin*’ means both “sacred” and “extraordinarily beautiful” (Berndt, 1976: 60). Similarly, in her discussion of Tonga aesthetics, Kaeppler (1971: 177) notes that, in addition to words for nice (‘*sai*’), good or satisfactory (‘*lelei*’), lovely or beautiful (‘*faka’ofa’ofa*’), there is also an expression for extreme beauty that has connotations of the supernatural (‘*talavou*’ – “almost supernaturally beautiful (usually applied to humans)”).

The link between truth and beauty is also seen in many cultures around the world. In Bali, for instance, Lansing (1981: 36-7) has observed that ornamental art provide a way “to understand the true nature of reality... The arts provide a way to understand and experience the divine essence.”

⁵ Regarding painters, for instance, one of the Aztec philosophers discussed by Leon Portilla claims that “The good painter is wise; God is in his heart, He puts divinity into things; He converses with his own heart” (Leon Portilla, 1963: 172). Leon Portilla also conveys this by noting that “[The painter] had to become a *yoltéotl*, one with a ‘heart rooted in God’” (172).

Similarly, in the Sande society of the Mende, the Sowo dancer who is the embodiment of the society and its values, and who needs to wear a mask which must be enchantingly beautiful, is thought to “become a gateway to the spiritual” through which the Mende can access “the truth... [that] exists on a metaphysical plane” (Boone, 1986: 155).

The decorated Walbiri Aboriginal dancers who impersonate the spirits of the dreamtime (and are thought to be embodied by them) report that their experience while performing is more genuine than their normal state in the sense that they have become their true, spiritual selves (Berndt & Berndt, 1970: 144). Whilst the appearance of Australian art varies, both regionally and from one medium to another, it is always graceful and economical in style, and “its makers used a “subjective vision,” representing things not as they briefly appear to the eye but as the mind knows them eternally to be” (Anderson, 2004: 69).

Similarly, Paulme reports that for the Kissi boys of upper Guinea whose costumed dancing brings about the public visitation of supernatural beings, “ornamentation does not mean the superimposition of some object onto one’s outer aspect; on the contrary, it means divesting oneself of externals” in order to “rediscover within himself his own enduring essence.”

Ben-Ami Scharfstein (2009: 427-8) reports that in Japanese aesthetics, the perception of beauty is thought to give rise to a state called ‘*yūgen*,’ in which one has the sense that one has met with a profound and indescribable truth that lies beneath surface appearances and is accompanied by tears. Also, lexical items in other cultures mark the connection between beauty and truth. For example, the Trobriand expression for beauty is ‘*kakapisi lula*,’ which literally means “it moves my insight” (Beier, 1974: 36).

Given the remarkable similarity in such beliefs about beauty across cultures, and that these beliefs are by no means *trivial*, one might wonder what is it about the nature of beauty that explains why these folk beliefs consistently arise? These beliefs are something which, I suggest, a mature account of beauty should be able to accommodate, or at least, should be convincingly explained away. Finally, let us turn to the last proposed explanandum.

§4.ii. Beauty and ugliness.

Arguably one of the most important features of the Western conception of beauty is that it is commonly believed to have a logical opposite – ugliness. Moreover, in many Western conceptions of beauty, it is commonly believed that ugliness can apply to the same range of types of things as beauty. According to those who hold to a broad conception of beauty, for example, ugliness can apply both to appearances and to immoral actions.

Indeed, such is the importance of this aspect of the Western conception of beauty that if another culture’s putative conception of beauty did not have a logical opposite, then one might reasonably wonder whether they do indeed have a concept of beauty at all.

In light of this, do other cultures have a concept for ugliness, is it lexically marked and does it display the same kind of logical behaviour, i.e. is ugliness thought to be the opposite of beauty and can it be applied to a broad or narrow range of kinds of things?

Although there has been considerably less research conducted on notions of ugliness in other cultures even than there has been research on beauty, some research has nevertheless been conducted in African cultures. This is in large measure due to Robert Farris Thompson, who in 1968 documented the deliberately ugly art of the Yoruba, and labelled this art “anti-aesthetic.” This research shows that non-Western cultures do indeed have a concept of ugliness, which is lexically marked and, like beauty, seems to apply to both appearances and actions, as shown by table 3.

People	Lexial Item	Concept		Source
		Formal Ugliness	Moral Ugliness	
Africa				
West Africa				
Diola	ngoti	✓	✓	Thomas, (1959: 354, n3).
Gola	E siè	✓	✓	D'Avezedo (1973: 307).
Dan	Jäija	✓	✓	Fischer & Himmelheber (1976: 34).
Senufo	pee	✓	✓	Glaze (1978: 63).
Guro	Nää	✓	✓	Fischer & Himmelheber, (1985: 35).
	Drälä	✓	✓	
	ple	✓	✓	
Baule	Kain	✓	✓	Vogel (1980: 8).
	te	✓	✓	
Yoruba	buru	✓	✓	Lawal (1974: 239).
Bini	Khorhion	✓	✓	Ben-Amos (1976: 252, n23).
Owerri-Igbo	Ojo	✓	✓	Cole (1969: 36; 1982: 175).
Afikpo-Igbo	Ori	✓	✓	Ottenberg (1975: 43).
Anang	Idiok	✓	✓	Messenger (1973: 121).
Kuba	Bwepi	✓	✓	Vansina, (1968: 26).
Central Africa				

'Rwanda'	Mubi	✓	✓	Smith (1985: 15).
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Table 3. Semantic fields of lexical items marking ugliness, adapted, with additions, from Van Damme (1987: 54).

Moreover, and interestingly, just as in the case of beauty, there seems to be a remarkable degree of similarity in the kinds of qualities that members of cultures find to be ugly, as illustrated by table 4. More interesting yet, many of these qualities are in some sense the opposite of the qualities that are reliably found to be beautiful across cultures. Where many cultures find the quality of brightness and smoothness to be beautiful, many cultures find dullness and roughness to be ugly. This implies that the concept of ugliness in other cultures may obey the same logical structure on the grounds that an object cannot be both bright and dull or smooth and coarse all over, and that each elicitor of beauty and ugliness respectively seems to be the meaningful opposite of the other (rather than the mere absence of a quality).

People	Type of Object	Elicitor of Ugliness													Source & Notes	
		Pollution domain					Weakness/Inactivity Domain				Disorder Domain					
		Darkness	Dullness	Roughness	Dirt	Obscurity / unclarity	Commonness	Jadedness / Weakness	Diseased	Old	Distortion	Excess	Falsity	Crude / Coarse		Imbalance
Africa																
West Africa																
Anang	Human faces & bodies															Scheinberg (1977) notes that the puppets of the <i>ekon</i> society that are considered ugly display physical distortions such as eaten-away noses, twisted mouths, bulging eyes, and wrinkled foreheads. Similarly, Messenger (1973: 123-4) notes that the <i>idiok ekpo</i> masks are dark and often have wrinkled and bulbous foreheads, bulging eyes and puffed cheeks, and may often show leprosy and yaws sores. He also claims that these masks must be balanced and smooth – though it is difficult to see how this could be the case given these other features. Messenger also notes that the <i>idiok ekpo</i> costumes are dark, and that the masker's movements contrast with those of the beautiful <i>ekpo mfon</i> maskers, which are described as elegant and slow (and so the former can be thought to be crude).
	Anthropic Art	✓		✓						✓					✓	
	non-Anthropic Art	✓		✓									✓			
	Nature															
Asante	Human faces & bodies															Having tested the judgements of ugliness and beauty of Asante carvers and non-carvers on a range of figures, Silver (1979: 199) notes with regard to ugly <i>akuaba</i> sculptures (fertility dolls, which must be beautiful) that "carvers remain quick to condemn changes that
	Anthropic Art				✓					✓					✓	

	non-Anthropoc Art															substantially distort ideal shape or proportions of the basic <i>akuaba</i> from.”
	Nature															
Akan	Human faces & bodies			✓		✓								✓		Akan words for ugliness give some indication as to the elicitors of ugliness: ugly is ‘ <i>bawee</i> ’ which means "ugly, rough or nasty; used to describe personal appearance, cloth or carvings"; ‘ <i>omum</i> ’ means "an ugly person; ugliness; can be used to describe a carving without well-defined features... ‘ <i>obaa mum</i> ’ refers to a shapeless or ugly woman”; ‘ <i>tawee</i> ’ means "rough, shapeless, bulky, thick object; used to describe ugly looking forms or very rough cloth." (Warren & Andrews, 1977: 33, 35, 37-8).
	Anthropic Art			✓		✓								✓		
	non-Anthropoc Art			✓		✓								✓		
	Nature															
Senufo	Human faces & bodies															Glaze (1981: 134-5) reports that the <i>koto</i> mask of the Tyeli (one of the artisan groups assimilated into the Senufo culture) are intentionally ugly. This mask performs the function of 'policing' crowds (Glaze, 1981: 134).
	Anthropic Art														✓	
	non-Anthropoc Art															
	Nature															
Igbo (Afikpo-)	Human faces & bodies														Ugly masks asymmetrical (Ottenberg, 1975). Ottenberg (1975: 43) also notes that the intentionally ugly <i>okpesu</i>	

	Anthropic Art								✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	<p><i>umuruma</i> or <i>ihu ori</i> ("face ugly") mask represents old men and sometimes elderly women. "The mask stands for greediness and self-interest of elders; the facial distortions seem to be regarded not as symptoms of physical illness, such as leprosy and yaws, but rather as signs of social illness" (Ottenberg, 1975: 48). Van Damme (1987: 66) notes that ugly masks are characterised by physical distortions, and suggests that these can be understood as references to disease and death.</p>
	non-Anthropoc Art															
	Nature															
(Owerri-) Igbo	Human faces & bodies															<p>Ugly masks noted to be asymmetrical (Cole 1969: 37). Cole (1982: 181) notes that the Okpangu figures – mythical apeman – are considered ugly and humorous.</p>
	Anthropic Art										✓				✓	
	non-Anthropoc Art															
	Nature															
Yoruba	Human faces & bodies															<p>Swellings in Yoruba figural sculpture are thought to be ugly as they refer to diseases and death. Thompson (1971: CH3/5) notes that four intentionally ugly masks, were used in "the art of psychological warfare, where images are made as instruments of terror intended to frighten or harass enemy forces." One of these masks has a swollen forehead, and is regarded as ugly, as swelling refers to death and disease (Thompson, 1973: 51-2). The mask also has rough skin, which "is a mockery of the canon of smoothness and finish" (Thompson, 1971: Ch3/6). Yoruba also relate intentionally ugly masks to satire when, in the Egungun cult, they "lampoon the barbarian from foreign lands or the indigenous buffoon with what might be</p>
	Anthropic Art			✓					✓		✓			✓	✓	
	non-Anthropoc Art															
	Nature															

																termed the sculpture of derision." (Thompson, 1971: CH3/5, as cited by Van Damme, 1987). Van Damme (1987: 65) notes that intentionally ugly art lacks smoothness.
Kalabari (Nigeria)	Human faces & bodies															Horton (1963: 105; 1965: Pl. 35) notes that in the <i>Ngula</i> (water spirit) play, part of the character of the doctor is his ugliness, which helps him drive spirits away; the dancer's ugliness is said to be indicated by the mask. Horton also notes that there is evidence that these sculptures are intended "to evoke not merely apathy but actual repulsion." He notes that one can refer to a man's ugliness by comparing his face to that of a spirit sculpture, and pregnant women are advised not to look at the spirit sculpture for too long, "lest their children acquire big eyes and long nose, and so turn out ugly" (Horton, 1965: 12).
	Anthropic Art									✓						
	non-Anthropic Art															
	Nature															
Baule	Human faces & bodies															Vogel notes that "the Baule see disease as the antithesis of beauty and good" (1980: 15); in figural sculpture, for example, a neck is considered ugly when it is twisted, bent and looks like an indication of sickness, and irregular surfaces are compared to blistered and leprous sores. Vogel (1980: 3, 1977: 171) notes that figures made for <i>bo usu</i> – nature spirits that help hunters – are said to be intentionally ugly because if the figure was too beautiful "the spirit will just stay on the figure all the time, and not get out into the forest to help catch animals." These "crude little figures," as Vogel (1980: 38) calls them, are minimal in form and almost always encrusted with dirt and sacrifices (1980: 3). Vogel (1980: 4) notes that in one area of Bauleland, a diviner will recommend placing a crude and ugly figure of mud on the pathway into the village to rid someone of a troublesome <i>blolo bian/bla</i> . Van Damme (1987: 65) notes that intentionally ugly art lacks smoothness.
	Anthropomorphic art			✓	✓				✓	✓			✓	✓		
	non-Anthropomorphic art															
	Nature															

Ebira (Nigeria)	Human faces & bodies															Picton (1974: 34) notes that masks used in the <i>ekuecici</i> masquerade are considered fearful for their blackness and angular faces, and are used to clear the path of obstacles and keep the public at a distance for another masquerade – the <i>ekuoba</i> – which is performed during the post-burial rites of a deceased grandfather.
	Anthropomorphic art	✓														
	non-Anthropomorphic art															
	Nature															
Yamein Mano (Liberia)	Human faces & bodies															Zetterstrom (1980: 51) does not speak of intentional ugliness, but he does report that the masks worn by the Poro official "is so terrible that people will be afraid when they see it. Kola nuts have been chewed and spread around its mouth so that the mask will look red and dangerous. The red paint around its mouth represents human blood."
	Anthropomorphic art															
	non-Anthropomorphic art															
	Nature															
Bassa (Liberia)	Human faces & bodies															Secret spirit masks used in Bassa rituals function to inspire reverence and fear. Dorsinville & Meneghini (1973: 14) do not explicitly state that these masks are intentionally ugly, they are representations of "what a spirit coming from the darkest forest may be like and what else if not a monster with protruding eyes, swollen lips, contorted features, hybrids of man and animals, a delirious, though not crazy, representation of the invisible realm." Van Damme (1987: 66) notes that ugly masks characterised by physical
	Anthropomorphic art								✓		✓					
	non-Anthropomorphic art															

	Nature															distortions, and suggests that these can be understood as references to disease and death.
Bamana	Human faces & bodies															McNaughton (1979: 44) notes that the masks used in the <i>komo</i> association are deliberately ugly and depart from the canon of beauty – specifically, moderation and clarity. The mask is coated in sacrificial animals materials, and no excess seems impossible as these added elements "make the portrayal of raw vicious animality more effective, and the masks more frightening." Van Damme (1987: 66) notes that ugly masks characterised by physical distortions, and suggests that these can be understood as references to disease and death.
	Anthropomorphic art					✓			✓		✓	✓		✓		
	non-Anthropomorphic art															
	Nature															
Mende	Human faces & bodies	✓	✓		✓											<i>Gongoli</i> (male) and <i>Gonde</i> (female) masks. Hommel (1974, n.p, as cited by Boone, 1986: 163) notes that <i>Gongoli</i> is "asymmetrical, oversized, out of proportion, with mismatched features." Phillips (1978: 273), notes that <i>Gonde</i> "represents the anti-aesthetic, purposefully reversing the normal criteria of beauty." The <i>Gonde</i> mask may be an old <i>sowo-wui</i> mask (beautiful), which has been discarded because of insect damage or breakage, or may be specifically carved, with crude workmanship and "grotesque" features. The costume consists of rags and junk (Phillips, 1978: 278-4; Boone, 1986: 39; Hommel, 1974: n.p.)
	Anthropic Art								✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
	non-Anthropic Art															
	Nature															
Vai	Human faces & bodies															<i>Gongoli</i> figure known as 'kpökpö,' which is intentionally ugly (see Mende for features), and is used to offer comic relief to the recently bereaved, and may, with impunity criticize and ridicule chiefs and elders, reducing social tensions (Siegmann & Perani, 1976: 46).
	Anthropic Art										✓	✓			✓	

	non-Anthropic Art																
	Nature																
Gola	Human faces & bodies																<p><i>Gongoli</i> figure, which is intentionally ugly (see Mende for features), and is used to offer comic relief to the recently bereaved, and may, with impunity criticize and ridicule chiefs and elders, reducing social tensions (Siegmann & Perani, 1976: 46).</p>
	Anthropic Art									✓	✓					✓	
	non-Anthropic Art																
	Nature																
Temne	Human faces & bodies																<p><i>Gongoli</i> figure, which is intentionally ugly (see Mende for features), and is used to offer comic relief to the recently bereaved, and may, with impunity criticize and ridicule chiefs and elders, reducing social tensions (Siegmann & Perani, 1976: 46).</p>
	Anthropic Art									✓	✓					✓	
	non-Anthropic Art																
	Nature																
Sherbro	Human faces & bodies															<p><i>Gongoli</i> figure, which is intentionally ugly (see Mende for features), and is used to offer comic relief to the recently</p>	

	Anthropic Art										✓	✓						bereaved, and may, with impunity criticize and ridicule chiefs and elders, reducing social tensions (Siegmann & Perani, 1976: 46).
	non-Anthropic Art																	
	Nature																	
Guro	Human faces & bodies																	The <i>zauli</i> masks are found to be ugly, and are characterised by asymmetry, warts, bulging cheeks and wrinkles (Fisher & Homberger, 1985: 187). Van Damme (1987: 66) suggests that this can be understood as a reference to disease and death. The <i>zauli</i> character behaves in a comic and bawdy manner, which contrasts with the refinement and elegance of the beautiful <i>zamble</i> mask (187, 189).
	Anthropic Art									✓	✓	✓						
	non-Anthropic Art																	
	Nature																	
Central Africa																		
Bangwa (Cameroon)	Human faces & bodies																	Deliberately ugly masks and costumes created as part of Night society of <i>Bangwa</i> . They serve as terrifying symbols of worldly and supernatural powers of the chiefs who exercise social control through the use of this secret society of executioners. Brain & Pollock (1971: 131-3) note that "bared teeth, blown-out cheeks, overhanging brows – all transform the human being into a supernatural one, its features distorted with lust or fear."
	Anthropomorphic Art			✓							✓							
	non-Anthropomorphic Art																	
	Nature																	
Chokwe	Human faces & bodies																	Crowley (1971: 323) notes that new masks preferred to old masks, as old masks likened to an old man as "sick and

	Anthropic Art							✓	✓	✓								broken.”
	non-Anthropic Art																	
	Nature																	
Lega	Human faces & bodies																	Biebuyck (1973: 235) notes that among in the <i>bwami</i> society, intentionally ugly objects are used "to reaffirm through negative contrast the high-flying aspirations of <i>bwami</i> initiates." The pieces are made "in a clumsy and unfinished looking manner" (Biebuyck, 1976: 346) and have physical deficiencies, which are used to refer to evil characteristics metaphorically (Biebuyck, 1986: 64). Van Damme (1987: 65) notes that intentionally ugly art lack smoothness. Van Damme (1987: 66) notes that ugly masks characterised by physical distortions, and suggests that these can be understood as references to disease and death.
	Anthropic Art			✓														
	non-Anthropic Art																	
	Nature																	
South America																		
Kayapo	Human faces & bodies				✓													Turner (1980: 155, 135) claims that Kayapo aesthetic values express their social values. Turner implies that the Kayapo find personal dirtiness ugly.
	Anthropic Art																	
	non-Anthropic Art																	
	Nature																	

Table 4. Properties found to be ugly across cultures. Constructed from data provided by Van Damme (1987: 53-66), with additions.

One might regard the fact that beauty has an opposite to be quite trivial. But the fact that beauty has an opposite at all is quite remarkable: After all, there seems to be no *a priori* reason why the property of beauty *should* have a logical opposite. There are, after all, many properties that do not. Whilst something must be either brown or not brown or hexagonal or not hexagonal for example, it is not clear that brown or hexagonal can be said to have any meaningful opposite. It is conceivable that the world could have been populated by things that are either not beautiful or beautiful, and not (as seems to be the case) with things that are either beautiful, ugly, or neither ugly nor beautiful.

One question that raises itself in the face of this is as follows: given that beauty is indeed thought to have an opposite and this is not a *trivial* property of beauty, what is it about the nature of beauty which explains why it does have an opposite? Or, to put it another way, given that the properties that tend to be found to be beautiful could be merely absent, or their opposites regarded as merely not beautiful rather than positively ugly, what is it about the nature of beauty and ugliness respectively that explains why this is the case?

§5. Conclusion.

By way of summary, then, we have seen that there may be a something in nature that is picked out by the broad conception of beauty, on the grounds that it is reliably found across cultures. As a consequence, any mature account of the nature of beauty, and its links to our human psychological natures, should seek to accommodate the features of the broad account.

In addition, I also expanded the range of explananda that a successful account of the aesthetic should explain to include the facts that: (a) beauty is widely thought to perform the function of facilitating contact with the supernatural; (b) beauty is widely linked to the supernatural in terms of beliefs about, for example, the origin of beauty; (c) beauty is widely believed to give us access to truth; and (d) the recognition of beauty seem always to be accompanied by the acknowledgement of its opposite, ugliness?

In taking the naturalistic turn – in part by looking at the data from one of the cognitive sciences, namely anthropology – I suggest that we may be able to move the debate surrounding what the aesthetic is, or something in its vicinity, onto firmer ground. As we will see, in the remainder of this thesis, in trying to develop an account of beauty that can accommodate these findings, it is also helpful to draw on theories and findings from the cognitive sciences – and specifically, philosophy, psychology, and neuroscience.

In the next chapter, I turn to consider one of two broad groups of philosophical accounts of beauty.

Chapter 3 – Towards a naturalised account of beauty I: ‘Special Form’ accounts.

§1. Introduction.

In the last chapter, I considered whether the notion of beauty, in either its broad or narrow form, is culturally superficial, and concluded that a broad notion of beauty seems to be reliably present across a wide range of cultures, and as a result, may track something in nature. I then proceeded to expand the range of explananda that need to be accommodated by an account of beauty. I noted, for example, that across cultures, beauty is thought to have a logical opposite – ugliness – and that the notion of ugliness is symmetrical to beauty in respect of the kinds of things to which it is typically predicated of. I also noted that beauty is reliably conceived of in a range of ways across cultures: most notably, beauty is often believed to come from a divine source and to be necessary for contact with the supernatural and ensure their benevolence, the experience of beauty is thought to give us privileged access to fundamental truths, and beauty is widely thought to admit of a logical opposite – namely, ugliness.

In this chapter, I consider one set of philosophical accounts of beauty – namely those that propose that beauty can be understood in terms of “disinterest” – on their own terms and in light of this set of explananda. I conclude that disinterested pleasure is at least not sufficient for experiences of beauty, and by extension (on a response-dependent account), beauty itself. Moreover, I argue that this account fails to satisfactorily accommodate the explananda.

Before beginning this discussion, however, it is important to briefly consider and reject one possibility. It may be that beauty is natural in the sense of simply being a mind-independent property of the world, which members of different cultures are all reliably tracking, and which happens to give rise to the beliefs discussed in the last chapter. Up until the eighteenth century, philosophical aestheticians commonly attempted to characterize beauty in just such a mind-independent manner, as simply symmetry, a certain ratio of parts, or ‘uniformity within variety’ (Tatarkiewicz, 1980, offers a good summary of these proposals).¹ However, all such proposals are widely thought to fail. For example, it is simply not true that all beautiful things are symmetrical, or that they have any single proportion, or that they have the property of ‘uniformity within variety’ as properties such as brightness do not have parts, and it is difficult to see how moral virtues could possess such properties. Indeed, it was only when philosophers became increasingly disillusioned by attempts to find such a property in the eighteenth century that it was proposed that beauty might be characterized in some manner by a common mental state. That is, the question, “what is beauty?” readily came to be replaced with the question “what does beauty do to man?” in modern philosophical aesthetics. As such, accounts of beauty based on a certain response seem to rightly be the only show in town, and will be the focus of my discussion.

Indeed, that this is the case makes the reasons for taking a Humean naturalistic turn with regards to the question of what beauty is all the more promising: if beauty is constituted, in some way, by a particular response, then one might naturally think that examining whether the capacity for a certain response to beauty, and only beauty, might be part of human nature would prove fruitful.

¹ Although, it is quite unclear whether ‘uniformity within variety’ could be considered a mind-independent property of objects. Whether something has more than one part is surely a mind-independent matter, but whether it displays uniformity seems to be mind-dependent.

§2. Accommodating the explananda: two types of accounts of beauty.

Among those who believe that there is some unique experiential constituent of beauty (often unfortunately discussed under the rubric of ‘aesthetic experience’), IA Richards ([1924], 2002: 11) claimed that there have been two general ways of characterizing this state: either as, (a), a distinct “mental event which enters into aesthetic experience and no others,” or (b) a state containing “no unique constituent” but rather composed “of the usual stuff but with a special form,” where the common element is pleasure, and the special form is usually described in terms of “disinterestedness, detachment, distance, impersonality, subjective universality, and so forth.” Although Richards was writing in 1924, his typology serves just as well now as it did then, and so I will follow this in what follows². In this chapter, I discuss the most prominent accounts that fall under the second group.

§3. The ‘Usual Stuff But Special Form’ (USSF) views.

The ‘usual stuff but special form’ group of views has been the most widespread in philosophical aesthetics. Nominal differences aside, accounts in this group take two main forms at root, which I’ll call the taste conception and the attitudinal conception. Although each form of the view aims to capture the same general idea, they each posit different psychological entities in order to do so, and this has consequences for what counts as a token of beauty. Indeed, in order to gain clarity on these views, they can, I think, best be understood in the context of mental architectures. In what follows, I will outline each of these views before proceeding to evaluate them.

§3.i. Disinterestedness as pleasure arising from ‘taste.’

This conception of the disinterestedness account finds its development in eighteenth century British aesthetics, most prominently in the work of Hutcheson ([1725] 1973), and was later taken up by Kant ([1790] 2000).³

Hutcheson is attempting to account for the experience that accompanies the contemplation of, for example, natural beauties. Hutcheson posits that there is nothing distinct in itself about the experience of beauty: just as the experience of eating a tasty meal is pleasurable, the experience of beauty is pleasure – both are constituted by the same experiential material.

What distinguishes the experience of beauty from certain other pleasures is the mechanism by which it is brought about. Hutcheson observes, by introspection, that the experience of beauty is immediate, pleasurable and occurs in the absence of desire satisfaction. Hutcheson writes,

Many of our sensitive perceptions are pleasant, and many painful, immediately, and without any knowledge of the cause of this pleasure or pain or how the objects excite it, or are the occasions of it, or without seeing to what farther advantage or detriment use of such objects might tend. Nor would the most accurate knowledge of these things vary either the pleasure or pain of the perception, however it might give a

² It may be important to note that not all aestheticians who have thought that beauty is characterized by a mental state fit into either of Richards’ groups. Hume, for example, seems to hold to a simple hedonic account by which the experience of beauty is simply pleasure. Whilst this account is not entirely vacuous – only a subset of our experiences are pleasurable, after all – in casting the net of beauty so wide, we lose sight of the idea that there is something *unique* about experiences of beauty. For this reason, Hume’s view will not be discussed further.

³ As the account is, I think, most clearly laid out in Hutcheson’s work, I will primarily remain close to his conception.

rational pleasure distinct from the sensible; or might raise a distinct joy from a prospect of farther advantage in the object, or aversion from an apprehension of evil. (Hutcheson, [1725] 1973: 36).

And,

This superior power of perception is justly called a sense because of its affinity to other senses in this, that the pleasure does not arise from any knowledge of principles, proportions, causes, or the usefulness of the object, but strikes us first with the idea of beauty. Nor does the most accurate knowledge increase this pleasure of beauty, however it may superadd a distinct rational pleasure from prospects of advantage, or from the increase of knowledge. (Ibid).

Hutcheson's claims are, I suggest, best understood in terms of a proposed architecture for our capacity for beauty.

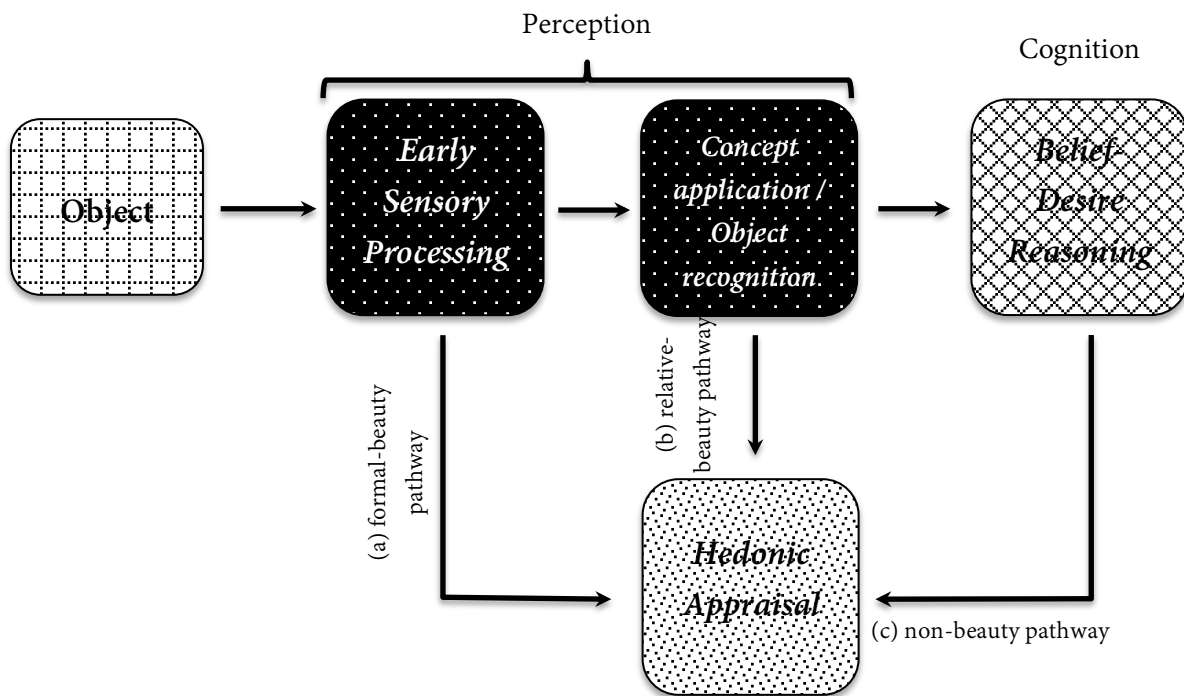


Figure 1. Hutcheson's architecture of the aesthetic mind.

Hutcheson suggests that whilst there are pleasures that arise from a process of reasoning, some pleasures occur upstream of any reasoning. Pleasures of the former sort are dependent on recognition of the object of perception, along with certain rational operations involving beliefs and desires concerning the recognised object. These pleasures are not the pleasures of beauty, according to Hutcheson. Pleasures of the latter variety may occur prior to, and are independent of, rational operations involving beliefs and desires.

It may appear that Hutcheson is promoting the idea that *only* pleasures that arise from early sensory processing are pleasures of beauty (that is, the pathway indicated by (a), in figure 1.), particularly when he claims that the pleasure of beauty occurs “without *any* knowledge of the cause

of this pleasure,” which might naturally be thought to include knowledge of the identity of the concept under which these sensations fall. This is not, however, correct. Although Hutcheson rules out pleasures that arise from the knowledge of the cause of something, he does not rule out pleasures that involve, at least in part, the identity of the objects causing these sensations. For Hutcheson, a face may be beautiful as an ideal of its kind. Moreover, insofar as one recognises that a certain perception achieves a certain function, it is a “relative beauty” for Hutcheson.⁴

Simplifying Kant’s ([1790], 2000) account of beauty considerably, Kant offers a similar conception of beauty as giving rise to disinterested pleasure (though Kant concerns himself primarily with the *judgement* of beauty). Kant understands an interest in terms of desires, which he in turn understands in terms of their connection to the real existence of the objects of those desires. Thus, for Kant, if the appearance of something is pleasing, to the extent that the pleasure would vary if the person’s belief in the existence or non-existence of the object were to change, it would not be the pleasure that is constitutive of beauty, since, for Kant, to the extent that the pleasure arises from a belief in the existence of the object, it must be because the object is pleasant for some use it may serve.

On the issue of whether pleasures that arise from the application of concepts are pleasures of beauty, Kant’s view is more ambiguous than that of Hutcheson. On the one hand, Kant at times seems to offer a formal view of beauty, when he suggests that since the act of applying concepts to a sensory array is required in order to use that information instrumentally or to know if one’s aims have been fulfilled, the pleasure of beauty cannot involve conceptualisation.⁵ On the other hand, like Hutcheson, Kant acknowledges that there are ‘impure’ or ‘dependent’ beauties, in which the application of concepts or the representation of function is involved in the pleasure that is constitutive of such beauties.

In any case, on these views, to test whether the pleasure one feels is constitutive of beauty or not, one need only run a set of counterfactual exercises in which the possible causes of one’s pleasure are varied individually whilst the other possible causes are kept constant. Where varying a particular cause makes a difference to the pleasure caused, that modicum of pleasure takes on the character of its cause with regards to whether it is a pleasure of beauty or not. A modicum of pleasure that co-varies with the agent’s beliefs and desires is not a pleasure of beauty, whereas a modicum of pleasure that co-varies with a feature of an object independent of any attendant set of beliefs and desires is a pleasure of beauty.

§3.ii. ‘Disinterestedness’ as arising from an *attitude* of intrinsic valuation.

The “disinterested attitude” account is the modern philosophical heir to the eighteenth century view of beauty just discussed. Two of the *loci classici* for the account are to be found in Bullough (1912) and in Stolnitz (1960). In more contemporary philosophical aesthetics, Robert Stecker (e.g., 2001) defends a form of the view.

Since Stolnitz (1960) offers one of the clearest conceptions of the view, I will focus on his view here. Stolnitz’s claims that the aesthetic attitude consists in “disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone” (34), and that when one adopts the aesthetic attitude, the experiences one will have as a result will be aesthetic experiences.

⁴ Hutcheson also claims that the pleasure of beauty needs to be taken in ‘uniformity within variety,’ but since such proposals are widely thought to fail (as I have just noted), it is not clear that this helps Hutcheson’s account. Having said that, as we will see in chapters 5-8, the positive account I offer has some resemblance to this idea.

⁵ If Kant did indeed hold this view, then it is simply false: even if it were true that use requires conceptualisation, it wouldn’t follow from this fact that conceptualisation entails use.

The disinterested attitude view is, in fact, a view about aesthetic experience. However, since the account that it emerges from is an account of the experience of beauty, and ultimately, what beauty is, and that beauty is the central case of the aesthetic, *mutatis mutandis*, it can be treated as an account of beauty without doing unacceptable violence to the view. Indeed, even if not all aesthetic experiences (understood, as per the first chapter, as experiences of art as art or something similar) are experiences of beauty, then deployment of the aesthetic attitude is at least necessary for experiences of beauty on these kinds of account, as illustrated by the following syllogism:

- (P1) If all experiences of beauty are aesthetic experiences, and,
- (P2) If all aesthetic experiences arise from deployment of the aesthetic attitude,
- (C) Then, all experiences of beauty arise from deployment of the aesthetic attitude.⁶

Stolnitz's characterisation of the aesthetic attitude requires unpacking. The first elements of this characterisation to examine are the notions of attitude and attention. Stolnitz claims that our perception of the world is always both selective and directed. We do not sense everything in our environment indiscriminately, but rather selectively attend to and process certain aspects of our environment. According to Stolnitz, at any given time, what is selected is governed by our purposes and goals. We attend to those aspects of our environment which will help us to achieve, or pose a danger of thwarting, our goal at a given moment. Having such goals also helps to orient us to react favourably or unfavourably to the contents of our environment: when we find things in our environment that are conducive to our present goal, we find them favourable. Conversely, when we find things that are not conducive to our present goals, we find them unfavourable.

With this clarified, we can turn to consider the kind of attention that Stolnitz claims is required to give rise to aesthetic experiences. Stolnitz claims that this attention needs to be "disinterested" and "sympathetic." At first sight, the requirement for "disinterest" may seem to be in tension with what Stolnitz says about the nature of attention. If attention is always guided by our goals, and our goals are our interests, then how could one attend to something disinterestedly – that is, without interests? Clearly, on Stolnitz's account, to be said to attend in any way at all, we must have interests.

So what is the aesthetic goal or interest? Stolnitz writes that disinterested means "that we do not look at the object out of concern for any ulterior purpose which it may serve," where he counts as an ulterior purpose all purposes apart from "just *having* the experience" (35). So, to take an example first proposed by Urmson (1957) and later used by Stolnitz, the theatre impresario who sits through a performance of one of his current productions and is interested only in the number of seats that have been sold is not adopting an aesthetic attitude towards the performance. He is not interested in the mere experience of the performance, but rather, he is treating it as a means to a financial end. In short, his financial goal leads him to attend to the performance in the wrong kind of way.

At this point, one might worry that the nature of the goal here is underspecified. How can one simply have the purpose of having just an *experience*, without filling in the content of that

⁶ Indeed, even if one has sympathy for disinterested attitude accounts in their original form, there is a way in which treating the account as aiming at beauty can also have certain logical consequences for the account as a theory of aesthetic experience. Since at least, (P1) all experiences of beauty are aesthetic experience; (P2) all aesthetic experiences require the aesthetic attitude, therefore; (C) all experiences of beauty require the aesthetic attitude. As a result if it is not true that experiences of beauty require the aesthetic attitude ($\neg C$), then either it is not true that all experiences of beauty are aesthetic experiences ($\neg P1$), or all aesthetic experiences do not require the aesthetic attitude ($\neg P2$). Given that the former (P1) seems to be unequivocally true – if experiences of beauty are not aesthetic experiences, then what are? – the latter (P2) must be false.

experience? That this is a difficult worry to answer is perhaps best indicated by the fact that Stolnitz and other attitudinal theorists seem to define the aesthetic attitude in terms of disqualifying conditions. To fill this out further, we need to turn to Stolnitz's second qualification concerning the way we need to attend to the object; namely, that we need to attend "sympathetically." By this, Stolnitz seems to mean that we attend to the object for the kinds of experiences that are *warranted* by the object. In his own words:

If we are to appreciate [an object], we must accept the object "on its own terms." We must make ourselves receptive to the object, and "set" ourselves to accept whatever it may offer to perception. We must therefore "inhibit" any responses which are "unsympathetic" to the object, which alienate us from it or are hostile to it... To maintain the aesthetic attitude we must follow the lead of the object and respond in concert with it. (Stolnitz, 1960: 36).

Stolnitz's suggestion that attending sympathetically to the object includes what it presents to *perception* is somewhat misleading here. He later remarks that "he has been using the word "perception" to describe aesthetic apprehension" but notes that "its meaning is too narrow" as it often merely "refers to apprehension of sense-data." Rather, he wishes to expand the circle of kinds of features that can become subject to the aesthetic attitude to the meaning of these sense-data and interrelations among these meanings – that is "‘intellectual’ non-sensuous knowledge of ‘concepts’ and ‘meanings’ and their interrelations" (ibid.: 41). As a result, Stolnitz is best thought of as arguing that experiences of any aspects of the object which are *warranted* by the object, are experiences of the object "alone" and so are aesthetic experiences (and *at least* include experiences of beauty, if not only experiences of beauty).

§4. Two specific problems for the disinterested attitude account.

Although I will assess the disinterested account of beauty more generally in the next section, there are two difficulties posed by the disinterested attitude account that do not beleague the simpler disinterested pleasure account, and which make the latter immediately more plausible. I will discuss these here before turning to the objections that can be levelled at both forms of the account.

§4.i. The aesthetic attitude has no, non-trivial, psychological reality.

The first problem is that the aesthetic attitude does not have any psychological reality according to Stolnitz's own (themselves plausible) criteria.

Stolnitz's account, by its own lights, requires that the aesthetic attitude involves a goal, which (a) directs attention, (b) provides motivational force, (c) inclines us to view the object of what is selectively attended to favourably or unfavourably. Conceived of as such, goals have the explanatory force to explain action.

To see why these criteria are plausible, let us first consider a case of an attitude that does satisfy these criteria, and, as a result, has explanatory force. Consider the case of an individual examining her film collection and selecting an action film. One can explain her action by saying that she had the goal to be thrilled. When assessing which film to select, the individual concerned would have attended to the films in her collection with a view to their propensity to thrill, regarding unfavourably those that did not, and regarding favourably those that did. One can explain why her attitude is motivating by noting that she anticipates that the experience of being thrilled will be pleasing in this

moment. Once she has selected a film, her attitude continues to perform a role in how she attends to it: whilst watching the film, she does not attend with the goal of, say, being moved or feeling delight in vibrant colours. Rather, she pays attention to the devices that the film employs to build and resolve tension in a manner that thrills: investing in the goals of the relevant characters, and attending to the situations that threaten the relevant characters' prospects of achieving those goals. Where the devices of the film successfully build and resolve suspense, she experiences being thrilled and she finds pleasure in this.

The same, it seems, cannot be said of Stolnitz's notion of the aesthetic attitude – that is, having the goal of attending “for itself.” To see this, imagine an individual walking through the street who adopts the disinterested attitude. She has the goal to pursue experiences of objects “in themselves” and “alone.” The tarmac she is walking along presents itself to her perception. She perceives the blackness of the tarmac, and the pattern created by the gravel and bitumen that makes it up.

How does this fair in terms of Stolnitz's own criteria, and so, in explaining the individual's action? First, without specifying the content of this goal further, it does not seem as though she could be said to have cause to select any *particular* object, or feature thereof, in her environment. On this form of the goal, anything will do. At best, whilst it may not give any *discriminative* power to attend, by adopting the goal of disinterested attention she is nonetheless able to bootstrap her attention away from all other concerns she may have and toward anything in her environment that may present itself to her. As a result, it seems that we should regard the aesthetic attitude, to the extent that it does exist, as *minimally orienting*, rather than as discriminatively selective.

Second, the attitude of disinterested attention adopted by this individual does not seem to be motivating. She may have bootstrapped her attention away from her other occurrent concerns to whatever is present, but this, by itself, is not sufficient to motivate her to continue to focus on these features. Without positing an additional factor to maintain her attention, it will peter out. (But, as Stolnitz himself remarks “experience is aesthetic only when the objects “holds” our attention” (ibid.: 37)).

In regards to the final criteria, the *mere* perception of whatever is presented to one's attention does not mean that we need regard it favourably or unfavourably. We need something else. The disinterested attitude theorist might wish to say in response that if one's goal is to have an experience of the object alone or in itself, that one's goal would have been satisfied, and, as a result, we would feel some kind of satisfaction. However, this seems to buy favourable and unfavourable attitudes by stipulation: it seems that we need not experience any satisfaction in perceiving the blackness of the tarmac, even if we did have the ostensible goal to experience the object in itself (to the extent that that is possible).

In order for the person described to be motivated to continue attending and to regard it favourably, it seems that one has to supplement the disinterested attitude account with the simpler disinterested pleasure account. In that case, insofar as what she is attending to gives her pleasure without satisfying any other goal, she will be motivated to continue to attend to it, and will regard it favourably.

In sum, the disinterested attitude's characteristic goal does not seem to do the work that is required of it to truly be said to indeed be a goal according to any conception deserving of the name, such as the one which Stolnitz posits himself.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this. The first is that deploying the aesthetic attitude seems to amount to nothing more than attending to one's environment and inhibiting one's other goals. And once one sees this, one can readily see that a second conclusion follows, namely, that the

“disinterested attitude” is not sufficient for aesthetic experiences (or, indeed, experiences of beauty, if they are distinct).

George Dickie (1964) offers a similar conclusion (though on slightly different grounds). Given the influence that Dickie’s criticism has had, it would be remiss of me not to discuss it. Moreover, as we shall see, Dickie’s objection has been recently attacked by Gary Kemp, and, as such, my own objections to the disinterested attitude account may help to buttress Dickie’s conclusion.

Dickie’s strategy is to argue that, just as it only makes sense to speak of walking fast if one could walk slowly, it only makes sense to speak of disinterested attention if one can attend interestedly. But, Dickie argues, when one attempts to give cases of attending interestedly, what one is really describing is not a special way of attending, but rather a way of not attending to the object. So, the theatre impresario who is pleased by the play because the house is full, is not attending interestedly to the play, even though he has his eyes open and directed at the actors onstage, but rather he is attending to the size of the audience and what this means for his bank account. That is, interested attention in the object is not attention to the object at all but rather inattention to the object.

From this, Dickie argues that the notion of a distinctive, aesthetic, way of attending is a myth: Stolnitz’s notion of the aesthetic attitude as disinterested attention cannot lift any philosophical weight in delimiting the realm of the aesthetic from the non-aesthetic. Attention, even close attention, is something that one exerts in all manner of non-aesthetic pursuits. Dickie’s point could equally be made with regard to the claim that beauty, or at least what it does to man, can be understood in terms of the disinterested attitude.

In response, Gary Kemp (1999) has argued that Dickie’s argument is not successful (though Kemp agrees with the conclusion, at least). Kemp argues that Dickie’s claim that “the notion of interested attention collapses into that of distraction or partial attention is surely mistaken,” on the grounds that “there can be cases of full attention to a work of art which is not the sort of attention exercised in aesthetic experience” (ibid.: 393). Kemp refers to an example offered by Dickie, of a music student listening to a piece of music in order to identify key modulations or rhythmic groupings. Clearly, Kemp presses, this is not a case of not attending to the music, but nor need it give rise to aesthetic experiences (*at least* including experiences of beauty), as the music student may attest (“we murder to dissect”(ibid.)).

The most obvious way of accounting for such cases, and the one pointed to by Kemp and even by Dickie himself, is that the motivation or intention of the music student is not of the right sort. Kemp points out, contra Dickie, that differences in motivation may be sufficient to characterize a distinctively aesthetic way of attending. Specifically, that attending is aesthetic when it is not done for pragmatic reasons. That is, Kemp argues that the idea that there is a kind of disinterested attitude is not a myth.

My form of the objection can help bolster Dickie’s case against the disinterested theorist, and furthermore Kemp, by showing that the goal of attending in itself does not qualify as a goal in any plausible sense but collapses into *mere* attending, and that mere attention is insufficient for aesthetic experiences (or, for that matter, experiences of beauty) to ensue. As such, we can see that once Kemp’s negative characterisation of the aesthetic attitude is cashed out in positive terms, it collapses.

§4.ii. The non-necessity of the aesthetic attitude for experiences of beauty.

But one can also draw a second objection from this discussion of the disinterested attitude account. If, in order for the disinterested ‘goal’ to be able to do any philosophical work, one would need to supplement the disinterested goal account with the idea of disinterested pleasure, then one

might well wonder what philosophical work (in addition to the simple disinterested pleasure account) the disinterested attitude account is doing?

Indeed, it doesn't seem to be the case that experiences of beauty need to have any antecedent interest at all. Whilst beautiful objects are sometimes sought after, a good deal of the time they simply present themselves unbidden.

Consider the example of a newly arrived tourist walking through a city, laden down with luggage, who comes across a beautiful sculpture and finds herself transfixed by its beauty. She doesn't seem to have anything like the goal of experiencing in itself; indeed, if she can be said to have any occurrent goal in her mind when walking, it is the goal of locating her hotel and relieving herself of the weight of her luggage. But her experience nevertheless may be one of beauty.

The aesthetic attitude theorist might wish to reply by saying that the moment she sees the sculpture, she forms the attitude of disinterested attention. That is, attention to the object in itself. But this seems to posit one more causal link than is necessary in the chain between contemplation and the experience of beauty. She doesn't seem to need to form an antecedent attitude of disinterested attention prior to being transfixed by its beauty. If anything, attending to the object with nothing in her mind except the object itself, comes *as a result* of being transfixed by its beauty.

Using a Kemp-style example, one might wish to point out that the difference between the person who attends to a piece of music and has an experience of beauty and the person who attends but does not, does not lie in the deployment of a particular "disinterested" attitude – which is, at root, simply attending and, perhaps, inhibiting one's instrumental goals. Attending to certain modulations of a piece of music for a certain end may prevent one from having an experience of beauty, but attending without any motivation is neither necessary nor sufficient: the way one attends cannot generate an experience of beauty if *what one is attending to* does not itself have the power to produce experiences of beauty, and where *that* is the case, one may have an experience of beauty *in spite* of one's pragmatic aims.

Since the disinterested attitude seems to be neither necessary nor sufficient for beauty, but there are at least *prima facie* reasons for thinking that the disinterested pleasure account might provide both, one might well wonder whether we should not simply dispose of the disinterested attitude theorist altogether. Such a conclusion would be a little hasty. It certainly seems true that one may simply attempt to dampen one's interest and bootstrap one's attention to whatever is presented, but this is at most sometimes an enabling condition for experiences of beauty. For this reason, in the remainder of the chapter, I will focus on the stronger account – namely, that of disinterested pleasure.

§5. The Case Against Disinterested Pleasure.

There are five arguments that can be mustered against disinterested pleasure accounts of beauty (and, in many cases, disinterested attitude theories as well): (1) the non-sufficiency of disinterested pleasure for beauty (as illustrated by the problem of humour), (2) the problem of discrepant phenomenology, (3) the problem of the non-fungibility of beauty, (4) the problem of satisfactorily accommodating the explananda; and (5) the problem of internal reasons. Problems (1-4) are all arguments that imply the non-sufficiency of disinterested pleasure. Problem (5) is an argument against the non-necessity of pleasure. Let us consider each in turn.

§5.i. The Problem of Humour.

The first problem is one that has been alluded to by at least two philosophers already. It was, as far as I can tell, first raised by Scruton (1974) (though it was not advanced as an argument against the disinterested account, but rather as an argument for including the humorous within the purview of aesthetic experience), and was later advanced explicitly as an argument against the disinterested account of beauty, by Gaut (2007).

The objection can be put, at a pass, in the following manner:

- (P1) At least some cases of humorousness give rise to disinterested pleasure, among other responses (such as laughter);
- (P2) These same cases of humorousness are not beautiful;
- (C) Therefore, disinterested pleasure is not sufficient for beauty.

Let us examine the premises in greater detail. In the case of (P1), humour does not, at least some of the time (and it is worth emphasising that the existentially quantified claim is all that is needed for the conclusion to follow), depend on us having any interest in the object in any of the senses that have been hitherto advanced.

Consider first Hutcheson's conception of disinterest as pleasure that arises immediately, and does not arise because of the satisfaction of some antecedent motivation. Imagine seeing someone slip over on your way to work and finding it amusing. The pleasure of amusement may be disinterested pleasure on this account: the pleasure seems to be immediate, one might not know the person, and one may have no antecedent (occurrent or even non-occurrent) desire for the person to slip. Indeed, if one can be said to have any occurrent desires, one might well be deep in thought about all the things that one has to do that day.

Similar counterexamples involving amusement can be developed for other forms of the disinterested pleasure account – such as Kant's – that posit that a pleasure is the result of beauty, to the extent that the pleasure wouldn't diminish if the content of one's perceptions were merely entertained, rather than held to obtain. This way of carving the distinction between the pleasure that is constitutive of beauty and other pleasures is beleaguered by similar counterexamples. For, whilst it is surely true that knowing that the situation described in an anecdote or joke truly occurred can make it more humorous, there are undoubtedly cases where one merely entertains (rather than holds) the scenario described in the joke, and finds it amusing. As a consequence, to the extent that the amusement involves pleasure in at least these cases, they are experiences of pleasure of a disinterested kind.

In the case of (P2), let us return to the example of seeing someone fall on the way to work. It should be clear that the features of the situation that make it humorous may not be beautiful (and here again, it is worth emphasising that only the existentially quantified claim is required for the conclusion to follow). On the contrary, it may be the precise *ungainliness* of the fall that makes the person falling as funny as it is.

Of course, one might appreciate the perfection of the situation for giving rise to humour: it is surely true that the humbling of the pompous and self-important is more comical than the humbling of the already humble (if this is indeed found to be comical rather than piteous) and that one might regard the ungainliness of a pompous fall to be a *beautifully* comic counterbalance to his evident self-importance moments before.

But that this is the case is neither here nor there for our purposes: for one thing, it certainly doesn't seem to be necessary that there is a beautiful counterbalance to the humorous situation or, if there is, that this is noticed in order for the situation to give rise to disinterested pleasure. Indeed,

insofar as one might deliberately notice *how* the various features of a situation conspire to be perfectly comic, one might thereby experience the unfolding of the situation as less, or even no longer, amusing. Rather, in this mode of appreciation, one might experience another kind of experiential state – such as, perhaps, admiration – instead of amusement.

In light of this, it might be better to reformulate (P2) as (P2*):

(P2*) These same cases of humorousness need not be beautiful, or, in cases where they are beautiful, need not be appreciated as such in order to give rise to the disinterested pleasure that is part of or accompanies amusement.

As a result, the pleasure that is involved in at least some cases of humour is disinterested and does not result from beauty, or, where beauty is present, need not result from the experience of it as such.

There are at least three further ways of arguing for the non-sufficiency of the disinterested account. Let us take each in turn.

§5.ii. The Problem of Non-Identical Phenomenology.

The first additional problem is that the disinterested pleasure account of beauty, if true, would suggest that the pleasure that is constitutive of beauty is phenomenally indistinguishable from other pleasures. This, I suggest, is implausible – we know, I submit, when we're having an experience of beauty (veridical or otherwise) from the quality of the experience itself – and so the disinterested theory is, at least as it stands, not able to offer a sufficient account of the experience of beauty.

More formally, the objection can be put, at least at a first pass, in the following way:

(P1) All cases of disinterested pleasure are, as pleasures, phenomenally identical to at least some cases of interested pleasure;

(P2) All experiences of beauty as beauty are not phenomenally identical to the experience of disinterested pleasure (and, by P1, at least some cases of interested pleasure);

(C) Therefore, disinterested pleasure is not sufficient to account for the phenomenology of experiences of beauty.

Let us examine the argument in finer detail. First, in terms of premise (P1) if, on the disinterested pleasure account, beauty is simply that which gives rise to disinterested pleasure, then one might naturally think that a corollary of the view is that experiences of beauty should be phenomenally identical to other kinds of pleasurable experiences. The reason one might think this is that the 'disinterested' qualification is one of the *aetiology*, rather than the mental state *itself*, and that as a result we have no reason to think that, *ceteris paribus*, there should be a *felt* difference between experiences of tokens of pleasure of a disinterested kind and those of an interested kind.

To this, the disinterested pleasure theorist might make two replies. The first is that, whilst the aetiology of the pleasure may not *directly* manifest itself in the felt experience of the mental state itself, it nevertheless makes itself known in that experience *indirectly*. For example, the disinterested pleasure theorist might follow Hutcheson in observing that whilst the pleasure may not be a different species of pleasure *per se*, as the disinterested pleasure is not mediated by one's interests, it occurs immediately and in the absence of conscious reasoning involving one's desires, and that *these* indicators are at least consciously available to the subject of that experience.

The second is that there are other properties that make themselves known to us by means of phenomenology that might be used to determine whether an experience of pleasure is caused by beauty or not. Insofar as beauty has been thought by many to be detected by exclusive means of the visual and auditory modalities and the imaginative capacities that at least resemble perceptual processing in these domains, the pleasures that co-occur with the awareness of properties that are specific to these modalities might be thought to help separate pleasures of beauty from other kinds of pleasure. As such, one might think that the pleasure that arises from, say, a sensation of redness might be regarded as a pleasure of beauty.

However, it is not clear that either of these replies is successful. Instrumental (that is, interested) pleasures can be immediate in the sense of occurring rapidly and prior to any process of deliberative reasoning involving one's desires, and can co-occur with certain modal presentations.

Certainly, the pleasure of finding one's keys when one thinks they are lost can be a pleasure that occurs rapidly, and one that need not arise from conscious deliberative reasoning, but simply by passing one's gaze across one's immediate environment. As a result, the speed with which the pleasure occurs and the absence of a process of conscious reasoning can, at best, provide a fallible internal signal that one is having an experience of beauty on the disinterested account.

Furthermore, it is entirely possible that one might find a certain appearance to be pleasurable because of a mere association between something desirable – such as, say, food, and a particular formal property, such as the appearance of a triangular shape. Moreover, given that such conditioning can occur in the absence of conscious awareness, and that once the associative link is established the reason for one's pleasure (and particularly the link to a desire for the food) may not be available to us, the pleasure may appear to us to come immediately, and in the absence of any desires.

As a result, one non-trivial consequence of the disinterested view (at least as it stands) is that there is no unique phenomenological quality to having an experience of beauty. As suggested here, all of the markers that have been proposed that are consciously accessible may also hold for at least some interested pleasures.

In the case of premise (P2), experiences of beauty feel quite different from cases of merely feeling pleasure, or even, for that matter, any of the additional consciously accessible markers that have been proposed.

To bring out the phenomenology most clearly, it is best to imagine relatively intense experiences of beauty. Imagine hearing a beautiful piece of music, or seeing an extremely beautiful human being or landscape, and experiencing them as such. In such cases, we feel uplifted, with an opening and warming of the chest, and a sense of dissolution of the self, and its quotidian concerns, and oneness or harmony with the beautiful object. We feel a sense of 'rightness,' as though we have accessed a truth, sometimes of a fundamental nature, or feel inspired. Often we feel tears come to our eyes and chills. Finally, we feel a sense of personal renewal, gratification or betterment. (As we will see in chapters 5-6, there is a good deal of evidence for this).

This is not to say that all our engagements with beauty are precisely like this. In most cases, these felt components may be much less intense, such that one may find them hard to precisely recognise as such, and they may even occur in the absence of conscious awareness. Nor is this to say that one needs to have any of these feelings in order to judge something to be beautiful. All it is to say is that, when we have an experience of beauty as beauty, it is marked by these feelings, conscious or otherwise, and howsoever weak.

The disinterest theorist might argue that this argument does not present much of an obstacle to their account. They might argue, for example, that all that premise (P1) points to is the mere fact that, as the kind of creatures psychologically constituted in the way we are, one can be mistaken, even

radically so, about whether a given experience is an experience of beauty, particularly if one relies on one's *phenomenology*.

The disinterested theorist may further point out that even if it is the case that there are no unique phenomenological differences between interested and disinterested pleasures (P1) and, furthermore, that there are phenomenal differences between experiences of beauty and experiences of mere pleasure, this wouldn't harm their account. For, the disinterested theorist might point out, it isn't necessary for an account of what makes something beautiful, or even simply for something to be an experience of beauty, that there is something that is *phenomenally* sufficient for experiences of beauty. It may simply be the case that disinterested pleasure *is* what it is for something to be an experience of beauty.

That is quite true. But, at the very least, it does mean that the disinterested pleasure theory is, at least, explanatory impoverished, in that it provides no explanation of why it is the case that experiences of beauty are not indistinguishable from mere pleasure – disinterested or otherwise. The disinterested theorist might have two responses to this.

They might first claim that experiences of beauty might contain all sorts of noise. The philosophical aestheticians' job, they might insist, is to see through this contingency, to that which is fundamentally most important.

Secondly, they might argue that the most they need to concede in the face of this is that these other components of the experience of beauty can be accommodated by *some* account (and they may further point out that it may be up to psychologists rather than philosophers to provide such an account). On these grounds, they might remain steadfast that whilst this constitutes an objection to the explanatory sufficiency of the disinterested pleasure account, it does not constitute an obstacle to the logical sufficiency of the account.

Neither of these responses is, I submit, satisfying. For one thing, as we have just seen, it is not true that disinterested pleasure is logically sufficient for experiences of beauty. For another, insofar as it is true that the cluster of components described above are present in experiences of beauty as beauty and only those kinds of experiences (as I will argue for further in chapters 4-7), the disinterested theorist should be concerned that this account might do a more adequate and parsimonious job of logically characterising beauty.

§5.iii. The Problem of the Non-Fungibility of Beauty.

Another problem that is both structurally similar and logically linked to the problem of non-identical phenomenology is the problem of the non-fungibility of beauty. The problem can be stated quite simply: the disinterested pleasure account of beauty, if true, would suggest that the pleasure that is constitutive of beauty secures the same kind of value as other properties that provide pleasure. This, I suggest, is implausible – beauty is widely thought to have a different value to properties that cause pleasure. Therefore, the disinterested account, at least as it stands, cannot fully account for the value of beauty.

More formally, the objection might be put, at least at a first pass, in the following way:

- (P1) All cases of experiences of disinterested pleasure secure the same kind of value, at root, as experiences of other pleasurable experiences;
- (P2) All experiences of beauty as beauty provide a higher kind of value than experiences of pleasurable experiences;
- (C) Therefore, disinterested pleasure is not sufficient to account for the value of experiences of beauty.

Let us examine the argument in finer detail. First, in terms of premise (P1) if, on the disinterested pleasure account, beauty is simply that which gives rise to disinterested pleasure, then one might naturally think that a corollary of the view is that experiences of beauty should provide the same kind of value as other kinds of pleasurable experiences. The reason for this is that as the 'disinterested' qualification is a qualification of the *aetiology* one might reasonably wonder why this difference should make a difference with regard to the value of the experience it secures.

To this, the disinterested theorist might make two (similar) replies. They might firstly argue that, since disinterested pleasure comes immediately and is not preceded by any conscious entertainment of a goal (or deliberative reasoning involving a goal), it is at least *perceived* to be something that we are all disposed to find pleasurable, irrespective of whether or not this is in fact true.

Secondly, they may argue that the greater value of experiences of beauty relative to other pleasurable experiences is secured on the disinterested theory by the fact that the disinterested pleasure that issues from engagement with beauty is not, *as a matter of fact*, dependent on an individual's particular interests. Thus the pleasure of the beautiful is more valuable because it is something that we are all, as a matter of fact and irrespective of our beliefs about this, disposed to find pleasurable.

But it is just not clear that either of these responses is going to be able to secure a distinct kind of value for disinterested pleasures as compared to garden-variety pleasures. In the case of the first response, as pointed out in the last section, some experiences of interested pleasures occur in the absence of any conscious entertainment of a goal or deliberative reasoning involving that goal. As such, if these features do constitute the superior value of experiences of disinterested pleasure, then this value is shared by some interested pleasures, and that being the case, it cannot explain the distinctive value of experiences of beauty.

It is not clear that the second response – which is really an objective version of the first – will help either. If the distinctive value of experiences of disinterested pleasure lies in the *fact* that it does not stem from an interest, then (given what I have said about the first response) it seems as though it would be necessary for us to discover, by means of an imaginative exercise, that our pleasure did not stem from the satisfaction of a goal we held, in order to see its superior value.

But one might still wonder whether even recognition of this would be sufficient to make the pleasure of a superior value, rather than simply a pleasure that is more likely to be more widely felt by others. Moreover, even if this were enough to make the disinterested pleasure of a superior value, then it is not clear that this is the kind of modification that is required to account for the superior value of beauty: the superior value of beauty is apparent even to those who have not, presumably, performed the required imaginative exercise to know that the pleasure is not dependent on their desires.

It is also worth pointing out in this context that there are a number of gustatory experiences in which the experience of pleasure is not in fact mediated by any personal interest, but do not seem to be more valuable than pleasant experiences of the same magnitude that come in the satisfaction of a desire. Also, since the pleasant experience of say, sweetness, may be disinterested but is not one of beauty, this example provides a further reason for why the disinterested pleasure account cannot account for the value of experiences of beauty, insofar as this is distinctive.

Turning to (P2), experiences of beauty enrich people's life in a way that pleasures of at least equal if not greater intensity do not. People commonly find experiences of beauty to have eudaimonic and epistemic value in addition to mere hedonic value.

In support of these claims, we can call upon the claims that have been made by philosophers with regards to the value of beauty. In his *Principia Ethica*, Moore ([1904] 1922) writes that "by far the most valuable thing, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be rightly described as the pleasures of human intercourse, and the enjoyment of beautiful objects" (Ch. 6, §112: 188). Moore emphatically restates this view when he writes that "personal affections and aesthetic enjoyments include *all* the greatest, and *by far* the greatest, goods we can imagine" (Ch. 6, §113: 189).

Given that the pleasures of personal affections and beauty can vary in the intensity of pleasure they afford, just as the intensity of pleasures that, say, foods afford can vary, and that the pleasures afforded by food may indeed be higher than those of beauty or personal affections, it is fair to say that if Moore is right in thinking that beauty is among the highest of values, he does not intend this as a claim about the quantity of pleasure that beauty affords.

Plato ([c. 370 BC] 2010, 211d) seems to get closer to explicitly articulating the value of the beautiful when, in the *Symposium*, Socrates reports (and seemingly assents to) Diotima's claim that "the life that is worth living for a man, [is] lived in the contemplation of the Beautiful itself."

More contemporaneously, Danto (2003: 15) claims that "beauty is the only one of the aesthetic qualities that is also a value, like truth and goodness. It is not simply among the values we live by, but one of the values that defines what a fully human life means."⁷

These three claims support the idea that beauty is thought to have a *eudaimonic* value. But what of its *epistemic* value? Here it is perhaps best to note that the beliefs across cultures that beauty is thought to give us access to truths of a fundamental nature, as documented at length in the last chapter, and will be discussed in the following section.

Of course, as in the case of the problem of non-identical phenomenology, the disinterested theorist might point out that as their account is an account of what beauty is (at least when converted into a response dependent account), they might point out that I have not ruled out the possibility that at least some experiences of beauty might be more valuable than other pleasurable experiences, and that some additional posit might explain this. Here, again, it is not clear that the disinterested theory should be able to help themselves to such a response lightly.

§5.iv. Further Objections to Explanatory Sufficiency.

In the foregoing two objections, I have suggested that the disinterested pleasure account may, at least, be explanatory impoverished. I turn now to explicitly consider how well it can accommodate the explananda laid out in the last chapter.

First, what of the beliefs about the relationship between the beauty and the divine? Specifically the widespread belief across cultures that (i) beautiful objects mediate a communion between humans and the divine, (ii) beauty comes from the divine.

⁷ Danto does not give much of a clue as to why he thinks that this is the case – he may simply think that it is a self-evident truth to those who have the capacity to appreciate beauty, and that no further reason can be offered to help others to see that. He does, however, observe immediately before asserting that beauty is a value, that "the spontaneous appearance of those moving improvised shrines everywhere in New York after the terrorist attack of September 11th, 2001, was evidence for me that the need for beauty in the extreme moment of life is deeply ingrained in the human framework" (ibid.). This suggests that the value secured by beauty is not exhausted by the values secured by other activities that are valuable insofar as they secure pleasure, such as eating delicious food.

The pleasure-based theory can accommodate some of the relevant beliefs better than others. With regard to (i), in many cultures, beauty is believed to be required to please supernatural spirits, and thereby secure their benevolence. For example, as noted in chapter 2, the Yoruba believe that the masks and dress worn in Yoruba masquerades should be as beautiful as possible to meet “the need for aesthetically pleasing the *orisha* [gods] by providing the most beautiful and symbolic costume possible...” (Cordwell, 1952: 36).

To explain such beliefs, the disinterested pleasure theorist might argue that mere pleasantness is sufficient to explain such beliefs. It seems plausible, for example, that merely pleasing the gods might be sufficient to secure their benevolence. Indeed, such a belief is, in part, well founded. Isen and Levin (1972) showed that participants who were made to feel pleased by having found a dime in the coin return of a public telephone when making a call were found to be significantly more likely to spontaneously help pick up papers that were dropped in front of them than controls. In further support of this, the disinterested theorist might point out that beauty is not exclusively well suited to perform the function of pleasing the gods as indicated by the fact that offerings of food are also used in some cultures to secure the beneficence of supernatural beings.

Often the beauty of an object is not only thought to please the supernatural but also to bring them into the human world, and to become unified with the beautiful objects themselves. For example, in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea, it has been reported that a number of tribes believe that the spirits which are required for the success of certain rituals actually reside in artworks such as carvings, paintings and masks. Donald Tuzin (1980: 190), for example, reports that among the Arapesh, the paintings “do not merely represent *Nggwal* [spirits], they are *Nggwal*, they partake directly in the same essence.” Similarly, Newton (1971: 34, 52) reports that in the creation myths of the Upper Sepik region, the first flutes and slit goings magically played themselves because they were invested with spirits.

The disinterested pleasure theorist might attempt to accommodate this belief by pointing out that all things that are merely pleasing, including beauty (but not exclusively so), cause approach behaviours and that the belief that this is the case is sufficient to explain the fact that many cultures believe that beauty is required to bring the supernatural into the world and localize them in the beautiful object.

What of beliefs (ii), namely that beauty originally came from the divine? Recall, for example, that the Yoruba believe that their art – which is largely considered to be beautiful by the Yoruba – comes from a divine source (Anderson, 2004: 162).

To accommodate (ii), the disinterested theorist may reason in the following manner to accommodate such data: since beauty is pleasing, pleasure is valuable, and the supernatural is the source of things of great value, it is apt that things that are valuable come from a divine source.

However, on the disinterested pleasure account, there are significant remainders in the data that remain unaccounted for. If beauty is merely that which causes disinterested pleasure, or merely believed to be so, it is not clear why it should be believed to be required to not only please supernatural beings and thereby bring about their beneficence, but also to actually bring them into the human world, and to become unified with the beautiful objects themselves.

Moreover, the suggestion that the tendency to approach that is characteristic of pleasant phenomena might explain the fact that the deities are believed to become unified with the beautiful object is, in itself, not convincing, and even less so when one considers some of the beliefs about the mechanism by which the beauty brings about the communion between the humans and supernatural entities. For example, recall that in the Ritual Healing Dance of the Northern San people known as the !Kung, the beautiful music is thought to be a vessel of the spirit (or *num*). Participation in the

dance is believed to make the participant's own spirit boil, sending them into a state called '*kia*' in which they are able to see the, normally invisible, arrows which are thought to be cast by spirits and cause bad luck, death and disease. Healers in this state are thought to intercede with the spirits to protect people from these arrows (Katz, 1982 and Shostak, 1981: 291-303, as cited by Anderson, 2008: 18). Such a belief does not support a mechanism involving mere tendencies to approach.

It is also not clear that the disinterested pleasure explanation of the beliefs that the beauty results from a divine source and that divine beings are themselves beautiful is adequately explained by the mere fact that both pleasure and the divine are valuable and therefore such beliefs are apt. For one thing, there are lots of things that are pleasant in these cultures and are not explicitly represented as being related to the divine. As such, the mere aptness seems to underdetermine the presence of such beliefs.

This is especially clear when one considers that many cultures hold the beliefs that the divine is not only the ultimate cause of beauty, but also the proximate cause. For example, recall that not only did the Aztecs believe that beauty is a gift from the gods, they also believed that the artist must, through meditation, achieve spiritual enlightenment in order to create beauty (Leon-Portilla, 1966: 51-2). The Maori not only believe that carving was, ultimately, invented by the gods, but also that the creation of beautiful carvings requires the good will of the spirits, which can be obtained by observing certain rules – called *tapus* (Chipp, 1971: 154).

Turning to the other explananda, it is simply not clear how the disinterested pleasure account of beauty can account for the belief that beauty gives rise to truths of a deep or fundamental nature. For example, in Bali, Lansing has observed that ornamental art provides a way “to understand the true nature of reality... The arts provide a way to understand and experience the divine essence” (Lansing, 1981: 36-7). Similarly, in the Sande society of the Mende, the Sowo dancer who is the embodiment of the society and its values, and needs to wear a mask which must be enchantingly beautiful, is thought to “become a gateway to the spiritual” through which the Mende can access “the truth... [that] exists on a metaphysical plane” (Boone, 1986: 155). For the Walbiri Aboriginals, the decorated dancers who impersonate the spirits of the dreamtime and are thought to be embodied by them, it has been suggested by anthropologists that the dancer's report their experience as being more genuine than their normal state in the sense that they have become their true, spiritual selves (Berndt & Berndt, 1970: 144.).

Indeed, this even more puzzling on the disinterested pleasure account in light of the fact that some cultures seem to attribute the link between beauty and truth to the experience of beauty. Ben-Ami Scharfstein (2008: 427-8) reports that in Japanese aesthetics, the perception of beauty is thought to give rise to a state called '*yūgen*,' in which one has the sense that one has met with a profound and indescribable truth that lies beneath surface appearances and is accompanied by tears.

It is also not clear that the disinterested pleasure account can elegantly accommodate the finding that most cultures seem to find moral actions beautiful. They might argue, pace Hume ([1751] 1975b) for example, that moral actions are immediately pleasurable to behold. But this belies the specificity of the relationship. As I have already argued, it is not the case that everything that is immediately pleasurable, or even pleasurable in the absence of any antecedent interest, is found to be beautiful.

Moreover, it is not clear that the disinterested pleasure theory can elegantly accommodate the fact that beauty admits of an opposite – ugliness – nor the properties that are reliably found to be ugly (as outlined in the last chapter). One possible answer is that pain, or at least displeasure, is the opposite of disinterested pleasure, and that the properties that are reliably found to be ugly across cultures are found to be immediately unpleasant to behold, and not because of any interest one holds.

But this explanation, in itself, grossly underdetermines the data. It is simply not true that anything that is, in itself, unpleasant, is ugly: stubbing one's toe is, in itself, unpleasant, but it is not ugly.

In sum, then, the disinterested pleasure is able to accommodate *some* of the data on beauty across cultures, but it is not able to satisfactorily accommodate all of this data. As such, it seems that the disinterested pleasure account is, by itself, explanatorily impoverished.

§5.v. The 'internal' interest objection.

Up until this point, I have argued that the disinterested pleasure account does not provide the basis for a sufficient account of beauty, either logically or empirically. But, in light of these arguments, if successful, the advocate of the disinterested account might nonetheless retreat to thinking that it is at least necessary for beauty.

A number of philosophers have attempted to rout the disinterested pleasure theorist from this shelter. However, I wish to briefly argue that these arguments are not successful, and that pleasure is indeed necessary for experiences of beauty, and so must at least form *part* of the basis for a response-dependent account of beauty.

A number of critics have attempted to argue that disinterested pleasure is not a necessary feature of an account of beauty on the grounds that it is not true that antecedent interests disqualify one from having experiences of beauty.

Gaut (2007) can be said to run a simple form of the "internal interest" objection. It is best reconstructed in the following manner:

- (P1) Some things are done with the aim of creating beauty;
- (P2) If pleasure results from the achievement of this aim, it is an interested pleasure;
- (P3) If pleasure results from the achievement of this aim, it is also a pleasure that is taken in beauty;
- (P4) From (P2) and (P3), there are some pleasures that are both interested and taken in beauty;
- (C) It is false that a given pleasure is a pleasure taken in beauty iff it is a pleasure that has no antecedent motivation.

This argument is intended to put pressure on the claim that beauty is that which gives rise to disinterested pleasure. The argument is supposed to show that (i) there are at least some cases where beauty gives rise to interested pleasures, and (ii), by hypothesis, that these are pleasures taken in beauty, and that, as a result, cases in which a person takes beauty as the aim of their activity and achieves that aim are counterexamples to the disinterested theory. Similar objections have been put forward by both Gary Kemp (1999) and Noël Carroll (2000, 2002) with regards to the 'aesthetic experience' more generally.

There are at least two problems with this objection (and those like it, such as those levelled by Kemp and Carroll). The first is that the disinterested theorist might wish to attempt to blunt the force of the argument by claiming that the argument individuates the pleasures that the agents described likely feel in a misleading manner. They might insist that rather than talking of pleasure *tout court*, we should speak of *modicums* of pleasure. As such they might plausibly suggest that premises (P2) and (P3) should be modified in the following manner:

(P2*) *To the extent that* the pleasure results from the achievement of this aim, it is an interested pleasure;

(P3*) *To the extent that* the pleasure results from the achievement of this aim, it is also a pleasure that is *caused by* beauty;

And once this is recognised, the argument looks less powerful. For once we admit of these two conditions, the disinterested pleasure theorist is not forced to reject the claim that these individuals are having the right kind of experience to be having experiences of beauty in order to maintain their theory. They might insist that the modicum of pleasure that results from the achievement of the aim of creating beauty is not the pleasure that is (at least partially) constitutive of experiences of beauty.

In support of this conclusion, the disinterested theorist might note that the modicum of pleasure that results from the achievement of this aim would disappear if the agent concerned didn't have that aim. By contrast, they might insist that a modicum of the agent's pleasure is likely to be taken in the beautiful creation itself, independently of the agent's aim to create beauty, and that, to this extent, the pleasure is the kind that is constitutive of experiences of beauty. Whilst both modicums of pleasure are caused by beauty, only pleasure of the latter kind, the disinterested theorist might insist, is pleasure taken in beauty as beauty.

The second problem with this argument is that the disinterested theorist might also suggest that even if this first kind of response isn't successful, the disinterested theory might be able to readily accommodate this interest as the *only* interest that is compatible with giving rise to experiences of beauty, on the grounds that the aim is not parasitic on aims external to beauty. That is, if the aim is not motivating for any reason external to the aim of creating beauty, then arguably it is intrinsically pleasing. By contrast, if one is creating artworks that one doesn't oneself find to be beautiful but knows that will be reliably found to be so by others in order to, for example, make money, then the pleasure one may feel in witnessing the beauty that one has created is not the pleasure of experiencing beauty as beauty.

I think that these responses are correct. It is indeed hard to imagine that something could be beautiful if it did not have the disposition to give rise to pleasure in itself, and as such, it seems that any response dependent account of beauty would need to be able to accommodate this. But this is not, I should stress, to admit that the disposition to give rise to disinterested pleasure is sufficient for beauty, as I have argued here.

§7. Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have outlined the most prominent forms of the “usual stuff, special form” accounts of beauty, according to which beauty is constituted by a disinterested mental state. I argued that disinterested pleasure is neither logically nor explanatorily sufficient for beauty, though pleasure seems to be necessary for experiences of beauty, and as such, a true response-dependent account should be able to accommodate this fact.

In the next chapter we turn to consider the other group of accounts of beauty – that is, those that posit some distinctive experiential material as constitutive of beauty.

Part II – Beauty & Ecstasy.

Chapter 4 – Towards a Naturalised Account of Beauty II: Unique ‘Mental Event’ Accounts.

§1. Introduction.

In the last chapter, following Richard’s ([1924] 2002) typology, we considered one group of accounts that hold that beauty is not constituted by a disposition to give rise to a distinct mental state, but by a disposition to give rise to a mental state that is found in many other experiences – pleasure – but in a special disinterested ‘form.’ I found that these accounts were not successful in themselves and in the face of the explananda outlined in chapter 2. Nonetheless, it is certainly true that experiences of beauty are pleasant, and that the pleasure that arises in the face of beauty is not the pleasure of the satisfaction of an interest. It is, as a result, perhaps not surprising that it has seemed apt to characterise beauty as disinterested pleasure.

In this part of the thesis, I leave behind the destructive portion of the thesis, and turn to begin to defend a positive account of beauty that will ultimately, I believe, be able to fully accommodate the explananda outlined in chapter 2 (and the additional explananda mentioned in chapter 3).

In this chapter, I proceed to consider the other type of philosophical accounts of what beauty is – namely, those that propose that beauty is constituted by a disposition to give rise to a distinctive “mental event which enters into aesthetic experience and no others” (Richards, 2002: 11).

I will argue that a number of prominent aestheticians have argued that the mental state that is uniquely caused by beauty is the emotion of ecstasy. In the chapters that follow, I will further develop an account of ecstasy and provide empirical evidence in support of this hypothesis.

§2. Candidate mental states.

What do proponents of this kind of account claim that this unique mental state is? Many of the theorists of this type have claimed that the mental state is an emotion, but, unfortunately, have not specified the nature of this emotion in any detail.

Susanne Langer (1953: 36-7), for example, claims that “the true connoisseurs of art, however, feels at once... that aesthetic experience is different from any other, the attitude toward works of art is a highly special one, the characteristic response is an entirely separate emotion... They feel a different emotion, in a different way.” Similarly, Moore ([1904] 1922) claims in his *Principia Ethica* that “it is plain that instances of aesthetic appreciation, which we think most valuable, there is included not merely a bare cognition of what is beautiful in the object, but also some kind of feeling or emotion” ([1904], Ch. 6, §114, 1922: 189). Moore also suggests that there is more than one kind of beauty, each with its own aesthetic emotion which is appropriate to it, but which may all have “some common quality” (ibid.). Moore offers no further elaboration of what this emotion, or emotions, might be apart from to say that the experience of beauty is “enjoyable” and that these emotion(s) must be “appropriate” to the beauty it is caused by (ibid.).

Undoubtedly influenced by Moore’s views through his interactions within the context of the Bloomsbury Group, the “aesthetic emotion” plays a crucial role in Clive Bell’s writings on art. Bell (1914: 7) claims that the aesthetic, by which he may be understood as intending beauty¹, is

¹ Bell himself observes that it might seem odd that he hasn’t called the aesthetic – that is, for Bell, significant form – beauty. He suggests that one can understand him to mean ‘beauty,’ provided that one does not understand ‘beauty’ to include its use as a term of mere approbation (Bell refers to “chatter about ‘beautiful huntin’” and ‘beautiful shootin’”), desirable (in a sexual sense), or nice (1914: 13).

characterised by a particular emotion, the aesthetic emotion, and then sets about to isolate “some quality common to all the objects that provoke it.” Such is the importance of this emotion for Bell that he defines art in reference to it (though we certainly do not need to follow Bell in this, and nothing in what follows turns on this commitment).

Bell is accused of running into circularity in his characterisation of this emotion. Bell is commonly thought to propose that the aesthetic emotion is the emotion that arises from apprehending ‘significant form,’ where significant form is the combination of lines and forms that produce the aesthetic emotion when apprehended.

The circularity should be obvious: if the aesthetic emotion is the emotion which arises from significant form and significant form is that which gives rise to the aesthetic emotion, then the notion of the aesthetic emotion appears on both sides of the definition, and so the notion of significant form cannot be used to independently characterise the aesthetic emotion.

Many, including Beardsley (1982: 35-6), Ducasse (1929: 307-14) and Levinson (1996: 5), take this logical failing to be fatal. Beardsley (1982: 35-6), for example, argues that “if (like Bell), we wish to make the statement [that aesthetic emotion is produced by significant form] definitive of one of its terms, then the other must be defined independently of it,” and given that “he gives no other description of aesthetic emotion,” it fails.

From examining the views of Langer, Bell and Moore, one could be forgiven for thinking that the ‘unique mental event’ accounts do not look all that promising. These philosophers all seem to simply express the intuition that beauty (or, for Langer, perhaps, the aesthetic) is constituted by an emotion, or at least causes a specific emotion, but cannot say more about this other than simply *that*.

But contrary to the common claim that Bell, at least, does not characterize his ‘aesthetic’ emotion in a non-circular manner, it seems that Bell does offer a characterization of some of the features of the emotion. Moreover, I believe, and will attempt to show, that something in the vicinity of Bell’s characterisation is offered by a number of other aestheticians.

But, in order to see how Bell and others characterize this emotion, and, more importantly, to ultimately arrive at an account that is sufficiently detailed to stand a chance of being convincing, it is worth first pausing to see what an account of the ‘aesthetic’ emotion would need to look like if such a distinctive emotion does in fact exist. To this end, let us turn to outline what characteristics a state needs to have to be an emotion, according to the (admittedly fragile) consensus in the philosophy of emotion.

§3. Desiderata for an account of beauty in terms of an emotion.

Despite controversies in the philosophy of emotion, some of which will be briefly discussed in the next chapter, it is commonly agreed that emotions are psychological episodes that have the following components and can be individuated on the basis of differences in these components (though different accounts emphasize the importance of different components): (i) characteristic physiological changes; (ii) subjective phenomenology or feelings; (iii) action tendencies; (iv) valence (positive or negative); (v) characteristic facial expressions; and, at least sometimes, (vi) a characteristic appraisal of the relation between the object of the emotion and the individual (sometimes discussed in terms of an emotion’s ‘formal’ object). It is increasingly being understood that the range of components of emotions should be extended from visceral perturbations, facial expressions and actions to include changes in perception and cognitive processes.

Take, for example, the emotion of disgust. In terms of disgust’s expression profile, episodes of disgust produce what is commonly called the ‘gape face’ – a wrinkling of the nose, gaping of the

mouth and extrusion of the tongue – and a sense of oral incorporation. Disgust also has a negative valence – it is often displeasing to experience and motivates the individual to avoid the offending item. The appraisal involved in disgust is less clear, but some have proposed that it is ‘poisonousness,’ ‘noxiousness,’ or merely ‘disgustingness.’ Disgust has been shown to result in certain cognitive effects. Disgust tends to result in a certain form of magical thinking called contamination sensitivity. It is part of what it is to be disgusted by something to think that the item which is appraised as disgusting will contaminate other things: that is, mere contact with another object is sufficient for the new object to be considered disgusting as well (for a summary of the nature of disgust, see Rozin et al., 1993; and more recently, Kelly, 2011).

We will return to these features and have more to say about them in the following chapters, but this outline will suffice for my purposes in this chapter at least. With this in mind, let us return to Bell’s account.

§4. Bell’s ‘Aesthetic’ Emotion.

The problem with Beardsley and Levinson’s (among others) claim that Bell does not provide a non-circular way of experiencing the emotion, is that it places too much emphasis on Bell’s principal and most explicit claims and overlooks much of what Bell says elsewhere. It is certainly true that one way of characterising an emotion is to try to specify the common property that gives rise to it. On this count, Bell certainly fails. And it is perhaps not surprising that he does. As we will see in the next chapter when we discuss the formal objects of emotion in more detail, in defining any emotion by the common property that elicits that emotion, one can readily be lured onto the rocks of circularity.

But, as we have just seen, there are other ways of identifying emotions apart from identifying its formal object; namely, in reference to the other components of emotions. In this regard, I believe that Bell fares considerably better.

§4.i. A solution from within.

To see why this is the case, an obvious place to start is by asking: does Bell (1914) lexically mark the aesthetic emotion by reference to other known emotional terms? And indeed, he does. Bell mentions “ecstasy,”² “rapture,”³ and “exaltation,”⁴ a great number of times in connection with the aesthetic emotion.

Given that many philosophers, including Beardsley, have argued that Bell does not elucidate the aesthetic emotion further than by saying that it is produced by significant form, and that those aestheticians could hardly have failed to notice these words (especially given the frequency with

² Ibid., pp. 20 (“aesthetic ecstasy”), 37 (“The forms of art... all lead by the same road of aesthetic emotion to the same world of aesthetic ecstasy”), 75 (“Art... moves us to ecstasy”), 76 (“the appreciation of art is a means to ecstasy, and the creation probably the expression of an ecstatic state”), 61 (artists “exalt us to ecstasy”), 81 (“For the mystic, as for the artist, the physical universe is a means to ecstasy,” “both [art and religion] have the power of transporting men to superhuman ecstasies; both are means to unearthly states of mind”), 92 (“Art and Religion are, then, two roads by which men escape from circumstance to ecstasy”), 106 (“Art is [morally] good because it exalts to a state of ecstasy”), 29-30 (“A good work of visual art carries a person who is capable of appreciating it out of life into ecstasy”), 34 (“moments of pure ecstasy”).

³ Ibid., pp. 18 (“aesthetic rapture”), 56 (“state of being rapt”), 92-3 (“Between aesthetic and religious rapture there is a family alliance. Art and Religion are means to similar states of mind”), 33 (“the austere and thrilling raptures of those who have climbed the cold, white peaks of art”).

⁴ Ibid., pp. 56 (“moments of exaltation”), 68 (“The contemplation of pure form leads to a state of extraordinary exaltation”), 76 (“That [art] is a means to a state of exaltation is unanimously agreed”), 26 (“Art transports us from the world of man’s activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation”).

which they are deployed), one might question what evidence there is that by “aesthetic emotion” Bell means one of these terms. There are, at least, three lines of evidence for this.

Firstly, he claims, for example, that “Art... moves us to ecstasy,” (ibid.: 75) and that “the contemplation of pure form [by which he means Significant Form] leads to a state of extraordinary exaltation” (ibid.: 68). Secondly, the connection between art and these emotional states is clear where Bell discusses the relationship between art and religion:

Art and Religion are, then, two roads by which men escape from circumstance to ecstasy. Between aesthetic and religious rapture there is a family alliance. Art and Religion are means to similar states of mind. (Ibid.: 92-3).

Art is a manifestation of the religious sense... We may say that both Art and religion are manifestations of man’s religious sense, if by “man’s religious sense” we mean his sense of ultimate reality. (Ibid.: 93).

That [Art] is a means to a state of exaltation is unanimously agreed, and that it comes from the spiritual depths of man’s nature is hardly contested. (Ibid.: 76).

The emotion expressed in a work of art springs from the depths of man’s spiritual nature; and those even who will hear nothing of expression agree that the spiritual part is profoundly affected by works of Art. (Ibid.: 76).

Thirdly, the connection between the aesthetic emotion and these terms is clear in those passages in which Bell discusses the relationship between the creation and appreciation of beauty. Bell writes at length on how an artist comes to produce what he calls significant form. He claims that artist can only produce significant form by herself having an experience of ecstasy:

What is this mysterious thing that dominates the artist in the creation of form? What is it that lurks behind forms and seems to be conveyed by them to us? What is it that distinguishes the creator from the copyist? What can it be but emotion? Is it not because the artist’s form expresses a particular kind of emotion that they are significant? – because they fit and envelop it, that they are coherent? – because they communicate it, that they exalt us to ecstasy? (Ibid.: 61).

The appreciation of Art is certainly a means to ecstasy, and the creation probably the expression of an ecstatic state of mind. Art is, in fact, a necessity to and a product of the spiritual life. (Ibid.: 76).

It is tempting to suppose that the emotion which exalts has been transmitted through the forms we contemplate by the artist who created them. If this be so, the transmitted emotion, whatever it may be, must be of such a kind that it can be expressed in any sort of form – in pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, textiles, &c., &c. (Ibid.: 68-9).

Those resistant to the idea that Bell intends the aesthetic emotion to mean ecstasy, rapture or exaltation, may point out that if this were true, then one would need to place an inconsistency at Bell's door. Bell holds to the following claims:

- (P1) Art is that which produces the aesthetic emotion;⁵
- (P2) The aesthetic emotion is only produced by significant form;
- (P3) Ecstasy, exaltation and rapture are produced by significant form and, at least, religion.

These premises are all consistent. But, if one adds the premise I am attributing to Bell, then they become inconsistent.

- ([Bell's alleged] P4) The aesthetic emotion is the emotion picked out by the terms 'ecstasy,' 'exaltation,' and 'rapture.'

We need not overly concern ourselves with how Bell might respond, as one need not hold fast to Bell's theory in its entirety to think that the weight of evidence suggests that he characterises the aesthetic emotion as ecstasy, exaltation or rapture. It is undoubtedly undesirable to attribute a position to Bell which would make his central claims inconsistent when taken together, but without any alternative conception of the aesthetic emotion on the horizon, it seems that the fallacy I am attributing to Bell may be the lesser falsehood.⁶

Finally, it may be pointed out that Bell refers to "the aesthetic emotion," implying that there is a single emotion that is constitutive of aesthetic experience, whereas I have ostensibly referred to three emotions. The question that naturally arises from this is which of these is the aesthetic emotion? The answer, I believe, is that 'ecstasy,' 'exaltation,' and 'rapture' are all lexical markers of the same emotional state, which emphasise different aspects of it.

§4.ii. Characterising Bell's 'Aesthetic Emotion.'

This naturally leads us to consider what these aspects of the aesthetic emotion are, and in so doing, to how the aesthetic emotion may be characterised independently of reference to significant form.

'Ecstasy,' 'exaltation,' and 'rapture' all refer to an emotional state that is characterised, in part, by being pleasurable. But more than this, 'exaltation' and 'rapture' make reference to the feeling of being raised up somehow. 'Rapture' also refers to one's attention being seized by object of that rapture, and feeling absorbed by it, and 'ecstasy' refers to the feeling that we are in some way transcending ourselves.

Bell makes reference to many of these features in his description of our responses to art. He writes for example that "the contemplation of pure form leads to a state of extraordinary exaltation and complete detachment from the concerns of life" and that "Art transports us from the world of

⁵ Consider, for example, "this emotion is called the aesthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all the objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the central problem of aesthetics. We shall have discovered the essential quality in a work of art, the quality that distinguishes works of art from all other classes of objects." (Ibid: 7).

⁶ Indeed, I may not need to place an inconsistency at Bell's door after all; as we shall see in the next chapter, it is not clear that religion *per se* is a trigger of ecstasy.

man's activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation. For a moment, we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested; we are lifted above the stream of life." (Ibid.: 27).

Here, we can clearly see the items identified in our brief analysis of exaltation and ecstasy: the sense of being lifted from oneself and from one's concerns, and transported out of oneself. But what of the idea of being absorbed by object. This can best be seen in the following quote:

[In this state of exaltation,] instead of recognising [the object of that emotion's] accidental or conditional importance, we become aware of its essential reality, of the God in everything, of the universal in the particular, of the all-pervading-rhythm. Call it by what name you will, the thing that I am talking about is that which lies behind the appearance of all things – that which gives to all things their individual significance, the thing in itself, the ultimate reality. (Ibid.: 69-70).

Here we see the idea, with platonic overtones, of seeing behind the veil of appearances, and getting *closer* to the way the world really is. Whilst it falls short of an explicit statement of becoming absorbed into the art object – after all, one can see behind a veil without coming closer to it – when taken together with Bell's other statements of the effect of the aesthetic emotion, it requires but a short leap of the imagination to see how Bell may believe that one becomes absorbed in the object. This quote also suggests another component of the state of ecstasy: namely, that one often feels a sense of the object of one's ecstasy being 'true,' and of having accessed a significant truth through the object of one's ecstasy.

It is no surprise that Bell's account has a platonic flavour, given that Bell was profoundly influenced by Moore, who was himself a neo-platonist. Indeed, Plato himself in the *Phaedrus* seems to offer a very similar account of the experience of beauty, at least, as ecstasy.

In Plato's *Phaedrus* ([c. 370] 1875), Socrates and Phaedrus are discussing rhetoric and love. Socrates distinguishes four kinds of madness – prophetic madness, the madness of an individual suffering from an inherited curse (e.g. Oedipus), the madness that comes from the muses and the madness provoked by the experience of beauty. In describing the lattermost kind of madness, Plato writes that the individual is "transported with the recollection of the true beauty; he would like to fly away, but he cannot; he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below" (ibid.: 249). Later, Socrates describes the experience in more precise terms:

At first, a shudder runs through him, and again the old awe steals over him; then looking upon the face of his beloved as of a god he reverences him, and if he were not afraid of being thought a downright madman, he would sacrifice to his beloved as to the image of a god; then while he gazes on him there is a sort of reaction, and the shudder passes into an unusual heat and perspiration; for, as he receives the effluence of beauty through the eyes, the wing moistens and he warms. And as he warms, the parts out of which the wing grew, and which had been hitherto closed and rigid, and had prevented the wing from shooting forth, are melted, and as nourishment streams upon him, the lower end of the wing begins to swell and grow from the roots upwards; and the growth swells under the whole soul – for once the whole was winged. During this whole process the whole soul is all in a state of ebullition and effervescence, – which may be compared to the irritation and uneasiness in the gums at the time of cutting teeth, – bubbles up, and has a feeling of uneasiness and tickling; but when in like

manner the soul is beginning to grow wings, the beauty of the beloved meets her eye and she receives the sensible warm motion of particles which flow towards her, therefore called emotion, is refreshed and warmed by them, and then she ceases from her pain to joy. (Ibid.: 251).

Whilst Plato's description is clearly aided by metaphor, the experiential state referred to thereby should be apparent – it seems to be an experience of awe followed by ecstasy. The man feels the need to worship the boy, and feels that he has been lifted off the ground and he has the sense of having accessed a profound truth. This seems similar to the account of ecstasy described by Bell. Plato mentions a few other components not present in Bell: namely, feelings of warmth, tumescent liquidity, and, perhaps, chills.

A remarkably similar conception of the emotion is, I believe, also found in the accounts of beauty offered by, at least, Dewey, Schopenhauer and Beardsley. Unfortunately, I do not have space to defend this exegetical thesis in each of these cases. For the sake of economy, I will only discuss Beardsley's last formulation of his account. There are a number of reasons to select Beardsley's account.

First, Beardsley was clearly influenced by Dewey (who himself was influenced by Schopenhauer), and tried to avoid the criticisms that were levelled against Dewey and his own earlier accounts. Second, Beardsley offers the clearest and most detailed statement of the view and the success of his account is not, like Schopenhauer's, hostage to the fortunes of a metaphysics that is far removed from the naturalistically inclined metaphysics that has been assumed in this thesis. As such, his account is the worthiest of consideration given that he attempts to clearly distil what was valuable about these other philosophers' accounts whilst disposing of their unclarities and loftier metaphysical fancies.

Finally, Beardsley's account has been widely thought to be gravely flawed as a result of objections raised by George Dickie – specifically, that the psychological entity posited by Beardsley is a 'phantom.' As a result, even if my argument that Beardsley should be taken as offering an account of beauty in terms of ecstasy, then one might feel that this would be a shallow success – one of more historical than genuine philosophical importance. In discussing Beardsley's view, I can not only extend the philosophical pedigree of the ecstasy proposal, and develop the account further, but also defend the account against one influential objection. Indeed, as we shall see, it is only when one can see that Beardsley should be taken as offering an account of beauty as ecstasy that we can see why Dickie's objection fails.

Before examining Beardsley's account, it is worth noting that it ostensibly concerns 'aesthetic experience.' Given that I suggested that the aesthetic, and derivative notions such as aesthetic experience, are superficial constructions in chapter one, one might think that there is little point in discussing Beardsley's account. However, it seems likely to me that Beardsley is, in fact, aiming for beauty in his characterisation, or at least can be most charitably taken to be so. As we will see, Beardsley is concerned with experiences of unity – which is close to the conception of beauty as 'uniformity within variety' that is found in the British sentimentalists (e.g. Hutcheson, [1725] 1973), among others). In what follows, I largely follow Beardsley in talking about aesthetic experience, but also note that his account fails (as it is, at least) as one of the experience of beauty.

§5. Beardsley's treatment of aesthetic experience: two puzzles.

In common with Langer and Moore, Beardsley seems to be motivated to postulate a unique

mental event account of the experience of beauty on phenomenological grounds. He notes that it seems:

...obvious that musical, literary, dramatic, plastic, and other such experiences do have something rather special about them. And though they are not exact substitutes for each other, they seem to go together: the experience of listening to a song has more in common with the experience of looking at a piece of sculpture than it does, say, with that of walking a picket line or driving down the Schuylkill Expressway. (Beardsley, 1982: 79).⁷

Of course, that these activities seem to “go together” on the phenomenological plane does not secure the claim that there is a single mental state that underlies this phenomenological similarity. But this option is, nevertheless, one that has proved appealing to many philosophers, as we have seen.

Beardsley suggests the possibility that “we can distinguish an aesthetic experience from a non-aesthetic one in terms of its own internal properties, and thus decide whether or not an experience is aesthetic without having first to know whether or not the *object* of (and in) the experience has the properties that permit aesthetic experiences” (ibid.).

Beardsley asks which predicates – apart from saying that it is of a particular duration – characterise the ‘aesthetic’ experience? This is Beardsley’s first puzzle. Beardsley’s second puzzle is whether these predicates, if they can be elucidated, would be sufficient to parcel off ‘aesthetic’ experience from all other kinds of experience.

§5.i. Beardsley’s ‘internal’ account of aesthetic experience.

Beardsley’s proposes that the following account meets both the first and second puzzles:

A person is having an aesthetic experience during a particular stretch of time if and only if the greater part of his mental activity during that time is united and made pleasurable by being tied to the form and qualities of a sensuously presented or imaginatively intended object on which his primary attention is concentrated. (Ibid.: 81).

From this, he goes on to say that the structure of aesthetic experience may be sketched in the following manner. He argues that when someone, say, listens to a piece of music or watches a motion picture, she attends to the various features of what he calls the “phenomenally objective field”: to sounds, pictures and so forth. At the same time, he notes, she is aware of various “phenomenally subjective events”: her expectations are aroused and she feels satisfactions when they are fulfilled, or she has emotions towards the events that occur in the film. By way of further clarification, Beardsley says that:

We can describe the phenomenally objective qualities and forms: these are the properties of the work of art that appear in the experience. We can describe the phenomenally subjective feelings and emotions: they may be said to be ‘evoked by’ or the ‘responses to’ the work of art, and in this special sense these affects can

⁷ Beardsley contrasts this approach with that deployed by philosophers, such as Urmson for example, who attempt to define the aesthetic experience as satisfaction; where what makes a satisfaction aesthetic depends entirely on what kind of properties one takes satisfaction in. This is the same type of strategy that was later developed, with limited success, by Carroll, as we saw in chapter one.

be said to be caused by the objective features. The experience, as such, consists of both objective and affective elements, and, indeed, of all the elements of awareness that occur in the perceiver during the time of exposure to the work of art, except those elements that are unconnected with that work of art (e.g. traffic noises or sudden thoughts of unpaid bills). (Ibid.: 82).

Beardsley's account rests on the claim that our experiences can be more or less unified – by which he means that it may be experienced as more or less complete, and more or less coherent. In further elaborating Beardsley's account of this unique aesthetic mental state, it is necessary to consider Dickie's well-known criticisms of Beardsley's account, since Beardsley himself refines his account in light of these and, as I have already said, Dickie's criticisms have been proposed to be responsible for the decline of such views in the late twentieth century up until the present day.

§5.ii. Beardsley's alleged phantom.

Dickie (1965) argues that Beardsley's account must be rejected because the term “unified” cannot be intelligibly applied to experiences. To make this argument, Dickie notes that the word ‘experience’ is a convenient catch all term that we use when we do not need to describe events very definitely. Dickie's argument is that for a use of this term to be intelligible it must be able to be cashed out more specifically: to use Dickie's examples, the expression “it was a great experience” simply means “it (the game) was thrilling” and “it was an experience I shall never forget” becomes “I shall always remember the game” (ibid.: 135).

Dickie claims that for the expression “the unity of experience” or “a unified experience” to mean anything, it must be thought to be shorthand for either the claim that (a) the work of art was perceived as unified, or (b) the work of art evoked a particular emotion.

From this, he concludes that no terms apply intelligibly or irreducibly to ‘experiences’ as such. They must either be reduced, in this case, to particular affective episodes or to properties of particular objects. Beardsley calls this Dickie's experience thesis.

Dickie also argues that we cannot intelligibly apply the terms “unified,” “coherent” and “complete” to what Beardsley calls the phenomenally subjective features of the experience as such. That is, he does not think it makes sense to talk about a particular affective response as unified or a sequence of affective responses as unified. Beardsley calls this Dickie's affect thesis.

To bring out the thrust of Dickie's criticism more clearly: Dickie argues that the claim that an experience is unified could only be true if the objects of those experiences have this property, or if the affective responses have this property. Since, Dickie claims, affective responses (or sequences thereof) cannot possess this property, if one speaks truly when one says that one has a unified experience, this must be a description of the properties that attach to the object of that experience. If this is true, then we do not have a psychological entity that is said to be itself ‘unified.’ As a result, if the ‘aesthetic’ experience is proposed to be just such a psychological entity, then it is a phantom.

Beardsley believes that both the experience thesis and the affect thesis are false. That is, sequences of affect can truly be said to be unified, and that experiences more generally can be said to be unified, and irreducibly so. Or, more specifically, Beardsley thinks that the following three claims are true: (1) that what he calls the “phenomenally objective presentation in experience” can be unified; (2) that what he calls the “phenomenally subjective events” can be unified; and (3) that the “phenomenally objective presentation in experience” can be unified with the “phenomenally subjective events.”

Of these claims, Beardsley seems to suggest that the third claim is *minimally* sufficient for an experience to be irreducibly unified (and, by extension, to secure the falsity of the experience thesis but not necessarily the affect thesis), but that the conjunction of claims (1) and (2) is also sufficient for an experience to be unified (and, by extension, to secure the falsity of both the experience and affect thesis).

§5.iii. Beardsley's attempt to banish the spectre of metaphysical queerness.

To establish the truth of claims (1-3), and with them the falsity of the experience and affect theses, Beardsley considers Dickie's treatment of his idea of unity through coherence.⁸ He does so by attempting to argue for the conjunction of claims (1) and (2).

Using the example of music, the position that Beardsley defends is that (1) a musical composition, for example, may be heard as a highly coherent phenomenal object and (2) an experience that involves close continued attention to the music may also be highly coherent when the affective elements of the experience are under the control, so to speak, of the perceptual elements. Beardsley stands by his description of the coherence of experience (leaning heavily on Dewey), as being that "one thing leads to another; continuity of development, without gaps or dead spaces, a sense of overall providential pattern of guidance, an orderly cumulation of energy towards a climax, are present to an unusual degree" (Beardsley, 1958: 528).

Dickie's objection, as Beardsley himself notes, is that: "everything referred to here is a perceptual characteristic (what Beardsley calls 'the phenomenally objective presentation in experience') and not an effect of the perceived characteristics. Thus no ground is furnished for concluding that experiences can be unified in the sense of being coherent" (Dickie, 1965: 131).

Beardsley replies by claiming that these expressions apply not only to phenomenally objective fields, but also to feelings. Beardsley writes that:

A feeling for example, may vary in intensity over a certain stretch of time, and it may change by gentle degrees or abruptly; or it may be interrupted by quite opposed or irrelevant feelings; it may fluctuate in a random way, at the mercy of shifts in the phenomenally objective field, or it may begin as one feeling among many and slowly spread over the whole field of awareness. (Beardsley, 1982: 84).

From this, Beardsley concludes that "it seems to [him] that the terms 'continuity' and 'discontinuity' apply quite clearly to such sequences, and continuity makes for coherence, in affects as well as in objects" (ibid.: 84-5). Beardsley here is attempting to show that claim (2) is true (and on the assumption that (1) is uncontroversial, that both Dickie's experience and affect thesis are false).

In order to allay the worry that the claim that affect can be coherent is "due to the philosophers' high handedness with plain language," Beardsley appeals to "the authority of a psychologist." Beardsley cites the general characteristics of Maslow's 'peak-experiences':

The person in the peak-experiences feels more integrated (unified, whole, of-a-piece) than at other times... He is now most free of blocks, inhibitions, cautions,

⁸ Beardsley also discusses Dickie's criticism of his claim that aesthetic experiences are unified by being complete. Much of what is relevant for our purposes here can be gleaned from the discussion of coherence, and so I will not discuss completeness. Completeness is a matter of expectations and impulses being resolved.

fears, doubts, controls, reservations, self-criticisms, brakes... (Maslow, 1962: 98 & 101).

From this, Beardsley says that “if it is true that the person in aesthetic experiences feels a high degree of “integration” (which I construe as a kind of coherence), then it would seem that there is in fact an integration of his feelings: they feel closely related to each other, as though they belong to each other” (Beardsley, 1982: 85).

§5.iv. Beardsley’s second puzzle: the insufficiency of Beardsley’s solution.

Let us attempt to clarify this dialectic with the help of an example. Imagine the following scene. A woman is alone in her house at night watching television. She hears a noise upstairs. She dismisses the noise as simply the normal creaks of an old house, and settles down to watch the television once again. She hears the noise again, and this time turns off the television. The sounds of flat and sharp notes of a double bass creep in, interjected with the dissonant sounds of cluster cords played on a piano and ominous swells of percussion. The woman nervously climbs the staircase and calls out in a quavering voice. The camera switches between angles suggesting what is in her visual field – moving shakily and haphazardly between objects in her line of sight – to angles suggesting that she is being watched. Emerging at the top of the stairs, she extends her hand slowly towards a door handle as the music rises to a terrifying crescendo of fast, shrill strokes of the violin. As the door opens, the camera cuts to the back of her head, precluding a good deal of her environment, and suggesting that her killer may be close-by but still unseen. All of a sudden, and with a loud bang of percussion, a cat jumps down from an open draw in the room in which it has been playing. The woman shrieks, and, recognising the cat, the music ceases abruptly, the woman laughs and picks it up, telling it how mischievous it is. At that moment, there is a noise somewhere else in the house, the woman looks around, the eerie music resumes and her search continues. The same sequence of events play out, but this time, it is not a cat that the woman finds, but the film’s antagonist, who proceeds to murder her in a grisly fashion.

With this example laid out, what can be said about this in the terms that Beardsley proposes concerning coherence?

Recall that Beardsley requires at least the third of the following three claims to hold for an experience to be unified (in the sense of being coherent): (1) that what he calls the “phenomenally objective presentation in experience” is coherent; (2) that what he calls the “phenomenally subjective events” are coherent; and (3) that the “phenomenally objective presentation in experience” is coherent with the “phenomenally subjective events.”

Turning to the first claim, a member of an audience may experience the “phenomenally objective presentation” as coherent in a number of senses. There is, for example, continuity of narrative and characters. The woman in the sequence does not suddenly disappear, to be replaced by, say, Frank Sinatra. Similarly, the scene does not arbitrarily cut to scenes from a documentary about the solar system intermittently. There is psychological continuity in the sequence too. The woman does not, upon hearing the noise upstairs, take this as a cue to dance around the living room in celebration, nor does the cat, upon being remonstrated, answer back to justify its actions. The sequence also has artistic coherence: the soundtrack accompanying the unfolding scene is not, for example, muzac, jazz, canned laughter, or a music hall ditty, and the cinematographer has not chosen to light everything in the scene or apply a red filter to the lenses to give it a warm inviting glow.

Let us turn to the second claim. It also may be said that there is coherence among what Beardsley calls the “phenomenally subjective feelings and emotions” of the audience members. The

audience members may feel their muscles tensing, and a stirring of anxiety in their viscera as the music creeps in, and a palpable sense of terror and fright when the cat and murderer appear. Feelings of tension, anxiety, and fright are all coherent, in the sense that one often accompanies the others, they often have the same cause, and that interludes of one may increase the intensity of subsequent feelings or concurrent feelings of the other types, in a way in which interludes of feelings of, say, calmness or sadness do not.

Turning to the third claim, feelings of tension may be said to be coherent with the features of the scene in the sense that they cause, and moreover are warranted by it, the features of the scene. The sequences of perceptual events – from the cinematography, to the narrative that plays out, to the music – all induce tension, anxiety and finally terror.

With this example, it seems that both of the ways in which Beardsley suggested an experience might be considered to be irreducibly unified (in this case by being coherent) have been met.

There are at least two difficulties with this account. The first is an epistemic difficulty, namely that Beardsley's account seems to underdetermine where a single sequence begins and ends. If the sequence is the whole film, then it is unclear that there would be a single coherent experience; but if the sequence were delimited to a particular scene, or even just a small subsection of it, there may well be a coherent experience. To this, Beardsley may simply respond, as above, that all he requires to secure the possibility of a coherent experience is for there to be sequences which satisfy either claims (1) and (2) or (3).

But this leads us to a second, and more pressing, difficulty, namely that this response may unwittingly cast the net of coherent experience so wide that it can no longer serve the function of playing a role in parcelling off 'aesthetic' experiences (or, and more importantly for my purposes, experiences of beauty) from other kinds of experiences.

Take an admittedly short sequence, which seems to satisfy the claims (1-3). A mother comes back from a trip abroad, and as she is reunited with her daughter, the mother says to her daughter that she has a present for her. The mother ruffles through her bag. The daughter feels anticipation and excitement. The mother's hand settles on the gift, and she pauses. The mother tells the daughter to close her eyes and open her hands. The rustling, pause, and inability to see all serve to increase the child's suspense and excitement. The daughter's experience fulfils all of Beardsley's criteria for a coherent experience, but it is not an aesthetic experience, or an experience of beauty.

The problem of insufficiency is all the more clear in cases where only claim (3) holds. Consider, for example, seeing a photograph of a snake, and feeling fear. One's perception is coherent with one's affective state, in the sense that the perception of a snake both causes and warrants feeling fear, but one certainly isn't having an aesthetic experience, or an experience of beauty, even if one is thrilled by this fear.

Beardsley may wish to save his account from such unintended consequences by pointing out that his account requires a high degree of coherence. But this response isn't without its dangers. For the problem then comes to determine the level of coherence above which an experience becomes 'aesthetic' or one of beauty. But notwithstanding this difficulty, even if it could be solved, it seems that degree of coherence is a red herring. One could elaborate the simple sequence of a mother and daughter to increase the level of coherence, but it doesn't seem as though any additional amount of *coherence* would make the daughter's experience an aesthetic experience or one of beauty.

In sum, even if Beardsley is correct to think that he has answered his first puzzle – that is, characterising the features of 'aesthetic' experience 'internally' – and defending it against Dickie's attacks, he has failed to solve his second puzzle – that is, showing that his account is sufficient for aesthetic experience, or experiences of beauty.

§5.v. Beardsley's first puzzle: the phantom continues to appear.

But, one may wonder whether Beardsley has even successfully solved the first puzzle – that is, of characterising the aesthetic experience ‘internally.’ To see why, it is worth pausing a moment longer on Dickie’s criticism of Beardsley’s thesis. Dickie’s claim, recall, is that unity does not *irreducibly* attach to experiences as such. Beardsley’s response, as I shown above, is to say that experiences as such can be said to be unified in the sense of being coherent when their composite parts – percepts and/or affects – cohere in various ways. But it should not go unnoticed that there is a slippage in Beardsley’s counter-claim.

The slippage here is from the first-person to the third-person perspective. The experience is coherent in the way Beardsley says when one considers the composition of percepts and affects that make up an experience as *the object of experience*. In this case, it seems that the experience is not *irreducibly* coherent, as Dickie requires: the coherent experience reduces to having an experience of seeing the elements of an experience – percepts and/or affects – as coherent, where the coherence belongs to the object of that experience rather than the experience itself. In this way, Dickie’s argument that Beardsley’s claim may reduce to a property of the objects experienced holds against Beardsley’s response.

But, recall, that Dickie claimed that, for the notion of “experience of unity” to be meaningful, it either reduces to a property of an object of experience, or to an affective state (or sequence of such states). This latter option is still open. In the face this, one might wonder whether Beardsley gives any clues as to a distinct phenomenology which might constitute the ‘unified experience.’

§5.vi. A second solution from within: banishing the phantom.

I think that there is such a distinct phenomenology. Beardsley seems to intend two different senses of the notion of ‘unified experience,’ which he runs together:

Beardsley claim 1: An experience is unified if, at least, one’s percept(s) and affect(s) cohere with one another or one’s percepts and affects respectively cohere.

Beardsley claim 2: An experience is unified if one *feels unified* in some sense.

The first sense of the notion should be familiar from the discussion above, but what evidence is there that Beardsley intends the second sense of the claim at points?

The primary evidence for this comes from the way in which Beardsley marshals Maslow’s work to support his account of integration. Recall that he quotes Maslow as saying that “the person in the peak-experiences feels more integrated (unified, all-of-a-piece) than at other times.... He is now most free of blocks, inhibitions, cautions, fears, doubts, controls, reservations, self-criticisms, brakes....” Beardsley takes Maslow’s idea that one can *feel more integrated* to imply that, in those moments, “there is in fact an integration of feelings: they feel closely related to each other and to each other.” What Beardsley precisely intends here is not quite clear: he may mean that when we say we feel more integrated, we simply mean that there is a coherence of feelings, or he may intend something weaker, namely that when one’s feelings are coherent, this causes one to feel more integrated.

But, either way, Beardsley is not correct. When an audience member watches the sequences from the horror film described above, her experience may be coherent (in that it satisfies Beardsley’s

criteria for a coherent experience), but it is highly doubtful that she feels integrated as a result, and even less certain that she “is now free of blocks, inhibitions, cautions, *fears*, doubts, controls, reservations, self-criticisms, brakes...” (my italics). As a result, they cannot be logically identical, and it is at least questionable whether one reliably causes the other.

A second line of evidence comes from Beardsley’s understanding of the notion of aesthetic pleasure. Beardsley acknowledges that his account “may have suggested a rather dry and solemn view of aesthetic experiences,” because he has not spoken of “those delightful characteristics of Maslow’s “peak experiences”: the sense of liberation, the joy of play, elation, fullness of power.” To redress this, Beardsley argues that he allows for the term “pleasure” to cover all such positive affective states.

Although Beardsley intends pleasure to mean all of these things, there is a real danger of equivocation here. It is not true that experiences of pleasure, as they are commonly understood, always result in these characteristics. When one eats a tasty morsel of food, and finds pleasure in it, one does not ordinarily experience a sense of liberation, elation, or fullness of power as a result.

At least some of these additional characteristics however, such as feelings of liberation from one’s desires and worries and vitality, are characteristic of the emotional state of ecstasy, which is, it should be added, always pleasurable (as we will further see in the next chapter).

Once one understands that Beardsley may intend the emotional state that is close to, if not identical to, ecstasy, then his mistake becomes apparent. In attempting to argue that aesthetic pleasure is the pleasure in a unified experience, he mistakenly attributes the properties of the phenomenology – namely, a feeling of unity in some sense – to the relationship between one’s perceptions and affective states.

With this clarified, it should also be clear that Beardsley’s account is better thought of as aiming at the experience of beauty specifically, rather than the full gamut of experiences that arise from artworks experienced as such: it is the experience of beauty, I suggest, that is like Maslow’s peak experiences (as we will see further in the following chapters), but many ‘aesthetic experiences’ – such as the thrilling terror that arises during horror films – are not.

My suggestion is, then, that Beardsley identifies some truth in his account of the aesthetic experience that is very close to that identified by Bell – namely that a feeling of unity in a sense, among other feelings such as feelings of liberation and vitality, occur during experiences of beauty.

One might object that even if this is the case, it does not assuage the objection that Dickie raises. Even if Beardsley mistakes the claim that an experience is unified if one feels unified in some sense for the claim that an experience is unified if one’s percepts and affects cohere respectively and with one another, Dickie’s objection still stands: that is, unity is not an irreducible property of feelings. Whilst I leave a fuller discussion of this objection to the next chapter, it is worth briefly noting that Dickie’s objection seems to lack traction. For one thing, it is no more odd to believe that one can feel “unified” in a sense than it is to feel “down” or “deflated” when sad. That one can feel unified even when there is no unity may simply be a fact of phenomenology – albeit a slightly unexpected one on reflection – just as it may be a fact that one can feel “down” even when one is not moving down. For another, even if the feeling of unity is reducible, this does not entail that what it is reduced to will not be able to provide the basis for an account of a unique mental state that is caused by beauty and only beauty.

In sum then, we can draw two conclusions from this consideration of Beardsley’s account of the ‘aesthetic’ experience: firstly, that he can best be taken to argue, like Bell, that ecstasy is the emotion caused by the contemplation of beauty, and secondly, that interpreting him as offering such an account is at least a more promising means of avoiding the objection that the ‘aesthetic’ experience is a phantom.

§6. Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have attempted to show that a number of philosophical aestheticians – namely, Plato, Bell and Beardsley – have proposed (or can best be taken to propose) that beauty at the very least causes a *sui generis* mental event, and that this event is the emotion of ecstasy. I have also briefly suggested that understanding the unique mental event as ecstasy provides the most promising grounds for avoiding one of the objections – namely Dickie’s claim that the most plausible candidate ‘aesthetic’ mental event is a phantom – that has disabled contemporary research in this area.

In the remaining chapters in this part, I will further develop the characterization of ecstasy that has been offered by these philosophers, and support the link between beauty and ecstasy – using data from some of the other cognitive sciences not discussed heretofore – namely, psychology and neuroscience.

Chapter 5 – The Emotion Ecstasy: I.

§1. Introduction.

In the last chapter, I attempted to show that a number of those philosophical aestheticians that have proposed an ‘aesthetic’ *sui generis* mental event can best be taken to suggest that this event is the emotion of ecstasy, and that it is caused by beauty. In the remaining three chapters of this second part of the thesis, I attempt to defend and develop this claim by drawing on empirical findings. Using this data, I argue that the capacity to experience the emotion ecstasy is part of our common human nature, and that it is not only reliably caused by beauty, but can be used to provide a response-dependent account of beauty.

The central claim of this second part of the thesis is that a response-dependent account of beauty of the following form is true:

x is beautiful \leftrightarrow x is disposed to give rise to x-directed ecstasy in standard conditions in standard subjects.

In order to convincingly demonstrate that this biconditional is true, it is helpful to answer two questions: firstly, what is ecstasy? And secondly, is beauty the disposition to cause ecstasy?

The second question can be thought of as Beardsley’s second puzzle (as discussed in the last chapter): namely, is it the case that the state of ecstasy is necessary and sufficient to parcel off experiences of beauty? We will turn to answer this question in chapter seven.

The first question can be thought of as Beardsley’s first puzzle (as discussed in the last chapter): namely, how can the state that is produced by beauty be characterised ‘internally’? Recall that, in the last chapter, I observed that emotions are commonly thought to be psychological states composed of a number of components: (i) a characteristic appraisal of the relation between the object of the emotion and the individual (which is sometimes talked about in terms of an emotion’s ‘formal’ object) (ii) affective phenomenology or feelings; (iii) characteristic physiological changes; (iv) action tendencies; (v) motivational valence and (vi) a characteristic facial expression. Since I claim that the state that beauty causes is an emotion – ecstasy – I will attempt to characterise ecstasy ‘internally’ in terms of components (i)-(v) in the next two chapters.

In this chapter, I will primarily draw on the evidence that has been collected by Marghanita Laski to characterise ecstasy at the personal level.

As we will see, two worries that are similar to those advanced by Dickie against the accounts of ‘aesthetic’ experience that I discussed in chapters 3 and 4 – namely, Dickie’s claim that ‘disinterested’ attention reduces to mere attention and his claim that Beardsley’s aesthetic experience is a ‘phantom’ – apply to Laski’s data regarding the affective phenomenology of ecstasy. In this chapter, I attempt to assuage these Dickie-style objections on *a priori* grounds.

Notwithstanding these responses, I suggest that we cannot merely rely on a *a priori* analysis of the descriptions of participants recalling experiences of ecstasy in order to fully characterise ecstasy internally and thereby rebut the Dickie-style objections, but also need to look to the sub-personal changes that might underlie these phenomenal experiences. In chapter 7, I develop my account of ecstasy as a *sui generis* state by attempting to characterise this state in terms of the sub-personal

changes involved in episodes of ecstasy by drawing on evidence on temporal lobe epilepsy, chills and processing fluency.

§2. What is the ‘formal’ object of ecstasy?

Unlike components of emotions such as affective phenomenology/feelings, physiological changes, action tendencies, valence and facial expression, an emotion’s formal object (as it was first labelled by Kenny, (1963)) is arguably the philosophically most important component of emotions, and certainly both the most contentious and difficult to grasp.

As such, it is important to examine what a formal object is and what role it plays in characterising an emotion briefly, before turning to consider ecstasy’s formal object. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the complexities of the philosophy of the emotion, so this discussion is necessarily truncated, and focused on what I take to be most important for my purposes.

A number of distinctions are in order. Emotions have actual causes, intentional objects and (at least often) formal objects. Let us take each in turn, using the following example. Suppose that Anna thinks that she has been insulted by James, and as a result gets angry with James. But suppose that Anna has misheard, and was in fact insulted by Thomas. In this case, the actual cause of Anna’s anger is Thomas, but the intentional object of Anna’s anger is James. The formal object of Anna’s anger is the offence to her.

The formal object then, can be thought of as the evaluative relation that is appraised to hold between the subject of the emotion and the intentional object of that emotion. To put it another way, it is that which the emotion is *about*. Emotions are responses to events that are significant to us, and different emotions help us to negotiate different significant events. As such, it has commonly been thought that understanding which significant events the different emotions are responses to is important to determine how many distinct emotions there are in addition to playing a role in the emotion’s rationality. Moreover, it is the presence of formal objects that are thought to provide a distinction between the moods and emotions. Emotions are directed at particular events and objects of significance to us in the world, whereas moods spread themselves over the world in a more diffuse way.¹

In the philosophy of the emotion, there has been a longstanding debate about the nature of the mental state that represents this evaluative relation. Many of the substantive disagreements now seem to me to have been resolved, but it is instructive to briefly consider this debate in order to arrive at the correct account of formal objects.

§2.i. The nature of the representation of formal objects & the distinction between basic and complex emotions.

On the one hand, strong ‘cognitivists’ about the emotions argue that the mental state that represents this relation is an ordinary propositional attitude, such as a belief or ‘judgement.’ For

¹ Many thanks to Bence Nanay for pressing me to think about why the *sui generis* ‘aesthetic’ mental state is an emotion (aside from the fact that it has been named as such by Bell, Langer and Moore). As we will see shortly, the answer is that this ‘aesthetic’ *sui generis* mental state is ecstasy, and ecstasy is (plausibly) an emotion on the grounds that it is a program of changes of the kind that are paradigmatic of emotions in response to instantiations of a certain kind of significance to the organism. This is a good thing too: as we saw in the last chapter, if the mental state were a mere motivational state like pleasure, or even pleasure of the disinterested kind, it wouldn’t be sufficient for a response-dependent account of beauty. And if the mental state were a mood, it wouldn’t be able to provide a response-dependent account of beauty, since it would be difficult to account for the beauty of particular objects – if ecstasy weren’t a response to particular intentional objects, it would spread over all objects in the intentional object’s environment.

example, in the case of anger, Robert Solomon argues that “what constitutes the anger is my judging that I have been insulted and offended” (1976: 47).²

On the other hand, ‘non-cognitivists’ argue that the mental state that represents the ‘formal’ object is not a belief, at least in some cases, on the grounds that the relevant beliefs or judgements are not necessary antecedents for at least some episodes of emotion to ensue. Non-cognitivists have made this point in two primary ways.³

Firstly, a number of philosophers have argued that pre-linguistic infants and animals can experience these states, though they presumably do not have the cognitive capabilities to make judgements. Robinson (2004: 32) and Griffiths (1997: 88), for example, note that the behaviourist Watson showed that restraining a new-born’s head is a universal stimulus for rage, but they do not have the cognitive resources to make evaluations such as “That was an offence!” D’Arms and Jacobson (2003), following Deigh (1994), put the point more clearly in the following way. They note that, judgements or beliefs are propositional attitudes, and to possess these, one must possess the concepts that are the content of those propositions. However, animals and infants have emotions but lack the concepts required for the propositions that are apparently necessary for emotions. As a result, cognitivism is false.⁴

Secondly, other philosophers, such as Stocker and Hegeman (1992), have claimed that emotional responses can occur in the presence of beliefs that would be inconsistent with the belief that cognitivists propose is involved in or even constitutes an emotional response. They also point out that evaluative beliefs can occur in the absence of emotional responses. One can believe that planes are the safest way to travel, and still have a fear of flying; and, conversely, one can believe that skating on ice is a threat to one’s well-being and not feel fear. As a result of such cases, De Sousa (2004: 62) has likened the emotions to perceptions. Just as certain perceptual illusions persist in the face of contrary beliefs, so too may episodes of emotions.

In response, non-cognitivists propose slightly different accounts of the necessary antecedents of an emotion. Drawing primarily on Joseph LeDoux’s work on fear conditioning in rats, Robinson (2004, 2005) argues that the formal object of emotions is not represented in cognitive representations, such as beliefs, but rather as a “quick and dirty” appraisal that occurs in subcortical structures. Of these affective appraisals, Robinson notes, for example, “it would seem impossible for rough and ready affective appraisals to distinguish subtle differences between shame and guilt, jealousy and envy” (Robinson, 2004: 37). Robinson does not, however, eliminate the role of cognitive states altogether. Rather she gives them a diminished role.

² Indeed, Solomon thinks that the relevant belief is not only a necessary antecedent but the emotion itself, but we needn’t follow Solomon in this. Solomon (2004: 77) has since denied that his thesis that emotions are judgements should be understood to be “singular summary judgements (such as might be used to briefly define them or distinguish one emotion from another,” that they are something deliberative, articulate, or fully conscious” or that they are “propositional attitudes.”

³ There are theories of emotions, such as Prinz (2004) that do not neatly fit into non-cognitivism as I am describing it here. I assume, however, that what I have to say about ecstasy can be transposed into a Prinzian framework without doing too much damage to the proposals made here.

⁴ This objection is not quite right, as has been pointed out recently. Blackman (2013) has cogently argued that if this were correct then the emotions of infants and animals would not have intentionality, and as a result, it would be at least questionable whether they are emotions at all. Blackman notes that D’Arms and Jacobsen’s proposed solution is that an emotion is “a syndrome of directed attention, physiological changes, affect and motivation that can be functionally understood as constituting a kind of appraisal of the circumstances. There may be no better way of articulating the appraisal than by saying that it involves construing oneself to be in imminent danger” (2003: 139). Blackman argues that this doesn’t seem to account for the intentionality of the emotion, as if one flees, none of the components of this response are directed at the intentional object of the emotion (2013: 70). To solve the problem, Blackman proposes that those who have made this criticism have misunderstood the nature of propositional attitudes. Propositional attitudes, Blackman notes, can have non-conceptual content – and it seems that pre-linguistic infants and non-human animals may deploy appraisals with non-conceptual content. This seems right to me, as we shall see.

The cognitive system can also (more slowly) appraise the eliciting stimulus – allowing for conceptually sophisticated human emotions such as shame and guilt – and it has limited causal powers in modifying action tendencies, physiological changes, and subjective feelings. For Robinson, however, these cognitive evaluations are not by themselves either necessary or sufficient for emotional responses. The belief that my stocks and shares are in danger of falling is not in itself sufficient to feel fear – in order for that to be the case the thought needs to activate the affective appraisal for ‘danger to oneself.’

Griffiths (2004, 1997) proposes that there are two psychological kinds that are picked out by the vernacular ‘emotion’: ‘affect programmes’ and ‘higher cognitive’ or ‘complex’ emotions. Griffiths claims that affect programmes are “short-lived, highly automatic, triggered in the early stages of processing perceptual information, and realised in anatomically ancient brain structures that we share with other vertebrates” (2004: 236). These emotions involve what Griffiths has called low-level appraisals, which he thinks of as a kind of innate “preparedness to interpret certain stimuli as having a particular ecological significance,” such as ‘danger’ for fear, and ‘noxiousness’ for disgust (1997: 89-90).⁵ In the case of fear, for example, we are prepared to respond fearfully and readily learn fear responses to the “prevalent sources of danger” in one’s environment during human evolution.

Like Robinson, Griffiths believes that cognitive processes can have some limited influence on the operation of such affect programmes. He notes, for example, that it may be that the rational evaluation of a stimulus as emotionally significant in some way may cause the triggering system to be sensitive to those stimuli in future, and cites evidence that at least some autonomic responses can be influenced by manipulating the interpretation of a stimulus by higher cognitive processes (Griffiths, 1997: 97-8). Unlike Robinson, however, Griffiths argues that complex emotions, such as guilt or self-loathing, are “unlikely to be reduced to the basic emotions, or understood as blends or elaborations of them,” though they “may involve basic emotions as parts” (Griffiths, 2004: 237). For Griffiths, these emotions require “responding in a more cognitively complex way to more highly analysed information” (ibid.). Griffiths argues that the affect programmes and higher cognitive emotions do not form one natural kind (in the sense that investigations of one are not ‘projectible’ to the other), but notwithstanding this, that some ‘higher cognitive’ or ‘complex’ emotions may be *analogous* to some basic emotions: one might cognitively appraise a global financial crash as a danger to oneself, and take actions to avoid it. The two fear emotions involve similar content – danger to oneself – but involve different psychological processes.

In sum, both Robinson and Griffiths posit that there are two streams to psychological processing involved in the emotions: a higher cognitive system, and a lower non-cognitive system, and that there can be evaluative representations at both levels. According to Griffiths, the higher cognitive system “uses information of the sort they verbally ascent to... to guide relatively long-term actions and to solve theoretical problems” (Griffiths, 1997: 92). The lower non-cognitive system, unlike the higher cognitive system, has many of the features of modular systems, in being opaque (people are aware of the outputs, but not the processes that lead to them), informationally encapsulated (it does not have access to the information stored in other cognitive systems, and can contradict that information), and mandatory (the processing at this level is automatic). As such, one can have a higher cognitive evaluative representation of, say, danger to oneself, and lower non-cognitive representation of ‘danger to oneself’; and these can come apart (giving rise to the pattern of conjunctions and disjunctions of beliefs and emotions that are described by Stocker).

⁵ Griffiths later describes the appraisal mechanism with reference to what Ekman calls an “automatic appraisal mechanism.” Griffiths says that this mechanism receives perceptual information “presumably at a quite basic level of analysis, and compares this to ‘memories’ which would take the form of generalisations about the significance of certain perceptible features” (1997: 92).

In the face of the non-cognitivist challenge, prominent cognitivists have argued that their claims have been misunderstood. Solomon (2004: 77), for example, argues that the judgements that are constitutive of emotions are not beliefs, deliberative, fully conscious, articulate, or propositional attitudes. Similarly, another cognitive theorist – Martha Nussbaum (2001: 114) – has argued that a theory of the emotions is “already in [a] sense a cognitive theory [if] the transmission of information within the animal is central to it,” which as De Sousa (2004: 61-2) notes, is so weak that it is “difficult to see what ground is left for non-cognitivism to occupy.” Nussbaum (2001) also argues that the content of the judgements that constitute emotions cannot be expressed in language without distortion. As such, it seems that on substantive issues, a form of non-cognitivism is correct.

Having now briefly discussed the debate between cognitivists and non-cognitivists, it is important to emphasise the conclusions that should be drawn about the nature of the representation of the formal object. As should be clear from this discussion of the debate surrounding the nature of the emotions, at least the basic emotions involve an appraisal that is non-conceptual. As Griffiths has put it:

A good, and close, analogy is that between emotional representations and states of the early stages of visual processing. The states of edge and motion detectors in the visual system, for example, are clearly ‘representations’ in some general sense of the term, but we do not expect to be able to characterise the representational content of these states using sentences of English while preserving all the semantic and inferential properties of those sentences! (Griffiths, 2003: 41).

Indeed, on Robinson’s account at least, all episodes of emotions involve such non-conceptual appraisals.⁶

As a consequence of the fact that at least many emotions involve non-conceptual appraisals, it can be extremely difficult to accurately specify the nature of the formal objects using the concepts expressed in language. There is not room here to discuss all the proposals, but discussion of one – anger – should illustrate the problem. It has been proposed for example that the formal object of anger is offence or damage to the self (Solomon, 1977: 47; and Nussbaum, 2004: 188) or “a barrier that prevents the satisfaction of an important need” (Panksepp, 1998: 202) or other-caused, motive inconsistent events (Roseman, 1984: 31).

In the case of the ‘offence’ proposal, the problem is that it is part of the concept of offence that it is caused by the intentional actions of another agent, whether the offence was deliberate or not. But, as noted by Robinson, the mere restraining of a pre-linguistic infant or non-human animals can result in an anger response, but it does not seem plausible to suggest that these pre-linguistic infants or non-human animals have a concept with such inferential links or that they are deploying it in this instance.

We encounter problems with the other suggestions as well. The “damage to the self” proposal is clearly at least not sufficient, and perhaps not necessary, for anger, as an appraisal of damage to the body might cause disgust and fear. In the case of the proposal of a “barrier to the satisfaction of an important need” proposal, an insult need not be the barrier to the satisfaction of an important need,

⁶ Psychologists have attempted to characterise these appraisals by asking people who have experienced a particular emotion to report the appraisal process. However, as Griffiths notes, “this comes close to ‘conceptual analysis by numbers’ or, as the leading appraisal theorist Klaus Scherer has expressed it, to studies that ‘do little more than explicate the implicational semantic structures of our emotion vocabulary’” (Griffiths, 2003: 41).

but it may still cause anger. The “other-caused, motive inconsistent events” proposal does not look necessary or sufficient either. A child’s head that has been restrained by an inanimate object may become angry, and many instances of fear and disgust may be appraised as other-caused and motive-inconsistent.

§2.ii. Is ecstasy a basic emotion?

In light of all this, we are almost in a position to consider what the formal object of ecstasy is. According to both Griffiths and Robinson, if ecstasy is a ‘basic’ emotion, then one should expect that it should, at least in most cases, involve a non-conceptual appraisal. However, if it is a ‘complex’ emotion (in Griffiths terms), it should have a conceptual appraisal. So is ecstasy basic or complex?

Although I cannot answer the question of basicness decisively here, a number of considerations suggest that ecstasy is at least closer to a basic emotion than a ‘complex’ emotion.

Firstly, as we shall see, ecstasy appears to be present across cultures. For example, as I will show in the next chapter, at least one of the components of ecstasy – chills had in response to beauty – has been shown to be the best marker of the openness to experience personality trait across a wide range of cultures. Secondly, if beauty is present cross-culturally, as I have argued, and the constitutive thesis is true, then it is implied that ecstasy is also present across cultures. Third, supposing that the constitutive thesis is true, since we often instantly recognise beauty when we see it, often cannot help but experience beauty as beautiful when we see it (as suggested in §4.ii. of chapter 3), and often cannot say why something is beautiful, this implies that the emotion may be modular in the way that basic emotions are. Fourth, as I will show in this and the next chapter, since the emotion is well differentiated at the level of the autonomic nervous system, and involves a characteristic facial expression⁷, it seems likely that it may be phylogenetically old like the other basic emotions (though perhaps not as old as, say, fear). Finally, although I am not currently certain what adaptive problem, or problems, ecstasy evolved in response to, as the data are too few to draw any firm conclusions on this matter, as we will see in the next chapter there is some evidence that ecstasy may have evolved from the suite of response involved in attachment behaviours – between kin, and sexual partners. As such, it may have proved adaptive in this domain.

§2.ii. Harmony with the self as the formal object of ecstasy.

So, what is the non-conceptual appraisal involved in ecstasy? In answering this question, it is helpful to examine some of the data on ecstasy. In two books, Marghanita Laski (1961, 1980) provides the most comprehensive empirical account of ecstasy that has been offered to date.⁸ Laski collected descriptions of ecstasy in 27 literary extracts, 22 religious texts, and by interviewing 63 subjects, and offered an account of ecstasy from this data. She asked her interview subjects whether they had known of a “sensation of transcendent ecstasy” and asked them to describe what it felt like

⁷ It is widely thought, due to the influence of Darwin and Paul Ekman no doubt, that the basic emotions are those that involve a characteristic facial expression. The logic behind this, though often unstated, seems to be that the basic emotions are those that involve distinct autonomic changes that evolved through natural selection to deal with particular adaptively significant events, and that if a given emotion is indeed autonomically distinct, it should involve a characteristic facial expression. This is puzzling. It is not clear why it should be the case that distinctive facial expressions should co-vary with distinctive autonomic responses (or any other affective responses, for that matter). It seems likely that there would only be such a characteristic facial expression if (a) changes in the musculature were part of, or a side effect of, the adaptive response, or (b) there was some adaptive value in being able to signify one’s affective state to others.

⁸ Maslow (1962, 1964, 1971) has also studied ecstasy, under the rubric of peak experience. However, whilst Maslow conducted various studies, largely based on interviews, he does not report his methodologies or the data collected in a rigorous and clear manner, and so his work will not be considered here.

and what caused it, among other questions.⁹ In order to avoid any potential confusions, it is important to stress at this point that the notion of ecstasy that is intended by both Laski (and by me) is not the notion picked out by the expression ‘being ecstatic’ – in the sense of excitedly happy – but that of “transcendent ecstasy,” in the sense of the features that will be discussed shortly.

Although Laski did not ask her participants to describe the aspect of the environment that they felt was responsible for their ecstasy, we can use the information she provides about the triggers of ecstasy, together with the appraisal suggested by descriptions of the experience of ecstasy itself, in order to determine the appraisal involved in ecstasy.

In her interview group, which was the only group in which subjects listed multiple triggers, 148 triggers were mentioned, of which (in descending order of frequency): 20.9% were art, 18.2% were nature, 16.8% were sexual love, 5.4% were movement, 4.7% were creative work, 4.0% were ‘beauty,’ 3.4% were childbirth, scientific knowledge and recollection/introspection respectively and 1.4% were poetic knowledge (and 8.8% were “miscellaneous”). Across all three of Laski’s groups, and a second group of subjects interviewed¹⁰, the proportions of types of the 212 triggers mentioned were as follows (in descending order of frequency): 24.5% were nature, 19.8% were art, 13.7% were sexual love, 10.4% were of religion, 5.2% were of beauty, 4.7% were of recollection/introspection, 3.8% were of creative work, 3.3% were of scientific knowledge, 2.8% were of childbirth, and 2.4% were of poetic knowledge (ibid.: 486).

In the face of this, one might ask, as Laski does: what property do all of these things have in common? Laski herself suggests (but ultimately, and wrongly, rejects) the idea that all of the triggers of ecstasy are found to be beautiful. Certainly, beauty was the only property that was mentioned and this figure is likely to be grossly underrepresented, as it seems clear that the great majority of the triggers of ecstasy are beauty.

In the case of nature, Laski observes that, excluding references to nature generally, subjects tended to mention scenery and landscapes, and in particular water, mountains, trees, flowers, the flight and song of birds, stars, the moon, wild animals, blue skies and clouds, light, sunset and sunrise (ibid.: 187-9). All of which are paradigmatic examples of natural beauty.

In the case of art, it also seems to be the case that only beautiful art is able to trigger ecstasy. In her discussion of architecture, for example, Laski notes that only two kinds of architectural object were commonly named – namely particular ruins and cathedrals – which Laski notes were always of “acknowledged beauty,” as are those cities which are cited as causing ecstasies, such as Venice and Constantinople. Indeed, Laski claims that beauty is a necessary feature of architectural triggers (ibid.: 191-3).¹¹

⁹ Laski asked: “(1) Do you know a sensation of transcendent ecstasy? (2) How would you describe it? (3) What has induced it in you? (4) How many times in your life have you felt it – in units, tens, hundreds? (5) What is your religion or faith? (6) Do you know of a feeling of creative inspiration? (7) How would you describe it? (8) Does it seem to you to have anything in common with ecstasy? (9) What is your profession?” (Laski, 1961: 9).

¹⁰ One part of this group of participants were recruited by posting a questionnaire similar to that used by Laski in her interviews through 100 letterboxes “in a working-class district of London.” The second part of this group of participants were recruited by a psychologist who sent a modified form of the questionnaire to 7 people, of which 4 were university colleagues and students and 3 were “non-academic middle class people” (ibid.: 526-7).

¹¹ The necessity of beauty for art objects and natural objects to be causally efficacious triggers is explicit in some of Laski’s interview subjects’ answers to what caused ecstasy, especially those who volunteered more detailed descriptions of the triggers. For example, one of Laski’s subjects reported that her experiences of ecstasy were triggered by “a really beautiful piece of music, most Beethoven, some Mozart, the night I heard Kathleen Ferrier singing ‘Chanson de Mer’ – a really beautiful spring or autumn day, mostly autumn – a play beautifully acted and produced, Shakespeare, Olivier’s *Richard III* and *Titus* at Stratford – and ballet, the first I ever saw” (ibid.: 393-4).

In the case of recollection/introspection, the mere act of recollection was not found to be sufficient to trigger ecstasy.¹² Only the recollection of beautiful artworks and beautiful nature was able to act as triggers of ecstasy among Laski's participants. One participant, for example, reported an ecstasy in recollection of a beautiful painting.

In the case of poetic and scientific knowledge, it seems that here again mere knowledge of, at least the latter kind, was not sufficient for ecstasy. Coming to discover that the humpback whale, for example, is a member of the biological class mammal is certainly a scientific truth, but it lacks the requisite unifying capacity that seems to be required of triggers of this kind. One of Laski's subjects reports "solving mathematical problems" as a trigger, and another mentions reading the anthropologist James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* for the first time. Laski also cites Einstein who is reported by his biographer to have claimed that:

The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mystical. It is the sower of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger... is as good as dead. To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty, which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms – this knowledge, this feeling, is at the centre of true religiousness. In this sense, and in this sense only, I belong to the ranks of the devoutly religious men. (Frank, 1947: 340-1, as cited by Laski, 1961: 201).

In all three cases, the trigger seems to be the act of perceiving a deeper unity behind a variety of parts that did not seem to be previously unified. Solving a mathematical problem often consists of discovering an answer which reveals why the elements of the problem are as they are and how they are related, and even that they are necessarily so. In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer presents a myriad of particular facts about religious practices and beliefs in different cultures and proposes an explanatory model of these data which identifies commonalities within this variation and explains why the variation is as it is. In the case of Einstein, he can be taken to be speaking of discovering some aspect of the laws of nature that explains why the universe, amidst all its complexity, is as it is given those laws. Or, to put it another way, which Einstein himself articulates, in each of these cases, the trigger seems to be beauty.

In the case of poetic knowledge, matters are not quite as clear. Laski takes poetic knowledge to be the "conviction of the truth of the statement (often metaphysical and implying a value judgement)" (ibid.: 201). It may be better to say that in the case of poetic knowledge one sees a unity lying behind variegated appearances, and that in the case of poetic knowledge, one simply cannot specify what this unity consists in. And here again, it seems like this would be a case of beauty.

Arguably, much of the same can be said about creative work. Aside from those cases that simply seemed to be caused by the contemplation of beauty – as in the case of the participant who reported an experience of ecstasy when "writing about beautiful scenes" – it seems that it is the appraisal of the products of creative work as perfectly expressing feelings or thoughts that were hitherto latent or disordered that caused the experience of ecstasy. One participant, for example, reported feeling ecstasy as a result of being "suddenly able to express something in permanent form."

In the case of religion, it is questionable whether it was the religious content of the religious objects that were causally efficacious in inducing ecstasy. There are a number of facts that support

¹² Laski classified a trigger as recollection/introspection "when ecstasy is induced by something not physically present at the time" (excluding cases of prayer or religious meditation) (ibid.: 26-7).

this scepticism. Firstly, as Laski herself notes, many of the entries that Laski made for religion were not simply for contemplation of religious objects, but beautiful works of art with religious significance. Secondly, many of the triggers with religious significance were reported by those without any religious beliefs. Thirdly, Laski observes that even in the group of religious texts only one text mentions prayer, and that it is even questionable whether St. Teresa – who is perhaps the most well known religious ecstatic – was able to trigger her ecstasies by contemplating mere religious content (ibid.: 195). Laski cites St. Teresa as admitting that, in trying to induce ecstasies, “I could make no use at all of my imagination in the way that others do who can induce recollection by calling up mental images” but instead found it helpful to look at “fields, water, or flowers,” to take a walk in the countryside, look at a picture or read a book, all of which, as we have seen, are objects and activities through which beauty is commonly experienced (ibid.: 50, 196). It seems, then, that it may have been the beauty of the religious objects, or the beautiful objects which are encountered during religious activities, that gave rise to ecstasy rather than the religious significance itself.

Nonetheless, there are some triggers of ecstasy that look harder to accommodate at first sight, such as childbirth, movement, and sexual love. Indeed, Laski rejects the idea that ecstasy is caused by beauty on the grounds that we do not commonly describe, for example, copulation or childbirth as beautiful (though she notes that we might well so characterise the idea of sexual love and childbirth) (ibid.: 223). I propose, however, that these cases do not pose a problem. In some cases, these triggers can be thought of as simply cases of beauty or deviantly-caused cases of ecstasy.

In the case of movement/exercise, often this does not seem to be causally sufficient for ecstasy in itself: where efficacious, it seems to be accompanied by another trigger, such as an experience of something beautiful in nature.¹³ Nonetheless, there do seem to be some rare cases where movement or rhythm, in the absence of a further trigger, triggers an ecstatic experience. Four of Laski’s participants mentioned swimming as a trigger to ecstasy, and one of Laski’s interview subjects reported (in conversation) having an experience of ecstasy in childhood when playing netball, which seems to have been caused by forward and upward movement. The subject noted that “...you don’t get it from any other game because you’re earthbound. You seem to be jumping up out of yourself in a queer way. You felt all uplifted and happy, real ecstasy” (ibid.: 199-200).

In any case, these cases do not present much of a problem to the claim that beauty and ecstasy are intimately linked. Emotions admit of what is sometimes called “backwards induction.” As shown by Ekman et al. (1983), if people are told to mimic the behavioural expressions of emotional episodes, they can thereby come to have episodes of those emotions induced.¹⁴ In many of the cases of forward or upward movement (which are, as we will see shortly, components of the feelings involved in episodes of ecstasy), it appears that this may be just such a case of backward induction.

In the case of childbirth, Laski found that the ecstasy is usually encountered when (a) the child is first placed in the mother’s arms or first seen, and (b) when the baby’s cry is first heard (Laski, 1961: 142). Among all of these responses, the actual experience of childbirth is never reported as a trigger of ecstasy. In these cases, it is not childbirth, considered as a mere object of perception or

¹³ For example, Laski notes that Wordsworth seems to be particularly sensitive to rhythmical movements (as well as forward movement at speed) in inducing ecstasy on the grounds that the sonnet *Westminster bridge* was composed on the back of a moving coach, four other poems were composed on horseback (*Chatsworth, thou stately mansion*, *Elegiac Musings in the Grounds of Coleorton Hall*, *The Warning*, and *Among all lovely things my heart has been*), and that the quasi-mystical experiences described in his poem *The Prelude*, all occurred to him while walking, running or climbing. However, it is worth pointing out that Wordsworth was in the presence of beauty in all of these cases. In both the cases of *Westminster Bridge* and *The Prelude*, for example, Wordsworth seems to be having experiences of scenic and natural beauty respectively.

¹⁴ Ekman and colleagues found that asking participants to model the facial expression for an emotion (without telling them which emotion it expresses) produced some of the autonomic effects associated with those emotions.

contemplation which is the trigger of ecstasy, but rather objects that are likely to be appraised as beautiful by the mother: namely, the face of the mother's new born baby and the sounds it makes.

The same can be said of experiences of ecstasy in response to copulation. It is not the perception or contemplation of the act of sexual intercourse that seems to be a trigger of ecstasy but certain experiences had during sexual intercourse, as indicated by a close look at Laski's data. In those cases where sex is mentioned as a trigger (which are, incidentally, outnumbered by those of 'love,') it appears to be a special kind of sex, as when one subject describes "love in its fullest sense, spiritual and physical," and another says "it wasn't just sex, it was everything right at that moment" (ibid.: 440). In these cases, the lover's experience of ecstasy is caused by the perceiving of the beloved – whom are invariably seen as beautiful if they are indeed beloved – along with an appraisal of the various elements of the lover's experience as being harmonious and perfect. No doubt this appraisal of perfection and harmony is aided by the rhythm of the lovers' actions, and the perceived synchrony of each parties' desires and actions.¹⁵

In sum, then, it seems that a few deviant cases of backwards induction aside, beauty does indeed seem to cause ecstasy (at least in Laski's sample). One might be tempted to simply argue that the 'formal' object of ecstasy is beauty. On this account, experiences of ecstasy involve an appraisal of beauty.

But, I think we can be a little more informative than this from Laski's data. It seems that many of the cases of ecstasy reported seem to result from an, often unarticulated, appraisal of the triggers as having internal harmony or unity, or as being harmoniously related to the subject of the experience. Indeed, this is evident from the participants' descriptions of their perceptions and intellectual seemings during experiences of ecstasy. Participants report, for example, a "felt achievement of pattern or harmony," "[something] suddenly clicked, perception of a pattern," "sensation of absolute oneness, rightness, the same thing – the whole world falls into place, matches, fits" (ibid.: 85). That is, the participants report that the object of their ecstasy, and the world more generally in many cases, seems to be harmoniously related to them.

At this point, one might raise the objection that the beauty cannot involve an appraisal of harmony, or any related notions such as uniformity within variety, on the grounds that for something to possess harmony, or any related qualities, the harmonious object must possess more than one part, and there are a number of beautiful things that do not possess more than one part. To this, two replies can be made.

The first is that one advantage of understanding beauty in terms of ecstasy, as I seek to do, is that the appraisal involved in emotions (or at least those that are not higher cognitive emotions) is non-conceptual. As such, in saying that the appraisal involved in ecstasy is harmony, I am providing the closest description of what is represented by this appraisal in one natural language, but one should not, as both cognitivists and non-cognitivists now agree, think that this appraisal possesses all of the inferential properties that the concept expressed by the word 'harmony' has.

The second is that both beautiful objects with multiple parts, and those with only one, may be appraised as being harmonious with the self. Where a beautiful object has multiple parts, the harmony may be *judged* to be located within the object, but it nonetheless seems likely that this will be the upshot of appraising the object as being harmoniously related to oneself. Where a beautiful

¹⁵ Indeed, the belief that some experiences of sexual love are of a piece with 'aesthetic' experiences (by which experiences of beauty may be intended) is supported by Gary Kemp's (1999: 398) assertion, in the context of discussing accounts of the aesthetic attitude (and, importantly, entirely independently of the constitutive thesis or any of the data discussed here), that aesthetic experience and love-making can be brought together by a common state of mind.

object does not have multiple parts, we may hesitate to *judge* it as harmonious, in trying to speak accurately, but it also nonetheless seems likely that the object may be appraised as being harmoniously related to self.

In conclusion, then, ecstasy seems to involve a non-conceptual representation of something like ‘harmony with the self.’

§3. What are the other components of ecstasy?

Having now characterised the formal object of ecstasy, we turn to the other components of ecstasy – namely, subjective phenomenology, physiological changes, valence, perceptual changes, and facial expression? Here the descriptions of ecstasy provided by Bell, the Plato of the Phaedrus, and Beardsley may be of some use, as summarised in table 1.

Component	Philosopher		
	Bell	Plato of the Phaedrus	Beardsley
Up-feelings, sometimes described in terms of a tumescent or flowing warm liquid.	“Exaltation” and “we are lifted above the stream of life”	[The soul] “grows wings” and is in a “state of ebullition and effervescence”; “he warms”	-
Loss of worries/concerns	“Complete detachment from the concerns of life”; “For a moment, we are shut off from human interests; our anticipations and memories are arrested”	“he is like a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below”	“now free of blocks, inhibitions, cautions, fears, doubts, controls, reservations, self-criticisms, brakes...”
Unity/contact/self-transcendence	“Art transports us from the world of man’s activity to a world of aesthetic exaltation”	“transported with the recollection of the true beauty”; “when in like manner the soul is beginning to grow wings, the beauty of the beloved meets her eye and she receives the sensible warm motion of particles that flow towards her...”	“feels more integrated (unified, all-of-a-piece) than at other times”
Perception of fundamental truth	[In exaltation] “we become aware of [the object of the emotion’s] essential reality... that which lies beyond the appearance of all things”	“recollection of the true beauty”	-
Chills/tears		“a shudder runs through him”	-
Positive valence	“exaltation”; “rapture”; and “ecstasy”	“joy”	“pleasure”
Moral action tendencies	-	“he would sacrifice to his beloved as to the image of a god”	-

Table 1. Components of ‘ecstasy’ mentioned by Plato, Bell, and Beardsley.

In both constructing a more comprehensive account of the components involved in ecstasy, and to further secure the truth of the claim that such a state even exists and has these characteristics, it would be helpful to gather some empirical evidence on this state for a number of reasons.

For one thing, it does not seem wise to posit that there is a *sui generis* state generated in response to beauty and characterise that state *merely* on the basis of the testimony of such a small number of people – even if these people are keen observers of their own phenomenology (as they surely are).

Indeed, we should be all the more cautious given that it is not clear whether these and other philosophical accounts of this proposed state provide literal descriptions of only what these experiences are or whether they provide these truths couched in metaphorical language, perhaps shot through with various unnecessary metaphysical commitments. If the latter is true, as may be the case for accounts such as that offered by Schopenhauer (which we have avoided) and Plato and Neo-Platonists such as Bell, then in relying too heavily on these accounts in characterising ecstasy, we run the danger of mistaking the superficial way in which a particular account presents ecstasy for more basic truths about it. One might further worry, in the vein of Dickie, that once one strips away these metaphysical commitments and the high-handed use of language in which they often appear, then one will see that there is no such *sui generis* emotion.

In order to help protect against these worries, it is helpful to be able to draw on evidence from the folk. If nature has furnished us with such a state, then, *prima facie*, this state should be able to be experienced by the folk and will be able to be reported by them without being influenced by the aforementioned philosophers' metaphysical commitments and idiosyncratic metaphorical expressions. Here again we can turn to the data collected by Laski.

§3.i. Marghanita Laski's Data.

Upon analyzing the descriptions offered, Laski discovered a common pattern to the descriptions with regard to the way that the experience was described.

In describing their experiences of ecstasy, Laski claimed that subjects typically reported a sense of loss of something, a sense of a gain of something, and physical feelings (described either literally or metaphorically).

On Laski's analysis, subjects typically spoke of a sense of loss of the following: difference (e.g., "the hard lines around one's individuality are gone"); time (e.g. "complete absence of a sense of specific time"); place (e.g. "detached from every earthly thing and place"); limitation (e.g. "transcend your normal limitations"); worldliness (e.g. "detached from every earthly thing"); desire (e.g. "all human desires and purposes shrivelled"); sorrow (e.g. "all my past wretchedness and pain is forgot"); sin (e.g. "we are mostly kept from transcendent living by sin"); self (e.g. "a loss of the sense of being oneself"); words and/or images (e.g. "I don't know how to put it into words"); sense (e.g. "overwhelming all other senses and superseded thought") (ibid.: 17, 28).

Laski claims that subjects also typically spoke of a sense of gain of the following: unity and/or 'everything' (e.g. "a sense of the oneness of things"); timelessness (e.g. "sensation of timelessness"); an ideal place, heaven (e.g. "as if being borne into heaven itself"); release (e.g. "complete sense of liberation"); a new life, another world (e.g. "soaring up to something you've always wanted, always known was there"); satisfaction (e.g. "complete satisfaction"); joy (e.g. "extreme happiness"); salvation, perfection (e.g. "the experience couldn't be more perfect"); glory (e.g. "sudden glory"); contact (e.g. "communion with something else"); mystical knowledge (e.g. "sense of certitude about nothing I can define"); new knowledge (e.g. "immensely creative, full of ideas"); knowledge by

identification (e.g. “knowledge of the reality of things”); vitality (e.g. “deeply felt vitality”); and harmony or pattern (e.g. “sensation of absolute oneness, rightness, the same thing – the whole world fall into place, matches, fits”) (ibid.: 18, 85-6). With regards to the epistemic feelings, Laski also found that experiences of ecstasy are often reported to give rise to inspiration, which she understands as the birth of valuable ideas that are communicable to others in some manner. Laski notes that these valuable and communicable ideas are often themselves such that they are able to act as triggers to further experiences of ecstasy (as when an inspiration leads to the creation of, for example, a beautiful theory, or a beautiful poem). Moreover, Laski notes that in some cases the knowledge that is thought to be gained is often reported to be important: concerning human goodness, or a deeper reality than mere appearances.

In addition to these senses of something lost and gained, Laski notes that ecstatic experiences are commonly described as being accompanied by what she calls ‘quasi-feelings.’ Laski found that up-feelings were the most common feelings reported, appearing in half of the interviews, literary and religious texts. Laski claims that these up-feelings can be divided into two types: “feelings of upward thrust or positive movement upwards, which are by far the most numerous,” and “feelings of floating.” Laski notes that feelings of being uplifted are often expressed metaphorically, and even sometimes with literal intention, with expressions about ‘being raised above oneself,’ ‘soaring up,’ ‘being carried away,’ and being ‘elevated,’ ‘exalted,’ or ‘uplifted.’ Laski also observes that this upward thrust is often reported to occur within the body of the ecstatic individual, and is often associated with the heart, as in the expressions “the heart... leaps like a fountain.” Laski notes that, more frequently than these feelings occurring within oneself, is the feeling that one is raised up, as in the expressions “soaring up to something,” “as if being borne into heaven,” and “feeling of physically flying” (ibid.: 67-8).

Laski observes that ecstatic experiences are often accompanied by either flashes of light or the sensation of sustained brightness. However, whilst these two features are commonly mentioned in the literary or religious groups they are almost entirely absent from the interview group and, as Laski herself admits, it is difficult to know how to interpret these cases where they are present. In many cases, it seems likely that they may simply be metaphorical expressions for insight or knowledge gained, as in “my intellect is illuminated,” or communion with God, which in the Christian tradition at least, is commonly symbolised by light, as in cases such as “there is seen the brightness of the Lord,” or to express vitality and the feeling of being alive, as in cases such as “I felt as one illuminated – a vitalizing spark” (ibid.: 464). Alternatively, this may be meant literally, either in the sense that during experiences of ecstasy, people see flashes of light as a matter of fact where there is in fact no perturbation of the retina, or people may see the objects they do in fact see as brighter. Laski suggests that the latter, at least, might be the case, when she observes that people often report that after an ecstatic experience, colours seem brighter (ibid.: 269).

Laski also notes that ecstatic experiences seem also to give rise to feelings described by a group of metaphors involving liquids, containers, and temperature. For instance, the metaphor of a container filling up, sometimes with warm liquid, is commonly employed, as in the expression “something wells up in one... grows like a spring,” Charlotte Bronte’s claim that her reading has “refreshed, refilled, and rewarmd her heart,” and Proust’s description of the sensation of being filled with a precious liquid. Another is of one’s heart melting and releasing liquid, as in St. Bernard’s claim that if we persist in prayer “grace comes steadily in a flood upon us, our breast grows full of increase, a wave of piety fills our inward heart; and if we press on, the milk of sweetness conceived in us will spread over in a fruitful flood.” In a number of cases, the metaphor employed suggests tumescence and release, as when a subject in the interview group reported feeling “this thing that has been

seething inside you and suddenly it comes out,” and Church’s literary description of the feeling that “the inspiration flowed... like blood... the passion rushed out of him.” At other times, the metaphor employed suggests detumescence and emphasises the contents of the container coming into unity with what is outside the container, as when a subject in the interview groups reported feeling that “the hard lines of one’s individuality are gone, one flows over them” and Wordsworth writes of “sensation, soul, and form, / All melted into him” (all of the above, *ibid.*: 79).

Other less frequently mentioned components of the physical feelings that are associated with ecstatic episodes have to do with feelings of changes in breathing, tingles and tears.

In terms of the breathing, Laski notes that one of her subjects reported that the experience of ecstasy was accompanied by “a little heavy breathing,” another reported feeling of constriction in the throat, and that two religious texts reported deep exhales of breath. Laski also notes that there is some evidence that ecstatic experiences are often preceded by deep slow breathing. In support of this, Laski cites Ward’s claims that “in those approaches to ecstasy which are sometimes experienced under the stimulus of nature (for instance), breathing deepens, slows, tends to become like that of a person anaesthetised or otherwise ‘entranced,’” and Jefferies’ claim that he was lost in his moment of exaltation, “involuntarily, [he] drew a long breath, then [he] breathed slowly.” Perhaps linked to up-feelings, the container metaphor commonly employed, and the inhalation of breath, Laski also reports that people often feel enlarged during ecstatic experiences, as evidenced by the ecstatic convert who reports that “suddenly there seemed to be a something sweeping into [them] inflating [their] entire being” (all of the above, *ibid.*: 79-80).

Laski notes that a common claim is that during an experience of ecstasy, people often find themselves in tears or with tears in their eyes, and that this is sometimes reported as occurring after some of the other feelings that characterise ecstasy (*ibid.*: 80).

Laski also found that reports of ecstatic experiences often include descriptions of tinglings. Some of her subjects in the interview group, for example, reported “a tingling that goes on,” “an electric sensation in the chest spreading over our whole body,” and of something “creeping up your spine.” Tingles sometimes appear at the climax of the ecstatic experience and are often described in terms of electricity or lightening (all of the above, *ibid.*: 80).

Laski also notes that there is some suggestion “of an instant of calm at or immediately after the climax of an intensity ecstasy,” as seems to be the case where her interview subjects reported a “standstill feeling,” and “great joyful gusts and a burst, a sudden feeling of complete calm.” Similar experiences appear in descriptions of ecstasies in the religious texts Laski examined where, for example, Suso speaks of “sensations of silence and of rest” at the heart of his experience, and Hugh St. Victor of peace, after he has been carried away by his ecstasy but before he returned to a more ordinary state. Feelings of peace and calm were reported by almost a quarter of the total number of 112 subjects in Laski’s three groups (all of the above, *ibid.*: 85).

Laski also notes that in spite of the fact that subjects often succeed in describing their experiences of ecstasy, subjects also report that these experiences tend to be thought to be ineffable. Indeed, feelings of ineffability account for an average of 2.4% of the total number of characteristics mentioned in the descriptions offered by subjects in each of Laski’s groups, and if we include descriptions of feelings of loss of words, images and sense as expressions of ineffability, this proportion rises to 10.1% of the total number of characteristics mentioned to describe ecstatic episodes (*ibid.*: 482).

Laski notes that ecstatic experiences were often described by subject as “total, infinite, and measureless”: 58% of subjects in the questionnaire group used totality phrases, 90% of subjects in the literary group, and 98% of subjects in the religious group. Laski notes that these totality expressions

take the form of “that which nothing greater can be conceived” in the class concerned, where this can be what is felt, perceived, contacted, known and unified in the ecstatic experience, as in, for example, contact with God, knowledge of the “being of all things” and “supreme happiness” (ibid.: 127-8).

Finally, Laski also notes that as a result of experiences of ecstasy, participants often reported a “generalised love towards everybody and everything, and notably what is normally quite repulsive to them.” She notes that these moral sentiments often result in the felt tendency to perform pro-social actions (ibid.: 271).¹⁶

§3.ii. Characterising ecstasy in light of Laski’s data.

In the face of Laski’s characterisation of the emotion ecstasy, we are faced with a number of issues that need to be ironed out, particularly with regards to the feelings of loss and gain: namely, is there a one-to-one relation between feelings and the contents of the expressions used to describe them? And, in light of this, how many distinct components of ecstasy are there and what are they? With regards to these questions, a number of points can be made.

Many of the descriptions offered by Laski’s participants pick out some of the components of the ecstasy response in a transparent manner, and do not require further discussion at this stage – such as tears, chills, feelings of warmth in the chest, phosphenes, feelings of peace, and action tendencies to approach and perform prosocial actions. However, understanding what is being communicated in other expressions is not quite as simple.

§3.ii.i. Ecstasy and ‘over-beliefs’ – redundant descriptions?

A number of the expressions are descriptions of the same feeling state that have been embroidered on the basis of background beliefs. Laski herself notes, for example, that many of her subjects reported that they had come into contact with a specific named person or thing: those who held religious beliefs named contact with persons and things associated with their religion, such as Christ or God; whereas those subjects with atheistic beliefs tended to report making contact with “reality.” Laski appeals to William James’ (1902) notion of “overbelief” to explain descriptions of ecstatic experiences that make references to religious notions. These beliefs move beyond what is warranted by the experience itself, and can be explained away as a product of filtering these experiences through one’s system of concepts and beliefs. Those that have been enculturated into a religion may be more likely to describe the experiences in religious terms, particularly where the experiences appear to occur in a religious context or in response to a religious object or event.

Indeed, this claim finds empirical support in the work of sociologists Brookover-Bourque and Back (1968, 1969, 1970, 1971). Observing from the work of Laski, among others, that some experiences of ecstasy are ostensibly religious in nature (and seem to be caused by religious triggers) and that others seem to be of a more secular nature (and caused by beauty), Brookover-Bourque and Back attempted to further investigate whether ecstasy is one or more psychological states.

To do this, Brookover-Bourque and Back (1969, 1970, 1971) issued the following questions (among others) to 1,608¹⁷ participants by the Gallup Organisation as part of their regular poll, which was drawn from all over the United States:

¹⁶ Indeed, Laski notes that one of her participants even reported that after her experience of ecstasy, “I welcome the wasps into the kitchen even!” (ibid.: 258).

¹⁷ In order to make the sample more representative of the population, a weighted sample of 3,518 was constructed by duplicating the data of certain interviewees according to a formula based on the likelihood of them being successfully contacted.

- (1) Have you ever seen or heard anything so beautiful that it made you indescribably happy or sad?
- (2) Would you say that you have ever had a religious or mystical experience – that is, a moment of sudden religious insight or awakening?
- (3) (If yes to 1 or 2): (a) How would you describe the way you felt (about the most important experience)? (b) What did the experience convey to (tell) you? (c) Did the experience affect your life in any way?

The data regarding how the participants described their experiences is summarised in the following table (table 2).

Described characteristics of experience	Beauty		Religious	
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
"Negative experience of loss or fear (similar to Laski's "feelings of loss")	113	14.2%	20	2.5%
"Physical expansion or contraction"	176	23.1%	89	11.3%
"Indescribable"	98	12.3%	55	7%
"Peace"	154	19.3%	63	8.0%
"Power, presence of supernatural"	39	4.9%	157	20.0%
"Renewal"	74	9.3%	122	15.5%
"Revelation of some truth"	137	17.2%	275	35.0%
"Nostalgia"	5	0.6%	5	10
Totals	796	100%	786	100%

Table 2. Brookover-Bourque and Back's (1969) findings of experience of ecstasy.

In response to the question of whether the experience had affected the participant's life, Brookover-Bourque and Back found that the participants tended to report that, apart from the revelation of some truth, the experiences had resulted in a moral improvement in themselves: "made me more understanding, made me grateful," "...made me a better man; stopped gambling," "love for one another; it made me feel humans really care about mankind; I've become more tolerant to people," "it made me a better person for the experience" (Back and Brookover-Bourque, 1970: 491).

As can be seen from this summary, the authors did indeed find some differences between the descriptions of religious and secular ecstasies. They found, for example, that participants describing experiences of beauty were more likely to mention "expansive, somewhat physical feelings or a feeling of peace, or a feeling of truth being revealed." By contrast, they found that participants describing religious experiences were more likely to report "revelational feeling of renewal or cleansing." Moreover, the authors also found that participants describing religious experiences were more likely to report a "single experience that significantly changed the pattern of their life" (Brookover-Bourque & Back, 1969: 156).

Brookover-Bourque and Back suggest that the differences are "not so severe as to allow us to positively conclude that the two experiences are qualitatively different." Rather "the differences which exist are primarily in the context from which they arise and the utilisation which is made of them." Brookover-Bourque and Back note, for example, that religious experiences tend to arise in a religious environment, occur only once, and are considered to be significant by the individual; and experiences

of beauty tend to occur in secular contexts, more frequently, and are considered to be less significant by the individual (*ibid.*).¹⁸

To lend support to this deflationary explanation of the differences in characterisations of religious ecstatic experiences and ecstatic experiences of beauty, Brookover-Bourque and Back suggest that differences in enculturation should correlate with differences in the propensity to report experiences of each kind. Those individuals who have had greater contact with religious institutions and who hold religious beliefs may be both more likely to have ecstatic experiences in religious contexts, and describe the experiences that occur in both religious and secular contexts in ways that are consonant with their religious enculturation. (Cf. Bell's claim that religion and art are both means to ecstasies in chapter 4, and Laski's observation that religious objects trigger ecstasies – though she doubts whether the religious significance is itself causally potent – in section 2.ii. of this chapter).

To test this suggestion, Brookover-Bourque and Back divided the participants into four groups: (1) those who only reported having religious experiences, (2) those who reported having only experiences of beauty, (3) those who reported having both religious experiences and experiences of beauty, (4) those who reported having neither religious experiences nor experiences of beauty. They then used multiple discriminant analysis to discover which of the ten demographic variables that were also measured best predicted who will fall into these groups. This kind of analysis of the data constructs what are known as “vectors,” or multiple composite variables, which maximally distinguish between groups.

Brookover-Bourque and Back found that two vectors were of interest in determining who would fall into which group. The first vector was composed of the variables: location of residence, size of community, race, religion, and politics. Those participants who were white and held political views, and who were resident in large communities on the East Coast of the United States, were more likely to report only experiences of beauty or neither kinds of experience; whereas those participants that were non-white, protestant, and from smaller communities that were not located in the East of the US were more likely to report only religious experiences.

The second vector was composed of variables related to education, age, and political affiliations and attitudes towards certain political figures. Those participants who were older, supported the Democratic Party and had a low level of education (grade school level) were more likely to have only religious ecstatic experiences. By contrast, those participants who were younger, approved of Lyndon B Johnson, and had a high level of education (college or professional education), were more likely to report having both kinds of ecstatic experiences, or exclusively experiences of beauty. Those scoring neither low nor high on this vector were most likely to report having neither experience.

In sum, Brookover-Bourque and Back found that ecstatic experiences of beauty tend to be reported by “middle class, well-educated, white residents of the suburbs,” and that religious ecstatic experiences tend to be reported by “the poorly educated, older, rural, [black] populations” (*ibid.*: 169). Brookover-Bourque and Back interpret these findings as supporting the claim that the two experiences are essentially the same, but simply described in different ways by people with different socioeconomic characteristics.¹⁹

¹⁸ Having said that, it is important to stress that this is also a matter of degree: revelation is one of the most commonly mentioned characteristics of experiences of beauty, and Brookover-Bourque and Back also reported that participants who had experiences of beauty also reported single experiences that affected their lives (*ibid.*: 162).

¹⁹ Brookover-Bourque and Back (1971) administered a similar survey in another Gallup poll in 1967 (N = 1503, weighted N = 3168). Unlike in the study reported primarily in (1969), the aesthetic and religious ecstatic experiences were measured using three questions in this study. The question which aimed at aesthetic experiences included, in addition to the question which featured in the 1966 Gallup poll, “Have you ever felt that suddenly the world was perfect and that you understood why the world was the way it is?” and “Have you ever had a feeling of timelessness or a feeling of being outside of your body?” The religious questions included, in addition to the religious question that was administered in the 1966 Gallup poll, “Have you ever had a feeling that you were somehow in the presence of God?”

Aside from providing empirical support for the claim that ecstasy is one psychological state that may be described in different ways according to one's background beliefs, Brookover-Bourque and Back's data also give independent support to the claim that arose from Laski's data that beauty reliably causes ecstasy. Whereas Laski asked her participants whether they had had an experience of a "transcendent ecstasy," without mentioning beauty, and discovered that they tend to be caused by the contemplation of beauty, Brookover-Bourque and Back asked people to describe intense experiences of beauty, without mentioning ecstasy, and found that they tend to describe experiences of ecstasy. Moreover, given that both Laski's and Brookover-Bourque and Back's samples were drawn from different cultures, this also suggests that ecstasy may be present across cultures (this will be taken up again in the next chapter).

§3.ii.ii. What are the feelings of loss and gain & what is the relationship between them?

Given the seeming complementarity of descriptions of certain feelings of loss and gain in Laski's data (see table 3), one might wonder if they are in fact distinct feelings.

Feeling of Loss	Feelings of Gain
Time	Timelessness
Wordly place	An ideal/perfect world
Limitation	Release
Desire / Sorrow	Satisfaction / Joy
Self / Difference	Unity

Table 3. Seemingly complementary feelings of loss and gain.

As Laski herself rightly argues, at least some of these feelings are distinct, as some of the feeling of loss can occur in the absence of their complementary feelings of gain (though the converse is not true). In the case of feelings of loss of desires and sorrow, for example, one can imagine a situation in which one's occurrent desires and sorrow have merely ceased to be occurrent or disappeared altogether, without the feeling of satisfaction and joy that invariably accompanies the quenching of one's desires or the gain of something of value respectively.

By contrast, many of the feelings of gain logically entail feelings of loss, as Laski herself observes:

To gain feelings of all being one is necessarily to lose feelings of difference, to gain feelings of satisfaction is necessarily to lose feelings of desire. One cannot feel oneself in a transformed world and, at the same time, in the everyday one; one cannot gain feelings of timelessness and eternity and retain one's sense of time. And though one can gain a feeling of knowledge without necessarily losing

Notwithstanding these differences, the authors found that a similar pattern of demographic variables to those found in the 1966 survey correlate with whether participants tend to report exclusively religious ecstasies, exclusively aesthetic ecstasies, both, or neither. As before, the authors found two vectors of interest. The first vector was composed of variables related to gender, race, residence, and size of household. Those participants who were female, black, residing in the South in a household comprising more than one adult were found more likely to report exclusively religious experiences. The second vector was composed of level of education. Those with a low level of education were more likely to report having exclusively religious experiences or neither kinds of experience. Those who report exclusively aesthetic ecstatic experiences are less likely to be female, Southern, Black and less well educated. This is broadly in line with the earlier study, and the authors conclude that religious and ecstatic ecstasy "are the same in terms of their content, and that the different descriptions are cognitive-linguistic differences which are a product of the social position of the individual" (1971: 3).

the means of expressing it, one cannot gain feelings of knowing everything without in fact, if not in logic, losing some of one's senses. (Laski, 1961: 279).

Laski's own preferred way to characterise the relationship between these feelings, and to accommodate the fact that they are both constitutive of ecstasy, is to argue that they are distinctive feelings that are chronologically sequent. In support of this, Laski makes two observations. The first is that procedures for inducing ecstasy often include inducing feelings of loss in the hope that feelings of gain will follow. The second is that those who experience ecstasy often find themselves in a state of gain (ibid: 279-80).

This is surely right, but it may also be the case that some of the feelings of loss are simply less intense feelings of gain – as may be the case for, for example, the feelings of loss of limitation, difference, self, time and place, as we shall see shortly.

Before turning to consider this possibility further, it is important to address a simpler and more fundamental worry: one might simply wonder what some of the feelings of loss and gain are – such as feelings of loss of 'self,' 'time,' 'place,' and 'difference' and gain of an 'ideal place,' 'heaven,' 'glory,' 'contact,' and 'unity.'

Indeed, one might object, following Dickie's objections to certain accounts of the 'aesthetic' experience (as discussed in chapters 3 and 4), that the expressions used to describe such feelings of loss or gain must either refer to (i) no feeling at all or (ii) to some other feelings in a metaphorical manner, on the grounds that some of the things that are reportedly felt to be lost or gained cannot truly be felt to be lost or gained.

There are a number of ways that one might try to press this claim. One might attempt to run the following argument, following Dickie's objection to the disinterested account of the 'aesthetic' experience:

- (P1) Participants in ecstasy described feelings of loss (or gain) of X;
- (P2) In order for participants to truly feel a loss (or gain) of X, there must be some feeling of having (or not having) X when not in ecstasy;
- (P3) There are no such feelings of having (or not having) X when not in ecstasy;
- (C) Therefore, participants in ecstasy are not truly having feelings of loss (or gain) of X.

At first sight, this seems to be a more pressing objection to the existence of some of the feelings of loss than it is to the feelings of gain, since one might naturally understand descriptions of feelings of loss as the diminution of a feeling that is ordinarily present. By contrast, it seems that feelings of gain can naturally be understood as the instantiation of a new feeling that need not have any obvious complementary feeling ordinarily in order to be said to truly exist.

Consider, for example, reports of feeling a loss of self. One might think that for it to be clear what the loss of self feels like, we must first know what a feeling of self is ordinarily. And here, we might have worries that the self is not something that we experience. When we examine any experience introspectively – say, the feeling of being hungry, for example, or the experience of perceiving redness – we find that the experience itself does not contain any trace of the subject who these experiences belong to, but simply the content of the experience. Similarly, arguably we do not ordinarily have any obvious conscious feeling or sense of time passing, being located in a worldly place, and being different from one's environment.

That is to say, the feelings of loss are metaphysically relational – they depend on the existence of antecedent conscious feelings of these contents – and since these feelings don't exist, one might argue that there can be no feeling of loss of self, time, place and difference.

By contrast, imagine feeling pain. In order to have a feeling of pain, it is not necessary that we ordinarily have a conscious sense of not being in pain, or any of the feelings that might be thought to be the natural opposite of feelings of pain, such as those that are pleasing. One might feel absolutely nothing at all before an episode of pain ensues. In a similar way, feelings of gain do not seem to be metaphysically relational in the same way – they do not depend on the existence of particular conscious feelings (apart from, perhaps, the absence of the feelings that are supposed to be gained themselves).

However, there are two reasons why this Dickian objection is not as troubling as it might appear at first. Firstly, at least in the case of feelings of loss of time, place and difference it may be that we can lose feelings of this nature. It seems possible that, just as we may sometimes not know that we feel irritable until we *find* ourselves behaving in an irritated manner, we may *ordinarily* have a sense or feeling of these features being present, albeit subconsciously, and be able to become conscious of these feelings by deploying our attention to (or having our attention captured by), for example, time passing, where one is located, and the distinction between oneself and one's environment. Moreover, it seems that these may truly result in feelings or senses that have a characteristic phenomenology, rather than merely thoughts with that content. If this is the case then it may be that when we have experiences of ecstasy, we become aware that the feelings that were subconsciously present are now missing.

Secondly, at least one of the premises – premise (P2) – seems to be false. It does not follow from the fact that we don't ordinarily consciously feel any of the contents of feelings of loss as part of our experiences that we cannot have feelings that are aptly described as such during experiences of ecstasy. That is to say, one does not need to understand *feelings of the loss of X* as *feelings of loss of the feelings of X* as the Dickie-style objection seems to require. As such, the feelings of loss may be just like feelings of gain: it may simply be the case that, even if we do not have any conscious feeling or sense of these features ordinarily, the psychological and physiological changes that underlie these feelings of loss may generate new feelings which feel like they may be aptly described as a feeling of loss of these contents.

One might also attempt to run the following argument against the existence of these feelings of loss and gain, following Dickie's objection to Beardsley's account of 'aesthetic' experience that it posits properties of experiences that cannot properly apply to experiences as such.

- (P1) Participants describe feelings of loss or gain of X;
- (P2) Participants do not, and indeed in some cases *could not (at least in nearby possible worlds)*, truly lose or gain X;
- (C) Therefore, participants cannot truly feel a loss or gain of X.

This argument, if valid, would rule out feelings of loss of difference, worldliness, place, unity, and contact, among others. Consider, for example, the felt loss of difference. Since the subject undergoing the ecstatic experience remains different from the environment throughout the experience – they do not (indeed could not), for example, dissolve into the ground beneath their feet – then one might wish to conclude that they cannot truly feel a loss of difference. In Dickie's terms, one might point out that if one cannot disappear, then that property cannot apply to experiences as such.

Again, this argument does little to trouble the claim that such feelings could exist. It doesn't follow from the fact that these people are not literally undergoing these changes, or indeed, that they could ever undergo such changes, that they could not have feelings that are aptly described by this content. It may simply be a fact that a person may undergo certain psychological and physiological changes during ecstasy, such that they have a sense or feeling that is aptly described by these contents.

This certainly seems to be the case for those 'quasi-physical' feelings that are described using conceptual metaphors. Just as the feelings of becoming angry are aptly described (indeed, can *only* be aptly described at the first personal level) in reference to metaphors involving pressurised containers and temperature (as in the metaphorical expressions "I had steam coming out of my ears," "I felt like I was going to explode," and "I could feel my blood boiling"), it seems that some of the quasi-physical feelings involved in the feelings of ecstasy can be aptly described (and indeed can *only* be aptly described at the first personal level) using such conceptual metaphors (as in descriptions of tumescence and flow involving warm liquids).²⁰

But, descriptions of quasi-physical feelings aside, the question still remains about what reports of feelings such as loss of 'self,' 'difference,' 'worldliness,' and gains of 'heaven,' 'unity,' and an 'ideal place,' amount to, and how many components there are.

It is, quite simply, difficult to answer this question definitively from the armchair. Nonetheless, there are a number of likely possibilities. In many cases, it seems plausible that these feelings should be understood in terms of changes (or combinations thereof) in sub-personal representations of the self and the world, perhaps together with other components in some cases. In this way, in some cases, one might be able to use an answer to the question of what physiological and psychological changes underlie the feelings reported in order to help determine how many distinct feeling components are present.

For example, in the case of descriptions of feelings of loss of self and difference and gain of unity and contact it seems like these may merely be referring to the different intensities of the same feeling component, or, in some cases to multiple components. Descriptions of feelings of loss of self and difference may, for example, both metaphorically refer to the feeling that arises from changes in one's sub-personal representation of one's spatial position, bodily states, and perhaps goal monitoring. When these changes are of a large enough magnitude (say, during intense experiences of ecstasy), and perhaps when combined with other components such as being uplifted, feelings of having gained a truth, or with approach action tendencies, the feeling may be aptly described as unity or contact with the object of one's ecstasy.

In the cases of descriptions of a feeling of heaven or an ideal, perfected place, this may metaphorically refer to the feeling or sense that the object of one's emotion, and the world more generally, is appraised as perfect, perhaps together with a sense of loss of difference or self.²¹

²⁰ This is not, of course, to say that there isn't a sub-personal explanation of why these feelings are aptly described by conceptual metaphors. Indeed, as the cognitive linguist Kocescs (1990) has observed in his study of conceptual metaphors and emotions, some of the emotional feelings described using conceptual metaphors can be linked to changes in the autonomic system associated with the relevant emotions. Kocescs notes, for example, that anger is commonly described using metaphors involving heat, and that Ekman et al. (1983) found that anger produces an increase in skin temperature. Kocescs suggests that the universality of the autonomic components of certain emotions may explain the presence of certain conceptual metaphors across cultures.

²¹ In some cases, such as these, it is not clear what aspect of the tenor of these metaphorical descriptions of feelings is intended to refer to a feature of the experience of ecstasy. For example, in the case of describing the experience like being borne into heaven, one might be describing feelings of vitality (given that it's a new life), uplifted (since heaven is commonly understood to be above us, at least in the Christian tradition that these participants come from), perfection of one's environment or oneself (since heaven is commonly thought to be perfect, and to be populated by good and joyous people), among others. Failing the possibility of being able to interrogate what is intended further, or conduct further empirical research where we see which components co-vary, we must simply make the best inferences possible and rely on the other, less ambiguous, components in interpreting these descriptions.

§3.ii.iii. The Laskian model of ecstasy.

In light of Laski's data, and this discussion, I suggest that we are able to give the following tentative characterisation of the majority of the components of ecstasy (see table 4). As we have just seen, it seems likely that some of these feelings – such as those of loss of desire, sorrow, sin, limitation, loss of time, and loss of self or difference, on the one hand, and gain of vitality and release, gain of timelessness, and contact and unity, on the other hand respectively – may be chronologically sequent feelings, or different intensities of the same feeling. It seems likely that at least some of these feelings – such as the feelings of contact or unity – may be composed of other feelings such as a feeling of loss of self / difference and having gained truth together with other feelings such as feeling uplifted.

Components		
Affective phenomenology / feelings	Feeling of Loss	Time
		Desire / sorrow / sin / limitation
		Self / difference
		Sense / words / images / ineffability
	Feeling of Gain	Timelessness
		Vitality / release
		Joy
		Contact / unity
		Knowledge of truth / inspiration
	Physical Feelings	Uplifted / floating
Warmth in chest (tumescant warm liquid)		
Tears		
Chills		
Calmness / peace		
Perceptual effects	Enhanced perception of brightness	
	Phosphenes	
Appraisal	Harmony	
Action Tendencies	Approach	
	Perform moral actions	

Table 4. Tentative characterisation of ecstasy based on Laski's data.

In individuating some of the components of ecstasy, I have ventured to make *a priori* conjectures as to the sub-personal changes that might underlie such feelings. I have suggested, for example, that feelings of loss of desire (and similar feelings), time and self may be underlain by changes in one's sub-personal representations of one's desires, time, and (perhaps) afferent signals from one's body.

In the next chapter, I turn to consider further evidence to illuminate the nature the sub-personal changes; but before doing this, however, there is one final component that has not been characterised – ecstasy’s characteristic facial expression.

§3.iii. The facial expression characteristic of ecstasy: A proposal.

Some have argued that ecstasy does not have any characteristic facial expression. Algoe and Haidt (2008), for example, argue that the emotion that is caused by the contemplation of moral beauty, and which Haidt calls ‘elevation’ (but which, I shall argue in chapter 8, is simply ecstasy), does not have any distinctive facial expression (and argues, as a result, that it may be basic to a limited extent). I think this is mistaken.

Since Laski only asked people to describe their experiences of ecstasy, and the objects that cause it, her data is not able to cast light on the question of whether there is a characteristic facial expression. Moreover, as far as I am aware, there are no other studies that have sought to investigate whether there is such a facial expression.

In the absence of further empirical studies, we are forced to turn to other sources of evidence. Given that ecstasy seems to be caused by beauty, one might wonder if artistic depictions of people who are uncontroversibly having experiences of beauty might cast light on the facial expression (or at least those that are constrained by the need for immediate intelligibility, and do not use conventionalised representations²²). And indeed they do.

There are at least two films that I know of that feature scenes in which characters explicitly report that they are contemplating beauty, are experiencing it as such, and in which we are able to see their facial expressions. The first occurs in Alan Parker’s *Angela’s Ashes*. In one scene, Frank McCourt’s teacher, Mr. O’Neill, who is teaching Euclidean geometry, asserts that “Euclid is grace, beauty and elegance.” At the moment when Mr. O’Neill makes this assertion, he raises his head, shuts his eyes, and exhales deeply through his open mouth.²³

Moreover, this does not seem to be idiosyncratic to this particular character or actor, as shown by my second example. Stephen Fears’ *The Queen* tells a dramatized account of Elizabeth II’s handling of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. In one scene, the queen sees an imperial stag on the hillside. When the queen sees the stag, the queen’s mouth opens and her brow creases. Time is shown to slow down for the queen, as indicated by the fact that the motion of the stag is undercranked (filmed in more than 24 frames per second). She takes an intake of breath and exclaims “Oh, you beauty!” in a breathy exhalation, and continues to look at the stag, tilting her head back slowly. Her facial expression is similar to that displayed by Mr. O’Neill in *Angela’s Ashes*. The additional element that we see in *The Queen* is a furrowing of the brow. From this admittedly very limited sample, I propose that the facial expression characteristic of ecstasy is a slight opening of the mouth, a furrowing of the inner brow (contraction of the *corrigator superciliaris*), and raising of the outer brow (contraction of the *frontalis*).

§4. Conclusion.

²² Indeed, in his early investigations of human emotional behaviour, Darwin (1872) looked to works of painting and sculpture, but found them too dominated by convention to be of use, and instead used photographs of actors posing.

²³ These lines are lifted directly from the novel itself. In the novel itself (1996: 153), Mr. O’Neill gets the boys to affirm that Euclid bring us each of the qualities of grace, beauty and elegance, and adds that “Euclid is complete in himself and divine in application.” Frank McCourt describes Mr. O’Neill’s facial expression after this episode as follows: “[Mr O’Neill] opens his eyes and sighs and you can see the eyes are a little watery.” The tears and deep exhales of breath are, as we have seen from Laski’s data, characteristic of ecstasy.

In this chapter, I have offered a characterisation of ecstasy in terms of the components that are commonly agreed to collectively characterise emotions primarily based on the comprehensive data collected by Marghanita Laski: namely (i) appraisal, (ii) affective phenomenology/feelings, (iii) physiological changes, (iv) perceptual changes, (v) facial expression, and (vi) action tendencies.

I have come some way to deal with Dickian worries about the characterization of the affective phenomenology of ecstasy that emerges from Laski's data on *a priori* grounds, and have made some conjectures about the sub-personal changes that might underlie such affective phenomenology. In the next chapter, I attempt to develop (and strengthen our confidence in the veracity of) this characterization of ecstasy, by drawing on evidence that is not entirely based on participant recall.

Chapter 6 – The Emotion Ecstasy: II.

§1. Introduction.

In the last chapter, I characterised the components of ecstasy, primarily on the basis of the data provided by Laski. Laski's data are all descriptions of what the experience of ecstasy is like from the first personal point of view, drawn from a demographically homogenous sample of participants, by both searching for written descriptions or eliciting reports from participants using a recall paradigm. As such, the conclusions that can be drawn are limited in a number of ways.

Firstly, even if the Dickie-style anti-realist objections fail, these descriptions may misrepresent the experiences concerned in various ways. The participants from which these data are drawn may simply misremember or misdescribe the experiences they have. Moreover, one might worry that the reference to “transcendent ecstasy” in the question asked might have placed certain demands on the participants to offer descriptions of more prosaic states according to culturally shared scripts. This worry is all the more pressing given that a number of the descriptions obtained are metaphorical. Whilst in some cases, some of the descriptions of experiences seem to be irreducibly metaphorical (e.g. those that use conceptual metaphors such as those involving a tumescent or warm liquid), in other cases, one might worry that they are reducible to more prosaic feeling states, especially in those cases where the vehicle of the metaphor underdetermines the aspect of the tenor being picked out.

This anti-realist worry may be assuaged somewhat by Brookover-Bourque and Back's data, as discussed in the last chapter, as these authors used a different probe, and their sample was demographically quite different from Laski's sample. However, as participants from both studies were drawn from the Anglosphere, it would be helpful to replicate these findings across other cultures.

Secondly, as descriptions of what the experience of ecstasy is like from the first-personal point of view, these descriptions cannot cast light on those changes that are at least not readily accessible to the person by conscious introspection – such as autonomic or endocrinal changes and subtle cognitive, behavioural, affective, or perceptual changes that can only be revealed by other methods of investigation. Indeed, as I proposed in the last chapter that some of the feelings reported might be able to be understood and individuated in terms of certain sub-personal changes (or combinations thereof), without evidence of such changes one might reasonably worry that we do not have sufficient reason to think that the described feelings can be understood in terms of the changes proposed (or indeed that they exist at all).

In order to remedy both concerns, in this chapter, I turn to consider three groups of data that are relevant to both of these issues: (a) data derived from the study of certain cases of temporal lobe epilepsy, (b) the study of chills in response to beauty, and (c) the study of feelings of truth in the face of beauty. From the discussion of these data, together with the discussion of Laski's and Brookover-Bourque and Back's data, I will propose a working model of ecstasy.

Whilst the majority of the last chapter and this chapter attempt to characterize ecstasy largely independently of other emotions, in order to arrive at a more complete account of ecstasy, it is helpful to specify how it can be distinguished from other emotional states, particularly those that are closely related. To this end, I will conclude my characterisation of ecstasy by contrasting it to another state that at least resembles ecstasy on a number of dimensions – namely, awe / wonder.

In the last chapter, I argued that ecstasy is reliably caused by beauty. In arguing for this claim, I noted that investigations of both ecstasy (in the work of Laski), and beauty (in the work of Brookover-Bourque and Back) independently converge on the claim that beauty causes ecstasy.

Given that the central claim of this part of the thesis is to argue for a constitutive link between beauty and ecstasy, it would be helpful to provide further empirical support for a causal relationship between ecstasy and beauty. To this end, in this chapter I provide further empirical support for such a relationship.

§2. Temporal Lobe Epilepsy.

Temporal lobe epilepsy, or psychomotor epilepsy as it was first known up until the early part of the 20th century, is most often characterised by what is known as simple partial seizures. These are seizures in which consciousness is retained and the abnormal neural activity is confined to one or both of the temporal lobes or one of its substructures. These simple partial seizures are often known as auras. They characteristically involve automatisms – that is, automated simple movements or actions such as opening a window or picking up an object, jerking movements which usually propagate from the extremities towards the head (sometimes called the Bravais-Jacksonian march), and emotional and intellectual changes including psychical illusions such as *déjà vu* and *jamais vu*, feelings of fear, sadness or ecstasy. These highly localised seizures can spread to other parts of the same lobe or hemisphere, or even to both hemispheres, in which case they are known as secondary generalised epilepsy, and can result in convulsive seizures. (See, for example, Gastaut, 1978: 194, 195, 197, for a discussion of temporal lobe epilepsy).

These seizures are, in some cases, followed by gradual changes in the epileptic's personality – including hyperreligiosity, hypergraphia, hypermoralism, increased philosophical concerns, emotionality, mnemonic illusions (*déjà vu* and *jamais vu*), social viscosity (stickiness or clinginess), intellectual circumstantiality, ideational symptoms such as forced thinking and flight of ideas, a sense of personal destiny, hyposexuality or other sexual changes, anger, and paranoia – and which are collectively known as the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome (see, for example, Waxman & Geschwind, 1975; Geschwind, 1983; Bear & Fedio, 1977; Shetty & Trimble, 1997).

What is striking about these patients is that there is some evidence that unlike patients with non-temporal lobe epilepsy, temporal lobe epileptics, or at least a small proportion of them, seem to have experiences of ecstasy both during their seizures (ictal ecstasy, also known as Dostoevsky's epilepsy), shortly after seizures (post-ictal ecstasy), and in the period between seizures (inter-ictal ecstasy).

§2.i. Temporal Lobe Epilepsy & Ecstasy.

Perhaps the most famous temporal lobe epileptic to have had experiences of ecstasy as a symptom of his seizures is Fyodor Dostoevsky. Whilst Dostoevsky does not himself record any episodes of ecstasy in his diaries, he is recorded as having reported experiences of ecstasy to at least two people: his friend, the mathematician Strakhov, and Sofya Kovelevskaya, the sister of one of the women that Dostoevsky was in love with.

Two years after Dostoevsky's death, Strakhov wrote in his memoirs that:

Fyodor Mikhailovitch on several occasions spoke to me of period of exaltation which preceded an attack. He said that "for several brief moments I feel contentedness which is unthinkable under normal conditions, and unimaginable for those who have not experienced it. At such times I am in perfect harmony with myself and with my entire universe. Perception is so clear and so agreeable

that one would give ten years of his life, and perhaps all of it, for a few seconds of such bliss.” (As cited by Gastaut, 1978: 188).

Several years after Strakhov, Sofya Kovelevskaya, recounted in her memoirs a conversation she had with the writer. During this conversation, while talking about his attacks, Dostoyevsky is said to have stated:

I had the feeling that the sky had descended to the ground and had swallowed me up. I truly felt the presence of God, and he entered into me. I was crying out loud to myself: ‘yes God exists.’ I don’t remember anything that followed. You others, who are in good health, you cannot even imagine what such happiness is like, this happiness which we epileptics feel one second before our seizure. Mohammed says in the Koran that he saw paradise, and all you intelligent imbeciles are convinced that he is only a liar and a charlatan. But no, he is not lying. He was in fact in Paradise during an epileptic seizure: as he was, like myself, afflicted by them. I cannot say whether this bliss lasts seconds, hours or months: but believe me, I would not exchange it for all the joys of the world. (As cited by Gastaut, 1978: 188).

These experiences are similar to the ecstatic epileptic experiences of two of his literary characters. For example, the protagonist of Dostoyevsky’s novel *The Idiot*, Prince Myshkin, is described as having experiences of the following character:

He remembered among other things that he always had one minute just before the epileptic fit (it came whilst he was awake), when suddenly in the midst of sadness, spiritual darkness and oppression, there seemed at moments a flash of light in his brain, and with extraordinary impetus all his vital forces suddenly began working at their highest tension. The sense of life, the consciousness of self, were multiplied ten times at these moments which passed by like flashes of lightning. His mind and his heart were flooded with extraordinary light: all his uneasiness, all his doubts, all his anxieties were relieved at once: they were all merged in a lofty calm, full of serene, harmonious joy and hope... ‘probably,’ he added, smiling, ‘this is the very second which was not long enough for the water to be spilt out of Mohomet’s pitcher, though the epileptic (prophet) had time to gaze at all the habitations of Allah.’ (As cited by Alajouanine, 1963: 216).

Dostoyevsky has Myshkin describe the meaning of his ecstatic aura, and the transformation it produced in his mind in the following manner:

No matter if my condition is a morbid one, no matter if my exaltation be an abnormal phenomenon, if the instance produced by it, evoked and analysed by me when I recover my health, is a proof that I have reached a superior harmony and beauty and if this instant brings to me – to an unknown, unbelievable degree – a feeling of plentitude, of fullness, of peace and communion, in a transport of prayer, with the highest synthesis of Life. These cloudy expressions seemed to me

perfectly comprehensive, even inadequate [sic]. (As cited by Alajouanine, 1963: 216).

Whilst Dostoyevsky's experiences of ictal ecstasy are both the most detailed and most well known, epileptologists have since reported a number of other temporal lobe epileptics (TLEs from hereafter) who experience ictal ecstasy – as reported by Morgan (1990), Ciriguetta et al. (1980), Naito and Matsui (1988), Hansen and Brodtkorb (2003), and Picard and Craig (2009). In addition to reports of ictal ecstasy (that is, Dostoyevsky's temporal lobe epilepsy), Dewhurst and Beard (2003) have reported that some patients with temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE from hereafter) are inclined to have experiences of ecstasy shortly after seizures (post-ictal ecstasy), or in the period between seizures (interictal ecstasy). Most of the evidence for these lattermost kinds of experiences comes from patients who are described in the cases studies as 'hyperreligious,' 'hypermoral,' 'hyperphilosophical' and 'hypergraphic,' and are often recorded in the literature as religious conversions. For the sake of economy, the nature of these experiences have been listed in the tables that appear in the appendix to this thesis.

In addition to these reports based upon participant recall, some epileptologists have also attempted to investigate some of the aspects of the Gastaut-Gerschwind syndrome – such as hyperreligiosity – and its link to the propensity for experiences of ecstasy among TLEs using other experimental instruments.

Trimble and Freeman (2006) tested the hypothesis that there might be a link between the hyperreligiosity of TLEs with Gastaut-Gerschwind syndrome and religious experiences. They compared the tendency to have religious experiences, and the nature of those religious experiences, among hyperreligious patients with TLE (n = 28), TLE patients who did not exhibit religiosity when interviewed (n = 22), and neurologically and psychiatrically normal control patients who all attended the same religious congregation (n = 30). The authors administered a modified version of the INSPIRIT scale (Kass et al., 1991), and Hood's 32-item mysticism scale (Hood, 1975), which are both intended to capture the quality of a person's mystical experiences.

Of particular relevance for my concerns here, the hyperreligious TLEs were found to score significantly higher on a number of the subscales of Hood's mysticism scale. Hyperreligious TLEs scored significantly higher than neurologically and psychiatrically normal religious individuals on: (1) the "ego quality" subscale, whose items refer "to the experience of a loss of self while consciousness is nevertheless maintained" and which is "common experienced as an absorption into something greater than the mere empirical ego" ($p < 0.001$)²⁴; (2) the "noetic quality" subscale, whose items refer to experiences that are a source of mystical knowledge ($p < 0.001$)²⁵; (3) the "temporal spatial quality" subscale, whose items refers to experiences in which "both time and space are modified with the extreme being one of an experience that is both 'timeless' and 'spaceless'"²⁶; (4) the "ineffability" subscale, whose items refer to the "impossibility of expressing the experience in

²⁴ This is measured by the following items: "I have had an experience in which something greater than myself seemed to absorb me," "I have had an experience in which everything seemed to disappear from my mind until I was conscious only of a void," "I have never had an experience in which I felt myself to be absorbed as one with all things," "I have never had an experience in which my own self seemed to merge into something greater" (Hood, 1975: 31).

²⁵ This is measured by items such as "I have had an experience in which a new reality was revealed to me," "I have never experienced anything that I could call ultimate reality," "I have had an experience in which ultimate reality was revealed to me," "I have never had an experience in which deeper aspects of reality were revealed to me" (ibid.: 32).

²⁶ This is measured by the following items: "I have had an experience which was both timeless and spaceless," "I have had an experience in which I had no sense of time or space," "I have never had an experience in which time and space were non-existent," and "I have never had an experience in which time, place and distance were meaningless" (ibid.).

conventional language... due to the nature of the experience itself and not to the linguistic capacity of the subject”²⁷; and the “positive affect” subscale, whose items refer to the “positive affective quality of the experience” ($p < 0.05$). On the modified INSPIRIT Scale, which is less relevant for my purposes, the hyperreligious TLEs scored significantly higher on a number of scores including: (1) “a sense or quasi-sensory experience of a great spiritual figure” ($p < 0.01$); and (2) “a feeling of being very close to a powerful spiritual force that seemed to lift you outside yourself” ($p < 0.05$).

This evidence suggests that at least those TLEs who exhibit hyperreligiosity may have more frequent or intense experiences of ecstasy than neurologically normal people, and that this might be responsible for their greater religiosity relative to neurologically normal people.

§2.ii. What is the significance of TLE for the Laskian account of ecstasy?

Let us return to the two limitations that were raised in the face of the Laski’s data, and the characterisation of ecstasy that emerged from my discussion of it.

§2.ii.i. TLE and the anti-realist worry.

The first worry was that the first personal descriptions reported by Laski’s participants may misrepresent the experiences concerned in various ways. In particular, it is possible that the subjects are not reporting a *sui generis* emotion but simply experiences of more prosaic emotional states such as joy or pleasure in a metaphorical way. Indeed, given that Laski’s participants were all from a demographically homogenous group, and that her recall participants at least were asked the same question, it is possible that Laski’s participants have been led to report more prosaic experiences according to a shared cultural script.

Fortunately, the two possibilities – namely, the realist possibility that participants are accurately describing different aspects of their experience of a *sui generis* emotion, and the anti-realist possibility that these participants are describing more prosaic emotional states in a metaphorical manner – make different predictions. If the realist possibility is true, then one should expect participants from different cultures to describe their experiences in similar ways, and that different means of eliciting recall of this experience should give broadly similar descriptions. By contrast, if the anti-realist possibility is true, then one should not expect to find similar descriptions across cultures or using different means of elicitation.

The second limitation was that as Laski largely employed a recall procedure, these data are only able to characterise those aspects of the experience of ecstasy that are consciously available through introspection. It was suggested that in light of the fact that some of the described feelings could be understood in terms of certain sub-personal changes, one would expect to find evidence of such changes on the sub-personal level, and that to the extent that this is true, the existence of feelings of this nature are supported (and a deflationary explanation is not supported).

Let us turn to consider how the data outlined on the experiences of certain TLEs can speak to both these worries, beginning with the first worry.

Recall that Laski characterised the emotion of ecstasy in the following way (table 1):

²⁷ This is measured by the following items: “I have never had an experience that was incapable of being expressed in words,” “I have had an experience that is impossible to communicate,” and “I have had an experience that cannot be expressed in words” (ibid.).

Components		
Affective phenomenology / feelings	Feeling of Loss	Time
		Desire / sorrow / sin / limitation
		Self / difference
		Sense / words / images / ineffability
	Feeling of Gain	Timelessness
		Vitality / release
		Joy
		Contact / unity
		Knowledge of truth / inspiration
	Physical Feelings	Uplifted / floating
Warmth in chest (tumescant warm liquid)		
Tears		
Chills		
Calmness / peace		
Perceptual effects	Enhanced perception (particularly of brightness)	
	Phosphenes	
Appraisal	Harmony	
Action Tendencies	Approach	
	Perform moral actions	

Table 1. The components of ecstasy.

The descriptions of the ecstatic auras of patient's with TLE seem to collectively include all of these characteristics, and individual cases include many of them (I direct the reader to the tables in the appendix for details).

To take the example that is most complete – namely that of Dostoevsky – Dostoevsky seems to report nearly all of the characteristics. In terms of the feelings of loss, Dostoevsky reports feelings of loss of the sense of time and place ("This is the very second which was not long enough for the water to be spilt out of Mohomet's pitcher, though the epileptic (patient) had time to gaze at all the habitations of Allah"), 'desire / sin / sorrow / limitation' ("all his uneasiness, all his doubts, all his anxieties were relieved at once"). In terms of feeling of gain, Dostoevsky reports gaining truth of a fundamental nature ("You suddenly embrace the entire creation and you say, well, it is like that, it is true..." "I was crying out to myself: 'yes, God exists'") unity or contact ("a feeling of communion, in a transport of prayer, with the highest synthesis of 'Life'" "I had the feeling that the sky had descended to the ground and had swallowed me up"), joy ("such happiness," "contentedness which is unthinkable under normal conditions"), vitality ("with extraordinary impetus all his vital forces suddenly began working at their highest tension"). In terms of quasi-feelings, Dostoevsky reports sensations of calmness and peace ("a feeling... of peace," "lofty calm"). Dostoevsky also reports alterations in perception and phosphenes ("Bolts of hypersensitivity," "perception is so clear," "At moments a flash of light in his brain..."). During his experiences of ecstasy, Dostoevsky also appraises the objects of his thoughts and perceptions as harmonious ("harmony with myself and with my entire universe," "presence of the eternal harmony").

The similarity between the descriptions of ecstatic auras, such as Dostoevsky's, and the descriptions collected by Laski is, I suggest, all the more compelling given that the patients concerned have a range of demographic characteristics, and that the descriptions are elicited by means of a different probe.

Whereas the majority of subjects in Laski's sample were British and tended to be highly educated, the patients who experience ecstatic auras reported here (see appendix) come from a range of other cultures, including Switzerland, the United States, Italy and Japan and included participants with lower levels of educational attainment. Moreover, where Laski's participants were specifically asked whether they had had descriptions of "transcendent ecstasy," in most of the cases reported here the experiences seem to have been spontaneously reported in clinical settings. Also, as shown by the data collected by Trimble and Freeman, hyperreligious TLEs are more likely to report experiences of ecstasy when probed with a range of different self-report measures of the components of ecstasy (including Hood's mystical experience scale) compared to controls.

In light of this, it seems highly unlikely that the data on experiences of ecstasy can be explained away by appealing to demand effects and demographic characteristics, and that the realist interpretation gains strong support from these data.

§2.ii.ii. TLE and the sub-personal mechanisms involved in experiences of ecstasy.

Let us now turn to the how this data can speak to the second issue – namely, how this data help to characterise the sub-personal changes that underlie the felt experience of this emotion, along with any other components that are not available through introspection. Recall that I suggested in the last chapter that some components of the experience of ecstasy can be understood in terms of certain sub-personal changes. To the extent that there is evidence of such changes, *that* characterisation of those components would be supported (as indeed would the claim that these felt components really exist). As such, the investigation of the sub-personal changes involved in experiences of ecstasy can also support the realist interpretation of the participants' descriptions. The investigation of those TLEs who have experiences of ecstasy can help to cast light on these sub-personal mechanisms.

The dominant explanation of the effect of seizures is that they cause the activation of the neural areas affected and the functions they perform. Moreover, the dominant explanation of the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome is that the seizures alter the response properties of the neurons in the affected areas, causing the threshold for their activation to be lowered. This is known as "kindling." On this account of the syndrome, the epileptic spike focus acts like an endogenous electrode chronically stimulating the areas concerned. This explanation is consistent a number of facts, which we do not need to concern ourselves with at length here.²⁸

²⁸ These explanations are held by at least Geschwind (1983, 1974), Gastaut (1954), and Bear (1979), and Bloomer (1999). To briefly outline the considerations that speak in favour of these explanations: Firstly, the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome occurs a period of time after the onset of seizures and develops gradually. As Devinsky and Schacter note: "Chronic changes in personality in TLE are very common – not an acute change in personality, but one that develops, continues, and typically gets more striking with the passage of time" (2009: 419). Secondly, repeated sub-threshold stimulation of one of the areas known to be involved in some cases of Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome – the amygdala – has been shown to lower the threshold of activation of neurons in that area. Thirdly, the symptoms of the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome do not occur in inappropriate circumstances, suggesting that the symptoms of the syndrome are not simply caused by simple activation of the subcortical limbic structures, but rather that the response profiles of the relevant areas have been altered (this point is made by Bear, 1979: 365). Fourth, both the seizures and the syndrome has been shown to disappear when the anterior temporal lobe is removed (Penfield and Falconer, 1973, as cited by Devinsky & Schacter, 2009: 421). As well as being consistent with the 'kindling' explanation, this also suggests that the syndrome is not caused by damage to the area. Fifthly, some of the features of the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome appear to be the opposite of some of the characteristics of the Kluver-Bucy syndrome in animals and temporal lobectomy in humans. Kluver-Bucy syndrome is caused by bilateral ablation of the temporal lobe and is characterised by placidity (immediate taming) and hypersexuality. Some of the characteristics of temporal lobectomy in humans include sexual changes and loss of all emotional expression (amimia). The logic at work in citing this ablation case is that since the elimination of activity in these areas

On this account of the effect of seizures and the cause of the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome, one might venture that the areas responsible for experiences of ecstasy (whatever these may be) are activated and sensitised in patients who experience ecstatic auras and suffer from Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome.

If this is right, then the location of the seizures can provide clues as to the neural areas involved in producing experiences of ecstasy. Moreover, the functional changes that underlie experiences of ecstasy can be inferred from the ordinary function of these areas, as revealed by functional neuroimaging, together with the patients' descriptions of their ecstatic episodes. So: what inferences about the functions that are involved in the experience of ecstasy can be drawn?

With regards to the study of the neural locations of the seizures of patients with the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome, the results are too mixed to be of any use at this stage. All seem to show that the limbic regions of the temporal lobe are involved, but disagree as to which particular structures are involved.

However, the investigation of seizure foci in patients with Dostoevsky's TLE has proven to be more fruitful for my purposes. Picard and his colleagues have studied a number of patients with Dostoevsky's TLE. Although half of the patients they studied had lesions of the temporopolar regions, they argue that the ecstatic experiences are the result of activity in the anterior insula. One of their strongest reasons for thinking that this is the case is that they were able to produce one patient's ecstatic auras by stimulating the anterior insula with electrodes. The patient concerned was a 23 year-old woman with TLE who had right temporal lobe seizures and reported "intense feelings of bliss and well-being," consisting of "sensations of airflow from her stomach, associated with a feeling of floating" during her ecstatic seizures and, "enhanced sensory perception, especially of intense colours, and a feeling of dilated time" in the moments before her seizures (Geschwind & Picard, 2014: 90). Using intracerebral electrodes, her seizures were found to originate in the right mesiotemporal region and to rapidly propagate to the anterior-dorsal insula. Picard and his colleagues report that stimulation of the anterior-dorsal insula "suddenly provoked a 'very pleasant, funny sensation of floating and a sweet shiver' in her arms, identical to her usual ecstatic aura" (ibid.).²⁹

Drawing on evidence of what is currently known about the function of the anterior insula, Picard and his colleagues have attempted to explain some of the features of the ecstatic experiences of TLEs in terms of these functions.

One of the functions the anterior insula is known to perform is in making predictions about the world and learning from false predictions – a process known as 'prediction error.' Simply put, according to the idea of prediction error, the brain is constantly making predictions about what will happen when different events occur based on prior experience. When the outcome is not what was predicted, a prediction error is generated, which is then used to improve the brain's predictions in future. The anterior insula is thought to perform the function of comparing the predicted with the actual outcome. Picard and colleagues suggest that during an ecstatic seizure, this mechanism of generating prediction errors by comparing the prediction with the actual outcome may be inhibited, resulting in a feeling of inner peace in which one's worries about the past and future are momentarily taken away. Picard and colleagues also propose that if the anterior insula's comparator function is inhibited then the predicted states will be preserved without being tested against the actual outcome,

appears to have the opposite effect of some of the features of the temporal lobe personality, the temporal lobe personality must be the result of augmentation of activity in these areas (for a discussion, see Bear, 1979: 379).

²⁹ The authors are confident that the anterior insula was responsible for this feeling, and not a nearby region that the anterior insula projects to on the grounds that the stimulation was of low intensity and there wasn't any after-discharge effect.

which they suggest may give rise to the feeling of clarity and certainty that occur in episodes of ecstasy (Geschwind & Picard, 2014: 96).

Another function the anterior insula is known to perform is to mark salient inputs for further processing. In virtue of this function, the anterior insula is involved in task switching and attentional focus. Picard and colleagues (ibid.: 95) suggest that in ecstatic seizures, the saliency detection system in the anterior insula may mark the inputs in those moments as highly significant, and that this may explain (perhaps in conjunction with the changes in error prediction function) why patients with ecstatic seizures often report that they have experiences of *deep and significant* truths.

The insula is also known to be involved in temporal perception. It has been proposed that the anterior insula plays a crucial role in this process. The anterior insula is proposed to do this by integrating interoceptive and sensory inputs to produce snapshots of what has been called the “sentient self” (evidence for this is summarised by Picard & Craig, 2009). The sampling rate of this integration is thought to be modulated by the salience of the inputs to be integrated: the more salient the input the more often the anterior insula integrates sensory and interoceptive information. It is proposed that this produces a subjective dilation time, leaving the subject in a sustained state of “present moment awareness.” Picard and his colleagues suggest that a process such as this might produce the feeling of timelessness reported by patients who experience ecstatic auras (Geschwind & Picard, 2013: 95).

Clearly, these proposals need to be supported by further evidence, and further investigations need to be undertaken. It may be the case that other functions of the anterior insula may be altered during experiences of epilepsy, along with the function of other, as yet undocumented, areas.

This evidence does not allow us to be able to say with any confidence how many functional changes characterise ecstasy, and how these relate to the expressions used to describe them. Nonetheless, they do at least provide some crucial pieces of the jigsaw of sub-personal changes that underlie episodes of ecstasy. Moreover, insofar as the evidence cited above provides evidence of how some of the described feelings (such as feelings of having accessed deep truths and timelessness) may be realised, we can be confident that at least some of the descriptions of ecstasy have a psychological reality. To this extent, the sharp end of the anti-realist worry has been blunted.

§2.ii.iii. TLE and Beauty.

Experiences of ecstasy in TLEs are clearly at least often deviantly caused as they are generated by an endogenous spike focus rather than with engagement with beauty.

Nonetheless, given (i) that it seems likely that the same neural areas that are involved in the production of ecstasy ordinarily are activated by epileptic seizures in some TLEs, (ii) that over time the threshold of activation of these areas is lowered in TLEs, and (iii) the proposed relationship between beauty and ecstasy ordinarily, one might predict certain changes in TLEs with regards to their engagement with beauty. Specifically, as we shall see, one might expect TLEs to be more likely to be sensitive to beauty, to attempt to create beauty, and to have ecstatic seizures in the face of beauty. Indeed, insofar as this proves to be the case, the claim that there is an intimate relationship between beauty and ecstasy would be supported. Let us take each of the predictions in turn.

The first prediction – regarding increased sensitivity to beauty – arises out of the following reasoning.

- (P1) TLEs with ecstatic auras or the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome seem likely to be more sensitive to experiences of ecstasy;
- (P2) Ecstasy is ordinarily caused by beauty;

(C) It seems plausible that temporal lobe epileptics with ecstatic auras or the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome will be hypersensitive to beauty, or ‘hyperaesthetes.’

So is this the case?

Indeed, it is. Ciriguetta et al. report that the only intellectual concerns of one of the TLEs they studied are music and travel and that this patient has the “need to establish rarefied contacts with the environment” (1980: 709). The authors go on to suggest that this patient’s “love for music and travel is the expression of a lonely soul longing to merge into a fantastic world” (ibid.). Although not explicit, since people paradigmatically try to establish rarefied contacts with objects of natural beauty, and that music often aims to be beautiful, it seems likely that this patient has an increased appetite for beauty.

In his discussion of TLE (though not, specifically, Dostoyevsky’s TLE), Ramachandran reports that “many a patient has told me of a ‘divine light that illuminates all things,’ or of an ‘ultimate truth that lies completely beyond the reach of ordinary minds who are too immersed in the hustle and bustle of daily life to notice the beauty and grandeur of it all’” (1998: 176).

Picard and Craig report that one of their patients (patient 15 in the tables in the appendix) reports of their epilepsy that it had resulted in “enhanced appreciation of art” and “more detailed perceptions when listening to music” (2009: 540). Again, whilst the patient does not explicitly report that she is more sensitive to beauty, given that both music and visual art are commonly beautiful, and moreover, that beauty is one of the only non-trivial properties that music and visual art can have in common, it seems probable that this patient may have an enhanced appreciation of beauty.

Waxman and Gerschwind report the case of a patient with TLE whose hypergraphia expressed itself, among other ways, in repeated drawings of the scene of one of her religious conversions. The aforementioned scene consisted of a landscape featuring a largely clear sky with the sun setting behind the mountains, and a single tree (1975: 1582). Given that natural objects such as sunsets, mountains, and trees are some of the paradigm cases of beauty, it seems plausible that this patient had a rather profound experience of natural beauty, which most likely resulted from a sensitisation to the triggers of beauty.

There is also some evidence that Dostoyevsky may have experienced stronger reactions to beauty. He wrote an article in his magazine *The Time*, entitled “Dobrolyubov and Art” in which he made it clear that he was a prodigious appreciator of artworks of great beauty, particularly that of the Apollo of Belvedere, which he described as “a majestic and beautiful image” that produced a “a sensation of the divine” and was capable of causing a long-lasting “internal change” in the soul of those who contemplate the image (Dostoyevsky, 1969: 1052, as cited by Amâncio, 2005: 1101). According to his wife, he showed a great deal of interest in beauty. When in Florence, she noted that he “incessantly praised the famous bronze doors of the St John Baptistery. He would like to have a photographic reproduction of actual size of Lorenzo Ghiberti’s masterpiece and, in particular, *The Door of Paradise* permanently within his gaze in his work office” (Dostoevskaja, 1977: 133, as cited by Amâncio, 2005: 1102). Dostoyevsky also clearly had a great interest in art. Catteau notes that Dostoyevsky would stand looking at paintings for a great deal of time – sometimes for hours, and that Dostoyevsky would sometimes bring a chair close to a painting so that he could take in the pictures better, without worrying about a possible fine (Catteau, 1977: 78, as cited by Amâncio, 2005: 1102). As before, since the artworks mentioned aim at beauty, it is reasonable to think that Dostoyevsky may have been hypersensitive to beauty.

The second prediction – regarding an increased propensity to try to create beauty – arises out of the following reasoning.

- (P1) The experience of ecstasy is ordinarily caused by beauty and often itself begets the creation of further beauty (as Laski’s data suggests, see chapter 5; see also §3.iii. of chapter 9);
- (P2) TLEs with ecstatic auras or the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome seem likely to be more sensitive to experiences of ecstasy;
- (C) It seems plausible that temporal lobe epileptics with ecstatic auras or the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome will display a greater propensity to create the ordinary trigger of experiences of ecstasy – namely, beauty.

So, is this the case?

There is some evidence that temporal lobe epileptic’s ecstatic experiences may inspire them to create beauty. Of the three cases of patients displaying hypergraphia reported by Waxman and Geschwind, two of these were noted to report writing poetry – which is, again, paradigmatically thought to aim at beauty – in addition to the patient who drew the landscape in which she had had a religious experience. In the case of this latter patient, the connection between the experience of ecstasy, and the creation of objects that aim at beauty is most explicit. As I have argued above, this patient was led to draw the setting of her experience of ecstasy, which itself seems to be caused by a hypersensitivity to the natural beauty of the scene.

Aside from Dostoyevsky, it has also been argued that a number of artists, including at least Van Gogh and Flaubert, suffered from TLE. Gastaut (1984), for example, notes that both artists suffered from epileptic seizures, had confirmed or probable temporal lesions, and many of the characteristics of the Gastaut-Gerschwind Syndrome: both were socially “viscous”/“sticky” (that is, they had strong emotional dependencies on friends), hyposexual, and had a tendency towards outburst of anger, and Van Gogh, at least, displayed hypergraphia and hyperreligiosity.³⁰

It may be pointed out that these findings could be explained in alternative ways, without recourse to beauty: it might, for example, be suggested that the products of hypergraphia are a mnemonic strategy to capture the higher level of detail that tends to be desired by TLEs. This certainly seems to be the most plausible explanation of some of the manifestations of hypergraphia: the patient who sketched the scene of her religious conversion, for example, reported to Waxman and Geschwind (1975: 1583) that she made lists of things “so I will know how many there are,” and wrote descriptions of events in the hours preceding a seizure “especially if... a seizure is coming on so I couldn’t [sic] memorise it.”

However, such deflationary explanations cannot explain all of the data. Whilst the mnemonic explanation can, for example, explain those instances of hypergraphia in which the contents of the target experiences are recorded without apparent regard to the means of recording their experiences, it fails to fully explain cases of hypergraphia, such as writing poetry, where the vehicle for expressing the content is important. Explanations such as the mnemonic explanation also belie the fact that much of the artistic products of TLE patient’s seem to have an expressive and communicative function. One of Waxman and Geschwin’s patients wrote devotional poems exalting his physicians,

³⁰ Gastaut notes that Flaubert had a confirmed left occipitotemporal lesion, which was probably the result of an aneurysm, and that Van Gogh most likely had a temporal lesion, the nature and precise location of which are unknown.

and another draws “‘cosmic paintings,’ stating that words cannot convey the depth of feeling” (1975: 1593, 1595).³¹

The third prediction – regarding beauty being a cause of ecstasy – arises from the following reasoning.

- (P1) The experience of ecstasy is ordinarily caused by beauty;
- (P2) The neural machinery that gives rise to ecstasy is sensitised in TLEs with ecstatic auras or the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome;
- (C) It seems plausible that seizure activity in temporal lobe epileptics with ecstatic auras or the Gastaut-Geschwind syndrome may be triggered by beauty.

This prediction is not, however, a strong prediction from premises (1) and (2). It seems unlikely that beauty is a necessary or sufficient causal antecedent of seizures with ecstatic auras. After all, in many cases, seizures seem to occur *causa sui* (which is one reason why epilepsy has been historically thought of as possession by a supernatural force), and not as a result of the ordinary manner of inducing the characteristics of seizures. Patients with gelastic epilepsy, for example, have seizures in which they laugh uncontrollably without any corresponding inner feeling, and do not seem to commonly report seizures in response to humorous events or objects. On the other hand, some forms of epilepsy are reliably caused by certain stimuli – so-called reflex epilepsy such as photosensitive epilepsy, and hot water epilepsy. Notwithstanding these caveats, is this the case?

There does indeed appear to be some evidence that ecstatic seizures are sometimes caused by beauty. Hansen and Brodtkorb (2003) report that one of their patients with Dostoyevsky’s TLE reported that their first seizures occurred during a concert, and another patient reported that they can induce attacks by listening to music. Although the authors do not explicitly claim that these seizures were caused by beauty it certainly seems likely given that music often aims at beauty. Similarly, Gschwind and Picard (2014: 89) report that one of their patients reported that their ecstatic seizures could be triggered by “a tractor with the harvest, nice photo, a nice colour, a flower, a nice landscape, a bird singing, grazing animals, branches that move with the wind, a beautiful woman.”

There may also be evidence that some of Dostoyevsky’s experiences of ecstasy were caused by perceiving beauty. For example, he was reported as experiencing ecstatic moods when viewing Titian’s *Christ Denied*, Rafael’s *Sistine Madonna*, Claude Lorrain’s *Acis et Galathe*, Holbein’s *Madonna* in Dresden, Rafael’s *St. Cecilia* in Bologna and *Madonna of the Chair* in Florence (Amâncio, 2005). These may simply be non-epileptogenic experiences of ecstasy, but it has been suggested that at least some of the ecstatic experiences he had in response to beauty are epileptic in nature.³²

In summary of this section, insofar as these predictions are born out by the data, the claim that there might be an intimate relationship between ecstasy and beauty is supported.

§3. Chills.

³¹ In their earlier paper, Waxman and Geschwind (2005 [1974]) consider the possibility that the hypergraphia exhibited by temporal lobe epileptics might be explained as a compensatory mechanism for the memory deficits that those with temporal lobe damage can suffer. They reject this possibility on the grounds that it does not explain the specific content of the writings, which primarily concern religious, moral and philosophical subjects (2005: 291). They add in a later paper (Waxman & Geschwind, 1975: 1585) that the memory explanation does not look plausible on the grounds that they have not encountered hypergraphia in non-TLE patients with memory disorders.

³² Dostoevsky’s wife reports in her diary that she thought that Dostoevsky was going to have a seizure upon seeing Holbein’s *Dead Christ*, and had to lead him away from the painting to calm down (cited by Amâncio, 2005: 1101). However, it is not clear whether Dostoevsky found it to be movingly beautiful, or whether he did indeed have an experience of ecstasy.

Many of Laski's participants reported feeling chills during their experiences of ecstasy, and chills are one of the few components of the ecstasy response that has been the subject of controlled psychological investigation.

Investigating the sub-personal basis of chills is important in itself, but it is even more valuable if, as seems plausible, there is a one-to-many relationship between the sub-personal psychological mechanisms that underlie ecstasy and components such as chills. Having said this, investigations of individual components such as chills are not without their pitfalls. Some of the experiential components might be multiply realisable at the sub-personal level. As such, one must exert caution when inferring the sub-personal mechanisms involved in the production of that component when it occurs in the context of experiences of ecstasy, and occurrences of that component in other contexts.

Maruskin and her colleagues (2012) have demonstrated that chills are, in fact, a set of heterogeneous phenomena in their recent study of chills, which is the most comprehensive to date (as far as I know). The heterogeneity of chills occurs on three levels: in terms of the experience of chills, in terms of the sub-personal mechanisms that produce chills, and in terms of the causes of chills.

On the experiential level, one can distinguish two broad groups of chills phenomena – 'goosetingles' and 'coldshivers.' The former is composed of the sensations of 'tingling' and 'goosebumps' and the latter is composed of 'cold feelings' and 'shivers.'

A number of different elicitors can be distinguished. Low body temperature can cause all of the chill sensations, and, more interestingly for my purposes here, both positive and negative emotions can be accompanied by chills. On the side of negative emotions, sadness, disgust and fear can cause chills – and particularly the 'coldshivers' sensations – as in cases where one describes fear-inducing events as 'spine-chilling,' or when one feels cold as the result of social isolation or separation from an attachment figure. On the side of positive emotions, experiences of ecstasy (sometimes referred to as 'being moved'), and perhaps similar experiences such as that of awe cause chills – and particularly the 'goosetingles' sensations (though awe may at least often be a negative emotion and therefore may cause 'coldshivers,' see §6 of this chapter).³³

Finally, the different components are under the control of different sub-personal mechanisms. For example, the piloerection response is under the control of the sympathetic nervous system, whereas cold feelings and shivering are under parasympathetic control.

Whilst we are primarily interested in understanding those chill sensations that are involved in ecstasy – namely, 'goosetingles' – it is helpful to understand these sensations in the context of chill sensations had in response to negative emotions – namely 'coldshivers' – and in particular, sadness. To see why this is the case, we first need to note a couple of further points.

Firstly, it is important to note here that the most common positive cause of chills is consistently reported in empirical studies to be beauty. For example, in one of the first studies of chills, Goldstein (1980) attempted to discover what kinds of stimuli elicit chills (though he labelled them 'thrills'), by administering a questionnaire to three groups of participants (employees of the Addiction Research Foundation, N=45, Stanford University medical students, N = 116, and Stanford University music students, N = 88). He found that the most common causes of chills was "transcendent beauty, a magnificent work of art or drama, a musical passage, a poignant encounter, a rousing speech, or a sudden intellectual insight" and concluded that "the common element appears to be a confrontation with something of extraordinary beauty or profound and moving significance" (128). Similarly, Maruskin and colleagues (2012) asked undergraduate psychology students (N=192) to record a diary of chills they felt over a 14-day period, and found that 'aesthetic beauty' and 'sexual

³³ It is also interesting to note that TLE seizures also commonly induces piloerection.

attraction/arousal' were selectively found to give rise to 'goosetingles.' Indeed, the link between chills and beauty appears to be rather deeply rooted in our psychology. McCrae (2007) found that chills in response to beauty, as measured by the item "sometimes when I am reading poetry or looking at a work of art, I feel a chill or wave of excitement" of the aesthetics subscale of the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R), was the best indicator of the Openness to Experience personality trait across a large number of the 51 cultures he examined.³⁴

Secondly, a great number of the chills elicited by beauty are often had in response to sad (or more specifically moving) pieces of music. Indeed, in one of the earliest series of studies of chills, Panksepp (1995) found that music that evoked sadness in participants was more likely to give rise to intensely pleasurable chills than happy music. Similarly (although not discussed in the last chapter, for reasons of economy), Laski (1961) found in her research that experiences of ecstasy were commonly preceded by what she called 'nadir' experiences – that is, experiences of negative emotions such as sorrow.

Given that sadness is one of the emotions that tends to cause 'coldshivers,' and that beauty tends to give rise to 'goosetingles,' and that they not only seem to commonly co-occur but, as we shall shortly see, seem to perform complementary functions, and have been until recently been explained as a unitary phenomenon, it is difficult to fully understand 'goosetingles' in the absence of understanding 'coldshivers.' So what explanations of chills generally have been proposed?

Panksepp proposed that chills might be crucially related to the separation-distress-attachment system, and may perform the function of signalling attachment threat. Panksepp proposed that beautifully sad music may in part mimic the prosodic structure of acoustic expressions of separation distress, which Panksepp (1995: 199) suggests may have evolved to "acoustically activate a thermally based need for social contact" through pre-existing thermoregulatory functions. That is, the separation call may bring about internal feelings of coldness, which may themselves provide increased motivation for social reunion. Panksepp notes that this is consistent with the fact that the infant calls have been shown to be able to induce chills in their parents.

To explain why these chills are felt to be pleasurable, Panksepp proposes that there is the suggestion of potential reunion with an attachment figure in beautiful music. He writes, for example, "sad music may achieve its beauty and its chilling effect by juxtaposing a symbolic rendition of the separation call (a high pitched crescendo or a solo instrument emerging from the background) in the emotional context of a potential reunion and redemption" (1995: 199). Indeed, he proposes that "perhaps the interplay between potential loss and redemption is an essential cognitive ingredient for evocation of chills," and observes in support of this that music that is apt to produce chills is often bittersweet (*ibid.*: 196).

Keltner (2009) appears, at first sight, to offer a competing account of the function of chills. He proposes that whilst piloerection functions in our primate relatives in adversarial encounters to expand their size to threaten and display physical dominance and power, in humans "piloerection shifted its use, coming to occur regularly when we ourselves feel expanded beyond the boundaries of our own skin, and feel connected to group members" (263). Indeed, although he doesn't explicitly say as much, Keltner seems to imply that it is the warmth and sense of self-expanding that is generated by piloerection that may function as a conscious signal of being attached to others.

³⁴ In personality psychology, Openness to Experience is proposed to be one of the five basic dimensions of individual differences in personality. As McCrae and Costa (1997: 816; as cited by McCrae, 2007: 6) originally put it "Openness is seen in the breadth, depth, and permeability of consciousness, and in the recurrent need to enlarge and examine experience." Individuals high on Openness to Experience tend to be tolerant of ambiguity, imaginative and innovative, and have been shown to be particularly sensitive to art and beauty. Like the other big five personality dimensions, it has been shown to be heritable and longitudinally stable, and can be assessed by either self-report or observer ratings.

Maruskin et al. (2012) suggest that, despite appearances, these competing accounts of the function of chills are reconcilable, as they point to different chill sensations – Panksepp is in part pointing to the function of ‘coldshivers,’ which Maruskin and colleagues have shown are associated primarily with avoidance related emotions such as fear, sadness and disgust, and Keltner is pointing to the function of ‘goosetingles,’ which they have shown are related to positive emotions such as ecstasy (or being moved) and perhaps awe.

They tested this hypothesis with an elegant experimental design. One hundred participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: a condition that attempted to elicit ‘goosetingles’ using a moving video (a performance by Susan Boyle from Britain’s Got Talent), a condition that attempted to elicit ‘coldshivers’ using a disgusting video (a performance from Britain’s Got Talent in which men perform the illusion of cutting themselves with knives), and an emotionally neutral control condition (a video containing instructions for making hot cross buns). After watching one video, all participants were asked to subsequently report whether they felt any chill sensations, and to indicate the extent to which they felt close to their mother by completing the Inclusion of Other in the Self (IOS) scale (Aron et al., 1992).³⁵ The results revealed that the video of Susan Boyle’s performance was successful in produced significantly more ‘goosetingles’ and the video of illusionary self-harm produced significantly more ‘coldshivers.’ Moreover, ‘goosetingles’ were found to positively predict the participants’ reported closeness to their mother, whereas the cold feeling component of ‘coldshivers’ was found to negatively predict closeness to their mother.

As such, there is evidence that both Panksepp and Keltner’s accounts of the functions of chills are, in fact, consistent. Moreover, this explanation of the different chill sensations in terms of the complementary functional systems involved may by itself readily cast light on a number of facts about ecstasy itself and its relationship to beauty.

Firstly, it provides an elegant explanation of why beautifully sad music is often found to give rise to pleasant chills. As both Panksepp and Keltner suggest, the pleasure of experiences of chills may come in the signal of social closeness that at least some of the chill sensations provide.

Secondly, if it is true that piloerection gives rise to feelings of warmth that are indicative of transcending the boundaries of the self and gaining contact or reunion with others, then it is easy to see how ‘goosetingles’ might be involved in the feeling of loss of self and contact or unity that are also characteristic of episodes of ecstasy.

Thirdly, it suggests that beautiful music may generate more intense experiences of the pleasing correlates of social closeness by simultaneously activating the mechanisms that underlie opposing functions, such as separation distress. That is, activating mechanisms underling social loss may act to synergistically promote the activation of mechanisms underlying social closeness: *ceteris paribus*, the self-same gain of social closeness feels more intense if it is preceded by feelings of social loss. Panksepp himself seems to allude to such a synergy when he notes, for example, that “just as the greatness of music resides in its ability to arouse sequences of powerful but often opposing emotional forces in the brain/mind, so also, the most profound forms of happiness may arise from the interplay of polar dualities within the higher brain dynamics of human emotions” (1995: 203).

This elegantly explains the initially puzzling fact that there is a relationship between both ecstasy and beauty on the one hand, and sadness on the other. On the side of ecstasy, Laski found that experiences of ecstasy are often preceded by ‘nadir’ experiences, and Brookover-Bourque and Back found that some experiences of ecstasy were reported to be triggered by negative events such as

³⁵ The IOS, developed and validated as a measure of social closeness by Aron and colleagues (1992), measures closeness by presenting seven pairs of circles, one representing the self and one the other, that vary in the degree to which they overlap, and asks them pick the illustration that best represents their relationship.

a reversal of fortune or the death of a loved one. Of Brookover-Bourque and Back's finding, Averill (2007: 107) observes that "the context of an experience [of ecstasy] is often not distinguished from the immediate trigger" and that "for example, the death of a loved one may provide the context, whereas an aesthetic object or religious service may provide the immediate trigger." In support of this, he cites instances in which a death seems to contribute to ecstatic experiences.³⁶

On the side of beauty, there seems to be a special relationship between beauty and loss. Danto points out that the recourse to beauty often spontaneously emerges on occasions where sorrow is felt, noting that people commonly play beautiful music and read beautiful poems at funerals, and bring flowers to graves. He claims, for example, that "the conjunction of beauty with the occasion of moral pain somehow transforms the pain from grief into sorrow, and with that into a form of release" and that "the effect of the elegy is philosophical and artistic at once: it gives a kind of meaning to the loss by putting it at a distance, and by closing the distance between those who feel it – who are in it, as we say, together" (Danto, 2003: 111-2).

Turning to the sub-personal mechanisms underlying chills, the psychological investigation of chills suggests a number of possibilities: (a) social neuropeptides such as oxytocin, (b) opioids and (c) sympathetic nervous activity.

Arising directly out of his functional account of chills as discussed above, Panksepp (1995) proposes that the social neuropeptide oxytocin (as well as other neuropeptides) is likely to be involved in the production of chills, on the grounds that the oxytocin system is important in producing and controlling separation distress, and bonding behaviour between mothers and their offspring, mates, and conspecifics. In support of this suggestion, Panksepp notes that it has been shown that the cry of infants leads to both chills and lactation, the latter of which is known to be triggered by oxytocin release. Moreover, as we shall see in chapter 8, the experience of witnessing moral beauty, has been shown to release oxytocin.

This proposal, if true, would also elegantly accommodate at least three of the other components of ecstasy. Firstly, oxytocin may be involved in the feelings of warm tumescence in the chest reported during experiences of ecstasy. It has also been shown to be synthesised, and have activity, in the chest area, and in particular on the vagal nerve, which is the primary parasympathetic modulator of cardiac activity (Carter, 2003: 384). It has been shown that the ecstasy that arises from witnessing acts of moral beauty (discussed under the rubric of the emotion 'elevation,' which I will argue in chapter 8 is simply ecstasy) does indeed activate the vagus nerve, and a number of psychologists have proposed that it is likely that this activity is responsible for the feelings of warm tumescent feelings in the chest that are commonly reported during experiences of ecstasy/'elevation' (Silvers & Haidt, 2008: 291; Keltner, 2009: 263, citing Oveis et al., unpublished manuscript).

Secondly, oxytocin may be responsible for the feelings of calmness and peace that are reported during experiences of ecstasy, most likely by modulating vagal activity. Oxytocin is thought to be responsible for what has been called "immobility without fear" – it has been shown to down regulate the sympathetic nervous system and supporting "the protective and restorative functions in the nervous system" (Carter, 2014: 10.11). It has also been shown, for example, in prairie voles, stressors such as social isolation or the presence of an intruder can cause increases in measures of depression, anxiety and physiological arousal, but that these effects can be mitigated by the provision of

³⁶ One of Averill's students, a woman in her forties, was alone with the sick husband of a neighbour when he died. Later that evening, the following events occurred: I spent a few moment out in the front field with the stars and the darkness. The union with reality was exhilarating. Life made sense. Recycling was a beautiful word. The thrill of being part of the world and universe in this form was an honour. The spiritual feeling was not an abstraction from the world of things. Rather, it was part of what I felt was me totally. It offered an increased wisdom and steadfastness. It offered a more profound understanding of my own existence. It did not suffer from the arrogant subjectivism of common sense. A trait I normally valued very highly. I felt a union with reality which went to the very core of my life. (Ibid.: 103-4)

exogenous oxytocin (Grippe et al., 2009). Similarly, in humans, it has been shown to modulate anxiety and fear in humans (for a review, see Bartz et al., 2011).

Thirdly, oxytocin might be able to explain some of the prosocial behavioural motivations that are found to occur as a result of experiences of ecstasy. Oxytocin has been found to be linked to increased trust, co-operation, attachment and care-giving behaviours, though it has been suggested that these functions of oxytocin may, at least in part, be a result of its effect on the parasympathetic nervous system. It has been suggested, for example, that the pro-social consequences of oxytocin may be an effect of decreased sensitivity to anxiety- and fear- producing stimuli (Bartz et al., 2011: 305-6). Also, a recent study found that increased vagal activity enabled emotional expression, empathy for other's mental and emotional states, the regulation of one's own distress, and the experience of positive emotions (Kogan et al., 2014).

It seems that 'goosetingles' may be underpinned by activation of the brain opioid system, which is thought to mediate pleasure. Goldstein (1980), for example, randomly assigned participants to either a placebo and an opiate receptor antagonist (naxolone) condition, asked them to listen to pieces of music of their choice, and indicate chills experienced by raising one, two or three fingers (depending on the intensity and spread of the chills). Goldstein found that naxolone significantly attenuated the experience of chills compared to participants in the placebo condition. This is not surprising, as both ecstasy and (at least) 'goosetingles' are found to be pleasurable.

Finally, 'goosetingles' seem to involve activation of the sympathetic nervous system (in addition to the parasympathetic activation suggested above – so called autonomic co-activation). Piloerection is commonly mediated by sympathetic nervous activity. In their study on piloerection in response to moving music, which employed direct measures of physiological changes, Benedek and Kaernbach (2011) found that those participants who experienced piloerection in response to moving music were found to experience increases in phasic electrodermal activity, heart rate, vasoconstriction, and increased respiration depth compared to controls. This pattern reflects the increased activity of various subsystems of the sympathetic nervous system. However, it does not seem to be the case that piloerection is a consequence of, or at least accompanied by, high general arousal: as the authors note, high general arousal should be accompanied by rapid shallow breathing, but piloerection was found to be accompanied by an increase in breathing depth.

This is consistent with Goldstein's (1980: 127) finding that 'aesthetic thrills' tend to be accommodated by sighing, and Laski's (1961) finding that experiences of ecstasy tend to be accompanied by deep breathing. Moreover, this may also be consistent with Maruskin et al.'s (2012) finding (study 4, N = 144) that 'goosetingles' tend to correlate with feelings of energetic arousal, whereas 'coldshivers' (which, recall, are associated with negative emotions such as fear), correlate with feelings of 'tense arousal.' Indeed, this special kind of energetic arousal, together with the parasympathetic changes that seem to accompany 'goosetingles' may elegantly explain why during experiences of ecstasy, people often report both feelings of vitality and peace and calm.

§4. Processing Fluency, Feelings of Truth & the Appraisal of Harmony.

As we have seen, some episodes of temporal lobe epilepsy seem to give rise to experiences of ecstasy. I have suggested that the experiences of ecstasy that arise during episodes of epilepsy are (often) deviantly caused as they are generated endogenously rather than by engagement with beauty. I have suggested that the same mechanisms that are involved in non-deviant episodes of ecstasy may be activated in epileptogenic ecstasy. For example, I have argued on the basis of the few sub-personal

investigations of the feelings of ecstasy that result from epilepsy, that the feelings of truth that occur in non-deviant episodes of ecstasy may be generated by a ‘jamming’ of the prediction error system.

It is important to stress, however, that there are a number of logical possibilities here (as is also the case for the other components of ecstasy that are sometimes deviantly caused by epileptic activity). It may be that during epileptic episodes, the same sub-personal mechanisms that give rise to those feelings of truth that arise in non-deviantly-caused episodes of ecstasy are activated, or that different sub-personal mechanisms that perform the same function are activated, or indeed, that multiple sub-personal mechanisms give rise to the feeling of truth in non-deviantly-caused experiences of ecstasy, and that only one or a subset of these is activated during epileptogenic ecstasy.

In addition to the insight that can be provided by the investigation of temporal lobe epilepsy, there is other evidence that casts light on the functional changes that underlie feelings of truth ordinarily. Indeed, it may be the case that the sub-personal process that underlies those feelings of truth that occur in epileptogenic ecstasy may be the same as those that arise from the non-epileptogenic causes that will be discussed here. Moreover, as we shall see, there is evidence that the same functional changes that underlie these feelings of truth may also contribute to an appraisal of harmony.

Reber and colleagues (2004) propose that (at least some) experiences of truth might be underpinned by a construct that they call ‘processing fluency.’ Reber and colleagues’ notion of processing fluency is a simple one: objects of thought and perception can be processed more or less fluently or easily – as determined by parameters including the speed and accuracy of perceptual or conceptual processing – and fluent processing is “subjectively experienced as positive” (2004: 365-6).³⁷ It is thought that fluent processing is experienced as positive because it is a signal of error-free processing, or the availability of knowledge structures to accurately interpret a thought or stimulus.

Reber and colleagues argue that this experiential signal is used as an internal source of evidence in making judgements of truth. Reber and colleagues cite a number of studies that show that features of objects of perception or thought that increase processing fluency seem to influence judgements of truth. For example, Reber and Schwartz (1999) presented participants with statements of the form ‘Town A is in country B’ either in moderately visible green, yellow or light blue coloured font (lower perceptual fluency group) or highly visible red or blue font (higher perceptual fluency group), and found that subjects in the high fluency group were significantly more likely to endorse the truth of the statements than participants in the low fluency group. Similarly, McGlone and Tofiqbakhsh (1999, 2000) found that propositions were more likely to be perceived as true when presented in rhyming rather than non-rhyming form, and as Reber et al. note, rhyming form enhances the fluency with which statements are understood (2004: 377, citing Rudin, 1995).

But what evidence is there that processing fluency might underlie the feelings of truth that occur in experiences of ecstasy? There are two considerations that speak in favour of this claim. Firstly, the ‘jamming’ of the prediction error can readily be thought of as a case where processing is fluent. If the mechanism that checks whether the outcome of perceptions against the predicted perceptions is jammed as suggested, the object of perception would be more fluently perceived.

Secondly, as well as arguing that processing fluency might underlie experiences of truth, they also suggest that the fluency construct might accommodate the pleasure that comes from certain features that have been reliably found to contribute to the beauty of an object. They argue, for

³⁷ The positive affect generated by processing fluency can be measured psychophysically. Winkielman and Cacioppo (2001) assessed participants’ affective responses to fluent stimuli with facial electromyography (EMG). Fluency was associated with stronger activity in the zygomaticus major (the muscles involved in smiling) in the first three seconds after stimulus presentation (and several seconds before an overt response was made).

example, that a number of features of objects that are known to influence judgements of beauty (as indicated by liking judgements) – such as symmetry, contrast, clarity and prototypicality – might do so by increasing the fluency with which the stimuli can be processed.

In the case of symmetry, for example, Reber and colleagues note that Garner (1974) showed that judgements of ‘figural goodness’ were higher the less information that participants had to extract from the stimulus: participants preferred symmetrical shapes than otherwise identical asymmetrical shapes, and symmetrical shapes contain less information (as measured by the number of different shapes a stimulus produces after rotating and reflecting a shape). Similarly, building on work by Palmer and Hemenway (1978), which showed that symmetry around a vertical axis is more fluently processed than horizontal symmetry which is in turn more fluently processed than diagonal symmetry (as measured by reaction time), Palmer (1991) showed that participants preferred more fluently processed stimuli (i.e. vertical symmetry more than horizontal, and horizontal symmetry more than diagonal symmetry) even when controlling for the amount of information presented (as measured by the number of different shapes a stimulus produces after rotating and reflecting a shape).

In the case of clarity, Reber and colleagues note that Reber et al. (1998) manipulated perceptual fluency by varying the figure-ground contrast of circles presented for one second, and found that circles which were processed more fluently were rated as ‘prettier’ than low figure-ground contrast circles.³⁸

In light of this, it seems plausible that, during experiences of ecstasy, the trigger of the ecstasy is fluently processed, and that this contributes to the sense of having gained access to a truth. This seems all the more likely given that the features that are reliably found to at least contribute to beauty also seem to be more likely to be fluently processed.

Finally, the processing fluency construct can also help to cast light on the appraisal of harmony. Clearly, as Reber et al. (2004: 365) note, the stimuli used in these studies and the judgements solicited hardly “capture the grand realm of beauty,” but it is plausible to suggest that the operation of one of the mechanisms that produces fluency may at least contribute to an appraisal of harmony of the kind that produces episodes of ecstasy, howsoever mild, in the face of beauty. Indeed, the perceptual fluency hypothesis nicely exhibits the relational nature of the appraisal of harmony: objects which are fluently processed produce a signal, albeit perhaps a very weak one in many cases, that the object of one’s perception or thought is in harmony with oneself vis-à-vis the state of one’s perceptual or conceptual processing dynamics.³⁹ Moreover, if this is right then the perceptual fluency hypothesis also nicely exhibits how attributions of beauty or harmony may be projected onto objects on the basis of an appraisal of harmony with the self. In the case of the high-figure ground contrast, the stimuli is thought to be judged as more ‘pretty’ on the grounds that the stimuli is more fluently processed by the subject’s perceptual machinery. The figural goodness here – in this case the ‘prettiness’ – is attributed by the participant to the stimuli, and not the relation between the stimuli and the subject’s perceptual machinery, even though it is the fit between the object and the participant that is the basis of their judgement.

³⁸ Moreover, a subsequent study, conducted by Schwarz and Reber (2001) showed that the more positive evaluations are not due to figure-ground contrast per se, but rather perceptual fluency. They reasoned that if the increased preference was due to mere high-contrast, then high contrast stimuli should be preferred irrespective of stimulus presentation time, whereas if increased fluency was responsible for the increased preference, then high contrast should be most influential during short presentation times (when the high contrast makes the most difference to processing fluency), and least influential at longer presentation times (when high contrast makes little difference to processing fluency, as the stimulus can be easily recognised). They showed that this was the indeed the case.

³⁹ Indeed, following Merleau-Ponty, they propose an interactionist account of beauty according to which a “sense of beauty emerges from patterns in the way people and objects relate” (2004: 363).

§5. A model of ecstasy.

In light of all of the data discussed in this chapter and the last, we are now in a position to offer an account of the emotion ecstasy, together with a tentative account of some of the sub-personal mechanisms that are involved in the production of the personal level components (see figure 1., boxes highlighted in blue are proposals, and are not currently supported by any empirical evidence). Clearly, this model only pieces together some of the sub-personal mechanisms involved in experiences of ecstasy, but it is enough to support the existence of a great many of the more opaque feeling components of the Laskian model of ecstasy against anti-realist worries, such as those that have been discussed in this chapter and the last: including, feelings of loss of self, desires, sorrow, time and place, and gain of unity or contact, and truth or inspiration.

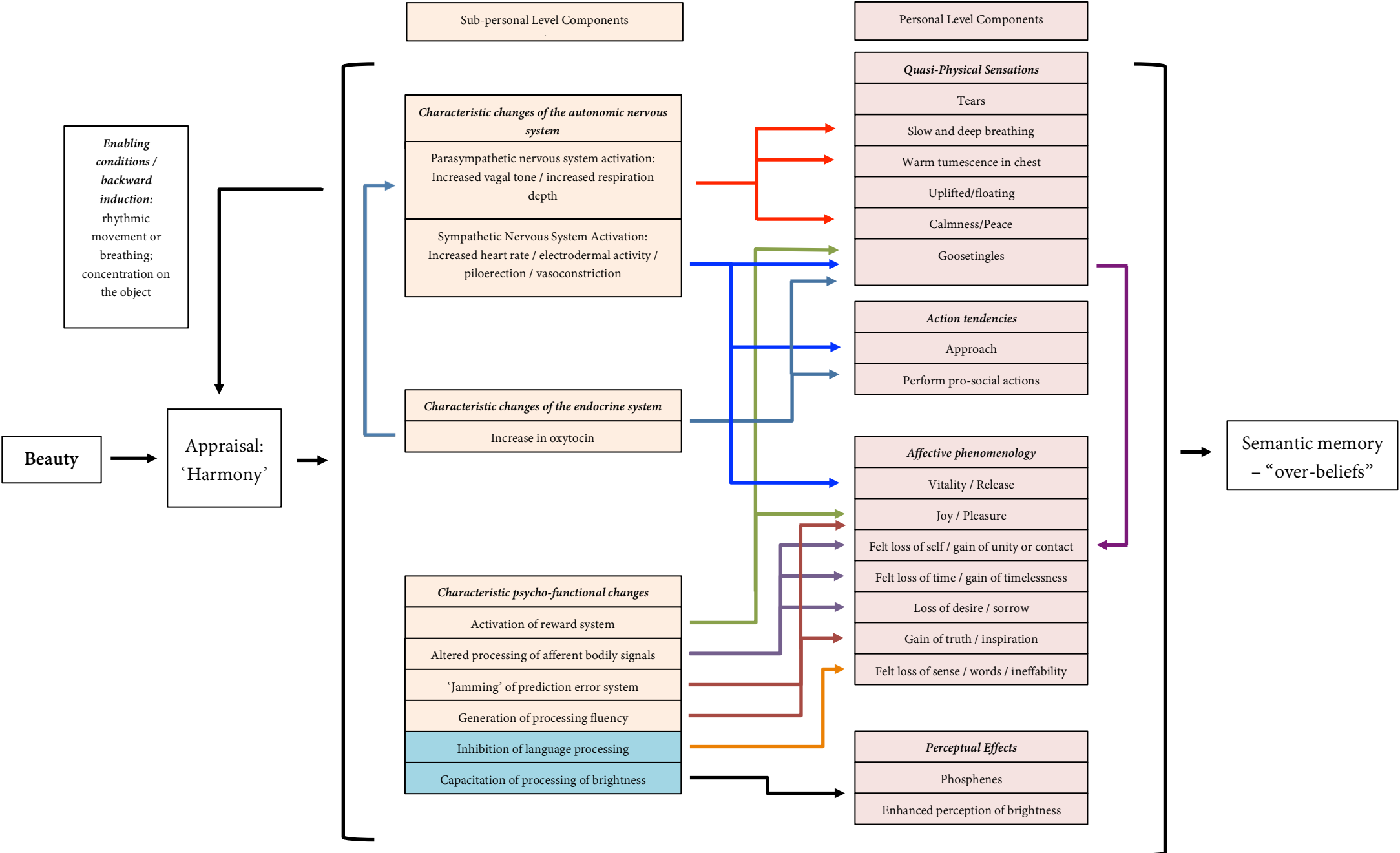


Figure 1. A tentative functional boxology of ecstasy.

§6. How does ecstasy differ from closely-related emotions?

So far, I have attempted to characterise the emotion ecstasy largely independently of other emotions. Whilst some emotions, such as joy and disgust, are distinct from one another on a number of dimensions (including facial expression, affective phenomenology, valence, action tendencies, among others), other emotions are quite similar and can reasonably be said to belong in families (and may, indeed, involve at least some of the same proximal mechanisms and may be closely linked phylogenetically). So does ecstasy stand on its own, or does it belong to a family of emotions?

§6.i. Awe & Wonder.

Ecstasy does indeed seem to belong to a family of emotions, which include, at least, awe / wonder and perhaps admiration. Whereas ecstasy has received relatively little attention from psychologists, philosophers and psychologists have recently focused on the closely related emotions – awe and wonder (if these two emotions are indeed distinct). There has also been *some* work on admiration, which will be discussed in chapter 8.

§6.ii. Keltner and Haidt on Awe.

In a now influential theoretical paper, Keltner and Haidt (2003), propose that awe has a prototype structure, involving two central appraisals – (1) perceived vastness, and (2) a need for accommodation – and that variants of awe, or awe-related states can be produced when certain other features are present or absent.

They claim that vastness refers to “anything that is experienced as being much larger than the self, or the self’s ordinary level of experience or frame of reference” and may “often be a matter of simple physical size” but can also include “social size such as fame, authority or prestige” (ibid.: 303). Keltner and Haidt understand accommodation in terms of “the Piagetian process of adjusting mental structures that cannot assimilate a new experience,” and that awe involves “a challenge to or negation of mental structures when they fail to make sense of something vast,” and stress that awe “involves a need for accommodation, which may or may not be satisfied” (ibid.: 304). They claim that this appraisal structure can accommodate many insights about awe that have been noted by philosophers of the sublime (e.g. Burke [1756] 2008), such as, for example, that awe is increased by obscurity and often involves confusion.

Keltner and Haidt argue that only experiences that involve these two appraisals should be properly called awe, and those that have only one such appraisal should be regarded as awe-like states. For example, they argue that surprise involves the need for accommodation without vastness, whereas deference involves vastness without accommodation (see figure 2., for a summary of the appraisals involved in awe proper and related states).

The authors add that experiences of awe can occur with additional themes that alter the emotional experience of awe, and ought to be considered awe-related states. They highlight five additional themes that give rise to such awe-related states: (i) threat producing awe ‘flavoured’ with fear, (ii) beauty – producing awe flavoured with ‘aesthetic pleasure,’ (iii), ability – producing awe flavoured with admiration, (iv) virtue – producing awe flavoured with ‘elevation,’ (v) supernatural causality – producing ‘awe’ flavoured with uncanniness.

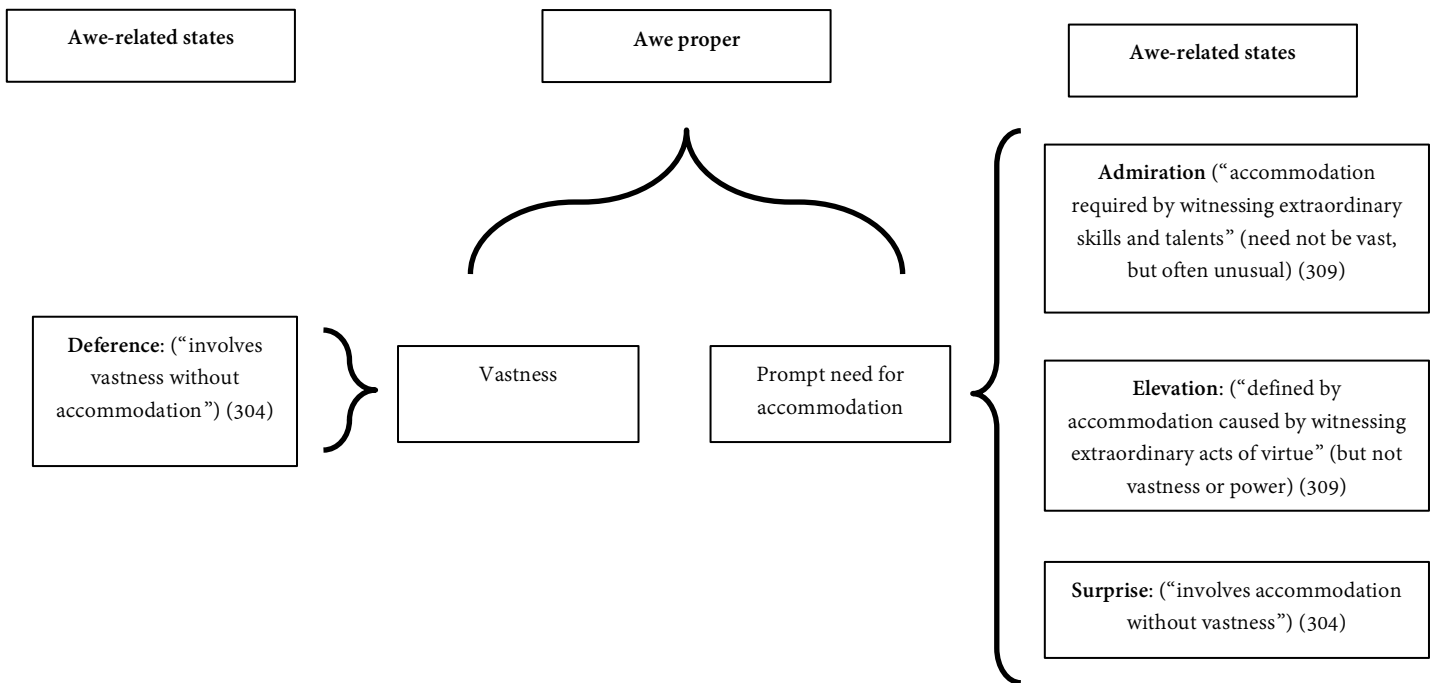


Figure 2. Haidt and Keltner's account of the appraisal structure of awe proper and related states.

In modelling this emotion, Keltner and Haidt follow a distinction between 'primordial' and 'elaborated' forms of emotions (which is in some ways similar to the distinction between basic emotions and higher cognitive emotions). Primordial forms of emotions are "relatively hard-wired pre-cultural sets of response that were shaped by evolution and built into the central and peripheral nervous systems of the human species" (ibid.: 306). By contrast, elaborated forms of emotions include "the full set of culture-specific norms, meanings, and practices that cultures build up around primordial emotions" (ibid.). For example, they note, following Rozin, that in the case of disgust, primordial disgust (or 'core disgust' as it is more often called) is the emotional rejection of foods that either smell like decay or that are known to have come into contact with other disgust elicitors; whereas elaborated disgust (for modern Americans at least) is a more complex emotion "involving emotional rejection of things based more on ideation than on perceptual qualities (e.g. racists, cheap wine, and political corruption)" (ibid.).

On this basis, they propose that primordial awe "centers upon the emotional reaction of a subordinate to a powerful leader" and that humans are biologically prepared to respond to awe-inducing stimuli (large stature and displays of strength and confidence) with action tendencies including passivity, heightened attention towards the powerful, the tendency to subordinate one's own interests for the sake of the powerful leader, and imitation (ibid.: 306, 307). Keltner and Haidt suggest that primordial awe may have evolved to reinforce social hierarchies by motivating commitment to the leader and discouraging attempts to overturn social hierarchies. They propose that the awe response became generalised to new, non-social, stimuli that have features that are associated with power and vastness, such as buildings, operas or tornadoes, and "to the extent that these stimuli bring in additional components of meaning... the primordial awe experience will acquire new flavours, and a new phenomenology" (ibid.: 307) (see figure 3. for a summary of primordial awe, as well as elaborated forms).¹

¹ Ibid., p. 307.

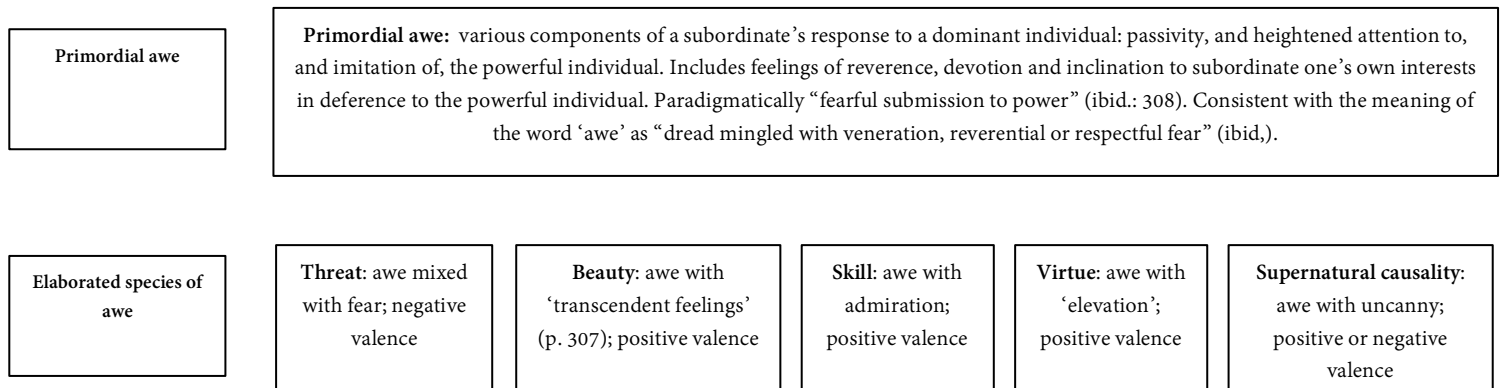


Figure 3. Haidt and Keltner’s account of primordial awe and elaborated forms of awe.

§6.iii. Prinz on Wonder.

Jesse Prinz (2011, 2014, in production) has developed an account of an emotion that is closely related to awe – namely, wonder, which he argues constitutes aesthetic appreciation. Prinz (2011) characterises wonder as a culturally elaborated form of one or more basic emotions – such as, for example, appetitive attention – and that this state: (1) is positively valenced – in the sense that it is appetitive – though not always pleasant, (2) involves feelings of elevation and reverence, and (3) involves captive attention (83-5). At greater intensities, Prinz notes that wonder is often named as ‘awe.’ Prinz (2014) characterises wonder as a species of interest, which is unlike curiosity in being reactive (rather than active), and which may be phenomenally more like fear in some cases. Indeed, Prinz claims that, whilst the “physical manifestations may vary as a function of context and intensity,” there may be some relationship to fear in that wonder may involve bodily changes such as “stopping in our tracks, covering our mouths (to conceal sounds of breathing), and even cowering in extreme cases, as if to bow in deference to something more powerful” (ibid.: 148). Prinz notes that when we are impressed by a work of art, “we say words like ‘wow’ as if rendered inarticulate, we gape, we marvel, we become enraptured” (ibid.).

In terms of the appraisal that is involved in wonder, Prinz (2011: 83) notes that wonder is unlike Descartes’ notion of “astonishment,” which implies an appraisal of novelty or the unexpected, insofar as wonder can be experienced in response to familiar objects, such as a lover’s eyes, or great paintings like Goya’s *Third of May*. More positively, Prinz (2014: 147) implies that the appraisal involved in wonder may be something like the ‘extraordinary.’

Prinz’s theory bears some resemblances to the account offered by Keltner and Haidt, in particular the potential link to fear and deference. Moreover, Prinz’s claim that wonder is a response to the ‘extraordinary’ seems to at least be able to include both of the appraisals suggested by Keltner and Haidt – namely, vastness and the need for accommodation.

§6.iii. Awe (and *perhaps* wonder): empirical evidence.

Based on Keltner and Haidt’s theoretical proposals, empirical work has been conducted on awe by Michelle Shiota and her colleagues.

Shiota and colleagues (2007) conducted four studies on ‘awe.’ Based on Keltner and Haidt’s characterisation of awe as involving vastness and a need for accommodation, Shiota and colleagues made a number of predictions: awe should be “self-diminishing, emphasising the perceptions of greatness outside the self, rather than self-focused and self-enhancing,” and should be elicited by

information-rich stimuli rather than material or social reward. Also, they predicted that since awe involves a need for accommodation, the disposition to experience awe should be associated with a willingness to modify mental structures. Finally, they predicted that decreasing attention to the self and emphasising objects greater than the self should promote representation of identification with a large group in the self-concept. The authors tested these predictions in four studies.

In the first study (N = 60), participants were asked to describe a recent event in which they felt awe (or happiness, for control). Participants were found to be more likely to report feeling awe in response to being in nature than happiness (and more particularly panoramic views, 27% vs. 7%), art/music (20% vs. 3%) and were significantly more likely to want to spend time in nature.

In their second study (N = 60), participants were asked to describe a time when they saw “a natural scene [they] felt was beautiful” (awe condition) or themselves achieved something (pride condition). Participants in the nature condition were found to report feeling significantly greater ‘awe,’ ‘rapture,’ ‘love,’ and ‘contentment,’ and report the following thoughts or appraisals during their experience: “felt small or insignificant,” “felt presence of something greater than self,” “unaware of day to day concerns,” “felt connected with the world around me,” and “did not want the experience to end” (ibid.: 953). They conclude from this that the experience of awe promotes self-diminishment, the direction of attention away from the self, the sense of being in the presence of something greater than the self and of being connected with their surroundings.

In their third study (N = 88), the authors attempted to show that dispositionally awe-prone people are more comfortable “revising their mental structures or creating new ones,” and that awe-prone people are more likely to define themselves as belonging to a larger whole. To do this, they administered a measure of dispositional awe (which includes items such as “I often feel awe” and “I feel wonder every day”), pride, and joy, a short form of the Need for Closure scale, (which measures intolerance for ambiguity and complexity), and the Twenty Statements Test (TST). The TST asks subjects to provide twenty different statements in response to the question “Who am I?” and which are coded according to (a) physical descriptions, (b) social role, (c) traits, and (d) “oceanic,” non-trait characteristics. This lattermost category is itself divided into four codes, including those that emphasise the participant’s uniqueness, those that emphasise the participant’s membership of a larger group, and other global abstract self-descriptors that do not fit into either of the other subcategories. They found that awe, but not pride or joy was negatively associated with the Need for Cognitive Closure ($p < .01$), and positively associated with universal and other global self-descriptors on the Twenty Statements Test ($p < .05$).

Finally, in their fourth study, the authors examined the effect of experimentally elicited awe on self-concept (N = 50). Participants in the awe condition were led to see a full sized replica of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeleton, were asked to look at the statue for one minute, and then complete the Twenty Statements Test (TST), whereas participants in the control condition were asked to look at an empty hallway for one minute and then complete the TST. The authors noted that a pre-test suggested that the primary emotion evoked by the dinosaur was awe: of 15 participants who were asked what emotion they remember feeling when they first saw the dinosaur, 6 offered emotion words in the awe family (awe, amazement, astonishment, impressed), 2 reported surprise, 1 fear, and 4 no emotion or non-emotional words. The manipulation had a significant positive effect on the number of oceanic type descriptors, and this was largely due to an increase in the Universal subtype ($p < .01$).

In addition to these studies, Shiota and colleagues have also demonstrated that awe seems to have its own characteristic facial expression. Shiota, Campos and Keltner (2003) asked people to recall and describe a time when they had felt awe and show how they would express that emotion to

another person non-verbally. They found that awe was characterised by raised inner eyebrows, widened eyes and a slightly drop-jawed mouth, a slight forward jutting of the head and visible inhalation.

These findings need to be interpreted with great care. There seems to be some ambiguity as to how 'awe' is being understood by both experimenters and participants in these studies, and as a result, at least some of these studies seem to confound ecstasy with awe.

As Shiota and colleagues (2007) note in their discussion of their first study, when participants were asked participants to recall an experience of 'awe,' participants did not describe any of the elicitors of 'primordial awe' – such as political leaders (though they did cite the remarkable accomplishments of others), or other elicitors that are similarly apt to evoke the tendency to submit, such as natural disasters. The authors suggest, as a result that 'awe' may refer to a fundamentally positive experiential state, and that experiences had in the face of natural events (such as tornadoes) may be better referred to as 'horror.'

Indeed, given that the majority of the elicitors mentioned were natural beauty and art or music and, as I have argued in the last two chapters, beauty at least reliably causes ecstasy, it seems likely that many of these participants have understood 'awe' as ecstasy. This is consistent with Haidt and Seder's (2009: 5) claim that the modern meaning of 'awe' has changed from its original meaning of "dread mingled with veneration, reverential or respectful fear" to little more than admiration of people or appreciation of beauty (though I suspect that this latter usage may be more common in American rather than British English). Shiota and colleagues (2007: 945) themselves claim that beautiful things elicit a response that "may best be labelled 'awe.'" Similarly, Haidt and Keltner (2001) have proposed a single character strength which they call "Awe/Responsiveness to Beauty," and that three types of goodness – beauty, skill or talent, and virtue – produce the "awe-related" emotions – awe, admiration and 'elevation' respectively.²

One might think that this merely boils down to a linguistic rather than a substantive difference, and that those psychologists who are studying awe are simply studying the same emotion that others have investigated under the banner of ecstasy.

However, it is not quite as simple as this, as there is a substantive difference between, at least, awe and ecstasy, and some of Shiota and colleagues' studies seem to be targeting these different emotions in their different studies. For example, in Shiota et al.'s second study, they asked participants to recall "a natural scene that was really beautiful to you" and that this "might have been a sunset, a view from a high place, or any other time you were in a natural setting that you felt was beautiful." By contrast, in their final study, they presented participants with a *Tyrannosaurus rex*, which is, I suggest, unlikely to be seen as beautiful, but rather sublime.

Shiota and colleagues may claim that both studies are investigating the same state – awe – on the grounds that, following Haidt and Keltner, they understand *awe* to involve an appraisal of vastness together with the appraisal of a need for accommodation, and both recalled stimuli and experimental stimuli are likely to be appraised in both ways.

The problem, here, is that a great many beautiful things do not involve vastness (or any nearby notions such as power), and the experience that arises from beauty – which I have argued is ecstasy – does not result merely from an appraisal of a *need for* accommodation (successfully achieved or not),

² Much of the literature they cite as being relevant to this "strength" and the items on the self-report questionnaire they develop to measure this strength don't seem to measure awe at all but rather ecstasy. For example, in the items they propose, there are no references to vastness, power, or the need for accommodation, or any of the typical elicitors of awe (natural disasters, political leaders, mountains), but only mentions of "being moved to tears by the beauty of music I am listening to," "I am left speechless by the beauty depicted in a movie" "I sometimes get strong urges to go out in the woods, or to 'commune with nature'."

but an appraisal of harmony between the object and the subject. That is, in Haidt and Keltner's terms, the *achievement* of 'accommodation.' As such, using beauty as an elicitor for awe, at best, adds a confounding appraisal, and at worst, misses the target appraisals involved in awe altogether.

In light of this, how should Shiota and colleagues' studies be understood? On the one hand, as I have already suggested, the findings of their second study may simply be understood to provide support for some of the components of ecstasy, at least when it involves appraisals of vastness or the need for accommodation. Indeed, these results are consistent with some of the findings related to ecstasy: namely, that participants felt their worries and themselves disappearing, felt connected to their surroundings, and felt the presence of something larger than the self.

On the other hand, their final study can be thought to cast light on awe in isolation. In that study, experiences of awe – in the sense of an experience of something vast and, thereby, requiring accommodation without necessarily achieving it – was found to cause participants to describe themselves in terms of belonging to a larger group; although, whether this is due to the size of the dinosaur priming the participants concepts for largeness, or whether it reflects a genuine change in the participants self-concepts as a result of an experience of awe induced by the dinosaur remains to be seen. Given that at least some of the feeling components reported in Shiota and colleagues' second study – such as feeling small and insignificant – seem to be specifically related to the vastness of the stimulus recalled, the latter explanation seems likely.³

§6.iv. The relationship between wonder / awe and ecstasy.

Clearly, a great deal more research needs to be done on awe, wonder and ecstasy, but in light of the characterisations of wonder and awe offered by Prinz (2011, 2014) and Keltner & Haidt (2003) respectively, together with this evidence, I propose that ecstasy and awe / wonder, might be sister-emotions, and that (a) they may be distinct pathways to similar experiences, and (b) awe / wonder might sometimes precede ecstasy, and in so doing amplify it.

Regarding (a), it seems likely that awe / wonder and ecstasy may be similar in many ways, as can be seen from the comparison between them in table 2.

But it also seems likely that ecstasy and awe / wonder might have evolved from different evolutionary antecedents and perform different adaptive functions. Whereas awe / wonder seems likely to have developed from submission behaviours and the affective states that underpin them (such as fear), and may have evolved to perform the function of maintaining group hierarchies, it seems plausible that ecstasy may have evolved from, and serve the function of facilitating, the social bonding system. This is consistent with the fact that the chills and tears that seem to arise from beautiful music (at least) have been suggested to be linked to the separation-attachment system, and that ecstasy commonly arises in response to the sight of new born infants, sexual partners, and acts of moral kindness (as we will see, in chapter 8). The idea that awe and ecstasy might, in some ways, have evolved from different antecedents and may perform different adaptive functions may be consistent with the fact that ecstasy, at least, seems to be sexually dimorphic. Diessner and colleagues (2008, 2013) found that women have a greater sensitivity to both beauty and to experiences of ecstasy (these authors' other findings will be discussed in detail in chapter 9). It may also be the case that men are more sensitive to both experiences of awe / wonder and to elicitors of vastness and power.

³ However, as this study contrasted awe with pride, rather than an emotionally neutral control, these effects may reflect the effects of pride relative to awe, rather than of awe itself.

Component	Awe / Wonder	Ecstasy
Appraisal	'Vastness,' 'need for accommodation' / 'Extraordinariness'	Harmony / 'accommodation'
Feelings	Diminishment/annihilation of self, amazement/wonder, reverence, elevated, chills (coldshivers and, perhaps, goosetingles), sudden intake of breath	Uplifted, warm tumescence in chest, peace/clam, vitality, feelings of loss and gain, slow deep breathing, goosetingles, tears
Facial Expression	The 'wow' face: raised eyebrows, wide eyes, drop-jawed, face jutting forward	The 'moved' face: raised outer brows, contracted inner brows, slightly opened mouth
Action tendencies	Passive attention to elicitor, submission, reverence	Approach, perform pro-social actions
Evolutionary antecedents & function	Submission system, and hierarchy- maintaining functions	Attachment system, and facilitate social bonding

Table 2. A comparison of awe / wonder and ecstasy.

Regarding (b), it seems that awe / wonder, like sadness, may work in a synergistic fashion with ecstasy. Firstly, if awe precedes an experience of ecstasy, then in causing feelings of diminution of the self and the cold-shivers phenomena, awe may potentiate the subsequent ecstatic feelings of 'goosetingles,' loss of one's self and union with the triggering object of the ecstasy.

Secondly, if an object gives rise to an appraisal of vastness and a need for accommodation (or an appraisal of extraordinariness), and if this same object is able to be appraised as being harmonious, the resulting feeling of ecstasy may be even greater. That is, it would likely result in a sublime beauty.

Indeed, some of the experiences reported by Laski's participants seem to be experiences of sublime beauty. Some of Laski's participants reported a sudden deep intake of breath before the slow and deepened breathing that is characteristic of ecstasy. As Shiota and colleagues (2003) found in their study of non-verbal expressions of awe / wonder, awe / wonder seems to result in a sudden intake of breath, and as such, it seems likely that some of Laski's participants experienced awe / wonder before their experiences of ecstasy. Moreover, it seems likely that some of the triggers of ecstatic experiences cited by both Laski's and Brookover-Bourque and Back's participants are vast and powerful or extraordinary. For example, some of Laski's participants cited mountains as triggers of ecstasy, and Brookover-Bourque and Back's participants mentioned 'power' and feelings of fear in their descriptions of experiences of beauty. As such, if these participants did at least sometimes appraise the triggers of their experience as being vast and requiring accommodation as well as being harmonious, it remains to be seen (by further empirical study) whether some of the components of ecstasy can be selectively attributed to appraisals of vastness and the need for accommodation.

Finally, it is important to note an important difference between the target of my own account and that of Jesse Prinz, in particular. Prinz (2011) is primarily attempting to characterise aesthetic value – that is, what appreciation of a work of art is – in terms of the emotion wonder (Prinz poses the question "what kind of state are we expressing when we say that a work of art is 'good'?" and

answers: wonder) (71). Prinz (2014) also intends this as a characterisation of the state that might be constitutive of beauty. By contrast, as I shall argue in greater detail in the next chapter, I only intend to offer an account of beauty in terms of ecstasy, and do not intend to offer an account of what constitutes *aesthetic value* – that is, appreciation of art.

I think that ecstasy is a poor account of what appreciation of art is but the right account of beauty, and I think that wonder / awe may be a good account of the appreciation of art but is not the right account of beauty. There are a number of reasons for this.

Let us first consider the issue of why ecstasy, but not wonder / awe, can provide a good account of beauty.

First, the experience of beauty as beauty is paradigmatically not (and, importantly, need not be) of wonder or awe, but rather of ecstasy, though it may, as I have attempted to demonstrate here, be at least preceded by wonder. To illustrate, consider the following example.

When we listen to a beautiful piece of music like Williams' *The Lark Ascending* and experience it as such, we feel deeply moved and uplifted, experience frissons, tears, a feeling of transcending oneself to become unified with the beauty of the music, vital and yet peaceful (all to however mild a degree). We do not, I submit, if we are experiencing it as beautiful, characteristically experience feelings of reverence, or awe, or want to exclaim 'wow.'

Secondly, the experience of wonder or awe can occur in experiences that are not of beauty. To consider an example, I may wonder or be awed at someone's athletic feats or the *T. rex*, but I need not thereby be experiencing them as beautiful.

Let us now turn briefly to the issue of why wonder / awe but not ecstasy can provide a good account of aesthetic appreciation understood as the appreciation of art.

Firstly, since ecstasy characteristically involves an absorption in, or unity with, the triggering object, it will often not provide the critical distance required for assessing how good a work is, according to the relevant norms – whatever these may be for the art form, genre, or particular work in question.⁴ By contrast, wonder / awe, are apt for the assessment of a work's goodness, since they involve an appraisal of extraordinariness (or something nearby), which can be extraordinariness in relation to the relevant artistic norms and to other artworks.

Secondly, there are a great many artworks that are good artworks, but are not beautiful. I think that French farces written at the turn of the twentieth century – such as Feydeau's *A Flea in Her Ear* (1907), and many of the plays written in the Golden Age of Spanish Baroque literature – such as Lope de Vega's *The Dog in the Manger* (1618) – are great artworks, but they are not beautiful. To experience them as beautiful – that is, on the constitutive account, to have experiences of ecstasy in the face of them – is not to experience them as they should be experienced (which in these two cases is as mirthful and intriguing). Of course, we may, after a performance of these plays, come to appraise the means employed as harmoniously achieving the artistic aims. As a result, we may have an experience of ecstasy, and come to see these artworks as good to the extent that they *beautifully* achieve their aims. But it is not clear that this could provide the basis of all appreciation of art. Often, great artworks are great because they are the first to do something, even if they don't achieve their aims as well as similar artworks that follow it. And in these cases, as well as those where something achieves its end well, wonder, with its appraisal of extraordinariness, is better equipped to constitute appreciation.

⁴ Of relevance in this context, Prinz (2011: 82-3) rightly notes that whilst interest might at first appear to be a good candidate for the state that constitutes appreciation, one reason that it is not right is that "interest is most readily applied while we are experiencing a work, while appreciation often takes place afterwards. This is especially true of the performing arts. We might be so engaged by a performance – so interested in it – that we don't step back and evaluate it. Then, after it's over we reflect and conclude that it was a good work." The same, I think, is true of ecstasy.

§7. Conclusion.

This chapter brings to a close my characterisation of ecstasy. In the last chapter, I characterised the components of ecstasy at the first personal level on the basis of the recall data provided by Laski. In this chapter, I have attempted to begin to characterise the sub-personal changes that may underlie ecstasy, based on the evidence provided by temporal lobe epilepsy, chills, and processing fluency.

In so doing, I have also provided evidence that this state: (i) seems to be present across cultures, (ii) cannot be deflated as a phantom state that, for example, reduces to more prosaic states such as pleasure, (iii) that this state is reliably caused by beauty, (iv) that this state can aptly explain some facts about beauty, such as its relationship with sadness, and (v) that ecstasy resembles, and may co-occur with, emotions such as awe / wonder.

Ecstasy, I submit, is one of the emotions that is part of the furniture of human nature – or to put it in Hume’s terms, one of the distinct parts of our mental geography. In the remaining chapters of this thesis, I suggest that ecstasy allows us to naturalise beauty.

Chapter 7 – Is Ecstasy Constitutive of Beauty?

§1. Introduction.

In the last two chapters, I have been attempting to safely sail a course between Scylla and Charybdis (to borrow a mythological metaphor that has been used by other philosophers). On the one hand, if experiences of ecstasy are *merely* experiences of pleasures, which are described metaphorically, then it is not clear that ecstasy will be sufficient to underpin a response-dependent account of beauty (and I will have steered us into one of Scylla's sets of jaws). On the other hand, if experiences of ecstasy are truly as rarefied as some of the descriptions suggest, then it is not clear that ecstasy would be necessary to underpin a response-dependent account of beauty (and I will have steered us into the maw of Charybdis).

To do this, I offered a characterisation of the components of the emotion ecstasy and a tentative model of the sub-personal changes that might underlie these components. In light of this characterisation and model, I suggested that anti-realist worries about this emotion of a Dickian nature – that ecstasy is not a real *sui generis* emotional state – are not well founded. In this chapter, I attempt to complete my voyage to offer an account of beauty.

Recall that the central claim of this second part of the thesis is that a response-dependent account of beauty of the following form is true:

Constitutive thesis_{Beauty}: x is beautiful \leftrightarrow x is disposed to give rise to x -directed ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions.

Having now characterised ecstasy, in this chapter we now turn to argue for the claim that beauty is the disposition to cause ecstasy. As I noted at the beginning of chapter 5, this can be thought of as an answer to Beardsley's second puzzle (as discussed in chapter 4): namely, is it the case that the state of ecstasy is necessary and sufficient to parcel off beauty?

§2. A proposed response-dependent account of beauty.

As I have shown in the last two chapters, independent investigations of ecstasy and beauty converge on the claim that beauty causes ecstasy. On the one hand, investigations of ecstasy (which do not include any mention of beauty in their methodologies), such as the one conducted by Laski, reveal that experiences of ecstasy seem to be reliably caused by beauty (cases of backward induction aside). Similarly, investigations of people who are pathologically sensitive to ecstasy (such as occurs in certain kinds of temporal lobe epilepsy) are more likely to be sensitive to beauty. This is supported by the fact that those components of ecstasy that have been investigated in themselves – such as chills and feelings of truth – have been shown to be caused by beauty. On the other hand, investigations of beauty, such as those of Brookover-Bourque and Back, reveal that beauty reliably causes ecstasy. Indeed, insofar as there is converging evidence from multiple sources and empirical paradigms, the claim that beauty at least causes ecstasy is supported.

But merely showing that beauty (and only beauty) reliably gives rise to ecstasy is not sufficient for a response-dependent account of beauty. For it could well be the case that beauty is a property that reliably and exclusively causes ecstasy, but is not itself constituted by it.

In assessing whether the constitutive thesis is truth or not, it is useful to recognise that the biconditional can only be true if both sides of the biconditional are true – either both are true or

neither are true. That is, it is helpful to recognise that the *biconditional* is just that – two conditionals, both of which need to be true, and which may be more manageably assessed individually:

(1) x is beautiful \rightarrow x is disposed to give rise to x -directed ecstasy (R) in standard subjects (S) in standard conditions (C),

(2) x is disposed to give rise to x -directed ecstasy (R) in standard subjects (S) in standard conditions (C) \rightarrow x is beautiful.

Or, more formally: $P \leftrightarrow Q \equiv (P \rightarrow Q) \wedge (Q \rightarrow P)$. It is important to note that the truth of the biconditional is not sufficient for the property concerned to be response-dependent in the way specified, but also requires showing that there is a left to right order of determination. That is, something is beautiful *because* it produces ecstasy.

Helpfully, this formalisation also shows that some of the weaker possible relationships are embedded within the formal structure of the strongest constitutive relationship. If only (1) is true, then it is the case the disposition to produce ecstasy is necessary for beauty at least in certain conditions and subjects, though not sufficient. Whereas, if only (2) is true, then the disposition to produce ecstasy at least in certain conditions and subjects is sufficient, though not necessary.

Given the logical equivalence between (1) and the conjunction of (2) and (3), one can more manageably argue for the truth of the constitutive thesis by arguing for the truth of the two weaker claims.

§2.i. The sufficiency of ecstasy for beauty.

Let us begin with conditional (2). For reasons that will become clear, it is helpful to first consider an etiolated form of the conditional:

(2*) x is disposed to give rise to x -directed ecstasy (R) in subject (S) \rightarrow x seems beautiful to subject (S).

Is this conditional true?

Indeed, it does seem to be. On the side of *a priori* considerations in favour of its truth: If one imagines a perceptual object or thought that is appraised as being harmonious with the self, and as a result feels an emotion that, paradigmatically, feels like one is transcending one's own boundaries, like one's worries and desires have disappeared and that one has been unified with the triggering object (and sometimes a greater totality) or perceived a truth, and which is often accompanied by shivers, 'up'-feelings, warm tumescent feelings, tears, and feelings of vitality, and peace, is it clear that the object to which this is directed will, at least, *seem* to be beautiful? In short, I suggest that it is.

A skeptic might wish to explain away our intuitions in this case by noting that the intuition might arise from an invalid inferential pattern, of something like the following form:

(P1) If x is beautiful then x causes an experience of x -directed ecstasy;

(P2) x causes an experience of x -directed ecstasy;

(C) Therefore, x is beautiful.

There are a couple of ways that one might support the claim that these feelings are not only merely reliably caused by beauty but sufficient for something to seem beautiful.

Here the data that derives from temporal lobe epilepsy is of assistance. In episodes of temporal lobe epilepsy that result in ecstatic experiences things that would ordinarily not seem beautiful seem so.¹

As I noted in the last chapter, the most detailed case of an ecstatic epileptic aura comes from Dostoyevsky, via his novels and his biographers. And here, there does indeed seem to be good evidence that Dostoyevsky had experiences of beauty during his epileptic seizures. For example, Dostoyevsky is reported by Strakhov to have said that in his ecstatic auras “I am in perfect harmony with myself and with my entire universe.” In *The Idiot*, in what seems likely to be a description drawn from his own epilepsy, Dostoyevsky has Prince Myshkin claim that in his ecstatic aura he has “reached a superior harmony and beauty.” Alajouanine (1963: 216) describes Myshkin’s account as a “revelation of a world of harmony and beauty associated with an intense feeling of joy and felicity” and claims that this “relates curiously with that marvellous line of Keats: “A thing of beauty is a joy forever...””

Similarly, Hanson and Brodtkorb (2003: 670) report that one of their patient’s “hears beautiful symphonic music” during her epileptic seizures and has the feeling that her mind has left her body. Finally, Dewhurst and Beard (2003: 79) report that one of their patients described a religious conversion (which seems likely to be epileptogenic) that occurred when walking from Kingsway to the Strand in London in the following manner: “It was a beautiful morning and God was with me and I was thanking God, I was talking to God... I was not thanking God, I was with God. God isn’t something hard looking down on us, God is trees and flowers and beauty and love. God was telling me to carry on and help the doctors here...” Importantly, these epileptics do not seem to be simply inferring that the objects of their awareness, be they thoughts or perceptions, are beautiful based on the fact that they are feeling ecstasy. Rather, they seem to experience the objects of their awareness as *beautiful*.

A skeptic might object that in these cases, the beauty of the things in the epileptic’s environment comes to be recognised as a result of the ecstatic seizure, or that the ecstatic seizure causes these epileptics to imagine or recall something with the property of beauty – an imaginary or hallucinatory perception – but that the ecstasy is not involved in the ascription of beauty. Indeed, as we saw in the last chapter, there is evidence that some temporal lobe epileptics seem to be hyperaesthetes – that is, more sensitive to beauty. The current state of the evidence does not allow us to decisively decide in favour of either of these explanations, but the idea that all of these cases can be explained as the recollection of beautiful imaginings, or an increased sensitisation to heretofore hidden beauties seems unlikely.

It is also worth noting that if the above is true, then the data on certain cases of TLE not only supports the claim that ecstasy is sufficient for beauty, but helps to determine the correct order of determination: it suggests that it is the case that something seems beautiful because it gives rise to ecstasy, rather than giving rise to ecstasy because it is beautiful.

In order to be able to consider this important data from TLE, it was helpful to consider an etiolated form of the conditional, since, on the non-etiolated form, these data would not be able to be considered since temporal lobe epileptics are clearly not standard subjects for judging whether something is *truly* beautiful (we turn to consider standard conditions further in §2.iii. of this chapter).

On the other hand, one might wish to meet the skeptic’s challenge on more *aprioristic* grounds. To be satisfied that ecstasy is indeed sufficient for beauty rather than merely being reliably caused by

¹ They cannot be veridically known to be so for this reason because standard conditions clearly do not hold. Seemings of beauty are sufficient here.

beauty, the skeptic might wish to know, for example, what it is about this emotional experience, that entails that beauty is predicated to the object to which ecstasy is directed.²

In response, recall that I argued that the formal object of ecstasy is ‘harmony.’ That is, ecstasy ordinarily involves a non-conceptual appraisal of ‘harmony’ between the intentional object and the self. It is, I suggest, this appraisal that predicates beauty to the intentional object.

As I noted in earlier chapters, it has been thought by both ancient and modern philosophical aestheticians that beauty consists in a relational property such as harmony, or uniformity within variety. This account, in its traditional form, is not successful as it can only provide a sufficient but not a necessary account of beauty (see §1 of chapter 3). There are cases of pleasure – such as the pleasure taken in bright colours – that cannot be harmonious because they have no parts.

Insofar as ecstasy involves an appraisal of harmony, and it is true that (at least some) beauty consists in a group of parts that are appraised as harmonious, the claim that ecstasy is sufficient for at least the predication of beauty is supported. More formally, we can exploit the following transitivity to support the sufficiency thesis:

- (P1) If x is appraised as being harmonious then x will at least seem beautiful;
- (P2) If x gives rise to an experience of x-directed ecstasy, then x will be appraised as being harmonious;
- (C) Therefore, if x gives rise to an experience of x-directed ecstasy, then x will at least seem beautiful.

Indeed, the constitutive thesis can do better than traditional philosophical accounts of beauty that posit that it is constituted by harmony, in that it can readily accommodate the counterexamples that have been laid against them, such as the beauty of simple particulars. Insofar as the appraisal involved in ecstasy is of harmony with the self and is non-conceptual, there is no barrier to simple beauties being appraised in this way. As we saw in the last chapter, for example, the fluency with which stimuli with high figure-ground contrast is processed seems to be a signal, albeit a weak one, of the harmony between the stimuli and one’s self vis-à-vis one’s processing dynamics. But even though the fluency as a matter of fact tells us something about the relation between the stimuli and oneself, it is those stimuli with high figure ground contrast that are described as prettier, and not the relation between the stimuli and the participant.

In sum, then, we can conclude that the sufficiency conditional is true: (i) there is a good deal of intuitive plausibility to the view that paradigmatic cases of x-directed ecstasy are sufficient for some x to seem beautiful, (ii) cases of ecstatic episodes caused by epilepsy suggests that the intentional objects do indeed seem beautiful rather than being merely inferred to be so, and that seeming beautiful, at least, does not require the presence of beauty, suggesting a response-dependent order of determination, and (iii) since ecstasy centrally involves an appraisal of harmony, and at least some beauty is harmony, episodes of ecstasy are sufficient for beauty.

§2.ii. The necessity of ecstasy.

Let us now turn to consider the other conditional, namely:

² I should record at the outset that this might be to demand too much: For there to be a connection between experiences of ecstasy (under certain conditions) and the predication of beauty, it does not seem to be required that it should be apparent to us what it is about ecstasy, specifically, in virtue of which beauty is predicated.

(1) x is beautiful \rightarrow x is disposed to give rise to x -directed ecstasy (R) in standard subjects (S) in standard conditions (C).

Is this true?

One way of assessing this is to see whether the range of particulars that are found to be beautiful across cultures can, and indeed do, have the disposition to cause ecstasy. Recall that in the first half of the thesis, I noted that a range of art forms and particular works (though by no means all), natural objects including landscapes and human faces and bodies, objects of thought such as theories, properties such as brightness and clarity, acts of moral goodness, and ideals, are found to be beautiful.

As I argued in the first part of the thesis, and have just noted, many of the existing accounts of beauty fail because they cannot accommodate the full range of particulars that are commonly found to be beautiful. For example, all of the (ostensibly) realist proposals, such as the claim that beauty consists in uniformity within variety, or a certain proportion, fail as they cannot accommodate moral beauty, or the beauty of particulars without parts such as brightness. Moreover, the closest response-dependent rival, namely that beauty consists in the disposition to give rise to disinterested pleasure fails, as I argued at length in chapter 4, as (among other reasons) there are cases of disinterested pleasure that are not caused by beauty (and so it is not, at least, sufficient).

Failing these proposals, can the ecstasy hypothesis account for all of these particulars? If one of these kinds of particulars does not have the disposition to give rise to ecstasy, then it cannot be necessary for beauty. As we have seen in our discussion of the data on ecstasy, people have experiences of ecstasy in response to beautiful natural objects, beautiful artworks, and beautiful theories (across a number of cultures). Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter, people also have experiences of ecstasy in response to moral beauty.

Indeed, since the appraisal involved in (at least non-deviantly-caused) ecstasy is a non-conceptual appraisal of harmony between the intentional object of the ecstasy and the self it is able to aptly accommodate the beauty of all of these particulars. Both simple particulars such as brightness and colours, dependent beauties and manifestations of humanity's better nature (moral beauty), can be beautiful because they can be non-conceptually appraised as being harmonious with the self. For example, as I have argued, many of the properties that are reliably found to at least contribute to the beauty of an object – such as brightness, clarity and order – are reliably appraised as being harmoniously related to oneself *vis-à-vis* one's perceptual or conceptual machinery. The same is plausible true of dependent beauties. With regards to moral beauty, we are reliably moved to ecstasy by displays of moral goodness and find such displays beautiful (as I will show in chapter 8), I suggest, because we reliably appraise such displays as being in harmony with our self *vis-à-vis* our own values. In the case of expressive beauties, we find objects that are emotionally expressive as beautiful when they 'resonate' with us – that is, when they are appraised as being harmoniously related to our self *vis-à-vis* our own emotional states and dispositions. Specifically, it seems to be the case that expressions of moving sadness are particularly apt to be appraised in this way.

Indeed, the constitutive thesis is able to aptly explain why the competing realist and response-dependent proposals have looked plausible to philosophers: since ecstasy paradigmatically involves a felt loss of desires, one can readily see why it has seemed intuitive to think that beauty might involve pleasure in the absence of any desires. Moreover, since ecstasy involves an appraisal of harmony with the self, it can also readily explain why it has looked intuitive to think that beauty somehow consists in some kind of unity. As we will see in chapter 9, this account is also able to elegantly accommodate the other explananda laid out in the first part of this thesis.

A skeptic might press that this way of testing the constitutive thesis has asymmetrical consequences for the necessity claim. A failure to be able to accommodate the range of particulars and most pressing potential counterexamples in the actual world entails that the disposition to give rise to ecstasy is not necessary for beauty, but success does not by itself secure the truth of the necessity claim. It could be true that beauty always gives rise to ecstasy, but that it is nonetheless constituted by something else. That is, the order of determination could be that something gives rise to ecstasy because it is beautiful, and not that something is beautiful because it gives rise to ecstasy.

How should we settle this? In the extensive literature on response dependence, which cannot be reviewed here for reasons of economy, there have been widespread disagreements about what needs to be demonstrated in order for a property to be truly response dependent. Two common proposals are that the biconditional needs to be necessarily true or, at least, *a priori* true (see, for example, Johnston, 1991, 1992, 1993, and Wright, 1992, 1993).

The requirement for necessity is thought to fail as one can produce response-dependent biconditionals that are necessarily true for paradigmatically response-independent properties such as squareness, by rigidifying on the actual world (it is necessarily true that something is square iff it looks square to standard subjects in standard conditions that hold in the actual world). Moreover, one cannot merely rule out rigidifying on the actual world, since some putatively paradigmatic response-dependent properties such as colour also require rigidifying on the actual world in order to prevent having to conclude that objects would change colour if the standard conditions or subjects changed (as a result of, say, an environmental disaster, or the actions of a malevolent geneticist).

Failing this, many have thought that a biconditional needs to be *a priori* true, though this is rarely explicitly argued for and seems to be due in part to a philosophical commitment to traditional philosophical methodologies. Edwards (1992: 263), for example, writes that “it seems current orthodoxy that one who grasps a concept of a particular secondary quality, e.g. redness, can discover *a priori* by analysis that the conception is of a secondary rather than a primary quality.”

It is not, however, clear why it should be necessary that the biconditional is true *a priori* if the property in question is response-dependent, and response-independent otherwise, as Miscevic (1998) suggests. Miscevic, for example, has cogently argued that response-dependent accounts may be *a posteriori* true. He argues that the folk concept of red, for example, does not contain a response-dependent biconditional, noting that the folk concept of colour is of a categorical property of objects that is revealed in experience and not a dispositional property. Miscevic points out that the grounds for thinking that colours are response-dependent derives from empirical discoveries, such as the fact that many of the features of our colour phenomenology are due to the organisation of our perceptual apparatus rather than the nature of the coloured surface (as where the opponent processing of colour information explains why we cannot see yellowish blues or greenish reds) and that colour cannot be identical with surface reflectance properties since a large number of surfaces with different reflectance profiles can appear to be the same colour (so called metameres). Miscevic plausibly argues that in the face of this evidence the best way to think about the nature of colour is to “weaken the assumption that colour is completely objective, sacrifice the assumption that it is a categorical property and retain the assumption that it is internally tied to perception,” and that the best way to capture this is in terms of response-dependence (77).

I cannot hope to settle what is required for a response-dependent biconditional to be true here. Nonetheless, I might not need to in order to argue for a response-dependent account of beauty, since the conditional appears to be true on all of the proposed grounds.

On the issue of necessity, one way to test the response-dependent account is to imagine a possible world in which ecstasy and any base property (or properties) that might be responsible for beauty in this world come apart.

Imagine, for example, a Martian world in which grating music, industrial wastelands and acts of cruelty give rise to experiences of ecstasy in the conditions and subjects that are standard in this world. In addition, sunsets, Helen of Troy's face, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, acts of great selflessness, and William's *The Lark Ascending* do not give rise to ecstasy, or indeed any response, in standard conditions in standard subjects. Similarly, imagine an ugly scientist, who, driven by his jealousy of beautiful objects, finds a way to modify humanity's shared affective machinery such that previously ugly things are found to be beautiful, and previously beautiful things leave one cold.

The question is, in these possible worlds, does the tokening of the property beauty follow the disposition to give rise to ecstasy or does it follow the base properties of beauty in the actual world? It seems, I suggest, that the property of beauty would follow the disposition to give rise to experiences of ecstasy across such worlds. Certainly, unlike in the case of other putative response-dependent properties such as colour, it is a hoary truism that beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Turning to the proposal that the biconditional must be true *a priori*, a skeptic might press the following example against me. Suppose that one feels mere pleasure in the colour or form of some contemplated object. One might object that surely this is sufficient for something to not only be judged to have the property of beauty but to *truthfully* be judged to have the property of beauty? Indeed, arguably, it seems at least *prima facie* plausible that one might be able to truthfully judge something to be beautiful without even feeling any pleasure. We sometimes hear people say, for example, that they can see why something is beautiful even though it leaves them unmoved.

The first thing to say in response, as I noted at the beginning of chapter 2, is that we often use the term 'beautiful' in a metaphorical way to indicate things that are merely pleasing or valuable. Indeed, insofar as experiences of beauty are pleasing and valuable, these metaphors are often apt ways of expressing one's liking, or belief in the value of, an object.

But, putting these cases aside, it is important to emphasise that the truth of the conditional does not require that every judgement of beauty, or even every true judgement of beauty, be the direct upshot of an experience of ecstasy. There may be a number of means of making a judgement of beauty, or ways of assessing whether something has the property of beauty. All that the conditional requires is that, at root, what makes something beautiful is its power to elicit experiences of ecstasy (howsoever mild) in certain conditions, and that therefore there would be no higher court of appeal than when these conditions hold.

To see why this is the case, it might be useful to consider an analogous case that is more intuitive to work with – namely, the case of colours. Suppose that:

(3) x is white \leftrightarrow x would appear white to standard subjects in standard conditions,

If this were true, there would still be multiple means of arriving at a judgement of whiteness truthfully that only indirectly involves the perception of whiteness. For example, imagine a photographer going into her dark room in the morning with a cup of coffee in her favourite white mug. When she enters the dark room, she sees a jumper she doesn't recognise on the chair. Without turning on the light, there are a number of ways that she could truly judge that the jumper is white, even though it appears to her to be red in the lighting conditions of the room. She might infer from the fact that the white mug appears to be the same colour as the jumper in the room, and that the

lighting conditions that hold for each are the same in this moment, that the jumper is white. Alternatively, she might call a friend and ask them if they know what colour the jumper is. In each case, the judgement exploits certain reliable mechanisms of arriving at a judgement of whiteness that are only *indirectly* based on the perception of whiteness.

Even though the judgement of whiteness is true in this case, whether the jumper is in fact white or not is determined by whether it would appear white to standard subjects in standard conditions. If the jumper were removed from the room and placed in standard conditions and found to give rise to a perception of yellowness in standard subjects, the jumper would be discovered to be, in fact, yellow and consequently that these judgements are false.

Similarly, perceptions of, say, redness might be used to identify the physical properties of surfaces that contribute to, or are even themselves sufficient for, perceptions of redness in some contexts. Once redness has been fixed to these physical properties, objects with these physical properties might be readily judged to be red in the absence of red perceptions, even if these objects are only truly red if they are disposed to give rise to perceptions of redness in standard conditions in standard subjects.

Analogously, in the case of judging something to be beautiful on the basis of a response of pleasure taken in the colour or form of an object, one might argue that one is merely exploiting a reliable means of tracking the disposition of the object to give rise to x-directed ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions. As such, some such judgements of beauty might truly indicate features of objects that have been found to reliably contribute to experiences of ecstasy, howsoever mild, in some contexts. But that being the case does not force one to conclude that these objects are *truly* found to be beautiful in the instance concerned.

A skeptic might attempt to press the objection in a different way, by insisting that there is a way in which beauty is disanalogous to colour. They might note, for example, as we saw in chapter 5, that similar evaluative representations can occur at multiple psychological levels. Episodes of the basic emotions at least seem to require a non-conceptual appraisal involving the formal object distinctive of the relevant basic emotion. But, as Griffiths and Robinson point out, an analogous cognitive appraisal with similar content can also occur in the absence of any emotional episode. One might come to believe that driving is more dangerous than household spiders in the UK, but only feel fear in response to the presence of the latter. The skeptic might also point out that the cognitive appraisal is more accurately able to appraise danger than the fast and inaccurate non-conceptual appraisal that produces the fear response. Analogously, in the case of beauty, the skeptic might press that one might be able to cognitively evaluate something as being, say, more or less harmonious, and that this may be more accurate in tracking beauty than one's ecstasy responses.

In this way, the skeptic might point out that unlike colour, where there is simply no further question about whether something is, say, white if it gives rise to a perception of whiteness in standard subjects in standard conditions, *mutatis mutandis*, the same is not true of beauty and ecstasy: there is a higher court of appeal than one's experiences of ecstasy even in standard subjects in standard conditions – namely, using one's ability to cognitively appraise an object as, say, harmonious.

In response, it is important to note that the difference between cognitive and non-cognitive appraisals is not merely one of speed and accuracy, but also of content. The content of the cognitive appraisal is similar enough to the non-cognitive appraisal that the operation of the cognitive mechanism might guide us towards beauty. But it is not identical.

Take, for example, the emotions disgust and fear. As we have seen, one proposal for the formal object of disgust is that it concerns 'noxiousness.' Suppose that one understands 'noxiousness' as that which causes harm on consumption. If that is true, then one could objectively measure 'noxiousness'

by simply looking at the statistical likelihood of the consumption of a given substance to lead to harm, without relying on any feelings of disgust. On this measure, nutmeg would count as poisonous, but isn't itself disgusting, and, by contrast, racism would not count as poisonous, even though it is disgusting. One proposal for the formal object of fear is that it concerns 'danger.' One might be able to measure danger by simply looking at the statistical likelihood of certain things to cause harm. On this measure, driving would count as dangerous, as would nutmeg but neither of these things are frightening; conversely a harmless spider would not count as dangerous, but it is found to be frightening.

As we have just seen in the skeptic's challenge, one way of understanding this is to say that the content of both appraisals is identical, but that the non-cognitive appraisal is less accurate than the cognitive appraisal. Alternatively, and rightly I think, one might wish to say that the content of the two appraisals are analogous but different: fear is related to danger, but its formal object is best described as being 'frightening,' whereas disgust's formal object is best described as 'disgustingness.'

Supposing that the latter is the right way to understand the different appraisals, we can say that whereas one can truly judge something to be dangerous, even if it does not have the disposition to give rise to fear in standard conditions and standard subjects, one cannot truly judge something to be frightening if it does not have the disposition to give rise to fear in standard conditions and standard subjects. Making the necessary changes, the same can be said for disgust.

Turning to beauty, it may be that we can have a concept for harmony that can be objectively measured in some way without reference to feelings of ecstasy (though it is hard to imagine such an objective measure), and that, as such, something can be harmonious even if it does not have the disposition to give rise to ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions.

But it seems like beauty is more like being 'frightening' or 'disgusting' than it is like 'danger' or 'noxiousness,' in that it seems to be the case that in order to truly judge something as beautiful, one must non-conceptually appraise the object as being harmonious with oneself, and experience (howsoever mildly) the components of the ecstasy response (provided no masking or mimicking conditions are present).

True judgements of beauty (that is, judgements with true content) seem to require a certain *response* in the agent making that judgement in addition to the mere entertainment of the thought that something is beautiful, just as true moral judgements do. It seems to be part of truly judging something to be morally wrong, that one is motivated, at least to some extent, to not perform the act that is judged to be wrong. The psychopath who claims that harming other people is wrong but feels no compunction not to harm people does not seem to be truly judging harming other people to be wrong in an important sense.³ Similarly, the person who judges something to be beautiful, but feels no inclination to feel ecstasy is, I submit, not truly making a judgement of beauty.

And it is important to emphasise that this is not merely a matter of intensity. It is neither necessary nor sufficient for something to have the disposition to give rise to intense pleasure for something to be truly beautiful. Moreover, true judgements of beauty can be true on the basis that they are disposed to give rise to experiences of beauty that are quite mild. What is required to truly judge something to be beautiful, rather, is that it has the disposition to give rise to feelings (howsoever mild) of the qualitative nature picked out by ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions.⁴

³ Although, I should note that this is not uncontroversial. See Doris and Stich (2005) for experimental evidence on this matter.

⁴ If it is the case that experiences of beauty as beauty can be mild, then one might worry that ecstasy cannot be the response that is constitutive of such experiences, since it seems natural to think that it is part of what it is to be an experience of ecstasy that it is of great intensity. But experiences of ecstasy can, like other emotions, admit of degrees of intensity. Laski reports that a number of participants reported quite mild experiences of transcendent ecstasy, which she labelled 'response experiences.'

If someone said that they judged something to be beautiful but found it merely pleasant (where no masking or mimicking conditions are present), it doesn't seem as though they would be truly judging it to be beautiful merely in virtue of their pleasure. It might be better to say that they merely liked the object or found it pretty.

Indeed, we might also point out in this context that in their study of the effect of clarity (as measured by figure-ground contrast), Reber and his colleagues asked their participants to make judgements of 'prettiness,' and imply that their stimuli could not achieve the higher realm of beauty. As I argued in the last chapter, features such as clarity might be one of the features that, by influencing processing fluency, at least contribute to an appraisal of harmony, but may not in themselves be sufficient for beauty (though they may be in other contexts). As such, I submit that the constitutive thesis is true on *a priori* grounds.

Turning to the proposal that a response-dependent account can be true on *a posteriori* grounds: As demonstrated by investigations of certain kinds of temporal lobe epilepsy, certain modifications of the propensity to have experiences of ecstasy seems to affect our perceptions of beauty: some temporal lobe epileptics seem to be chronically susceptible to both deviantly- and non-deviantly-caused episodes of ecstasy, and as a result seem to be sensitised to beauty, and indeed, even find beauty where none in fact exists. The best explanation of this, I submit, together with the fact that beauty is conceived to be a property of objects, is that beauty is in fact the disposition to give rise to ecstasy.

Finally, it is also important to note in support of the constitutive thesis that, like all response-dependent accounts of properties, it is able to steer a course between anti-realist and realist intuitions about beauty, elegantly capturing elements of both. On the realist side, if we wish to know whether something is visually beautiful, we look at the object in question and not in our own minds. In cases where we know that there is something odd about the environmental conditions (say, the lighting or one's distance from the object in question) or the operation of our psychological faculties (if one has, for example, consumed psychoactive substances) we might wait for the environment, or our own psychological state, to change before judging or may temporarily rely on the judgement of others (if one believes that aesthetic testimony is possible). That is to say, in certain conditions, at least, we do not take our subjective impressions to be indefeasible. Moreover, we think of beauty as a categorical and stable property of objects that causes our experiences of beauty.

On the other hand, we seem to have certain anti-realist beliefs about beauty. The most prominent such belief is in what Johnston (1993: 230) has called 'revelation,' in the context of colour, drawing on remarks made by Russell on the subject. If an object looks beautiful to subjects who are free from any perturbances in standard conditions, then the fact of the matter is revealed to our consciousness, and there is quite simply no further question as to whether something is beautiful. One does not need to wait for the verdict of an aesthetic scientist to know that this is the case, and indeed, the proclamations of scientists are only secondary to the facts about beauty as they present themselves in our consciousness. If a scientist were to discover that a beautiful object had a physical property that was different from that of all other tokens of beauty, one would not need to suspend one's judgement about whether it is indeed beautiful. One's experience in the face of the object is sufficient in these circumstances to make a true judgement, and this discovery would not so much challenge that judgement as constitute a new fact about beauty – one would have simply discovered a new physical realiser of beauty. Moreover, one might also have the intuition that the discovery of this fact would

not reveal what beauty really is – which is exhaustively revealed by the experience of the beauty – but rather a non-essential fact *about* it.⁵

On a response-dependent account of beauty, such as the one I argue for here, we are able to capture elements of both sets of intuitions. Beauty is tied to particular responses in the individual, but is nevertheless, a dispositional property of the world that can be multiply realised by a number of particulars – be they abstract, visual or acoustic objects, or actions.

§2.iii. What are the standard conditions and subjects?

Up until this point, I have said nothing about the standard subjects and conditions that help to determine whether something is truly beautiful or not. Indeed, in discussing the sufficiency of ecstasy for beauty, I considered an etiolated form of the conditional that did not include such constraining conditions. Let us turn to consider these now.

As I have already noted above, on some conceptions of response dependence, it is thought that the biconditional needs to be true *a priori*. This commitment causes problems in attempting to substantially specify the standard subjects and conditions. When one tries to offer a substantial characterisation of the standard conditions for a particular property, one quickly incorporates considerations that are known *a posteriori*.

In offering a response dependent account of colours, for example, one would need to rule out certain lighting and motion conditions in order to satisfactorily accommodate certain colour illusions. Benham's tops are rotating discs that are divided along the diameter into white and black regions. When rotated at seven cycles per second and viewed under bright tungsten light, the tops appear to be coloured. We do not consider these discs to change colour when these kinds of motion and lighting conditions are present; rather, we regard them as illusory colours. But we couldn't know that these conditions would need to be excluded by a substantial characterisation of the standard conditions merely by reflecting on the notions of black, white or colour.⁶

To get around this problem, Haukioja (2007) has suggested that advocates of response dependence should adopt a topic-neutral specification of the conditions, based on a proposal made by Pettit (1999). Pettit offers a functionalist account of normal conditions: we should look at the practices that are deployed when disagreements about the domain in question arise, and consider those conditions and subjects which are not rejected as a result of these disagreements-resolving practices to be the standard conditions. From this, Haukioja proposes the following topic-neutral specification of normal conditions:

(Topic-Neutral) Normal conditions for the application of a response-dependent concept C are conditions which are such as not to generate interpersonal or

⁵ Dominic Gregory has pressed me on the issue of revisions of judgements of beauty over time. Gregory points out, for example, that Bouquereau's paintings used to provoke rapture in people, but now merely seem kitsch. The issue of the status of such revisions deserves discussion at length in further research, but briefly: it is consistent with this response-dependent account that the truth of judgements may be relative to certain epochs, and there is considerable room for blameless disagreements in this account.

⁶ Haukioja (2007) offers a similar example involving the colour of tulips in a remote village of the Himalayas. Haukioja asks us to imagine that some substantial specification of normal conditions in terms of suitable lighting conditions holds, but there are fumes in this village that make red objects look blue. The upshot of this thought experiment is that "we cannot know *a priori* all the different factors which might conceivably affect our colour judgements," (329) and so any topic-specific substantiation of the conditions will fail. It is also worth pointing out that Benham's tops pose a similar problem for those who think that necessity marks out response dependence. It seems like it is a contingent fact about the way that humans happen to be constituted that we are subject to such colour illusions. We might have been constituted such that we are not subject to such illusions, but rather occupy a world in which motion and tungsten light is necessary to see the true colour of objects. If that were the case, then any biconditional whose specification excluded these conditions would not be necessarily true.

intrapersonal discrepancy of responses among those who possess C. (Haukioja, 2007: 327).

The presumed advantage of this is that it allows advocates of response dependence to characterise the standard conditions and subjects substantially and in an *a priori* fashion. The higher-order topic-neutral characterisation of normal conditions is known *a priori*, and this guides the decision procedure as to whether those features of the subject or environmental conditions that are found *a posteriori* to affect the response count as normal or not.

Now, as I have made clear, I cannot settle the question of whether response-dependent accounts need to be true *a priori* or not (though my sympathies certainly don't lie with arm chair philosophy). But irrespective of one's views on this, Haukioja's proposal is helpful in any case as a higher order guide to decide whether a particular feature of a subject or environmental condition that is discovered to affect the propensity of something to give rise to ecstasy counts as normal or not.

Taking a cue from Johnston (1992, 1993), non-standard conditions can be classed into two broad kinds: mimicking conditions and masking conditions. Mimicking conditions are those subject or environmental conditions that mimic the effects of the disposition that is constitutive of a property in the absence of that property. Masking conditions are those subject or environmental conditions that prevent the disposition that is constitutive of a property from manifesting itself when present. Let me turn to consider a few such constraints.

We have already encountered one such feature that can affect the occurrence of ecstasy – namely the presence of a certain kind of temporal lobe epilepsy.

In the case of TLEs who experience ecstatic auras, the epileptic focus can be thought of as an endogenous electrode that spontaneously stimulates the neural areas responsible for producing experiences of ecstasy to produce that emotion in the absence of any external cause. This phenomenon can be used to devise a number of conditions that would be non-standard because they either mimic or mask the disposition to produce ecstasy.

In the case of mimicking, we can well imagine cases where a surgeon uses an electrode to depolarise the neurons in the areas involved in the production of the experiences of ecstasy to give rise to an experience of ecstasy, and where neither the actual cause (i.e. the stimulating electrode) nor the intentional object of the ecstasy (i.e. whatever the response is directed at, usually the cause) is beautiful. If such a subject were to judge that the intentional object is beautiful, and another subject disagrees, it seems likely that the judgement of the epileptic would be discounted on the grounds that the judgement seems to be the result of a cause that is external to the intentional object.

In the case of masking, just as one can well imagine a case where deviant experiences of ecstasy are caused by applying an electrode that depolarises the neurons in the areas involved in the production of experiences of ecstasy, one can also imagine cases where experiences of ecstasy may be inhibited by the use of an instrument that hyperpolarises the neurons in the area involved in the production of experiences of ecstasy.⁷ Where this is the case, beautiful things may fail to give rise to an experience of ecstasy in the subject concerned. If the subject were to judge the thing concerned to not be beautiful, and another subject who was not under the influence of such an instrument were to disagree, it seems likely that a disagreement-resolving practice would discount the judgement of the

⁷ These examples are not merely philosopher's fancies: Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) and Transcranial direct-current stimulation (tDCS) are two such devices that might achieve this effect. In the case of TMS, decreased neural activity can be induced in a particular area by administering low frequency magnetic pulses to the scalp adjacent to the area (and increased activity by administering higher frequency pulses). In the case of tDCS, decreased neural activity can be induced by applying a cathodal current to the area of the scalp adjacent to the area concerned (and increased activity can be induced by applying an anodal current).

subject who was under the influence of such an instrument. Similar outcomes seem likely in cases where disagreement arises from the influence of any number of psychoactive substances.

Moreover, as beauty may be considered, at least in some cases, to be a tertiary property that supervenes on secondary properties (and, in turn, their supervenience bases), it seems probable that many of the standard conditions required for true judgements of secondary qualities will also be required for true judgements of beauty. For example, where a colour-blind person judges the colours of a painting to be beautiful, and others disagree, one might discount the colour-blind individual's judgement. Similarly, where someone judges that something is beautiful under poor lighting conditions, or from a distance, and others disagree, one may choose to discount the judgement of the subject who is in sub-optimal viewing conditions.

It is important to note that it does not need to be the case that the standard conditions and subjects are the same for all the modalities in which beauty might present itself. For example, the standard conditions for having experiences of ecstasy that are truly indicative of beauty in visual objects might be quite irrelevant for having the equivalent experiences from music.

Indeed, it is not even the case that the standard conditions for having experiences of ecstasy that are truly indicative of beauty may not be the same for all tokens of beauty that present themselves within the same modality. For example, the standard conditions for truly judging the beauty of a diamond tiara – which may include midday sunlight – may be quite different from the standard conditions for truly judging that a sunset is beautiful – which could not possibly include being seen in the midday sun.

It seems likely that there may be many non-standard conditions related to the subject's mood and focus of attention. In cases where someone is preoccupied with their worries, a beautiful object may fail to produce experiences of ecstasy, howsoever mild, and the individual's pronouncements as to the beauty of the object may be discounted where they differ from those of individuals who are not so preoccupied.

In the case of mood, it also seems likely that there may be an important relationship between certain moods and beauty. Some moods may at certain times be anathema to the disposition to produce ecstasy. It seems that, for example, when one is overly excited, a beautiful sunset may not be able to manifest its disposition to produce ecstasy. Similarly, as we shall see in chapter 9 in our discussion of ugliness, disgust seems to be anathema to ecstasy on a number of dimensions – including in terms of the elicitors and the components of the emotion itself. As such, it seems likely that being in a disgusted mood will be anathema to beautiful objects being able to manifest their power to produce experiences of ecstasy.

By contrast, a number of moods may act to enable some beautiful things to manifest their disposition to produce ecstasy. For example, it seems that sad moods may have a special relationship with at least some cases of beauty and, as one would expect if the constitutive thesis is true, ecstasy. It may be the case that experiences of sadness may, by some mechanism, potentiate experiences of ecstasy. Correspondingly, the beauty of at least those artworks that are deeply moving (such as tragedies, paradigmatically) seems to be enhanced by the sadness they often induce, and a sad mood may aid such works in manifesting their beauty. Similarly, as we have seen, experiences of self-diminishing vastness and power, as occur in response to the sublime, may potentiate experiences of beauty.

This discussion of the kinds of things that might feature as standard and non-standard environmental and subject conditions is in no way intended to be exhaustive. There are surely a multitude of environmental and subject conditions that could influence the power of different

beautiful objects to manifest their dispositions to produce ecstasy. It is for philosophers and psychologists to discover these relationships.

In closing, however, it is important to emphasise that this allows for a good deal of relativism in beauty (as alluded to above). Where there are disagreements in judgements of beauty between different people, and where this is not due to standard condition or subject conditions not being met, it seems that we simply have different truths in play. Indeed, that this is the case seems to be a virtue of the account, as it allows us to chart a course between a wholesale relativism about beauty and a wholesale realism about beauty. As such, it is not only able to accommodate the fact that we often disagree about beauty whilst still holding to the idiom that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but also helps to cast light on the circumstances in which disagreements are likely to be able to be resolved. There is surely a great deal more to be said about this, but this must await future work.

§6. Conclusion.

In this chapter, I brought my positive account of beauty and ecstasy to a close. I have argued that ecstasy is not only exclusively caused by beauty, but that ecstasy might actually be constitutive of beauty. I have proposed that beauty might be the disposition to produce ecstasy in standard conditions in standard subjects.

In attempting to demonstrate how this account is true, I have argued that it makes the best sense of our intuitions about beauty, can incorporate the grounds on which its competitors look appealing without being committed to their shortcomings, and is consistent with a range of empirical findings.

In the third and final part of the thesis, I turn to consider how the constitutive thesis can be put to work explanatorily. In chapters 8 and 9, I will show how the constitutive thesis is able to accommodate the data outlined in chapter 2, including the fact that moral actions are reliably found to be beautiful across cultures together with the folk beliefs regarding beauty that are reliably found across cultures, among other data. Indeed, insofar as the constitutive thesis can elegantly accommodate these findings, I submit that it is thereby further supported.

Part III – Meeting the Explananda.

Chapter 8 – Meeting the Explananda I: Moral Beauty & the Constitutive Thesis.

§1. Introduction.

In the thesis thus far, I have argued that there is an emotion that is part of our shared psychology – namely, ecstasy – and that beauty is constituted by a disposition to produce this response. In this final part of the thesis, I show how the constitutive account can be put to work to accommodate the explananda discussed in chapter 2.

In this chapter we turn to consider how the ecstasy thesis, and relevant empirical data, can be used to make progress in one of the debates surrounding the relationship between aesthetics and ethics: namely, the debate surrounding whether moral character can be beautiful. I argue that the constitutive thesis suggests an affirmative answer to this question. In so doing, I also attempt to show that the ecstasy thesis can elegantly accommodate the finding (laid out in chapter 2) that a broad conception of beauty can be found across cultures, and that insofar as this is the case, the constitutive thesis is itself supported.

In chapter 9, I turn to consider how the constitutive thesis can accommodate the remaining explananda outlined in chapters 2 and 3.

§2. The Moral Beauty Question: is virtue *truly* beautiful?

The view that morally good character traits and actions may be beautiful (the moral beauty thesis, or MBT from hereafter) has been held by a number of philosophers in the history of philosophy, including by Plato, the Stoics, Hume and Hutcheson. Indeed, up until the eighteenth century, the MBT was so widely held that it was not as much considered a theory as a fact that needed to be accommodated by theories of beauty (and, as such, arguments in support of the fact that character traits can be beautiful are few). But, between the eighteenth century and late into the twentieth century, and in no small measure due to the development of disinterested theories of beauty (and, in particular, Kant's conception of it), the view has fallen out of philosophical fashion (Gaut, 2007).

In chapter 1, we saw that two contemporary philosophers – Carroll and Goldman – have argued respectively that the moral merits or demerits of a work need to be excluded or included in accounts of aesthetic experience on the basis of such philosophical usage. I argued that it would be philosophically more robust to look at usage across cultures. After surveying a good deal of anthropological data in chapter 2, I concluded that across cultures, people find acts of moral goodness beautiful. In this chapter, I further consider contemporary arguments that have been put forward in favour of the moral beauty thesis specifically, and attempt to accommodate the cross-cultural findings.

In contemporary philosophical aesthetics, two philosophers have attempted to reverse the fortunes of the moral beauty thesis – Colin McGinn (1999) and Berys Gaut (2007). Each defends a slightly different conception of the thesis, and on different grounds. In what follows, I will outline the difference between the two contemporary conceptions, and then proceed to consider the arguments that each have advanced in favour of the MBT.

I will suggest that two strategies have been pursued. Gaut primarily advances a Socratic strategy according to which we should consider the MBT to be true provided that (i) it is *prima facie*

true, and (ii) it can withstand objections posed against it. McGinn primarily advances a direct argument in favour of the MBT based on a proposed account of beauty.

With regard to the former, I will attempt to clarify and buttress the arguments laid out by Gaut against the most prominent objections, drawing on some of the data concerning the prevalence of the moral beauty thesis across cultures. I will argue that even though this strategy, with the modifications proposed, is a promising one, it is nonetheless still defeasible.

I will then argue that what is needed is a direct argument for the MBT from a true account of beauty. Given that many of the considerations that form part of the *prima facie* argument for moral beauty can, I suggest, be thought of as explananda, a true account of beauty should, at least, be consistent with these data. Turning to consider the direct argument that has been proposed for the MBT by McGinn, I argue that this does not succeed in its current form, but that there is nonetheless something of merit in the view.

In the second half of the chapter, I argue that that the constitutive thesis can provide a positive answer to the question of whether moral virtues can be beautiful, and that it can elegantly accommodate the evidence cited in favour of the *prima facie* argument deployed. I support this view by drawing on evidence provided by Haidt, Diessner and colleagues. Indeed, I argue that insofar as the constitutive thesis is consistent with all of these data, it is thereby supported.

§2.i. Varieties of the Moral Beauty Thesis.

Before beginning in earnest, it is important to at least note that different advocates have advanced different conceptions of the moral beauty thesis.

§2.i.i. The proposed domain-specificity of beauty with regard to character.

The main difference between different accounts of moral beauty concerns the kinds of character traits that can be considered beautiful.

On the one side, Gaut, for example, advances a weak conception of the moral beauty thesis, according to which both moral- and non-moral- character traits may be beautiful.

Gaut claims, for example, that the greatest beauty of the soul consists in wisdom, where this is meant to include more than just moral wisdom, but is thought to involve a general grasp of eternal truths. In further support of this view, Gaut (2007: 120) notes that we talk of someone who is exceptionally intellectually gifted as having in that respect “a beautiful mind” (noting that this was the title of a well known biography of the mathematician John Nash).

Gaut notes that there are a number of other traits that are beautiful but that we do not consider to be moral: for example “having a vivacious capacity to experience life to its full and being open and positive towards opportunities is an attractive character trait, but is not a specifically moral one,” and conversely that “a tendency to be pessimistic, to be neurotically fearful of every change, with a killjoy view of any proffered happiness, is an ugly aspect of someone’s character, though it is not in itself a moral defect, and is quite consistent with being morally upstanding” (ibid.).¹

On the other hand, a greater number of philosophers at least *seem* to hold to a stronger form of the moral beauty hypothesis according to which it is only moral character traits that are beautiful.

¹ Gaut cautiously dips his toes into the debate surrounding how one should draw the moral-non-moral distinction, arguing that the moral domain is characterized by norms governing the well-being of others, broadly construed. For what it’s worth, I think that such a conception is plausible, but it should be noted that it is not clear, at this point at least, that one need to have such a conception in order to get the weak form of the moral beauty thesis off the ground: one can identify moral and non-moral character traits without thereby knowing what makes them cases of moral and non-moral character traits respectively.

McGinn (ibid.: 93), for example, claims that the virtues of “kindness, justice, compassion, steadfastness, etc.; cruelty, injustice, meanness, callousness, capriciousness, and so on” are the supervenience bases for what McGinn calls the “morally aesthetic properties” such as “fine,” “pure,” “stainless,” “sweet,” and “wonderful,” on the positive side and “rotten,” “vile,” “ugly,” “sick,” “repulsive,” and “tarnished” on the negative side.

§3. Arguments in Favour of Moral Beauty.

As I have already mentioned, the existing arguments in favour of moral beauty can be divided into two groups. The first strategy, and the one deployed by Gaut (2007) for the most part, is to argue that we should accept the MBT provided that it is *prima facie* true that character traits can be found to be beautiful and that the claim can withstand objections. The second strategy, and the one deployed by McGinn for the most part, is to argue for a particular conception of beauty in order to show how it can be the case that character traits can be beautiful.

To this end, we will consider (i) the ordinary language argument – which intends to show that the MBT is *prima facie* true – and the main objections that have been levelled against this argument, namely (a) the metaphor objection (b) the false belief objection, and (c) the necessity of perception objection. We will then turn to consider one further argument that has been proposed by McGinn to directly argue for the MBT.²

§3.i. The *Prima Facie* Truth of the MBT: The Ordinary Language Argument.

Perhaps the most important argument in favour of the thesis is that we often talk about moral virtues as beautiful and moral vices as ugly. It is clear that we quite commonly say that a person is beautiful on the inside – most commonly to describe those who are kind or compassionate and actions that express kindness or compassion. On the face of it, this suggests that moral virtues and moral vices are indeed tokens of beauty and ugliness respectively.

Gaut has suggested that a Socratic dialectical argument can be built from this observation, of the following form: it at least appears that moral virtues can be beautiful, and provided that this can withstand objections, we should accept it as true. The Socratic strategy can I suggest, in part, be understood as an abductive strategy: that is, what best explains the fact that it appears that moral virtues can be beautiful? Is it that moral virtues are indeed beautiful or is it that they are not beautiful and these appearances can be more satisfactorily explained away by recourse to some other means?

Once one sees the argumentative strategy in these terms, it should be clear that the more evidence that virtue appears to be beautiful, the more pressure one is under to be able to adequately accommodate these findings. And here, the data on whether a broad or narrow conception of beauty is found across cultures is of relevance.

As I noted in chapter 2, the majority of cultures across the world that have been investigated seem to use the same lexical marker to mark both formal and moral beauty. To take just two examples, Schneider (1966: 158) notes that among the Turu, the term ‘*majigha*’ is used to mark both

² Gaut mentions another argument – the phenomenology argument – which will not be considered here, as it is grossly underdeveloped and, therefore, currently unconvincing, as Gaut himself notes. It goes as follows: Gaut suggests, following Hume, that “the type of pleasure one has in contemplating a markedly good act seems very like the type of pleasure one takes in beauty” – and that in seeing the kindness in someone’s face, one seems to see a kind of beauty. However, this argument is clearly undeveloped. It’s not clear what it means for there to be different kinds of beauty, and it is far from clear that Gaut thinks that there is indeed such a kind of pleasure that is distinctive of beauty (and perhaps other things).

formal beauty and “a voluntary act which makes people happy,” and in his investigation of the Chokwe, Crowley (1973: 228) notes that “an ugly woman who is a faithful wife and good mother is ‘*chibema*’ ([*beautiful*]), but so is a pretty but faithless wife” and that “this lack of linguistic distinction between the aesthetic and the moral became a favourite subject in the chota’s men’s house.”

Putting aside the ordinary language usage of ‘beauty’ to describe moral virtue, as I noted in chapter 2, one can add a further set of data points concerning moral beauty that need to be explained. In a number of cultures, there is a conceptual link between moral and formal beauty, namely that formal beauty is believed to be caused by moral beauty. Bony (1967: 2) notes that among the Bete for example, “outer beauty underpins inner beauty, of which it is only its outward sign and expression.” And the belief in the moral ontogeny of beauty does not merely concern anthropic beauty, but also artistic beauty. In Chinese culture, for example, it is thought that good artists need to be good people, which is here understood to mean that the artist is “at peace with nature” and that the artist’s “breasts must brood no ill passions” (Lin, 1935: 288). As I argued in chapter 2, for this reason, among others, it is not clear that these beliefs can be elegantly explained away in terms of domain-general capacities.

§3.ii. The *Prima Facie* Truth of the MBT: McGinn’s ‘no cases of contradiction’ argument.

McGinn can be seen as attempting to bolster the significance of the fact that we talk about moral beauty and ugliness in ordinary language with his “no cases of contradiction argument.”

McGinn begins by suggesting that the moral beauty thesis can be tested by asking what would need to hold in order for it to be false. McGinn claims that one state of affairs that would be inconsistent with the moral beauty thesis would be if “a person could present an observer with both aesthetically positive and morally negative characteristics, these being instantiated by the same thing, namely, a soul” (1999: 100-1). That is, if it is conceptually possible for a soul to be either both ugly and virtuous or beautiful and vicious then the MBT would be false.

More formally, one can put the argument in the following way:

- (P1) Moral virtues are beautiful and moral vices are ugly (moral beauty claim);
- (P2) Something cannot be both beautiful and not beautiful or ugly and not ugly (non-contradiction claim);
- (P3) Something that is ugly is not beautiful and something that is beautiful is not ugly (mutual exclusivity of aesthetic qualities);
- (C) Souls cannot be both virtuous and ugly or vicious and beautiful.

McGinn claims that one way that this could be the case is if there are terms that ascribe beauty to a soul yet have no moral implications. McGinn claims that “ordinary language declines to offer up such terms – they all seem to have moral import” (ibid.: 100). McGinn here means that all the words that express what he calls “morally aesthetic properties,” such as “fine,” “pure,” “stainless,” “sweet,” “wonderful,” on the positive side and “rotten,” “vile,” “ugly,” “sick,” “repulsive,” and “tarnished” (ibid.: 99) on the negative side, all express either beauty and moral virtue or viciousness and ugliness and that no such terms express properties that are beautiful and vicious or ugly and virtuous.³

³ McGinn notes that the ordinary language that is used to morally appraise character is saturated with aesthetic notions: “We say of a person we morally esteem that she is fine, pure, stainless, of high quality, unblemished, flawless, lovely, delightful, inspiring, simple, natural, spontaneous, sweet, wonderful; while the person we morally disapprove may be described as rotten, bestial, swinish, stinking, foul, vile, crooked, monstrous, grotesque, sick, sickening, flawed, corrupt, ugly, filthy, shitty, tarnished, disgusting, disgraceful, unclean, repulsive, an asshole, a prick, a cunt” (ibid.: 99).

McGinn notes that the only term that comes close is “charming” – where this might be used to describe someone who is morally vicious and beautiful. Here, McGinn claims that in such cases, the beauty really attaches to the person’s manner rather than their character, and thus there is no contradiction. McGinn takes this fact to provide powerful evidence in favour of the moral beauty thesis.

But this is rather misleading, as the results of this conceptual connection test have asymmetrical consequences for the thesis. A negative answer is inconsistent with the conceptual truth of the thesis, and could be used by those skeptical about moral beauty to argue against the moral beauty thesis.

By contrast, an affirmative answer is *only consistent* with the moral beauty thesis, and need do nothing to convince those who do not already think that the thesis is true. After all, if one thinks that the moral beauty thesis is incorrect, and that people who assert that moral virtue is beautiful are making a category mistake or speaking metaphorically (as we shall discuss in the next section), then it is no surprise that there wouldn’t be cases of contradiction. Since, for the skeptic, someone’s character cannot be beautiful or ugly at all, there is no way in which such a contradiction could exist. That is to say, McGinn’s non-contradiction argument does nothing above and beyond the ordinary language argument to support the moral beauty thesis.

So, failing McGinn’s attempt to bolster the ordinary language argument, can the *prima facie* truth of the MBT thesis stand up against objections and alternative explanations?

§3.iii. Objections to the *Prima Facie* Argument I: Deflation as Metaphor.

The first objection to this view, and one that has been raised by, for example, Burke, is that the claim that virtue is beautiful is not literally true but simply metaphorical. Burke writes, for example, that:

This loose and inaccurate manner of speaking, has therefore misled us both in the theory of taste and of morals; and induced us to remove the science of our duties from their proper basis (our reason, our relations, and our necessities,) and to rest it upon foundations altogether visionary and unsubstantial. (Burke, Part III, Section XI, [1756] 2008: 102).

As Burke makes clear, if the claim that moral virtue is beautiful is merely metaphorical then one can deny that moral beauty really exists. So, how should one adjudicate as to whether it is meant metaphorically or literally?

McGinn isn’t much help against the sceptical challenge here – simply asserting that talk of moral beauty is not “merely poetic or sentimental, [or] clearly false if taken as the sober truth,” (1999: 93) and later that “it can hardly be that whenever we say such things we are uttering outright falsehoods, or making silly category mistakes” (ibid.: 99). For, ‘*why not?*’ the Burkean might well ask.

Gaut suggests that “the application of a term in a context is *prima facie* evidence of literal usage” (2007: 124) and that, as a consequence, the burden of demonstrating defeating conditions falls on the shoulders of the skeptic. So what are these defeating conditions?

Gaut claims that there are two such pragmatic markers that defeat literal usage. The first ‘truth-defeating marker’ is the evident falsehood of the claim when taken literally. Where it is said that somebody is a swine, the assumption of the literal truth is defeated by the evident falsehood of the claim. People are obviously not pigs (*Sus domesticus*). The second ‘truth-defeating marker’ is the

evident truth but complete irrelevancy of the claim when taken literally. If someone who is asked how they are feeling, and replies that they are not “over the moon,” the assumption of literal truth will be defeated by the evident truth but irrelevancy of the claim. It is evidently true that the person has not travelled over the moon, but taken literally, this would be a *non sequitur* as a response to the question.

Gaut proposes that one can adjudicate this matter by answering the question: are claims about moral beauty evidently true but completely irrelevant when taken literally or evidently false? Gaut’s reply is that the claim that a morally virtuous person is beautiful is not *evidently* true but *completely* irrelevant, and that it is at least not *evidently* false. Indeed, if it were either evidently false or evidently true, there wouldn’t be any room or cause for debate about the moral beauty thesis. As such, Gaut concludes that the metaphor objection does not reach the standard required to defeat literal usage.

Gaut’s answer is unsatisfactory. The two ‘truth-defeating markers’ set the bar far too high for metaphorical usage, and in so doing, stack the odds unfairly against skeptics of the MBT. Some locutions may be intended or taken to be metaphorical which are not evidently false, but simply somewhat likely to be false. If someone claims that there’s a pig in the living room, one might take this to be metaphorical on the grounds that farm animals are not characteristically found in the living room and that the person has some quite despicable acquaintances, but it certainly isn’t *evidently* false. It is quite possible that one might enter the living room to find an actual pig there.

With this in mind, one can simply say that there is a presumption in favour of literal truth unless it is intended to be taken as false or true but irrelevant. As such, the metaphor objection requires negotiating this possibility in a more subtle way, by answering the question: is there any evidence that historical proponents of the MBT have intended the MBT to be merely false or true but irrelevant?

This doesn’t seem to be the case. Take, for example, the case of Hume. Hume abundantly refers to “the beauty of virtue, and deformity of vice,” and he is quite explicit that he intends this to be understood as literally true and not irrelevant:

The ancient philosophers, though they often affirm, that virtue is nothing but conformity to reason, yet, in general, seem to consider morals as deriving their existence from taste and sentiment. On the other hand, our modern enquirers, though they also talk much of the beauty of virtue, and deformity of vice, yet have commonly endeavored to account for these distinctions by metaphysical reasons, and by deductions from the understanding. (Hume, [1751] 1975b: 170).

That is, according to Hume, among the ancients, talk of the beauty of virtue seems to be at least implicitly intended to be taken as literal and true, on the grounds that, according to Hume, it is implied that they believed that morals exist in virtue of the same psychological faculty that gives rise to beauty. Indeed, Hume himself clearly intends his own talk of moral beauty to be literal, on the grounds that beauty and virtue are for him, at root, the pleasure or approbation that arises from the operation of the faculty of taste. Indeed, he classes them both as the same sentiment – namely, “the sentiment of beauty and deformity, vice and virtue” – and claims that “in many particulars, [moral beauty] bears a natural resemblance” to natural beauty (ibid.: 294, 291).

Similarly, one can clearly see that talk of moral beauty is not intended to be taken as false or true but irrelevant by other alleged proponents of the MBT, on the grounds that if one were to claim that it is, one would be forced to conclude that these philosophers also knowingly peppered their

philosophical writings with trivialities and nonsenses. One can see this by a method of substitution. If the alleged proponents of the MBT intend their talk of moral beauty to be false or true but irrelevant, and therefore metaphorical, then one should be able to substitute the vehicle of the metaphor for the tenor without creating trivialities or solecisms. Thus, Plotinus' claims that,

all the virtues are a beauty of the soul, a beauty authentic beyond any of these others [the beauties of the senses], (Plotinus, *Ennead I, Sixth Tractate, Section I*, [c. 270 AD], 1976: 142)

Becomes, with substitution of beauty for virtue/goodness:

Substitution_{Virtue}: all virtues are virtues, a virtue authentic beyond any of these others [the beauties of the senses],

Substitution_{Good}: all virtues are good, a goodness authentic beyond any of these others [the beauties of the senses],

The first clause of the sentence is trivial in both cases – clearly virtues are identical with themselves and it is part of what it is to be a virtue to be good. In the case of the second clause, the substitution with virtue is both trivial and puzzling – if all virtues are virtues, then it is unclear how some could be more authentic virtues than the beauty of the senses if one doesn't hold the moral beauty thesis. In the case of the goodness substitution, whilst the claim that the virtues are a more authentic goodness makes sense, it isn't clear how it makes sense to say that these could be more authentic than the "other" beauties of the senses if one doesn't hold the moral beauty thesis.⁴

Arguably, given that assuming that alleged proponents of the MBT intend their talk of moral beauty to be false or true but irrelevant would mean that they would be offering trivialities and solecisms, then, on the plausible assumption that these philosophers aim to be at least *minimally* informative, it seems likely that they intend their talk of moral beauty to be literally true (but not irrelevant). As such, the defeating conditions do not seem to be present in at least these two cases.

Nor do these defeating conditions seem to be present in the cases present across cultures where the same lexical item is used to mark both formal and moral beauty. In at least some cultures, it seems that members reflectively assert that the same property that is expressed by the lexical item for formal beauty really attaches to tokens of moral beauty. As I noted earlier, and in chapter 2, for example, in his investigation of the Chokwe, Crowley (1973: 228) notes that "an ugly woman who is a faithful wife and good mother is '*chibema*' ([*beautiful*]), but so is a pretty but faithless wife" and that "this lack of linguistic distinction between the aesthetic and the moral became a favourite subject in the Chota's men's house."

Such a conclusion is supported by the fact that the term 'beautiful' appears to be used specifically to pick out good moral character as well as formal beauty rather than being used as a general term of approbation. It is not the case, for example, that it is used in reference to other

⁴ Indeed, the full quote is as follows: "all the virtues are a beauty of the soul, a beauty authentic beyond any of the others; but how does symmetry enter here?" Plotinus goes on to deny that souls can have the symmetry of size or number, and questions how one might measure the "coalescence of the soul's faculties or purposes" (ibid.: 142). Given this, Plotinus could hardly be denied to be asserting that virtue is truly beautiful.

sources of pleasure in these cultures such as food.⁵ As such, it does not appear that the use of this lexical item can be explained away as metaphorical – that is, to express mere approbation.

It is clear then, that the fact that we speak of moral virtues as beautiful is a robust fact, and as such, it cannot be pushed aside lightly. Failing the possibility of deflating talk of moral beauty as merely metaphorical, the detractors of the moral beauty thesis need to avail themselves of some other objection and deflationary explanation.

§3.iv. Objections to the *Prima Facie* Argument II: The False Belief Objection.

One might be tempted to suggest that literal talk of moral beauty is the result of a false belief, or number of false beliefs (as there are surely multiple possible means of arriving at the moral beauty thesis). The difficulty here is demonstrating which beliefs, or combinations thereof, might be responsible for the belief that moral virtues can be beautiful, and whether any of these beliefs are false.

In the case of Hume, for example, one might argue that he is led to claim that the virtues are beautiful by some theoretical commitment. For example, he may be led to believe that virtues are beautiful on the grounds that (a) both beauty and virtue seem to give rise to pleasure or approbation or some other sentiment in the absence of a process of reasoning, and (b) virtue and beauty are nothing but projections of the outputs of the faculty that automatically gives rise to pleasure, approbation or some other sentiment.

One might argue on this basis that the belief in moral beauty is a consequence of these other theoretical commitments, and not one of the antecedent (i.e. pre-theoretical) intuitions/observations that these theoretical commitments are intended to accommodate.

Although he doesn't explicitly pin down the false-belief objection, Gaut (2007: 116) seems to have something like this in mind when he observes in support of the moral beauty thesis that “talk of moral beauty and moral ugliness has been widespread in a heterogeneous variety of philosophical traditions.”

He notes, for example, that the Plato of the *Symposium* talks, via a dialogue between Socrates and Diotima, of ascending a ladder of beauty – from the beauty of one individual, to the beauty of virtuous actions and finally to the form of beauty itself (recall that Plato's Diotima holds that the “beauties of the body are as nothing to the beauties of the soul” (Plato, *Symposium*, [c. 370 BC] 2010, 210b). The stoics held that virtues were beauties of the soul, and that one could make oneself beautiful irrespective of the hand one had been dealt by nature in terms of physical beauty. As we have just seen, Plotinus held that “all the virtues are a beauty of the soul, a beauty authentic beyond any of these others [the beauties of the senses],” ([c. 270 AD] 1976: 142) and he compares the person who is striving to morally improve himself with a sculptor carving away stone from a block to reveal a beautiful form. In the modern period, Hutcheson argues that the “author of nature... has made virtue a lovely form, to excite our pursuit of it” ([1725] 1973: 25).

One might well wonder why Gaut thinks it should matter that a number of people have claimed that moral beauty exists, and moreover, why it should matter that these people have come from different philosophical traditions? Presumably, the thought is that if philosophers are independently arriving at the thesis from different traditions, then it does not seem likely that they

⁵ Or, if it is used in this thin sense, then a thicker use also exists which applies to a subset of that which is met with approbation. Also, it is important to note that there is at least one culture in which beauty and gustatory qualities are lexically linked: in Turkish, the word ‘beauty’ is used to mark both sweetness and beauty. Thanks to Bence Nanay for this point.

are simply inheriting the thesis from a philosophical forebear, or arrive at the thesis as a result of a common false belief.

Given that it is difficult to see whether a particular belief is responsible for a given philosopher's tokening of beauty to character traits, not least because the relevant belief may be implicit, one might think that Gaut provides a convenient (if less decisive) solution – if philosophers with otherwise very divergent beliefs arrive at the moral beauty thesis then, multiple means aside, it seems unlikely that this could be due to at least one of those divergent beliefs.

Indeed, as I noted in my discussion of the benefits of looking at concepts across cultures in chapter 2, we can do better than merely looking at the beliefs of philosophers in different traditions, as Gaut seems to recommend. After all, since there is often some continuity between subsequent philosophers and traditions and their antecedents, or at least an awareness of the claims of earlier philosophers and traditions, even philosophy may be considered one intellectual culture through which a certain false belief might persist (Cf. my discussion of conceptual sifting in chapter 2).

Here, one can cite the fact that the moral beauty thesis seems to be held by members of a wide variety of cultures across the globe. As such, it seems that it cannot be the case that it is the result of some *culturally superficial* (false) belief. Given its distribution across cultures, it is either the result of some universal psychological biases, the operation of a general learning mechanism together with a common input, or a deep fact about the nature of beauty given the kinds of creatures we are.

In sum then, it seems *unlikely* that the appearance that moral virtue can be beautiful can be elegantly explained away as the result of a false belief.

§3.v. Objections to the *Prima Facie* Argument III: The necessity of perception for beauty.

Even if it is true that across cultures the folk, as well as philosophers, often say that moral virtues are beautiful and believe that such locutions are at least sometimes literally true, it may still be the case that both the folk and philosophers are mistaken.

For this reason, it is important to consider the most prominent philosophical objection to view that moral virtues (among other things such as scientific theories and literary art works) could be beautiful.

The argument runs in the following way:

- (P1) Beauty is a perceptual quality itself or necessarily supervenes on perceptual qualities;
- (P2) Virtue is not a perceptual quality itself or does not necessarily supervene on a perceptual quality;
- (C) Therefore, virtue is not beautiful.

Gaut notes that the most sophisticated advancement of this claim is offered by Zangwill (2001: 140-3), who argues that beauty and its subspecies are dependent on perceptual qualities.

One immediate problem with this view is that this would rule out the beauty of mathematics, theories, as well as literary plots and ideas, as these are not the kinds of things that can be perceived.

To support this somewhat counterintuitive conclusion, Zangwill claims that he is not denying that one can admire such cases, but simply that the admiration here is not of beauty. In support of his distinction, Zangwill argues that the admiration of beauty requires that a perceivable object expresses an end rather than merely accomplishing it.

Zangwill offers the example of a design for a library: the purpose of a library is to house books, and the design might express that purpose. Insofar as this is the case, it can be beautiful. But, Zangwill claims, the design may also fail to be a good means of housing books. That is, it expresses this end but doesn't accomplish it. Zangwill claims that whether it accomplishes this end makes no difference as to our admiration of its beauty. In the case of intellectual objects like theories, they cannot express their ends (i.e. in this case aiming at being true) but can only accomplish them (i.e. by being true), and thus, whilst they can be admired intellectually, they cannot be admired for their beauty.

Both Gaut and McGinn's main response to the perceptual dependence objection and, in Gaut's case, Zangwill's particular defence of it,⁶ is to fall back on their responses to the attempt to deflate the significance of talk of moral beauty as metaphorical. In the case of McGinn, he simply takes it as evident that cases of mathematical and theoretical beauty exist and are non-perceptual.

In the case of Gaut, he notes that we have no reason to believe that scientists or mathematicians are talking metaphorically, as "none of these things is evidently false when taken literally, in contrast to the way that saying that a man is a swine is evidently false when so taken" (2007: 127). Moreover, Gaut points out that they seem to be intended to be understood literally, as Pythagoras and Plato's theories of beauty argue that the proper mode of apprehension of the beautiful is contemplation rather than perception, in order for their accounts to be able to accommodate the beauty of abstract entities.

But, putting these objections aside, it might be better to meet Zangwill, in particular, on his own terms. For Zangwill's distinction between accomplishing and expressing ends seems to fail to do the required work in buttressing the perception-dependent view of beauty.

It is just not true that a theory can merely achieve the end of truth rather than express it: it is common to hear scientists lament the falsity of a theory that is beautiful, which suggests a kind of admiration that couldn't be merely intellectual in Zangwill's terms, and even in cases where a theory is true, such as evolution by natural selection, the beauty seems to reside at least in large part in the way that it accommodates the data – that is, *mutatis mutandis* in Zangwill's terms, the expression of its purpose. I do not admire the theory of evolution by natural selection simply because it is a true account of life, but how it accommodates such diversity of life and complexity by such simple and dumb means.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that I think that something in the vicinity of Zangwill's thesis is correct: namely that for something to be experienced as beautiful its beauty needs to be manifest. But this is a much more permissive claim than Zangwill's perception claim. It allows that the beauty can be manifest in imaginings as well as perceptions.

Turning to the case of virtue, it seems true that virtue needs to be manifest in order to be experienced as beautiful. It is true, for example, that a wounded army doctor who ignores her own wounds to cut open another soldier's throat to perform a life-saving tracheotomy is performing a virtuous act. Indeed, it is a beautiful act. But it is difficult to experience her act as beautiful when manifested in this way. The manner in which this is done seems to mask the beauty of the intentional act.

Gaut seems to come close to this when he defends the moral beauty thesis against certain counterexamples on the basis that the beauty of moral actions is *pro tanto*. Gaut offers the example of someone who acts in a 'cruel to be kind' manner (like the tracheotomy described above). Surely, one might object, these are good actions that are not beautiful. In response, Gaut rightly replies that we should distinguish between the moral motivations of the actions and the outer accompaniments of the

⁶ It would be anachronistic to claim that McGinn is responding to Zangwill.

actions: they are beautiful motivations that, when expressed in certain actions, have the appearance of being cruel and therefore ugly (2007: 122).

This, of course, doesn't suggest that in cases where a certain act manifests the beauty of a virtue that the beauty properly belongs to the perceptual features of the act. For the self-same action could be known to be done for the wrong reasons, and in that case, the beauty of the act would diminish, if not disappear altogether.

For these reasons, the primary objection to the moral beauty thesis – namely that beauty is perception-dependent – is not successful.

By way of summary of the *prima facie* argument in favour of the MBT, it seems that the fact that, across cultures, we speak of moral virtues as beautiful (and moral vices as ugly) cannot be convincingly deflated as merely metaphorical, or the result of a false belief, and moreover, that the MBT can withstand at least one of the strongest objections to the view – namely that beauty is necessarily a perceptual property or supervenes on perceptual properties.

Nevertheless, the Socratic strategy remains a defeasible one. It may still be the case that even though the folk assert that moral virtues are beautiful, they may be wrong about this.

More substantial support for the MBT could be derived from an account of what beauty is itself, such that one could ask what feature (or set of features) moral virtues have such that they genuinely qualify as instances of beauty. Moreover, since I have suggested that facts about ordinary language may be considered explananda, one might expect a mature account of beauty to satisfactorily accommodate these explananda, and that insofar as an account can do this it is thereby supported. It is to these arguments that we now turn.

§3.vi. Direct Arguments from the Nature of Beauty.

Both Gaut and McGinn note that a number of arguments can be derived from theories about the nature of beauty. The arguments highlighted by Gaut are not successful (as Gaut himself notes), and have already been dealt with in chapter 3, so won't be discussed at length here. McGinn, however, offers a novel argument for the moral beauty thesis, which whilst unsuccessful (as I shall argue shortly) is worth discussing since it gestures towards the right kind of response.

McGinn's answer to the question "what is beauty such that the soul can possess it?" is twofold. First, he offers the following response-dependent account of beauty:

Beauty_{McGinn}: Beauty is "the property that delights our aesthetic faculties." (1999: 108).

This is clearly inadequate in itself: if one understands 'aesthetic' to simply be beauty (as McGinn seems to intend), then the characterisation looks to be circular. In attempting to elucidate this characterisation further, he turns to Nabokov's general remarks on the aesthetic: "For me a work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords me what I shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss, that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other states of being where art (curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy) is the norm" (Nabokov, 1959: 75, as cited by McGinn, 1999: 109). Clearly, art is not curiosity, tenderness, kindness and ecstasy, or any disjunctive combination thereof, as that would be a category mistake. Helpfully, and no doubt recognising this inadequacy, McGinn paraphrases Nabokov in the following way:

An object is beautiful if and only if it affords aesthetic bliss, and aesthetic bliss is a state of mind in which one is connected to other states of being in which art is the norm – where art involves curiosity, tenderness, kindness and ecstasy. The beautiful object is what disposes us to experience these other-worldly states of being. In a word, it puts us into contact with certain ideals. (Ibid.: 110).

McGinn admits that this does not, by itself, have any bearing on the moral beauty thesis. For that to be the case, McGinn claims that it must be combined with his moral beauty thesis. Thus, McGinn argues in the following manner:

- (P1) Moral goodness is a kind of beauty (Moral beauty thesis);
- (P2) Beauty is something that gives rise to moral ideals (Nabakov’s characterisation of beauty);
- (C) Moral goodness is something that gives rise to moral ideals.

McGinn’s moves here are a little odd. If the moral beauty thesis features as a premise in the argument, then it can hardly be used to offer an independent argument in favour of that thesis.

In light of this, it might be better to reformulate McGinn’s argument in the following way, based on his claim that the moral beauty thesis and Nabakov’s characterisation of beauty are supported by the fact that “virtue, especially exceptional virtue, does make us think of – even yearn for – a world in which virtue is the norm” (ibid.: 111):

- (P1) All beauty gives rise to moral ideals;
- (P2) All virtue gives rise to moral ideals;
- (C) Therefore, virtue is beautiful.

As we shall shortly see, this argument seems to be aiming in the right direction, but it is clearly unsatisfactory as it stands: For one thing, it wouldn’t follow from the mere fact that experiences of beauty and virtue give rise to moral ideals that virtue is therefore beautiful. Giving rise to thoughts or moral ideals may be a mere predicative feature of each, which wouldn’t in itself confer the property of being beautiful. In light of this, one might wish to modify (P1) to,

- (P1*) All beauty and only beauty gives rise to moral ideals when contemplated;
- Or
- (P1**) All beauty is that which gives rise to moral ideals when contemplated;⁷

But the problem with both of these modifications is that they are not the most obvious characterisation of beauty or its effects, and might be readily resisted by skeptics, not least because they both seem to presuppose the truth of the thesis that engagement with beauty makes one more moral, which is controversial. At the least, it seems to require further argumentation to be convincing.

⁷ There is a question here about whether one can really attribute either of these modified premises to McGinn. He does, minimally, claim that the state that beauty gives rise to is one in which one feels that one has contacted certain ideals – which he interprets as moral ideals, and moreover, that beauty might be a response-dependent property. As such, it might be best to regard McGinn as offering an abductive argument. Given that beauty gives rise to this state, and this state is rare, McGinn might be taken as arguing that the best explanation of this fact is that they both hold the same response-dependent property.

§4. The Contribution of the Ecstasy Hypothesis.

It should be clear that a number of questions remain: firstly, whether there is a direct argument for the moral beauty thesis, and secondly, whether both moral and non-moral virtues are beautiful. Finally, as I have argued, it remains to be seen how the explananda highlighted in the preceding sections (and in chapter 2) – such as the use of ‘beauty’ in ordinary language, and the beliefs concerning the relationship between moral and formal beauty are to be explained. It seems plausible that a mature theory of beauty should be expected to do this.

Let us see how the constitutive thesis can address these desiderata.

§4.i. Moral Beauty and the Constitutive Thesis.

Recall that the constitutive thesis is that beauty is constituted by the disposition to produce experiences of ecstasy, howsoever mild, in standard subjects in standard conditions. If this is truly what beauty is, then one should expect it to be able to provide a means of directly arguing in favour of the moral beauty hypothesis. And indeed it does. The argument runs in the following manner:

(P1) x is beautiful \leftrightarrow x is disposed to give rise to x -directed ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions.

(P2) Moral virtues are disposed to give rise to moral-virtue-directed ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions.

(C) Therefore, moral virtues are beautiful.

Since I have argued at length that the first premise is true, and the argument structure is valid, the burden rests on the truth of the second premise. So is there any evidence that (P2) is true?

Looking at the data from Laski and Brookover-Bourque and Back, one might understandably be far from overwhelmed. From her own experience, Laski expected to find that people coming together to act together – as in political movements or displays of solidarity – which could certainly be understood as expressions of moral beauty, would be triggers of ecstasy, but this was not convincingly borne out by the data that she collected. Similarly, whilst Brookover-Bourque and Back report that “interactions with people” were reported to be the triggers of 16.6% of the reported experiences of ‘aesthetic’ ecstasy and 5.9% of the reported experiences of ‘religious’ ecstasy, they do not provide sufficient information to decide whether these are indeed displays of moral virtue.

Failing this, we need to turn to two other sources of data. The first, and most important set of data, comes from Jonathan Haidt’s work on what he coins “moral ‘elevation’.” The second, and less important data, derives from the work of Rhett Diessner and his colleagues.

§4.ii. ‘Elevation’ as the emotion that is responsive to moral beauty.

Let us begin with Haidt. In a number of publications, Haidt has proposed that there is an emotion that is selectively responsive to moral beauty. Haidt’s primary theoretical source for this idea is Jefferson, who, writing in 1771, advocated a certain kind of moralism about art:

Every useful thing which contributes to fix in us in the principles and practice of virtue. When any [...] act of charity or of gratitude, for instance, is presented either to our sight or imagination, we are deeply impressed with its beauty and

feel a strong desire in ourselves of doing charitable and grateful acts also. On the contrary, when we see or read of any atrocious deed, we are disgusted with its deformity and conceive an abhorrence in vice. Now every emotion of this kind is an exercise of our virtuous dispositions; and dispositions of the mind, like limbs of the body, acquire strength through exercise. (Jefferson, 1975: 350, as cited by Haidt, 2003: 275).

Jefferson goes on to say that the physical feelings and motivational effects caused by a good novel are as powerful as those caused by the real episodes:

[I ask whether] the fidelity of Nelson, and generosity of Blandford in Marmontel do not dilate [the reader's] breast, and elevate his sentiments as any similar incidence which real history can furnish? Does he not in fact feel himself a better man while reading them, and privately covenant to copy the fair example? (Ibid.)

From this, Haidt claims that Jefferson is identifying an emotion that has, heretofore, received little attention, and which he calls 'elevation,' but which people sometimes refer to as "being touched, moved or inspired" (Haidt, 2003: 281). In line with the widely held view that emotions are constituted by a set of components, such as eliciting conditions, physiological responses, motivational tendencies, and affective phenomenology, Haidt proposes that the emotion is constituted by the features in table 1.

Component	'Elevation'
Elicitor	"People moving up, blurring human-god divide" by committing "acts of virtue or moral beauty," i.e. the "sight or imagination" or any "act of charity or gratitude."
Motivation Tendency	"Merge, open-up, help others" "strong desire in ourselves of doing charitable and grateful acts also."
Physical changes	"Feel lifted up, optimistic about humanity," "warm open feelings (dilation?) in the chest."
Affective phenomenology	"Elevated sentiments," feelings of "moral improvement."

Table 1. Haidt's characterisation of 'elevation' (adapted from Haidt, 2003: 284-5).

Haidt has attempted to both empirically elucidate and provide empirical support for this characterisation in a number of studies, employing a variety of experimental paradigms. As we shall shortly see, the data that has emerged is not as clear as one might like, and so requires laying out in detail and discussing with care. (If the reader is happy to forgo a discussion of the considerable complexities of the relevant studies and wishes to cut straight to the upshot of these studies for my purposes here, please go to the second paragraph of p. 184, beginning "What conclusions can be drawn from these various data?").

Haidt (2000) reports two unpublished studies conducted by Haidt et al. (2000). One study employed a traditional recall paradigm. Participants were asked to recall and write about a time when they had seen either "a manifestation of humanity's 'higher' or 'better' nature" (experimental

condition, 'elevation') or when they "were making progress towards a goal" (control condition, happiness).

The second study employed an induction paradigm. Participants were shown either a clip from a documentary about Mother Teresa (experimental condition, 'elevation'), a clip from an interesting but otherwise emotionally neutral documentary (control condition, interest), or a clip from the TV show America's Funniest Home Videos (control condition, mirth).

Participants in the 'elevation' conditions were found to be more likely to report physical feelings in their chests, especially warm, pleasant, or 'tingling' feelings, and were more likely to report wanting to help others, to become better themselves, and to affiliate with others. By contrast, for example, participants in the mirth condition felt energised, and felt like pursuing private or self-interested pursuits (Haidt, 2000: 281-2).

Algoe and Haidt (2009) attempted to partially replicate these findings in three studies. The first study (N = 165) employed a recall paradigm. The participants were asked to think of a specific time when they either benefitted from the kindness, helpfulness or generosity of someone else (gratitude condition); witnessed someone doing something good, honourable or charitable for someone else ('elevation' condition), witnessed someone overcome a handicap or obstacle (admiration condition), or when something that they had been wanting to happen finally happened (joy condition).

The results did not show a clear discriminant validity between 'elevation' and the other conditions in terms of the physical sensations, but a number of features emerged as characteristic of the feelings reported: 23% of participants reported having a lump in their throat, 49% reported having warm feelings in their chest, 23% reported having tears in their eyes, 23% reported having chills or tingles, and 20% reported feeling light/bouncy.

Participants in the 'elevation' condition were, however, shown to have some different action tendencies and motivations to the other conditions. 'Elevation' participants were significantly more likely to want to be prosocial (E = 43%, G = 5%, A = 4%, J = 3%, $p > .05$) and were most likely to want to emulate the other (E = 67%, G = 19%, A = 33%, J = 0%, $p > .05$). Admiration and 'elevation' participants were significantly more likely to want to morally improve themselves than joy participants (E = 17%, G = 8%, A = 20%, J = 0%, $p > 0.05$).

Algoe and Haidt's second study (N = 130) was a controlled induction experiment. Participants were shown a video either about a man who set up a homeless shelter as a boy ('elevation' condition), a video of stand up comedians (amusement condition), or a video of Michael Jordan scoring baskets (admiration condition).

In terms of the feelings reported on a 6-point likert scale (anchored at 0 = not at all, and 6 = very much), the 'elevation' participants most commonly reported feeling respect (4.77), admiration (4.72), moved (4.05), and inspired (4.03). There were no significant differences between participants in the 'elevation' and admiration conditions on ratings of these feelings, but there were large and significant differences between both 'elevation' and admiration on the one hand and amusement on the other.

A factor analysis of the relevant feelings revealed a three factor model which accounted for 80% of the variance – with the items 'respect,' 'admiration,' 'inspiration,' 'moved,' 'awe,' loading on a factor the authors labelled 'admiration'; the items 'gratitude,' and 'love,' loading on a factor the authors labelled 'warmth' (though 'moved' also strongly loaded on this factor); and the feelings 'entertained,' and 'amused' loading on a third factor which the authors labelled 'amusement.' This revealed some discrimination between the different conditions. The authors found that 'elevation' participants scored the items on the warmth factor significantly higher than participants in the

admiration and amusement conditions ($E = 2.49$, $Ad = 1.43$, $Am = 0.53$). They found that the admiration participants scored the items on the admiration factor significantly higher than participants in the 'elevation' and amusement conditions ($E = 4.05$, $Ad = 4.68$, $Am = 0.59$). The authors conclude that 'elevation' is characterised by feelings closely allied to admiration and love.

In terms of physical sensations, both 'elevation' and admiration participants were found to be significantly more likely than amusement participants to report warm feelings in their chest ($E = 51\%$, $Ad = 43\%$, $Am = 20\%$). 'Elevation' participants were significantly more likely to report a lump in their throat than both the admiration and amusement participants ($E = 18\%$, $Ad = 2\%$, $Am = 4\%$). 'Elevation' participants were most likely to report feeling a warm chest (51%) and muscles relaxed (31%), though the latter was not significantly different from either of the other conditions. Analysis of the participants' descriptions of their feelings with their own words revealed, in addition to these findings, that participants in the 'elevation' and admiration conditions were found to be more likely to report feeling 'uplifted' ($E = 23\%$, $Ad = 33\%$, $Am = 0\%$).

In terms of motivational effects and action tendencies⁸ 'elevation' participants were most likely to express motivations to become a morally better person, and significantly more likely to become a morally better person and to repay the other person than both the admiration and amusement participants ("being a better person" $E = 2.28$, $Ad = 1.57$, $Am = 0.16$; "doing something good for another," $E = 2.62$, $Ad = 1.39$, $Am = 0.44$; "making sure the person is taken care of" $E = 1.26$, $Ad = 0.39$, $Am = 0.04$; "doing something for the other person," $E = 1.10$, $Ad = 0.33$, $Am = -0.09$, all $p > 0.05$).

Algoe and Haidt conducted a third study employing a more ecologically valid paradigm, using the same participants as the second study ($N = 98$). Participants were asked to record entries for one of the same kind of events probed in study two. The results were broadly in line with those of the second study.

In terms of the feelings reported, 'elevation' was most likely to be described as evoking feelings of 'admiration' (3.25), 'respect' (3.38), 'gratitude' (2.98), and being 'moved' (2.98). There were, however, some differences to the other studies. For example, where there were no significant differences in the second study between ratings of admiration, respect, being moved, and being inspired between the admiration and 'elevation' conditions, significant differences appeared in the third study (Admiration, $E = 3.25$, $Ad = 4.63$, $Am = 1.10$; Respect, $E = 3.38$, $Ad = 4.31$, $Am = 0.91$; Inspired, $E = 2.26$, $Ad = 3.82$, $Am = 0.72$, all $p > 0.05$). Moreover, where there was a significant difference between the 'elevation' and admiration conditions on the feelings of 'gratitude' in the second study, this difference was not found to be significant ($E = 2.98$, $Ad = 2.15$, $Am = 1.17$, ns). Nonetheless, in spite of these differences, the large and significant differences between admiration and 'elevation' on the one hand and amusement on the other were confirmed.

In terms of physical feelings, participants in the 'elevation' condition most commonly reported a 'warm' chest (35%), relaxed muscles (31%), and feeling 'light/bouncy' (23%), but none of these were significantly different from both the amusement and admiration conditions. In the 'elevation' condition, the only feelings that came out as significantly higher were: having a lump in the throat ($E = 9\%$, $Ad = 19\%$, $Am = 4\%$), which was significantly higher than the amusement condition but also significantly lower than the admiration condition; and relaxed muscles ($E = 31\%$, $Ad = 11\%$, $Am = 48\%$), which was significantly higher than the admiration condition but significantly lower than the amusement condition.

⁸ Participants were asked to rate items such as "As a result of this event, I feel... like I want to be a better person," on a 9-point likert scale ranging from -4 (much less) through 0 (no change) to +4 (much more).

In terms of the other conditions, participants in the admiration condition were significantly more likely to report feeling ‘high energy,’ ‘tensed muscles’ and an ‘increased heart rate’ compared to both ‘elevation’ and amusement; and amusement participants were significantly more likely to report relaxed muscles and laughter than participants in the amusement and admiration conditions.

In terms of motivations and action tendencies, the results were similar to those of Algoe and Haidt’s second study. As in the second study, ‘elevation’ was found to most commonly produce the motivation to emulate the other person, improve oneself morally, and act in a general pro-social manner; and ‘elevation’ was significantly more likely to produce general pro-social action tendencies and repay the person concerned than both admiration and amusement.

Diessner and colleagues (including Haidt) (2013) have since attempted to perform a partial replication of Algoe and Haidt (2009), with a larger sample and different emotional induction stimuli. Participants were assigned to either an admiration condition, in which subjects would watch a short video of an impressive baseball catch, or an ‘elevation’ condition, in which participants would watch a longer video in which an opposing baseball team collectively acted in a self-sacrificing way to help an injured member of the other team. After watching the video, participants completed 7-point likert scales (anchored from 1 = not at all to 7 = a great deal) indicating the extent to which they experience a lump in the throat, awe, admiration, gratitude, love, desire to be a better person, desire to do good for others and desire for success. The ‘elevation’ video was shown to produce significantly higher levels of admiration, gratitude, love, wanting to be a better person, wanting to do good for others, and a lump in the throat than the non-moral excellence video. The admiration video produced significantly higher levels of reported feelings of ‘awe.’ However, there were no significant differences in the reported desire for success between conditions.

Finally, we turn to consider the evidence that has been gathered by Diessner and his colleagues (2008) on the Engagement with Beauty Scale (EBS). Diessner and his colleagues developed the EBS in order to provide a specific measure of our sensitivity to experiences of natural, artistic and moral beauty. The scale is composed of three scales – the artistic beauty, natural beauty, and moral beauty subscales. Each subscale consist of four questions, which subjects are asked to rate on a 7-point likert scale, which ranges from “very unlike me” to “very much like me”: (1) “I notice beauty in [one or more aspects of nature/in art or human made objects/in human beings],” (2) “when perceiving [beauty in nature/in a work of art/an act of moral beauty] I feel changes in my body, such as a lump in my throat, an expansion in my chest, faster heart beat, or other bodily responses,” (3) When perceiving [beauty in nature/beauty in a work of art/an act of moral beauty] I feel emotional, it “moves me,” such as feeling a sense of awe, or wonder, or excitement, or admiration, or upliftment,” (4) “When perceiving [beauty in nature/beauty in a work of art/an act of moral beauty] I feel something like a spiritual experience, perhaps a sense of oneness, or being united with the universe, or a love of the entire world.” In addition to these questions, the moral subscale has two additional questions: (5) “When perceiving an act of moral beauty, I find that I desire to become a better person,” and (6) “When perceiving an act of moral beauty, I find that I desire to do good deeds and increase my service to others” (ibid.: 328-329).⁹

⁹ The items on this scale were derived from a number of sources. The characterisation of the bodily emotions and action tendencies were derived, in part, from Haidt’s work on ‘elevation.’ Interestingly, in using the same questions for each subscale apart from the questions regarding action tendencies, it is clear that Diessner and colleagues believe that the emotional experience of all kinds of beauty are the same. However, in addition to the influence of Haidt’s work on ‘elevation,’ Diessner includes an additional experiential probe on feelings of “a sense of oneness, or being united with the universe, or a love of the entire world,” on the grounds that the experience of beauty was a spiritual experience for a number of philosophers such as Kant and Hegel, religions often make reference to beauty, and some psychologists, such as Haidt and Keltner, have suggested a relationship with transcendence.

The significance of the ratings of this scale might appear rather limited at first sight. Participants might score the scale simply by focusing on whether they simply have valuable experiences of beauty without paying much attention to the particular components mentioned, or they may score the scale on the basis that they often experience the components mentioned without paying attention to the elicitor. Alternatively, they may be lead to think that their experiences of beauty are such as they are presented by the question.

However, there are ways of strengthening the conclusions that can be drawn about the nature of the experience of various kinds of beauty on these scales by looking at correlations with scales that focus independently on either beauty or the experiential components mentioned.

On the one hand, scores on the EBS have been shown to strongly correlate with measures of the disposition to have experiences of the states that feature in the scale. This strongly implies that patients are sensitive to the nature of experiences described by the scale. For example, Diessner and colleagues (2103) administered both the EBS and the Schwartz Values Survey (SVS), among other relevant measures of traits. The version of the SVS used gives 58 items, each of which names a value and asks participants to rate the degree to which the value is a guiding principle in their life on a scale that runs from -1 (opposed to my values), through 0 (not important), 3 (important), to 7 (of supreme importance). 58 items are combined into 10 major value types. Of these 10 values, and with a very large sample ($N = 2594$), scores on the EBS correlated moderately to strongly with three: benevolence, spirituality and universalism (and in some cases showed no relationship or even negative correlations with the values of power, hedonism, and achievement). Of these, only the latter two are relevant for our purposes. Schwartz characterises universalism as the value of being focused on “understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature,” and spirituality is derived from items concerning inner harmony, a spiritual life, and meaning in life.¹⁰ These correlations are consistent with a tendency to experience “a sense of oneness, or being united with the universe, or a love of the entire world” in response to beauty, as probed by one of the items on the EBS.¹¹

This is further supported by another study conducted by Diessner and his colleagues (2008) ($N = 206$) in which subjects were presented with the EBS together with a number of measures including Piedmont’s Spiritual Transcendence Scale, which assesses “the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place and to view life from a larger, more objective perspective” (Piedmont, 1999: 988). The total EBS score was found to correlate moderately to strongly and very significantly with the Spiritual Transcendence Scale ($r = .39, p > 0.001$).

On the other hand, scores on the EBS correlate with other measures of sensitivity to beauty that do not mention the particular experiential components mentioned by the EBS. Diessner and colleagues (2008), for example, found that the EBS strongly correlated with one of the only two other existing measures of the trait of engaging with beauty, namely, the 10-item Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence (ABE) subscale of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS) and the 8-item Aesthetics facet of the Openness to Experience Scale of the NEO Personality Inventory. As we saw in chapter 6, the lattermost scale has been used to show that chills experienced in response to beauty is a marker of Openness to Experience across cultures. In one study ($N=122$), Diessner and colleagues administered the EBS along with the ABE subscale. They found that the ABE was very

¹⁰ The correlation between the value of universalism and the EBS is supported by the fact that, on the the identification with humanity and love of humanity scales, there were very strong correlations between the EBA and love of all humanity and identification with the world (love of all humanity, $n = 497$, Nature Subscale = .51, Artistic Beauty Subscale = .41, Moral Beauty Subscale = .59; identification with the world, $n = 497$, Natural Beauty Subscale = .41, Artistic Beauty Subscale = .42, Moral Beauty Subscale = .49).

¹¹ Indeed, going beyond what is strictly warranted by these correlations alone, the authors conclude from this that “it appears engagement with any kind of beauty, including moral beauty, lifts us out of ourselves, and assists us to transcend ourselves” (Diessner et al., 2013: 148).

strongly and significantly correlated with the EBS subscale ($r = .80, p < 0.001$). This suggests that the participants responding to the EBS are actually sensitive to the question's reference to beauty as the elicitor of the experiential components mentioned, rather than merely the experiential components. Taken together, the triangulation of these correlations strongly implies that the measure has construct validity (i.e. that it actually measures what it purports to measure).

What conclusions can be drawn from these various data? Clearly, as this detailed outline of the relevant data shows, it is very difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding the nature of 'elevation,' as the different studies employ different induction paradigms, use different measures, compare different positive emotions, and have reported at least some inconsistent results.

Notwithstanding this, there are two ways in which an emotion might be characterised from these data: firstly, simply by noting the components that are positively reported with any frequency (preferably across studies, where the same measures have been used), and secondly, by looking at which components are reported more or less relative to other emotions across studies.

Putting aside the more difficult question of how 'elevation' should be *discriminatively* characterised for the moment, let us first look simply at which components are reliably reported with a degree of frequency.

In the studies that asked people about their feelings (Algoe and Haidt's second and third study, and Diessner et al.'s partial replication), 'elevation' was primarily characterised by 'admiration,' 'respect,' 'being moved,' 'being inspired,' 'gratitude,' and 'love' (though the latter was only measured and found in Diessner et al.'s partial replication). In addition, Diessner's studies using the EBS showed that people often feel a sense of having gained a oneness or unity with a larger totality such as everything.

In the studies that measured physical sensations (Haidt's two unpublished studies, Algoe and Haidt's three studies, Diessner et al.'s partial replication, and Diessner's studies on the EBS), 'elevation' was characterised by a 'warm chest,' 'relaxed muscles,' 'a lump in the throat,' and sometimes by 'chills and tingles,' 'tears in the eyes,' feeling 'light/bouncy,' and 'uplifted' (though this lattermost feeling was only measured in two studies).

In the studies that looked at action tendencies, 'elevation' was characterised by feelings of wanting to be a morally better person, do something for another, and less frequently, repay or emulate the object of the emotion. This characterisation is summarised in table 1.

Component	'Elevation'
Elicitor	Moral Virtue/Beauty.
Feelings	Moved, inspired, admiration, respect, love, gratitude, sense of oneness or being united with the universe.
Physiological changes/physical symptoms	"Warm" opened chest, relaxed muscles, lump in the throat, uplifted, occasionally chills and tears.
Action tendencies/motivations	Act prosocially, emulate virtue displayed, repay/reward object of emotion.

Table 2. The components of 'elevation.'

It is much more difficult to satisfactorily say how 'elevation' can be robustly distinguished from the other positive emotions from these data – clearly, a great deal more psychological work will

be required to do this adequately. Nonetheless, even at this early stage in the empirical research programme, there are a couple of things that may be said about how ‘elevation’ compares to other positive emotions.

‘Elevation’ emerges as more similar to admiration than either amusement or joy on a number of measures. In all three of Algoe and Haidt’s studies, participants reported feeling more ‘respect,’ ‘admiration,’ ‘inspired,’ and ‘moved,’ in the admiration and ‘elevation’ conditions than participants in the amusement condition. In Algoe and Haidt’s second study, participants in the ‘elevation’ condition were significantly more likely to report ‘warm feelings in their chest’ and being ‘uplifted’ than participants in the amusement condition, but not significantly more than those in the admiration condition.

Participants in both the admiration and ‘elevation’ condition were more likely to feel a lump in their throats than those in the amusement condition (and one *might* also be able to discriminate between ‘elevation’ and admiration on the basis of this component). In Haidt and Algoe’s second study, participants in the ‘elevation’ condition were found to be significantly more likely to report feeling a lump in their throat than both those in the admiration and amusement conditions. Similarly, in Diessner et al.’s partial replication, participants in the ‘elevation’ condition were significantly more likely to feel a lump in their throat than those in the admiration condition. But, in Algoe and Haidt’s third study, participants in the ‘elevation’ condition were found to be only significantly more likely to feel a lump in their throat compared to participants in the amusement condition and significantly less likely to report this feeling than participants in the admiration condition.

Moreover, ‘elevation’ and admiration are also more akin to one another than amusement, and perhaps joy, in terms of their action tendencies, and there are some grounds for distinguishing ‘elevation’ from admiration by this component. In Algoe and Haidt’s first study, admiration and ‘elevation’ participants were found to be more likely to want to morally improve themselves than joy participants.¹² Participants in the ‘elevation’ condition were also found to be significantly more likely to want to be prosocial and emulate the object of the emotion than participants in the admiration condition. Similarly, in both Algoe and Haidt’s second and third studies, participants in the ‘elevation’ condition were significantly more likely to report prosocial action tendencies than participants in both the admiration and amusement conditions, and participants in the admiration condition were also more likely to report prosocial tendencies than those in the amusement condition. In Diessner et al.’s (2013) replication, participants in the ‘elevation’ condition were found to be significantly more likely to want to be a better person and do good for others than participants in the admiration condition.

Apart from, perhaps, a difference in the likelihood of feeling a lump in the throat, and prosocial tendencies, the primary difference between admiration and ‘elevation’ (in these data at least) seems to be in the arousal and ‘warmth’ properties of these emotions.¹³ In the factor analysis performed on the feelings reported by participants in Haidt and Algoe’s second study, the participants in the ‘elevation’ condition were significantly more likely to report feelings that constitute what the authors call the ‘warmth’ factor – ‘gratitude,’ ‘love,’ and to some extent ‘moved,’ than participants in the admiration condition. This is consistent with the fact that in Algoe and Haidt’s third study, participants in the

¹² This is also in line with Haidt’s unpublished studies, in which he found that participants in the mirth condition were found to be more likely to report wanting to pursue private or self-interested pursuits than participants in the ‘elevation’ condition.

¹³ There *may* also be some differences between ‘elevation’ and admiration with regard to feelings of admiration, respect, inspiration, and being moved. Algoe and Haidt’s third study found significant differences on these measures, but these were not found in their second study. The largest and most significant differences appeared to hold between ‘elevation’ and admiration on the one hand, and amusement on the other. Moreover, in Diessner et al.’s partial replication of these studies, they found that participants in the ‘elevation’ condition were significantly more likely to report feeling ‘admiration,’ among a number of other components.

‘elevation’ condition were more likely to report feeling relaxed, and participants in the admiration condition were significantly more likely to report feeling ‘high energy,’ ‘tensed muscles,’ and ‘increased heart rate’ compared to participants in the both the ‘elevation’ and amusement conditions. It also seems to be consistent with Diessner et al.’s (2013) finding that participants in the ‘elevation’ condition are significantly more likely to feel ‘love,’ ‘gratitude’ and ‘admiration’ than participants in the admiration condition, who themselves were significantly more likely to report feeling ‘awe.’

Overall, this data suggests that admiration may be closer to awe / wonder than it is ecstasy. As Keltner and Haidt observe, admiration seems to require an appraisal of the need for accommodation, and sometimes vastness or power, and seems to be closer to awe in the feelings associated with it. Not only was admiration shown to be significantly more likely to feel like ‘awe’ (in at least Diessner et al.’s study), the high energy, tensed muscles and increased heart rate relative to ‘elevation’ is consistent with admiration being related to a submission response (as awe is thought to be). This is also consistent with my claim in chapter 6, that awe / wonder and related emotions such as admiration on the one hand, and ecstasy on the other, may be different means to similar states of mind.

§4.iii. ‘Elevation’ as ecstasy.

From this, we are now in a position to press the direct argument in favour of the moral beauty thesis. Recall that the shape of the argument is as follows:

- (P1) x is beautiful ↔ x is disposed to give rise to x-directed ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions;
- (P2) Moral virtues are disposed to give rise to moral-virtue-directed ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions;
- (C) Therefore, moral virtues are beautiful.

Now, as there is no mention of ‘elevation’ in this argument, there is clearly an additional obstacle that needs to be surmounted in order for the evidence cited above to connect up with premise (P2) as required: namely, to clarify the relationship between ‘elevation’ and ecstasy. I propose that the distinction between ‘elevation’ and ecstasy is merely nominal. That is, instances of ‘elevation’ are merely instances of ecstasy elicited by tokens of moral beauty.

As we saw earlier in this thesis, ecstasy is an emotional state that is paradigmatically characterised by the following features (see table 3).

Components		
Affective phenomenology / feelings	Feeling of Loss	Time
		Desire / sorrow / sin / limitation
		Self / difference
		Sense / words / images / ineffability
	Feeling of Gain	Timelessness
		Vitality / release
		Joy
		Contact / unity
		Knowledge of truth / inspiration
	Physical Feelings	Uplifted / floating

	Warmth in chest (tumescant warm liquid)
	Tears
	Chills
	Calmness / peace
Perceptual effects	Enhanced perception of brightness
	Phosphenes
Appraisal	Harmony
Action Tendencies	Approach
	Perform moral actions

Table 3. The components of ecstasy

While there are certainly some differences in the components that have been claimed to characterise ecstasy, and the characteristics that were put forward and tested by Haidt, Diessner and colleagues, this is to be expected, given that Haidt seemed to base his proposals on those of Jefferson. Nonetheless, there is considerable overlap. Sufficient I suggest to tentatively conclude that they are in fact the same psychological state. Indeed, the fact that ‘elevation’ was found to be distinguishable from admiration primarily on the ‘warmth’ factor is consistent with the idea that ‘elevation’/ecstasy might have evolved from the social bonding system. This is also consistent with the fact that women were found by Diessner et al. (2008, 2013) to be more sensitive to experiences of what can reasonably be thought of as ecstasy in the face of all kinds of beauty.

As I noted earlier, the formal object is often considered the most important component for individuating emotions. Given this, how can it be the case that the formal object of ‘elevation’ and ecstasy is the same? I propose that both ‘elevation’ and ecstasy involve an appraisal of harmony with the self, but in the case of ‘elevation’ the intentional objects are the moral values evinced in such actions. When one witnesses moral virtue, one appraises the manifestations of those values as being in harmony with oneself vis-à-vis one’s own values.¹⁴

A skeptic might attempt to resist this identity claim on the grounds that Haidt (and perhaps Diessner) seem to believe that ‘elevation’ is the emotion that is *specific* to the perception of moral beauty, and that it only bears a resemblance with the other emotions in the awe-related family of emotions. Haidt, for example, places particular emphasis on the action tendencies in characterising ‘elevation,’ including in distinguishing it from other emotions.

However, this does not seem to be convincingly borne out by the data. In order to help bolster the suggestion that there is some special link between the perception of moral beauty and a state which centrally features prosocial tendencies, Diessner and colleagues (2013) attempted to answer the question: “would engagement with any kind of beauty correlate with moral personality traits and virtues, or does engagement with moral beauty have a specific relationship with moral traits?”

While Diessner and colleagues did indeed find that the largest correlations between the trait of engaging with moral beauty (as indicated by scores on the moral beauty subscale of the EBS) and various morally relevant traits, the general pattern indicated that engagement with all kinds of beauty correlated moderately to strongly with these traits. If these traits underlie the capacity to have experiences of ‘elevation,’ including prosocial action tendencies, in response to moral beauty, then

¹⁴ This proposal gains support from the work that has been done on ‘being moved’ – which seems to simply be ecstasy. Deonna and Cova (2014) propose that one is ‘moved’ when one contemplates a manifestation of one’s most important values, and in an unpublished paper with Sanders, suggest that ‘elevation’ is simply being moved.

this capacity seems to also underlie the experiences had in response to non-moral beauty. This implies that the distinction between ‘elevation’ and ecstasy may not be a difference of kind.

In conclusion then, a direct positive argument, supported by empirical data, can be offered in favour of the MBT: Put simply, moral virtues are beautiful because they possess a disposition to induce ecstasy. Indeed, we can see that McGinn’s direct argument was aiming in the right direction, but that the motivational tendencies need not be left to do all of the philosophical work in making this argument.

§4.iv. The domain specificity of moral beauty.

But, does the constitutive thesis have anything to say about the second remaining question related to the moral beauty thesis – namely, whether the weak or strong form of the MBT is true?

Whether the constitutive thesis is committed to a strong or weak form of the moral beauty thesis will simply depend on whether expression of non-moral virtues are able to cause ecstasy in the standard subjects under standard conditions. Whether this is the case doesn’t seem to be entirely clear from the existing evidence, but some tentative conclusion can be drawn.

From examining the anthropological literature, it is certainly clear that acts of *specifically* moral goodness are found to be beautiful in the majority of cultures. For example, as I have already noted, Schneider (1966: 158) notes that among the Turu, that the term ‘*majigha*’ is used to mark both formal beauty and “a voluntary act which makes people happy,” and Aniakor (1982: 5) reports that among the Igbo, the word ‘Mmá’ means both beauty of the body and “beauty of the heart (character).” These data support a strong form of the moral beauty thesis.

On the other hand, there are at least a couple of uses in other cultures that may suggest a weaker form of the moral beauty thesis. For example, Beier (1976: 16) observes that among the Melpa, ‘*kae*’ may be translated as “good, beautiful, useful, clean and light,” and as Boone remarks regarding the Mende,

Mende assume that a beautiful exterior enshrines the most beautiful something. In almost every discussion of beauty, someone would say how awful it is if a pretty girl is lazy or does not have fine character. Mende call this ‘*nyande gbama*,’ empty beauty, ‘*gbama*’ meaning ‘for nothing, in vain’ (Innes, 1969: 17). ‘*Nyande gbama*’ refers to many of the functional and moral issues. It is ‘*gbama*’ for a good-looking girl to be rude, insolent and disrespectful. It is ‘*gbama*’ for her to be non-functional in the community: “She can’t work, can’t cook, can’t dance, can’t sing – of what use is she?” It is ‘*gbama*’ to be poor, of low status, living in coarse company although because of your looks you would be welcomed among those of refinement and prestige. It is beauty wasted. Beauty without a dimension of goodness is hollow, without substance, a deception. (Boone, 1986: 141).

In both of these cases, at least, potentially non-moral values such as being useful, being able to sing and dance, and being hardworking seem to be found to be beautiful.

One might be tempted to think that this disagreement turns on a logically antecedent issue – namely, how one should understand the distinction between moral and non-moral values. As I noted earlier, Gaut tentatively argues that the moral domain is characterized by norms governing the well-being of others, broadly construed (see footnote 1 of this chapter). On this account, character traits such as being hardworking or a good dancer or singer would not count as moral. Others, such as

Turiel (1983), have argued that one can draw the moral-non-moral distinction in terms of their categoricity: moral norms do not derive their normative force from any authority figure, but apply irrespective of any given authority figure's beliefs. On this account, it isn't clear whether these traits would count as moral or not. And some, such as Stich (forthcoming) most recently, have even argued that there is no coherent distinction between moral and non-moral values across cultures, and that we should simply talk about norms more generally. On this conception, one can either argue that these are all moral norms, or that the question is itself misguided.

This is not the place to attempt to settle this question here. But, we might not even need to settle this in order to decide the issue at stake here. If the constitutive thesis is true, and the formal object of ecstasy is harmony with the self, then one might suggest that any manifestation of values that are important to oneself will be likely to be appraised as harmonious with oneself vis-à-vis one's values, and thereby give rise to experiences of ecstasy. Since moral values are some of the most important values we hold, it would be no surprise that manifestations of these values are especially likely to give rise to ecstasy. But there may be other, perhaps culturally idiosyncratic, values which, when manifested, are also appraised as being in harmony with the self, and thereby give rise to ecstasy.

In a similar vein, one might think that being morally good is one of the most prominent and important ways that one can display 'dependent' beauty – that is, a manifestation that is appraised as being harmonious with the self vis-à-vis one's ideal standards for a given category. If that is the case, then the issue might simply turn on the question of whether dependent beauty truly exists – the answer to which seems to be affirmative.

It may not be the case that we need to accommodate all of the manifestations of traits that are thought to be beautiful in terms of dependent beauty. Recall that Gaut (2007: 120) claims, in a neo-platonic vein, that the greatest beauty of the soul consists in wisdom, where this is meant to include more than just moral wisdom, but is thought to involve a general grasp of the eternal truths. In further support of this view, recall that Gaut points out that we talk of someone who is exceptionally intellectually gifted as having in that respect "a beautiful mind."

Here, it seems that one might wish to explain why it appears apt to call someone who is intellectually gifted as beautiful, or perhaps especially beautiful, in terms of the coherence between this characteristic and the state that results from experiences of beauty according to the constitutive thesis. As we have seen, experiences of ecstasy both often give rise to the sense that one has been granted access to some deep truth, and are themselves sometimes caused by the perception of deep, unifying truths. For this reason, it is perhaps no surprise that minds like that of John Nash, which has the disposition to give rise to such truths, is aptly described as beautiful.

Tentatively, one might wish to say that all virtues are beautiful insofar as they are cases of dependent beauty, and that given that 'moral' virtues are among some of the most important, and universally treasured, characteristics of humans, it is not surprising that they are the most widely reported to be beautiful.

Finally, let us turn to the question of how one might explain the belief that seems to occur in a large number of cultures that there is a causal relationship between inner and outer beauty. Indeed, I noted that people in some cultures regard people with beautiful appearances who are discovered to be morally ugly with disgust. This fact is a surprising one – after all, there seems to be no *a priori* reason why one should expect a belief in such a causal relationship to be represented across cultures.

One plausible and elegant explanation is provided by the constitutive thesis. Specifically, when people have experiences of beauty, they often have a sense that they have been able to access some deeper truth of an important nature, sometimes of a moral ideal, such as the goodness of everything,

and themselves feel the need to perform prosocial actions (see, for example, the discussion of Laski and Brookover-Bourque and Back). As such, the constitutive thesis is elegantly able to explain how it can be the case that this belief arises: when people in these cultures encounter beautiful people, they have experiences of this nature, and this explains why they form the beliefs that these people are good (even if they have no evidence to that effect), and that this moral goodness might indeed be responsible for their outer beauty. It also seems to be able to explain why beautiful people who are discovered to be morally bad are regarded with disgust. Beauty is not thought to be trifling or superficial but to run deep, no doubt in part as a result of fact that the experience of beauty is felt to give us access to deep and significant truths (that are often ineffable), and that beauty itself is found in truths of a metaphysical or moral nature (as evidenced by both Laski's data and the anthropological data). As such, it is not surprising that if we discover that a beauty is only skin deep, it becomes phony – a cheat – and is regarded with disgust.

§5. Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have discussed, and in some cases attempted to strengthen, a number of the *prima facie* arguments in favour of the moral beauty thesis, by, for example, drawing on some of the cross-cultural data outlined in chapter two. I have argued that, despite this, these arguments still do not provide sufficient support for the moral beauty thesis. What is needed, I have suggested, is a direct argument in favour of the moral beauty thesis from a positive account of beauty, and that this should be able to adequately accommodate the facts on which the *prima facie* arguments rest.

I have argued that the constitutive thesis can provide a compelling and simple argument for the existence of moral beauty: namely, that if the constitutive thesis is true and perception of moral virtue can cause ecstasy, then moral beauty exists. I attempted to show that moral virtue can indeed produce ecstasy by arguing that the emotion that has been supposed to arise in response to moral beauty, and originally named 'elevation' by Haidt and other positive psychologists is, in fact, ecstasy.

Indeed, insofar as the constitutive thesis provides an elegant explanation of all of the relevant data – both the data gathered from across cultures regarding moral beauty and Haidt, Diessner and colleagues' data – I have suggested that it is supported. Finally, I have briefly discussed whether a weak or strong form of the moral beauty thesis is true and tentatively suggested that a weak form might be true (whilst also suggesting why there is greater evidence for the strong thesis).

In the final substantive chapter, we turn to consider how the constitutive thesis can accommodate the remaining data outlined in chapter 2.

Chapter 9 – Meeting the Explananda II: Folk beliefs, beautiful kinds and qualities, and ugliness.

§1. Introduction.

Having shown that the constitutive thesis can elegantly explain the fact that moral virtue is reliably found to be beautiful across cultures, in this final chapter I turn to consider how the constitutive thesis can accommodate the remaining explananda laid out in chapters 2 and 3.

In chapter 2, we saw that beauty is reliably found in a characteristic range of entities and qualities across cultures. Beauty reliably adheres in art, natural objects, human beings, moral virtue, ideal particulars, personal and emotional expression, and (at least in the West), abstract objects. Beauty was also found to reliably adhere in the following qualities of, at least, human beings, natural objects and some visual artworks: brightness/lightness, shininess, smoothness, cleanliness/purity, clarity/distinctness, novelty, vitality, health, youth, moderation, truth, delicacy and balance.

A similar conception of beauty is also reliably held across cultures – as indicated by the beliefs about beauty itself. Specifically, (i) beauty is believed to allow us to contact the supernatural realm, (ii) beauty is often believed to be truth, and give us access to truths, and (iii) beauty is believed to be caused by the supernatural. Also, in chapter 3, I noted (based on the claims of philosophers such as Danto, Plato, and Moore) that beauty is believed to provide something of value that is greater than that provided by objects that merely please.

Finally, across cultures beauty is thought to admit of a logical opposite, ugliness, and that ugliness is thought to adhere in the following qualities of, at least human beings, natural objects, some visual artworks: namely, darkness, dullness, roughness, dirt, obscurity, commonness, weakness, disease, oldness, excess, falsity, coarseness and imbalance. Moreover, moral viciousness is also thought to be ugly.

So how does the constitutive thesis fare in accommodating these explananda?

§2. Explaining the range of objects and qualities found to be beautiful.

In chapters 5-8, I have already explained how it is that the range of kinds of entities and qualities that are reliably found to be beautiful are accommodated by the constitutive thesis. So here I will briefly recapitulate this, and attempt to show how the constitutive thesis can accommodate any of the findings that have not already been addressed.

Firstly, the constitutive thesis is able to accommodate the range of kinds of entities that are reliably found to be beautiful. As we have seen from the empirical data provided by Laski, Brookover-Bourque and Back, Haidt, and Diessner, among others, a good number of these entities have been shown to give rise to ecstasy: including, people, nature, artworks, theories and acts of moral goodness. Moreover, the constitutive thesis is readily able to explain *how* it is that this heterogeneous range of entities can possess beauty. Since I have argued that beauty is the disposition to cause ecstasy, and ecstasy ordinarily involves a non-conceptual appraisal of harmony with the self, one can readily see how all of these things are able to be beautiful: they are beautiful because they can possess features that tend to be appraised as being harmonious with the self.

Secondly, the constitutive thesis also seems to have the resources to explain how the qualities that beauty reliably adheres in (at least in some objects) can be beautiful. On the constitutive account, these qualities are beautiful, or at least found to contribute towards beauty in certain contexts, as they are able to themselves realise or contribute towards the realisation base of a disposition to give rise to

episodes of ecstasy (howsoever mild). I have, as we have already seen in chapter 6, suggested *how* some of these properties might do this. Properties such as clarity and balance, for example, may contribute towards an appraisal of harmony between a subject and an object with these qualities by means of processing fluency: these properties make a stimulus more fluent to process, where this indicates a fit between the object and one's perceptual (or conceptual) apparatus. It may also be the case that objects with the qualities of being healthy, young, smooth, bright, or pure tend to be more fluently processed.

In the case of novelty, one can also explain its contribution to beauty in terms of processing fluency. As Reber and colleagues (2004) have noted, it has been hypothesised by Whittlesea and Williams (2000) that fluency is likely to vary as a function of processing expectations: stimuli that are expected to be processed fluently (such as objects that are, for example, simple or familiar) do not generate a strong subjective experience when they are fluently processed, whereas stimuli that are not expected to be processed fluently (because they are complex or unfamiliar) generate strong subjective experiences when they are processed fluently. As such, novel stimuli, when processed fluently, may give rise to a more salient signal that a stimuli is in harmony with oneself vis-à-vis one's perceptual or conceptual processing dynamics.

In some cases, it is worth emphasising that the properties that are reliably found to be beautiful or contribute to beauty are also reported to be characteristics of ecstasy. For example, not only are lightness/brightness, clarity, vitality and truth reliably found to be beautiful, these adjectives also appear in descriptions of experiences of ecstasy, as in feelings of having accessed truth, feelings of vitality, and reports of feeling illuminated or mental clarity, and having perceptions of brightness (phosphenes) or augmented perception of brightness.

I am not certain how this should be understood. It seems tempting to understand most of these qualities as projections of responses of some kind. For example, it seems that attributions of vitality, truth and clarity might be made on the basis of feelings of vitality, truth and mental clarity: those objects that possess features that give rise to such feelings are readily described as possessing vitality, truth, and clarity.¹⁵

It is also worth stressing that whilst these qualities may be reliably found to be beautiful across cultures due to some natural fit (or preparedness) between these qualities and ecstasy, the role of cultural and learning should certainly not be underplayed. Clearly, as is the case for all emotions, new elicitors may be learned (as shown by, for example, Prinz (2004) and Ekman (1997)). It may also be the case that whilst there may be some natural preparedness to find all of these qualities beautiful, culture may play a role in emphasising which of these qualities is found most beautiful. Among the Fang, for example, the cardinal principal of beauty seems to be balance (Fernandez, 1973: 219-220). Clearly, there is a great deal more work to be done here, but that must be saved for another occasion.

§3. Explaining folk beliefs about beauty that appear across cultures.

It seems that the constitutive thesis can explain the beliefs about beauty that reliably occur across cultures fairly precisely. Let us take each in turn.

¹⁵ Indeed, in support of this suggestion, we might wish to take a cue from De Sousa (2004), when he notes that emotions are not analogous to perceptions in terms of their transparency. De Sousa notes, following Noë, that unlike sensory perceptions that are 'transparent' in the sense that they simply represent things external to themselves and don't seem to add anything internal to the person (though, given the ongoing controversy surrounding naïve realism, it may be better to finesse this as the claim that perception is, in large measure, transparent), emotions are more "opaque" in that they "face in and out: they reflect facts about the subject but refer also to something outside, to which they are typically responses." De Sousa notes that "when someone undergoing an emotional response attempts to describe the object of that emotion, one often ends up describing one's own state of mind" (De Sousa, 2004: 63-4).

§3.i. Folk beliefs about beauty: beauty allows communion with the supernatural.

Across cultures, it is believed that beauty allows people to contact, be contacted by and influence what they believe to be realms beyond the material world.

The specific mechanism by which beauty is reported to carry out this function varies to some extent between cultures. In the case of some cultures, as we have seen, it is reported that it is believed that beautiful artworks act as vessels for supernatural spirits, and that if an artwork is not beautiful then the deity will not choose to enter. For example, Boone reports that among the Mende people, the mask worn by costumed dancer must be “attractive to the spirit, otherwise it will not choose to enter, and the helmet will be useless” (Hommel, 1974: n.p., as cited by Boone, 1986: 163). In other cases, the beauty of the artwork does not actually bring the deity into the presence of the human participants, but simply pleases them. For example, Cordwell (1952: 49-50) reports that in Yoruba divination, the beauty of the bowls and trays used serves to aesthetically please the gods. In some cases, beauty is thought to function by both appeasing and bringing the deities into closer proximity with the human world. For example, Vogel (1980: 4) notes that among the Baule beautiful figures are sculpted to localise and placate spirits.

It seems that the content of these beliefs can be explained by (at least) the following features of the experience of ecstasy: (a) feelings of gain of unity or contact with something beyond the self, (b) feelings of having accessed a deep or significant truth, (c) the desire to do pro-social actions, and (d) feelings of calmness or peace.

In light of this, the following seems to be plausible. When people experience beautiful entities, they have an experience of the emotion ecstasy of some intensity – which is characterised by these feelings, among others, and as a result reliably come to believe at the time, or on reflection and in light of certain background beliefs, that (i) they have accessed, contacted, or become unified with a deeper reality (often of a spiritual nature) through the beautiful entity (as a result of components (a) and (b)), (ii) the beautiful entity causes a spiritual entity to become unified with the beautiful object (as a result of components (a) and (b)), (iii) a spiritual entity has been placated by the beautiful entity (as a result of component (a) and (d)), or (iv) the beautiful entities cause the spirits to act in a beneficent manner (as a result of component (a) and (c), or perhaps (d)).

§3.ii. Folk beliefs about beauty: beauty and truth.

Across cultures, it is believed that beauty is linked to truth, either by giving us access to deep or significant truths or being in some sense significantly true itself.

As should be clear from the foregoing discussion, beliefs of this broad kind are not always separate from the belief that beauty facilitates contact with the supernatural realm. Not only is beauty thought to facilitate contact with the supernatural realm, the supernatural object of this contact is often regarded as a deeper and more fundamental truth. Take, for example, the Mende Sowo dancer discussed earlier. In this case, Boone (1986: 155) reports that the dancer and her beautiful mask are thought to be “a gateway to the spiritual” through which the Mende can access “the truth... [that] exists on a metaphysical plane.” Similarly, Paulme (1973: 23-4) reports that for the Kissi boys of Upper Guinea whose costumed dancing brings about the public visitation of supernatural beings, “ornamentation does not mean the superimposition of some object onto one’s outer aspect; on the contrary, it means divesting oneself of externals” in order to “rediscover within himself his own enduring essence.”

As we saw in chapter 2, the link between beauty and truth is sometimes manifested in the lexical item used to refer to beauty, or in beliefs about the experience of beauty itself. In the case of the former, for example, the Trobriand expression for beauty – ‘*kakapisi lula*’ – literally means “it moves my insight” (Beier, 1974: 36). In the case of the latter, Ben-Ami Scharfstein (2009: 427-8) reports that in Japanese aesthetics the perception of beauty is thought to give rise to a state called ‘*yūgen*,’ in which one has the sense that one has met with a profound and indescribable truth that lies beneath surface appearances and is accompanied by tears.

It seems that the content of these beliefs can be explained by the fact that experiences of ecstasy seem to give rise to feelings of having gained access to a deep or significant truth. As we saw in my discussion of Laski’s data in chapter 5, the truth that is felt to be accessed as a result of experiences of ecstasy is sometimes interpreted as being of a spiritual nature.

In light of this, the following seems to be plausible. When people experience beautiful entities, they have an experience of the emotion ecstasy of some intensity – which is characterised by this feeling, among others, and as a result reliably come to believe at the time, or on reflection and in light of certain background beliefs, that (i) they have accessed, contacted, or become unified with a deeper reality, often of a spiritual nature through the beautiful entity, and (ii) that beauty itself or the beautiful entity might be true in a sense.

§3.iii. Folk beliefs about beauty: beauty is believed to be caused by the supernatural.

Across cultures, beauty is believed to be caused by the supernatural. Beliefs of this broad kind manifest themselves in different ways.

It is often thought that natural beauty and art objects themselves – whether they be songs, instruments, or sculptures – are created by deities, and given to humans. The Yoruba, for example, believe that their art – which is largely considered to be beautiful by the Yoruba – comes from a divine source (Anderson, 2004: 162). The Mende of the Sande society believe that the most beautiful *sowo-wui* masks used during the Sande ceremonies, are actually sculpted by water deities, and retrieved by divers from the heaven that they believe exists at the bottom of rivers during public ceremonies (Boone, 1986: 161, 230). Similarly, the Maori believe that carving was invented by the gods, and that the creation of beautiful carvings requires the good will of the spirits, which can be obtained by observing certain rules – called *tapus* (Chipp, 1971: 154).

In those cases where the fact that artworks are believed to be actually created by humans, rather than simply retrieved from supernatural entities, it is commonly believed that one needs to make oneself into a channel to commune with supernatural entities. The Aztecs, for example, believed that the artist must, through meditation, achieve spiritual enlightenment, in order to create beauty (Leon Portilla, 1963: 172). Similarly, Osborne notes of Chinese art (but which we can also take to apply to beauty) that “while the Western artist typically aimed to produce a replica of reality, actual, imagined, or ideal, the Chinese artist – although he might in fact do this – made his first aim to bring his personality into keeping with the cosmic principle so that the Tao would be expressed through him,” which itself requires that the artist is “at peace with nature” (1968: 107).

To see why how the constitutive thesis can account for the content of such beliefs, we need to look a little more closely at inspiration itself, and the link between beauty, ecstasy and inspiration.

As Laski notes, inspiration is conceived of in two ways. In a broad sense, inspiration is “a breathing in or infusion of some idea, purposes etc., into the mind; the suggestion awakening, or creation of some feeling or impulse, especially of an exalted kind,” and in a narrower sense “a special or immediate action or influence of the Spirit of God (or some divinity or supernatural being) upon the human mind or soul; said especially of that divine influence under which the books of Scripture

are held to have been written” (1961: 279-80). (Cf §3.ii. of this chapter regarding beauty and the divine).

Laski also notes that beauty commonly causes feelings of inspiration, and inspiration itself commonly begets the creation of further beauties (that may in themselves inspire). Laski helpfully illustrates this with two examples. The poet A. E. Housman reported in his lecture *The Name and Nature of Poetry* that:

Having drunk a pint of beer at luncheon... I would go out for a walk of two or three hours. As I went along, thinking of nothing in particular, only looking at things around me and following the progress of the seasons, there would flow into my mind, with sudden and unaccountable emotion, sometimes a line or two of verse, sometimes a whole stanza at once. (Housman, 1933: 49, as cited by Laski, 1961: 284).

And the composer Jean Sibelius reports:

I loved to take my violin with me on my summer rambles, so that whenever I felt inspired, I could express it in music. During the summers in Saaksmaki I selected a platform, for preference, consisting of a stone in Kalalahti with an enchanting view... There I gave the birds endless concerts. The neighbourhood of Lovisa inspired me quite as much. When sailing I often stood on the bow with my violin and improvised to the sea. (Sibelius, as quoted by Hardin, 1948: 85, as cited by Laski, 1961: 282).

Since, on the constitutive thesis, beauty is that which has the disposition to give rise to ecstasy, it is no surprise therefore, that ecstasy is characterised in part by feelings of inspiration. Moreover, given that feelings of inspiration themselves often result in the creation of beauty, it is also no surprise that the experience of ecstasy begets the creation of further beauties (as well as being caused by beauty itself).¹⁶

Putting these facts about inspiration, beauty and ecstasy together, it becomes clear why the constitutive thesis can elegantly accommodate the belief that beauty is reliably believed to be caused by the supernatural in some way: since the inspiration to create beauty often occurs during experiences of ecstasy (which are themselves ordinarily caused by beauty), and these inspirations are commonly thought to be received from a supernatural source, it is no surprise that it is commonly believed that beauty derives from a supernatural source both ultimately and proximally.

§3.iv. Folk beliefs about beauty: the superior value of beauty.

Finally, beauty is believed to enrich people’s life in a way that objects and activities that merely please do not. More specifically, beauty is thought to have eudemonic value in addition to mere hedonic value. In support of this, I drew on the claims made to this effect by Moore ([1904] 1922) Plato’s Diotoma of the *Symposium* ([c. 370 BC] 2010) and Danto (2003: 15).

¹⁶ Laski’s own preferred explanation of *why* the experience of ecstasy results in the creation of further beauties is plausible, and worth noting. Laski claims that ecstasies facilitate the process of “fusing accumulated material that constitutes the valuable new idea into potentially communicable form” (ibid.: 282). It is this fusing that creates new and harmonious products – be they abstract or material objects.

It seems that the content of this beliefs can be explained by the following features of the experience of ecstasy: (a) feelings of having accessed something of great significance or truth – often interpreted as being of a spiritual, moral or metaphysical nature, and (b) feeling of having reached (or even become unified with) perfection through the triggering object, often expressed as feeling like being in heaven.

In light of this, the following seems to be plausible. When people experience beautiful entities, they have an experience of the emotion ecstasy of some intensity – which is characterised by these feelings, among others, and as a result reliably come to believe at the time, or on reflection and in light of certain background beliefs, that (i) a life spent in the pursuit of beauty is a meaningful life, and (ii) beauty itself is more valuable than qualities that merely please.

§4. Explaining the logical opposition between beauty and ugliness.

As I noted in chapter 2, not only do all cultures seem to have a similar conception of beauty, beauty is reliably thought to admit of a logical opposite across cultures – namely, ugliness. I noted that as trivial as this might seem, it is far from it, as there is no *a priori* reason to suspect that beauty should admit of an opposite, and as such, the fact that it does seems to call for an explanation.

Given that I have argued that beauty is constituted by a disposition to give rise to an emotion – ecstasy – and that many emotions seem at first sight to admit of logical opposites (e.g. love and hate, pride and embarrassment), one tantalizing possibility is to understand the opposition between beauty and ugliness in terms of the idea that ugliness might be constituted by a disposition to give rise to an emotion that is in some way (or set of ways) the opposite of ecstasy. I think that this is the right strategy.

Although this is not the place to give a fully elaborated account of what ugliness is, there are good reasons for thinking that ugliness might be partially constituted by a disposition to give rise to disgust (even if such a disposition falls short of strict necessity or sufficiency).

Frank Sibley (2001c) seems to arrive at something close to an account of ugliness as a disposition to give rise to disgust. Sibley claims that it is necessary for something to be ugly that it is a ‘deformed’ (201), ‘denatured’ (202), or ‘denormalised’ (197) member of some kind, where Sibley intends these notions to include the abnormalities and distortions picked out by adjectives such as “distorted, defective, defiled, emaciated, swollen, bloated, begrimed, stunted, dwarfed, wizened, decaying, mouldering, blighted, festering, and a host of others indicative of abnormality or defect in shape, colour, size, health, growth, etc.” (197).

In order to negotiate the fact that in some cases, all the members of a class are ugly, such as toads, hyenas, and certain “spiny, slimy, oozy or drab” plants (197), and yet are not (or at least need not be) deformed members of their class, Sibley suggests that the standard or norm that these cases are departures from may belong to a different class – such as that of humans.

Given that many of the features that realise these departures are apt to elicit disgust, it is no surprise that Sibley “does not really doubt that there is some connection between ugliness and revulsion” (203). Indeed, Sibley implies that his proposal – that it is necessary for something to be ugly that it possesses some feature that makes it deformed/denatured/denormalised relative to some norm – is also a necessary appraisal for at least some things to give rise to disgust. He notes, for example,

Even if a toad’s face repels you or blotched skin or a bloated body, it is because you see it as a face, a skin, or a body. If you saw them only as abstract colouring and

patterns, far from being repulsive, they might be pretty, even beautiful and attractive. (ibid.: 204).

In support of the link between disgust and ugliness, Sibley notes that those objects that have features that constitute departures from norms tend to be seen as having the qualities that give rise to disgust:

Those exaggerations, departures from notional norms, that strike us as ugly are those that we tend to see as having something, some degree however slight, of the dirty, squalid, polluted, diseased, spoiled, degraded, coarse, base, subnormal, brutish or subhuman, even foul or evil, either physically or spiritually – as well as threatening, dangerous, or frightening as etymology suggests. (ibid.).

This suggestion points to a slight complication. The word ‘ugly’ is a Middle English word that derives from the Old Norse ‘*uggligr*,’ meaning fearful or dreadful. And indeed, some ugliness in other cultures seems to inspire terror. Thompson (1973), for example, notes that the Yoruba use intentionally ugly masks in psychological warfare in order to inspire terror in enemy forces.¹⁷ Similarly, among the Bangwa, the ugly masks used as part of the Night Society serve as terrifying symbols of the power of the chiefs who exercise control through the use of this secret society of executioners (Brain & Pollock, 1971). Whilst such complications certainly need to be accommodated by a mature theory of ugliness, these need not detain me for my purposes. It is enough that a disposition to give rise to disgust may be necessary for at least some, if not all, ugliness, in order to be able to get an explanation of the opposition of beauty and ugliness off the ground.

The link between disgust and ugliness is supported by a great deal of the anthropological evidence on ugliness surveyed in chapter 2, together with evidence on the elicitors of disgust.

Firstly, some anthropologists note that ugliness is explicitly intended to disgust in other cultures. Horton (1963, 1965), for example, notes that ugly spirit sculptures are intended to evoke revulsion rather than mere apathy.

Secondly, many of the properties that are reliably found to be ugly or contribute towards ugliness across cultures are related to the typical elicitors of disgust across cultures. Disgust has been found to be reliably elicited by dirt, disease, bodily envelope violations, bodily products, reminders of death, animals and reminders of one’s animal nature, as well as moral violations (see for example, Rozin et. al., 2008). An extensive empirical literature has also shown that disgust selectively (compared to other negative emotions such as sadness) makes moral judgments more severe, and as a result has been proposed to be linked to appraisals of moral wrongness (see, for example, Schnall et al, 2008).

This is remarkably consistent with the qualities that are reliably found to be ugly across cultures such as roughness, imbalance, dullness and crudeness, which are themselves reliable indicators of disease, decay and dirt (in some contexts). Vogel, for example, variously notes that “the Baule see disease as the antithesis of beauty and good” (1980: 15); the ugly *bo usu* figures are

¹⁷ Moreover, a number of anthropologists have reported artworks that inspire terror, but do not record whether they are seen as intentionally ugly or not. Picton (1974: 34) for example, notes that the masks used by the Ebirra people in the *ekuecici* masquerade are considered fearful for their blackness and angular faces. Zetterstrom (1980: 51) notes that, among the Yamein Mano people, the mask worn by the Poro official “is so terrible that people will be afraid when they see it. Kola nuts have been chewed and spread around its mouth so that the mask will look red and dangerous. The red paint around its mouth represents human blood.” Dorsinville and Meneghini note that among the Bassa, the secret spirit masks used in rituals function to inspire reverence and fear. These masks are reported to be representations of “what a spirit coming from the darkest forest may be like and what else if not a monster with protruding eyes, swollen lips, contorted features, hybrids of man and animals, a delirious, though not crazy, representation of the invisible realm” (ibid: 14).

encrusted with dirt (ibid.: 3); and in figural sculpture, a neck is ugly when it is twisted, bent and looks like an indication of sickness, and irregular surfaces are compared to blistered and leprous sores (ibid., 1977: 171). Messenger (1973: 123-4) notes that the ugly *idiok ekpo* masks of the Anang people are dark and often have wrinkled and bulbous foreheads, bulging eyes and puffed cheeks, and often show leprosy and yaws sores. Turner (1980) notes that the Kayapo find dirtiness to be ugly. It is also the case that objects seem to be considered ugly if they include animal reminders, or symbols of moral vice. McNaughton (1979: 44) notes that, among the Bamana people, the masks used in the *komo* association are intentionally ugly, and are coated in sacrificial animal materials. Boone (1986: 96-7) notes that among the Mende, lips that are too thin are considered ugly as they are appraised to be simian. Ottenberg (1975: 48) notes that the intentional ugly masks of the Afikpo-Igbo have facial distortions that “seem not to be regarded as symptoms of physical illness, such as leprosy and yaws, but rather as signs of social illness [such as greed and self-interest].” Biebuyck (1976: 235) notes that, among the Lega, ugly objects are created with physical deficiencies in order to refer to evil characteristics.

Thirdly, there is evidence that ugliness admits of the same kind of magical thinking that characterizes disgust. Physical or symbolic contact with a disgusting item is believed to make the contacting entity disgusting itself (Rozin et al., 1986). Similarly, in some cultures, it is believed that ugly entities are contaminating. Horton (1965: 12), for example, notes that among the Kalabari, pregnant women are advised not to look at the ugly spirit sculptures “lest their children acquire big eyes and a long nose, and so turn out ugly.”

Supposing that beauty is constituted by ecstasy, and ugliness is, at least partially, constituted by disgust, what is it about this state of affairs that explains the opposition?

To see this, it is important to recall that emotions are typically composed of a number of components, including (a) an appraisal in terms of a formal object, (b) affective phenomenology, (c) changes in the autonomic nervous system, (d) valence, (e) facial expression, (f) action tendencies, among other things. As has been pointed out by De Sousa (2004), one can understand the opposition of emotions in terms of one or more of these components.¹⁸

Disgust and ecstasy are opposite in a number of ways. For one thing, they have an opposite valence. The experience of ecstasy is overwhelming positive, and the experience of disgust feels negative. For another, they have opposing action tendencies. Ecstasy includes the tendency to approach the elicitor, whereas disgust includes a tendency to avoid the elicitor. It also seems plausible that the autonomic components of ecstasy and disgust might be such that one cannot simultaneously undergo the autonomic changes that accompany both emotions.

One might point out that these differences seem to be insufficient to ground the specific oppositional relation that holds between beauty and ugliness by themselves: there are, presumably, many qualities that are found to be negative, cause us to avoid the things to which they belong, and

¹⁸ De Sousa discusses three candidate criteria, which he calls the “phenomenological criterion,” the “neurological criterion,” and “formal object criterion.” With regards to the phenomenological criterion, De Sousa notes that it may be “impossible simultaneously to feel certain pairs of emotions in regard to the very same objects, aspects, and situations” (71). De Sousa rejects this on the grounds that this suffers from “extreme subjectivity” – some people insist that they can, for example, both hate and love something at the same time. With regards to the neurological criterion, De Sousa notes that we might take a cue from the work of the psychologist Marcel Kinsbourne, who attempted to find out whether different tasks involved the same brain area by measuring the degree to which tasks inhibited one another (using an methodology that is plagued with confounds). He found that if subjects were asked to balance a pole on their right hand and speak at the same time, the pole tended to fall, but not if they were asked to sing. From this, De Sousa notes that we might base a criterion of oppositionality based on the idea of inhibition: “emotions that inhibit one another by, say, activating the sympathetic or parasympathetic nervous system would be rated as opposites” (ibid.). De Sousa claims that this criteria is feeble “as it may relate only to competition for use of a given brain resource” and that it may be “inaccessible” or “altogether unavailable” to us (ibid.). Finally, De Sousa claims that, at least for the more subtle emotions, the formal object “is the only thing capable of defining a relation of contrariety for that emotion” (ibid.).

have the disposition to influence the peripheral nervous system in ways that are opposed to the changes that arise in episodes of ecstasy, that are not considered the opposite of beauty.

This is surely right, though it is worth noting that these components may play some role. As I just noted, it seems that those qualities that realize the disposition to give rise to both disgust and fear might both be found to be ugly, and fear and disgust have at least one more component in common with one another than disgust and fear each possess with the other negative emotions. Fear and disgust are both avoidance emotions, unlike anger (which is an approach emotion) and sadness (which is neither clearly an approach or avoidance emotion). Nevertheless, in order to attain the required level of specificity between disgust and ecstasy, we need to turn to the affective phenomenology, and the appraisals involved in disgust and ecstasy respectively.¹⁹

Let us turn first to the affective phenomenology. The emotion ecstasy is characterized, in part, by feelings of contact and oneness with the trigger, feeling uplifted, perfected and vital, and feelings of loss of self, sorrow, and sin. Moreover, it should be clear from the descriptions of ecstasy surveyed in chapter 5 that the trigger of an ecstasy, and in many cases the wider world, are perceived as being in some sense 'higher.' Some of Laski's participants, for example, describe feeling that they have perceived or reached heaven or perfection (see chapter 5). In support of this, we can note that, among the Tiv, beautiful people are considered "to be in a satisfactory ritual state" (Bohannon, 1956: 117), and that, as noted by Boone (1986: 21, 23) beauty is found by the Mende in qualities like purity / cleanliness, smoothness and shininess, and that these are felt by the Mende to be apt to stand for higher values such as "spirituality, helpfulness, fairness and justice."

This is in fairly direct contrast to the feelings that are involved in disgust. Disgust is characterized by a feeling of wanting to reject, close off, and distance oneself from the triggering object. Moreover, disgusting objects are often seen as somehow base and low – as connected to one's animal nature – and contact with disgusting objects makes one feel tainted and debased. If this is true, then it seems plausible that one cannot feel both ecstasy and disgust simultaneously, and, therefore, that the dispositions to give rise to disgust and ecstasy are in an important sense oppositional.

Indeed, others have alluded to the opposition of disgust and ecstasy. In one of his first papers on 'elevation' (which I argued in chapter 8 is simply ecstasy), Haidt (2003) argued that 'elevation' and social disgust are opposite emotions. Haidt proposes that, in addition to the two commonly recognized social dimensions of solidarity (which picks out the closeness of others to the self) and hierarchy (which picks out relations of power and status between individuals), there is a third dimension that he calls the "purity versus pollution" or "elevation versus degradation" dimension.

Haidt (2003: 280-1) claims that the logic of this "purity" dimension is the same across cultures: one can be high or low in trait purity or pollution (high for priests, low for prostitutes), and state purity or pollution (high after meditating, low after defecating). According to Haidt, "feelings of disgust towards certain behaviours inform people that someone else is moving 'down' on [this] dimension," and that feelings of 'elevation' towards certain behaviours inform people that someone else is moving up the purity dimension.

Haidt (2003: 285) proposes that the emotions are themselves oppositional on a number of levels (as illustrated in table 1).

¹⁹ Although I have just said that the autonomic changes may not be sufficient, this may not be quite right. As De Sousa plausibly notes, insofar as the affective phenomenology is simply a reflection of physiological changes, just as the phenomenological colour cone conforms to the opponent process theory of trichromatic colour sensation, the specificity of the opposition between the affective phenomenology of disgust and ecstasy may also be reflected at the physiological level.

Component	Elevation	Social Disgust
Elicitor	People moving up, blurring human-god divide	People moving down, blurring the human-animal divide
Motivation Tendency	Merge, open-up, help others	Separates, closes off
Physical changes	Feel lifted up, optimistic about humanity.	Feel dragged down, cynical about humanity.
Contamination	Positive	Negative ²⁰

Table 1. Haidt's comparison of social disgust and 'elevation,' from Haidt (2003: 285).

Turning to the appraisal involved in both disgust and ecstasy, I have argued that the appraisal that seems to be involved in ecstasy is one of harmony with the self: those things that are appraised as being harmoniously related to oneself give rise to ecstasy. For example, as I have argued, many of the properties that are reliably found to at least contribute to the beauty of an object – such as brightness, clarity and order – are reliably appraised as being harmoniously related to oneself vis-à-vis one's perceptual or conceptual machinery.

In the case of disgust, we have noted that, like many other emotions, it is difficult to express the formal object of disgust with the concepts expressed in language. In light of the range of elicitors – such as acts of moral evil, reminders of death, penetration of the bodily envelope, poisonous substances, dirt, and disease – one might say that the formal object is best described as 'disgustingness.' One might naturally say that the appraisal that is involved in disgust is one of disharmony between the triggering object and the subject. If something like this is true, then it seems fairly clear that one cannot simultaneously appraise the same feature as both disharmonious and harmonious with oneself, and therefore, that the dispositions to give rise to such appraisals and as a result disgust and ecstasy respectively, are in an important sense oppositional.

Indeed, as one might expect if the appraisals are oppositional, some of the qualities that are found to be beautiful and ugly are oppositional. Whereas beauty is found in, for example, brightness, clarity, smoothness, and order; ugliness is found in, for example, dullness, obscurity, roughness, and disorder.

In sum, then, the constitutive thesis, together with the plausible proposal that ugliness might centrally involve disgust (even if it falls short of sufficiency, or strict necessity), can elegantly explain why beauty does indeed have an opposite – ugliness. Indeed, as I have shown, this proposal explains the depth of the opposition: opposition occurs in terms of the impossibility of the self-same features being simultaneously beautiful and ugly, in the respective experiential effects of engaging with beauty and ugliness, and as a consequence, presumably, the way that these properties are valued respectively. Having said this, since ugliness seems also to be found in objects that elicit fear, and fear may be related to awe / wonder, ugliness may, at least sometimes, act to potentiate beauty (see chapter §6.iii of chapter 6).

§5. Conclusion.

In this final chapter, I have argued that the constitutive thesis can elegantly explain the range of explananda that were outlined in chapters 2 and 3 – including the types of objects and events that

²⁰ As we have seen, there is evidence that both disgusting objects and ugliness admit of magical thinking in the form of contamination. Something similar might also be the case for the triggers of ecstasy – namely, beauty. Antubam (1963: 164) notes that the *akuaba* dolls of the Akan are themselves beautiful, and are thought to ensure the birth of good-looking children (though the mechanism by which this believed to occur is unclear).

are reliably found to be beautiful across cultures, the qualities that reliably contribute to beauty across cultures, the folk beliefs about beauty itself and beautiful objects that appear across cultures (and one that *may* appear across cultures), and the fact that beauty has a logical opposite – ugliness – across cultures. I submit that insofar as the constitutive thesis can accommodate such a large set of data so elegantly provides strong abductive support for the constitutive thesis.

Conclusion.

Philosophers have hoed over the plot of aesthetics often enough, but the plants they have raised thereby are pitifully weak and straggling objects. The time has therefore not yet come for tidying up some corner of the plot; it needs digging over afresh in the hope that some sturdier and more durable produce may arise, even if its health may be rude. (Urmson, 1957: 75).

Returning to where I began, I have now finished my attempt to dig over the plot of aesthetic theory. I have claimed that the emotion ecstasy seems to be one of the distinctive parts of the geography of the human mind (to put it in a Humean fashion), and one that is *crucially* important in understanding beauty.

It is my hope that, even if my positive account is considered to be in such ‘rude’ health that it cannot be seriously countenanced, this thesis will nonetheless help to expand the purview of philosophical aesthetics beyond its normal confines of analysing concepts such as the ‘aesthetic experience’ from the armchair on the basis of intuitions.

Philosophical aesthetics should, I suggest, aim to reveal deep truths about the way the world is (including the relevant aspects of human nature) vis-à-vis the aesthetic domain. As I have tried to show, beauty, at least, is not a superficial human construction: not only does it seem to exist across cultures, there is a remarkably consistent conception of it across a large number of them. Moreover, across cultures, beauty appears to give rise to a specific kind of experience. It is my hope that having argued that this is the case, at the very minimum, future philosophical theories of beauty should be consistent with these findings, and preferably should also aim to elegantly accommodate these facts. That is to say, it is my hope that the naturalistic enterprise should become embedded within philosophical aesthetics.

The proposal that I advance here – namely that beauty is constituted by a disposition to give rise to experiences of ecstasy in standard subjects in standard conditions – is not simply derived from thinking about the concept of beauty from the armchair. My focus on the notion of beauty itself did not emerge *a priori*, but rather by looking across cultures for a robust aesthetic phenomenon, and my theory of beauty emerged primarily from characterisations of a *sui generis* experience present in the philosophical literature together with those that emerge from empirical studies that have been conducted on the experience of beauty. As I have argued, the account that emerges from this data is able to explain much of the anthropological data surveyed, together with other facts about beauty such as, to take one example, the fact that it seems to hold a special relationship with the emotion sadness. It is hoped that there is something of merit in this view.

In concluding this thesis, I wish to look to the future, and outline a few of the avenues for further research.

Firstly, clearly, the controlled study of ecstasy is in its infancy. Further studies are required to characterise the feelings involved in ecstasy itself further, and the sub-personal mechanisms that underlie them.

Secondly, further work needs to be done to carefully distinguish ecstasy from closely related emotions such as awe / wonder. As I noted in chapter 6, it seems that awe / wonder and ecstasy may be different means to similar psychological states. In order to do this, stimuli and probes will need to be developed that are aptly able to discriminate between the different appraisals involved in each emotion.

Thirdly, since I have argued that the capacity to be responsive to beauty is part of our shared human natures, and crucially involves our capacity to feel a *sui generis* mental state that is only felt in response to beauty (cases of deviant causation aside), it is not only important to characterise the proximal mechanisms that give rise to this feeling, but also to reconstruct its phylogenetic history. Is ecstasy an adaptation or a spandrel, or a group thereof? Is beauty specific to *Homo sapiens*, or are other species able to appreciate beauty? These are questions about which very little can be said at present (and even less with any confidence). I have suggested that beauty might be related to the suite of responses and behaviours that underpin social bonding, and that the sublime might be related to the suite of responses and behaviours that underpin social hierarchy (if the latter is what is constituted by awe / wonder). This suggests that the appreciation of the 'aesthetic' domain might be specific to social mammals. Clearly, this requires further exploration.

Fourthly, and relatedly, the constitutive thesis may help us to make progress in the debate surrounding the evolution of art. One reason that the literature on art and evolution by natural selection has proved so unsatisfying is that many of the contributors to this debate, such as Carroll (2004) and Dutton (2009), have focused on offering a definition of art that holds across cultures, and looking for a single adaptive function for art. This debate should refocus on examining the specific capacities that are involved in the appreciation and creation of specific forms of art, and the extent to which these capacities are cross-culturally invariant. It seems obvious to me that the phylogenetic story of art will be a rather complicated one, as it seems unlikely that there will be a single capacity involved in the production and appreciation of art. The explanation of how it is that humans have come to produce comedic art, sublime art, ugly art, beautiful art, horrifying art, to name but a few, will no doubt be radically different. Clearly, whether my tentative suggestion about the evolutionary antecedents of the capacity for beauty is on track or not, it seems clear that investigating the likely phylogenetic bases of ecstasy will form one part of an answer to the question of why humans create art.

Fifth, although I have briefly discussed the relationship between beauty and ugliness, and beauty and the sublime, I have not paid attention to species of beauty or related properties. It is sometimes thought that beauty is a superordinate property, of which there are many subspecies (e.g. Zangwill, 2001). For example, beauty is sometimes suggested to be related in a determinate-determinable manner to the properties of grace, elegance, charmingness, handsomeness, picturesqueness, prettiness, quaintness, sexiness, cuteness, daintiness or delicateness. Moreover, beauty seems to be related to a number of other properties – such as kitschness and gaudiness – although not in a determinant-determinable manner. In light of this, if beauty is the disposition to give rise to experiences of ecstasy, then one question for future research is how the relations between these properties and beauty should be understood on the constitutive account (and indeed, whether it has the resources to understand these differences)? A couple of tentative suggestions are in order here to demonstrate the range of resources available to accommodate these properties and their relations to beauty on the constitutive thesis.

First, as beauty is proposed to be a disposition to give rise to ecstasy, and such a disposition may be multiply realisable by different base properties and combinations thereof, it may be the case that some of the properties that are species of beauty are simply specific ways of realising the disposition to give rise to ecstasy and which deserve their own name. Certainly, it is the case that the quaint and the picturesque refers to man-made objects (and particularly architecture) of a certain age, size, and idiosyncrasy. Similarly, the properties of grace, elegance and daintiness suggest a certain kind of simplicity, ease, fragility, or fineness. The property of cuteness seems to require a

certain smallness or fragility, prettiness (in a sense) suggests a certain feminine quality, and handsomeness suggests a certain power, honesty or coarseness.

Moreover, whilst some of the base properties that are reliably found to realise the disposition to be beautiful and ugly are mutually exclusive – the self-same modicum of an entity cannot be both smooth and rough, or bright and obscure, or delicate and excessive, or true and false (in a sense) – some of these properties (if we should call them that) can belong to the self-same modicum of an object. The self-same modicum of an object might be both coarse and bright, or delicate and dull, for example. As a result, it may be that some of these properties refer to certain combinations of base properties. The gaudy, for example, might be thought to refer to objects that display some excess of brightness or shininess (which as we have seen may, in some cases, be beautiful). Similarly, artworks that have many of the properties that are reliably found to be beautiful – such as brightness and clarity – but which are appraised as phony or false may be appraised as kitsch. Those artworks that aim to move us by expressing the best human values, but do so in a way which is phony and cheap, such as lachrymose or warm-hearted film will not be seen as beautiful to the extent that they are found to be phony, but rather sentimental, trite or mawkish.

Second, as ecstasy is an emotion, and emotions can normally admit of a variety of intensities (though we may lexically mark certain intensities, such as ‘rage’ and ‘irritation’), one might also be able to explain the differences in terms of the intensity of feelings. Indeed, as I noted in chapter 5, some of the feelings that are constitutive of ecstasy may vary depending on the intensity of the ecstasy felt: for example, the feelings of loss of self and desires, may be less intense forms of feelings of a gain of unity. As a result, one might, for example, think that the property of prettiness or charm might be a disposition to give rise to very weak feelings of ecstasy – perhaps involving feeling of a slight loss of self and desires but not feelings of unity, for example.

Third, as ecstasy is a programme of changes that naturally tend to cluster together, one might also be able to explain some of the differences between these properties in terms of only some of the components being present in the responses to these related aesthetic properties. It may be the case, for example, that some properties such as prettiness or charm may resemble beauty in eliciting some of the components without eliciting the full complement of components. The charming and pretty may elicit pleasure, and perhaps the feeling of one’s desires and sorrows disappearing, but not the other components. It may also be the case that some properties are able to produce certain components of the ecstasy response to a greater degree. For example, it may be that cuteness is especially able to produce the feelings of liquidity that are sometimes reported during experiences of ecstasy, and that handsomeness may be especially able to produce feelings of vitality.

Fourth, as ecstasy is an emotion, and emotions are thought to be able to be blended or elaborated with different appraisals, one might also be able to explain some of the differences between these properties in terms of the addition of other components. For example, it may be the case that the property of sexiness is the disposition to give rise to ecstasy blended with sexual arousal and yearning.

These four proposals are clearly of a very tentative nature, and indeed, may be inconsistent with one another, but they nonetheless demonstrate that the constitutive thesis has a range of resources that might be able to cast light on the nature of a number of properties that are thought to be linked to beauty in some manner. Whether any of these are right, or even on the right track, remains the task of further research.

Appendix – Temporal Lobe Epilepsy & Ecstasy.

Paper		Multiple sources	Ciriguetta et al. (1980)	
Patient		Dostoyevsky	Patient 1	
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)		EEG revealed spike focuses in the right temporal lobe.	EEG revealed spike focuses in the right temporal zone during sleep; EEG showed a spike focus which was concentrated in the left and right temporal zones during ecstatic seizure.	
Characteristics of Ecstatic Experiences (and other symptoms)	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	"At moments a flash of light in his brain... His mind and heart were flooded with extraordinary light."	-
		Enhanced / altered perception	"Bolts of hypersensitivity"; "Perception is so clear"	-
		Increased mental presence/attentional augmentation	"The sense of life, the consciousness of self, were multiplied ten times at these moments"; "heightened awareness"	-
	Physical feelings	Tears or Chills	-	-
		Up feelings	-	-
		Calm / Peace	"A feeling... of peace"; "lofty calm, full of serene, harmonious joy and hope."	-
		Warm or tumescent liquid or related expression	-	-
	Feelings of Loss	Loss of sense of time (and place)	"This is the very second which was not long enough for the water to be spilt out of Mohomet's pitcher, though the epileptic (prophet) had time to gaze at all the habitations of Allah."	Authors report that patient felt that "All his attention to his surroundings is suspended: he almost feels as if this estrangement from the environment were a <i>sine qua non</i> for the onset of seizures."
		Loss of words	-	-
		Loss of 'worldliness desire, sorrow, sin'	"All his uneasiness, all his doubts, all his anxieties were relieved at once."	Authors report the patient feels that "All disagreeable feelings, emotions, and thoughts are absent during the attacks."
	Feelings of Gain	Gain of vitality	"With extraordinary impetus all his vital forces suddenly began working at their highest tension."	-
		Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with religious colouring)	"You suddenly embrace the entire creation and you say, well, it is like that, it is true..."; "I was crying out loud to myself: 'yes, God exists.'"	-
		Joy / Pleasure	"Harmonious joy"; "I feel contentedness which is unthinkable under normal conditions"; "such happiness."	Intense pleasure.
		Loss of self / Gain of unity or contact (sometimes with religious colouring)	"There are some instances, they last 5 or 6 seconds, when you suddenly feel the presence of the eternal harmony, then you have reached it..."; "A feeling of... communion, in a transport of prayer, with the highest synthesis of Life"; "I am in perfect harmony with myself and with my entire universe"; "I had the feeling that the sky had descended to the ground and had swallowed me up. I truly felt the presence of God, and he entered into me."	-
	Appraisal	Harmony / Perfection / Unity	"See paradise," "harmonious joy," "perfect harmony," and "presence of the eternal harmony."	-
	Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	-

Other	Ineffability: "You others, who are in good health, you cannot even imagine what such happiness is like."	Ineffability: Authors report that "the subjective symptoms are defined by the patient himself as "indescribable," words seeming to him inadequate to express what he perceives in those instants."
Reliable elicitor	Perhaps beauty.	

Paper	Naito & Matsui (1988)	Morgan (1990)	Howden (reported by Dewhurst and Beard, 2003).		
Patient	Patient 2 (p.123)	Patient 3	Patient 4 (p. 78)		
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)	EEG revealed spike activity in the (dominant) left anterior and middle temporal region during sleep. GGS? Patient displayed hypergraphia; also displayed changes of moral character as well as hyperreligiosity: "Naïve, good natured and pious, she possessed a strong faith in the god of a new religion."	-	TLE		
Characteristics of Ecstatic Experiences (and other symptoms)	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	Authors report that the patient experienced "...triple haloes appeared around the sun, suddenly the sunlight became intense."	Author reports that patient "would see a bright but not glaring light."	-
		Enhanced / altered perception	-	-	-
		Increased mental presence /attentional augmentation	-	-	-
	Physical feelings	Tears or Chills	Patient reported to shed happy tears.	-	-
		Up feelings	-	-	Patient believed that it took three days for his body to become reunited with his soul.
		Calm / Peace	-	-	"Never before knew what true peace was."
		Warm or tumescent liquid or related expression	-	-	-
	Feelings of Loss	Loss of sense of time (and place)	-	Author report that the patient's family reported "during these fits he seemed in another world."	-
		Loss of words	-	-	-
		Loss of 'worldliness desire, sorrow, sin'	-	Author reports that "during the fit [the patient] felt a ease with himself and his environment. He sensed an ineffable contentment and fulfilment."	-
	Feelings of Gain	Gain of vitality	-	-	-
		Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with	Authors report that the patient experienced "a revelation of god and all creation glittering under	Author reported that the patient "sensed that the light was the source of knowledge and understanding."	"He was a converted man"; "Never before knew what true peace was."

	religious colouring)	the sun.”		
	Joy / Pleasure	-	Author reports that patient’s experience was “joyful and pleasurable.”	-
	Loss of self / Gain of unity or contact (sometimes with religious colouring)	Authors report that the patient had an experience in which “The sun became bigger and engulfed [her].” Authors report she exclaimed “I saw god.”	Author reports that “in about half of these episodes a young bearded man would appear. The man did not identify himself, although the patient assumed that this somewhat vague appearing individual was Jesus Christ.”	Believed that he was in heaven.
APP raisa	Harmony / Perfection / Unity	-	-	-
Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	-	-
	Other	-	-	-
	Reliable elicitor	-	-	-

Paper		Hansen & Brodtkorb (2003)			
Patient		Patient 5 (p. 668 & 672)	Patient 6 (p. 668)	Patient 7 (p. 668-9)	
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)		Unclear: no abnormalities in interictal EEG, and normal MRI. On basis of postictal aphasia and cold shiver, authors suggest that patient may have TLE with seizure onset lateralised to the left.	Abnormal interictal EEG in left temporal zone; MRI revealed parietal occipital atrophy; likely seizure onset lateralised to left hemisphere.	No abnormalities of interictal EEG, or as revealed by MRI, and no localising symptoms. Perhaps not TLE.	
Characteristics of Ecstatic Experiences (and other symptoms)	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	-	-	
		Enhanced/altered perception	-	Objects in focus move closer and become enlarged.	
		Increased mental presence / attentional augmentation	-	-	
	Physical feelings	Tears or Chills	"Cold shivering."	-	-
		Up feelings	-	-	-
		Calm / Peace	-	"A profound relaxation."	-
	Feelings of Loss	Warm or tumescent liquid or related expression	-	-	Patient reports “it’s like a warm, woolly, pleasant feeling spreading through skin.”
		Loss of sense of time (and place)	Reports being so absorbed in sensations that he can barely hear when spoken to.	-	-
		Loss of words	Patient reports difficulties expressing himself afterwards.	-	-
	Feelings of Gain	Loss of ‘worldliness desire, sorrow, sin’	-	-	-
		Gain of vitality	-	-	-
		Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with religious colouring)	-	-	-

		Joy / Pleasure	Patient reports “a trance of pleasure.”	Experience has pleasant character when not disturbing.	Patient reports “it’s like a warm, woolly, pleasant feeling spreading through skin”
		Loss of self / Gain of unity or contact (sometimes with religious colouring)	Denies any religious aspect to seizures, but authors report that patient reported contact with an “indescribable phenomenon.”	-	-
	raisa	Harmony / Perfection / Unity	-	-	-
	Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	-	-
	Other	Patient reports feeling “compelled to obey” the feeling, increased muscle tension, delicious taste and swallowing; difficulties expressing himself after. Ineffability: reports “perceiving short moments of an indefinable feeling.”	Sometimes strong déjà vu accompanied by nausea dominates, a sensation that usually heralds GTC.	After seizure, she experiences headache and nausea.	
Reliable elicitor		Seizures first occurred at music concert, when a teenager. Can sometimes self-induce when relaxed by “opening up mentally” and contracting muscles.	Triggered by passing a particular place on way to school, could self-induce by recalling previous seizures.	-	

Paper		Hansen & Brodtkorb (2003)			
Patient		Patient 8 (p. 669)	Patient 9 (p. 669)	Patient 10 (p. 669)	
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)		Unspecific abnormalities in the interictal EEG in right frontotemporal region. May not be TLE. GGS? certainly not hyper-religious as agnostic.	Abnormalities in interictal EEG in right frontotemporal region; seizure onset confirmed to be in right temporal region by EEG. MRI revealed sclerosis in right medial temporal lobe. TLE with right focus.	Abnormalities in the interictal EEG in left frontotemporal region; normal MRI; suggests that may be TLE with left focus.	
Characteristics of Ecstatic Experiences (and other symptoms)	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	-	-	-
		Enhanced/alterd perception	-	-	-
		Increased mental presence/attentional augmentation	-	-	-
	Physical feelings	Tears or Chills	-	-	"Endogenous charge of skin."
		Up feelings	-	-	-
		Calm / Peace	-	-	-
	Feelings of Loss	Warm or tumescent liquid or related expression	-	-	-
		Loss of sense of time (and place)	-	-	-
		Loss of words	-	-	-
	Feelings of Gain	Loss of worldliness desire, sorrow, sin?	-	-	-
Gain of vitality		-	-	-	
	Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with religious colouring)	-	-	-	

		Joy / Pleasure	Reports “an intense sensation in my stomach as if I were a teenager helplessly in love.”	“Pleasant emotions” and delightful “woolly feeling in head.”	-
		Loss of self / Gain of unity or contact (sometimes with religious colouring)	Often heard voices that were enjoyable and frightening at the same time. At end of performance in church (she is an artist), imagined hearing voice, which came from God.	-	“Telepathic contact with a divine power”
	Appraisal	Harmony / Perfection / Unity	-	-	-
	Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	-	-
	Other		Pleasant sensations often followed by feelings of fear and anxiety accompanied by shuddering and an urge to swallow.	Begins with a buzzing sound in her ears, and a feeling of <i>jamais vecu</i> , accompanied by vague erotic components, sometimes accompanied by nausea and vomiting.	Patient reported an “oscillating erotic sensation, like twinkling polar light” in his pelvic region and down inside his thighs. Described as different from sexual excitement, more like “endogenous charge of the skin.” May be accompanied by faintness and drowsiness.
Reliable elicitor		Often occurred during relaxation after deep concentration.	Can sometimes induce these seizures by listening to music and concentrating deeply.	-	

Paper		Hansen & Brodtkorb (2003)			
Patient		Patient 11 (p. 669)	Patient 12 (p. 670)	Patient 13 (p. 670-1)	
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)		No abnormalities revealed by interictal EEG. Normal MRI. Perhaps not TLE.	Abnormalities in the interictal EEG in the left frontotemporal region; normal MRI. Perhaps TLE with left focus.	No abnormalities in interictal EEG, but abnormalities recorded in left temporal region during seizures. Definite TLE with left focus.	
Characteristics of Ecstatic Experiences (and other symptoms)	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	-	-	-
		Enhanced/altered perception	-	-	-
		Increased mental presence/attentional augmentation	-	-	-
	Physical feelings	Tears or Chills	-	-	-
		Up feelings	-	Patient reports feeling of “inebriation and floating,” and a feeling that her mind has left her body.	-
		Calm / Peace	-	-	-
		Warm or tumescent liquid or related expression	-	-	-
	Feelings of Loss	Loss of sense of time (and place)	-	-	-
		Loss of words	-	Patient reports difficulty expressing herself.	-
		Loss of ‘worldliness desire, sorrow, sin’	-	-	-

	Feelings of Gain	Gain of vitality	-	-	-
		Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with religious colouring)	Patient reports "a vision of her grandfather, who she loved deeply, trying to give her a message she couldn't grasp" (though underdetermined by expression).	-	Imagines encountering a woman who in nonverbal manner tried to present to her the ultimate mission of her life, which she is unable to interpret except that it is extremely problematic, and related to saving children.
		Joy / Pleasure	"Intense happy feelings."	-	-
		Loss of self/Gain of unity or contact (sometimes with religious colouring)	-	-	-
	Appraisal	Harmony/Perfection/Unity	-	-	-
	Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	-	-
		Other	Patient reports a smell of sawdust and a stereotyped image of her as a child superimposed on a vision of her grandfather.	Initially felt an intense thirst and an urge to swallow, followed by a sound of increasing intensity, which turns into beautiful symphonic music accompanied by a smell of herbs and incense (which she had only ever experienced in a market in Bali). Afterwards she is drowsy.	Harsh and pungent taste and "numb prickling" sensation in right arm. Authors note that this patient did not use terms of intense or unfamiliar positive emotions, but rather described having spiritual or mystical experiences to which she felt attracted.
	Reliable elicitor	Could elicit the attacks by recalling the smell of sawdust.	-	-	

Paper		Hansen & Brodtkorb (2003)		
Patient		Patient 14 (p. 670)	Patient 15 (p. 670)	
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)		Abnormalities to interictal EEG in right temporal zone; abnormalities in EEG recorded in left parietocentral zone in EEG during seizures; MRI revealed sclerosis of right mesial temporal lobe. TLE with left seizure focus.	Abnormalities recorded in the interictal EEG in right temporal zone; abnormalities in EEG in right temporal zone during seizures; MRI revealed left temporal tumour; definite TLE with right focus.	
Characteristics of Ecstatic Experiences (and other symptoms)	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	-	
		Enhanced/altered perception	-	Patient reports that he "can sense the colours red and orange without seeing them."
		Increased mental presence/ attentional augmentation	-	-
	Physical feelings	Tears or Chills	-	"Gooseflesh."
		Up feelings	-	-
		Calm / Peace	-	-
		Warm or tumescent liquid or related expression	-	-
Loss of sense of time (and place)	-	-		

		Loss of words	-	Transient difficulties speaking afterwards.
		Loss of 'worldliness desire, sorrow, sin'	-	-
	Feelings of Gain	Gain of vitality	-	-
		Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with religious colouring)	-	-
		Joy / Pleasure	"Indescribably pleasant and joyous feeling."	Patient reports that "it is pleasant, but not similar to ordinary joy."
		Loss of self/Gain of unity or contact (sometimes with religious colouring)	-	Authors report that when in the close presence of another person, patient feels a "peculiar unification."
	Appraisal	Harmony/Perfection/Unity	-	-
	Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	-
		Other	Sometimes accompanied by faintness and oral automatisms. Ineffability: "indescribably pleasant and joyous feeling."	Patient reports that "it starts in the stomach and spreads upwards. It is pleasant, but not similar to ordinary joy. It is like an explosion." Authors note that the patient had an intense déjà vu sensation, queer taste, and "gooseflesh." Sometimes these seizures evolved into complex partial seizures with reduced consciousness, autonomisms and transient difficulties speaking. Ineffability: authors report that patient has experiences which are "beyond what can be described in words."
		Reliable elicitor	-	-

Paper		Picard & Craig (2003)	
Patient		Patient 16 (p. 540)	Patient 17 (p. 541)
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)		MRI revealed meningioma in the left temporopolar region with compression of the temporal top and edema involving wide regions of the left temporal lobe. Interictal EEG revealed abnormalities in the left anterior temporal zone. GGS? May be hyperreligious as had influence on the way she felt about the world: she no longer feared death, for example.	MRI revealed tumoural mass in right anterior portion of the parahippocampal gyrus, with edema affecting the temporal pole. Interictal EEG revealed abnormalities in the anterior temporal lobe.
Characteristics of Ecstasic Experiences (and of the associated phenomena)	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	-
		Enhanced/alterd perception	"I see the world differently, every sensation is stronger; for instance I see more colours than before, and I have more detailed perceptions, particular when listening to music." "Sensations, everything, seems bigger, overwhelming me."
		Increased mental presence	"During these seizure it is as if I were very, very conscious, more aware, and the sensations, everything, seems bigger."
Physical feelings	Tears or Chills	-	-
	Up feelings	-	Patient reports that "my inner body rises from an unalterable bliss"; "I feel light inside, but far from being empty."
	Calm / Peace	Patient reports "...feeling of complete serenity, total	-

			peace.”	
		Warm or tumescent liquid or related	Patient reports that “it felt as though my body was filling up with a sensation which was quite surreal.”	Patient describes experiences as “something pleasant, which fills my inner body, wrapping me, with a rapid crescendo.”
	Feelings of Loss	Loss of sense of time /place	-	-
		Loss of words	-	-
		Loss of ‘worldliness desire, sorrow, sin’	Reports “no worries; it felt beautiful, everything was great.”	-
	Feelings of Gain	Gain of vitality	-	-
		Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with religious colouring)	Perhaps; patient reports that “I have no religious feeling but it was almost religious”; “thanks to these experiences I do not fear death anymore” (presumably because she is able to transcend herself).	-
		Joy / Pleasure	-	Patient reports his experience as “something pleasant”; “feel really good”; “unalterable bliss.”
		Loss of self/Gain of unity or contact (sometimes with religious colouring)	Patient reports that “I have no religious feeling but it was almost religious.”	-
	Appraisal	Harmony/Perfection/Unity	-	-
	Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	-
		Other	Patient reports these ecstatic seizures were sometimes followed by forced thinking - such as the involuntary repetition of multiplication tables in her head.	Some descriptions difficult to interpret: “I escape into the time space of my body. It is a moment of fullness in the loophole of time, a return to myself. It is an unconditional, privileged moment of inhaled sensations. My body and my head may interact differently to what every human knows.” He also described feelings of deja vu, which was associated with the ecstatic aura.
	Reliable elicitor	-	-	

Paper		Picard & Craig (2003)	
Patient		Patient 18 (p. 540)	Patient 19 (p. 540-541)
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)		MRI normal, but interictal EEG revealed abnormalities in left anterior temporal area.	MRI normal, but interictal EEG shows abnormalities in left anterior and mid-temporal region.
Characteristics of Ecstatic Experiences <small>(and other assessment)</small>	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	-
		Enhanced/altered perception	-
		Increased mental presence/attentional augmentation	-
	al feeling	Tears or Chills	-
		Up feelings	Patient reports a “rising in the head, like bubbles in the head.”

	Feelings of	Calm / Peace	-	Patient reported to describe a feeling of relaxation.
		Warm or tumescent liquid or related expression	Patient reports "feeling of fullness."	Reports that "my head fills with feelings and emotions," and reported a strong sense of warmth rising in her body to her head.
		Loss of sense of time (and place)	-	"I feel discharged from anything else."
	Loss	Loss of words	-	-
		Loss of 'worldliness desire, sorrow, sin'	-	"I feel discharged from anything else."
	Feelings of Gain	Gain of vitality	-	-
		Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with religious colouring)	-	-
		Joy / Pleasure	Reports that the sensation was a "feeling of pleasure"; "I feel intensely well in my body."	Reports that "the pleasure goes to a crescendo until it reaches a peak."
		Loss of self/Gain of unity or contact	-	-
	raisa	Harmony/Perfection/Unity	-	-
	Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	-
		Other	Patient reports that feeling "is a physical state, an overload" and that the aura of bliss is usually followed by a loss of balance, together with "a difficulty in gaze fixation, with a sensation of eye convergence," and oscillopsia.	Patient also reports tachycardia. Noteworthy that patient interpreted feelings of relaxation as "being very conscious of myself, I feel discharged from anything else, although I do not lose consciousness."
		Reliable elicitor	-	-

Paper		Picard & Craig (2003)	Dewhurst and Beard (2003)	
Patient		Patient 20 (p. 541)	Patient 21 (p. 7)	
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)		-	TLE	
Characteristics of Ecstatic Experiences (and other symptoms)	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	-	
		Enhanced/altered perception	-	
		Increased mental presence/attentional augmentation	Patient reports that "I feel very, very present at that time; the consciousness of myself is very increased... I am one hundred percent concentrated on myself."	"Clarity of mind."
	Physical feelings	Tears or Chills	-	-
		Up feelings	-	Felt elated.
		Calm / Peace	-	-
		Warm or tumescent liquid or related expression	-	-
	Feelings of Loss	Loss of sense of time (and place)	Patient reports that during experience she feels that "I am a radiant sphere without any notion of time or space. My relatives tell me that it lasts two or three minutes, but for me these moments are without beginning and without end."	-

		Loss of words	Jargonophasia	-
		Loss of 'worldliness desire, sorrow, sin'	-	-
	Feelings of Gain	Gain of vitality	-	-
		Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with religious colouring)	"These experiences brought me confidence. They confirm that there is something that surpasses us."	Reported discovery that "God isn't something hard looking down on us, God is trees and flowers and beauty and love."
		Joy / Pleasure	Patient reports that "the immense joy that fills me is above physical sensations"; "entirely wrapped up in the bliss."	General sense of well-being.
		Loss of self/Gain of unity or contact (sometimes with religious colouring)	"A feeling of unbelievable harmony of my whole body and myself with life, with the world, with the 'All.'"	"God was with me... I was talking to God... God was with me."
	Appraisal	Harmony/Perfection/Unity	"A feeling of unbelievable harmony of my whole body and myself with life, with the world, with the 'All.'"	-
	Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	"I was thanking God... God is... beauty and love... God was telling me to carry on and help the doctors."
		Other	Patient reports that "I feel very, very, very present at that time; the consciousness of myself is very increased... I am one hundred percent concentrated on myself"; "it is a feeling of total presence, an absolute integration of myself." However, this is certainly not incompatible with contact or union, as patient also describes union with 'all'; may merely represent feelings of vitality. After ecstatic seizure, patient reports decrease in consciousness and jargonophasia.	-
	Reliable elicitor		A joy or sense of relief can trigger seizures.	-

Paper		Dewhurst and Beard (2003)		
Patient		Patient 22 (p. 79)	Patient 23 (p. 80)	
Temporal lobe focus (including whether displays GGS)		TLE	TLE	
Characteristics of Ecstatic Experiences (and other symptoms)	Perceptual Effects	Perception of light/phospheres	-	"Flash of light."
		Enhanced/altered perception	-	-
		Increased mental presence/attentional augmentation	-	-
	Physical feelings	Tears or Chills	-	-
		Up feelings	"State of exhalation."	"State of exaltation."
		Calm / Peace	-	-
		Warm or tumescent liquid or related expression	-	-
	Feelings of Loss	Loss of sense of time (and place)	-	-
		Loss of words	-	-

		Loss of 'worldliness desire, sorrow, sin'	-	-
	Feelings of Gain	Gain of vitality	-	-
		Gain of fundamental truth (sometimes with religious colouring)	After experience "continued to believe in their validity."	"Suddenly felt God's reality."
		Joy / Pleasure	"Suddenly overcome with bliss."	-
		Loss of self/Gain of unity or contact (sometimes with religious colouring)	"Literally in heaven."	"Suddenly felt God's reality."
	Appraisal	Harmony/Perfection /Unity	-	-
	Action Tendency	Prosocial action tendency	-	"Determined to live in a Christian manner"; "received message from God to mend his ways and help others."
		Other	"Heard divine and angelic voices and music."	"Dream like feeling"; one such experience took place when he was alone whilst living a spartan and isolated life in the RAF.
		Reliable elicitor	-	-

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