

A Degree-Based Solution to the Paradox of Everyday Aesthetics

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Sanna Hirvonen (LanCog, Centre of Philosophy, University of Lisbon)

&

Robert Michels (Goethe University Frankfurt & LanCog, Centre of Philosophy,
University of Lisbon)

Everyday aesthetics is a thriving subfield in aesthetics which shifts the focus in aesthetic theorizing from artworks to aesthetic experiences we have in our ordinary life. This project is threatened by the paradox, or sometimes also dilemma, of everyday aesthetics which arises from the tension between the ordinary nature of everyday experiences and the apparent extra-ordinariness of aesthetic experiences. In this paper, we propose a response to the paradox which builds on a framework which conceives of aesthetic experiences as multidimensional and gradable.

1. The Paradox introduced

Everyday aesthetics has developed into a rich subfield that theorizes about the myriad experiences in our daily lives, from hanging laundry to scratching an itch. But does something unite those experiences as aesthetic experiences, in contrast to being merely everyday experiences? This paper approaches the question starting with the paradox of everyday aesthetics (Saito 2007; Carlson 2014). The paradox can be stated as follows:

1. All aesthetic experiences are special.
2. Some everyday experiences are aesthetic experiences.
3. No everyday experience is special.

Premises 1.-3. form an inconsistent triad. What makes this inconsistent triad a paradox is that for each of the three Premises, we have good reasons to think that it is true. Premise 1 is supported by standard views in the Western aesthetic tradition, including the Kantian theory of beauty, according to which aesthetic experiences “stand out” among the mundane stream of ordinary experiences. Premise 2 has been forcefully argued for by Saito and others, pushing back against the traditional Western narrative. Finally, the third premise seems to be true by definition: What makes an experience an everyday experience is exactly that it does not stand out, that it is plain and ordinary. One common solution to the paradox is to give up Premise 2, and to argue that the very idea that everyday experiences can be aesthetic experiences is incoherent. That reaction is particularly damaging to the emerging field of everyday aesthetics. Our search for a solution to the paradox is motivated by precisely the need to provide a firm foundation for everyday aesthetics.

In the next section, we motivate our proposal by arguing that existing responses do not provide a satisfactory solution to the paradox (section 2). In the rest of the paper we propose a novel response to the paradox. This response is based on a framework which takes aesthetic experiences to consist of various different aesthetic dimensions, both from the side of the object or event experienced, and the person who is having the experience (section 3). Moreover, those dimensions are gradable, with the consequence that whether one is having an aesthetic experience or not is also a gradable matter, ranging from experiences that barely have an aesthetic character to extremely special aesthetic experiences (section 4). In section 5, we present the solution to the paradox. The last section summarises the theory and discusses some challenges and questions for future work that are outside the scope of this paper.

2. Responses to the Paradox

A number of responses to the paradox have been proposed in the literature. Even the most promising strategies typically suffer from one of two defects: either they elevate everyday aesthetic experiences to the level of exceptional experiences of impressive artworks or sublime nature, thereby erasing their everydayness. Or, they err in the other direction, allowing aesthetic experiences to cover such a broad range of experiences that they seem to lose traction on their aesthetic nature.

Carlson (2014) provides a useful overview, illustrating these shortcomings for a number of natural response strategies. Formalists hold that the aesthetic nature of certain experiences can be traced to certain formal properties that the objects of those experiences have. Likewise, formalists may appeal to the formal properties of everyday objects and events, arguing that perceiving those causes the experiences to be aesthetic. However, they fail to avoid the paradox, since they reduce “the everyday to a shadow of itself, to a shallow veneer,” (Carlson 2014, p. 52) ignoring the richness and open character of everyday experiences.

Some responses draw on the aestheticisation or ritualization of ordinary actions to explain how everyday experiences can become aesthetic. However, they fail to solve the paradox, since their basic idea is that everyday experiences have to be elevated above the ordinary in some way to make them aesthetic. Thus, the process of elevating makes them lose their everyday nature. (See *ibid.*, p. 54.)

According to Carlson, solutions which focus on *pleasure* as a core characteristic of aesthetic experiences ultimately fail to delineate genuinely aesthetic experiences from non-aesthetic, but nonetheless pleasurable, everyday experiences. (See *ibid.*, p. 58.)

Kantians, who see a disinterested attitude as characteristic of aesthetic experiences, firmly embrace Premise 1, thus solving the paradox in a way which undermines the possibility of everyday aesthetic experience. (See *ibid.*, p. 58.)

Solutions which tie aesthetic experiences to engagement fare better in Carlson’s view, but they ultimately face a different dilemma, the dilemma of

having to explain how our engagement and the resulting aesthetic appreciation can be sustained in ordinary experiences of everyday life. (See *ibid.*, p. 61.)

Carlson's own proposal combines the engagement approach with a cognitive view of aesthetic experience.¹ The idea is that engagement plays a role in such experiences, but that they also crucially involve us having specific background knowledge, which in everyday experiences is not art-historical or -critical, but rather pertains to the kind of object or event we experience. This also yields a solution to the new dilemma concerning sustained aesthetic appreciation: "knowledge of the workings of the everyday world makes it interesting and, moreover, interesting enough to both motivate and sustain aesthetic appreciation." (*Ibid.*, p. 63) While Carlson's approach is interesting, it doesn't manage to avoid the second of the two common pitfalls. It seems that neither engagement with a particular object or scene, nor suitable background knowledge are enough to explain what causes the experience to have an aesthetic character. Think of an electrician who fixes a broken toaster. The electrician certainly has to be engaged with the toaster and its inner electrical workings and also needs relevant background knowledge about electrical circuits to fix the appliance. However, those features alone do not give rise to an aesthetic experience. But it seems that Carlson's account would have to classify that as an example of an aesthetic everyday experience, even though it seems a doubtful case at best.²

¹ Note that Carlson states that the Cognitivist view could alternatively be combined with another approach providing a successful solution to the original paradox. See *ibid.*, p. 64. Based on his favourable discussion of the engagement approach, it still seems fair to attribute an engagement-based approach to him.

² The problem could of course be avoided by providing more specific notions of engagement and of the kind of background knowledge involved in aesthetic everyday experiences, but a non-circular way of fixing these notions is, judging from the current literature, still elusive.

3.The multidimensional nature of aesthetic experiences

As we saw in the previous section, many different kinds of features have been taken to be characteristic of aesthetic experiences. Among those, we may distinguish two classes: features of the *objects or events* of aesthetic experiences and features of the *experiencing subjects*. Among the former, traditional Western aesthetics has highlighted the formal and expressive properties of objects as the properties that are perceived in aesthetic experience. Among the features of the experiencing subjects, a disinterested attitude, special perception, experiencing pleasure, a sustained or special attention or engagement, and the having of the right kind of background knowledge have been just some of the candidate states required for an aesthetic experience (perhaps in combination with conditions on what kind of objects can afford aesthetic experience). Let us call these the *objective* and the *subjective* sides of aesthetic experiences.

Within everyday aesthetics, the criteria for the objective side of aesthetic experiences has been radically expanded, allowing such myriad objects and events as hanging laundry, feeling an itch, or having dinner to be the objects of aesthetic experiences. It has been more controversial whether the subjective side needs to be expanded as well to accommodate everyday aesthetic experiences. Some have argued that even if the object of an everyday aesthetic experience is mundane, the experience is aesthetic because the object is experienced in a special, non-mundane way (see e.g. Leddy 2012). We return to that question in the following section, and argue that there is no specific attitude required for an aesthetic experience; rather, there are many ways to have one.

Both the objective and the subjective sides of an experience matter with respect to whether it is an aesthetic experience. But more than that, the core of our view on what makes an experience aesthetic is its *multidimensional* character. We can identify numerous relevant dimensions within both the subjective and objective sides of an experience. An experience can be aesthetic due to a specific

emotional response it evokes, for example, or due to a particular special attitude one takes towards the objects it involves, due to particular qualities one perceives of the object of the experience, and the list goes on. Any aesthetic experience can be associated with a list of such features which characterize it. Let us call the list of features that make a particular experience aesthetic its 'aesthetic profile'.

Given the breadth of kinds of experiences that have been considered aesthetic, both in our everyday lives as well as during, say, special experiences of art, it is only natural to assume that there is no single aesthetic profile which all aesthetic experiences share. The framework we propose allows one to take an ecumenical approach to different views of aesthetic experience, and to treat those views as highlighting different dimensions of possible aesthetic profiles. An aesthetic profile may, for example, involve that the experiencing subject is in a particular state of mind of valuing the experience for its own sake (see e.g. Isenminger 2006), that the subject has a particular kind of emotional reaction, such as being in a state of amazement or wonder (see e.g. Prinz 2011), that the subject pays a particular kind of attention to the object of the experience (see Nanay 2013). Our framework then permits us to synthetically integrate these apparently contrary views about aesthetic experiences by treating them as dimensions involved in aesthetic profiles. We take this to be a definite advantage of the framework.

To give a concrete example of the way multidimensionality works, let us consider some examples. First, think of a philosopher who is pausing to think while writing a paper. While deep in thought, their eyes are fixed on a water glass in front of them, when they suddenly start to "really see" the glass. They notice its simple but elegant shape, balanced proportions and its forest green shade. In that case, the object's properties stand out, directing the person's attention (which was elsewhere), so that they end up noticing the glass's aesthetic properties.

Second, think of a person who is in love, and whose happiness makes them notice the beautiful and charming in everything. Again, it is the properties of the objects that are being noticed, but the aesthetic character of that person's experiences is more due to the particular mental and affective state that they are in, rendering them sensitive to aspects of things that most people might not even

perceive and evoking particular aesthetically relevant affective reactions in them, which other people, or even they themselves in a less elevated state, would not have.

Third, think of a person who knows a lot about geology, in particular, rocks. While they are hiking, they see cliffs with strata that are visible to everyone. But their knowledge and interest allows them to see not just coloured lines of rock, but into the history and physical structure of the cliff, causing them to have a deep aesthetic experience that is not available to a person without their knowledge. These are just some examples to illustrate how different objective and subjective dimensions interact and cause radically different experiences that can nevertheless be classified as aesthetic experiences.

One of the lessons the literature on everyday aesthetics teaches us is that there is a much wider range of different kinds of aesthetic experiences than traditional, often exclusively art-focused theories of aesthetic experience can admit. Instead of a set of necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, our framework rather naturally evokes a similarity-based treatment of the aesthetic character of certain experiences. The resemblance of experiences of this kind is captured by an overlap between their aesthetic profiles. Still, we do not assume that any two aesthetic experiences must necessarily have overlapping aesthetic profiles, as long as each aesthetic experience has an aesthetic profile which sufficiently overlaps with that of *some* other aesthetic experience.³

This of course presupposes that we have a certain grasp on what an aesthetic experience is, independently of the framework we introduce to account for the notion. We take this to be extremely plausible, since a) we are clearly able to identify paradigm examples of aesthetic experiences and also of non-aesthetic experiences b) the purpose of the proposed framework is to account for our already established ideas of what makes an experience aesthetic, in a way that nevertheless does justice to what have been considered competing accounts of aesthetic experience.

³ The proposed account hence echoes Wittgenstein's famous discussion of games in Wittgenstein (1953) and the associated notion of family resemblance. A detailed discussion of how our framework relates to Wittgenstein's ideas is beyond the scope of this paper.

4. The gradability of the aesthetic character of experiences

In the previous section we argued that aesthetic experiences can vary widely between each other, and that as a consequence, we cannot settle for a single set of the necessary and sufficient conditions for aesthetic experiences. Instead, experiences have numerous dimensions that are aesthetically relevant, and it is the interplay of them –what we have called ‘the aesthetic profile’ of an experience– that determines whether or how an experience is aesthetic. There are thus numerous ways to have aesthetic experiences. The framework is more elaborate than that, though, since each dimension admits of degrees. We will next look at the gradable nature of aesthetic dimensions.

Let us begin with a controversial statement: Not all aesthetic experiences are special, stand out, or are extraordinary. Think of the experience of looking at the dull grey colour of the sky on a rainy winter day, or the feeling of the texture and coolness of a metal door handle. Experiences of this kind are arguably not special in any way. We have them, but they leave us indifferent. They are neither positive, nor negative, but rather neutral. However, arguably they have an aesthetic character. (See Carroll 2012, pp. 166ff.)

Traditional Western aesthetics typically focuses on positive, outstanding aesthetic experiences as the prototypical aesthetic experiences. However, there is more to aesthetic experience than the prototypes. Whether an experience is aesthetic, we claim, is a matter of degree, so that on the top end of the scale are the outstanding (positive or negative) aesthetic experiences, and on the low end the experiences that are aesthetic, but just barely so. That gradability of how aesthetic an experience is is a direct consequence of the gradable nature of each aesthetic dimension.

On the objective side of aesthetic dimensions we may note that aesthetic predicates like ‘beautiful’, ‘ugly’, ‘cute’, ‘comfortable’, or ‘nice’ are gradable.⁴ They allow the use of degree modifiers (“This is very nice”) and support comparative judgments (“This is more beautiful than that”) about items to which they apply. On the subjective side, dimensions that belong to the experiencer side of aesthetic experiences such as pleasure, joy, satisfaction (Irvin 2008), attention (Nanay 2014), or one’s valuing the experience for its own sake (Stecker 2006), also vary in intensity.

Our solution to the paradox of everyday aesthetics is based on the claim that aesthetic dimensions, including the category of the aesthetic itself, are gradable. Experiences can have more or less of an aesthetic character. Where on this scale an experience is located is a matter of what we call its *aesthetic profile*, which consists of each of its aesthetic dimensions and where in that dimension the experience is, for example, *how cute* a dog one sees is, *how much attention* one is paying to it, or *how much joy* seeing it brings.⁵ These different aspects and the degrees to which they are exemplified in an experience together determine how aesthetic overall the experience is. Intuitively, this overall degree of “aestheticness” captures how intensely aesthetic the experience is.⁶

As emphasised earlier, the aesthetic profile of an experience is strongly dependent on its subjective features. That means that it is unlikely that two aesthetic experiences will ever share exactly the same profile, even if they happen

⁴ There is no consensus over which predicates exactly are aesthetic (see e.g. Sedivy 2025, Shelley 2026). However, the fact that no clear distinctions exist between aesthetic and non-aesthetic categories is arguably something our view predicts, as our view holds that there is no clear demarcation between the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic that language could track. We return to this point in section 6.

⁵ Note that there is obvious interplay between the objective and subjective sides of the experience. For example, a dog’s cuteness is not merely a matter of the dog’s qualities, but of what the person who sees it considers cute.

⁶ We will not enter into a discussion of the ontology of aesthetic categories like beauty or cuteness, but one might still wonder whether the solution is compatible with natural views of what kind of entities they are. Here, we want to briefly point out that, at least for what seem to be the two most natural candidate views, systematic theories which accommodate the gradability of such categories are available. If “beautiful”, “ugly”, “cute”, etc. are concepts, then our solution can be implemented in the conceptual spaces framework, which treats concepts as regions in quality spaces (see e.g. Gärdenfors 2000). If they are properties instead, they can be treated as graded qualities in the sense of Calosi & Michels 2025.

in the same context and while the person involved is attending to the same object. Two such experiences had by different persons (or by the same person at different times) may also differ in whether they qualify as aesthetic experiences or not. For example, two people may be watching a sunset on a beach together, but one has seen a sunset there a thousand times and is therefore not moved, whereas the other one rarely sees a sunset and is having an extremely strong aesthetic experience. Many of the established theories of aesthetic experience found in the literature involve context or experiencer sensitivity of this sort.⁷ In our framework, this is borne out in terms of the context sensitivity of aesthetic profiles.

Aesthetic profiles can thus vary in two ways. First, they may involve different sets of dimensions. Someone's aesthetic experience of using a manual lemon squeezer to extract the juice of a ripe lemon has a number of sensory dimensions (e.g. smelling the zesty scent, feeling the waxy texture), which contribute to its aesthetic nature. Those are completely absent from the experience of reading a poem, which in turn has intellectual and imaginative dimensions which an aesthetic experience of the first kind lacks.

Second, experiences may share (some of) the same dimensions that make them aesthetic, but differ in the degrees to which these dimensions are exemplified in the experience. For example, think of smelling a cheap eau de toilette by a mainstream clothing brand vs. smelling a perfume made by a skilled perfumer from more expensive materials. We can suppose that the two cases involve exactly the same dimensions: the sniffing of the perfume by the same person (and thus the same knowledge, olfactory faculties and sensitivity to scents), the same amount of attention paid in a situation that is the same in the relevant aspects (e.g. a neutral smelling location). However, the better scent offers a much more marked aesthetic experience due to the qualities of the perfume itself; the experience is more intense and thereby *more aesthetic*.

That brings us to the crucial feature of our view regarding everyday aesthetics. In the previous section we mentioned that everyday aesthetics has

⁷ An example is Nanay's attention-based theory. One of its advantages is that it explains how one may fail to have an aesthetic experience if the context is not right, even when one has good reasons to expect to have an aesthetic experience. See Nanay 2015, p. 101.

broadened the range of objects, events, and actions that are considered suitable for providing an aesthetic experience. We argue that we also need to broaden our views on what kind of states one needs to be in to have an aesthetic experience, in other words, the subjective conditions of aesthetic experiences are much more varied than is often assumed. Most of the subjective conditions mentioned in the literature are necessary only for aesthetic experiences that really stand out, for example, feeling awe or marvel, paying special attention, being in a sustained state of aesthetic appreciation, or having an extraordinary perceptual experience. We hold that none of those are necessary, because one can have aesthetic experiences that don't stand out. Thus, perhaps one feels marvel while seeing a certain sunset; but once one has seen that sunset a hundred times, one might feel merely a small amount of appreciation. Nevertheless, both experiences are aesthetic.

The core of our solution to the paradox relies on the idea that the aesthetically relevant dimensions that contribute to the aesthetic profile of an experience are gradable; hence, there can be low-level aesthetic experiences. Arguably, most of our everyday aesthetic experiences are low-level. It is a natural consequence of some common characteristics of everyday experiences, e.g. that they occur often, they may be brief, our attention may be partially elsewhere, their emotional impact may be low, and the pleasure they afford may not be much. Here are some examples of such low-level aesthetic experiences from Irvin 2008:

I drink tea out of a large mug that is roughly egg-shaped, and I clasp it with both hands to warm my palms. When I am petting my cat, I crouch over his body so that I can smell his fur, which at different places smells like trapped sunshine or roasted nuts, a bit like almonds but not quite. I scratch my head with a mechanical pencil that allows me to part my hair and reach exactly the right spot on my scalp. I move my wedding ring back and forth over the knuckle that offers it slight resistance, and I jiggle it around in my right palm to enjoy its weight before sliding it back on. (Irvin 2008, 30.)

Those are the kind of experiences that don't stand out or cause awe, but they provide richness, interest and subtle pleasures to our everyday lives, thus making them indispensable and valuable.

5. A degree-based solution to the paradox of everyday aesthetics

Let us now return to the paradox and our suggested solution to it. To repeat, the paradox can be stated in the form of an inconsistent triad of three claims which are all independently justified, if considered in isolation:

1. All aesthetic experiences are special.
2. Some everyday experiences are aesthetic experiences.
3. No everyday experience is special.

In a nutshell, our view is that the paradox is based on a false dichotomy between the extraordinariness of aesthetic experiences and the ordinariness of everyday experiences. The first premise is correct only insofar as *certain* particularly impressive aesthetic experiences have an extraordinary character. Such examples include being moved by a magnificent sunset over the ocean, being fully immersed in an excellent performance of an outstanding piece of music, or having a wonderful evening with good friends and great food in a traditional restaurant. Both in traditional and everyday aesthetics there has been some tendency to focus on positive examples of that kind as paradigmatic aesthetic experiences and to generalize based on them. This tendency may mislead us into embracing the first premise. There is an acceptable claim in the vicinity of Premise 1, namely that *some*, rather than all, aesthetic experiences are special. Crucially, this is however not a necessary feature all such experiences have. Our response to the paradox is hence to reject Premise 1.

Our proposed framework allows us to see more clearly that beyond the paradigmatic special and positive aesthetic experiences there are also middling and unremarkable aesthetic experiences, experiences which are aesthetic to some degree, but insufficiently so to count as being special. Think again of experiences such as the feeling of the texture and coolness of a metal door handle. The aesthetic profile of such an experience involves some typical aspects of aesthetic experiences, but it exhibits these aspects to a comparatively low degree. In general, the more ordinary the experience is, the more everyday it is; but its ordinariness does not reduce the qualitative aesthetic character of the experience, which is due to the other aesthetic dimensions which are, at least to some degree, present in its aesthetic profile. Importantly, aesthetic experiences are still connected by a network of qualitative similarities and dissimilarities incorporated in their aesthetic profiles, allowing for a broad variety of aesthetic experiences.

In short, in the degree-based framework, the extraordinary character of an aesthetic experience is due to its high overall intensity, which in turn derives from the aesthetic dimensions involved in its aesthetic profile and the degrees to which they are exemplified. While such extraordinary aesthetic experiences differ in degree from their everyday counterparts, this difference does not entail a fundamental difference in quality. Being awed by great art and appreciating a clean towel may be polar opposites as regards their specialness, but they are still on the same qualitative scale of being positive aesthetic experiences.

6. Conclusions

The paradox of everyday aesthetics presents an existential threat to the field of everyday aesthetics. If aesthetic experiences are always somehow special, and everyday life is never special, then it is hard to make sense of the idea that there can nevertheless be everyday aesthetic experiences. The aim of this paper has been to present a framework that allows for a continuum of aesthetic experiences from

unremarkable to outstanding ones. The framework allows us to explain what is wrong with the paradox. We have argued the problem lies in the premise that assumes that all aesthetic experiences are special or stand out. Only some aesthetic experiences are special, but luckily we also experience a great number of unremarkable but still valuable aesthetic experiences in our everyday lives.

In a nutshell, the framework is as follows. The aesthetic profile of an experience encompasses many dimensions mentioned earlier (e.g. paying attention, using particular senses, making an evaluative judgment, feeling certain emotions, thinking of the object or event in question). Some of the dimensions are given by the objective side of the experience, that is, the object, event, or action, and others by the experiencing subject. Moreover, each dimension comes in a degree. The aesthetic profile of the experience then determines the degree of how aesthetic overall the experience is. As is always the case with gradable notions, this gives rise to a question about scale. We can, in theory, at least classify aesthetic experiences on an ordinal scale, that is, we are able to sort them into ranked categories like “maximally aesthetic”, “highly aesthetic”, ... , “minimally aesthetic”, “not aesthetic at all”, allowing us to compare them with respect to “how” (quantitatively) aesthetic they are. In practice, qualitative differences between different aesthetic experiences make it impossible to determine a strict ordering, but the general idea, which we take to be very plausible independently of the proposed framework, is that experiences can have more or less of an aesthetic character.

It should be noted that many others have argued that aesthetic experiences of everyday life and of art lie on a continuum (see e.g. Dewey 1934). Our framework advances the debates on the nature of aesthetic experiences by showing how both the subjective and objective dimensions are graded, and come together in innumerable ways, allowing us to explain how a wide range of very different kinds of experiences can nevertheless be aesthetic. Reading experimental poetry and stroking one's cat might have nothing in common between them. But both are in virtue of their aesthetic profiles embedded in a network of similarities ultimately also connecting them to paradigmatically aesthetic experiences.

Another important feature of the framework is its neutrality regarding the exact dimensions that make up the possible aesthetic profiles. It holds that experiences have aesthetic profiles and that these aesthetic profiles determine to which degree the experience is aesthetic. These requirements are *formal*, but they do not constrain the *qualitative* nature of aesthetic experiences or of the aesthetic dimensions involved in them. The framework is hence compatible with existing proposals for characterizing aesthetic experiences found in the literature (see Carroll 2012 for a recent (opinionated) overview), in the sense that it can incorporate them as dimensions of aesthetic profiles. Our approach is that there are many, many ways to have aesthetic experiences due to the countless possible objects of aesthetic experiences as well as the interplay of the various dimensions that form the aesthetic profiles of experiences.

In this paper we have, due to lack of space, only discussed aesthetic experiences that range from neutral to positive. However, negative aesthetic experiences also exist, and they may even be more present and influential in the everyday lives of many people than the positive ones. Some examples include the noise and smell of traffic, the grey concrete ugliness of many cities, disgusting background music in public spaces, or being forced to see saccharine, family-centered commercials for a bank while waiting for the metro. However, we can offer a brief sketch for how the framework can account for them. Consider the earlier example of smelling perfumes. Smelling the pollution of traffic relies on the very same subjective dimensions: paying attention to the smell, using olfaction, judging what the smell is and making an evaluative judgment about it, and finally, evaluating whether the experience itself is positive or negative. It is the last step that determines whether the aesthetic experience is negative, neutral or positive. It is important to highlight that the valence of the experience is not necessarily determined by the valence of the prevalent aesthetic properties of the experience. For example, one might think that one's dog smells bad, but it doesn't mean that smelling the bad smell of the dog is an unpleasant experience. The experience itself consists of more than merely experiencing the bad smell, and hence its valence is determined by more features as well.

Finally, the biggest challenge for our multidimensional view, or for any view which allows for a wide variety of different kinds of aesthetic experiences, is to provide an empirically plausible account of the aesthetic-making dimensions and the thresholds. However, given that ‘aesthetic’ is a theoretical term whose meaning has changed since its introduction, and which has come to be used to denote quite different kinds of entities (concepts, experiences, properties, judgments, etc.), we shouldn't assume that it has a unified meaning, or that it manages to “carve nature at its joints”. But given the importance of the experiences we intuitively regard as aesthetic, we should continue to investigate what accounts for their aesthetic character, even if it turns out to be a heterogeneous class of features.

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