

Shades of value: aesthetic properties,
aesthetic value and the determination relation

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
Introduction.....	8
1. Aesthetic properties, kinds and pluralism.....	14
1.1. Aesthetic properties.....	14
1.2. Kinds	21
1.2.1. Characterising kinds	22
1.2.2. Models of kinds	27
1.2.3. Determinates, pluralism and unity	33
1.3. Pluralism.....	39
2. Why believe the determination thesis?.....	43
2.1. Motivating the kind thesis.....	44
2.1.1. The way thesis.....	50
2.1.2. Sufficiency for reason	57
2.2. Motivating the determination thesis.....	62
2.2.1. Motivation from description.....	65
2.2.2. Motivation from mutual supervenience.....	68
2.2.2.1. Supervenience of aesthetic properties on aesthetic value	74
2.2.2.2. Supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties	76
2.3. Against the genus thesis.....	83
2.4. Conclusion.....	91
3. Neutral aesthetic properties	92
3.1. Normativity argument.....	93
3.2. Objections.....	102
3.2.1. Fineness of grain.....	103
3.2.2. Are there neutral aesthetic properties?.....	107
3.2.3. Neutral aesthetic value.....	110
3.3. Conclusion.....	112
4. Aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value	114
4.1. Aesthetic properties are not kinds of <i>pro tanto</i> aesthetic value.....	115
4.1.1. <i>Pro tanto</i> properties.....	116
4.1.2. Correspondence of <i>pro tanto</i> and overall properties	120

4.2.	Objection from strict sufficiency	125
4.3.	Objection from determinate incompatibility.....	130
4.3.1.	When can determinates co-occur?	132
4.3.2.	Counterexamples to maximal determinate incompatibility	139
4.4.	Rejecting the valency constraint.....	144
4.4.1.	Purely qualitative overall determination thesis.....	146
4.4.2.	Objections and replies	153
4.5.	Conclusion.....	158
5.	Dimensionalism	159
5.1.	What is dimensionalism?	161
5.2.	Motivation for dimensionalism	168
5.2.1.	Objection from strict sufficiency	169
5.2.2.	Motivation from description.....	170
5.2.3.	What are the determination dimensions of aesthetic value?.....	172
5.2.4.	Motivation from mutual supervenience.....	175
5.3.	Against dimensionalism	177
5.3.1.	Sufficiency for reason	177
5.3.2.	Objection from determinate incompatibility.....	183
5.4.	Conclusion.....	185
6.	Realizationism.....	186
6.1.	What is realizationism?	187
6.2.	Sufficiency for reason	192
6.3.	Objection from determinate incompatibility.....	197
6.4.	Motivation from description.....	199
6.5.	Motivation from mutual supervenience.....	202
6.6.	Against qualitative pluralism	203
6.7.	Conclusion.....	215
7.	How aesthetic value may not be a kind of value	216
7.1.	The value and identification claims	217
7.2.	Against the identification claim.....	220
7.2.1.	Against the <i>pro tanto</i> identification claim	222
7.2.2.	Objection from strict sufficiency	224
7.2.3.	Objection from determinate incompatibility.....	226
7.3.	Responses	228
7.3.1.	What does ‘value’ mean in ‘kind of value’?.....	229

7.3.2.	The unity thesis	235
7.3.3.	Difference in bearers	238
7.4.	Aesthetic value as formal value	240
7.5.	Definition by grounding properties	241
7.6.	Conclusion	245
8.	Conclusion	246
8.1.	Parallel debates	248
8.2.	The metaphysics of the <i>pro tanto</i>	254
	Bibliography	256

Abstract

Many believe that different aesthetically valuable things have different kinds of aesthetic value: Yosemite and the Norfolk Broads have aesthetic value of different kinds. This raises the question: what are the kinds of aesthetic value? One answer is particularly popular. According to the *kind thesis*, the kinds of aesthetic value are *aesthetic properties*, i.e. elegance, monotony, flamboyance and the like. This claim is usually articulated by way of analogy: the relationship is like that between redness and colour, that is one of *determination*.

This thesis argues that the kind thesis is false. This has been largely overlooked for two reasons. Firstly, insufficient attention has been devoted to the features of kindhood and determination relations. Secondly, very little has been said about the metaphysics of what it is to be P in some respect, or *pro tanto* P. This notion is central to assessing the kind thesis, which is best read as claiming that aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value. After all, elegance does not always make its bearers overall aesthetically good, although it may always make them *pro tanto* aesthetically good. Once the metaphysics of what is the case *pro tanto* is examined more closely, even this articulation of the kind thesis fails.

Two alternatives are considered. According to *dimensionalism*, the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value is like that between brightness, hue and saturation and colour. According to *realizationism*, it is like that between brains and minds.

A surprising argument exactly parallel to that against the kind thesis shows that aesthetic value is not a kind of value. This will strike many as implausible – but, importantly, it does not involve denying that aesthetically valuable things are valuable. Philosophers have overlooked how demanding the notion of a kind is.

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While the influence of their advice must have been apparent to them across successive drafts, I would like to mention another way in which they have influenced this thesis, and that is through their work. A talk by Louise almost a decade ago at the Amoral Sciences Club at Cambridge showed me an example of a precise analytic aesthetics that is worth pursuing. It is my hope for this thesis that the ideal exemplified in her and Jim's work is at least legible in mine.

For insightful written comments I would like to thank Umut Baysan, Matt Rosen, Lewis Williams and Mark Windsor. Many others have also contributed to the development of the ideas in this thesis through discussion at seminars and conferences in Oxford, Berkeley, Rome, Athens and Glasgow. Kyle Kirby deserves a special mention as a fellow questioner of the place of determination relations in the metaphysics of aesthetic value. I have taken much comfort in the thought that the problems with which I have been grappling cannot only be in my head, since they are also in his.

An essay based on some of the arguments of Chapters 2 and 4, entitled 'Aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value', was awarded the 2025 Fabian Dorsch ESA Essay Prize. I would like to thank the European Society for Aesthetics

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Introduction

Here is a common view of the relationship between aesthetic properties, aesthetic value and value.

Aesthetically valuable things are valuable. After all, as the very name suggests, aesthetic value is a kind of value. But there is not just one aesthetic value. Rather, there is a multitude of aesthetic values because aesthetically valuable things are aesthetically valuable in a multitude of ways. The towering rocks of Yosemite are aesthetically valuable in a different way than the peaceful fens of the Norfolk Broads. Yosemite and the Norfolk Broads both have aesthetic value – but aesthetic value of different *kinds*. Yosemite is majestic, sublime, powerful and raw. The Norfolk Broads are tranquil, mellow and somewhat melancholy. Majesty, sublimity, power and rawness are the kinds (or some of the kinds) of aesthetic value that Yosemite has. Tranquillity, mellowness and a slight melancholy are kinds of aesthetic value that belong to the Norfolk Broads.

Many aestheticians have found the picture sketched above appealing, either in its entirety or in part. I think that it goes wrong in at least three and possibly four places.

I agree that there is a multitude of aesthetically valuable things and that most (perhaps even all) are aesthetically valuable in their own unique way. But here is my first disagreement: I doubt that different aesthetically valuable things always, or perhaps ever, have different kinds of aesthetic value. The distinction between ways and kinds, which I will explain, can too easily be overlooked. Secondly and relatedly, two things can have aesthetic value *in different ways* without having aesthetic value *of different kinds*. So, the fact that Yosemite and the Norfolk Broads are aesthetically

valuable in different ways does not show that they have aesthetic value of different kinds. Thirdly, even if different aesthetically valuable things did have different kinds of aesthetic value, aesthetic properties such as majesty, sublimity, tranquillity and melancholy would not be among them. Majesty and tranquillity *make* their bearers aesthetically valuable, but they should not be identified with kinds of that aesthetic value. Fourthly and finally, it is not even clear that aesthetic value is a kind of value, though I am sure that aesthetically valuable things are valuable. These, in very rough outline, are the positions that this thesis will defend.

Its aim is to illuminate the relationship between aesthetic properties, aesthetic value and value. I believe that philosophers have persistently overlooked the range of ways in which these three kinds of properties can be related. They have also not paid enough attention to what it is to be a kind. As a result, they have cornered themselves into insufficiently substantiated and sometimes highly implausible positions.

I see my task as both negative and positive. My negative task will be to show how some positions often presented with little explicit argument are in fact untenable. Here I have in mind above all the *kind thesis* which claims that aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value. I also argue on similar grounds that it is implausible to think that aesthetic value is a kind of value.

My positive task will involve pointing towards alternatives which philosophers have often overlooked. In this vein, I will show that there are views of the relation between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value other than the kind thesis, some of which avoid the objections that the kind thesis faces while accommodating the motivation for it. And I will also show how one can deny that aesthetic value is a kind of value while maintaining that aesthetically valuable things

are thereby valuable. In these ways, I hope to show that a range of views that have been either overlooked or assumed to be obviously false may actually be true.

This thesis is a study in aesthetics as a branch of value theory. I have resisted the urge to pursue analogies with the ethical and epistemic domains in parallel to the main argument. This is not because I do not think that there are analogies to be found, although they are likely to be partial and certain to be contested, but to avoid losing focus on the already complex aesthetic case. I do want to emphasise, however, that this thesis is a contribution not just to aesthetics but also to value theory. To understand value in its many guises philosophers cannot treat ethics as their only paradigm. I hope that by trying to understand the relationships among aesthetic properties, aesthetic value and value this thesis also sheds some broader light on the relationships between evaluatively thick properties and some of the many things we can mean by the word ‘value’. Some of this broader significance will be addressed in the Conclusion.

Here, in outline, is what is to come in the next seven chapters.

Chapter 1 attends to three central concepts: aesthetic properties, kinds and pluralism. It explains how each should be understood. In doing so, it sharpens and motivates the questions that this thesis poses. The chapter also distinguishes between different models of kinds and argues that the determinable-determinate model is particularly worthy of attention.

Chapter 2 motivates the most popular version of the kind thesis, the view that aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value. This is the determination thesis, which conceives of the relevant kindhood relation as one of determination. First, it argues that understanding the relation as determination is much more plausible than viewing it as a genus-species relation. Second, it considers three motivations for the

determination thesis. Two consist in reconstructing the link between qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value and the determination thesis, i.e. between the claim that there are qualitative determinates of aesthetic value and the claim that they should be identified with aesthetic properties. The third is the popular claim that aesthetic properties are ways of being aesthetically good and bad, which however is itself controversial and supports not just the determination thesis but also alternative views.

Chapter 3 considers a problem case for the kind thesis: that of neutral aesthetic properties. Perhaps elegance is a kind of aesthetic goodness and garishness is a kind of aesthetic badness. But what about flamboyance or sadness? These properties do not seem to have an especially close relationship to aesthetic goodness or aesthetic badness. Since it is unclear whether there are any kinds of aesthetic value which are not kinds of aesthetic goodness or aesthetic badness, such neutral aesthetic properties present a problem for the kind thesis. There are, however three lines of defence from criticisms of this sort.

Chapter 4 argues against not only the determination thesis but the entire kind thesis more broadly. It presents the views with a dilemma: they should either be understood as claims about *pro tanto* or overall aesthetic value. I argue that if they are understood in the *pro tanto* way, they are extremely implausible in a way which has gone entirely overlooked. On the other horn of the dilemma, I present two objections against the overall versions of the views. The first is the objection from strict sufficiency which shows the overall kind thesis to have untenable commitments. The second is the objection from determinate incompatibility which only applies to the determination thesis. Crucially, even if there is a model of kindhood which I have overlooked in the survey above, the arguments of Chapter 4

still show that aesthetic value is not a kind of value on *any* model. I conclude that the kind thesis is false along with its strongest version, the determination thesis.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn to alternative accounts of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. If it is not one of kindhood, then what is it?

Chapter 5 considers the possibility that aesthetic properties may not be determinates but determination dimensions of aesthetic value. In that case, the relationship would not be analogous to that between red and colour but that between saturation and colour. I call this view dimensionalism and argue against it since it is vulnerable to the objection from determinate incompatibility and has a number of other weaknesses.

Instead, in **Chapter 6** I argue for realizationism, the view that the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value is one of realization, such as that between physical properties and biological properties or biological and psychological properties. This view avoids both the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility. It can also accommodate the motivation that made the determination thesis seem plausible in the first place as presented in Chapter 2. The chapter concludes with a tentative criticism of qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value which has hitherto been conceded for sake of the argument. If qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value is false, then both the determination thesis and dimensionalism must also be false because they entail it. Meanwhile, realizationism is consistent both with the truth and the falsity of qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value.

Chapter 7 argues for a surprising result which follows by applying the reasoning of Chapter 4 at a higher level. Whereas before I argued that aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value, here I argue on analogous grounds that

aesthetic value is not a kind of value. This conclusion is bound to strike many as provocative, if not downright contradictory. I therefore explain why my claim does not involve denying that aesthetic value is a way of being valuable. To make my main case, I again draw on the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility as well as on other, supplementary arguments.

The **Conclusion** examines some of the broader significance of the results argued for in previous chapters. It pursues analogies both within and outside aesthetics. It also points towards a fully general metaphysical problem that has emerged in the course of discussion which has so far been entirely overlooked.

1. Aesthetic properties, kinds and pluralism

This chapter introduces the central concepts and problems of this thesis and explains why they are worth addressing. In this way, it lays the foundation for the arguments of the chapters to come.

Section 1.1 explains the notion of an aesthetic property and of aesthetic value and presents the question of their relationship to each other. Section 1.2 clarifies the concept of a kind, distinguishes between different models of kindhood and argues that one of these models is of particular metaphysical interest. Section 1.3 distinguishes different views that can be called pluralist and explains how a particularly popular pluralist view consists in the belief that there are kinds of aesthetic value.

1.1. Aesthetic properties

The first two concepts that need clarifying are those of aesthetic value and aesthetic properties.

By ‘aesthetic value’ I mean beauty and ugliness understood very broadly. I do not assume any controversial account of aesthetic value. I also use the word ‘value’ to include both the positive and negative. Thus, in my terminology, value does not contrast with disvalue (I avoid the term ‘disvalue’ altogether) but simply with lack of value (whether positive, negative or otherwise).

By ‘aesthetic properties’ I mean properties such as elegance, delicacy, vividness, garishness, gaudiness, flamboyance, heaviness, tediousness, melancholy, powerfulness, triteness, balance, monotony, majesty, tranquillity and the like. These

are to be contrasted with non-aesthetic properties, which include size, shape, colour, form, material, medium, authorship and historical properties.

Aesthetic properties stand in important relationships to non-aesthetic properties and to aesthetic value. Aesthetic properties and aesthetic value are both *higher-level properties* in the sense that they are grounded in other, more fundamental properties. Bracketing broader doubts about the reality of higher-level properties in general (Heil 2003), none of the following claims should be controversial:

- aesthetic properties depend on non-aesthetic properties (e.g. shape can make a difference to elegance)
- aesthetic value depends on aesthetic properties (e.g. elegance can make a difference to aesthetic value)
- aesthetic value depends on non-aesthetic properties (e.g. shape can make a difference to aesthetic value)
- value depends on aesthetic value (i.e. aesthetic value can make a difference to value)

These dependence relations are encapsulated by Figure 1.

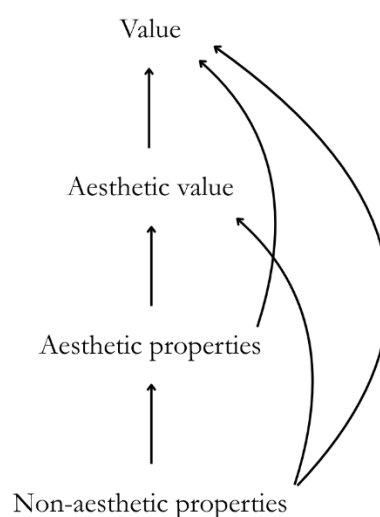


Figure 1. Dependence relations.

There is a host of questions about the relationships illustrated by the diagram. What are the metaphysical relationships? Is it the same relationship in all cases? Do the arrows on the right only illustrate transitive links or also independent relations?

These are among the questions that I will address in this thesis although I will not answer all of them fully. My focus will be on one particularly interesting relation: that of kindhood. I devote the closest attention to two questions. Is aesthetic value a kind of value? Are aesthetic properties kinds of aesthetic value? In both cases, I answer in the negative. I therefore also spend some time drawing out more plausible alternatives.

As the next section explains, kinds are interesting because there is a particularly intimate connection between kinds of P and the property P. Indeed, aesthetic properties have sometimes been *defined* as kinds of aesthetic value (Tatarkiewicz 1980, 153–54; Zangwill 1998; 2013; 2024). It is not clear whether everyone who has held that aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value has intended the claim as a definition. However, at least some have thought that the stakes are high. Nick Zangwill, expressing scepticism about the alternative definitions on offer, writes that if the definition of aesthetic properties as kinds of aesthetic value fails, it is unclear whether the modern notion of the aesthetic can be salvaged (2024).

One of the main conclusions of this thesis is that aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value. Since one of my aims is to assess a possible definition of aesthetic properties – namely, that they are kinds of aesthetic value – in doing so I should not rely on any other definition. This means that a core concept that I will rely on will remain undefined. The remainder of this section will be devoted to two

tasks: defending the characterisation of aesthetic properties given above and outlining the definitions and characterisations that others have given.

Above I have characterised aesthetic properties by two means: through a list of examples and by noting their relationships to non-aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. The first method, though popular, has been said to immediately run into trouble. As James Shelley points out, aesthetic properties cannot be denoted unambiguously by means of a list. The reason is that the terms that denote aesthetic properties are almost always ambiguous between aesthetic and non-aesthetic meanings:

...kingdoms may be *unified*, budgets *balanced*, circuits *integrated*, flowers *lifeless*, weather *serene*, browns *somber*, energy *dynamic*, enemies *powerful*, dreams *vivid*, health *delicate*, targets *moving*, value *sentimental*, and accidents *tragic*, all in non-aesthetic ways... A list will tell you only that certain terms function aesthetically at least some of the time. It won't tell you when those terms are functioning aesthetically... (Shelley 2021, 215; compare Kivy 1975, 198)

Frank Sibley, who introduced the notions of an aesthetic term, concept and property to the modern debate, never fully defined them. He certainly believed in the informativeness of such lists:

There is, it seems to me, no need to defend the distinction [between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic]. Once examples have been given to illustrate it, I believe almost anyone could continue to place further examples—barring of course the expected debatable, ambiguous, or borderline cases—in one category or the other... Those who in their theoretical moments deny any such distinction usually show in their practice that they can make it quite adequately. (Sibley 1965, 135)

I agree with Shelley, as Sibley would also likely do, that a list cannot provide a criterion for recognising when a term is being used in its aesthetic sense. However, such a criterion is not necessary for my purposes. The function of the list is to illuminate the notion of an aesthetic property. That function can be performed even if the list does not allow us to recognise when a term refers to an aesthetic property

and when it does not. This is because the items on the list disambiguate *each other*. Little links the terms on the list other than the fact that it is easy to imagine them as being used to refer to properties which, for some reason that needs pinning down, fit together and can be adequately described as 'aesthetic'. Once the terms have disambiguated each other, each can be used unambiguously in their aesthetic meanings so long as it is made clear that they are used in the same sense in which they appear on the list.

There have been many suggestions about how to define aesthetic properties. There have also been many more suggestions about how to define aesthetic concepts, aesthetic terms and aesthetic uses of terms, which are generally taken to refer to aesthetic properties, although the exact relationship between them is less than clear.

Since I cannot define aesthetic properties, I will now give a brief survey of attempts at the definition of aesthetic properties which, as will become apparent, is a greatly contested matter. This is in part to give the reader a better sense of how one could conceptualise aesthetic properties, especially since I later argue that they should not be understood as kinds of aesthetic value.

I will begin with the classic characterisation offered by Sibley. Since he considers the notion of a property unclear, he uses it in a very minimal sense (Sibley 1966; 1968, 32–33; Benson 2001, 224–26). Thus, what Sibley means by saying that something has an aesthetic property is that it is true that an aesthetic use of a term applies to it (1968, 32–33). He never offered a full definition of an aesthetic term, concept or property. However, he has characterised aesthetic uses of terms by means of two necessary features.

Firstly, according to Sibley the central cases of aesthetic uses of terms require the exercise of taste, understood as a way of perceiving that requires more than keen physical senses and intelligence (1959, 421–23; 1965, 135; 1963, 80).¹ Sibley is precise in speaking of aesthetic *uses* of terms rather than terms *simpliciter* because many terms have both aesthetic and non-aesthetic uses. For example, ‘delicate’ can refer either to the non-aesthetic property of being easily breakable or to an aesthetic property. Importantly, his point applies only to central cases of aesthetic usages of terms, which he calls aesthetic judgments. One can use a term aesthetically without exercise of taste. However, Sibley compares such uses to those of colour terms by colour-blind people (Sibley 1965, 137). It is aesthetic judgment, which requires the exercise of taste, that demonstrates competence with aesthetic concepts and plays a role in fixing the reference of aesthetic terms just as colour perception plays a role in fixing the reference of colour terms.

Secondly, Sibley writes that aesthetic uses of terms are not positively condition-governed. This means that there are no logically sufficient non-aesthetic conditions, whether indefeasible or defeasible, that an object must satisfy for a term in its aesthetic use to be applicable to it. That is, there are no conceptual truths of the form: if x has non-aesthetic properties N, then x is guaranteed to have aesthetic property A (Sibley 1959, 426). In addition, Sibley also maintains that there are no conceptual truths of the form: if x has non-aesthetic properties N, then x is guaranteed to have aesthetic property A unless some defeating condition obtains (1959, 429–30). He allows, however, that aesthetic uses of terms can be negatively conditioned-governed: some non-aesthetic conditions are inconsistent with the

¹ In a response to a critic, Sibley clearly says that this is not a sufficient condition (Sibley 1963, 80).

applicability of an aesthetic use a term. For example, if something is in pastel colours, then as a conceptual matter it cannot be garish (Sibley 1959, 427).²

While Sibley's distinction between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties has become widely adopted, his account of it has not. Indeed, many others have been proposed. Marcia Freedman has suggested that aesthetic predicates are ones 'that describe the perceptual qualities of an entity in a necessarily value-tending way', i.e. one that will 'tend toward or imply value judgments' (1968, 54, 52). Developing her thought, Monroe Beardsley says that aesthetic properties are those which can be independently cited as grounds of aesthetic value, where grounds of aesthetic value are properties that contribute aesthetic value to their bearers (1973, 64).

Alan Goldman defines aesthetic properties in terms of the responses of ideal viewers in virtue of non-aesthetic properties (1995, 21; for discussion see Budd 1999; Sedivy 2023). Meanwhile, Vid Simoniti defines them not in terms of responses but objects' powers to elicit them (2017, 1441; also see Hick 2012, 313).

Other philosophers have tied aesthetic properties closely to appearances and perception. Sue Larson defines aesthetic properties as those which can only be shared by indistinguishable objects (unpublished suggestion cited in Mothersill 1984, 343; for discussion see 1989; Nehamas 2007, 159; Sedivy 2023). Both Jerrold Levinson and Andrea Sauchelli conceive of aesthetic properties as higher-order manifest properties, i.e. properties of a similar sort to colours and timbres (Levinson 2005; 2006; Sauchelli 2022). And Rafael De Clercq says that aesthetic properties are those which are at least in part value properties and perceiving which requires

² Sibley's critics include Ted Cohen (1973; 2001), Peter Kivy (1973; 1975) and Monroe Beardsley (1973).

perceiving the object's shapes and colours (or other non-aesthetic properties for non-visual aesthetic properties) but not *vice versa* (2002).

Eddy Zemach takes an entirely different route by proposing that aesthetic properties as a matter of definition are 'the measures and manners of objecthood', by which he means that they are the grounds which distinguish genuine objects (e.g. rabbits, blue things) from gerrymandered ones (e.g. rabbit-time-slices, grue things) (Zemach 2001, 56). Finally, it may be the case that the category of aesthetic properties contains such a great diversity that nothing unites all the items on lists such as that given above. After all, they do represent a great variety of different properties (Hermerén 1973; 1988; Kivy 2011).

This concludes my survey of the definitions and characterisations of aesthetic value. As explained above, I do not endorse any of the views described. However, I do argue against one of them: the view that aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value. I have said what I mean by 'aesthetic properties'. It is now time for me to say what I mean by a kind.

1.2. Kinds

The notion of a kind is an everyday concept. We often speak of things as being of many kinds, sorts, varieties, types, species or forms. We also sometimes express the same idea by employing plurals (although Section 1.3 will distinguish two ways in which such plurals can be understood). For instance, instead of saying that cats and rabbits are different kinds of animal we may say that they are different animals. Similarly, instead of saying that a triangle and a square are kinds of shape we can say that they are shapes. The everyday notion that can be used in all of the above ways is what I will mean by the word 'kind'.

This section looks more closely at the concept of a kind, characterises it with no aspiration to definition, and explains why it is of philosophical interest. It also discusses what models of kindhood there are and why one is particularly interesting from a metaphysical perspective.

1.2.1.Characterising kinds

There are two ways in which I can clarify the concept of a kind: first by means of examples and then by means of characteristics. I am not sure whether this characterisation would be enough to explain the concept to someone who has no prior grasp of it. Hopefully, however, it should be enough to bring the relevant concept into focus as well as to explain its philosophical importance.

Here are some examples of kinds. A cat is a kind of mammal. Red is a kind of colour. Scarlet is also a kind of colour, as well as a kind of red. A metre is a kind of length. It would also be normal to say that a red triangle is a kind of triangle. In fact, I have some doubts about this last example and will show below that there is good reason to think that a red triangle is *not* a kind of triangle. But I will have to argue for that conclusion. Pretheoretically, it seems right to say that a red triangle is a kind of triangle even if on reflection we should revise this belief, as I believe we should.

We can also characterise the kindhood relation by appealing to its traits. The first is that kindhood entails a unity in diversity (von Wright 1963, 12–13, 17). Cats and rabbits are different kinds of mammals: they are both mammals but different ones. And the fact that red and green are different colours tells us that they are similar in a way as well as being different in another. They are similar in so far as they are both colours: they are, at least to some extent, the same sort of thing. Here's

one way of thinking about this: given that red and green are kinds of colour, a general account of colour will tell us what sort of thing red and green are. Similarly, given that cats and rabbits are mammals, a general account of mammals will tell us what sort of thing cats and rabbits are (for example, that they feed milk to their young). And if a red triangle is a kind of triangle, then whatever is true of triangles in general will be true of red triangles (for example, that the sum of their internal angles is 180 degrees). Accounts of the more general property can also be informed by those of the more specific one. If a cat is a kind of mammal, then being a mammal has to be at least consistent with all the things that cats are.

This unity in diversity makes kinds of special interest to philosophers: kinds are ways in which different things are unified, which allows them to be understood. In our case, the question of whether aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value is interesting because it determines how much distance there can be between an account of one or the other.

Importantly, the unity among kinds of P is more than merely linguistic. That is, just because two things can be referred to by the word 'P' does not mean that they are both kinds of P. Financial banks and river banks are plainly not two kinds of bank. In the same way, Tasmanian tigers, as marsupials, are not a kind of tiger.

This point is worth emphasising because some philosophers have distinguished kinds by such semantic means. When Georg Henrik von Wright discusses 'the varieties of goodness' he says that he means 'the multiplicity of the uses of the word "good"' such as 'a good watch', 'a good way of memorizing a poem', 'good at chess', 'good memory', 'good manners', etc. (von Wright 1963, 8). Insofar as von Wright's use of 'varieties of goodness' does not strike us as objectionable in the way in which talk of financial and river varieties of banks would,

it is probably because we presume that there are some genuine similarities between the referents of the various uses of the word ‘good’, even if it is a philosophical puzzle what these similarities exactly are (for some proposals see Thomson 2008; Cosker-Rowland 2019). Still, we should be careful with such loose usage. It is not how most people speak, since most people would not accept that Tasmanian tigers are a kind of tiger. And we have good reason to speak in this way because kinds are only interesting if they stand for a genuine unity in diversity, not a merely linguistic one.³

A second characteristic of relations of kindhood is the following:

Kind inheritance. For any property P, whatever has a kind of P thereby has P.
(Funkhouser 2014; Wilson 2023)

For example, if something has a kind of colour, then it must have colour. Nothing could be red, for example, while being colourless. Similarly, nothing could be a cat without being a mammal. Crucially, kind inheritance articulates a strictly sufficient condition. That something is scarlet is not merely a consideration in favour of it being red, but a guarantee that it must be red.

A third and fourth trait of kindhood is that it is an asymmetric and transitive relation. If A is a kind of B, then B is not a kind of A. Mammals are not kinds of cats, red is not a kind of scarlet, length is not a kind of metre, etc. In addition, if A is a kind of B and B is a kind of C, then A is a kind of C. Because International Klein Blue is a kind of ultramarine and ultramarine is a kind of blue, International Klein Blue is a kind of blue. In both cases, the examples should be taken to illustrate a conceptual point about kindhood.

³ For more on the ambiguity of ‘value’ and kinds of value, see Section 7.3.1.

Is kindhood reflexive? That is, is everything a kind of itself? No – by an ordinary language measure it sounds false to say that a cat is a kind of cat. More strongly, there is reason to think that kindhood is irreflexive, i.e. that nothing is a kind of itself. The reason for this is that kinds of P are more specific than P itself. Meanwhile, no property is more specific than itself.

This brings us to a sixth trait of kindhood relations, which has just been mentioned above. If A is a kind of B, then A is more specific than B and B is more general than A (Searle 1959; Tappolet 2005; Funkhouser 2014, 33; Wilson 2023). It is in this vein that Jessica Wilson and Eric Funkhouser call what I have been referring to as kindhood ‘specification relations’ (Funkhouser 2014; Wilson 2023). It is surprisingly difficult, however, to pin down precisely what the relevant notion of specificity is. Although the thought that kinds are more specific than what they are kinds of is doubtless correct in some sense, this claim is probably best seen as a gloss on the notion of kindhood.

One concept of specificity that is certainly *not* the one involved in kindhood is that which is employed in the distinction between tokens and types. Tokens of a property certainly are more specific than their types but only in a different sense of ‘specific’. The Union Jack waving outside the Houses of Parliament can be called a specific Union Jack, as opposed to the type Union Jack. But the Union Jack outside the Houses of Parliament is not a kind of Union Jack. After all, the same Union Jack waves on any number of other flagpoles. This ambiguity is particularly worth emphasising for a couple of reasons. Firstly, ‘type’ can ordinarily be one of the many synonyms for ‘kind’. But this is not the case for the technical usage of the word ‘type’ as it appears in the type-token distinction. Secondly, it would be normal to say that the Union Jack outside the Houses of Parliament is *a* Union Jack. Such use of

the indefinite article is similar to one that describes kinds: red is *a* colour and a triangle is *a* shape. But, as explained above, the distinction between tokens and types is different from that between kinds and that of which they are kinds. Since this thesis is concerned with relations of kindhood and alternatives to it, all of the questions it addresses concern relationships among types.

Finally, if A is a kind of B, then being A is a way of being B (or, drawing on the previous point, a *specific* way of being B) (Funkhouser 2014, 33; Wilson 2023). This is certainly true – but only as a necessary condition and furthermore one that is equivalent to a feature already discussed above. As far as I can see, the claim that kinds of B are ways of being B is equivalent to kind inheritance which was discussed above. To say that being A is a way of being B just is to say that whatever has A thereby has B. For example, striking a match in normal circumstances is a way of obtaining a flame because it is sufficient for obtaining a flame. Striking a match under water is not a way of obtaining a flame because it is certainly not sufficient for obtaining a flame. Nothing is a way of being B unless whatever has it thereby has B. In summary, although it is true that all kinds of B are ways of being B, this claim should be understood as equivalent to a feature of kindhood that was already discussed above.

In addition, not all ways of being B are kinds of B. That is, being a way of being B is necessary but not sufficient for being a kind of B. Blushing is a way of being red. But it is not a kind of redness.

This point is worth emphasising because some writers have used phrases such as ‘way of being aesthetically valuable’ to mean ‘kinds of aesthetic value’ (Zangwill 1998, 85; 2013; Lopes 2018, 128). While such usage is appropriate to an extent – after all, all kinds are ways – it may also obscure the fact that some ways are

not kinds. It is easy to slip from the claim that aesthetic properties are ways of being aesthetically valuable to the claim that they are kinds of aesthetic value (for more on this point see Section 2.1.1).

1.2.2. Models of kinds

The discussion so far has presented a general characterisation of kindhood. But more can be said about the various models of kindhood. The question to answer now is: what models of kindhood are there?

There are two widely recognised models of kindhood, although it is often claimed that there may also be others. These are the *genus-species* and *determinable-determinate* models. To these one could reasonably add the *disjunction-disjunct* model and hybrids of the three. I will now explain the differences between the models and review the possibility that there may be other models.

The genus-species model is conjunctive. For a property to stand in a genus-species relation to a genus K is to be the conjunctive property, one of the conjuncts of which is K and the other of which is some other property traditionally called the *differentia*. For example, to be a tabby is to be a cat and to have a certain stripy marking. This makes tabbies a species of the genus cat. And to be a red triangle is to be red and to be a triangle. This makes red triangles species of the genus triangle.

Of course, a tabby is not only a species of the genus cat but also, along with zebras, a species of the genus of stripiness. Similarly, red triangles are not just a species of triangle but also, along with red telephone boxes, a species of red. Either conjunct can in principle play the role of the genus or the differentia. If either of the examples just given seems odd, their oddness will be discussed in Section 1.2.3.

The genus-species model accommodates the unity in diversity which is characteristic of kindhood in a simple way: the genus conjunct unifies the species whereas the differentia conjunct, as the name suggests, differentiates them. For example, red triangles and blue triangles are the same in being triangles but different in whether they are blue or red.

In contrast, the determinable-determinate (or simply *determination*) model is not conjunctive. Red is a kind of colour, but to be red is not to be coloured and to have some other property. The relationship between colour and red is not conjunctive and therefore not genus-species. Rather, red is a determinate of colour.⁴ Other examples of determinates of a determinable include scarlet and red, triangle and shape, 3 kilograms and weight and 10 kilometres and length.

While in genus-species relations the genus unifies the different species and the differentia distinguishes them from each other, in both the unity and the diversity of determinates is supplied by the determinable. That is, determinates both differ and are similar with respect to their determinable. Red and green are similar to each other in that they are both colours but they are also different in colour. Similarly, what connects squares and triangles is that they are both shapes but they also differ with respect to shape.

A qualification is needed here. I have said that green and red differ from each other in respect of colour. But wouldn't it be more accurate to say that they

⁴ David Sanford has suggested that being red could be defined in the following way: x is red by definition if and only if (x is colored) and (x is red or x is not colored) (2016). However, the need to resort to self-reference in the second conjunct is evidence of the property's resistance to such analysis. One could similarly argue that all properties are conjunctive on the basis that whenever something has P it also has the conjunctive property P-and-P. While it may be possible to represent determinates of a determinable in a self-referential conjunctive form, there is nothing conjunctive in the nature of the properties. See also Kirchin (2017, 48–49).

differ in hue, one of the aspects of colour alongside brightness and saturation (at least on many theories of colour)? Similarly, I have said that squares and triangles differ from each other in respect of shape. But it is equally correct – indeed, more precise – to say that they differ in the number of sides and the sum of their internal angles. Doesn't this undermine the claim that determinates of K differ with respect to K?

No, it just adds detail to the claim. To differ in colour just is to differ in hue, saturation or brightness and to differ in shape just is to differ in number of sides, sum of internal angles or other geometrical features. Because differing in hue, say, is constitutive of differing in colour, it would be wrong to say that something that differs in hue does not differ in colour. I will call such ways in which kinds of K can differ in respect of K *determination dimensions* (Funkhouser 2014). There will be much to say about them in chapters to come.

At least some determinates seem to have the notable feature that they cannot co-occur with some other determinates of the same determinable. For example, nothing can be entirely red and entirely green or both triangular and square. However, not all determinates of a determinable are incompatible in this way: things can certainly be both scarlet and red or both square and rectangular. Pinning down the exact conditions under which determinates are incompatible is a tricky task which has often been carried out too hastily. This problem is addressed in Section 4.3. Rightly understood, determinate incompatibility turns out to bear on how we should view the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value as well as that between aesthetic value and value more broadly.

Most discussions of kindhood only mention the genus-species and determinate-determinable models. Some, however, also claim that the disjunction-

disjunct relation is a kindhood relation (Wilson 2023). The thought is that, for example, being red is a kind of being red-or-triangular. Admittedly, this claim does not have the same intuitive resonance as the usual examples of genus-species and determinable-determinate relations. However, it does seem to have all the characteristics of kindhood that were discussed above. Whatever is red is thereby red-or-triangular, so the relation could satisfy kind inheritance. The disjunction-disjunct relation is irreflexive, asymmetric and transitive. And it certainly sounds right to say that being red is in some sense more specific than being red-or-triangular.⁵

The only remaining question is: does the disjunction-disjunct relation display the unity in diversity needed for kindhood? It does. There certainly is a unity between being red and being red-or-triangular that is not there between being blue and being red-or-triangular. This is analogous to the point that there is a unity between being red and being red-and-triangular that is not there between being blue and being red-and-triangular. The latter is just the unity provided by the genus-species relation, which just is the relation between a conjunct and its conjunction.

In addition to the three models of kindhood described above there are hybrid cases. A red triangle is a kind of triangle (on the genus-species model). And a triangle is a kind of shape (on the determination model). By transitivity of kindhood, a red triangle is a kind of shape. But the relationship between red triangles and shape does not seem to be that of a species to its genus or a determinate to its

⁵ It is common to conceive of determinables as disjunctions and of determinates as disjuncts (e.g. Clapp 2001; Massin 2013). However, even so the determination relation would be a special case of the disjunction-disjunct relation where the disjuncts resemble each other in particularly interesting ways.

determinable. The relationship is not species-genus because shape is not a conjunct in the conjunction red-and-triangle. And it is not determinate-determinable because the property red-and-triangle differs from other kinds of shape not just in shape but also in something else (namely, colour).

There is not much to say about the relationship between being a red triangle and shape beyond the relationships between triangle and shape and between a red triangle and a triangle. In general, hybrid kindhood relations can simply be analysed into the relations that they hybridise. The three models discussed above can be hybridised in any way. For example, a triangle is a kind of shape-or-colour.

Can kindhood be understood in ways distinct from the genus-species, determinable-determinate and perhaps the disjunction-disjunct models? It is striking that while most existing discussions of the subject only speak of genus-species and determinable-determinate relations, few claim outright that these relations exhaust the options.⁶ Some philosophers have signalled openness to the possibility that there may be other models of kindhood (Harcourt and Thomas 2013, 25; Wodak 2020, 60). However, they generally do not give illustrations of these alternatives. Neither do they give arguments to the conclusion that some such alternative must be

⁶ Funkhouser seems to be a notable exception: he claims that for abstracta specification (his word for ‘kindhood’) just is determination (2014). But he also allows that particulars can stand in genus-species relations. Meanwhile, Simon Kirchin notices that the two models exhaust logical space, but he seems to think this for the wrong reasons. He says that genus-species relations are characterised by *commonality*, by which he means that there is a separable common element shared by all species of the genus. Meanwhile, determination relations are characterised by *exclusion*, meaning the determinate incompatibility, e.g. the fact that nothing can be both red and blue (see Section 4.1). And he says that commonality and exclusion exhaust the options (Kirchin 2017, 56). But, so understood, commonality and exclusion are not in fact logically exclusive. Kirchin goes on to claim that the relation between evaluatively thick and thin concepts does not conform to either model. This claim is best understood as denying that thick concepts are kinds of thin concepts at all, since he rightly notices that any such view would be vulnerable to an objection analogous to the objection from strict sufficiency I present in Section 4.2.

available. Meanwhile, we are justified in not hedging our bets unless clear examples or arguments are presented.

I would like to conclude this section with a clarification about how some of the philosophical terminology that I have been employing differs from scientific and everyday language. The terms ‘genus’ and ‘species’ derive ultimately from Aristotle’s theory of definition which he notably applied to biological species. However, the life sciences have progressed since Aristotle’s time while philosophical usage of ‘genus’ and ‘species’ has largely stayed put. The modern notion of a biological species is a complex and contested one. However, one golden standard for defining biological species is by identifying the last common ancestor of all of its members. Defined in such a way, to be a cat would be to be descended from a certain ancestor or group of ancestors which we can call for sake of convenience the *proto-cat*. Importantly, such a definition is not conjunctive or at least not obviously so. And it would certainly be redundant to say that a cat is the *animal* all of whose individuals are descended from the proto-cat, since all of the descendants of the proto-cat are animals. It is therefore at least uncertain whether being a cat stands to being an animal as a species to its genus in the conjunctive, philosophical sense. For analogous reasons it is unclear whether cats are species of the genera of mammals or vertebrates in the philosophical sense.

In addition, the modern scientific understanding of the word ‘genus’ refers to a specific taxonomical level more specific than animals (which are classified as a kingdom), vertebrates (a subphylum) and mammals (a class). So, even if being a cat could be defined as being a mammal and X, for example, the property of being a mammal would not be a genus of the species cat in the biological sense of ‘genus’ and ‘species’ although it would in the philosophical meanings of the words. Unless

clearly stated otherwise, I use the terms ‘genus’ and ‘species’ in the philosophical and not the biological sense throughout this thesis.

In what sense of ‘kind’, then, is a cat a kind of animal or vertebrate or mammal? This is a difficult question to which I have no answer. This is partly because biologists are divided on what constitutes a species. It is also partly because it is unclear what model of kindhood makes best sense of the various scientific definitions of species. I suspect that if there were a notion of kindhood other than determination or genus-species, biological species would be a promising place to look. But it is also far from obvious that, for example, the last common ancestor account cannot be accommodated by the determinable-determinate model. At any rate, the complications here are too numerous to provide a clear model of kindhood distinct from the two widely recognised ones.

1.2.3. Determinates, pluralism and unity

The previous section argued that there are three models of kindhood: genus-species, determinable-determinate and disjunction-disjunct. Yet we have special reasons to be interested in the determination relation. In fact, these reasons are so strong that it may seem tempting to simply identify kindhood with determination, thereby denying that genus-species and disjunction-disjunct models are kindhood relations. But even if this hard line is not pursued, the determination relation still warrants special attention.

Two features of determination make it of particular interest: the fact that it is pluralist and that it involves a deeper unity than the other models of kindhood. I will now discuss each feature in turn.

The determination relation is *pluralist* in the sense that if there are many determinates of P, then there is a plurality of properties of P. For example, from the fact that there is scarlet and that there is crimson it follows that there is a plurality of properties of red. This feature contrasts sharply with the genus-species model which is *monist* in the sense that it does not follow from the fact that there are many species of the genus P that there is a plurality of properties of P (Lopes 2018, 127–29).

The following example should give an intuitive grip on the distinction between pluralist and monist kinds which I will then try to articulate more precisely. Imagine an aggressively monochrome room in which everything is coloured the shade International Klein Blue (IKB for short). The walls, the ceiling, the chairs, the lamps and the doors are all the exact same shade of colour. What kinds of colour are there in this room? If we understand the question narrowly, we would say that there is only one kind of colour, IKB. If we understand it more broadly, we may also add for example that there is ultramarine and blue in the room. After all, IKB is a kind of ultramarine which in turn is a kind of blue.

Yet, given the way in which kindhood was characterised in the previous sections, we should say that there are many kinds more of colour in the room. The chairs have the conjunctive property of being a-chair-and-IKB while the lamps have the conjunctive property of being a-lamp-and-IKB. These properties are, according to the characterisation of the previous section, species of the genus IKB. Because species are kinds, the room contains things that have many kinds of IKB. Furthermore, because IKB is a kind of colour (more specifically, a determinate of colour), the properties of being a-chair-and-IKB and a-lamp-and-IKB are kinds of colour (in a hybrid sense), by the transitivity of kindhood. Similarly, the properties of

being a-chair-and-coloured and a-lamp-and-coloured would be kinds of colour on the genus-species model.

Now, counting such properties as kinds of colour represented in the room may well seem odd. At the very least, if such properties do count as kinds of colour, they are kinds in a much less interesting sense than that in which scarlet and ultramarine are kinds of colour. What is it that makes the former less interesting than the latter? My diagnosis is that while there being many determinates of colour entails that there are many properties of colour, this does not follow from the fact that there are many species of the genus colour. Supposing that there are conjunctive properties, the fact that some things are a-chair-and-coloured and others are a-lamp-and-coloured does show that there is a plurality of properties. After all, the two conjunctive properties are distinct. However, this does not show that there is a plurality of properties *of colour*. Being red-and-triangular and red-and-circular are different properties but they are not different reds. Neither are they different colours.

Now, how to make precise what it is for there to be a plurality of properties *of P*? I would like to suggest that this is best understood as there being a plurality of properties which differ from each other with respect to P. As discussed above, this is one of the hallmarks of the determination relation. For example, red and green differ from each other with respect to colour. Meanwhile, this is not true of species of a genus, which differ from each other with respect to their differentia. For instance, being red-and-triangular and red-and-circular are species of the genus red, yet they do not differ with respect to redness but shape. This articulates the way in which determination relations are pluralist but genus-species ones are monist. As explained above, kindhood relations are interesting because they involve a unity in

diversity. Monist kindhood relations are less interesting than pluralist ones because the diversity within them is superficial. As the discussion above illustrates, genus-species relations are monist, as are hybrid kindhood relations that involve the genus-species model.

Are disjunction-disjunct relations pluralist or monist? This is hard to judge. Take a blue triangle and a red circle. They both have the same property of being red-or-triangular. Is there a plurality of properties being red-or-triangular among the blue triangle and a red chair? My sense is that the answer is yes, but intuitions about such an abstract question probably do not count for much. I doubt that we can be particularly confident about the answer either way.

However, regardless of how we judge this issue, the disjunct-disjunction relation lacks another important feature of the determination relation. Like pluralism, this is a feature that makes models of kindhood other than determination far less interesting. I have said that kinds are characterised by a unity in diversity. By this I meant a unity between the kinds and the property of which they are kinds. However, determinates of a determinable also display a different unity. Not only are they unified with the determinable, but also with *each other*. For example, by virtue of being determinates of the determinable colour, red and green resemble each other. They are the same sort of thing, namely colours.

In contrast, disjuncts of a disjunction need not resemble each other in any way (except possibly in some trivial way in which anything resembles anything else). Maybe, as considered above, the fact that there are blue triangles and red chairs shows that there is a plurality of properties of being red-or-triangular. However, the properties of being red and being triangular do not resemble each other in any interesting way. The fact that the properties A and B are disjuncts of the disjunctive

property A-or-B does not tell us anything interesting about the relationship between A and B. While there is a unity between disjuncts and their disjunctions, there need not be any unity among the disjuncts. This means that categorising A and B as disjuncts of a disjunction does not tell us anything interesting about the relationship between A and B. The determination relation illuminates not just the unity between determinates and determinables but also among the determinates. This makes it far more interesting than the disjunction-disjunct relation which is only unified in one way.

The genus-species relation does not suffer from this defect. That is, it does seem that species of the same genus resemble each other in a meaningful way. Blue lamps, blue chairs and blue triangles are genuinely connected by the fact that they are all blue. Species are both unified with their genus and with each other. Like determinates of a determinable, they have both a vertical unity with the property of which they are kinds and a horizontal unity among the kinds.

As the above discussion shows, the determination relation displays a unity in diversity that cuts deeper than that possessed by any other model of kindhood. The diversity in question consists in determination's pluralism. This is the trait whereby if there are many determinates of a determinable P, then there is a plurality of properties of P. And there is a plurality of properties of P just in case there is a plurality of properties that resemble each other with respect to P. Determination also involves a unity among determinates in addition to the unity between determinates and their determinables. Since there are no examples of other relations of kindhood besides the ones discussed (see Section 1.2.2), determination is unique in having both traits.

Does this mean that we should deny that genus-species and disjunction-disjunct relations are relations of kindhood? This depends on whether we should count pluralism and unity among kinds as a requirements for kindhood. Doing so would certainly go against some ordinary usage, since it would involve straight-out denying that a red triangle is a kind of triangle. Still, ordinary usage provides arguments both for and against counting genus-species relations as kindhood. On the one hand, it seems correct to say that a red triangle is a kind of triangle. On the other, it is strange to say that a red triangle is a kind of red. Yet there seems to be no principled reason to say one but not the other.

At the same time, there are clearly kinds of triangle that are kinds of triangle in a more interesting sense than red triangles, metal triangles and striped triangles. The fact that there are equilateral, isosceles and right triangles demonstrates a plurality of triangles in a way in which the fact that triangularity can appear in many conjunctions does not. Furthermore, this plurality is united in a way in which whatever plurality may be involved in disjunctions is not.

Determination is by far the most interesting kindhood relation. But for my purposes I do not need to claim that it is the only one. Many of the arguments I present in the chapters to come apply equally to determinable-determinate, genus-species and disjunction-disjunct relations as well as hybrids of them. In fact, many of these arguments would also apply to other models of kindhood if there were any. In those cases, there is no need to artificially narrow my target just to determination, even if it is of greater interest than the others. I will therefore consistently use the term 'kind' in the inclusive way described in Section 1.2.1.

1.3. Pluralism

There is a multitude of aesthetically valuable things and each is aesthetically valuable in its own way. A similar point could be made about many aesthetic properties: a dress and a mathematical proof can both be elegant but in different ways. At the most general level, we could also say that being aesthetically valuable is just one of many ways of being valuable, alongside for example being morally valuable and epistemically valuable.

These considerations often serve to motivate pluralism about aesthetic properties, aesthetic value and value. But ‘pluralism’ can mean many things. In this section, I distinguish between different views which can be called pluralist which can apply equally to aesthetic properties, aesthetic value and value. I will also show how one of these notions of pluralism relates to the discussion of determinates in Section 1.2.3. These distinctions will be central to the arguments of this thesis.

To begin with, it is doubtless true that there are many aesthetically valuable things. Art galleries and national parks are full of them. Moreover, it is true that many kinds of things can be aesthetically valuable. Art works and natural features are but two examples. Pluralism about bearers of aesthetic value and pluralism about kinds of bearers of aesthetic value are certainly true, but they are not particularly interesting. Much the same can be said about pluralisms about bearers and kinds of bearers of aesthetic properties and value in general (Tucker 2016, 334–35).

As to the philosophically interesting claims, Miles Tucker has introduced a very useful distinction among two pluralist views about value, which as far as I can see generalises to pluralism about any property (2016). Here is the distinction in a nutshell: pluralism about P can either claim that there are many P-making properties

or that there are many kinds of P. Both will be stated more carefully below. The former Tucker terms *weak pluralism* and the latter *strong pluralism*.

More specifically, and this is my elaboration of Tucker's distinction, the kinds that strong pluralists are committed to are determinates. This is for the two reasons explored in Section 1.2.3: determination is the only kindhood relation which is pluralist in last section's sense of entailing a plurality of properties of P while also involving a unity among the kinds of P. So, more carefully stated, strong pluralism about P says that P is a determinable with many determinates.

What about weak pluralism? What is it to be a P-making property? To be a P-making property is to be a way of being P or, equivalently again, to be such that whatever has the property thereby has P. Weak pluralism does not entail strong pluralism because, as discussed above, not all ways are kinds. Containing 1200 litres of feathers is a way of weighing 100 kilograms, as is containing 13 litres of iron. But something that contains 1200 litres of feathers has the exact same property of weighing 100 kilograms as something that contains 13 litres of iron does. A single kind of weight, 100 kilograms, can obtain in two different ways.

I am sceptical of some of the claims made by strong pluralists about aesthetic value and aesthetic properties. However, this scepticism needs to be qualified. There is one sense in which strong pluralism is doubtless true both about aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. There are certainly many kinds of aesthetic value because things can be aesthetically valuable to different *degrees*. The properties of weighing 1 kilogram and 2 kilograms are determinates of the determinable property

of weight: they differ from each other with respect to weight.⁷ And aesthetic value is, among other things, a quantity in the minimal sense that it is something that there can be more or less of, even if unlike weight it cannot be measured.⁸ Being aesthetically bad, mediocre, very good and excellent are doubtless determinates of aesthetic value. Similarly, things can be elegant or garish or melancholy to various degrees. In this sense, there is no question that strong pluralism about both aesthetic value and aesthetic properties is true.

It may seem odd to call this view *strong* pluralism, since it is largely uncontroversial. But the crucial point is that there is a plurality internal to aesthetic value in virtue of there being many degrees of aesthetic value. This is a stronger sense of ‘plurality’ than that in which there is a plurality of aesthetic value in virtue of the fact that there are many ways of being aesthetically valuable. The latter is consistent with everything being aesthetically valuable to the same degree. In that sense, even the uncontroversial claim that there are many determinates of aesthetic value in the sense that there are different degrees of aesthetic value is stronger.

However, strong pluralists about aesthetic value can and often do accept more than this. They can also claim that objects can differ in aesthetic value *qualitatively* as well as in degree. Sibley articulates and justifies the thought that there is specific aesthetic value in the following passage:

Two Titian portraits of the same period, both fine works, similar in style and approach, are yet different; each has aesthetic value, but neither is a substitute for

⁷ For an argument to the conclusion that quantities should be understood as determinables see Section 4.4.1.

⁸ One may worry that this commits to the implausible view that there is a definitive ranking of all things by degree of aesthetic value. However, degrees of aesthetic value could be allowed to be vague. One way of accommodating this possibility which draws on Wilson’s account of metaphysical vagueness is discussed in Section 4.4.2 (2013).

the other since each has a different aesthetic character, offers a different aesthetic experience, and therefore has a different *specific* value. Indeed, art-works differing in aesthetic character, if of value, *must* have different aesthetic values. (Sibley 1985, 172)

I will say that *qualitative pluralism about P* is the view that there are many qualitatively distinct determinates of P. Qualitative pluralism is a version of strong pluralism. According to qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value, aesthetic value is both a quantity and a quality. That is, things can differ in aesthetic value both by differing in how much aesthetic value they have and what qualitative aesthetic value they have. It has seemed to many, as it has to Sibley, that there are qualitatively different determinates of aesthetic value (Sibley 1985; Zangwill 2013; Shelley 2023). It has also seemed to many that there can be qualitatively different determinates of aesthetic properties, i.e. qualitatively different elegances, tranquillities, melancholies, etc. (Beardsley 1973, 64–65; Sibley 1985, 172; Zangwill 2013). Although these views have proven popular and have never so far been criticised, I am uncertain whether either is true. These doubts are substantiated in Section 6.6.

Qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value raises a question: if there are qualitative determinates of aesthetic value, what are they? It has been generally assumed that they must be aesthetic properties. Yet what exactly makes them the best candidates? This question, among others, will be addressed in Chapter 2 which aims to understand the motivation for the view that aesthetic properties are determinates or more broadly kinds of aesthetic value.

Later, Chapters 3 and 4 will argue that even if there are qualitative determinates of aesthetic value, they should not be identified with aesthetic properties. This is because the seemingly innocent view that aesthetic properties are determinates of aesthetic value is in fact disastrously implausible.

2. Why believe the determination thesis?

The *kind thesis* says that aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value. Two versions of the kind thesis have attracted particular attention. The first is the *genus thesis*, which takes the relevant relation of kindhood to be genus-species. The second is the *determination thesis*, which takes it to be determinable-determinate.

This chapter examines the motivations for the kind and determination theses. These have generally not been made fully explicit even by the views' advocates. Most of the discussion is therefore devoted to a charitable reconstruction of reasons to believe the views, combined with some assessment of the plausibility of these motivations. The overall picture that emerges is that there are special reasons to believe the determination thesis which do not apply simply to any version of the kind thesis. In addition, there are special reasons to reject the genus thesis.

Section 2.1 presents a consideration in favour of the kind thesis: the thought that aesthetic properties are ways of being aesthetically valuable. While this view doubtless accounts for at least some of the appeal of the kind thesis, it has two weaknesses. Firstly, it is contested. Secondly, even if it is correct, it equally serves to motivate alternatives to the kind thesis.

Section 2.2 discusses two motivations that are supposed to speak not just in favour of the kind thesis but more specifically the determination thesis. The starting point for both is qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value, the view that aesthetic value is a determinable with not only quantitative but also qualitative determinates. Aesthetic properties seem to be the best candidates for such qualitative determinates. But what makes them such good candidates? Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2

articulate two reasons why one may think that this is the case: the motivation from description and the motivation from mutual supervenience.

Section 2.3 presents a criticism of the genus thesis. As it turns out, conceiving of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value as genus-species is radically implausible. Furthermore, these are defects from which the determination thesis does not suffer. The determination thesis is therefore more plausible than an alternative version of the kind thesis.

2.1. Motivating the kind thesis

‘There is something aesthetically good about the outfit because it is elegant’;
‘There is something aesthetically bad about the decorations because they are garish’
– these attributions of aesthetic value are well-substantiated. ‘There is something aesthetically bad about the outfit because it is elegant’; ‘There is something aesthetically good about the decorations because they are garish’ – these are in need of further substantiation. On their own the latter two judgments do not give reasons to believe that the attributions of aesthetic value that they make are true. This is despite the fact the judgments can be true. The garishness of an outfit can make it bold and thereby make it aesthetically good. And the elegance of decorations can be an aesthetic flaw if they were prepared for a young child’s birthday party. But at least until such further explanations are provided, the latter pair of judgments articulate insufficient reasons for the attributions of aesthetic value that they make.

The above phenomenon provides, as I will explain, part of the motivation for the kind thesis. However, it equally supports various alternatives to the kind thesis. Attempting to understand it will therefore play the double function of motivating both the kind thesis and alternatives to it.

Let us say that a property is *sufficient for reason* just in case appeal to it is on its own enough to provide a reason for a *pro tanto* attribution of aesthetic value. The phrase '*pro tanto*' just means 'in some respect' or 'in so far as it goes'. The aesthetic value in question is positive in the case of positive aesthetic properties and negative in the case of negative aesthetic properties. And the attribution in question is *pro tanto* because naming a single merit or demerit is almost never sufficient to justify an attribution of overall aesthetic value. Elegance, delicacy, majesty and serenity are examples of positive aesthetic properties while negative aesthetic properties include garishness, monotony, tediousness and gaudiness.⁹ I will refer to positive and negative aesthetic properties collectively as *valenced aesthetic properties*.

It is widely acknowledged that valenced aesthetic properties are in this sense sufficient for reason. It is this feature that Sibley refers to when he says that aesthetic properties, or at least valenced ones, provide general reasons for judgments of aesthetic value (2001a, 108). He says that a valenced aesthetic property 'inherently possesses aesthetic merit' or 'an aesthetic evaluative polarity', by which he means that one cannot intelligibly say without further explanation 'This work is bad because it is graceful' or 'This work is good because it is garish' (Sibley 2001a, 106; see also Kivy 1975, 200). In a similar vein, Monroe Beardsley proposes that it might be a defining feature of aesthetic properties that they can be independently cited as properties that contribute aesthetic value to their bearers (1973, 64; compare Strawson 1966; Freedman 1968, 52–54; Levinson 2005, n. 11).

⁹ I characterise these categories by means of examples for now, which I hope is clear enough. A more principled distinction will be given in Chapter 3.

Sufficiency for reason does not obviously seem to be a feature of neutral aesthetic properties. Just as elegance is a positive aesthetic property and garishness is a negative one, others are neutral. Examples include flamboyance, sadness, broodingness or mysteriousness.¹⁰ Neutral aesthetic properties are not sufficient for reasons for attribution of positive or negative aesthetic value. Neither ‘There is something aesthetically good about the show because it is flamboyant’ nor ‘There is something aesthetically bad about the show because it is flamboyant’ are on their own adequately supported.

Perhaps it is better to ask whether attributions of neutral aesthetic properties are sufficient for reasons for *pro tanto* attributions of neutral aesthetic value. Chapter 3 will argue that there is an intelligible notion of aesthetic value which is neither positive nor negative but which is also distinct from the absence of aesthetic value. Since this notion will need some explanation, let us set aside the question of neutral aesthetic properties for later. I will argue in Section 3.2.3 that attributions of neutral aesthetic properties are not sufficient for reason even in this way.

Sufficiency for reason cries out for explanation. Why is it that attributing elegance is alone a reason for attributing *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness? Here is one explanation: because whatever is elegant is thereby *pro tanto* aesthetically good. In other words, because being elegant is a way of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good. Let’s call this claim the *way thesis*.

How does the way thesis explain sufficiency for reason? In general, the fact that A occurs whenever B occurs explains why B’s occurrence provides a reason to

¹⁰ Neutral aesthetic properties will be characterised more carefully and discussed at length in Chapter 3.

believe in A's occurrence. Perhaps we may also need to add that the connection between A and B must be known. But even if this addition is necessary, it is plausible to suppose that we may have implicit knowledge that, for example, whatever is elegant is thereby *pro tanto* aesthetically good. In this way, the way thesis offers one explanation of sufficiency for reason.

However, the way thesis would itself need to be explained. That is, if it is indeed true, as there are objections and alternative explanations of sufficiency for reason that will be considered shortly. Why would it be that whenever something is elegant it is thereby *pro tanto* aesthetically good?

To answer that question we should first clarify what it means to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good or bad. As mentioned above, '*pro tanto*' means 'in some respect' or 'in so far as it goes'. So, to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good is to be aesthetically good in some respect or in so far as something goes: for example, in respect of an object's elegance or in so far as its elegance goes.

There is still a further question as to how to interpret this claim. Namely, should we understand it as committing to there being such a property as *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness (i.e. being aesthetically good in some respect or in so far as it goes)? Section 4.1.1 will argue that we should not. That is, we can make better sense of talk of what is the case *pro tanto* without postulating *pro tanto* properties.

However, this is not the interpretation of the way thesis that the kind thesis opts for. That is, if supporters of the kind thesis are to accommodate the way thesis they must take there to be such properties as *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness and badness. They need to do so due to the following characteristic of kindhood relations:

Kind inheritance. For any property P, whatever has a kind of P thereby has P.

Kind inheritance was already discussed in Section 1.2.1 as a conceptual truth about kinds. For example, whatever property of being scarlet thereby has properties of being red and being coloured. An instantiation of scarlet is strictly sufficient for an instantiation of red and colour. Similarly, the instantiation of elegance would be sufficient for the instantiation of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness if elegance were a kind of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness. This could only be the case if there were such a property as *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness. Compare: if there are shades of colour, then there must be colour.

The kind thesis explains the way thesis by claiming that the relationship between elegance and *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness is some kindhood relation. There are three features of the kindhood relations that make it apt for such an explanation: kindhood is an *asymmetric synchronous necessitation relation*. This is exactly what is needed to explain the way thesis, at least if we assume that there is such a property as *pro tanto* aesthetic value.

Properties A and B stand in a *necessitation relation* just in case whatever instantiates property A thereby instantiates property B. If there is such a property as *pro tanto* aesthetic value, the way thesis is naturally read as stating simply that the relationship between aesthetic properties and *pro tanto* aesthetic value is a necessitation relation. For example, on this view whenever elegance is instantiated so is thereby *pro tanto* aesthetic value. The relationship between kinds and the properties of which they are kinds is also a necessitation relation, as witnessed by the feature of kind inheritance.

A relation is *asymmetric* just in case if A stands in the relation to B, then B does not stand in the relation to A. If the way thesis is true and there is a property of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness, then the relationship between elegance and *pro tanto*

aesthetic goodness is an asymmetric one. If something is elegant, then it is thereby *pro tanto* aesthetically good. But it follows from this that the relation does not hold in the opposite direction: the object that is *pro tanto* aesthetically good is not thereby elegant. Similarly, if A is a kind of B, it follows that B is not a kind of A.

Finally, the kindhood relations are *synchronic* in the sense that if something has a kind A of the property B, then by kind inheritance it also has B *at the same time*. Similarly, if something is elegant, then it is thereby *pro tanto* good *at the same time*.

In this way, the kind thesis is a suitable candidate for explaining the way thesis. More specifically, such an explanation is offered by the *pro tanto kind thesis* according to which aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value (as opposed to overall aesthetic value).¹¹ Even more specifically, it is offered by the *pro tanto kind thesis* on condition that it conforms to the *valency constraint*. According to the valency constraint, if aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value, then positive aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic goodness and negative aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic badness. The valency constraint is invariably considered part and parcel of the kind thesis.¹² It is simply an articulation of what philosophers mean when they say that aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value. And this is for good reason: the valency constraint is vital for the kind thesis if it is to account for the way thesis.

Now, we have arrived at a motivation for the kind thesis, or rather the *pro tanto kind thesis* as bound by the valency constraint. It proceeds through two

¹¹ The *pro tanto* determination thesis will be criticised in Section 4.1.

¹² The prospects of views that relax this constraint are examined in Section 4.4.

inferences to the best explanation. What explains sufficiency for reason? The way thesis. What explains the way thesis? The *pro tanto* kind thesis.

Both are certainly perfectly good explanations. But are they the best? As far as I can see, others are at least equally good. In the next two sections, I will point towards these alternative explanations and consider objections. Doing so will show the strength of the motivation that sufficiency for reason provides for the kind thesis. It will also give an idea of how these phenomena can be explained if the kind thesis turns out to be false, which I later argue it does.

2.1.1. The way thesis

Suppose that the best explanation for sufficiency for reason is the way thesis. Now, what is the best explanation for the way thesis? Is it the kind thesis? Some have suggested so (Tappolet 2005, 209; Shelley 2007, 132). But some other justifications do just as well.

The *pro tanto* kind thesis explains the way thesis because kindhood is an asymmetric synchronic necessitation relation. But it is not the only one. The way thesis can be explained just as well by any other asymmetric synchronic necessitation relation.

Realization is one notable example (Baysan 2015; Wilson 2021; forthcoming). Realization is a necessitation relation: if a certain arrangement of cells realizes a liver, then wherever that arrangement of cells occurs so will thereby a liver. Realization is asymmetric: if A realizes B, then B does not realize A. For example, if the arrangement of cells realizes a liver, then a liver does not realize that arrangement of cells. And the relation is synchronous in that a group of cells can only realize a liver if they exist at the same time as the liver.

In so far as the desideratum of explaining the way thesis goes, realization offers an equally good explanation as kindhood. The same would go for any asymmetric synchronic necessitation relation.

Yet there is also another way of explaining the way thesis, one that does not involve an asymmetric synchronous necessitation relation. The *pro tanto* kind thesis can explain the way thesis if it is understood as involving the existence of the property of *pro tanto* aesthetic value. So can some alternatives to it. However, Section 4.1.1 will argue that the way thesis is better understood as not committing to any such property. This more plausible understanding of the way thesis is one which realization can accommodate but kindhood cannot. Still, I will set aside this line of thought since the task currently at hand is to examine the motivation for the *pro tanto* kind thesis on its own terms. I will return to it in Chapter 6 which presents a positive case for the view that the relation between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value is one of realization.

I will now consider two arguments to the effect that the way thesis cannot explain sufficiency for reason. I argue that neither is convincing. This is in order to show that the support that the kind thesis receives from the motivation from sufficiency for reason is genuine.

The starting point for the first objection is the following observation. Some objects are *pro tanto* aesthetically bad in virtue of their elegance (pace Conolly and Haydar 2003). For instance, elegance spoil some positive rustic effect (Dickie 2004). Or, to continue with an earlier example, elegance may be a defect in decorations for a children's party. Such cases are known in the literature as instances of *reversal* because a feature which is at least usually aesthetically good-making makes its bearer *pro tanto* aesthetically bad.

This can be taken as a reason to deny that elegance is a way of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good. If elegance is a way of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good, then whatever has elegance thereby has *pro tanto* positive aesthetic value. But if elegance can sometimes make its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically bad, it seems not to be the case that whatever has elegance thereby has *pro tanto* positive aesthetic value. Hence, the thought goes, the way thesis must be false of elegance.

The reasoning of the last paragraph would be correct if it concerned overall aesthetic value (see Section 4.2). However, since it concerns *pro tanto* aesthetic value, it is mistaken. Nothing can be both aesthetically good and bad overall. But things can certainly be both aesthetically good and bad *pro tanto*. Elegance may still be a way of being aesthetically good even in cases where it makes its bearer *pro tanto* aesthetically bad. It is perfectly consistent with the way thesis for something to be *pro tanto* aesthetically bad in virtue of its elegance (pace Stecker 2019, 73). However, this is only possible if the elegant work is *also* aesthetically good in virtue of its elegance.

This may seem to be only half an explanation. Granted, one may say, there is no contradiction in supposing that elegance makes its bearers both *pro tanto* aesthetically good and bad. The question is how.

The defender of the *pro tanto* kind thesis has a convincing answer at their disposal. The *pro tanto* aesthetic value of an object may depend on its elegance in two different ways simultaneously. Firstly, it may depend on the elegance alone. Secondly, it may depend on the object's elegance along with some of its other properties.

Kind inheritance says that whatever has a kind of P thereby has P. This means that any kind of P is on its own sufficient for the instantiation of P. To meet kind inheritance elegance must itself suffice for *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness, just as

being scarlet suffices on its own for being red. However, an object's elegance can interact with other features. For example, it can interact with the rustic character of a play and make it incongruous.¹³ Similarly, elegant decorations can be out of place at a child's birthday party because the context of their occurrence makes them lifeless or even grotesque.

Here's the crucial point: it seems that in both cases the elegance is only indirectly responsible for the *pro tanto* aesthetic badness. The direct explanation of why the objects are *pro tanto* aesthetically bad is that they are incongruous, lifeless or grotesque. Of course, they are incongruous, lifeless or grotesque in part because they are elegant. This, however, is only a partial explanation of what makes them so. Importantly, according to this response the *pro tanto* aesthetic badness which obtains indirectly in virtue of the elegance obtains directly in virtue of some negative aesthetic property. Since the *pro tanto* kind thesis considers negative aesthetic properties kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic badness, it offers a straightforward explanation of how they make their bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically bad. They do so by kind inheritance. As far as I can see, the above explanation presents a convincing model of how elegance can make its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically bad if the *pro tanto* kind thesis is true.

One may still wonder whether the view is entirely off the hook. In particular, one may wonder this about one version of the kind thesis, the determination thesis. The way in which elegance can interact with other properties to give rise to negative

¹³ This is an adapted version of George Dickie's example of an elegant dress that is a defect in a rustic play (Dickie 2004, 412). The issue with the original example is that a play can contain an elegant dress without being an elegant play. It is not the case that as a rule the aesthetic properties of a work's parts are aesthetic properties of the work.

aesthetic properties seems to have no analogy in the case of colour, which is one of the main paradigms for determination relations. While this is true, it has the simple explanation that while things can have more than one aesthetic property at a time and more than one instance of *pro tanto* aesthetic value at a time, they can only have one shade of colour at a time.¹⁴ This in itself may seem to be a disanalogy that undermines the determination thesis. However, this disanalogy could be explained by the fact that there appears to be no such property as *pro tanto* colour. And it is a general fact that things that cannot be both A and B can be both *pro tanto* A and *pro tanto* B.

I will argue in due course that the *pro tanto* kind and determination theses are implausible partly because the very notion of a *pro tanto* property (as opposed to a *pro tanto* contribution) is dubious. In so far as that is my view, I do not find the final part of the defence just given convincing. However, I do not want to get ahead of myself, since for now the aim is to understand the motivation for the view. And contrary to the objection considered here, the *pro tanto* kind and determination theses do offer explanations for the way thesis if the existence of *pro tanto* properties is conceded.

This comes with the caveat, however, that so do alternative accounts of the relationship between aesthetic properties and *pro tanto* aesthetic value. For example, elegance may be sufficient on its own for *pro tanto* aesthetic value because it on its own realizes aesthetic goodness. Meanwhile, elegance combined with other features of its bearer can realize a further aesthetic property which in turn realizes *pro tanto* aesthetic badness.

¹⁴ See Section 4.3 for a more precise articulation of this thought.

Another objection to the claim that the way thesis can explain sufficiency for reason concerns defective aesthetic properties. It is widely acknowledged that some evaluatively thick ethical concepts are *defective* in the sense that they misevaluate the objects to which they are applied (Eklund 2011; Väyrynen 2013, ch. 3; Kyle 2013). Commonly given examples include chastity, lewdness, blasphemousness and sinfulness. Zoë Johnson King has argued that similar concepts appear in aesthetics, although they have received scant attention (2023). Her examples include tackiness, chavviness and being nouveau-riche. It may be a matter of debate whether the aesthetic concepts she lists are genuinely defective, just as is the case with the more common moral examples. After all, many theists and social conservatives will not consider sinfulness and chastity defective. However, regardless of whether Johnson King's examples are convincing, it would be surprising if no aesthetic concepts were defective in this way. After all, we can have false aesthetic beliefs and it would be surprising if we could not craft these false beliefs into concepts that aesthetically misevaluate, just as we can do in ethics.

Let's call the properties to which defective aesthetic concepts refer *defective aesthetic properties*. It is not clear whether there are any defective aesthetic properties, since some think that evaluatively defective concepts fail to refer. Alternatively, some think that evaluatively defective concepts do refer but that the properties to which they refer fail to have the evaluative import that their associated concepts represent them as having.

For sake of the argument, let's assume with Johnson King that tackiness is a defective aesthetic property. One may think that defective aesthetic properties show that the way thesis cannot explain sufficiency for reason. This is because one may well think that 'There is something aesthetically bad about the outfit because it is

tacky' is a well-substantiated attribution of aesthetic value. That is, tackiness can be thought to be sufficient for reason. But it is clearly not a way of being aesthetically bad. Depending on one's stance on what exactly makes evaluatively defective properties defective, one can either deny that anything is tacky or claim that some things are tacky but they are not always thereby *pro tanto* aesthetically bad. Either way, tackiness is not a way of being aesthetically bad. If it were, it would not be defective.

The mistake in this argument is to take tackiness to be sufficient for reason in the first place. Supposing that tackiness is a defective aesthetic property, attributions of aesthetic value justified by appeal to tackiness are emphatically *not* well-substantiated. This may be contrary to appearances. It may be that the concept of tackiness represents the property of tackiness as one that is sufficient for reason. However, this is at least part of the way in which the concept misrepresents how things are aesthetically. Once the concept is recognised as defective, it should also be recognised as inadequate for substantiating attributions of aesthetic value. The fact that a concept is in some sense negative is not enough for it to be sufficient for reason.

I have argued that two arguments to the effect that the way thesis cannot explain sufficiency for reason fail. The way thesis is a good explanation of sufficiency for reason – a fact that motivates both the *pro tanto* kind thesis and at least some alternatives to it. However, as the next section shows, sufficiency for reason can also be explained in other ways.

2.1.2. Sufficiency for reason

This section considers a family of alternative explanations for sufficiency for reason. Many philosophers deny that valenced aesthetic properties are ways of being aesthetically valuable. Instead, they explain sufficiency for reason by the fact that valenced aesthetic properties are the sorts of properties that make it intelligible why their bearers would have the associated aesthetic value. Importantly, denying that sufficiency for reason is to be explained by the way thesis is inconsistent with the kind thesis. This is because all kinds of P are ways of being P although the converse is not true.

The central divide here concerns cases of reversal such as those discussed above, in which a positive aesthetic property makes its bearer *pro tanto* aesthetically bad or a negative aesthetic property makes its bearer *pro tanto* aesthetically good. The question is whether in such cases the aesthetic property's usual contribution is *cancelled* or *outweighed*. Suppose that a rustic play's elegance makes it aesthetically bad by making it incongruous. In that case, does the elegance only make the object aesthetically bad *pro tanto* and is its usual positive *pro tanto* contribution cancelled? Many philosophers who otherwise disagree with each other think so (Bender 1995; Sibley 2001a; Dickie 2004; Dancy 2004; Bergqvist 2010; Stecker 2019, 71–77). Others subscribe to the way thesis and insist that elegance can make an object both *pro tanto* aesthetically good and bad (Sibley 1974; Zangwill 1998, 87; Conolly and Haydar 2003).¹⁵

¹⁵ Interestingly, Sibley seems to have changed his mind on this matter. Compare:

How these two different approaches explain sufficiency for reason can be illustrated by James Shelley's model of critical communication (Shelley 2007, 130–31; drawing on Isenberg 1949). Suppose that I say that something is *pro tanto* aesthetically good because it is P. An interlocutor can challenge the reason that I have given in two ways. They can issue a *consistency-challenge*: that is, they can object that some other things are also P but are not *pro tanto* aesthetically good. Alternatively, they can ask why the object is P and thereby make a further *reason-request*. Shelley observes that if P is a positive valenced property, such as elegance, then the objection is likely to take the form of a reason-request rather than a consistency challenge. Everyone sees that if something is elegant, then there's a reason to think that it's good. But if someone is unsure of whether the object is aesthetically good in any respect, it is likely that they will fail to see that it is elegant. On the other hand, if P is a neutral property, then a consistency challenge becomes much more likely. For example, one may well see that the object is curved but fail to see why its curve makes it *pro tanto* aesthetically good. If P is a negative aesthetic property, such as garishness, then a consistency-challenge will be issued urgently: *how come* is the object *pro tanto* aesthetically good because it is garish, given that garish things are almost always (or even always) *pro tanto* aesthetically bad?

The question of explaining sufficiency for reason can be put in the following terms: why is it that attributions of aesthetic goodness supported by appeal to

'There are criteria of merit in aesthetics in the sense that, if certain terms ('merit-terms') are applicable to a thing, it has thereby some aesthetic merit.' (Sibley 1974, 20).

'The general qualities that, when mentioned *tout court* or *in vacuo*, I have called inherent merit-qualities are, in the context of the particular work, *prima facie* merits, but not necessarily *actual* merits.' (Sibley 2001a).

elegance do not prompt consistency-challenges?¹⁶ Those who endorse the way thesis can offer the simple answer that it is because all elegant things are *pro tanto* aesthetically good. There is no inconsistency to be challenged.

But a different explanation is possible. It may be denied that all elegant things are *pro tanto* aesthetically good. However, the judgment ‘There is something aesthetically good about it because it is elegant’ may still be well-substantiated on some other grounds. That is, it may be that a consistency-challenge would not be a reasonable response despite the fact that some elegant things may not thereby have anything aesthetically good about them. Two such explanations have been suggested (although not always in the terms in which I describe them). The first appeals to frequency, while the second appeals to the absence of obstruction. Both tend to be motivated by the thought that in cases of reversal the usual evaluative import of an aesthetic property is cancelled rather than outweighed.

On the first explanation, positive aesthetic properties *usually* make their bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good (Bender 1995; for discussion see Bergqvist 2010, 7–10). What explains sufficiency for reason on this view is that elegant things are all thereby *pro tanto* aesthetically good in the vast majority of cases. By way of analogy, the claim ‘it is not carnivorous because it is a plant’ may be well-supported despite the fact that some plants are carnivorous. Because carnivorous plants are unusual, the fact that something is a plant is a reason to think that it is not carnivorous. This could explain the unlikeliness of consistency-challenges such as ‘Why think that

¹⁶ For ease of exposition I will focus on the example of elegance and positive aesthetic value. However, analogous claims can be made for any valenced aesthetic property and aesthetic goodness or badness, according to its valency. The special case of neutral aesthetic properties has been set aside for now and will be returned to in Chapter 3.

there is something aesthetically good about it because it is elegant, given that some elegant things have nothing good about them?’. Such questions are unlikely to be asked for the same reason as the following: ‘Why think that it is not carnivorous just because it is a plant, given that some plants are carnivorous?’. In both cases, appeal to frequency explains why the consistency-challenges are unlikely to be issued.

A possible drawback of this explanation is that it does not say why the elegance makes its bearers *pro tanto* good in the vast majority of cases. In addition, it may not explain why further explanation is needed in those cases in which it does not. The second explanation promises to rectify these apparent shortcomings. This alternative explanation of sufficiency for reason can be summarised by saying that elegance is an aesthetic merit *by default*.¹⁷ Instead of appealing to tendencies, sufficiency for reason can be explained by the thought that it takes extenuating circumstances for elegance to fail to endow its bearers with *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness. Jonathan Dancy describes a similar idea in the following terms:

I can get over the stile by myself, thank you very much, without your help, though if you get in the way I can’t get over it at all. Your not getting in the way, that is, your not preventing me from getting over, is not at all the same as your helping me over. It enables me to get over, but it does no more than that; when I do get over, I do so under my own steam. (Dancy 2007, 88)

By analogy, elegance normally is sufficient for *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness. However, the fact that the elegance is instantiated by decorations for a child’s party gets in the way of elegance realizing *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness.

¹⁷ The notion of defaultness is used to articulate this strategy in Dancy (2007), Bergqvist (2010, 10–12) and Tsu (2019, 42–44).

Now, it is a burden on the defaultness theorist to articulate what makes for an extenuating circumstance. Whether they can do so convincingly will largely determine how credible an explanation of sufficiency for reason it can present.

Still, all that matters for our purposes is that it cannot be taken for granted that the way thesis is the best explanation of sufficiency for reason. This means that one major motivation for the *pro tanto* kind thesis could be undercut. If not the way thesis but something else explained sufficiency for reason, this fact would pose a dire threat to the *pro tanto* kind thesis. If elegance is a kind of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness, then whatever is elegant is thereby *pro tanto* aesthetically good, just as whatever is scarlet is thereby red and whatever is a red triangle is thereby a triangle. This is just to say that the *pro tanto* kind thesis entails the way thesis.¹⁸ The two alternative explanations discussed in the section are inconsistent with the way thesis. The claims that elegance makes its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good usually or by default should be understood as excluding the possibility that elegance *always* does so. After all, the motivation for those explanations is to allow for the positive contribution of elegance in cases of reversal to be cancelled, not just outweighed. A popular way of accounting for sufficiency for reason, one endorsed by the later Sibley, Dancy, George Dickie, and John Bender among others, is inconsistent with the kind thesis.

The kind thesis is an explanation of the way thesis which is an explanation of sufficiency for reason. However, in neither case is it obvious whether this explanation is the best one. Explaining sufficiency for reason certainly by way of the way thesis can motivate the kind thesis. But it is motivation that equally applies to

¹⁸ Strictly speaking, the *pro tanto* kind thesis entails the way thesis only assuming the universally acknowledged valency constraint.

alternative accounts and which can be pulled from under the feet of the kind thesis unless additional argument for the way thesis is provided.

2.2. Motivating the determination thesis

The determination thesis is by far the most popular version of the kind thesis. To the best of my knowledge, it has been held by all those who have explicitly endorsed the kind thesis (Ingarden 1964, 204–5; Sibley 1974 on Lopes’s reading; Tatarkiewicz 1980, 153–54; Zangwill 2013; Lopes 2018, 127–29). In addition, many more philosophers have held an analogous position about thick moral properties or concepts or thick concepts in general (Tappolet 2005; Oddie 2005, 160–61; Harcourt and Thomas 2013; Heuer 2017, 20–21; for criticism see Kirchin 2017, 56; Cannon 2020). Such views do not obviously entail the determination thesis. However, since similar motivations apply to both, the determination thesis would certainly be a natural position to adopt for those who hold analogous views about concepts.¹⁹

This section examines the motivation for the determination thesis. It consists largely of reconstruction, since the view is seldom argued for in fully explicit terms. It launches, however, the strongest case in favour of the view that I am aware of. In doing so, it draws on the work of Dominic Lopes and Nick Zangwill, the chief advocates of the determination thesis. It also draws on suggestions by Shelley, whose stance on the determination thesis is unclear, and Sibley, to whom the view has been misattributed (Lopes 2018; Zangwill 1995; 1998; 2013; 2024; Sibley 1974; 1985;

¹⁹ Such analogies will be briefly pursued in the Conclusion.

Shelley 2024).²⁰ I suspect that similar motivation, where unstated, is also often implicit in the literature on thick properties and concepts outside of aesthetics.

The main source of motivation for the determination thesis is qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value, the view that there are multiple qualitative determinates of aesthetic value. Uncontroversially, many different things have aesthetic value, which they owe to many different properties. Some things are aesthetically good because they are delicate and others because they are elegant. Some are aesthetically bad because they are garish and others because they are monotonous. It is also uncontroversial that there are many determinates of aesthetic value, at least in the minimal sense that things can have different degrees of aesthetic value. Being aesthetically excellent, somewhat bad or mediocre are clear examples of determinates of aesthetic value.²¹ Therefore, the view that aesthetic value has multiple determinates, strong pluralism about aesthetic value, is by and large uncontroversial.

A stronger and more controversial claim that many have been tempted to make is that there are many *qualitatively distinct* determinates of aesthetic value. That is, things that are aesthetically valuable to the same degree can still have different kinds of aesthetic value (see quote from Sibley in Section 1.3). This is the claim made by qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value (or just ‘qualitative pluralism’, for

²⁰ Shelley is a qualitative pluralist about aesthetic value (2023). He has not unambiguously endorsed the determination thesis, although he has clearly considered the view (Shelley 2007, 132). In recent work he enumerates the following as species of aesthetic value: ‘the beautiful, the sublime, the picturesque, the tragic, the comic’ (Shelley 2024). It is unclear whether this should be understood as an endorsement of some form of the kind thesis in so far as it is unclear whether the view applies to all aesthetic properties (or at least all valenced ones) and what is meant by ‘species’.

²¹ J.E. Wolff is the only exception in holding that quantities should not be understood as determinables (2020). Wolff’s arguments are criticised in Section 4.4.1.

short), which many have found plausible (Sibley 1985; Zangwill 2013; Lopes 2018, 127–29; Shelley 2023). Section 6.6 will argue that our reasons to believe qualitative pluralism may be weaker than is often assumed. However, I will set such doubts aside for the time being, since qualitative pluralism plays a role in motivating the determination thesis – a source motivation that I am now trying to reconstruct.

Qualitative pluralism does not entail the determination thesis. After all, qualitative pluralism only says that there are qualitative determinates of aesthetic value. To identify at least some of those determinates with aesthetic properties is to accept a further claim. Yet many qualitative pluralists have found the determination thesis tempting, generally without providing explicit arguments in its favour.

It is possible to accept qualitative pluralism while denying the determination thesis. Yet this possibility is easy to overlook. Lopes attributes the determination thesis to Sibley and speaks of aesthetic properties as ‘Sibleyan Shades of Value’ (Lopes 2018, 127–29). This, I think, is a misreading. True, Sibley endorses qualitative pluralism: he says that there are many kinds of aesthetic value and that objects with different aesthetic properties have different kinds of aesthetic value (Sibley 1985, 172). But he is silent on whether these kinds should be *identified* with aesthetic properties. He does discuss determinates and determinables in one paper (1974). But the point that he makes there is that aesthetic properties typically depend on determinate rather than determinable *non-aesthetic* properties: ‘a line is not graceful because it is curved, but because of its particular curve’ (Sibley 1974, 11). In fact, that paper is often considered a classic statement of the view that aesthetic properties are non-evaluative (De Clercq 2008, 897–98), a sentiment that Sibley has also expressed elsewhere (1963, 80). In fact, if we can take the liberty of attributing any metaphysical view to an ordinary-language philosopher like Sibley, the relation

that fits his views much better is realization, not determination. This is also my favoured view, which I defend in Chapter 6.

The possibility of holding qualitative pluralism but rejecting the determination thesis is easily overlooked because aesthetic properties are so naturally taken to be the best candidates for qualitative determinates of aesthetic value. Any qualitative pluralist faces the following question: if there are qualitatively distinct determinates of aesthetic value, what are they? The determination thesis offers an answer. Why, however, should we take aesthetic properties to be the best candidates?

There are at least two distinct paths from qualitative pluralism to the determination thesis. The first is the *motivation from description*: we should believe that aesthetic properties are determinates of aesthetic value because their attributions are particularly well-suited to describe aesthetic value. The second is the *motivation from supervenience*, according to which aesthetic value supervenes on its aesthetic properties and *vice versa*, as is characteristic of determination relations. The two motivations will be discussed in Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, respectively. Perhaps there are other ways of reconstructing the link between qualitative pluralism and the determination thesis, but I have not found them.

2.2.1. Motivation from description

Let's return to Sibley's example of the two Titians that are similar in style, approach and quantity of aesthetic value but differ in their aesthetic value qualitatively (see Section 1.3.) How to describe the difference in aesthetic value between them? One may describe the portraits' non-aesthetic features, such as the sitter's pose, the colours, the way the brushstrokes are applied, etc. However, this is

often thought to miss the mark. Regardless of how good a description it may be *of the painting*, it is at best an indirect description *of the painting's determinate aesthetic value*. Appeal to aesthetic properties, the thought goes, does much better. To say that one painting is more serene than the other, that both are sad but have different kinds of sadness, that one is tense whereas the other is relaxed – these are genuine descriptions not just of the differences between the paintings but their respective determinate aesthetic value. Or so at least it has seemed to many (Hungerland 1962, 43; Zangwill 1995, 328; 1998, 85).

This conclusion alone does not entail the determination thesis. To do so, an extra premise would be needed: that appeal to aesthetic properties describes determinate aesthetic value better because aesthetic properties are determinates of aesthetic value.

Here is one way in which this premise could be substantiated. Consider two ways of describing the taste of lemon sorbet. We can say that it is sour, sweet, tart, soft and cold.²² Alternatively, we can say that the taste is that of a frozen dessert made with lemon juice and rind and sugar syrup. The two descriptions work in different ways. The former is *direct* in that it says what the taste is or what it is like. The latter is *indirect* because it describes the features that are responsible for the taste of the dish but which cannot be identified with the taste or properties of the taste: namely, the ingredients and cooking process. In this example, both descriptions seem adequate. However, indirect descriptions are derivative in the sense that they

²² Here I understand taste as multi-modal, i.e. not limited to what can be sensed by the palate but also including texture, mouthfeel, temperature, etc.

rely on an antecedent grasp of the objects of direct description.²³ For example, the indirect description is only informative if it is understood that lemons are sour, that sugar is sweet, etc. This gives some reason to prefer direct descriptions. This consideration is particularly pertinent to the aesthetic domain, where it is notoriously difficult to determine the aesthetic value of an object solely from a description of its non-aesthetic features (Sibley 1959).

Now, the determination thesis can be justified in the following way. Appeal to aesthetic properties is supposed to be better at describing aesthetic value than appeal to non-aesthetic properties. And direct descriptions are supposed to be better than indirect descriptions. We know that descriptions that appeal to non-aesthetic properties are indirect, since non-aesthetic properties are the lower-level properties on which aesthetic value depends. So, one (perhaps not the only) way of accounting for the superiority of descriptions that appeal to aesthetic properties is that they are direct.

How does the claim that appeal to aesthetic properties directly describes aesthetic value lend support to the determination thesis? To describe something directly is to either say what it is like or what it is. Let's examine the first possibility first. If attributions of aesthetic value say what aesthetic value is like, they attribute higher-order properties possessed by aesthetic value. However, this is implausible. Firstly, it is objects and not their aesthetic value that possess aesthetic properties. Secondly, things have aesthetic value because they have aesthetic properties, not *vice versa*. But if elegance were a property of aesthetic value, then things would have

²³ This is a toy example, since one cannot get far in descriptions of taste before resorting to indirect description.

elegance because they have aesthetic value. Aesthetic properties should therefore be taken to describe aesthetic value directly in the second way – that is, by saying what the determinate aesthetic value is. This means that attributions of aesthetic properties attribute determinates of aesthetic value. By analogy: attributions of shades say what an object's colour is.

In this way, the determination thesis is supported by qualitative pluralism combined with a preference for direct over indirect description. Notice, however, that the argument proceeds via an inference to best explanation. Thus, it is possible to accept all the premises but deny the conclusion. One then bears the burden of providing an alternative explanation for why appeal to aesthetic properties is particularly apt for describing aesthetic value (unless one denies that it is particularly apt). Two alternative explanations will be discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

2.2.2. Motivation from mutual supervenience

There is another way of reconstructing the link between qualitative pluralism and the determination thesis. It is commonly acknowledged that aesthetic value supervenes on aesthetic properties. Interestingly, however, it has also been claimed that the relationship holds in the other direction: that is, that aesthetic properties supervene on aesthetic value. The latter claim is particularly interesting because, as I will show, mutual supervenience of this kind is exactly what we would expect from a determination relation.

The entire discussion that follows assumes qualitative pluralism. As a result, when I write that two objects differ in aesthetic value this may be due to a difference in quantity or quality of aesthetic value or both.

Supervenience is a modal, not a metaphysical relation. To say that A supervenes on B is to say, roughly, that there can be no difference in A without a difference in B.²⁴ This can but need not be because A metaphysically depends on B. However, in much of the debate about supervenience in aesthetics the separate claims of supervenience and dependence have been discussed together. Here is Nick Zangwill's articulation of both:

Something which is beautiful, cannot be *barely* beautiful. It must be beautiful *because* it has various substantive [aesthetic] properties. This dependence has three aspects. If two things differ in evaluative respects then they differ substantively. If something changes evaluatively, then it changes substantively. And something could be different in evaluative respects only if it were different in substantive respects. (1995, 325)

The opposite supervenience claim has also been endorsed. Sibley says that if things differ in their assemblage of aesthetic properties, then they must differ in aesthetic value.²⁵ Meanwhile, Lopes endorses both supervenience claims explicitly in support of the determination thesis (2018, 128).

The determination relation is characterised by the mutual supervenience of determinates and their determinables. This is because to differ in a determinable just is to differ in its determinates. For example, objects differing in colour, if of colour, must have different shades and objects of different shades, if of any shade, must differ in colour. This is because shades just are determinates of colour. The determination thesis is committed to an analogous claim. If aesthetic properties are

²⁴ For a detailed discussion of the varieties of supervenience in aesthetics, see Hick (2012).

²⁵ '[A]rt-works differing in aesthetic character, if of value, *must* have different aesthetic values.' (Sibley 1985, 172). Sibley understands aesthetic character as 'the quality or assemblage of qualities in virtue of which it may be aesthetically praised or condemned', which he identifies with the assemblage of an object's qualitatively determinate valenced aesthetic properties (see discussion towards the end of this section for a clarification of this terminology) (1985, 172).

determinates of aesthetic value, then supervenience holds in both directions. The determination thesis entails mutual supervenience.

Importantly, however, mutual supervenience does not entail the determination thesis. It is a genuine possibility that aesthetic properties may supervene on aesthetic value and *vice versa* while the relationship between them is not one of determination. Bank statements mutually supervene on incoming and outgoing transactions but do not stand in a determination relation with those transactions (Platchias 2009, 34). Nonetheless, mutual supervenience of this sort, if it genuinely occurs, would be a striking feature in need of explanation. Since the determination thesis offers a particularly elegant explanation, mutual supervenience would speak strongly in favour of the determination thesis.

One aspect of the mutual supervenience claim still needs clarifying. This is that the aesthetic properties on which aesthetic value supervenes and which supervene on aesthetic value are *determinate aesthetic properties*. Just as there are strong pluralists about aesthetic value, so there are *strong pluralists about aesthetic properties* who claim that aesthetic properties are determinables with multiple determinates. And just as in the case of strong pluralism about aesthetic value, there is a minimal sense in which strong pluralism about aesthetic properties is uncontroversial. Namely, there certainly are multiple *quantitative* determinates of aesthetic properties. That is, things can be tranquil, or majestic, or ungainly, or flamboyant to various extents. And properties which can come in degrees are best understood as determinables.²⁶

If the mutual supervenience claim is to be plausible, it should allow that objects that differ in aesthetic value may sometimes differ only in the degree in

²⁶ On this point see also Sections 1.2.3 and 4.4.1.

which they have their aesthetic properties. For example, two objects whose only aesthetic property is gaudiness would differ in aesthetic value if one was gaudier than the other. This strongly seems to be a possibility that ought to be accommodated. We frequently explain our attributions of aesthetic value by reference not just to aesthetic properties but to the degrees in which they are possessed. And we presumably would not do so if quantities of aesthetic properties could not make a difference to aesthetic value. I take it that this feature has been implicit in the existing statements of supervenience claims.

The remainder of this section draws attention to two variations of the mutual supervenience claim. The support that mutual supervenience lends to the determination thesis does not depend on the version of the claim which is endorsed. However, at least in one of the cases the version of the mutual supervenience claim one endorses affects which version of the determination thesis is supported. Since this is a point of reasonable and relatively minor disagreement, I will remain neutral on whether either of these versions of the mutual supervenience claim should be endorsed instead of the general claim. Still, this point of contention is worth flagging.

I have said that strong pluralism about aesthetic properties is uncontroversial insofar as aesthetic properties clearly have quantitative determinates. However, it is or at least should be controversial whether they also have qualitative determinates. This is the further claim made by *qualitative pluralists about aesthetic properties* (Beardsley 1973, 64–65; Sibley 1985; Zangwill 2013). That is, they claim that objects that are, for example, elegant to the same degree can still differ in elegance in qualitative respects. Sibley articulates this view in the following way:

Shylock's speeches are an expression of hatred distinctively different from that of Iago's speeches, the perfect balance of a particular Veronese canvas is not that of a Palladian building or even of another Veronese, the particular serenity of the close of the Goldberg Variations is not that either of a Claude sunset or of Beethoven's Op. III Adagio, and so on. (Sibley 1985, 172; compare Levinson 2011, 193)

Note that the distinction between determinable and determinate aesthetic properties is not a type/token distinction. The idea is that the serenity of the close of the Goldberg Variations is a different type than the serenity of a Claude sunset. If they were merely two different tokens of the same type, then the distinction would not articulate a qualitative difference. Such confusion could arise easily, since determinate aesthetic properties are often identified by their bearers (as is, for that matter, determinate aesthetic value). But so can types be. 'The serenity of a Claude sunset' denotes a type just as 'the red of a Coca-Cola label' does.²⁷

The version of the mutual supervenience thesis in question says that there can be no change in aesthetic value without a change in determinate aesthetic properties or *vice versa*, where determinates of aesthetic value can differ both in quantity and quality (Sibley 1985; Zangwill 2013). This opens the possibility that things that differ in aesthetic value may not just differ in the aesthetic properties which they have and the degree in which they have them, but also in the qualitatively distinct determinates of the aesthetic properties. For example, two things may have only one aesthetic property, elegance say, and have it to the same degree but still have different aesthetic value.

²⁷ If so, one may wonder whether things can share the serenity of a Claude sunset just as many things share the red of Coca-Cola labels. The fact that the answer is likely to be negative seems to me to be a reason to be sceptical of qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties. However, I will reserve my criticisms until Section 6.6.

There may be reasonable disagreement whether qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties is true. However, the general mutual supervenience claim is neutral on this matter. As mentioned before, to differ in a determinable is to differ in its determinates. It is consistent with the general mutual supervenience claim that this difference can be at a very fine-grained level. The statement at hand is a mere gloss on the general claim.

The second variation of the mutual supervenience claim is as follows. It is common to limit the scope of both supervenience claims to only valenced aesthetic properties, which amounts to excluding neutral aesthetic properties such as flamboyance or sadness (Sibley 1985; Zangwill 2013; Lopes 2018; but not Zangwill 1995). Thus the claim would be that there can be no difference in valenced aesthetic properties without a difference in aesthetic value and *vice versa*. This excludes only one scenario with which the broader statement is consistent. Namely, it entails that there could be no difference in aesthetic value between two objects that share all valenced aesthetic properties, but where one has some neutral aesthetic property (e.g. flamboyance) and the other does not. Meanwhile, the general statement of mutual supervenience allows that this could be the case.

Intuitions can reasonably vary on whether or not this scenario is a genuine possibility. Depending on the version of the mutual supervenience claim which is endorsed there will also therefore be reasonable variation in the version of the determination thesis which mutual supervenience supports. This variation will be in whether one takes all or only valenced aesthetic properties to be determinates of aesthetic value. For ease of exposition, I will generally ignore this distinction in scope except where it is relevant. And it will be highly relevant to Chapter 3, which

presents an objection to the determination thesis by appeal to neutral aesthetic properties.

Having cleared these subtler points, let us return to the general picture. Many will find the mutual supervenience of aesthetic properties and aesthetic value intuitively appealing. However, to place the motivation for the determination thesis on more solid ground, we should ask what speaks in favour of each supervenience claim. More specifically, we should ask what speaks in favour of each on the assumption of qualitative pluralism. Recall that the task at hand is to reconstruct the link between qualitative pluralism and the determination thesis.

Sections 2.2.2.1 and 2.2.2.2 examine the support for each direction of the mutual supervenience claim. I conclude that the supervenience of aesthetic properties on aesthetic value is highly plausible on the assumption of qualitative pluralism though it is clearly false without it. However, the truth of the supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties seems much less certain than it may appear at first glance. Still, because these difficulties have not been widely recognised, it is likely, as a descriptive matter, that mutual supervenience does serve as part of the motivation for the determination thesis.

2.2.2.1. Supervenience of aesthetic properties on aesthetic value

Let us assess the first supervenience claim, which says that aesthetic properties supervene on aesthetic value. Can there be a difference in aesthetic properties without a difference in aesthetic value?

Clearly, there can be a difference in aesthetic properties without a difference in degree of aesthetic value. Very different things with very different aesthetic

properties can be aesthetically valuable to the same degree. Aesthetic properties clearly do not supervene on degree of aesthetic value.

However, qualitative pluralists believe that things can differ in aesthetic value even if they do not differ in degree of aesthetic value. Since the task at hand is to reconstruct the link between qualitative pluralism and the determination thesis, we should see whether qualitative pluralism can substantiate the supervenience claim under discussion.

The question to ask should be: under what circumstances do objects have the same qualitative aesthetic value? Sibley suggests an answer:

So two works may have roughly the same, i.e., equal, aesthetic value; but if they have different aesthetic characters, not inter-substitutable, each has a different specific value. (Sibley 1985, 172)

The thought is that two objects differ in aesthetic value in qualitative respects only if there is a change in aesthetic value if one object is exchanged for another. For example, if a museum lost a precious work in a fire but was compensated by a work of equal aesthetic value, there is still a sense in which the original aesthetic value has been lost (or so qualitative pluralists may say). Following this line of thought, we can ask the following question to assess whether aesthetic properties supervene on aesthetic value. Can two objects with different aesthetic properties be intersubstitutable with respect to aesthetic value? May it be, for example, that the distinct work with which the museum is compensated, which has different aesthetic properties from the original one, is a perfect substitute in aesthetic value? That is, could the new work be a perfect substitute in the way in which any two paperweights of the same mass are perfect substitutes with respect to the instrumental value of holding down paper?

The answer seems to be no. Nothing with different aesthetic properties could compensate for the loss of the original work in the sense of providing something with aesthetic value that is qualitatively exactly the same. Since objects are not aesthetically intersubstitutable only if they have different aesthetic value, it follows that there can be no change in aesthetic properties without a change in aesthetic value. Or at least that is what a qualitative pluralist should say. My own view is that the qualitative pluralist's explanation for the lack of intersubstitutability brings with it its own problems and that we have good reasons to seek alternative explanations (see Section 6.6). However, the current objective is to assess whether qualitative pluralists have reason to accept the supervenience of aesthetic properties on aesthetic value. And it seems that they do.

2.2.2.2. Supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties

As mentioned above, supervenience is not dependence. However, answering questions about dependence can help us assess claims about supervenience. The reason why the supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties can seem plausible in the first place is that aesthetic value depends on aesthetic properties. That is, it can seem plausible that there could be no difference in aesthetic value without a difference in aesthetic properties because aesthetic properties *make* a difference to aesthetic value.

Uncontroversially, aesthetic value depends on both aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties. The Hagia Sophia is aesthetically valuable in virtue of its splendour. And it is also aesthetically valuable in virtue of its pendentive domes. Equally uncontroversially, aesthetic properties depend on non-aesthetic properties.

For example, the Hagia Sophia is splendid in virtue of its pendentive domes, the proportions of its columns, etc.

What is less clear is how the dependence of aesthetic value on aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties relate to one another. Is the dependence of aesthetic value on non-aesthetic properties always *mediated* by aesthetic properties? For instance, does the aesthetic value of the Hagia Sophia depend on its pendentive domes only insofar as their arrangement endows the building with splendour, majesty, lightness, etc.? Or, alternatively, may it be the case that the pendentive domes *directly* affect the aesthetic value of the Hagia Sophia? That is, might the arrangement of the domes make the Hagia Sophia aesthetically valuable not only by making it splendid but also without endowing it with any additional aesthetic property?

Answering this question is essential to assessing the current motivation for the determination thesis. This is because the possibility of direct dependence on non-aesthetic properties undermines the claim of the supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties. If there can be a difference in aesthetic value in virtue of a difference in non-aesthetic properties without a difference in the object's aesthetic properties, then aesthetic value does not supervene on aesthetic properties. And, as already explained, such supervenience is necessary for the determination thesis to be true. Unless aesthetic value supervenes on aesthetic properties, they cannot stand to it in the relation of determination. Most pertinently to the purposes of the current discussion, if the supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties is not plausible, it cannot serve to motivate the determination thesis.

The claim that aesthetic value supervenes on aesthetic properties should be distinguished from two others, which are generally uncontroversial (pace Roberts 2017; 2018). The first is that aesthetic value supervenes on non-aesthetic properties.

If the aesthetic value of an object is to differ there must be a difference in some non-aesthetic properties, such as the formal features of the object or perhaps some features of the context. Aesthetic value is, after all, a higher-level property. The second is that aesthetic properties supervene on non-aesthetic properties. Again, this claim is generally uncontroversial because aesthetic properties are higher-level properties. Writers who claim to reject either supervenience claim generally reject some stronger claim, such as that aesthetic properties and aesthetic value supervene on the non-aesthetic properties *of the object* to the exclusion of, for example, contextual factors (Eaton 1994). As a result, the supervenience of aesthetic value and aesthetic properties on non-aesthetic properties have been charged with being claims so weak as to be uninteresting (Currie 1990; Watkins 2021). The consensus on both supervenience claims has recently been broken by Debbie Roberts (2017; 2018; for criticism see Zangwill 2017). However, the discussion of this section will not presuppose either.

Let's draw out the scenario under consideration. There can sometimes be a change in non-aesthetic properties without a change in aesthetic properties, though such a change is usually very slight. So, here is the question at hand: can there be a change in aesthetic value in virtue of a change in non-aesthetic properties that does not affect the object's aesthetic properties?

This much is clear: if an unmediated change in degree of aesthetic value is possible, it must be small. It seems impossible to imagine an object with only positive aesthetic properties that is made aesthetically bad overall solely by its non-aesthetic properties. It seems similarly impossible to imagine an object with just negative aesthetic properties which nonetheless is aesthetically good. If non-aesthetic

properties can effect a direct change in degree of aesthetic value, it could not be a significant one.

However, this observation does not take us very far. Firstly, the fact that any unmediated change would have to be small does not mean that no such change can occur. Secondly, the observation concerns a change in degree, i.e. quantity, of aesthetic value. But according to qualitative pluralism aesthetic value can also differ in qualitative respects. So, even if it could be shown that there is no unmediated change in degree of aesthetic value, it would still remain to be shown that there is no unmediated change in quality of aesthetic value.

One may try to avoid the first shortcoming by an argument that takes a cue from Sibley. He has suggested that whenever a judgment of degree of aesthetic value is made, a general reason for that judgment can be given (Sibley 2001, 107-8).²⁸ Providing such a general reason in Sibley's view consists in citing aesthetic properties – specifically, valenced aesthetic properties. If this is correct, then it speaks against the possibility of unmediated dependence. If any judgment concerning degree of aesthetic value can be adequately supported by appeal to an object's valenced aesthetic properties, this suggests that the degree of aesthetic value is accounted for by the aesthetic properties cited.

Still, Sibley's observation can be plausibly contested. We certainly often appeal to non-aesthetic properties to give reasons for judgments of degree of aesthetic value. We may say, for example, 'The picture is excellent because of the way it uses red', 'The long shots really make the film stand out' or 'The brambles spoil the look of the garden'. According to Sibley, in each of these cases there should

²⁸ On this point see the discussion of sufficiency for reason in Section 2.1.2.

be a valenced aesthetic property which can be invoked to provide a more general reason for each of the judgments. It seems right to think that this is the case a lot of the time. But why should we think that it is *always* the case? That is, why could it never be that some judgment of degree of aesthetic value cannot be substantiated by reference to valenced aesthetic properties? Sibley does not present an argument against this possibility. Yet given how common it is to cite non-aesthetic properties to support judgements of degree of aesthetic value, it would be those who endorse his position that bear the burden of proof. Still, I suspect that the intuition on which Sibley draws runs deep enough that many would be willing to simply concede his point here.

Suppose, however, that we concede the claim that quantity of aesthetic value supervenes on aesthetic properties. There still remains the second problem: that of showing that there can be no unmediated change in quality of aesthetic value. The Sibleyan argument appealed to above only apply to quantitative aesthetic value. It could show at most that quantity of aesthetic value supervenes on valenced aesthetic properties. In addition, there is a structural reason why it cannot be extended to qualitative aesthetic value. The argument involves a judgement about the degree of aesthetic value and a separate substantiation of it by appeal to valenced aesthetic properties. These two separate stages cannot apply to the case of qualitative aesthetic value. Or at least this is so if the discussion of the motivation from description in Section 2.2.1 is correct. Many find it plausible that qualitative aesthetic value is best described by appealing to aesthetic properties. If so, appeal to aesthetic properties cannot provide reasons for judgments of qualitative aesthetic value, as those very aesthetic properties would already be mentioned in the judgement in need of support.

What then could be said in support of the supervenience of qualitative aesthetic value on aesthetic properties? Perhaps the motivation from description itself offers some support. Assuming that aesthetic properties describe qualitative aesthetic value directly, one may think that whenever there is a difference in qualitative aesthetic value, there must be a difference in aesthetic properties. However, this argument requires the further premise that aesthetic properties describe qualitative aesthetic value *completely*. Yet a description can be direct without being complete. It is consistent with the motivation from description that appeal to aesthetic properties may give a very good yet still incomplete description of qualitative aesthetic value. It therefore cannot justify the supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties.

Instead, one may seek a route from the quantitative supervenience claim to the qualitative one. Indeed, I think that there is an argument of this sort, but only one that takes us part of the way. It proceeds from the following thought: quantitative aesthetic value supervenes on qualitative aesthetic value. That is, there can be no difference in how good or bad something is with respect to aesthetic value without a difference in what it is like qualitatively with respect to aesthetic value. I take this to be a highly plausible claim. It is distinct from the converse, which is false. It is not true that qualitative aesthetic value supervenes on quantitative aesthetic value because two things that differ in qualitative aesthetic value can be aesthetically valuable to the same degree. Two Titians can be equally good but still have qualitatively different aesthetic value (or so the qualitative pluralist claims).

The argument, then, is this. Suppose that there is a change in quantity of some object's aesthetic value. If so, then there must be a change in the quality of its aesthetic value (as per the supervenience of quantity on quality of aesthetic value, as

discussed in the previous paragraph). And there must also be a change in aesthetic properties (as per the supervenience of quantity of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties, as supported by the Sibleyan argument which I have granted). Therefore, if there is a change in quantity of aesthetic value, then there is a change in both quality of aesthetic value and aesthetic properties (by the transitivity of supervenience). So, there can be no change in qualitative aesthetic value without a change in aesthetic properties on condition that there is a change in quantitative aesthetic value.

However, the final condition means that this conclusion stops short of the claim of the supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties. It leaves open the following scenario. The degree of aesthetic value does not change. And yet the quality of aesthetic value changes without aesthetic properties changing.

I am not sure how a qualitative pluralist can argue against this possibility. Perhaps they could insist that the difference could not be large, since objects with very qualitatively different aesthetic values always have different aesthetic properties. Still, to repeat an earlier point, that a difference would have to be small is no reason to think that it could not be present at all.

The supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties is widely accepted. However, it seems to stand on weaker ground than would seem at first glance. The claim that quantity of aesthetic value supervenes on aesthetic properties needs further support that is not offered by Sibleyan considerations, despite their likely appeal. And even if this point is granted, the argument for the supervenience of quality of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties stops short of its target. Part of the difficulty is that of distinguishing factors that have no effect from those that

have a small one. In areas where precise measurements are impossible, such as aesthetics, the difference can be particularly elusive.

This is a reason to reduce our confidence in the supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties. As such, this supervenience thesis is also a weaker source of support for the determination thesis.

Nonetheless, the difficulties noted above have to the best of my knowledge gone unrecognised. They therefore should cast little doubt on the fact that, as a matter of reconstruction, the supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties may in fact motivate philosophers to adopt the determination thesis.

2.3. Against the genus thesis

The determination thesis has proved much more popular than the genus thesis, a different version of the kind thesis. This section argues that the unpopularity of the genus thesis is well deserved. It is a highly implausible view and supporters of the kind thesis do well in preferring an alternative.

According to the genus thesis, aesthetic properties are species of the genus aesthetic value. This means that any given aesthetic property is a conjunctive property where one of the conjuncts (the genus) is aesthetic value and the other is some other property (the differentia).

Two preliminary clarifications regarding the genus are necessary. What does it mean to say that aesthetic value is the genus? Firstly, the claim that aesthetic value is a genus should and invariably is understood as conforming to the valency constraint. Recall that this constraint says that if aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value, then positive aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic goodness and negative aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic badness. For example, elegance is

invariably taken not just to be a kind of aesthetic value, but more specifically a kind of aesthetic goodness. Furthermore, the genus thesis must satisfy the valency constraint if it is to accommodate the way thesis and sufficiency for reason.

An additional reason to accept the valency constraint is that some *prima facie* plausible conjunctive analyses of aesthetic properties claim that properties share a differentia but differ in their genera. For instance, one may think that to be vibrant is to be brightly coloured and *pro tanto* aesthetically good while to be garish is to be brightly coloured and *pro tanto* aesthetically bad.

As a result, we should not take there to be a single genus of aesthetic value, but rather two or three genera: aesthetic goodness, aesthetic badness and perhaps neutral aesthetic value.²⁹ That this is how the genus thesis should be understood is not entirely obvious if its statement is taken entirely at face value. The most direct reading of the claim that aesthetic value is a genus is that the genus is the property of having some aesthetic value or other, whether positive, negative or possibly neutral. However, understanding the genus thesis in this way may be excessively literal.

To the best of my knowledge, it has never occurred to anyone to understand the genus in this broad way. This is for at least two good reasons. The first is that it is likely that anything that has any aesthetic properties (and probably almost anything in general) has aesthetic value, whether positive, negative or possibly neutral.³⁰ The

²⁹ The valences of aesthetic properties and aesthetic value, including the contentious category of the neutral, will be discussed in much detail in Chapter 3.

³⁰ What could lack aesthetic value altogether, whether positive, negative or possibly neutral? Panos Paris suggests the following: ‘Candidates here are few, but may include purely abstract concepts (though not the abstract entities that they pick out); mere facts (*that* the French Revolution occurred in 1789; *that* I am on an island writing this paper, etc., as opposed to thoughts representing these facts); simple sensations that are localisable but lack intentionality, or experientially undifferentiated objects, like the component particles in the air that we breathe’ (2024, 83). Individual colours, tones or other simple sensory properties are different candidate examples (2024, 83).

broad genus would therefore be at risk of being redundant in the analysis of aesthetic properties. If all things that are P are Q, the conjunctive property P-and-Q is unlikely to have more explanatory potential than the property P alone. The second reason is that such a broad understanding of the genus would preclude the *prima facie* plausible analyses discussed above (e.g. that vibrancy is being brightly coloured and *pro tanto* aesthetically good and garishness is being brightly coloured and *pro tanto* aesthetically bad). For these reasons, in the discussion below I will take as my target the genus thesis understood in accordance with the valency constraint. However, the arguments that I level against it apply equally to a version of the genus thesis that understands the genus broadly.

Secondly, the genus thesis is clearly a non-starter if it is understood as a claim about *overall* aesthetic value. Some vibrant things are not aesthetically valuable overall. So, it cannot be the case that to be vibrant is to be overall aesthetically good and X. After all, anything that has a kind of P thereby has P, by kind inheritance. For example, if something is a tabby, then it must be a cat and if something has a kind of colour, then it must have a colour.³¹

As a result, the genus thesis is only tenable if the genera are not properties of overall but *pro tanto* aesthetic value. However, one may well be suspicious whether there is any such property as *pro tanto* aesthetic value. I am highly sympathetic to such scepticism and argue for it in Section 4.1. In addition, I also argue that the view that aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value is implausible for

³¹ An analogous argument against the determination thesis will be discussed in more detail in Sections 4.2 and 4.4.

independent reasons. However, these doubts are set aside here. This is for sake of examining the failings specific to the *pro tanto* genus thesis.

In summary, I have clarified the genus thesis in two ways. Firstly, the claim that aesthetic value is a genus is most commonly and most plausibly understood as shorthand for the claim that aesthetic goodness, aesthetic badness and (possibly) neutral aesthetic value are genera. Secondly, if the genus thesis is to be plausible at all it must concern *pro tanto*, not overall aesthetic value.

Who are the proponents of the genus thesis? Interestingly, this question is difficult to answer with much certainty. Criticism of this view and related ones has been more common than support for it (Tappolet 2005; Kirchin 2017, ch. 3; Lopes 2018, 127–29). Many philosophers write of aesthetic (or thick) properties (or concepts or terms) as composed of an evaluative and non-evaluative component (Zangwill 1995; Levinson 2006; 2005; Budd 2007, 335–36; Väyrynen 2013; Spoor 2023).³² However, those who claim that there are two such components almost invariably consider the evaluative one somehow inessential, separable or cancellable. This of course is inconsistent with the genus thesis, since all conjuncts are essential to a conjunction. The genus thesis may turn out to be a by and large unoccupied position. And as we shall see, there is plenty of reason not to occupy it.

The remainder of this section offers three objections against the *pro tanto* genus thesis that do not apply to the determination thesis. The first objection is one that will only appeal to those who are persuaded by the kind thesis. It says that even

³² Many discussions do not distinguish carefully between terms, concepts and properties. The distinctions are particularly important here because the claim that the concept of elegance is a species of the concept of aesthetic goodness does not obviously entail an analogous claim about the properties of elegance and aesthetic goodness (Eklund 2017, 92–95; Lopes 2018, 129). I return to aesthetic concepts in the Conclusion.

if the *pro tanto* genus thesis is true, aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value in a non-pluralist sense. Secondly, the view gives the wrong order of priority among aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. Thirdly, the view is implausible because it does not require any connection between the genus and differentia. I conclude that the *pro tanto* genus thesis is highly implausible. Because, as I have explained, this is the only remotely tenable version of the genus thesis, the genus thesis should be rejected wholesale.

The first point is one that I have already made in before but will reiterate here. Chapter 1 distinguished between pluralist and non-pluralist kinds: ones that entail that there is a plurality of properties of P on the basis that there are many kinds of P and ones that do not. The determination relation is a pluralist kindhood relation. For example, that there are many determinates of colour entails that there is a plurality of colours.

Now, the genus-species relation is not a pluralist relation of kindhood precisely because there can be many species of a single genus even if there is no plurality in the genus. There are big cats, tabby cats, tortoiseshell cats and female cats. These are all species of the genus cat. But it does not follow that there are many cats. The instantiation of these species is consistent with the existence of a single cat: a big tabby tortoiseshell female. Nor does it follow that there are many properties of being a cat. Cats can differ in size, sex and fur pattern, but the property of being a cat cannot.

If the *pro tanto* genus thesis is true, then to be delicate is to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good and X while to be elegant is to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good and Y. But just as there is no plurality of properties of being a cat just because cats can have different size sex and fur pattern, so there is no plurality of *pro tanto* aesthetic

value just because some things are *pro tanto* aesthetically good and X while others are *pro tanto* aesthetically good and Y (Lopes 2018, 127–28). This in turn means that the *pro tanto* genus thesis does not entail that there are pluralist kinds of aesthetic value. After all, it is consistent with there being just a single property of aesthetic value.

Now, this objection will only be convincing to those who believe that aesthetic properties are not just any kinds but pluralist kinds of aesthetic value. Since I reject the kind thesis altogether, I also reject the above premise. However, many of those who are attracted to the kind thesis are likely to understand the claim as concerning pluralist kinds since, as argued in Chapter 1, this is a particularly interesting notion of kindhood.

The second objection is that the *pro tanto* genus thesis cannot account for the fact that things have aesthetic value because they have aesthetic properties and not *vice versa*. Things have conjunctive properties (supposing that there are any) because they have each conjunct. On the *pro tanto* genus thesis aesthetic properties are conjunctive properties where the conjuncts are *pro tanto* aesthetic value and some differentia. For example, majesty would be the conjunctive property of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good and X. Hence, on this view things have aesthetic properties because they have *pro tanto* aesthetic value and the differentia. But this gets things backwards (Tappolet 2005, 216–17; Shelley 2023; 2024; Kirby forthcoming). The Hagia Sophia is aesthetically good partly because it is majestic, not majestic partly because it is aesthetically good. The *pro tanto* determination thesis does not share this flaw: things are coloured because they are red, not *vice versa*.

The third objection is that conjunctive analyses of aesthetic properties fail because conjuncts are logically independent. Suppose that to be vibrant is to be brightly coloured and *pro tanto* aesthetically good. Now, imagine that some painting is

brightly coloured but is not vibrant. Instead, it is garish. However, the painting has a partially redeeming feature: it is balanced. The painting is brightly coloured. And it is *pro tanto* aesthetically good (in virtue of its balance). But by hypothesis it is not vibrant. So, being vibrant cannot be the conjunctive property of being brightly coloured and *pro tanto* aesthetically good (Tappolet 2005, 214; Blackburn 2010, 133).

This problem generalises to any conjunctive analysis of aesthetic properties where *pro tanto* aesthetic value is one of the conjunct properties. In any such conjunctive analysis the *pro tanto* aesthetic value need not obtain in virtue of the differentia. Yet the *pro tanto* genus thesis is wedded to such conjunctive analyses.

This problem can be easily obscured by the phrase '*pro tanto*', which performs two functions. Firstly, it indicates that the assessment in question is partial. Secondly, it says *which* partial assessment is in question. In fact, the most natural and plausible reading of the analysis of vibrancy given above is that to be vibrant is to be brightly coloured and *pro tanto* aesthetically good *in virtue of the bright colours*. However, if that is how the analysis is read, then it is not conjunctive. The fact (*A and (B because A)*) is not a conjunctive fact about A and B. This is because the fact (*B because A*) is not a conjunctive fact about A and B.

The analysis can be read as implausible and conjunctive or plausible but not conjunctive. On the *pro tanto* genus thesis, it must be conjunctive and is therefore implausible. The double function of the phrase '*pro tanto*' promotes a plausible misreading of the analyses of aesthetic properties to which the *pro tanto* genus thesis is committed.

This concludes my case against the genus thesis. However, the last criticism opens the prospect of a retreat which needs to be addressed. If the analysis given above is plausible but not conjunctive, could a supporter of the kind thesis embrace

it? Could any relationship of being A in virtue of being B be a kind of kindhood, perhaps also if it fits none of the models of kindhood discussed so far?

The answer is no. Take two properties:

- The property of weighing 100 kilograms in virtue of containing 1200 litres of feathers.
- The property of weighing 100 kilograms in virtue of containing 13 litres of iron.

These are two different properties of being A in virtue of being B. But they are not two different kinds of A, that is not two kinds of weighing 100 kilograms. Rather, they are two ways of realizing the single, multiply-realizable property of weighing 100 kilograms. Properties of being A in virtue of being B are not kinds of A. For all that I know, some account of aesthetic properties as properties of being A in virtue of being B may be true (Burton 1992, 31; for criticism see Garrard and McNaughton 1993). But there is no reason to think that it would be a version of the kind thesis.

I have given three arguments against the *pro tanto* genus thesis. They present powerful considerations individually, and jointly constitute a robust case against the view. This is reason to reject not just the *pro tanto* genus thesis, but the genus thesis more broadly. As I have argued earlier, the genus thesis cannot concern overall aesthetic value if it understands the genus as aesthetic goodness, badness and possibly neutral aesthetic value. This is because if, for example, to be elegant would be to be aesthetically good overall and X, then all elegant things would be aesthetically good overall, which is plainly not the case. The implausibility of the *pro tanto* genus thesis is reason to reject the entire genus thesis.

Importantly, none of the three issues discussed above apply to the determination thesis. Supporters of the kind thesis do well in preferring it to the genus thesis.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the motivations for the kind thesis more broadly and the determination thesis more specifically. The kind thesis is supported by the way in which attributions of aesthetic properties provide reasons for attributions of aesthetic value. However, much the same can be said of many alternatives to the kind thesis. I have then argued that the determination thesis is the most appealing version of the kind thesis to qualitative pluralists about aesthetic value, who claim that there are qualitatively distinct determinates of aesthetic value. Since qualitative pluralism does not entail the determination thesis, I have attempted to reconstruct the link between the two. I have argued that aesthetic properties are good candidates for determinates of aesthetic value because appeal to them directly describes aesthetic value. Furthermore, aesthetic properties and aesthetic value have been claimed to supervene on each other, as is typical of determination relations. By analogy: shades supervene on colour and colour supervenes on shades. However, the discussion suggested that our reasons to believe in such mutual supervenience are weaker than they seem. Finally, I criticised the genus thesis, an alternative version of the kind thesis which suffers from defects which do not apply to the determination thesis.

3. Neutral aesthetic properties

The previous chapter motivated the determination thesis. This chapter begins the case against it, and the kind thesis more broadly, by considering the important category of neutral aesthetic properties such as flamboyance, sadness, lightness or mysteriousness. It argues that neutral aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness by means of the *normativity argument*. This argument, presented in Section 3.1, shows that they do not meet a necessary condition for being kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness. As a result, neutral aesthetic properties such as flamboyance cannot be kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness.

Does this show that some aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value? I think so. But there are three ways of disagreeing. Firstly, if one understands kinds as determinates, one may insist that at the fundamental level all determinates of properties such as flamboyance are determinates of aesthetic goodness or badness. Secondly, one may deny that properties such as flamboyance are aesthetic. Thirdly, one may insist that a property can be a kind of aesthetic value without being a kind of aesthetic goodness or badness. These objections are considered in Section 3.2.

I argue that there are good reasons to resist all three lines of thought. Still, the kind thesis has some resources to escape the normativity argument, though not without incurring controversial commitments that require significant substantiation. Therefore, while this chapter sheds doubt on the kind thesis, it does not show that it is false. That more ambitious task is the aim of Chapter 4.

I have previously argued that the determination thesis is the most interesting and popular version of the kind thesis. However, the normativity argument that this

chapter presents applies equally to all other kindhood relations: the genus-species, disjunction-disjunct and hybrid relations discussed in Chapter 1 as well, in principle, to any other kindhood relations if there were any. The case presented here is one against the entire kind thesis and therefore *a fortiori* against the determination thesis.

3.1. Normativity argument

This section argues that facts about properties such as flamboyance lack properties that facts about aesthetic goodness and badness have and therefore flamboyance cannot be a kind of aesthetic goodness or badness. Specifically, it argues this about normative properties. A normative property is one that consists in favouring some action or attitude. Examples of normative properties include reasons, meriting, requirement, permissibility, rightness and wrongness. Relevantly to current concerns, recent years have seen much debate about normativity in aesthetics, for example about whether there are any aesthetic obligations and whether there are reasons for affective attitudes or whether they can only be merited. Since taking a stance on these issues is not necessary for my argument, I will speak generically of favouring rather than reasons, obligations or meriting.

A first pass at the general principle that underlies the normativity argument is the following: if X is a kind of Y, then if the fact that A is Y favours F, then if A is X, then something favours F. For example, if the fact that the traffic light is red favours not crossing the road, then if the light is scarlet, then something speaks in favour of not crossing the road. Similarly, if the fact that the traffic light is red favours not crossing the road, then if the light is red and round, then something speaks in favour of not crossing the road. The reason to believe this principle is that

if the fact that A is Y favours F, then something will favour F regardless of *which* kind of Y is possessed by A.

The facts of possessing aesthetic goodness or badness favour all sorts of actions and attitudes. I will examine three normative properties that illustrate the asymmetry to some aesthetic properties particularly well. The fact of possessing aesthetic goodness favours attending to the object, preserving the object and responding to the object with pleasure. The fact of possessing aesthetic badness favours not attending to the object, not preserving the object and responding to the object with displeasure. The fact that an object is flamboyant does not favour any of the above. To bring out the contrast with valenced aesthetic properties, I will also show that the facts that an object is elegant or garish do favour the actions and attitudes that the facts of being aesthetically good and bad do.

First, suppose that a painting is aesthetically valuable. This fact favours looking at the painting (Ziff 1966; Cross 2017; Gorodeisky 2022). To see this consider the following situation. I have it on good authority that in a gallery room which I have not yet seen there are two paintings, one of which is aesthetically valuable, and the other which is not. In this situation, I know that if the testimony is accurate, then there is a consideration in favour of looking at the aesthetically valuable painting.³³ Something speaks in favour of looking at one painting rather

³³ It is a common thought that aesthetic knowledge cannot be acquired by testimony, but only by first-hand experience (Livingston 2003). To accommodate this, what I know in this scenario is expressed as a conditional ('if the testimony is accurate...') and how the testimony relates to practical deliberation is put as a matter of trust.

than the other, although this does not imply that I would be irrational or blameworthy if I chose to do otherwise.³⁴

Much the same applies to elegance, although only with an important qualification. One may think that if a painting is elegant, then something speaks in favour of attending to it. Given a choice between two paintings to attend to and trusted testimony that one is elegant and the other is not, there is reason to believe that something speaks in favour of looking at the elegant one. This means that elegance seems to meet a necessary condition to be a kind of aesthetic goodness: facts about elegance seem to favour the same action as facts about aesthetic goodness.

The above point about elegance may be correct but as it stands it is controversial. Some would be reluctant to concede that elegance *always* favours attending to its bearer. Cases of reversal, which were already discussed in Section 2.1, are the point of contention. This disagreement maps onto the debate whether the positive contribution of elegance in cases of reversal is merely outweighed or outright cancelled. Suppose that the decorations for a child's birthday party are aesthetically flawed partly in virtue of their elegance. Some would be happy to say that even in that case the elegance itself favours attending to the decorations. This would be so if all elegant things were thereby *pro tanto* aesthetically good, that is if elegance were a way of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good (see discussion of the way thesis in Section 2.1). Meanwhile, others could reasonably insist that the elegance of

³⁴ This claim is consistent with the view that aesthetic reasons only entice or recommend what's best, but do not make demands (Dyck 2021).

the decorations does not favour attending to them, even if elegance does usually or by default favour attending to its bearers.³⁵

However, there is a simple way of avoiding this problem. Recall that we are talking about a necessary but insufficient feature of kinds of aesthetic goodness. Its formulation can therefore be weakened by adding disjuncts without undermining its necessity. The fact that something is aesthetically good always favours attending to it. It therefore also favours attending to it always *or* usually *or* by default. And so does the fact that it is elegant. The fact that something is elegant favours attending to it always, usually or by default. Elegance meets this necessary condition for being a kind of aesthetic goodness. The general principle underlying the normativity argument should therefore be more precisely put as follows: if X is a kind of Y, then if the fact that A is Y favours F, then if A is X, then something favours F always *or* usually *or* by default.

Yet some aesthetic properties do not meet even this weaker condition. Suppose that I am told that one painting is flamboyant and another is not. Provided that I trust the testimony, does anything always, usually or by default speak in favour of looking at one rather than the other? No – the fact that a painting is flamboyant favours neither attending nor not attending to it. The situation is analogous to being told that one painting is red and the other is not. I might have my own preferences as to the character or colour of works I attend to and the fact that I am partial in this way may favour looking at one or the other. But the fact that a painting is flamboyant does not itself favour giving attention to the painting even usually or by

³⁵ Compare Sibley's contrast between merits *in vacuo* and in a specific object and Dickie's elaboration of it (Sibley 2001a; Dickie 1988, 81–100).

default. Flamboyance therefore does not meet a necessary condition for being a kind of aesthetic goodness.

Neither does it meet a necessary condition for being a kind of aesthetic badness. The fact that something is aesthetically bad favours not attending to it. So does the fact that it is garish, at least usually or by default. But, as explained above, the fact that something is flamboyant does not favour refraining from attending to something even usually or by default. Flamboyance therefore cannot be a kind of aesthetic badness.

Second, the fact that an object is aesthetically good favours preserving it (Eaton 2008, 5; Andrew 2018). Suppose that there is a fire in a museum and I can only save one of two paintings. One is aesthetically good and the other is not. In this situation, something speaks in favour of saving the aesthetically good one. Again, perhaps I would not be blameworthy or irrational for doing otherwise, although such a charge might seem reasonable to some. It is just that the fact of possession of aesthetic goodness favours saving one painting over the other.

A similar claim is true of elegance. The fact that a painting is elegant favours saving it from destruction at least usually or by default. Of course, other facts might bear on my decision whether to save the elegant painting or the non-elegant one. But there is at least one fact that usually or by default favours the preservation of the elegant painting. An analogous claim is not true of flamboyance. Knowledge that one painting is flamboyant and another is not does not help in choosing which to rescue. The fact that a painting is flamboyant, unlike the fact that it is aesthetically good, does not favour its preservation even usually or by default. Flamboyance is therefore not a kind of aesthetic goodness.

Neither is it a kind of aesthetic badness. This is because the fact that something is aesthetically bad favours not preserving it. This can involve active destruction or simply allowing the object to decay. Is the ugly graffiti fading? Good riddance. Something speaks in favour of letting it disappear. The same goes for garish graffiti, at least usually or by default. Flamboyance does not favour not preserving the flamboyant object even usually or by default. It therefore cannot be a kind of aesthetic badness.

Third, aesthetic goodness favours responses of pleasure (Gorodeisky 2021a). It is common to think that some things are more worthy objects of pleasure than others. I can enjoy a rubbishy TV show or I can take pleasure in an aesthetically excellent film. I can take pleasure in fiddling with my phone or soaking in a lunar eclipse.³⁶ But the fact that the film and the lunar eclipse are aesthetically good favours taking pleasure in them instead of the rubbishy TV show and my favourite way of killing time on the phone. This is not to say that the film and the eclipse have the potential to supply more pleasure. It is also not to say that it is irrational to take pleasure in the TV show rather than the film or that one is blameworthy for doing so. It is just that the facts that the eclipse and the film are aesthetically good favour responses of pleasure, just as a friend's misfortune favours a response of sympathy.³⁷

Let's return to the case of testimony about the elegant and non-elegant paintings. I know that if the testimony is accurate, then something speaks in favour of taking pleasure in the elegant painting if not always then at least usually or by

³⁶ This is C. Thi Nguyen's example cited in Dyck (2021, 2).

³⁷ Here my talk of favouring serves to remain neutral on two issues surrounding the normative properties of facts about aesthetic value. The first is whether there is an obligation to respond to aesthetic goodness with pleasure (Dyck 2021). The second is whether there are reasons for affective attitudes such as pleasure or only relations of meriting (Maguire 2018; Faraci 2020).

default. This means that elegance meets a necessary condition to be a kind of aesthetic goodness. As argued above, if an object is aesthetically good, then something always speaks in favour of taking pleasure in the object. This is always the case; therefore it is the case always or usually or by default.

The picture presented in the last two paragraphs is complicated by the fact that there are aesthetically good objects that favour responses such as anguish, horror and disgust (Sharpe 2000, 328; Shelley 2019). If these are genuinely at odds with pleasure, then aesthetic goodness might sometimes not favour responses of pleasure. Against this view, it has been argued that a proper understanding of pleasure should be broad enough to include experiences that involve typically unpleasant elements (Korsmeyer 2011; Strohl 2012; Gorodeisky 2021b). This much we can say with certainty: if there is any truth to the claim that the fact that something is aesthetically good favours a response of pleasure, the pleasure in question must be understood broadly. I therefore submit that this part of the discussion is premised on the assumption that painful, horrifying and disgusting beauties favour responses of pleasure. If this assumption is false, then the current argument is not sound. Still, this is one argument of three to the conclusion that flamboyance is not a kind of aesthetic goodness or badness. The controversial premise is reasonably plausible; but if it is false, there are two other arguments.

On the negative side, the fact that something is aesthetically bad favours a reaction of displeasure to it. I might take pleasure in something that I recognise to be aesthetically bad because I happen to like it. However, to the extent to which the object is aesthetically bad, the pleasure I take in it is misplaced. This need not mean that I am blameworthy or irrational for taking pleasure in it, or that I am flouting some obligation or that I have bad taste. It is just to say that something speaks

against taking pleasure in it. This is consistent with other considerations outweighing this one. It is also consistent with both a reaction of pleasure and one of displeasure being favoured (Maguire 2018). Much the same can be said of garishness. The fact that something is garish favours reacting to it with displeasure at least usually or by default.

Now, suppose that I am told that a painting is flamboyant. The testimony does not tell me whether pleasure or displeasure are favoured responses to the painting, even usually or by default. The fact that the painting is flamboyant does not favour the same responses as the facts that it is aesthetically good or bad do, even usually or by default. Therefore, flamboyance is not a kind of aesthetic goodness or badness.

I have shown three examples of normative properties which facts about aesthetic goodness and badness have but those about flamboyance do not. As explained at the beginning of this section, for any kind of aesthetic goodness or badness the fact that an object possesses it must have the same normative properties as the fact that the object is aesthetically good or bad. It follows that flamboyance is not a kind of aesthetic goodness or badness.

Even one of the three examples given would have sufficed to establish this conclusion. Still, there is a vast pool of others. It is not just that facts about flamboyance lack a couple of normative properties that facts about aesthetic goodness or badness have. The flamboyance is *very unlike* aesthetic goodness and badness with respect to normativity. Here are some more actions and attitudes that the fact that an object is aesthetically good always favours: hanging a poster up, putting together a sequence of film scenes, recommending a poem, planting a willow of a certain variety, restoring a painting to its original state, as well as an endless list

of others (Lopes 2018). Similarly, the fact that an object is aesthetically bad may favour taking the poster down, changing the sequence of film scenes, discouraging people from reading a poem, planting a willow of a different variety, refraining from restoring a painting and others. The fact that the objects are flamboyant does not favour or disfavour any of these always, usually or by default.

Throughout the discussion of this section my target has been the aesthetic property of flamboyance. Again, this one example is enough to make my case. Still, there is a host of aesthetic properties that the argument also applies to. To mention a few, these include sadness, happiness, lightness, heaviness, darkness, pensiveness, mysteriousness and tenseness. A case for the normativity argument can be made with any of these aesthetic properties and any of the normative properties mentioned in the previous paragraph. The examples I presented illustrate a broad normative dissimilarity between aesthetic goodness and badness and a range of aesthetic properties, which shows that they cannot be kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness.

The aesthetic properties in question are the ones that I have previously called neutral without providing a definition. I am now in a position to say what makes an aesthetic property neutral. *Neutral aesthetic properties* are those the fact of possession of which always, usually or by default favours the same actions and attitudes as neither the fact of possession of aesthetic goodness nor badness. Similarly, *positive aesthetic properties* are those the fact of possession of which always, usually or by default favours the same actions and attitudes as the fact of possession of aesthetic goodness. And *negative aesthetic properties* are those the fact of possession of which always, usually or by default favours the same actions and attitudes as the fact of

possession of aesthetic badness. This, I think, is a fair way of making precise a distinction that has commonly been accepted by others.³⁸

The conclusion of this section is that neutral aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness. If to be a kind of aesthetic value is to be a kind of aesthetic goodness or badness, this means that neutral aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value. This would be a counterexample to the kind thesis.

3.2. Objections

The next three subsections consider objections to the normativity argument. Section 3.2.1 discusses the objection from fineness of grain, which seems to threaten the soundness or else the importance of the normativity argument. Section 3.2.2 argues that the normativity argument does not threaten the kind thesis because there are no neutral aesthetic properties. Section 3.2.3 proposes a different route of defence for the kind thesis. This route is to postulate a property of neutral aesthetic value, of which neutral aesthetic properties could be a kind. In this way, neutral aesthetic properties could be determinates of aesthetic value without being kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness.

³⁸ Note that it may be the case that an aesthetic concept that is in some sense positive or negative denotes a neutral aesthetic property. This will be the case with evaluatively defective aesthetic concepts such as perhaps tackiness, if we accept Zoë Johnson King's example (see Section 2.1.1) (2023). Tackiness is in some sense an evaluatively negative concept. But if Johnson King is right and this evaluation is defective, then the fact that something is tacky will neither favour attending to its bearer nor not attending to it even usually or by default.

3.2.1. Fineness of grain

The normativity argument seems to be open to the objection that it fails to target fundamental aesthetic properties and is therefore either unsound or uninteresting. This section spells out this line of thought, drawing on suggestions by Nick Zangwill (2013; 2024) and Monroe Beardsley (1973, 64–65). I begin by reintroducing the distinction between determinate and determinable aesthetic properties which raises a problem for the normativity argument. I then present two responses.

The distinction between *determinate* and *determinable* aesthetic properties was already introduced in Section 2.2.2. The thought is, to use Zangwill's example, that the determinate delicacy of a certain cloud is not the same as the determinate delicacy of a certain vase, although both thereby possess determinable delicacy (2013, 206–7). The same thought is articulated by Frank Sibley so eloquently that it is worth quoting him again:

Shylock's speeches are an expression of hatred distinctively different from that of Iago's speeches, the perfect balance of a particular Veronese canvas is not that of a Palladian building or even of another Veronese, the particular serenity of the close of the Goldberg Variations is not that either of a Claude sunset or of Beethoven's Op. III Adagio, and so on. (Sibley 1985, 172)

Importantly, the claim is that there are *qualitative* determinates of aesthetic properties. Aesthetic properties certainly do have quantitative determinates such as being somewhat garish or being very elegant. However, these determinates are not relevant here. Rather, the thought here is that the close of the Goldberg Variations and a Claude sunset can have different serenities even if they are serene to the same degree. This is by exact analogy to the way in which qualitative pluralists about

aesthetic value hold that different aesthetically valuable things have different qualitative determinates of aesthetic value.

One could well deny that there are qualitative determinates of aesthetic. After all, it could be maintained that the serenity of the close of the Goldberg Variations is no different qualitatively from that of a Claude sunset. Perhaps aesthetic properties, unlike colours, do not come in shades. But suppose that there are determinate aesthetic properties. How does this affect the normativity argument? According to a line of thought developed by Zangwill and Beardsley, it threatens to undermine its soundness or interest.

One may think that the normativity argument only applies to determinable aesthetic properties on the following grounds. Perhaps the fact that one outfit is flamboyant favours the same actions and attitudes as the fact that it is aesthetically good, while the fact that another outfit is flamboyant favours the same actions and attitudes as the fact that it is aesthetically bad. This could have the simple explanation that they have different determinate flamboyances. Beardsley seems to express a similar thought:

But are there neutral [aesthetic] qualities—[aesthetic] qualities that don't count either [positive or negative] way at all? What about such predicates as "languid," "calm," "swaggering," "grotesque"? But it doesn't seem to me that these are really neutral. There is something puzzling about them, but it is, I think, their variability of sense, or their vagueness, rather than their neutrality. "Grotesque" covers so many different qualities that one kind of grotesqueness in a work may be a good thing in it, while another kind of grotesqueness may be a bad thing. (Beardsley 1973, 64–65; compare Zangwill 2013, 206–7)³⁹

³⁹ This is not to imply that Beardsley himself accepts the kind thesis. In fact, some of his commitments are incompatible with it, e.g. 'Goodness is not entailed by "unity" or "graceful," and hence is not part of their meaning; the connection is contingent, I think, even though it has a certain constancy.' (Beardsley 1973, 63–64). For my understanding of Beardsley's account, see Section 6.1.

The objection, then, is as follows. My aim is to demonstrate that some aesthetic properties are neither kinds of aesthetic goodness nor badness. I offer flamboyance as an example. However, the fact that determinable flamboyance is itself neither a kinds of aesthetic goodness nor badness is consistent with all determinates of flamboyance being kinds of one or the other. So, I have not shown that some aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic goodness nor badness.

Here is an analogy to the argument just given. Suppose that my aim is to demonstrate that some colours are neither light nor dark. I offer blue as an example. The fact that blue itself is neither light nor dark is consistent with all shades of blue being either light or dark. So, I have not shown that some colours are neither light nor dark.

There are two responses to this argument. Firstly, that blue is a colour, so my conclusion would still be established even if all shades of blue were either light or dark. Secondly, that some shades of blue are neither light nor dark. I now offer the aesthetic analogues of these responses.

The first response is that determinable aesthetic properties are aesthetic properties, just as blue is a colour. So, if the aim is to show that some aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness or that some colours are neither light nor dark, this can be done without proving the claim for determinate aesthetic properties or determinate shades. Therefore, whether or not determinate aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value, the soundness of the normativity argument remains unscathed.

The above response succeeds in showing that some aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value. However, this conclusion may now ring hollow. Determinable aesthetic properties are metaphysically dependent on determinate

ones. Just as nothing would be blue if nothing had any shade of blue, nothing would have determinable flamboyance if nothing had some determinate flamboyance.⁴⁰ At the more fundamental, determinate level all aesthetic properties would either be kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness. The fact that this would not be the case at the less fundamental, determinable level would be of much less importance.

By way of analogy, consider the conjunctive property elegance-and-monotony. The fact that something is elegant favours the same actions and attitudes as the fact that it is aesthetically good, at least usually or by default. Similarly, the fact that something is monotonous at least usually or by default shares the normative properties of facts about aesthetic badness. The fact that something has the property of elegance-and-monotony does not favour any of these actions or attitudes, even usually or by default. So, if that conjunctive property is aesthetic, then it must be neutral. However, the fact that there are such properties does not do much to illuminate the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. This is because conjunctive properties are less fundamental than the conjunct properties. The threat to the interest of the normativity argument is analogous, even if determinable aesthetic properties are more unified than conjunctive properties. If there are determinate aesthetic properties, as we are currently supposing, the normativity argument must show that some are not kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness in order to provide an interesting conclusion.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Jessica Wilson has argued that cases of vagueness are exceptions from this rule (2013). See Section 4.4.2.

⁴¹ The possibility that all determinable aesthetic properties are relevantly like the conjunctive property of elegance-and-monotony will be considered in Section 4.4.

The second response is that just as some shades of blue are neither light nor dark, some determinate flamboyances may not be kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness. It certainly seems possible to imagine a work which has a neutral aesthetic property but is neither aesthetically good nor bad on its account (Hermerén 1973; Kivy 1975). In recent work even Zangwill has recognised that this may be the case, although of course he could not endorse the possibility without abandoning his defence of the kind thesis (or, more specifically, the determination thesis) (2024).

It seems then that the normativity argument can be conducted even for determinate aesthetic properties. In order to argue to the contrary, a reason would need to be given for thinking that an object's determinate flamboyance always either favours the same actions and attitudes as aesthetic goodness or as aesthetic badness. As far as I can see, there is no reason to think that this is in fact the case.

3.2.2. Are there neutral aesthetic properties?

The normativity argument shows that properties such as flamboyance are not kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness. This conclusion does not challenge the kind thesis if it is denied that properties such as flamboyance are aesthetic. To protect the kind thesis in this way it is necessary to deny that there are any neutral aesthetic properties.

The prospects of this strategy are hard to assess without committing to an account of aesthetic properties. These were only characterised in Chapter 1 by means of a list which included some neutral aesthetic properties. Their inclusion on such lists is very common, although it can be objected to. Rafael De Clercq has denied that any neutral properties are paradigmatically aesthetic. He grants that they appear on many lists of aesthetic terms, yet

they do not seem to have the standing that 'beautiful', 'ugly' and 'elegant' have. For example, if one had to choose between two definitions of 'aesthetic term', one including 'beautiful' and excluding 'sad', the other doing it the other way around, then, other things being equal, it is clear what choice one would have to make. (De Clercq 2008, 902)

It is true that some properties, such as beauty, ugliness and elegance may occupy a more central role in determining our grasp of the notion of an aesthetic property than sadness or flamboyance. However, from the fact that other properties are more paradigmatic it does not follow that neutral properties are *not paradigmatic at all*. Consider the following analogy. Paintings, sculptures and musical works are more paradigmatically works of art than pottery, textiles or conceptual art. If we were forced to choose between a definition of art that only accounts for Michelangelo's *David* and one that only accounts for Duchamp's *Fountain*, to the exclusion of the other, we would choose the former. But both would be bad definitions. Good definitions should accommodate more than just the innermost core of paradigms, or else they risk paving over the diversity of the phenomenon. Furthermore, even supposing that De Clercq is right that sadness is not a paradigmatic aesthetic property, it does not follow that it is not an aesthetic property at all. Not everything that falls under a concept needs to be a paradigm of it.

Ultimately, what would be needed to deny that there are any neutral aesthetic properties is a principled reason for not including them on the list. Given that counting such properties as aesthetic is common, such a reason would have to be strong. The kind thesis may provide such a reason. Suppose that all valenced aesthetic properties turned out to be kinds of aesthetic value. If neutral aesthetic properties could not be fitted into the same mold, this would be a principled reason to deny that they are aesthetic. To do otherwise would be to conceive of aesthetic properties as a disjoint category including both properties that are and are not kinds

of aesthetic value. ‘Aesthetic property’ is a term of the art and there is an extent to which we can choose how to use it, but the choice should be guided by theoretical usefulness. If the kind thesis were only true of valenced aesthetic properties, the wiser choice would be to reclassify neutral aesthetic properties as non-aesthetic.

There is some reason to think that the kind thesis is more plausible for valenced than for neutral aesthetic properties. The normativity argument gives one such reason. In addition, as argued in Chapter 2, it is unclear whether the motivations from mutual supervenience and from sufficiency for reason apply to neutral aesthetic properties. Thus, the kind thesis for neutral aesthetic properties may be undermotivated. Still, this line of defence against the normativity argument can only be effective if the kind thesis is true for valenced aesthetic properties. And as Chapter 4 will argue, the kind thesis is highly implausible for *all* aesthetic properties.

Of course, there may be other reasons for counting or not counting properties such as flamboyance, lightness or sadness as aesthetic. However, examining them would require taking on commitments about the nature of aesthetic properties. Meanwhile, this thesis attempts to inform theorising about aesthetic properties and should therefore not be informed by contested views about them.

The kind thesis can be defended from the normativity argument by denying that there are neutral aesthetic properties. However, the question whether there are any neutral aesthetic properties cannot be settled prior to accepting an account of aesthetic properties. Rather, it is more likely to follow from such an account than to inform it.

3.2.3. Neutral aesthetic value

The kind thesis says that aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value. If what I have argued so far is correct, then some aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness. For this to amount to a counterexample to the kind thesis an additional premise is required: that something can be a kind of aesthetic value only if it is a kind of aesthetic goodness or badness. Yet this premise can be contested.

At first glance, this might be surprising. After all, aesthetic goodness and badness are polar opposites. But it is also reasonable to suppose that there is such a thing as *neutral aesthetic value*, a zero situated between the positive and negative yet distinct from the absence of aesthetic value (Sibley 2001b, 192; Paris 2024, n. 4). We might say that something is neither aesthetically good nor bad and mean that as an aesthetic assessment, that is a judgment of the degree to which something is aesthetically valuable. Besides the beautiful and the ugly there is also the plain and unremarkable. An unoffensive wall colour or an easily overlookable lamp shade may serve as examples.

It seems reasonable to treat such plainness as a degree of aesthetic value as opposed to the absence of aesthetic value. Take something that has a slight positive aesthetic value and make it a little bit worse. Alternatively, take something that is somewhat aesthetically bad and improve it only slightly. In each case, the result should be an object that is neutrally aesthetically valuable. What has happened is best described as a change in the degree of the object's aesthetic value rather than the disappearance of its aesthetic value. After all, if one continued the same process and worsened the first object further or improved the second object further, the event should clearly be described as a change in degree of aesthetic value. These

considerations speak in favour of understanding neutral aesthetic value as a degree of aesthetic value alongside aesthetic goodness and badness as opposed to an absence of aesthetic value.

Given the above, a natural proposal would be that neutral aesthetic properties are kinds of neutral aesthetic value. The fact that something is flamboyant does not favour attending to or not attending to something, preserving or not preserving it or reacting to it with pleasure or displeasure, even usually or by default. Much the same could be said of neutral aesthetic value. Flamboyance, then, meets a necessary condition to be a kind of neutral aesthetic value. So do other neutral aesthetic properties like it.

I grant that it makes perfect sense to postulate neutral aesthetic value in order to make sense of the way in which we sometimes talk of being neither aesthetically good nor bad as a degree of aesthetic value. Still, there is no reason to believe that neutral aesthetic properties are kinds of neutral aesthetic value.

Recall that a key motivation for the kind thesis was the way thesis, which claims that aesthetic properties are ways of being aesthetically valuable. While there is some reason to believe that valenced aesthetic properties are ways of being aesthetically valuable, there is no analogous reason to believe the same of neutral aesthetic properties.

For valenced aesthetic properties, the way thesis explained sufficiency for reason: the phenomenon whereby judgments such as ‘There is something aesthetically good about it because it is elegant’ and ‘There is something aesthetically bad about it because it is garish’ are obviously well-substantiated. However, neutral aesthetic properties do not seem to be sufficient for reason. The judgment ‘There is something neither aesthetically good nor bad about it because it is flamboyant’ is not

well-substantiated is the same way. This is not to say that it cannot be true that the object is neither aesthetically good nor bad in some respect owing to its flamboyance. In fact, I have spoken in favour of that very possibility in Section 3.2.1. However, appeal to an object's flamboyance does not on its own provide reasons to believe that it is in some respect neither aesthetically good nor bad.

In principle, there could be some reason other than sufficiency for reason to think that neutral aesthetic properties are ways of being neutrally aesthetically valuable. However, I do not know of one. And if there is no reason to think that neutral aesthetic properties are even ways of being neutrally aesthetically valuable, we should be even more doubtful of the further claim that neutral aesthetic properties are kinds of neutral aesthetic value.

3.3. Conclusion

The above discussion of neutral aesthetic properties (e.g. flamboyance, lightness or sadness) suggests that they are not kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness. The normativity argument shows that they fail to meet a necessary condition for being such kinds. This may show that some aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value, thereby constituting a counterexample to the kind thesis. However, to this end further premises are needed. It is open to the advocate of the kind thesis to insist that determinate neutral aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness, that neutral aesthetic properties are not genuinely aesthetic or that they are kinds of neutral aesthetic value. I have argued that there is reason to resist each of these responses. The present chapter has cast significant doubt on the kind thesis by considering the special case of neutral aesthetic

properties. The next chapter argues that the kind thesis cannot even accommodate the examples that seem friendliest to it.

4. Aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value

Chapter 3 argued that there is a substantial category of aesthetic properties which the kind thesis struggles to accommodate, namely neutral aesthetic properties. This chapter tackles the kind thesis head on by arguing not only that it cannot accommodate some special cases, but that it cannot accommodate the central ones. Even the apparently innocent claim that elegance is a kind of aesthetic goodness carries extremely implausible implications that have been by and large overlooked.

This chapter argues that the kind thesis should be rejected entirely. Whatever relation aesthetic properties bear to aesthetic value, it is certainly not any relation of kindhood.

The overarching structure of this chapter is that of a dilemma as to how the kind thesis is to be stated. The view can be either understood as concerning overall or *pro tanto* aesthetic value, that is as the *overall kind thesis* or the *pro tanto kind thesis*.

On the first horn of the dilemma, the view is understood as the *pro tanto* kind thesis, according to which aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value. This is the best motivated version of the view since, as discussed in Chapter 2, it is supported by the way thesis. However, Section 4.1 shows that the *pro tanto* kind thesis is either highly implausible or does not represent a genuine alternative to the overall kind thesis.

On the other horn, the kind thesis is understood as the *overall kind thesis* and claims that aesthetic properties are kinds of overall aesthetic value. This view is vulnerable to the *objection from strict sufficiency* which is presented in Section 4.2. Just as being scarlet is strictly sufficient for being red, being elegant should be strictly sufficient for being aesthetically good overall if elegance is a kind of overall aesthetic

goodness. But this is plainly not the case. Things can be aesthetically bad overall despite being elegant if they have enough of other, negative aesthetic properties.

A second objection also applies on the same horn of the dilemma, although it assumes a narrower target: the *overall determination thesis* which claims that aesthetic properties are determinates of aesthetic value. Thus Section 4.3 discusses the *objection from determinate incompatibility*. It proceeds from the much-discussed feature of determination relations that explains why things cannot be simultaneously both blue and red. I examine the conditions under which determinate properties can co-occur. I then argue that the overall determination thesis is committed to the implausible view that all maximally determinate aesthetic properties possessed by an object must be identical to each other.

Section 4.4 considers a fallback position for supporters of the overall kind thesis that would allow it to avoid the objection from strict sufficiency. This involves denying that positive aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic goodness and negative aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic badness. However, at least if kinds are understood as determinates, even taking such a drastic step would only make the objection from strict sufficiency reemerge at a different point.

I suspect that persistent confusion between the overall and *pro tanto* kind theses has allowed their radically implausible implications to go unnoticed. Upon closer scrutiny, the kind thesis loses its entire appeal.

4.1. Aesthetic properties are not kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value

The *pro tanto* kind thesis says that aesthetic properties are not kinds of overall aesthetic value but of *pro tanto* aesthetic value. This is the view motivated by the motivation from sufficiency for reason via the way thesis. In so far as the thought

that aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value is motivated by the thought that they are ways of being aesthetically valuable, this is the relevant view.

One of the versions of the *pro tanto* kind thesis is the *pro tanto* determination thesis, which as I have argued is particularly interesting, popular and motivated. Since the objections I present apply to the *pro tanto* kind thesis in general, they also apply *a fortiori* to the *pro tanto* determination thesis.

The *pro tanto* kind thesis faces two problems. The first is that it is unclear if there are any *pro tanto* properties. The second is that the *pro tanto* kind thesis is either highly implausible or is not a genuine alternative to the overall kind thesis.

4.1.1. *Pro tanto* properties

Here is the first problem. If aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value, then there must be such a property as *pro tanto* aesthetic value. But that's far from obvious. As far as I can see, there may well be no *pro tanto* properties.

At the linguistic level, the phrase '*pro tanto*' generally functions adverbially. For example, if I ought *pro tanto* to φ , then '*pro tanto*' modifies 'ought' rather than ' φ '. That is, '*pro tanto*' qualifies the obligation not that which someone is obliged to do. For instance, if I *pro tanto* ought to donate to charity, it is my obligation that is partial and not the donation. In fact, the notion of a *pro tanto* donation seems unintelligible.

Similarly, at a purely linguistic level the claim that something is *pro tanto* aesthetically good is not naturally read as attributing the property of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness to the object. This is because '*pro tanto*' modifies 'is', not 'aesthetic value'.

The most straightforward, though mistaken, way of interpreting this linguistic evidence would be the following. Because '*pro tanto*' modifies 'is' we should

understand the claim that something is *pro tanto* aesthetically good as the claim that it is aesthetically good *in a pro tanto manner*. However, this reading cannot be right. To φ in a certain manner is still to φ . Whether I eat lunch quickly or slowly, my action is still one of eating lunch. Similarly, in whatever manner something is aesthetically good, it is still aesthetically good. But things can emphatically be *pro tanto* aesthetically good without being aesthetically good (overall, that is). For this reason, to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good is not to be aesthetically good in a *pro tanto* manner. Rather, '*pro tanto*' should be compared to adverbs which do not entail that to φ F-ly is to φ . '*Pro tanto*' has more in common with 'generally', 'allegedly' 'partly' and 'possibly' than with 'quickly' or 'slowly'.

Now, one may think that this only opens the door to *pro tanto* properties. After all, it is plausible to suppose that there are such properties as being generally on time or being partly red. This is in spite of the fact that from a grammatical point of view the adverbs modify the verb. For example, being partly red should be understood as the property of having a red part. It is not the partial possession of the property of being red. It is unclear what that would even amount to.

Suppose that we wanted to construct a similar account of what it is to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good. How could we proceed? Recall that '*pro tanto*' means 'in some respect' or 'in so far as something goes'. We could say that for an object to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good is for there to be a respect (or aspect, or regard, etc.) in which it is aesthetically good. This is by analogy to the way in which if something is partly red, then it has a part which is red. Yet while there certainly are parts, it is unclear if there are respects. We can certainly sensibly speak of things being one way in one respect and another way in another respect. But if we were to understand

such talk by exact analogy to talk of parts, we would be committed to the existence of respects. And it is simply not clear what such respects would have to be.

At the very least, anyone who wanted to pursue this strategy would have to give an account of what a respect is. This is a general metaphysical issue which to the best of my knowledge has so far gone unnoticed. Furthermore, there is some *prima facie* reason to doubt that respects are real. What is real, one may think, is an all-things-considered matter. If we can, we should account for our talk the way things are *pro tanto* in a way which does not commit to the existence of respects.

Given that I deny that there are *pro tanto* properties, I carry some burden of explaining how claims about *pro tanto* aesthetic value can still be true. After all, it would be highly revisionary and implausible to deny that they can be true. I will now consider three ways in which this could be done. Two turn out to be inadequate but one is promising.

The first suggestion is this. Perhaps to be *pro tanto* P is to have a part which is P. It would be natural to say that a photo is red in some respect if it contains a red spot. The suggestion would be to generalise this phenomenon to all claims to the effect that something is *pro tanto* P. If this analysis were right, it could provide a reasonable notion of a *pro tanto* property.

Perhaps this is one intelligible notion of *pro tanto*. However, it cannot be the notion relevant to being *pro tanto* aesthetically valuable. Having an aesthetically good part is not necessary for being *pro tanto* aesthetically good. A work can be balanced as a whole without having any parts that are balanced. So, the way in which a work is *pro tanto* aesthetically good in virtue of such balance cannot be put down to the aesthetic goodness of any of its parts. A different notion of *pro tanto* must be in play.

A second suggestion would be to explain *pro tanto* properties in terms of modal properties. One may think that an object is *pro tanto* aesthetically good in virtue of its property P just in the following case: if the object were not P, it would be aesthetically worse. This could be one articulation of the intuitive thought that to make something *pro tanto* aesthetically good is to make it aesthetically better.⁴² Again, however, this analysis cannot fully account for what it is to be *pro tanto* aesthetically valuable. Multiple of an object's aesthetic properties can depend on the same non-aesthetic properties in such a way that they stand or fall together (Gaut 2007, 60–61). For example, the same features that make an object dynamic may make it garish. If so, then it may be that the object would be aesthetically better if it were not dynamic. This would be so if the garishness were a greater *pro tanto* defect than the dynamism a *pro tanto* merit. When merits come bundled up with defects, things can be better off without the merits. The counterfactual analysis cannot account for such cases.

The third proposal is that talk of *pro tanto* is a way of speaking of contributions to the way in which things are overall. For example, for an object to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good is for some factor to contribute positively to the object's overall aesthetic value (and analogously for the negative). For example, to say that an object is *pro tanto* aesthetically good in virtue of its elegance is to say that its elegance positively contributes to its overall aesthetic value. As explained in the previous paragraph, this need not mean that the object would be worse if it were not elegant.

⁴² This suggestion only makes sense for gradables. Interestingly, however, it seems hard to think of claims about things being *pro tanto* P where P is non-gradable.

Crucially, this analysis makes sense of '*pro tanto*' by attending to the relation among the object's properties. Elegance contributes positively to its bearer's overall aesthetic value. This is a fact about a relationship between elegance and overall aesthetic value, not about the bearer of these properties. It is therefore only in a derivative sense that objects could be said to have *pro tanto* properties. Sure, the object has the property of having some property which positively contributes to the object's overall value. But what makes it true that the object is *pro tanto* aesthetically good is something about the contributive relationship between its properties, not about the object itself.

This is the best sense that I can make of how things can be *pro tanto* P. To be clear, I do not take myself to have demonstrated that there are no *pro tanto* properties. However, at the very least defenders of the *pro tanto* kind thesis owe us an argument defending their reality. It is a disadvantage of the *pro tanto* kind thesis that it commits to the existence of a property, *pro tanto* aesthetic value, in which we do not obviously have reasons to believe.

4.1.2. Correspondence of *pro tanto* and overall properties

Let's concede for sake of the argument that there is such a property as *pro tanto* aesthetic value. There is still an even more fundamental problem that the *pro tanto* kind thesis faces: it is that it cannot be a genuine alternative to the overall kind thesis.

To make this case two observations are necessary. The first is that just as we speak of things having aesthetic value *pro tanto* or overall, we apply the same distinction to aesthetic properties. For example, an outfit may be *pro tanto* elegant despite the fact that an excessively conspicuous logo makes it inelegant overall. This

is a common-sense distinction. As suggested in the previous section, recognising this distinction need not involve committing to the existence of a property of *pro tanto* elegance, although I will concede its existence for purposes of the current discussion. Instead, the claim that an outfit is *pro tanto* elegant could be understood as saying that some factor positively contributes to the object's overall elegance. This can make sense even if the object is overall inelegant.

The second observation is the following: no account of a *pro tanto* phenomenon should be different from an account of the corresponding overall phenomenon, except in that one is partial and the other is not. If there is such a property as *pro tanto* aesthetic value, then it must be the exact same property as overall aesthetic value with the sole difference of partiality. After all, they are both supposed to be aesthetic value. If they differed from each other otherwise than in their partiality, the two could not be each other's equivalents.

Relatedly, properties that differ only in partiality have the same kinds with the sole difference that the kinds of one are partial and those of the other are not. Consider the following example. I don't know if it makes sense to speak of *pro tanto* colour. But if it does, the kinds of *pro tanto* colour would have to be *pro tanto* green, *pro tanto* blue, *pro tanto* scarlet, etc. Otherwise, *pro tanto* colour would not be colour but something else. Let's display this idea schematically. In general, if A is a kind of B, then:

- overall A is a kind of overall B
- *pro tanto* A is a kind of *pro tanto* B

As explained above, this is because overall B and *pro tanto* B are the same except for their partiality. And if properties are the same bar partiality, then they

must have the same kinds bar partiality. In general therefore accounts of *pro tanto* phenomena shadow accounts of overall phenomena.

At this point, a dilemma opens up as to how to understand the *pro tanto* kind thesis. Does it claim that *pro tanto* aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value? Or does it claim that overall aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value? On the first understanding, the *pro tanto* kind thesis is not an alternative to the overall kind thesis. On the second, it is highly implausible. Therefore, however it is understood, the *pro tanto* kind thesis cannot constitute a plausible alternative to the overall kind thesis. I now explain why.

Suppose that the *pro tanto* kind thesis is understood as claiming that *pro tanto* aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value. As argued above, *pro tanto* and overall aesthetic value should have the same kinds with the sole difference that those of one are *pro tanto* properties and those of the other are overall properties. So, if *pro tanto* aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value, then overall aesthetic properties should be kinds of overall aesthetic value. So understood, the *pro tanto* kind thesis would not compete with the overall kind thesis. Indeed, it would require it to be true. Furthermore, it would complement it. Whereas the overall kind thesis would classify overall aesthetic properties, the *pro tanto* kind thesis would classify *pro tanto* aesthetic properties. As a result, the *pro tanto* kind thesis would not be an alternative to the overall kind thesis.

This is not yet a reason to reject the *pro tanto* kind thesis. After all, I have not yet said anything about the plausibility of the overall kind thesis. The fact that the *pro tanto* kind thesis on the current understanding commits to the overall kind thesis does not yet count against it. However, Section 4.2 will argue that the overall kind thesis is untenable, to which Section 4.3 will add another argument against the

overall determination thesis. If the *pro tanto* kind thesis commits to the overall kind thesis it also becomes untenable – but this point will only be substantiated by the arguments against the overall kind thesis.

The *pro tanto* kind thesis could be an alternative to the overall kind thesis if it were a claim about overall aesthetic properties. On this understanding, the *pro tanto* kind thesis would claim that overall aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value. However, the form of this view does not fit the template above which we have fully general reasons to endorse. The *pro tanto* kind thesis would take the following form: overall A is a kind of *pro tanto* B. Meanwhile, I have argued above that if A is a kind of B, then *pro tanto* A must be a kind of *pro tanto* B and overall A must be a kind of overall B. This is on pain of severing the unity between overall and *pro tanto* B as well as overall and *pro tanto* A. The unity in question consists in being the same property bar partiality.

To further illustrate how implausible breaking with the schema would be, I will spell out the consequences of violating it. Suppose that overall A is a kind of *pro tanto* B. In that case, what is *pro tanto* A a kind of?⁴³

Three answers to the first question are on the table. *Pro tanto* A may be a kind of *pro tanto* B, overall B or neither. Suppose that *pro tanto* A, like overall A, was a kind of *pro tanto* B. This would be a strange result. To see this, ask: what would be the kinds of overall B? Since overall B is the same property as *pro tanto* B bar partiality, its kinds should be the same kinds as those of *pro tanto* B bar partiality. So, if *pro tanto* A is a kind of *pro tanto* B, we should expect overall A to be a kind of overall B. But

⁴³ A similar argument to the one below can be constructed by asking instead: what are the kinds of overall B? However, examining only one of the questions suffices to illustrate the implausibility of breaking with the schema.

by hypothesis overall A is a kind of *pro tanto* not overall B. The only way out seems to be to allow that *pro tanto* B could differ from overall B in more than partiality. Yet this would be to deny a conceptual truth. *Pro tanto* aesthetic value must be the same thing as overall aesthetic value except for obtaining in some partial respect. Otherwise it would not even be deserving of its name.

If *pro tanto* A were a kind of overall B, then the situation would be very strange indeed. Applied to the aesthetic case, this would mean that *pro tanto* elegance is a kind of overall aesthetic value but overall elegance is a kind of *pro tanto* aesthetic value. This gets things backwards. I have said that in order for *pro tanto* and overall B to be the same property bar partiality, they must have kinds that are the same bar partiality. This should be understood as meaning that the kinds of *pro tanto* B are partial while those of overall B are not. Otherwise, again, *pro tanto* B would not be the same property as B with the sole difference of being partial where the latter is not.

Finally, suppose that *pro tanto* A is neither a kind of overall nor *pro tanto* B. In that case, given that overall A is a kind of *pro tanto* B, it is obscure how *pro tanto* and overall A could be the same property bar partiality. For this to be the case *pro tanto* A would need to be a kind of some property of B differentiated by partiality. But what property would that be? As I have argued above, *pro tanto* A cannot be a kind of overall or *pro tanto* B. And it is at the very least unclear whether there are any other options. As a result, if *pro tanto* A is neither a kind of overall nor *pro tanto* B, then it must differ from overall A in more than partiality.

As the above discussion shows, breaking with the schema requires postulating a difference that goes beyond partiality among corresponding overall and *pro tanto* properties. But this is to deny a conceptual truth. Therefore, if the *pro tanto*

kind thesis is to be understood as claiming that overall aesthetic properties are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value, it is highly implausible. And, as argued above, this is how it must be understood if it is to be an alternative to the overall kind thesis.

This section argued that the *pro tanto* kind thesis cannot be a plausible alternative to the overall kind thesis. This is because on one reading it is not an alternative to it and on the other it is implausible. And all of this is conceding that there are *pro tanto* properties, something that Section 4.1.1 shed doubt upon. The plausibility of the kind thesis, then, depends on whether the overall kind thesis is defensible.

4.2. Objection from strict sufficiency

The overall kind thesis claims that aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value. We can add some detail to this claim. The overall kind thesis is invariably taken to mean that positive aesthetic properties are kinds of overall aesthetic goodness and aesthetic properties are kinds of overall aesthetic badness. For example, elegance is a kind of overall aesthetic goodness and garishness is a kind of overall aesthetic badness.⁴⁴ This is in conformity with the valency constraint, which was discussed in Chapter 2.

The valency constraint is not strictly entailed by the kind thesis. But it is clearly what supporters of the kind thesis mean to endorse. Perhaps there may be logical space for elegance to be a kind of aesthetic value without being a kind of

⁴⁴ As discussed in Chapter 3, the kind thesis can try to accommodate neutral aesthetic properties in two ways. Either they can be considered kinds of neutral aesthetic value or it can be maintained that determinate neutral aesthetic properties are always kinds of aesthetic goodness or badness.

aesthetic goodness (though, clearly, it is not a kind of aesthetic badness).⁴⁵ Still, it is fair to say that this is a hitherto unoccupied position. This is for good reason: the kind thesis is motivated by the thought that being elegant is a way of being aesthetically good (see Section 2.1). It is therefore unlikely that defenders of the kind thesis would be willing to give up the valency constraint. Still, this possibility will be considered in Section 4.4 as a possible retreat. For the time being I will assume the valency constraint, as everyone else does.

With this constraint in place, the overall kind fails straightforwardly and dramatically. Here is an uncontroversial conceptual truth about kinds:

Kind inheritance. For any property P, whatever has a kind of P thereby has P.

This principle is constitutive of our very grasp on the notion of a kind. For instance, if something has a kind of colour, then it thereby has colour and if something is a kind of cat, then it is thereby a cat. Importantly, kind inheritance articulates a strictly sufficient condition. Having a kind of colour, blue say, is not merely a consideration in favour of being coloured, a factor that could be cancelled or outweighed. It is an ironclad guarantee.

However, aesthetic properties do not relate to aesthetic goodness or badness in the way in which they would if they were kinds of overall aesthetic value. This constitutes the *objection from strict sufficiency*.

The overall kind thesis has two untenable consequences. The first is that it predicts that each positive or negative aesthetic property is alone sufficient for

⁴⁵ As emphasised in Chapter 1, I use ‘aesthetic value’ throughout in a sense that encompasses both positive and negative aesthetic value, i.e. one that does not contrast with but which includes ‘aesthetic disvalue’.

overall aesthetic goodness or badness. A second, related consequence, is that nothing can have both positive and negative aesthetic properties.

Here is how the first failing shows itself. According to the overall kind thesis, elegance is a kind of overall aesthetic goodness. This means that whatever is elegant is thereby overall aesthetically good. This follows by kind inheritance: by analogy, whatever is blue is thereby coloured. Similarly, having any kind of overall aesthetic goodness guarantees the possession of overall aesthetic goodness (Tappolet 2005, 210). In this way, the overall kind thesis is committed to view that being elegant is strictly sufficient for being overall aesthetically good. But this is obviously not the case: some things are elegant but not aesthetically good.⁴⁶ Even if one thinks that elegance always makes its bearers good in some respect, it is clearly not sufficient for overall aesthetic goodness. After all, an elegant work may also be monotonous or pretentious.

Analogous considerations apply to negative and neutral aesthetic properties. By the same reasoning, anything that is garish would be thereby guaranteed to be aesthetically bad. Similarly, if neutral aesthetic properties are taken to be kinds of neutral aesthetic value, then anything flamboyant would be thereby guaranteed to be neutrally aesthetically valuable overall. But the former is not always the case and the latter seems to be the case very seldom.

⁴⁶ Simon Kirchin notices a similar problem relating to thick concepts which he attributes to Debbie Roberts (Kirchin 2017, 56–57; see also Tappolet 2005, 209–10; Väyrynen 2013, 230). He presents an objection against a view analogous to the overall determination thesis. However, this objection is stronger than necessary. He takes the problem to be one with reversal, the phenomenon whereby positive aesthetic properties make their bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically bad or negative aesthetic properties make them *pro tanto* aesthetically good (see Section 2.1). But the problem is not only that the kind thesis is inconsistent with things being elegant and bad *on account of their elegance*. Some even find that consequence plausible (Conolly and Haydar 2003, 124). The deeper problem is that the overall determination thesis, as a version of the kind thesis, is inconsistent with anything being elegant and aesthetically bad *for whatever reason*.

In the discussion so far, I have been using elegance, garishness and flamboyance as clear examples of positive, negative and neutral aesthetic properties, respectively. But the same argument would apply to almost any aesthetic property.

In defence of the overall kind thesis one may argue that some aesthetic properties reign supreme and always outweigh all others: sublimity and majesty may be like this on the positive side and tediousness on the negative. For example, majesty may be a kind not just of aesthetic goodness but of a very high degree of aesthetic goodness, while tediousness may be a kind of intense aesthetic badness (see Figure 2). These are special cases that are consistent with the overall kind thesis.

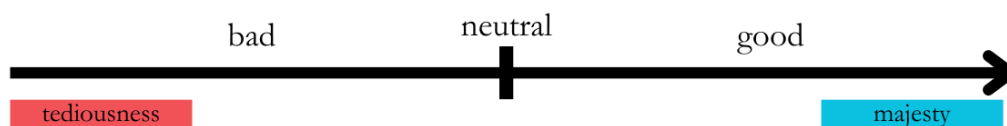


Figure 2. A special case of the kind thesis.

However, this response does not provide any rescue for the overall determination thesis. Firstly, since most aesthetic properties are not definitive in this way, this response could at most defend a version of the view limited solely to the highly positive and negative aesthetic properties. Secondly, such superlative aesthetic properties still succumb to the second failing of the overall kind thesis.

The view's second failing is that it cannot account for the fact that things can have both positive and negative aesthetic properties. Nothing can be both aesthetically good overall and bad overall. So, nothing can have both kinds of overall aesthetic goodness and badness, since by kind inheritance that would make it both aesthetically good overall and bad overall. But that means that nothing could have both positive and negative aesthetic properties, which is blatantly false. Things can

be elegant but monotonous, chaotic but lively, dynamic but incongruous... This is also true of the superlative properties considered in the previous paragraph: an object can be majestic but cold or tedious but balanced. The kind thesis cannot accommodate these basic facts.

Both cases discussed above provide overwhelming reason to reject the overall kind thesis. No other premise can be plausibly rejected. Kind inheritance, as explained above, is uncontroversial: nothing could have a kind of P without having P. And plainly, we should not deny that the cases described above are possible: some things are elegant and not aesthetically good overall, while some are both elegant and monotonous.

The overall kind thesis is hopeless. But there may seem to be a simple way out. Of course, it is absurd to think that anything that is elegant should thereby be aesthetically good overall. Nobody believes that. But it is not absurd, indeed it seems plausible though controversial, to think that whatever is elegant is thereby *pro tanto* good.⁴⁷ Similarly, nothing can be both aesthetically good and bad overall, but things can certainly be both aesthetically good in one respect and bad in another. The objection from strict sufficiency is cleanly avoided by the *pro tanto* kind thesis.

This, I suspect, may account partially for the enduring popularity of the kind thesis and relevantly similar views. The general problem which the objection from strict sufficiency articulates has been occasionally acknowledged by various writers (Kirchin 2017, 56–57; see also Tappolet 2005, 209–10; Väyrynen 2013, 230). The fact that these concerns have not dampened the popularity of the kind thesis may

⁴⁷ This is the controversy as to whether sufficiency for reason should be explained by the way thesis or otherwise (see Section 2.1).

partially be accounted for by the ease with which the *pro tanto* kind thesis avoids them. This explanation is particularly likely given that many discussions of the kind thesis and analogous views do not explicitly distinguish between their overall and *pro tanto* versions.

However, Section 4.1 has already argued that the *pro tanto* kind thesis cannot be a plausible alternative to the overall kind thesis for reasons that have hitherto gone unnoticed. It therefore offers no retreat for the overall kind thesis. Since both the overall and *pro tanto* versions of the kind thesis are highly implausible, we should reject the kind thesis altogether.

4.3. Objection from determinate incompatibility

This section continues the case of the previous by advancing a separate argument against the overall determination thesis, the most interesting version of the overall kind thesis.

Nothing can be simultaneously red and blue. This raises a *prima facie* problem for the overall determination thesis. If elegance and delicacy stand to aesthetic value as red and blue stand to colour, then nothing could be both elegant and delicate. Plainly, such a consequence would make the overall determination thesis untenable. Let's call the feature of determination relation whereby some determinates are inconsistent with others *determinate incompatibility*.

There is widespread recognition of problems in this vicinity, at least in ethics and value theory more broadly if less so in aesthetics.⁴⁸ However, there is no agreement whether they are any serious cause for concern for theories like the determination thesis. The reason for this is that only *some* determinates are incompatible with each other. Nothing can be both red and blue but things can certainly be both red and scarlet. Furthermore, it has been argued that determinate incompatibility is merely a typical, not a necessary feature of the determination relation (Armstrong 1978, 48–49; Johansson 2000, 116–17; Wilson 2013). If that is the case, then the fact that the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value does not display determinate incompatibility at most weakly counts against the determination thesis. The fact that some of the counterexamples apply to the paradigm case of colour may seem to completely deprive any potential objection along these lines of its bite (Sanford 2016).

More needs to be said about the conditions under which determinates can and cannot co-occur. Until this is done, it will be impossible to tell whether determinate incompatibility poses a problem for the determination thesis. The failure to do so is the greatest weakness of existing discussions. As a result, views structurally parallel to the determination thesis have been dismissed too quickly and for the wrong reasons (Väyrynen 2013, 230; Cosker-Rowland 2019, 78–79; Kirby

⁴⁸ Similar observations have been made about thick concepts (Tappolet 2005, 217–18; Väyrynen 2013, 230) and value (Cosker-Rowland 2019, 78–79; Wodak 2020, 66–67; Kirby forthcoming). Simon Kirchin discusses at some length the way in which certain determinates exclude others in relation to thick concepts but does not explicitly mention this feature as a difficulty for the view that thick concepts are determinates of thin concepts (2017, 47–48, 56, 74).

forthcoming).⁴⁹ Alternatively, they have been upheld without sufficient explanation as to why the co-occurrence of determinates is unproblematic (Tappolet 2005; Wodak 2020, 66–67).

Closer scrutiny reveals that determinate incompatibility does raise trouble for the determination thesis, but not in the way which has usually been identified. It is not that things cannot have multiple aesthetic properties. It is that whenever they do, those properties must be identical to each other at the maximally determinate level. This, I argue, is a highly unlikely result.

Section 4.3.1 articulates a statement of determinate incompatibility and argues that it raises a serious problem for the determination thesis. This is the *objection from determinate incompatibility*. Then, Section 4.3.2 considers counterarguments to the statement and shows that they do not apply to the determination thesis so long as it is understood as a claim about overall aesthetic value.

4.3.1. When can determinates co-occur?

When can two or more determinates co-occur and when are they incompatible? This question will be partially answered in this section by considering the case of colour. A prominent statement of determinate incompatibility turns out to be demonstrably false. However, an alternative statement can easily accommodate the cases that the original statement could not. This allows us to identify more precisely the problem that determinate incompatibility raises for determination thesis.

⁴⁹ Kyle Kirby devotes more attention than others to the conditions under which determinates can co-occur (forthcoming). However, even he ends up dismissing a view parallel to the determination thesis on the wrong grounds.

The following is a common statement of determinate incompatibility:

Levelled determinate incompatibility: If x has determinate P of determinable Q at time t , then x cannot have at t , any other determinates R of Q at the same level of specificity as P . (Wilson 2023; compare Johnson 1921, 181; Johansson 2000, 116; Funkhouser 2014, 34)⁵⁰

Determination relations are structured by levels of specificity. The colour of Yves Klein's monochrome paintings is blue or more specifically ultramarine or even more specifically International Klein Blue. Determinate and determinable status is relative: ultramarine is a determinate of blue but it is a determinable of International Klein Blue.

Levelled determinate incompatibility asserts the simultaneous incompatibility only of *same-level* determinates, not all determinates in general. This is supposed to accommodate the thought that blue is incompatible with red but is not incompatible with ultramarine. Red and blue are at the same level of specificity. Meanwhile, ultramarine is more specific than blue. Ultramarine is also more specific than red, although it is not a determinate of it.

How to make this notion of levels of specificity more precise? John Searle has suggested that two determinates of a single determinable are at the same level just in case neither is a determinate of the other (1959, 149). As Jessica Wilson rightly notes, this criterion would mistakenly count determinates such as red and ultramarine as same-level (2023). However, she does not provide an alternative criterion that could secure more than an intuitive grasp of the notion of same-level determinates. As far as I can see, the best improved criterion for sameness of level is

⁵⁰ This formulation is that of Wilson (2023), but its name is mine to distinguish it from the alternative formulation discussed below.

the following: two determinates of a single determinable are at the same level just in case they have the same number of determinates. By this measure, ultramarine and red would be at different levels because there are fewer shades of ultramarine than there are of red. Meanwhile, blue and red would be at the same level of specificity just in case have the same number of shades. Of course, it is an empirical matter how many shades of blue and red there are and there is no reason to simply assume that their number must be the same. But if the number is different, it does seem reasonable to treat one as at a higher level of specificity than the other.

If sameness of level is understood in this way, and it is hard to think how else it could be understood, then there are straightforward counterexamples to levelled determinate incompatibility. This can be easily shown using examples of the sort brought to light by David Sanford (2016). Such counterexamples are constituted by any two determinates which have the same number of determinates of their own while also having some determinates in common. For example, suppose that there are n shades of red and that there are also n pale colours.⁵¹ Since the two determinable properties of redness and paleness possess the same number of determinates, they are same-level determinates of colour. Yet they are compatible: there are many pale reds. So, levelled determinate incompatibility is demonstrably false even of the paradigm case of colour. Or at least it is so if we understand sameness of level as I have proposed we should.

When it comes to determinate incompatibility, all talk of levels is a red herring. In fact, determinate incompatibility has nothing to do with levels. Some

⁵¹ This is unlikely to actually be the case. However, the simplification is harmless, since there certainly are overlapping subsets of red and pale colours where neither is a subset of the other.

same-level determinates are compatible (e.g. red and pale). And some determinates of different levels are not (e.g. red and ultramarine). The discussion of Sanford-style examples suggests a way of revising the statement of determinate incompatibility in a way that allows for some same-level determinates to be compatible:

Maximal determinate incompatibility: If x has determinate P of determinable Q at time t , then x can have at t some other determinate R of Q only if x has some determinate S of Q which is a determinate of both P and R .⁵²

In other words, two determinate properties can simultaneously co-occur only if they are determinables of some determinate. Furthermore, they do simultaneously co-occur only if some determinate they share occurs. Compare: something can be both red and pale only if its specific shade is a pale red.

Things can have many determinable colour properties but only one specific shade. Let's call a determinate that does not have any further determinates a *maximal determinate*. Maximal determinate incompatibility owes its name to the fact that it entails that things can only have one maximal determinate of a determinable at a time (compare Funkhouser 2014, 34). This is because an object can have two determinate properties only if it has a property which is a determinate of both. Since maximally determinate properties by definition have no further determinates, nothing can have more than one maximal determinate.

Does maximal determinate incompatibility truly articulate the conditions under which determinates can co-occur? To answer either way further argument would be needed. This is because there are alleged counterexamples to maximal

⁵² This formulation does not assume that a determinable is only instantiated if one of its determinates is. While this has long been the consensus, it has recently been challenged by Jessica Wilson (2013). See the discussion of vagueness in Section 4.4.2.

determinate incompatibility. These will be considered in the next section. For now, let us ask: how plausible is the determination thesis on the assumption that maximal determinate incompatibility is true?

Maximal determinate incompatibility suggests a way in which defenders of the determination thesis can respond to the *prima facie* problem that determinate incompatibility seems to open to it. If elegance and delicacy are related in the same way as red and blue, then nothing could be both elegant and delicate, which is clearly false. But the determination thesis does not need to claim that elegance and delicacy stand to each other as red does to blue. Instead, the relationship may be like that between red and pale. Things can have both elegance and delicacy – but only if they have some property that is a determinate of both. This is by direct analogy to the way in which things that are both pale and red must have a single colour property that is a determinate of redness and a determinate of paleness.

Even if maximal determinate incompatibility is true, it seems that the determination thesis can give an explanation of how aesthetic properties can co-occur. This has been overlooked by most writers who have attacked views relevantly analogous to the determination thesis on grounds related to determinate incompatibility (Väyrynen 2013, 230; Cosker-Rowland 2019, 78–79; Kirby forthcoming).

Still, the determination thesis is not off the hook. The ability to accommodate the co-occurrence of aesthetic properties in this way comes at a price which is not worth paying.

As explained above, aesthetic properties can co-occur only if their bearer has a property which is a determinate of all of its aesthetic properties. This means that all aesthetic properties an object possesses are unified in the same way as all its colour

properties are. Many colour properties can be attributed to Yves Klein's monochrome paintings: for example, they are ultramarine, blue and highly saturated. However, these properties are all possessed in virtue of a single determinate property, the specific shade known as International Klein Blue which is a determinate of ultramarine, of blue and of highly saturated colour. The maximal determinate property of International Klein Blue, so to say, unifies all the other, determinable colour properties that Klein's monochrome paintings possess.

Similarly, the overall determination thesis is committed to the claim that anything can have only one maximally determinate aesthetic property of which all of its other aesthetic properties are determinables (assuming, as we are, the truth of maximal determinate incompatibility). Thus, an object that is dreary, balanced, sad and mysterious must have a single property that is a determinate of all of the above. This would be by way of analogy to the way in which International Klein Blue is a determinate of blue, ultramarine and highly saturated colour. As a view of how aesthetic properties co-occur, this is highly implausible. This is for at least three reasons.

The first reason is that many aesthetic properties seem too different to share determinates. Perhaps some determinates of elegance are also determinates of grace. But in other cases such unity seems impossible: dreariness, balance, sadness and mysteriousness seem too different for a single property to be a determinate of all four. No kind of dreariness is a kind of balance.

The second reason is that it is common to perceive one aesthetic property of an object without perceiving others. One might see that an object is balanced but not that it is harmonious, or see that it is garish while failing to see its dynamism. This would be odd if what was in question was the perception of a single

determinate property. One might notice that a colour is pale without registering its hue if the coloured object is only seen briefly. However, this would hardly ever be the case for a person with good eyesight if the object is available for careful examination. Meanwhile, aesthetic properties can be missed even when close attention is given.

The third reason is that different aesthetic properties make different contributions to their bearer's overall aesthetic value. One reason to think that no determinate of dreariness can be a determinate of balance is that dreariness makes its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically bad while balance makes them good.⁵³ Such diametrically opposed contributions suggest that dreariness and balance should be thought of as distinct.

For all of the above reasons, it is implausible to think that aesthetic properties co-occur by sharing determinates. But there is no other way in which they could co-occur according to the determination thesis if maximal determinate incompatibility is true. This is a strong reason to reject the overall determination thesis if maximal determinate incompatibility is true. The task which now remains is to ask whether maximal determinate incompatibility is true of aesthetic properties.

⁵³ Whether this is the case always or only typically or by default is a point of contention. See Section 2.1.2.

4.3.2. Counterexamples to maximal determinate incompatibility

The problem just raised for the overall determination thesis is only pressing if maximal determinate incompatibility were true of aesthetic properties. In the absence of counterexamples, we should think that it is so, since the rule seems to correctly articulate the co-occurrence conditions for the paradigm case of colour. However, at least four counterexamples have been proposed. I argue that they do not provide reasons to believe that aesthetic properties are exempt from maximal determinate incompatibility if they are determinates of overall aesthetic value. However, this is not the case if aesthetic value is understood as *pro tanto* aesthetic value. The determination thesis can therefore try to escape the objection from determinate incompatibility if it is understood as the *pro tanto* determination thesis. Yet, as I have argued in Section 4.1, this route is already closed.

The first apparent counterexample is the following. One could claim that aesthetic properties belong to their bearers by virtue of belonging to their parts. This would be by analogy to the way in which it can be true to say that a ladybird is red because it has red parts (despite also having black ones). The thought is that determinate incompatibility does not hold between being red and black *per se*, but between being red and black *all over*. By analogy, the objection runs, it should be possible for an object to be both elegant and delicate without violating determinate incompatibility by having elegant parts and delicate parts.⁵⁴

This objection is unsuccessful: having a part with an aesthetic property is neither necessary nor sufficient for an object to have the property. An object can have parts with aesthetic properties that do not belong to the whole. Suitably

⁵⁴ For a related discussion, see Wodak (2020, 66–67) and a criticism by Kirby (forthcoming).

cropped, the most hellish scenes of Hieronymus Bosch may be serene. Similarly, an object can have aesthetic properties that do not belong to any of its parts. A composition can be balanced as a whole without any of its parts displaying balance alone.

Note that this response does not require endorsing the claim that objects *never* have aesthetic properties in virtue of possessing parts that have them. It is enough to say that this is not always the case. Perhaps some objects are both elegant and delicate in virtue of having elegant parts and delicate parts. However, so long as this is not always true some cases would still need an alternative explanation. In this way, the attempt to resist the conclusion by appeal to the aesthetic properties of parts is unsuccessful.

The second counterexample is a highly unusual case brought to light by Jessica Wilson:

The highly iridescent feathers of the hummingbird gorgets are among the most specialized of all bird feathers... The iridescence is produced by the proximal part of the barbules... The colors do not directly depend on selective pigment absorption and reflection, as do brown and blacks produced by the melanin pigments of non-iridescent feathers. Rather, they depend on interference coloration, such as that resulting from the colors seen in an oil film or soap-bubble... Thus, a gorget may appear ruby red when seen with a beam of light coming from directly behind the eye, but as the angle is changed the gorget color will shift from red to blue and finally to black, as the angle of incidence increases. (Johnsgard 1997; quoted in Wilson 2013, 367)

It is not the case that the hummingbird feathers have parts that are blue and parts that are red. The example is therefore different from that of a ladybird as discussed above. Rather, hummingbird feathers are such that they seem blue or red, depending on the angle of light. What this shows is that at least in certain cases maximal determinate incompatibility must be relativised. Here it seems that what

colour an object has depends, at least in some cases, on the perspective from which it is viewed.

While this phenomenon does motivate a refinement of the conditions under which colours can co-occur, it would be inadequate as a model for explaining the simultaneous occurrence of aesthetic properties. The feather can't simultaneously be seen as both red and blue. But a vase can simultaneously be seen as delicate and elegant. Whatever perspective-relativity is involved in the case of the hummingbird feather is clearly absent in the common cases of co-occurring aesthetic properties.

The third counterexample to maximal determinate incompatibility is much more formidable and concerns the sense of taste. Sourness and sweetness are often taken to be determinates of the determinable property of taste or flavour. But a dish can be both sweet and sour (Armstrong 1978, 48–49). This is the case despite the evident fact that no kind of sweetness is a kind of sourness or *vice versa*.

This is a clear-cut *prima facie* counterexample to maximal determinate incompatibility. However, it is not entirely clear whether the relationship between sweetness and taste is one of determination. It is certainly not a paradigm of the same rank as colour or shape or quantities such as weight or length.

Still, there is an alternative explanation for the case of taste which is not only simple but superior to the suggestion that sweet and sour are determinates of taste. This suggestion is that they are not determinates but *determination dimensions* of taste, i.e. respects in which determinates can differ with respect to a determinable (Funkhouser 2006; 2014). For example, the determination dimensions for colour may be saturation, hue and brightness, while weight and length have single determination dimensions of quantity.

This is superior as a description of the relationship between sweetness and taste. Firstly, preserving maximal determinate incompatibility (besides relativised cases such as the hummingbird feather) is a virtue in itself. Otherwise, some other explanation would be necessary as to why it is a feature of some instances of the determination relation but not others. Secondly, conceiving of sweetness, sourness, bitterness, saltiness and umami as determination dimensions rightly predicts that an object can only have one value at a time along each determination dimension. Just as an object can only have one saturation, brightness and hue (again, in non-relativised cases) so any given object has only one sweetness, one sourness and one bitterness at a time.⁵⁵

The fourth counterexample is one suggested by Ingvar Johansson (Johansson 2000, 16–17). He argues that the property of possessing a property is itself a determinable with all other properties as its determinates. If Johansson is right about this, then anything that has multiple properties will have multiple determinates of a single determinable. For example, all physical objects will have both some weight and some shape. But no shape is a determinate of weight and no weight is a determinate of shape. This is therefore a counterexample to maximal determinate incompatibility.

One could well challenge the claim that the property of possessing some property is a determinable. However, let us concede this premise. This does show that maximal determinate incompatibility is false in some cases. But it is still true in some, notably in the case of (non-relativised) colour (Johansson 2000, 16). And there is reason to think that it would apply to aesthetic properties. This reason is that

⁵⁵ Determination dimensions will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

some determinates of aesthetic value certainly are incompatible with others. If anything is a determinate of aesthetic value, aesthetic goodness and badness are. Yet they are clearly incompatible. The same could be said of differing degrees or quantities of aesthetic value. Nothing could be both somewhat aesthetically good and aesthetically excellent. This suggests that even if maximal determinate incompatibility did not apply with full generality, aesthetic properties – alongside colour – would be among the ones to which it did apply.

Or at least this is so if aesthetic value is understood as overall aesthetic value. Nothing can be aesthetically good and bad overall, but of course things can be aesthetically good in one respect but bad in another. That is, there is no incompatibility between *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness and badness. In general, when it cannot be the case that both A and B, it can be the case that A in one respect and that B in another.

This suggests a way in which a defender of the determination thesis can deny that aesthetic properties can co-occur only if they share a determinate. They can claim that elegance is not a determinate of overall aesthetic goodness but of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness, and that garishness is not a determinate of overall but *pro tanto* aesthetic badness. That is, they can embrace the *pro tanto* determination thesis which the objection from determinate incompatibility leaves unscathed.⁵⁶

However, I have already argued that the *pro tanto* kind thesis – and, *a fortiori*, the *pro tanto* determination thesis – is not a plausible alternative to the overall

⁵⁶ This fact is overlooked by Pekka Väyrynen who levels the objection from determinate incompatibility against a view about thick concepts analogous to the *pro tanto* determination thesis (2016a). In other work where he considers the objection from determinate incompatibility he does not specify if he has in mind views analogous to the *pro tanto* or overall determination thesis (Väyrynen 2013, 230).

determination thesis. Thus the retreat that could allow the overall determination thesis to avoid the objection from determinate incompatibility is already closed off. Since neither the overall nor the *pro tanto* determination thesis is plausible, we have reason to conclude that the determination thesis should be rejected altogether.

4.4. Rejecting the valency constraint

Is there any way in which the overall kind thesis could avoid the objections levelled against it? This section considers a final attempt at defending the view. This defence is so costly that I doubt that many would be willing to pursue it. However, it could promise to protect the view from the objection from strict sufficiency. Still, I argue that it cannot even do that, at least if kinds are understood as determinates. One way or another, the overall determination thesis still succumbs to the objection from strict sufficiency.

The discussion of the objection from strict sufficiency in Section 4.2 assumed the valency constraint. This constraint says that if aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic value, then positive aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic goodness and negative aesthetic properties are kinds of aesthetic badness.

There are two very strong reasons for accepting the valency constraint. Firstly, if the valency constraint is rejected, then so should the way thesis. That is, it would have to be denied that being elegant is a way of being aesthetically good and being garish is a way of being aesthetically bad. But it is this thought that made the kind thesis appealing in the first place and allowed it to account for sufficiency for reason. Secondly, the valency constraint has to the best of my knowledge been accepted by all proponents of the overall kind thesis. It is therefore more plausibly

seen as an elaboration of how the overall kind thesis is to be understood than as an additional premise.

Still, it is possible to deny the valency constraint while accepting the overall kind thesis, even if this is a previously unoccupied position. This therefore marks a possible if extremely costly retreat for supporters of the overall kind thesis.

This cost consists in the two considerations mentioned above. Firstly, abandoning the valency constraint requires giving up on the motivation from the way thesis and sufficiency for reason. And secondly, for most advocates of the kind thesis it is likely to involve changing the claim that they were making from the start. In addition, the valency constraint does not offer any respite from the objection from determinate incompatibility. As presented in Section 4.3.1, the objection made no reference whatsoever to the valency constraint. Therefore, for the determination thesis denying the valency constraint can at most be a defence against the objection from strict sufficiency, although I will argue that it does not succeed even on that count.

In what follows, I will argue that even such a costly defence does not succeed for the overall determination thesis. Section 4.4.1 explains what form the overall determination thesis would have to take to deny the valency constraint. This view seems to be invulnerable to the objection from strict sufficiency as presented earlier. However, the objection simply reappears at a lower level of specificity. Despite initial appearances to the contrary, the overall determination thesis is equally vulnerable to the objection from strict sufficiency even without the valency constraint. Section 4.4.2 considers two additional lines of defence, neither of which proves adequate. The last-ditch attempt at saving the overall determination thesis by denying the valency constraint achieves nothing.

4.4.1. Purely qualitative overall determination thesis

How could elegance be a determinate of overall aesthetic value without being a determinate of overall aesthetic goodness? Clearly, it cannot be a determinate of overall aesthetic badness: otherwise, all elegant things would be overall aesthetically bad in virtue of their elegance, which is absurd.

One suggestion may be that elegance could be a determinate of neutral overall aesthetic value. Recall that one way in which the determination thesis could accommodate neutral aesthetic properties such as flamboyance was by postulating a category of neutral aesthetic value as distinct from absence of aesthetic value (see Section 3.2.3). Perhaps all aesthetic properties may similarly be determinates of neutral aesthetic value.

This suggestion easily succumbs to the objection from strict sufficiency. Since on this view all aesthetic properties would be determinates of neutral overall aesthetic value, any aesthetic property would be sufficient for making its bearer neutrally aesthetically valuable overall (by kind inheritance). This conclusion is plainly absurd: if anything, examples of neutral overall aesthetic value are hard to come by, while on this view anything that has any aesthetic property whatsoever would be neutrally aesthetically valuable overall.

Could any property be a determinate of overall aesthetic value without being a determinate of overall aesthetic goodness, badness or neutral aesthetic value? It could. To see how, let's ask more generally what determinates of overall aesthetic value there are.

We can certainly say this much: being overall aesthetically good and overall aesthetically bad are certainly determinates of overall aesthetic value. If there is neutral overall aesthetic value, then it is such a determinate too. Furthermore, the

various degrees of overall aesthetic goodness and badness are also determinates of overall aesthetic value. This is because aesthetic value is a quantity, i.e. something that there can be more or less of. More specifically, it is the sort of quantity that can have both positive and negative values, i.e. degrees of aesthetic goodness or badness.

In general, quantitative properties such as weight or length are often understood as determinates of a determinable (Armstrong 1978, 63; Bigelow and Pargetter 1991; Funkhouser 2014). For example, 2 kilograms is a determinate of weight and 5 centimetres is a determinate of length.⁵⁷ One strong reason for understanding quantities in this way is that they are characterised by adherence to the *single value principle*: if an object has a quantity, then it can only have a single precise value of that quantity at a given time (Chang 2001; Wolff 2020, 14).⁵⁸ For example, nothing can have both a weight of 2 kilograms and 3 kilograms at the same time. This is exactly what maximal determinate incompatibility would predict. It

⁵⁷ J.E. Wolff has recently objected to the view that quantities are determinables, arguing that determination does not explain what differentiates quantities from other properties because many determinables are not quantities (e.g. colour or shape) (2020). Wolff's proposal is that it is the horizontal relation between the values (e.g. 2 kilograms–3 kilograms) that explains what makes a property quantitative, not the vertical relation between the value and the quantity (e.g. 2 kilograms–mass). This seems plausible. However, even if the vertical relation does not explain what makes a quantity distinctively quantitative, it is still an open question what the vertical relation is. On this point, Wolff claims that some features of determination are inconsistent with determinables being quantities. In particular, Wolff says that quantities do not nest in the way determinables do, i.e. there is no quantitative analogue to the sequence International Klein Blue-ultramarine-blue-colour. But there is an exact analogue: brackets of values. The shade International Klein Blue stands to ultramarine as the weight 2 kilograms stands to the property of being between 1 kilogram and 3 kilograms. Wolff considers this response incompatible with another feature of the determination relation because it would make the value 2 kilograms a determinate of the same-level determinables of belonging to the bracket 1-3 kilograms and belonging to the bracket 2-4 kilograms (2020, 17). However, as shown in Section 4.3.1, there is no incompatibility between same-level determinates as such but only between same-level determinates that do not share any determinates. In sum, the response to Wolff's objection is twofold. Firstly, quantities do nest: namely, as value brackets. Secondly, same-level determinates can overlap.

⁵⁸ This is typically expressed as a constraint on *physical* quantities. However, it is also hard to see how a non-physical quantity could fail to have this feature.

entails that for each determinable an object can have only one maximal determinate, that is one which does not have any further determinates. Nothing can have more than one maximal determinate because two determinates can co-occur only if a property which is a determinate of both is instantiated. But maximal determinates do not have further determinates, so they cannot co-occur.

There is a minimal sense in which it is undeniable that aesthetic value is a determinable: namely, that there are many *quantitative* determinates of aesthetic value. Just as two objects that differ in degree of weight have different weights, so objects that differ in degree of aesthetic value have different aesthetic value.

Qualitative pluralists about aesthetic value commit to a stronger claim: that there are many non-quantitative, i.e. qualitative, properties of aesthetic value. To return to the example taken from Sibley, on the pluralist view two Titians that are aesthetically valuable to the same degree can still differ in aesthetic value in qualitative respects (1985, 172). Everyone agrees that aesthetic value is a quantity. But qualitative pluralists maintain that it is also a quality.⁵⁹

Let us take stock. There certainly are quantitative determinates of aesthetic value with values that can be positive or negative. Pluralists claim that there are also qualitative determinates. And supporters of the overall determination thesis claim that at least some of the determinates of overall aesthetic value are aesthetic properties. Clearly, aesthetic properties are not distinguished from each other solely by degree of aesthetic value. That is, it is not the case, for example, that to be elegant just is to be overall aesthetically good or bad to degree *n* and to be delicate just is to be overall aesthetically good or bad to degree *m*. Aesthetic properties differ from

⁵⁹ Some reasons to doubt qualitative pluralism will be discussed in Section 6.6.

each other qualitatively. So, if aesthetic properties are determinates of overall aesthetic value, they must be at least in part qualitative determinates.

The possibilities considered so far – that elegance may be a determinate of overall aesthetic goodness, badness or neutral aesthetic value – assumed that aesthetic properties are only *partly* qualitative determinates. However, they could also be *entirely* qualitative. Here is an analogy to this suggestion. Colours that differ from each other must differ in hue, saturation or brightness. To return to a term introduced before, these are the determination dimensions of colour, ways in which determinate colours can differ from each other. But not all determinates of colour must differ along each of these dimensions. Red and blue are determinates of colour. But red does not differ from blue in brightness or saturation. It only differs in hue. Of course, individual shades of red and blue can differ in saturation and brightness. Still, red and blue themselves do not.

Similarly, one could claim that aesthetic properties only differ from each other in qualitative respects. That is, they would not differ along the determination dimension of quantity of overall aesthetic value, but only along qualitative determination dimensions.⁶⁰ On this view, elegance would be a determinate of neither overall aesthetic goodness, badness nor neutral aesthetic value just as red is not a determinate of being bright, dark nor anywhere in between. The same could be said of negative and neutral aesthetic properties. Let's call this view the *purely qualitative overall determination thesis*.

⁶⁰ What are the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value? Defenders of the determination thesis, and qualitative pluralism more broadly, are yet to rise up to the challenge of identifying them (Cannon 2020). Given that no suggestions have been made, I will not assume anything about what they are. The possibility that aesthetic properties may themselves be determination dimensions rather than determinates of aesthetic value is considered in Chapter 5.

On the face of it, the purely qualitative overall determination thesis avoids the objection from strict sufficiency. As presented, this objection exploited the valency constraint. The problem was that elegance cannot be a determinate of overall aesthetic goodness because that would mean that all elegant things would be overall aesthetically good, which is plainly not the case. Because the purely qualitative overall determination thesis does not categorise aesthetic properties as determinates of overall aesthetically goodness, badness or neutral aesthetic value, it avoids this form of the objection from strict sufficiency.

On this view, the fact that an object is elegant only guarantees one fact about an object's degree of overall aesthetic value. This is that it has some degree of overall aesthetic value or other. This is plausible: if something is elegant, then it has some degree or other of overall aesthetic value. By analogy, if something is red, then it must have some level of brightness and saturation. However, the fact of being red does not entail anything about what this level is.

However, the objection from strict sufficiency recurs at a lower level of specificity. The source of the problem for the purely qualitative overall determination thesis is that all determinates of an aesthetic property are aesthetic properties themselves. Determinates and determinables do not differ in nature but only in specificity. All determinates of colour are colours, all determinates of shape are shapes and all determinates of weight are weights. Similarly, all determinates of aesthetic properties are aesthetic properties themselves.

The purely qualitative overall determination thesis claims that elegance is a purely qualitative determinate. But determinates of elegance cannot be purely qualitative. Compare: the determinable property of being red is not individuated by brightness. But any maximally determinate shade of red will have a certain level of

brightness. Suppose that a red post box is bright to degree n . Its maximally determinate colour will be both a determinate of red and a determinate of the property of being bright to degree n .

Similarly, any maximal determinate of elegance would be individuated by degree of aesthetic value if the purely qualitative overall determination thesis were true. Take any elegant object that is aesthetically valuable to degree n . That object's maximally determinate elegance is a determinate of being aesthetically valuable to degree n . This is despite the fact that the determinable property of elegance is not individuated by degree of aesthetic value on the current view. This is by exact analogy to the way in which the determinable property of redness is not individuated by brightness but any specific shade of red is.

Now, the objection from strict sufficiency plays out at a lower level of specificity than before. Take an object that is overall aesthetically valuable to degree n , elegant and monotonous. The purely qualitative overall determination thesis predicts that an object's maximally determinate elegance will be sufficient to make it overall aesthetically valuable to degree n (by kind inheritance). So will its maximally specific monotony, which is also a determinate of being overall aesthetically valuable to degree n . By analogy: having a shade of red with a brightness of n is sufficient for having a brightness of n . For example, if an elegant object is overall aesthetically bad to degree n , then its elegance is strictly sufficient for being overall aesthetically bad to degree n .

This consequence is plainly wrong. The object's elegance is not sufficient for its degree of overall aesthetic value and neither is its monotony. Rather, the fact that the object is overall aesthetically valuable to degree n depends both on its elegance and its monotony but in different ways. Elegance, at least typically, contributes

positively to overall aesthetic value while monotony at least typically contributes to it negatively. However, on the purely qualitative overall determination thesis the contribution is the same: the maximally specific elegance and melancholy are strictly sufficient for whatever degree of aesthetic value the object has overall.

Here is what the overall determination thesis cannot account for. The relationship between aesthetic properties and overall degree of aesthetic value is a *contributive* one in the sense that the overall degree of aesthetic value that an object possesses is fixed by the totality of its aesthetic properties.⁶¹ An example of a contributive relationship would be that between weights placed on opposite ends of scales and the overall balance. The final balance depends on each of the weights placed on either scale. And whether the balance tips towards the right or left and by how much depends on *all* the weights.

The relationship between determinates and determinables is not contributive. Rather, it is one of strict sufficiency: whatever is red is thereby guaranteed to be coloured. This, ultimately, is what makes determination a bad fit for the relation between aesthetic properties and degree of overall aesthetic value. The purely qualitative overall determination thesis attempted to avoid this problem by insisting that aesthetic properties are not individuated by degree of aesthetic value. However, this is simply not true of many determinate aesthetic properties and all maximally determinate ones.

⁶¹ An object's degree of aesthetic value is fixed by the *totality* rather than just the *set* of its aesthetic properties for the following reason. Another object that had the same set of aesthetic properties to the same degrees plus some other aesthetic properties would usually not have the same degree of aesthetic value as the first object. Therefore, no set of aesthetic properties is sufficient to fix an object's degree of aesthetic value *per se* but only if that set constitutes the totality of the object's aesthetic properties.

The purely qualitative overall determination thesis attempted to rescue the overall determination thesis by letting go of the plausible valency constraint. Yet even this drastic measure did not make the overall determination thesis any more plausible. The motivation was to avoid the objection from strict sufficiency. However, the objection only followed the overall determination thesis to a lower level of specificity. Rejecting the valency constraint offers no refuge for the overall determination thesis.

4.4.2. Objections and replies

This section considers three objections to the above case against the purely qualitative overall determination thesis, none of which is successful.

The first objection proceeds as follows. The objection from strict sufficiency as applied against the purely qualitative overall determination thesis relied on the following premise: many determinates of aesthetic properties, including all their maximal determinates, are individuated by degree of overall aesthetic value. For example, if an object is both overall aesthetically valuable to degree n and elegant, then its maximally determinate elegance is a determinate of being overall aesthetically valuable to degree n . Compare: if a colour is bright to degree n , then it is a determinate of the determinable property of being a colour bright to degree n .

This is the premise that this objection denies. According to this objection, not only is elegance a purely qualitative determinate of overall aesthetic value. So are the determinates of elegance. Determinates of elegance, the thought goes, are *not* individuated by degree of aesthetic value.

Here is one way in which this objection could be substantiated. Suppose that I ask: how bright is this object? An acceptable answer would be: it is bright to degree

n. It would be irrelevant to add that it is also saturated to degree *m* and blue. Neither would it be appropriate to respond that the object's colour is International Klein Blue. An object's saturation or hue are neither here nor there if what is in question is its brightness. Brightness is not individuated by saturation or hue. Similarly, the defender of the overall determination thesis could insist that aesthetic properties are not individuated by degree of overall aesthetic value because they are purely qualitative determinates.

It is true that degrees of brightness are not distinguished by saturation and hue. But brightness is not a determinate of colour: it is one of its determination dimensions, that is one of the ways in which determinates of colour can vary. Just as brightness is not a determinate of colour, neither is the property of being bright to degree *n*. The *values* or *degrees* or *levels* of determination dimensions are not determinates of the relevant determinable.

This version of the objection fails because it does not distinguish between determinates and values of determination dimensions. There are two properties. One is the property of being bright to degree *n*. Another is the property of being a colour that is bright to degree *n*. The former is not a determinate of colour while the latter is.⁶² The overall determination thesis claims that aesthetic properties are determinates of overall aesthetic value. It is therefore inconsistent with aesthetic properties being the determination dimensions of overall aesthetic value or values thereof.

In response, the defender of the overall determination thesis may be tempted to accept that aesthetic properties are determination dimensions of overall aesthetic

⁶² This distinction will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.1.

value or the values of these determination dimensions. Let's call this view *dimensionalism*. For the reasons described above, it successfully avoids the objection from strict sufficiency. However, to adopt dimensionalism is to abandon the overall determination thesis, which is almost always articulated by means of the analogy to the relationship between colour and shades. It therefore does not offer a shelter for the overall determination thesis but only a retreat. Dimensionalism will be discussed and criticised at length in Chapter 5.

However, a second objection along similar lines can be attempted without appeal to determination dimensions. Red, blue and yellow are primary colours.⁶³ But none of their determinates are: for instance, scarlet, cerulean and canary yellow are not primary colours. Perhaps, then, being an aesthetic property is like being a primary colour: it is not a property that is passed on to determinates. In that case, even if the determinates of aesthetic properties are individuated by degree of overall aesthetic value, the defender of the overall determination thesis could claim that aesthetic properties themselves are not.

However, this response does not stand in the way of the objection from strict sufficiency. Let's concede for sake of the argument that the status of being an aesthetic property should be understood by analogy to that of being a primary colour. If so, then no aesthetic property would be sufficient for any degree of aesthetic value. But many determinate properties of elegance, garishness, flamboyance, etc. would still be sufficient for degrees of aesthetic value. By analogy: being blue is neither sufficient for being dark nor bright. But many a specific shade

⁶³ Theories of colour in fact differ in which colours they consider primary and how they understand the notion. My choice is purely for illustrative purposes.

of blue is sufficient for being dark or bright. This in itself is the problem articulated by the objection from strict sufficiency, whether or not these determinate properties would qualify as aesthetic or not.

The third and final concern is that the objection from strict sufficiency against the purely qualitative overall determination thesis only applies to cases where aesthetic value is not vague. Meanwhile, vagueness is pervasive in the aesthetic domain. This is witnessed by the fact that although some things are clearly more aesthetically valuable than others, it is doubtful that there could be a definitive ranking of all things by aesthetic value. Some may explain this phenomenon as a symptom of our uncertainty about how aesthetically valuable things are. Others think that the vagueness runs deeper than that and that there is in fact no fully precise fact of the matter about how aesthetically valuable everything is (Adajian 2012; Kubala 2025, 450–51).

Wilson's account of metaphysical vagueness as the instantiation of a determinable without the instantiation of its determinates below a certain level can serve as a plausible articulation of the latter approach (2013). On her view, if it is a genuinely vague matter whether a certain object has some precise length n or m , then it has the determinable property of having a length between n and m . Yet it does not have any determinate property of having a length l where l falls between n and m . Length can be vague, for example, in the case for ordinary objects such as tables and chairs whose physical boundaries when examined at a microphysical level is not fully precise. Similarly, it is plausibly a genuinely vague matter whether *Abbey Road* or *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* is aesthetically better, although both are aesthetically excellent. Adapting Wilson's suggestion, this means that the two albums must fall

into the same bracket of high values along the determination dimension of degree of overall aesthetic value.

How does this generate a problem for the objection from strict sufficiency?

The case against the purely qualitative overall determination thesis proceeded by arguing that the strict sufficiency for degree of overall aesthetic value reappears at lower levels, especially the maximally determinate level. But in cases of vagueness there is no maximally determinate level. Since with aesthetic value vagueness is the rule, the objection from strict sufficiency would be powerless against the purely qualitative overall determination thesis if it required there to be a maximally determinate level of overall aesthetic value.

However, the objection was only presented in terms of maximally determinate aesthetic properties as a simplification of convenience. To account for cases of vagueness the same point can be made in a more general way, which equally applies to non-vague cases. Suppose that a monotonous but elegant object is aesthetically valuable overall to a vague degree between n and m . The most specific determinate of elegance in that object will be sufficient to make its bearer overall aesthetically valuable to a vague degree $n-m$. So will its most specific determinate of monotony.

Suppose further, just to add some detail to the case, that in this object elegance is a great merit and monotony is a slight flaw and that it has no other merits or flaws. Whether this is plausible will depend on how far from each other n and m are. Presumably, if n stood for being somewhat aesthetically bad overall and m for being aesthetically outstanding overall, both the elegance and the monotony would be individually sufficient for making their bearers somewhere in between. But this would be to overstate the vagueness usually found in aesthetic value. In this case, the

vagueness is likely to be between the middle and higher echelons of overall aesthetic goodness. And it is certainly not true that the slight defect of monotony and the great merit of elegance are individually sufficient for their bearer to fall into *this* bracket. Rather, they pull in separate directions and average out at *n-m*. The objection from strict sufficiency is just as strong in cases of vagueness.

This section considered three responses to the objection from strict sufficiency against the purely qualitative overall determination thesis. Since none genuinely threaten the objection, the purely qualitative overall determination thesis fares no better than the version of the overall determination thesis that embraced the valency constraint.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has presented a case against the overall kind thesis. It did so by means of a dilemma: should the view be understood as the *pro tanto* or overall determination thesis? The *pro tanto* kind thesis faces two problems. Firstly, it is unclear if there is such a property as *pro tanto* aesthetic value. Secondly, even if there is, the *pro tanto* kind thesis cannot be a plausible alternative to the overall kind thesis. Meanwhile, if the view is understood as the overall kind thesis, it faces the problem from strict sufficiency. In addition, the overall determination thesis, the most interesting and popular version of the overall kind thesis, faces the objection from strict sufficiency. The kind thesis has no way of avoiding its radically implausible commitments. We therefore have overwhelming reason to reject the kind thesis.

5. Dimensionalism

It is a common though not uncontroversial thought that elegance is a way of being aesthetically good and garishness is a way of being aesthetically bad (see Section 2.5.1). One way of articulating this thought is that elegance is a kind of aesthetic goodness and garishness a kind of aesthetic badness. I have argued that this view, the kind thesis, is one that we have overwhelming reason to reject.

Yet not all ways are kinds. Being saturated is a way of being coloured but saturation is not a kind of colour. Having a brain is a way of having a mind but a brain is not a kind of mind. Perhaps being elegant is a way of being aesthetically good in one of those ways. If so, then being elegant may still be a way of being aesthetically good even if elegance is not a kind of aesthetic goodness. The two examples just given illustrate two alternatives to the kind thesis which will be the focus of this chapter and the next.

According to what I have called dimensionalism, aesthetic properties are either determination dimensions of aesthetic value or values of determination dimensions of aesthetic value. That is, they stand to aesthetic value in one of two relationships. Either they stand to it as hue, saturation and brightness stand to colour. Or they stand to it as degrees of hue, saturation and brightness stand to colour. On this view, things are aesthetically valuable because they are elegant in the same way in which things are coloured because they have hue, saturation or brightness or some degree thereof. This is a view adjacent to but distinct from the determination thesis. As mentioned briefly in Section 4.4.2, dimensionalism is a position to which supporters of the determination thesis may be tempted to withdraw. I will argue, however, that they have plenty of reason not to do so.

According to what I will call *realizationism*, aesthetic properties stand to aesthetic value in a relation of realization. That is, the relationship between them is like that between my physical properties and my biological properties or like that between the properties of my brain and the properties of my mind, to give just a couple of examples. According to realizationism, things are aesthetically valuable because they are elegant in a way analogous to the way in which I have a brain because I have certain physical properties, or the way in which I have a mind because I have a brain. As these examples suggest, it may be plausible to think there is no single relation of realization but rather a family of similar relations (Baysan 2015). I will remain neutral on this issue. All that matters is that there is a contrast with the other relations under discussion: those between determinables and determinates, determinables and determination dimensions, and determinables and degrees of determination dimensions.

Overall, I believe that realizationism offers by far the best account of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. I will make a positive case for this conclusion in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, this chapter presents, motivates and criticises dimensionalism. Section 5.1 explains in more detail how the view ought to be understood. Then, Section 5.2 motivates dimensionalism in a way that could be particularly attractive to those who have subscribed to the determination thesis. However, Section 5.3 argues that there is good reason to reject the view altogether.

5.1. What is dimensionalism?

Dimensionalism says that aesthetic properties are determination dimensions of aesthetic value or their values. This is importantly distinct from the determination thesis. According to dimensionalism, aesthetic properties are *not* determinates of aesthetic value. Rather, they are the ways in which determinates of aesthetic value differ from each other. I will now say in more detail what determination dimensions and their values are. I will then explain why dimensionalism has a disjunctive structure: that is, why it says that aesthetic properties are *either* determination dimensions *or* their values.

In general, to differ from or to be similar to something is to differ from or to be similar to that thing *in some respect*. It is a characteristic of the determination relation that it contains a unity in diversity: determinates both differ with respect to a determinable and are similar with respect to it (see Section 1.3).

Focussing on the aspect of difference, we can give this claim more detail. Red and orange are both different with respect to colour. More specifically, they differ with respect to hue. Similarly, light blue and dark blue are different with respect to colour, but more specifically with respect to brightness in that they have different degrees of it. Crucially, this is not to deny that red, orange, light blue and dark blue differ in colour but only to add detail to the claim. To differ in colour just is to differ in hue, brightness or saturation.

The respects in which determinates of a determinable can differ are typically called determination dimensions. Here are some other plausible examples. The number and lengths of sides are some of the determination dimensions of two-dimensional shape. And, as argued in Section 4.3.2, sweet, salty, sour, bitter and umami are best understood as determination dimensions of flavour.

Determination dimensions come in different values, levels or degrees.⁶⁴

Being very dark and somewhat saturated are examples of values of determination dimensions of colour. Having three sides and having a side of 2 centimetres in length are examples of values of determination dimensions of two-dimensional shape. And being slightly salty, very sweet and quite bitter are values of the determination dimensions of flavour.

One difficulty that constantly presents itself when trying to speak precisely about dimensionalism is that many terms are ambiguous between denoting a determination dimension and a value thereof. For example, the word ‘brightness’ can be understood in two ways. Understood in one way, it is opposed to ‘darkness’. Understood in another, it includes darkness. It is in the latter sense that we can say of a dark colour that it has a low level of brightness. If we were using the term in the first sense, this claim would be simply false: a dark colour would not have *any* level of brightness because it is not bright. When ‘brightness’ is understood as including darkness it refers to a determination dimension of colour. This is the sense in which every shade of colour has some level of brightness. When ‘brightness’ is understood as opposed to ‘darkness’ it refers to a value of that determination dimension. More precisely, it refers to values of it above some vague benchmark.

It generally sounds more natural to use positive sounding terms as names for determination dimensions. For instance, it is more natural to say that a dark blue has a low level of brightness than that a bright blue has a low level of darkness. Perhaps this is because negativity carries connotations of absence. I will generally keep to this

⁶⁴ I will prefer the term ‘value’ over the others, since it can also apply to non-quantitative determination dimensions. This should not be confused with the sense of ‘value’ relevant to evaluation, as for example in ‘aesthetic value’.

convention, but I do not think it has much significance. The property of brightness, understood as inclusive of darkness, and the property of darkness, understood as inclusive of brightness, are the same property described in different ways.

Dimensionalism has two appealing features, the appreciation of which goes to explain the disjunctive structure of the view. Firstly, it neatly accommodates the fact that aesthetic properties are quantities. Secondly, it allows for a systematic explanation of the way in which many aesthetic properties come in opposed pairs (e.g. elegance-inelegance, grace-gracelessness).

As to the first point, aesthetic properties are quantities, at least in the minimal sense in which I have been using the term so far. That is, they are the sort of thing of which there can be more or less of: things can be elegant, garish, flamboyant, melancholy, etc. to various degrees. This thought is accommodated by dimensionalism. According to this view, there would be a determination dimension of elegance, the values of which are the various extents to which things can be elegant.

The claim that aesthetic properties are quantities is consistent with the thought that aesthetic properties are not *merely* quantities. As mentioned before, qualitative pluralists about aesthetic properties hold that aesthetic properties have both qualitative and quantitative determinates (see Section 1.3 and 2.2.1). The thought is that, to use Sibley's example again, the serenity of the close of the Goldberg Variations is different from that of a Claude Lorrain sunset (Sibley 1985, 172). The question whether and how dimensionalism can accommodate qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties will be addressed in Section 5.2.3.

The second appealing feature of dimensionalism is that it accommodates another important feature of aesthetic properties: the fact that they often appear in

opposed pairs. Besides elegance we have inelegance, besides grace gracelessness, etc. Dimensionalism offers a neat explanation of this phenomenon: such pairs can be conceived of as opposite sections of a single determination dimension, much like a number line that contains both positive and negative numbers. This would be by analogy to the way in which the determination dimension of degree of aesthetic value includes both aesthetic goodness and badness.

As mentioned above, terms are often ambiguous between determination dimensions and their values. This ambiguity also applies to aesthetic properties. ‘Elegance’ can be understood in two ways. The first, most natural understanding is one that contrasts with ‘inelegance’. This is how I have generally been using the word so far. The second understanding includes inelegance, much in the way in which a dark colour can be said to have a low level of brightness rather than no brightness at all. The second reading is harder to hear. The following example can help bring out the contrast. Suppose that we had the task of scoring the elegance of two objects on a scale from 1 to 10. The first object is hideously inelegant. Meanwhile, the second is neither elegant nor inelegant. There are two sensible ways of scoring these objects. One could award both objects a mark of 1 on the basis that neither is elegant. Alternatively, one could give the first object a mark of 1 and the second a mark of 5 on the basis that one is more elegant than the other. The two marking systems correspond to the two understandings of the word ‘elegance’.

Now, we are finally in a position to answer the following question: why should we be interested in a disjunctive view? That is, why is dimensionalism not simply defined as the view that aesthetic properties are determination dimensions of aesthetic value? Why add that aesthetic properties can also be the *values* of these determination dimensions?

The two features of aesthetic properties discussed above – quantitateness and the fact that they often come in opposing pairs – justify the disjunctive structure of dimensionalism in the following way. Suppose that dimensionalism said that aesthetic properties are determination dimensions of aesthetic value but denied that the values of these determination dimensions are aesthetic properties. In that case, the property of elegance which contrasts with inelegance would not be an aesthetic property. After all, as explained above, the two are usefully understood as two brackets of values of a single determination dimension, like positive and negative numbers on a number line. But denying that the elegance which contrasts with inelegance is aesthetic is plainly wrong. It should count as an aesthetic property if anything should. So, a view that counts determination dimensions as aesthetic properties should also count their values as aesthetic properties. An additional reason to do so is that properties such as being somewhat elegant or very elegant should count as aesthetic.

In fact, if there is any reason to take issue with the disjunctive structure of dimensionalism, it concerns the first disjunct. Perhaps determination dimensions could be reduced to their own values. For example, the property of brightness may just be the property of having a value of brightness between the minimum and maximum. If such a reduction is plausible, then perhaps dimensionalism need not be phrased disjunctively. However, since it is not clear whether such reductions are plausible, I will err on the side of caution by considering dimensionalism disjunctive.

Before I proceed to an assessment of dimensionalism, another matter needs clarifying. I have argued earlier that quantities are best understood as determinables (see Section 4.4.1). Doesn't this mean that the values of determination dimensions

just are determinates? And aren't determination dimensions just determinables? If so, doesn't dimensionalism collapse into the determination thesis?

The answer to the first two questions is: it depends. Red is a determinate of colour but a determinable of scarlet. In this sense, determinate and determinable status is relative. A similar relativity is characteristic of the status of being a determination dimension or a value thereof. Being bright, dark and bright to degree n are determinates of brightness. But they are not determinates of colour. They are values of a determination dimension of colour. Similarly, brightness is a determinable with regard to the properties of being bright, dark and bright to degree n . But with regard to colour, brightness is a determination dimension which has being bright, dark and bright to degree n among its values.

I have just said that the property of being dark is not a determinate of colour. But dark colours are certainly determinates of colour (as are bright ones, saturated ones, etc.). One may therefore think that the property of being dark ought to be a determinate of colour. However, this would be to overlook a subtle but important distinction between the property of being dark and the property of being a dark colour. The former is not a determinate of colour but of brightness. The latter is a determinate of colour but not of brightness.

Why think that the two properties are distinct? Because they have different determinates. Here are some determinates of being a dark colour: being a dark blue, dark green or dark grey. Here are some determinates of being dark: being somewhat dark, very dark and extremely dark. Being dark blue is not a determinate of being dark. Determinates of being dark are not distinguished by hue, unlike determinates of being a dark colour. A dark green and a dark blue that are dark to the same degree have the same darkness but different dark colours.

I find the distinction just made plausible. But some may be unconvinced. One may think that there is no such property as being dark as distinct from being a dark colour, but rather that there is a single property described under two guises. After all, nothing could be dark without being a dark colour.

Such scepticism would only bolster my overall case, since my overall aim is to argue that dimensionalism is implausible. And it certainly would be implausible if, as the above suggestion proposes, the values of a determinable's determination dimensions were its determinates. If that were the case, then dimensionalism would entail the determination thesis. And as the previous chapter has established, the determination thesis is an extremely implausible view.

I will henceforth assume that a determinable's determination dimensions and their values are not determinates of that determinable. This, I think, is as things actually are, but anyone who is unpersuaded can see this as a charitable concession to my opponent.

I have now explained what dimensionalism says and why it is articulated as a disjunctive claim. Section 5.2 explains why the view may be attractive, especially to those who hold or have held the determination thesis. Section 5.3 then argues that despite these attractive features the view should be rejected.

5.2. Motivation for dimensionalism

To the best of my knowledge, dimensionalism has so far been an unoccupied position.⁶⁵ However, it has a number of features which render it attractive, above all to those who are initially drawn to the determination thesis. Given the implausibility of the determination thesis, dimensionalism may seem to be an appealing fallback position. In fact, as I will argue in Section 5.3, it has highly implausible commitments and on some counts fares even worse than the determination thesis. However, a criticism of dimensionalism would be of little interest if there was nothing to be said in its favour. This section therefore makes a brief case for dimensionalism and notes points of particular appeal to those who found the determination thesis appealing.

There are at least six considerations in favour of dimensionalism. Two were already discussed in the previous section: dimensionalism accommodates the gradability of aesthetic properties and the way in which they often appear in opposite pairs. The third advantage is that dimensionalism avoids the objection from strict sufficiency. This point was already made in Section 4.4.2 but will be explained again in Section 5.2.1. The fourth advantage is that dimensionalism accounts for the motivation from description (see Section 5.2.2). The fifth is that it promises to identify the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value (see Section 5.2.3). This is a challenge that all qualitative pluralists face and which none have so far met. The sixth and final is that it can explain the mutual supervenience of aesthetic properties and aesthetic value (see Section 5.2.4).

⁶⁵ Kyle Kirby defends an analogous position about the relationship between aesthetic value and value, which will be discussed in Chapter 6 (forthcoming).

5.2.1. Objection from strict sufficiency

The greatest advantage of dimensionalism over the determination thesis is that it is invulnerable to the objection from strict sufficiency which proved lethal to the latter. I have already explained why this is the case in Section 4.4.2, but I will reiterate the point here.

The objection from strict sufficiency was the following: the determination thesis is committed to the claim that aesthetic properties, or at least determinate aesthetic properties, are sufficient for whatever degree of aesthetic value their bearer has. For example, if an elegant thing was aesthetically excellent, then its determinate elegance would be a determinate of aesthetic excellence. Any determinate aesthetic property is sufficient for its bearer's degree of aesthetic value, just as any specific shade of colour is sufficient for its degree of brightness. But this is plainly not the case, since some things are elegant but not aesthetically excellent. This problem could be avoided by understanding the determination thesis as the claim that aesthetic properties are determinates of *pro tanto* rather than overall aesthetic value. However, I have argued that any such view is deeply implausible (see Section 4.1).

Dimensionalism is unaffected by the argument from strict sufficiency. The problem for the determination thesis derives from the fact that determinates are individuated along each of their determination dimensions. However, the values of determination dimensions are not specified along other determination dimensions. A saturated blue and a saturated red are not two different saturations although they are different colours. Different saturations can be individuated by degree but they are not individuated by brightness or hue. So, if properties of elegance are determination dimensions or values thereof, they are not individuated by quantity of aesthetic value. This in turn means that they are not strictly sufficient for any quantity of

aesthetic value. With regard to the objection from strict sufficiency, dimensionalism is off the hook.

5.2.2. Motivation from description

Recall that there were three reasons to believe the determination thesis. The first was the motivation from description. The second was the motivation from mutual supervenience. And the third was the motivation from sufficiency for reason. Dimensionalism is able to account very well for the first two motivations. However, I will argue in Section 5.3.1 that the way it can account for the third motivation is implausible.

The starting point for the first two motivations for the determination thesis was qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value: the view that there are multiple qualitative determinates of aesthetic value. Yosemite and the Norfolk Broads are both aesthetically valuable. But, the thought is, the determinate aesthetic values they have are different, even if we were to concede that they are aesthetically valuable to equal degrees.

Qualitative pluralism does not entail the determination thesis. That there are qualitative determinates of aesthetic value plainly does not entail that aesthetic properties are such determinates. If qualitative pluralism was to support the determination thesis, additional arguments would be needed. I suggested two.

The first was the motivation from description (see Section 2.2.1). This begins with the common observation that appeal to aesthetic properties describes differences in qualitative aesthetic value better than appeal to non-aesthetic properties. For example, a good way of describing how Yosemite and the Norfolk Broads differ in aesthetic value is that Yosemite is majestic, powerful and sublime,

while the Norfolk Broads are tranquil and gently melancholy. A worse way of describing the difference, the thought goes, would be to say that Yosemite has massive cliffs of rock while the Norfolk Broads consist mostly of flat fenland; that Yosemite is largely forested while the Norfolk Broads has large reed beds, etc. The latter may be thought to be a good description of the national parks themselves. However, to many it would seem lacking as a description of their aesthetic value.

Why is the aesthetic description better than the non-aesthetic one? One answer (though, as we shall see in Section 6.4, not the only one) is that the former is more direct than the latter. A direct description is one that describes what something is or what it is like. Naming a determinable property's determinates amounts to describing what it is. So, by inference to the best explanation, the reason why aesthetic descriptions are superior to non-aesthetic descriptions could be that they name the determinates of aesthetic value. This thought motivates the determination thesis.

The motivation from description fits dimensionalism just as beautifully. One way of describing the determinates of a determinable is to name them. This is what aesthetic descriptions do according to the determination thesis. For example, you could directly describe a colour by saying that it is pink. Another way of describing the determinates of a determinable is to ascribe values along its determination dimensions. By analogy, instead of saying that a colour is pink one could specify the ranges of hue, brightness and saturation that correspond to pink. This is how aesthetic descriptions work on the dimensionalist view. One could compare them to plotting coordinates on a graph. For example, by saying that a work is elegant but somewhat monotonous one ascribes values along the determination dimensions of aesthetic value. Crucially, both ways of describing determinates are direct, since they

both describe what the colour is as opposed to, for example, the properties responsible for the colour.

In so far as the motivation from description is appealing, it gives us reason to accept dimensionalism. However, since the argument in its favour proceeds by inference to the best explanation, there may be other equally good explanations of the same phenomenon.

5.2.3. What are the determination dimensions of aesthetic value?

Dimensionalism has another merit that the determination thesis does not share. It explains what the determination dimensions of aesthetic value are. In doing so, it meets a challenge faced by all qualitative pluralists – and one that has so far never been met. However, meeting this challenge involves a trade-off: the inability to account for qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties.

According to qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value, determinates of aesthetic value can differ qualitatively. This, however, raises the question: what are the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value? The determination thesis does not offer an answer, since it is a thesis about the determinates of aesthetic value and not one about its determination dimensions. This is not a flaw in itself so long as some account of the determination dimensions can be offered. Yet none of the supporters of the determination thesis have so far even attempted to give such an account. More broadly, no qualitative pluralist about aesthetic value has ever met this challenge.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ An exactly analogous challenge is articulated by N.D. Cannon against the view that thick concepts are determinates of thin concepts (2020).

Dimensionalism does better than the determination thesis has done so far. It identifies the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value as aesthetic properties. In this way, it can elegantly meet a challenge to which no other qualitative pluralists have so far risen. More specifically, it can do so if it is understood as making the stronger claim that all, and not just some, determination dimensions of aesthetic value are aesthetic properties.

Dimensionalism can secure the advantage of being able to identify the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value. However, it comes at a price. It is one that, I suspect, few qualitative pluralists would be willing to pay. Unless they pay it, dimensionalism does not fare much better in identifying the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value than the determination thesis.

Qualitative pluralists about aesthetic value generally tend also to accept qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties, the view that aesthetic properties have not only quantitative but also qualitative determinates (see Section 2.2.1). According to this line of thought, things that are elegant or garish or flamboyant to the same degree can still differ in their elegance or garishness or flamboyance in qualitative respects (Sibley 1985; Zangwill 2013). For example, the majesty of the Hagia Sophia may be different from that of Yosemite National Park, even if neither is more majestic than the other. That is to say, they would both have the determinable property of majesty, but they would have qualitatively different determinate properties of majesty.

If elegance can only differ in quantity of elegance, then the dimensionalist only needs one determination dimension to account for it. However, if elegance can also vary in quality, then the dimensionalist must postulate additional determination

dimensions. But what are they? Dimensionalism has no ready answer to that question. As a result, if qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties is true, then dimensionalism loses an argument in its favour: its identification of the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value is dramatically incomplete.

Dimensionalism faces a dilemma. If it says that *all* determination dimensions of aesthetic value are aesthetic properties, it gains the following advantage. It is able to identify the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value and thereby meet a challenge that no qualitative pluralist about aesthetic value has hitherto met. However, reaping this benefit comes at the cost of the inability to account for qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties.

On the other hand, dimensionalism can claim that *some but not all* determination dimensions of aesthetic value are aesthetic properties. In that case, it stands a chance of accounting for qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties. However, dimensionalists then carry the burden of saying what these qualitative determination dimensions are.

In short, dimensionalism cannot have it all. It cannot both identify all the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value and accommodate qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties.

This raises the question: why believe qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties in the first place? Qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value and qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties are logically independent. It is therefore open to qualitative pluralists about aesthetic value to deny qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties. The first horn of the dilemma may well be unproblematic.

Indeed, rejecting qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties is a possibility, although my sense is that few qualitative pluralists about aesthetic value would choose this route. The question of the plausibility of qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value will be discussed in Section 6.6 and many of the considerations raised there generalise to qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties. As I will argue there, there is indeed some reason for scepticism.

5.2.4. Motivation from mutual supervenience

Section 5.2.2 discussed one way of closing the gap between qualitative pluralism and the determination thesis. Here, I discuss another: the mutual supervenience of aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. The thought is that there can be no difference in aesthetic value without a change in aesthetic properties. And there can be no difference in aesthetic properties without a change in aesthetic value. Or at least some qualitative pluralists have thought so, although I have expressed scepticism as to whether this can be treated as a given (see Section 2.2.2).

Such mutual supervenience would be striking if it obtained and would cry out for explanation. The determination thesis provides one. The mutual supervenience is just like the mutual supervenience of colour and shades. Objects differing in colour, if of colour, must have different shades and objects of different shades, if of any shade, must differ in colour. I could not change the shade of my walls without changing their colour. And I could not change their colour without changing their shade. According to the determination thesis, the mutual supervenience of aesthetic properties and aesthetic value is just like that.

Dimensionalism also offers a plausible explanation of mutual supervenience. This explanation is slightly more straightforward if the view is understood as the

claim that *all* rather than just some determination dimensions of aesthetic value are aesthetic properties. Objects differing in colour, if of colour, must have different hue, brightness or saturation. And objects of different hue, brightness or saturation must differ in colour. By analogy, according to dimensionalism, if something differs with respect to some aesthetic property, then it differs in the value of some determination dimensions of aesthetic value and therefore differs in respect of aesthetic value. And if it differs in respect of aesthetic value, then it must differ in the value of some determination dimension of it and therefore in some aesthetic property.

Now, suppose that dimensionalism only says that *some* determination dimensions of aesthetic value are aesthetic properties. As discussed in Section 5.2.3, dimensionalists may be willing to make this claim to accommodate qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties. In that case, they need to postulate additional determination dimensions by which aesthetic properties can vary. However, this does not threaten the mutual supervenience of aesthetic properties on aesthetic value for the following reason. These additional determination dimensions are postulated with the sole purpose of allowing individual aesthetic properties to differ qualitatively. To differ in one of these determination dimensions is to differ in an aesthetic property. And since these are determination dimensions of aesthetic value, to differ in them is also to differ in aesthetic value. Mutual supervenience is therefore secured.

5.3. Against dimensionalism

Given the discussion above, dimensionalism may seem to be an appealing alternative to the determination thesis, especially to qualitative pluralists. This may make it seem to be a plausible fallback position for those who previously subscribed to the determination thesis.

This section argues that dimensionalism is an unattractive view and should be regarded as such even by those for whom the determination thesis held some appeal. Setting aside the trade-offs discussed in Section 5.2.3, it has two major flaws. Firstly, it cannot accommodate the thought that being elegant is a way of being aesthetically good. More generally, it does not seem to have the resources to explain sufficiency for reason. Secondly, it is just as vulnerable to the objection from determinate incompatibility as the determination thesis. These features make dimensionalism inadequate as an account of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value.

5.3.1. Sufficiency for reason

This chapter began with the following thought. It is common to think that being elegant is a way of being aesthetically good and being garish is a way of being aesthetically bad (though, as discussed in Section 2.1.2, this not uncontroversial). But not all ways of being P are kinds of P. Notably, determination dimensions and their values are ways of being P but not kinds of P. For example, being of some saturation or another is a way of being coloured. And being highly saturated is a way of being coloured. But neither is a kind of colour. Being a determination dimension of P is a way of being P. And so is being a value of a determination dimension of P.

Dimensionalism can therefore comfortably accommodate the common thought that elegance and garishness are ways of being aesthetically valuable. But this shows too little. The thought that needs to be accommodated is that elegance is a way of being aesthetically good and garishness is a way of being aesthetically bad. However, I will argue that dimensionalism struggles to make space for these claims. The most that it can show is that elegance and garishness are both ways of being aesthetically valuable, where being aesthetically valuable is taken to include being aesthetically good, bad and possibly neutral. This is a grave flaw, since it underpins dimensionalism's inability to account for a basic fact about the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value.

To see this, let's take a few steps back. Why should anyone think that being elegant is a way of being aesthetically good? The first observation to make is that attributions of aesthetic properties are sufficient for reason, which means that they can on their own serve as reasons for *pro tanto* attributions of aesthetic value. More specifically, positive aesthetic properties serve as reasons for *pro tanto* attributions of aesthetic goodness and negative ones serve as reasons for *pro tanto* attributions of aesthetic badness. For example, 'The picture is *pro tanto* aesthetically good because it is elegant' is well-substantiated but 'The picture is aesthetically bad because it is elegant' is not.

Sufficiency for reason requires explanation. One such explanation is provided by the way thesis, which says that positive aesthetic properties are ways of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good and negative aesthetic properties are ways of being *pro tanto* aesthetically bad. Equivalently, whatever has a positive aesthetic property thereby has *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness and whatever has a negative aesthetic property thereby has *pro tanto* aesthetic badness.

Section 4.1.1 discussed how the claim that something is *pro tanto* good or bad in virtue of P can be understood. In particular, it argued that it is implausible to understand the claim as attributing the property of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness or badness. Rather, I have suggested that the best understanding of what it means to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good in virtue of P is that the object's property P contributes positively to its overall degree of aesthetic value (and analogously, *mutatis mutandis*, for the negative). The way thesis can therefore be understood in at least two ways: one that accepts that there are properties of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness and badness and one that instead takes talk of *pro tanto* as a way of speaking of contributions to overall aesthetic value.

The way thesis can explain sufficiency for reason. But what explains the way thesis? The determination thesis provides one neat explanation: elegance provides a reason to judge its bearers to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good because it is a determinate of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness. This explanation understands the way thesis in the first way described above, that is as assuming that there are properties of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness and badness. This simple explanation constituted part of the appeal of the determination thesis (for a detailed discussion see Section 2.1).

Dimensionalism does not offer an explanation of sufficiency for reason. This is because it struggles to accommodate the way thesis. And it is obscure what other explanation it could give.

Why does dimensionalism struggle to accommodate the way thesis? If elegance is a way of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good, then it contributes positively to an object's overall degree of aesthetic value. Applied to dimensionalism, this would mean that there is a contributive relationship between the values of some determination dimensions of aesthetic value: namely, between the determination

dimensions of degree of elegance and degree of aesthetic value. But there are no contributive relationships between the values of any determinable's determination dimensions. So, it can't both be the case that dimensionalism is true and that elegance is a way of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good.

Now, let me justify the argument's premises. I have argued in Section 4.1.1 that if something is *pro tanto* aesthetically good in virtue of its elegance, then elegance contributes positively to its bearer's overall degree of aesthetic value. In fact, I have argued for this claim as an analysis of what it is to be *pro tanto* aesthetically good. However, there is good reason to think that this claim is true even if it is incorrect as an analysis. To see this, think: can something be *pro tanto* aesthetically good in virtue of its elegance without the elegance contributing positively to its bearer's overall degree of aesthetic value?

One may think that cases of reversal are counterexamples. For example, elegance may make a rustic play aesthetically worse by making it incongruous. However, in this case it is plausibly the incongruousness, not the elegance *per se* which contributes negatively to its bearer's degree of aesthetic value. Or at least this is what any advocate of the way thesis ought to say. Otherwise, reversal would simply become a counterexample to the way thesis (on this point, see Section 2.1.1). The first premise of the argument rests on solid ground.

Why believe that there are no contributive relationships between the values of any determinable's determination dimensions? In general, the values of determination dimensions are independent of each other. For example, a colour's brightness and saturation do not contribute to its hue. Similarly, the bitterness and sourness of a flavour are independent of its sweetness.

If dimensionalism is true, the determination dimensions of aesthetic value behave very differently. The determination dimension of degree of aesthetic value would depend on the values of other determination dimensions, notably those of degree of individual aesthetic properties. A higher value on the determination dimension of degree of elegance would contribute to a higher value on the determination dimension of degree of aesthetic value. Similarly, a higher value on the determination dimension of degree of garishness would lower the value of the determination dimension of degree of aesthetic value. Such interdependence is highly uncharacteristic of determination dimensions. It is as if the fact that an object is saturated made it brighter and the fact that it has a red hue made it less bright and therefore its overall brightness ended up somewhere in the middle. This marks a stark contrast in the behaviour of the determination dimensions of colour and aesthetic value on the dimensionalist view.

The dimensionalist may respond by saying that this disanalogy only exposes the limitations of using colour as the main paradigm for determination relations. Perhaps colour is unusual in having determination dimensions that are fully independent of each other. The lengths of a shape's sides are among its determination dimensions. Perhaps its perimeter could also be among them. But a shape's perimeter depends on the lengths of its sides. So, if perimeter is a determination dimension of shape, then the values of a determinable's determination dimensions can be interdependent.

However, it is unclear whether perimeter is a determination dimension of shape. And there is no clear example of interaction between the determination dimension of any other determinable. Perhaps some general theories of

determination could settle this issue. However, as far as I can tell, the issue of such interaction has not been addressed.

More generally, there is a scarcity of clear examples of determination dimensions. The case of colour is the clearest there is. The problem for dimensionalism is therefore that it would have to lean very heavily on a controversial or marginal feature of determination dimensions. And it would need to do so to explain a feature of aesthetic properties as central as sufficiency for reason, at least if it were to do so by means of the way thesis.

In addition, there is an extra layer to the interdependence of determination dimensions. Aesthetic properties frequently depend on each other. For example, that a play is both rustic and elegant makes it incongruous. So, in a dimensionalist framing, a high value along the determination dimensions of degree of rusticity and elegance would contribute to a high value along the determination dimension of incongruity. It is particularly common for other aesthetic properties to depend on neutral aesthetic properties. For example, that something is sad can make it moving or depressing or sentimental. As a result, the interactions among determination dimensions that dimensionalism would need to postulate would be complex indeed.

Could dimensionalism account for sufficiency for reason without accepting the way thesis? Perhaps, but I do not see how it could do so. Dimensionalism certainly has no clear explanatory potential on this front that would speak in its favour. The inability to explain sufficiency for reason speaks very strongly against dimensionalism. It is a given that elegance gives reasons to judge its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good and not *pro tanto* aesthetically bad. Any account of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value that does not explain this does not fulfil its job description. On this important count, dimensionalism fails.

5.3.2. Objection from determinate incompatibility

The second significant weakness of dimensionalism is that it is vulnerable to the objection from determinate incompatibility which I have earlier levelled at the determination thesis (see Section 4.3). The problem for the determination thesis emerged due to the following feature of the determination relation, which articulates the conditions under which determinates can co-occur:

Maximal determinate incompatibility: If x has determinate P of determinable Q at time t , then x can have at t some other determinate R of Q only if x has some determinate S of Q which is a determinate of both P and R .

Simply put, maximal determinate incompatibility says that something can have two determinate properties of the same determinable at the same time only if it has a determinate of both (see Section 4.3.2 for qualifications). For example, an object can only be both red and of a bright colour by having a shade which is a bright red.

This means that on the determination thesis if something has two different aesthetic properties, then it must have a property that is a determinate of both. For example, if something is both elegant and monotonous, then it must have a single property that is a determinate of both elegance and monotony. The properties of elegance and monotony would themselves be distinct, just as the properties of brightness and redness are distinct. However, at the most determinate level there would only be a single property that could be described as an elegant melancholy or a melancholy elegance. By analogy: something that is both red and bright has two distinct properties of brightness and redness, but at the maximally determinate level there is a single shade of bright red. As explained in Section 4.3.1, such a commitment would be highly implausible.

Dimensionalism denies that aesthetic properties are determinates of aesthetic value. It therefore avoids the commitment that all objects that are both elegant and monotonous have an aesthetic property that is a determinate of both. However, a very similar problem arises. Namely, on the dimensionalist view there is still a single property that is both elegant and monotonous. By analogy, if an object is both bright and highly saturated, then it has a determinate property that is a bright, highly saturated colour.

This commitment is implausible for a reason that equally applied to the determination thesis. It is possible to perceive some of an object's aesthetic properties without perceiving others even when devoting sustained attention. But it is only rarely, when one lacks time or attention, that one can notice a colour's hue without noticing its brightness and saturation. The values of the determination dimensions of colour are perceived together, except in exceptional circumstances. Much the same could be said of the values of the determination dimensions of flavour: the properties of being sweet, salty, sour, bitter and umami are normally perceived together. But this is not the case with aesthetic properties. It is common to, for example, notice an object's garishness while failing to grasp its dynamism. This can happen even if sustained attention is given to the object. In this respect, aesthetic properties do not behave in the way we would expect from the determination dimensions or their values.

The vulnerability to the objection from determinate incompatibility speaks against dimensionalism. However, I concede that it does not speak against it as strongly as against the determination thesis, for which the objection also created two other problems. More broadly, while my aim has been to criticise dimensionalism, neither the considerations raised in this or in the previous section are as decisive as

those levelled against the determination thesis. Still, there is an alternative account of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value that does not suffer from either defect. It is to that view that I turn in Chapter 6.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter considered an alternative account of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value, dimensionalism. Although the view has some advantages over the determination thesis, it turns out to be implausible for two reasons. Firstly, it is at least unclear whether it can accommodate sufficiency for reason, a feature that any account of this sort needs to either explain or explain away. Secondly, just like the determination thesis, it falls prey to the objection from determinate incompatibility. This provides some good reason to reject dimensionalism, even if it is not as conclusive as in the case of the determination thesis – especially since, as the next chapter shows, a more plausible alternative is readily available.

6. Realizationism

This chapter offers a positive alternative to the kind thesis and dimensionalism. This view is realizationism, which says that the relation between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value is one of realization. Examples of other realization relations include the one between my physical properties and my biological properties and the one between my brain and my mind. It is this view that I will defend as an account of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value.

I make a case in favour of realizationism by arguing that it avoids the issues faced by the determination thesis and dimensionalism while being able to accommodate the attractive features of these views. It also has the advantage of being consistent with a wide range of views about the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. Notably, it accommodates the way thesis, which claims that aesthetic properties are ways of being aesthetically valuable, but it is also consistent with its falsity. Realizationism is also consistent with the falsity of an assumption that I have so far conceded: qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value. As Section 6.6 explains, there is reason at least not to take this view for granted.

Section 6.1 introduces realizationism. Section 6.2 discusses the ways in which realizationism can account for sufficiency for reason, and the corresponding manners in which the details of the realizationist view should be filled in. In doing so, it also shows how realizationism avoids the objection from strict sufficiency. Section 6.3 shows how realizationism avoids the other argument to which both the determination thesis and dimensionalism succumbed: the objection from determinate incompatibility. Section 6.4 argues that realizationism can accommodate

the motivation from description, though in a very different way to the views previously considered. Section 6.5 argues that realizationism can accommodate but does not entail the mutual supervenience of aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. This, again, bears witness to the view's versatility. Finally, as mentioned above, Section 6.6 sheds some doubt on qualitative pluralism.

6.1. What is realizationism?

The realization relation contrasts with determination in a number of ways. The clearest way of demarcating the two is the following. Whereas determinates of a determinable differ with regard to a determinable, realizer properties do not differ with respect to the realized property. Red and blue differ from each other with respect to colour (more specifically, with respect to hue). But different brain structures do not differ in mental respects even if they realize different mental states. The brain structures give rise to mental states, but they differ from other brain structures in physical, not in mental respects.⁶⁷

The contrast between the two relations can be brought out further by the following case which was originally presented by Funkhouser (2023, 9). Consider some maximally determinate property of pain – say, an intense, stinging pain of a specific sort. This very pain could in principle be realized by a number of different brain structures. After all, many properties are *multiply realizable*: that is, they can be realized by a number of different properties. Now, if the determination and realization relations were identical, then the brain structures would be determinates

⁶⁷ This point has been made forcefully by Eric Funkhouser against Stephen Yablo and Jessica Wilson's claim that mental properties are determinates of physical properties (Yablo 1992; Wilson 2009; Funkhouser 2014, 16–25; 2023).

of the maximally determinate pain. But, by hypothesis, the pain in question is maximally determinate: it does not have any further determinates of its own. Stinging, intense pains that differ only in the properties that realize them do not differ at all with respect to pain. They only differ in the properties that realize them.

Realization, then, is distinct from determination. But what would it be for the relation between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value to be one of realization? Although the term ‘realizationism’ is my coinage (at least in this context), many philosophers have articulated views that are best understood as realizationist (Sibley 1974; Levinson 2005; 2006; Spoor 2023). Monroe Beardsley articulates the view in a particularly compelling way:

Unlike some aestheticians, particularly those associated with the phenomenological school, I do not want to say that unity and gracefulness are “values,” but rather that they are (aesthetically) valuable, that they contribute aesthetic value to the objects that have them. (1973, 62)⁶⁸

Beardsley denies that unity and gracefulness are what he calls ‘values’ and what I would call kinds or determinates of value. But, crucially, he does not deny that things are aesthetically valuable because they are unified or graceful: unity and grace contribute (positively) to their bearers’ value. Here is a different way of putting this point. According to realizationism, unity and grace are aesthetically good-making properties. They are not the aesthetic goodness that gets made.

Here is another way of making vivid the difference between realizationism and the determination thesis. It consists in an image presented in an early paper by Nick Zangwill, a later supporter of the determination thesis. Zangwill talks of ‘a

⁶⁸ It is not entirely clear which aestheticians associated with the phenomenological school Beardsley means. Roman Ingarden would be a likely candidate (Ingarden 1964, 204–5).

three layered cake': aesthetic value depends on aesthetic properties which in turn depend on non-aesthetic properties (1995, 324). Ironically, the picture fits realizationism much better than the determination thesis.

Realizationism takes the picture at face value: aesthetic value is realized by aesthetic properties which in turn are realized by non-aesthetic properties. We can imagine that the cake has a sponge base and a layer of chocolate and is topped with cream. Each layer is distinct. Now, if the determination thesis is true, the illustration is inaccurate. On this view, non-aesthetic properties realize aesthetic properties which in turn are determinates of aesthetic value. The determination thesis collapses the top two layers: it is analogous to saying that the kind of cream on the sponge base is chocolate-flavoured cream. This in turn would mean that there is no separate layer of chocolate. The cake would have only two layers.

Of course, much of the detail of how realizationism conceives of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value still remains to be spelled out. However, when it comes to these details the view offers a lot of choice. Indeed, a particularly appealing feature of realizationism is that it remains neutral on a variety of contentious issues. This makes it an appealing view for a wide range of philosophers.

Firstly, it can present an elegant explanation of how aesthetic properties are ways of being aesthetically valuable. But it is also consistent with alternative explanations of sufficiency for reason. This makes it an appealing view both for those who think that elegance always makes its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good and those who believe that its usual positive contribution can sometimes be cancelled. This line of thought will be developed in Section 6.2.

Secondly, realizationism is consistent with understanding aesthetic properties as non-evaluative but also, at least on many understandings of the term, as evaluative. This has been a fault line in many debates about aesthetic properties, although the distinction between evaluative and non-evaluative properties is far from clear (Sibley 1974, 90–91; Eklund 2011; 2013). At any rate, whatever it takes for a property to be aesthetically evaluative, if anything should count as an aesthetically evaluative property, aesthetic value should and so should its determinates. The determination thesis is wedded to understanding aesthetic properties as aesthetically evaluative. Realizationism is not. This should make it immediately attractive to those who understand aesthetic properties as non-evaluative.⁶⁹

This is not to say that realizationism is inconsistent with aesthetic properties being aesthetically evaluative. However, much depends on how exactly this notion is to be understood. One reasonable understanding of what it is to be evaluative is to be action-guiding. Since there seems to be no reason why one action-guiding property could not realize another, realizationism could allow aesthetic properties to be evaluative in this sense. Alternatively, perhaps an aesthetically evaluative property is one that necessarily contributes positively or negatively to its bearer's aesthetic value. Realizationism can certainly accommodate this possibility too, at least for valenced aesthetic properties.

With other notions of evaluativeness, it may be more difficult for realizationism to accommodate the thought that aesthetic properties are evaluative. Zangwill has suggested that we should believe that aesthetic properties contribute

⁶⁹ Should dimensionalism understand aesthetic properties as evaluative or non-evaluative? The answer is far from clear. For relevant discussion, see Cannon (2020).

positively or negatively to their bearers' aesthetic value not just necessarily but *essentially* (2024). That is, he holds that part of what it is to be a given aesthetic property is to contribute positively or negatively to its bearer's aesthetic value. It does seem much less likely that the evaluativeness of aesthetic properties so understood could be accommodated by realizationism. It is worth asking, however, how we can be certain that valenced aesthetic properties contribute to their bearers' aesthetic value essentially and not just necessarily. Still, even if realizationism cannot accommodate this possibility, it is a virtue of the view that it can accommodate a wide range of stances on the question of the evaluativeness of aesthetic properties.

Thirdly, realizationism is consistent with but does not entail qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value. Throughout the discussion so far I have been conceding the truth of qualitative pluralism. There is no need to deny it in order to reject the determination thesis and dimensionalism in favour of realizationism. Determinates of aesthetic value may differ both in quantity and quality even if neither any of these determinates nor any of the respects in which they differ from each other should be identified with aesthetic properties. Realizationism itself is silent on what the qualitative determinates and determination dimensions of aesthetic value are. But it is consistent with qualitative pluralism.⁷⁰ Of course, those realizationists who accept qualitative pluralism ought to identify these determinates and determination dimensions. However, as already argued above, the determination thesis and dimensionalism face a similar challenge.

⁷⁰ I have suggested that Frank Sibley could be plausibly read as a qualitative pluralist realizationist. See discussion of Dominic Lopes's reading of Sibley in Section 2.2.

Importantly, realizationism is also consistent with the falsity of qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value. Perhaps aesthetic value, like weight, only differs in quantity but not in quality. This possibility is inconsistent with the determination thesis and dimensionalism. Yet realizationism can allow it. And, as I argue in Section 6.6, the falsity of qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value is a prospect that we ought to take seriously.

Realizationism, if it is plausible, ought to be a view with wide appeal, since it can accommodate a range of views that are or ought to be matters of controversy. But I have said nothing so far about its plausibility. This is the task of the next four sections.

6.2. Sufficiency for reason

Judgements such as ‘It is *pro tanto* aesthetically good because it is elegant’ are well-substantiated but ones such as ‘It is *pro tanto* aesthetically bad because it is elegant’ are not. Why is this? Any account of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value ought to explain or perhaps explain away this phenomenon, which I have called sufficiency for reason.

As discussed at length in Chapter 2, there are two broad strategies which can be used to explain sufficiency for reason. The first is to endorse the way thesis. This is the claim that positive aesthetic properties are ways of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good while negative aesthetic properties are ways of being *pro tanto* aesthetically bad. The second strategy is to reject the way thesis and claim that elegance does not always make its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good. Instead, one can offer an alternative explanation such as that elegance makes its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good typically or by default.

Realizationism can explain sufficiency for reason in either way. In fact, there are two different explanations realizationists can offer even if they pursue the route that embraces the way thesis.

How can realizationism accommodate the way thesis? Here is the simplest way. Realizationists could say that positive aesthetic properties realize *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness and negative aesthetic properties realize *pro tanto* aesthetic badness. Neutral aesthetic properties could either realize neutral aesthetic value or sometimes realize *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness and sometimes *pro tanto* aesthetic badness.

However, I do not think that this is the best way of accommodating the way thesis. It still needs to explain the relationship between the various properties of *pro tanto* goodness and badness and an object's overall aesthetic value. But much more importantly, it assumes that there are such properties as *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness and badness. Yet I have argued that we have excellent reason to doubt that such properties are instantiated (see Section 4.1.1).

Here, then, is a way for realizationism to accommodate the way thesis that does better on both fronts. I have suggested that the claim that elegance makes its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good should not be understood as saying that it endows them with the property of *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness. Rather, it should be taken to say that elegance contributes positively to its bearers' overall aesthetic value (compare the quotation from Beardsley in Section 6.1). Aesthetic properties do not realize aesthetic value individually but only jointly. Each individual aesthetic property contributes to its bearer's aesthetic value but does not realize it alone.

In this respect, the dependence of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties resembles the dependence of aesthetic value on non-aesthetic properties. The Hagia

Sophia is aesthetically good in part on account of its pendentive domes. But its domes do not realize its overall aesthetic goodness alone. Rather, the totality of its aesthetically relevant non-aesthetic properties does. An object's non-aesthetic properties only *jointly* realize its overall aesthetic value. According to realizationism's best way of accommodating the way thesis, so do aesthetic properties.

Yet, even if we assume this picture to be true, there is still a disanalogy between aesthetic and non-aesthetic properties. Suppose that it is true. Then, aesthetic properties could be ways of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good or bad. Indeed, all valenced aesthetic properties would. But non-aesthetic properties are generally not ways of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good or bad. The Hagia Sophia's pendentive domes make it *pro tanto* aesthetically good, i.e. contribute positively to its overall aesthetic value. But having pendentive domes is not a way of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good because not everything that has pendentive domes is thereby *pro tanto* aesthetically good. Meanwhile, on this view, majesty would be a way of being *pro tanto* aesthetically good, since anything that has it would thereby be aesthetically good. However, having *all* the non-aesthetic properties of the Hagia Sophia is a way of being aesthetically good. After all, anything that could have these properties – namely, the Hagia Sophia and probably nothing else – is thereby aesthetically good overall.

In this way, realizationism can simply accommodate the way thesis and thereby explain sufficiency for reason. In the same way, it can also avoid the objection from strict sufficiency which proved lethal to the determination thesis. The source of the problem was that the determination thesis had the commitment that each individual aesthetic property was sufficient for its bearer's overall aesthetic value. Realizationism, on the method of accommodating the way thesis we are

considering, has no such feature. Elegance contributes positively to its bearer's overall aesthetic value and realizes it jointly with all of its other aesthetic properties. But elegance neither realizes nor is sufficient for its bearer's overall aesthetic value on its own.

Realizationism can also account for sufficiency for reason without accepting the way thesis. This point is worth stressing because many philosophers have rejected the way thesis (Bender 1995; Sibley 2001a; Dickie 2004; Dancy 2004; Bergqvist 2010; Stecker 2019, 71–77). Neither the determination thesis nor dimensionalism are able to accommodate this rejection. Realizationism can.

The rejection of the way thesis is generally motivated by the thought that in cases of reversal the usual evaluative import of an aesthetic property is cancelled rather than outweighed. For example, the elegance of decorations may make them *pro tanto* aesthetically bad if they are prepared for a young child's birthday. The way thesis entails that even in this case the decorations must be *pro tanto* aesthetically good in virtue of their elegance, even if they are also *pro tanto* aesthetically bad in virtue of it. This commitment sounds implausible to many.

How to explain sufficiency for reason without accepting the way thesis? Section 2.1.2. outlined two broad strategies. According to the first, positive aesthetic properties *usually* make their bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good (Bender 1995; for discussion see Bergqvist 2010, 7–10). Whatever its merits, this explanation can be comfortably accommodated by realizationism.

According to the second strategy, what explains sufficiency for reason is that it takes extenuating circumstances for elegance to fail to make its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good. In other words, elegance makes its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good *by default*. I take it to be a burden on the defaultness theorist to articulate what

makes for an extenuating circumstance. However, at least schematically, such an explanation should fit into a picture presented by realizationism. The picture is this. Elegance, jointly with all other aesthetic properties its bearer has, realizes its bearer's overall aesthetic value. In the absence of impediments, it makes its bearer *pro tanto* aesthetically good. In the presence of impediments, it makes its bearer *pro tanto* aesthetically bad or neutral.

Note that I do not say that elegance realizes *pro tanto* aesthetic goodness. This is because, as I have argued, it is doubtful whether there are any *pro tanto* properties. In the absence of impediments, elegance makes its bearer aesthetically good in some respect. But this should be understood as a claim about the sort of contribution that it makes to the property of overall aesthetic value which it realizes jointly with other aesthetic properties.

Both strategies allow realizationism to avoid the objection from strict sufficiency. Elegance is certainly not sufficient for overall aesthetic goodness on either. After all, both are explicitly constructed so as to allow the possibility that some things may be elegant and not even *pro tanto* aesthetically good.

In conclusion, realizationism can account for sufficiency for reason both by accepting the way thesis and by rejecting it. The latter possibility marks it out as unique in comparison to the determination thesis and dimensionalism, both of which were wedded to the way thesis. Furthermore, realizationism steers far clear of the objection from strict sufficiency which proved lethal to the overall kind thesis.

6.3. Objection from determinate incompatibility

Realizationism can also avoid the other argument against the determination thesis, which also applied to dimensionalism. This objection relied on maximal determinate incompatibility, a notable feature of the determination relation. But it is at the very least doubtful whether such a feature holds of realization. That is, the following is far from being obviously true:

Realizer incompatibility: If x has realizer P of realized property Q at time t , then x can have at t some other realizer R of Q only if x has some realizer S of Q which is a realizer of both P and R .

It is at least unclear whether realizer incompatibility is true in general or as applied to aesthetic properties. But crucially, even if it were true, it would not lead to the disastrous results it brings for the determination thesis or dimensionalism. The problem there was that if something was both elegant and monotonous, then, whenever the two properties were co-instantiated, either so was a determinate of both or a property that had both. Yet I have argued that both consequences lead to implausible results.

No similar worry applies to realizationism. Suppose even that realizer incompatibility is true. If so, then if realizationism is true, whatever is both elegant and monotonous must have some property that is a realizer of both. But neither problematic consequence follows from this. Firstly, it does not follow that the common realizer needs to be a determinate of both elegance and monotony. Secondly, neither does it follow that the common realizer must possess both properties.

Still, one may wonder whether this is enough for realizationism to avoid the objection. After all, many philosophers have understood realization reductively,

insisting that realized properties are nothing over and above the realizing properties. Suppose that monotony and elegance have the same realizer and are nothing over and above that realizer. In that case, the monotony and elegance are not distinct at the fundamental level in a way analogous to that in which two co-occurring determinates are not distinct at the fundamental, maximally determinate level. This consequence may be equally implausible as those faced by the determination thesis and dimensionalism.

There is much debate whether realized properties can be something over and above the properties that realize them. It may well be that general metaphysical considerations speak in favour of the view that they cannot. This is a matter that cannot be settled here. However, any such view would have the relative disadvantage of sacrificing the ability to account for how things seem with respect to aesthetic properties. Since one would need strong reasons to endorse such a general picture of realization, accepting a less plausible view of the metaphysics of aesthetic properties may well count as collateral damage. However, I take it as an objective of a detailed study such as this to try to account for the phenomena as well as possible. The enterprise contains the risk of being swept away by views that are willing to sacrifice fidelity to appearances for theoretical virtue or the ability to explain more fundamental phenomena. Nothing that I could say about aesthetic properties could stand in the way of such a view. It would have already bitten harder bullets, such as conceding that minds are nothing over and above brains or that chairs are nothing over and above the subatomic particles that make them up.

If such a view of realization is true of all realization relations, then it is a weakness of realizationism that it cannot account for the apparent distinctness of co-occurring aesthetic properties. However, it is not a *relative* weakness in the sense that

all alternative views are bound to struggle with the same problem. Aesthetic properties and aesthetic value are both higher-level properties. As such, any account of them will be open to the same challenge that they are nothing over and above the lower-level properties on which they depend. If so, then realizationism is not at a relative disadvantage compared to any alternatives to it.

Nonetheless, on many non-reductive views of realization, realized properties can be something over and above the properties that realize them. Such understandings of realization are best suited to explain the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value, since they allow co-occurring aesthetic properties to be distinct, even at more fundamental levels.⁷¹

6.4. Motivation from description

The last two sections argued that realizationism avoids the objections to which the determination thesis and dimensionalism are vulnerable, as well as showing that it can plausibly explain sufficiency for reason in a variety of ways. This section and the next consider two more motivations raised in support of the determination thesis. I argue that realizationism can plausibly accommodate both. This should make the view appealing even to those who were attracted to the determination thesis.

Realizationism accounts for the motivation from description in a very different way to the determination thesis and dimensionalism. In both of the latter cases, the apparent fact that appeal to aesthetic properties describes qualitative aesthetic value better than appeal to non-aesthetic properties was explained in the

⁷¹ See, for example, Jessica Wilson's notion of strong emergence (2021).

same way. Namely, this was done by maintaining that aesthetic properties describe aesthetic value directly whereas non-aesthetic properties do not.

To describe something directly is to describe what it is or what it is like. According to the determination thesis, appeal to aesthetic properties describes aesthetic value directly because it says what it *is*. By analogy, colour can be described in the same way by naming its determinates: by saying that the colour is red, for example. Dimensionalism accounts for direct description differently, by saying what aesthetic value *is like*. Appeal to aesthetic properties on the dimensionalist view describes what aesthetic value is like by specifying values along its determination dimensions. This would be analogous to describing colour by specifying its hue, brightness and saturation.

Descriptions of realizer properties neither say what the property they realize is nor what it is like. Or at least this must be the case if we understand realization as distinct from identity. If the realizing properties are not identical to the realized property, then describing the realizing properties cannot amount to describing what the realized property is. It also cannot amount to describing what the realized property is like, since they only describe what makes it what it is like.

Realizationism therefore needs another way of explaining the aptness of appeal to aesthetic properties for describing aesthetic value, one that does not take the description to be direct. Fortunately, such an explanation is available.

Ironically, it is again to be found in the earlier work of Zangwill, one of the chief proponents of the determination thesis. Note that in the following passage the

word ‘determines’ is used in its non-technical sense, so that to say that A determines B means simply that B depends on A.⁷²

The suggestion is that the *point* of substantive [aesthetic] judgments is to describe that which determines aesthetic value. And this is why it is misguided to lose interest in beauty and focus instead on the dainty and the dumpy, or forget about goodness and concentrate instead on robustness or vibrancy. Substantive [aesthetic] judgements have no point except to describe that which determines merit or demerit. And this is asymmetrical. (Zangwill 1998, 328; compare 1998, 85–86; Kivy 1975, 210–11)

As Zangwill rightly notices, the point of talking about aesthetic properties is to get at aesthetic value. It is therefore no wonder that they are so good at describing aesthetic value. We would not be interested in them if they weren’t. Any property is better described by appeal to properties that are more relevant to it than by reference to those that are less relevant to it. And aesthetic properties are very relevant to aesthetic value.

One may suspect that this criterion might throw too broad a net. After all, shape and colour are highly relevant to aesthetic value. Yet they are supposed to be the properties which describe aesthetic value less well. Still, there is reason to think that the relevance of aesthetic properties to aesthetic value is more intimate than that of shapes and colours. The intimacy of the connection can be articulated in any of the ways which can be used to explain sufficiency for reason. Positive aesthetic properties either always make their bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good, or they tend to do so, or they do so in the absence of impediments. Therefore, on any of these accounts, valenced aesthetic properties show a high degree of relevance to of

⁷² This is evidenced by the fact that Zangwill speaks of dependence and determination interchangeably and says that non-aesthetic properties determine aesthetic properties.

aesthetic value. This explains why appeal to aesthetic properties can serve to describe aesthetic value better than appeal to non-aesthetic properties.

6.5. Motivation from mutual supervenience

Realizationism can accommodate the mutual supervenience of aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. However, it does not predict it. In this respect, it differs from the determination thesis and dimensionalism which both entail mutual supervenience. This, however, may be an advantage rather than a drawback.

Since it merely accommodates but does predict mutual supervenience, realizationism on its own does not explain this alleged feature of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value. To do so, an additional claim about this relationship must be made. Fortunately, it is possible to tell a story similar to the one that accounted for the motivation from description. Aesthetic properties are highly relevant to aesthetic value. We would have no reason to be interested in aesthetic properties if not for their relevance to aesthetic value. It would therefore be no surprise if a change in aesthetic value was always accompanied by a change in aesthetic properties and *vice versa*. After all, we selected aesthetic properties for our attention in the first place because they are of special relevance to aesthetic value.

Still, the fact that realizationism is also consistent with the falsity of mutual supervenience has its advantages. Section 2.2.2.1 argued that support for the supervenience of aesthetic value on aesthetic properties is weaker than one may have expected. Similarly, Section 2.2.2.2 argued that the supervenience of aesthetic properties on aesthetic value is false if qualitative pluralism is false. That is, if aesthetic value can only differ in quantity and not quality, then it can be that two things with different aesthetic properties can have the same aesthetic value. After all,

very different things can be aesthetically valuable to the same extent. And, as the next section argues, the falsity of qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value is a prospect that we ought to take seriously.

6.6. Against qualitative pluralism

Throughout the entirety of the last three chapters as well as this chapter so far, I have conceded qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value. As explained many times, this view is entailed both by the determination thesis and by dimensionalism. Furthermore, it plays a role in motivating both views and therefore is likely to be treated by their advocates as a given. All criticisms of both views presented so far have been underwritten by this major concession.

This concession has been for sake of the argument. My case can be made even on the terms of the qualitative pluralist about aesthetic value. Even if qualitative pluralism is true, there is excellent reason to reject the determination thesis and dimensionalism and to prefer realizationism over both. Still, qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value is not obviously true. If it were shown to be false, both the determination thesis and dimensionalism would be nipped in the bud, as they both entail its truth. Realizationism would then stand as the default contender for an account of the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value.

Although qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value has many supporters, it has too often been assumed, too rarely argued for and never criticized. A full assessment of the view is therefore a sizeable task. My more moderate aim here will only be to show that there are some reasons to doubt it and questions that its supporters need to answer. I am in fact not sure whether qualitative pluralism about

aesthetic value is true or false – but this is enough of a reason not to take it for granted.

Many of the considerations discussed below generalise to qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties. However, given the motivation above, the main subject of the discussion is qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value. I will refer to this view simply as ‘qualitative pluralism’ throughout this section.

What would aesthetic value be like if qualitative pluralism about it were false? As explained in Section 1.3, there is a minimal sense in which pluralism about aesthetic value is uncontroversial. Uncontroversially, there are many degrees to which things can be aesthetically valuable: things can be aesthetically good or bad to different extents as well as perhaps being aesthetically neutral. And as argued in Section 4.4.1, quantities are best understood as determinables. Almost everyone is therefore a quantitative pluralist about aesthetic value. To this qualitative pluralists add that aesthetic value can differ in qualitative as well as quantitative respects. To return to Sibley’s example, two similar and equally good Titians can have different aesthetic value.

This is what qualitative monists about aesthetic value deny. According to qualitative monism, if two things have the same degree of aesthetic value, then they have the same aesthetic value. This is the case even if the bearers of the aesthetic value are very different. If Yosemite National Park and the Hagia Sophia have the same degree of aesthetic value, then their aesthetic value is exactly the same. It cannot differ in qualitative respects. According to qualitative monism, aesthetic value is in this respect like weight. Suppose that a block of iron and a block of wood both weigh 1 kilogram. The iron and the wood don’t have different kinds of weight.

Weight – like aesthetic value, according to qualitative monists – does not come in qualitatively different kinds, but only in quantitative degrees.

Now that we have the alternative to qualitative pluralism in focus, let us consider the challenges that qualitative pluralism faces. I will consider two. The first is the need to identify the determination dimensions of aesthetic value. The second is that the only clear motivation for qualitative pluralism commits to the implausible claim that each aesthetically valuable object has a determinate aesthetic value that no other object could possess.

The first point is one which I have already made before, so I will not linger on it for long. If aesthetic value can differ not only in quantity but also in quality, it is reasonable to ask: in what respects can it differ qualitatively? In other words, what are the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value? As already mentioned, no qualitative pluralist has so far as much as acknowledged this question, never mind suggested a solution (compare Cannon 2020). Dimensionalism promised to offer one by identifying these determination dimensions with determinable aesthetic properties. However, the dimensionalist way of meeting this challenge had the apparent downside that it could not be squared with qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties (see Section 5.2.3).

The fact that qualitative pluralists haven't identified the qualitative determination dimensions of aesthetic value does not mean that they cannot do so. Perhaps a plausible identification is just around the corner. However, until it is arrived at, the view will remain in an important way incomplete. It says that aesthetic value can differ in qualitative respects but does not say what these qualitative respects are. Until they are identified, qualitative pluralism may provoke more questions than it answers.

The second reason to doubt qualitative pluralism concerns a tension between the main motivation for the view and the fact that properties can generally be possessed by more than one object. A good starting point is the following passage by James Shelley, which raises a question for qualitative pluralists:

The Dada Hari mosque, for instance, is not beautiful because valuable, but valuable because beautiful; *its particular beauty* is the determinate form its value takes, as its particular reddish-grayness is the determinate form its color takes. (2023, 98–99 emphasis added)

I take the phrase ‘its particular beauty’ to suggest a qualitative difference in aesthetic value between the Dada Hari mosque and other aesthetically valuable things. Shelley sets up an analogy between the mosque’s aesthetic value and its colour. The question is: how far does the analogy extend?

The Dada Hari mosque has its particular reddish-grey. But its reddish-grey is not unique to it. A painter could use paint of the same reddish-grey to render the mosque on canvas – or, captivated more by the colour than with the architecture, could use the same paint for a different subject. The same reddish-grey could appear on a book cover or as a symptom of a skin disease or on the egg shells of some bird. Many things can, and many certainly do, have the same particular reddish-grey as the Dada Hari mosque.

Can other things similarly have the same particular aesthetic value as the Dada Hari mosque? If the analogy to colour is to hold fully, the answer should be yes. That is, it should be in principle possible for some other building or poem or mountain or perfume or chair to have the very same aesthetic value as the Dada Hari mosque. However, my sense is that this is a consequence that few qualitative pluralists would want to embrace. In fact, as I will argue, admitting that two things could have the same determinate aesthetic value stands in tension with a core

motivation for qualitative pluralism. Yet we should be sceptical of the claim that determinate aesthetic value is unique to its bearers in this way. This gives reason to be sceptical of qualitative pluralism. I will now make the case for this conclusion.

The word ‘particular’ can invite an ambiguity between type and token properties. What is in question, both in the case of colour and aesthetic value, are types. Nothing other than that Dada Hari mosque can have its token reddish-grey (except perhaps its parts). This tells us nothing about reddish-greyness, but only something about tokens: namely, that distinct objects cannot have the same token property. The topic of the current discussion are types, not tokens.

I will now introduce some terminology that will allow me to state the question at hand more precisely. Let’s say that an *unshareable* property is one that at most one object can actually have. Let’s say that a property is *object-bound* just in case nothing other than one specific object could possibly have it. All object-bound properties are unshareable: if it is impossible for any object other than a specific one to possess a property, then no two objects can actually possess it. However, some properties are unshareable but not object-bound. For example, no two things could both have the property of being the only thing on my desk. But many different things could be the only thing on my desk. Similarly, no two people can have the property of coming first in any competition that does not allow for ties. But any participant could come first in the competition.

Colour property types are shareable and therefore not object-bound. More than one object can have a single colour. This applies both to more and less determinate colour properties: many things can be blue, and many things can be ultramarine, and many things can be International Klein Blue. The question now is: should qualitative pluralists believe that types of determinate aesthetic value are

sharable, object-bound or neither? I will now argue that the only motivation explicitly given for qualitative pluralism supports understanding determinate aesthetic value as not just unshareable but also object-bound. This, I later show, is a commitment that there is reason to resist.

The motivation for qualitative pluralism that I have in mind is that of *aesthetic irreplaceability*, and has been articulated most fully by Sibley (1985, 172). What is aesthetic irreplaceability? Suppose that I shatter my glass paperweight but I am given a stone one of equal weight to replace it. In this scenario, nothing has been lost in so far as the instrumental value of holding down paper is concerned. In this sense, paperweights are instrumentally replaceable. But if a museum loses a Titian and is offered a Picasso of equal aesthetic value in its place, something has still been lost in so far as aesthetic value is concerned. Aesthetic irreplaceability is the phenomenon whereby aesthetically valuable things cannot be replaced by other things, even of equal aesthetic value, without a loss of some sort with regard to aesthetic value. Such cases have attracted considerable attention, as have analogous phenomena outside aesthetics (Sibley 1985, 172; Grau 2004; Matthes 2013; Bradford 2023, 433; 2024).

How best to make sense of aesthetic irreplaceability is a philosophical puzzle. In particular, it is puzzling how a loss of aesthetic value cannot be compensated by the production of an equivalent amount of aesthetic value.

Qualitative pluralism offers an explanation. The reason why a lost Titian cannot be compensated by a Picasso of equal value is that the two have qualitatively different aesthetic value. This explains how the replacement is not like-for-like in respect of aesthetic value despite the fact that the two paintings have the same degree of aesthetic value.

This answer is not available to a qualitative monist. As explained above, qualitative monists claim that aesthetic value does not differ qualitatively but only quantitatively. They are therefore committed to saying that the Picasso and the Titian do not differ in aesthetic value any more than the glass paperweight differs in weight from the stone paperweight.

To make this case, a qualitative pluralist does not need to consider determinate aesthetic value to be unshareable. A qualitative pluralist does not need to claim that an object with aesthetic value cannot be replaced by *any* other object with equal degree of aesthetic value. They only need to claim that there is *at least one* object of equal degree of aesthetic value with which the original object cannot be replaced. This would be enough to provide grounds for an inference to the best explanation that the two objects must differ in quality of aesthetic value.

This is true in so far as qualitative pluralists do not *need* to claim any more to support their view. However, the intuition of aesthetic irreplaceability does not support just the more modest claim but the stronger one. It is not just the Picasso that cannot adequately replace the Titian. Nothing else would do either, including, according to Sibley, a very similar Titian of the same period, theme and style.⁷³ The intuition of irreplaceability supports more than is needed to justify qualitative pluralism. This excess, I will argue soon, causes trouble for the qualitative pluralist.

What could adequately replace, say, Titian's *Venus of Urbino*? In so far as I share the irreplaceability intuition, I do not think that anything could. In so far as I do not share it, it seems that anything of equal aesthetic value would do. If the irreplaceability intuition underlies qualitative pluralism – and no other motivation

⁷³ See Sibley's discussion of the two Titians quoted in Section 1.3 (1985, 172).

has been given – then it does seem that its supporters ought to consider aesthetic value to be unshareable.

One way of resisting this conclusion would be to say that Sibley has overstated his case. Perhaps a good substitute for the *Venus of Urbino* could be a different but very similar work by Titian.⁷⁴ However, such an admission seems to strike in the very heart of the intuition of aesthetic irreplaceability. Worse than that, it suggests a simple error theory for the intuition. What it tracks, one may suspect, are not qualitative differences in aesthetic value but qualitative differences in non-aesthetic properties. We wouldn't say that only a mosque similar to the Dada Hari can have the same determinate colour. What reason is there to believe that only a similar mosque could have the same determinate aesthetic value?

I have argued that the intuition of aesthetic irreplaceability involves conceiving of determinate aesthetic value as unshareable. Yet it seems to support more than that: it supports understanding determinate aesthetic value as object-bound. Let's change the example. Suppose that the *Venus of Urbino* was never painted. In that case, could a museum ever acquire an object with the determinate aesthetic value that the *Venus of Urbino* actually has? If it could, then the determinate aesthetic value of the *Venus of Urbino* would be unshareable but not object-bound. This, however, is unlikely. If it is possible for other objects to possess the determinate aesthetic value of the *Venus of Urbino*, it is obscure why they could not be created in the actual world, where the *Venus of Urbino* exists. But this is precisely the possibility that the unshareability of determinate aesthetic value disallows. The

⁷⁴ Zangwill voices a related thought in his discussion of qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties (2013, n. 33).

irreplaceability intuition therefore supports thinking of determinate aesthetic value not only as unshareable but object-bound.

Yet there is good reason to doubt that determinate aesthetic value is object-bound. Object-boundness in a property type is a strange and striking feature. After all, the vast majority of property types is not object-bound.⁷⁵ Qualitative pluralists would have to explain why it is reasonable to postulate properties with this unusual trait.

This burden only increases once we consider the sorts of properties that are object-bound. Nothing other than the Dada Hari mosque could have the property of being identical to the Dada Hari mosque. More generally, for any object x : nothing other than x can have the property of being identical to x . Similarly, nothing other than the Dada Hari mosque can have the property of being the only member of the set that contains only the Dada Hari mosque. Again, this is an instance of a broader phenomenon. For any x : nothing other than x can have the property of being the only member of the set that contains only x . Maybe, though such a claim is bound to be controversial, nothing other than the Dada Hari mosque can have the complex property of having all the properties of the Dada Hari mosque (even excluding the two mentioned above that would entail the truth of this claim). But this claim is only plausible if it generalises: that is, if it is true of anything that nothing can share all of its properties (even if we set aside the two properties mentioned above).

⁷⁵ Trope theorists, who conceive of properties as abstract particulars, would reject this claim. However, an analogous claim can still be made: in general, there are exactly similar properties possessed by different objects. While I will continue to write in a universalist manner of properties being shared by various objects, a trope theorist can understand this locution as meaning that these objects have exactly similar properties.

Examples or putative examples of object-bound property types can probably be multiplied. Importantly, all such properties are trivial in the sense that anything has an object-bound property of the relevant sort. The Dada Hari mosque is identical to itself – but so is everything else. I could have chosen anything to illustrate my point above. Nothing hangs on the fact that I have chosen the Dada Hari mosque.

If determinate aesthetic value were object-bound, it would be uniquely non-trivial among object-bound properties. The Dada Hari mosque's aesthetic value is no more trivial than its colour. This is witnessed by the fact that neither can be known *a priori*. I can know that the Dada Hari mosque is identical to itself without knowing anything about it (except, perhaps, that it exists). But to find out the aesthetic value of the Dada Hari mosque, I have to see it or a suitable reproduction, just as I do in order to ascertain its colour.⁷⁶

One may raise the following objection: it *does* sound trivial to say that the Dada Hari mosque has the aesthetic value it does. After all, *anything* has the aesthetic value it has: the Hagia Sophia has the Hagia Sophia's aesthetic value, Yosemite National Park has Yosemite National Park's aesthetic value, etc. If so, then the claim that aesthetic value has object-bound determinate types may not seem objectionable at all. After all, it is trivial.

This line of thought trades on an ambiguity. The phrase 'the aesthetic value of the Dada Hari mosque' can be understood in two ways. It can be understood as referring to whatever aesthetic value the Dada Hari mosque has. So understood, the

⁷⁶ Some also claim that reliable testimony can do in the case of aesthetic value, just as it can for colour.

claim that the Dada Hari mosque has its aesthetic value is trivial. The claim would still be true if the mosque had different aesthetic value. Alternatively, it can be understood as referring to the aesthetic value that it actually has. There is nothing trivial in the claim that the mosque has *that* determinate aesthetic value. By analogy: it is trivial that Coca-Cola cans are Coca-Cola red if ‘Coca-Cola red’ is understood as meaning whatever shade of red Coca-Cola cans are. But there is nothing trivial about the fact that Coca-Cola cans are this and not some other shade of red.

It is unfortunate that we have no simple way of referring to the aesthetic value of the Dada Hari mosque besides identifying it by its bearer. This fact invites the above ambiguity, in addition to the type-token ambiguity discussed earlier. If the motivation from description is correct, we could also describe the mosque’s aesthetic value by reference to the mosque’s aesthetic properties: we could say that it is grand and imposing. The fact that the Dada Hari mosque is aesthetically valuable in a grand, imposing way is no more trivial than the fact that it is reddish-grey.

The non-triviality of determinate aesthetic value speaks strongly against viewing it as object-bound. As far as I can see, all other object-bound properties are trivial. But suppose that there are some non-trivial object-bound properties. After all, I have not *argued* that none exist – I just cannot think of any. Perhaps there is some very special property that is bound to some very special object. Yet the irreplaceability intuition commits to much more than that. It commits to the thought that for each thing that possesses aesthetic value there is a unique determinate that only that thing can possess. Non-trivial object-bound properties would have to be pervasive. A very good reason would have to be given to allow such properties.

Does the above mean that qualitative pluralism is false? It certainly gives us reason to doubt it. But it is hard to deny that, as things stand, the irreplaceability

intuition genuinely speaks in favour of qualitative pluralism and against qualitative monism. The challenge for qualitative monists is to explain or explain away the irreplaceability intuition. Some recent discussions of the broader phenomenon of irreplaceability suggest routes that qualitative monists could pursue, although none generalise straightforwardly to the case of aesthetic value (Bradford 2023; 2024).

Neither does the first challenge raised in this section – the need to identify determination dimensions of aesthetic value – show qualitative pluralism to be false. But it does show that the plausibility of qualitative pluralism will depend on whether it is possible to plausibly identify its determination dimensions, which is something that no qualitative pluralists have done.

The discussion between qualitative pluralists and monists has barely begun. The fact that qualitative monism is a live possibility speaks against dimensionalism and the determination thesis, which both entail qualitative pluralism. Realizationism has the virtue of being consistent with both.

By way of conclusion it is perhaps worth noticing that the direction of inference could run counter to the one which I have suggested in Chapter 2. Perhaps some may be qualitative pluralists because they accept the determination thesis and not *vice versa*. One may think: of course there are qualitative determinates of aesthetic value – after all, elegance is one. However, as should be abundantly clear by now, such grounds for qualitative pluralism would be very poor indeed.

6.7. Conclusion

This chapter and the previous considered two alternatives to the kind thesis: dimensionalism and realizationism. Given this choice, realizationism is a clear victor. Not only can it avoid the objections faced by the determination thesis and dimensionalism, it can also accommodate the considerations that spoke in their favour.

Furthermore, realizationism is a view that should appeal to philosophers with very different views. Whether or not you believe that aesthetic properties are ways of being aesthetically valuable, you should be a realizationist. Whether or not you believe that aesthetic properties are evaluative, you should be a realizationist. Whether or not you endorse qualitative pluralism, you should be a realizationist.

7. How aesthetic value may not be a kind of value

Is aesthetic value a kind of value? It might seem obvious that the answer must be yes. One may think: what else could aesthetic value be if not value of an aesthetic kind? It seems contradictory to say that aesthetic value is not a kind of value, just as it seems contradictory to say that a Siberian cat is not a kind of cat. But linguistic appearances may deceive. After all, Tasmanian tigers are not a kind of tiger but a kind of marsupial.

There is also a second, deeper worry. Denying that aesthetic value is a kind of value sounds like denying that aesthetically valuable things have value. But this seems wrong: aesthetically valuable things *are* valuable on account of their aesthetic value! One may therefore think that ‘aesthetic value’ cannot function like ‘Tasmanian tiger’: if something is a Tasmanian tiger, then it is not a tiger, but if something has aesthetic value, then it has value.

In this chapter, I argue for two conclusions. I begin with a moderate one and then proceed to one that is bound to strike many, at least to begin with, as blatantly false. The first is that we should treat seriously the possibility that aesthetic value may not be a kind of value. The second is that aesthetic value is in fact not a kind of value.

These conclusions are significant for at least two reasons. Firstly, whether aesthetic value is a kind of value affects the relationship between a theory of aesthetic value and a theory of value in general. If aesthetic value is a kind of value, then whatever is true of value in general must also be true of aesthetic value. By analogy: whatever is true of animals in general must be true of cats because cats are a kind of animal. Given the breadth and volume of debate surrounding value in

general, it is important to know whether the outcome of these debates should constrain theories of aesthetic value. Secondly, once we realize that aesthetic value may not be a kind of value we are in a position to consider what else it may be.

Section 7.1 argues for my more moderate claim. It shows that two claims are independent: the *identification claim*, according to which aesthetic value is a kind of value and the *value claim*, which says that being aesthetically valuable is a way of being valuable. The value claim is a plausible constraint on accounts of aesthetic value. I argue that the value claim does not entail the identification claim. This dismisses a serious reason to doubt that aesthetic value could be anything else than a kind of value. Section 7.2 then presents two arguments for that conclusion which are exactly analogous to the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility considered in Chapter 4. Section 7.3 considers three possible responses to these arguments. Then Sections 7.4 and 7.5 present two independent reasons for doubting the identification claim.

7.1. The value and identification claims

It is very common to think that being aesthetically valuable is a way of being valuable. That is to say, bearers of aesthetic value – whether artworks, natural objects or artifacts – are valuable in virtue of their aesthetic value. Let's call this *the value claim*.

What explains the truth of the value claim is a contested matter. Some say that it is that aesthetically valuable things give pleasure (e.g. Stecker 2006; Matthen 2017), or are a source of knowledge, particularly that of a moral kind (Gaut 2007, 133–64), that they provide social benefits (Lopes 2018; 2023; Riggle 2022) or constitute objects of game-like play (Nguyen 2023) or that their value cannot be

explained by reference to the value of other sorts of things (Shelley 2023; 2024; Gorodeisky 2021a; King 2021). All that matters here is that the value claim is widely accepted.

It is important to distinguish the value claim from a different but similar-sounding claim. This is that aesthetic value is a kind of value. Let's call this *the identification claim*. If the identification claim is true, the value claim is also true. By analogy: if scarlet is a kind of red, then whatever is scarlet is thereby red. However, it is often overlooked that the value claim may be true while the identification claim is false.

In general, if P is a kind of Q, then being P is a way of being Q. Being scarlet is a way of being red. But there are ways of being P that are not kinds of P. For example, if P is a realizer of Q, then being P is a way of being Q but not a kind of Q (see Chapter 6). For instance, if a certain brain state realizes pain, then being in that brain state is a way of being in pain. But that brain state is not a kind of pain (Funkhouser 2014, 16–25; 2023).⁷⁷

Let's say that a property is a *bringer of value* if and only if it is a way of being valuable but not a kind of value. Pleasurability is an example of a bringer of value.⁷⁸ Being pleasurable is a way of being valuable. But pleasurability is not a kind of value. Here are some other plausible examples of bringers rather than kinds of value:

⁷⁷ See Section 6.1 for a fuller discussion of this argument.

⁷⁸ Compare Robert Stecker's distinct notion of a centre of value, a property such that once it is identified in an object 'its value is secure' (2019, 12) and Bart Streumer's remark that beauty may still be instantiated in a world without value (2017, 105–6).

friendship, love, knowledge, creativity and life-saving medication.⁷⁹ Thick properties such as courage, curiosity and honesty may also be bringers of value, although this claim is bound to be controversial.⁸⁰ It is consistent with the value claim that aesthetic value may be a bringer rather than a kind of value. If this is indeed the case, then the value claim is true and the identification claim is false.

The point that the value claim does not entail the identification claim should strike the reader as familiar. It is exactly analogous to the earlier observation that the way thesis does not entail the kind thesis (see Section 2.1.1). As I argued there, the fact that being elegant is a way of being aesthetically valuable does not entail that elegance is a kind of aesthetic value. An analogous point applies here to aesthetic value itself. The fact that having aesthetic value is a way of being valuable does not entail that aesthetic value is a kind of value.

If it still seems contradictory to say that aesthetic value is not a kind of value, this appearance is linguistic. The mere fact that the phrase ‘aesthetic value’ contains the word ‘value’ does not show that aesthetic value is a kind of value. ‘Aesthetic value’ is, after all, a philosopher’s coinage and it is incumbent on philosophers to show, when challenged, that the term they have chosen is not misleading. The possibility that aesthetic value might be a bringer of value raises precisely such a challenge. It may be that aesthetic value is not a kind of value, just as Tasmanian tigers are not tigers but marsupials.

⁷⁹ The value that life-saving medication brings (as well as part of the value of the other items on the list) is *instrumental* value, i.e. the kind of value things have as means for something that is valuable in itself.

⁸⁰ After all, some may be tempted to treat them as kinds of value (Tappolet 2005; Oddie 2005, 160–61; Harcourt and Thomas 2013; Heuer 2017, 20–21). The prospects of extending my arguments against the kind thesis to the view that properties such as honesty are kinds of value will be considered in the Conclusion.

To reinforce the point that any impression of contradiction is only apparent, let's replace 'aesthetic value' with a synonym: 'beauty'. This is not to say that 'beauty' always functions as a synonym for 'aesthetic value', but that it can be so understood. The claim 'beauty is not a kind of value' is not contradictory in the way in which 'aesthetic value is not a kind of value' can seem to be. There is certainly no contradiction on the syntactic level. If the claim still sounds odd, it should not sound any odder than 'pleasurability is not a kind of value'. Any appearance of strangeness in both claims has the straightforward explanation that anything that is beautiful or pleasurable is thereby good. This, however, is no reason to believe that the claims are contradictory. There is another explanation for the value of beautiful or pleasant things: that beauty or pleasantness is a bringer of value.

Still, one may reasonably think that nothing that I have said so far should shed any serious doubt on whether aesthetic value is a kind of value. I have argued that the value claim can be true even if the identification claim is false. And I have also tried to explain away the appearance of contradiction that this possibility has about it. But that a position meets a plausible necessary condition and is not contradictory is not yet a reason to place any belief in it. And I have not given any reasons to doubt the identification claim.

7.2. Against the identification claim

This section presents a case against the identification claim. I am reasonably confident that aesthetic value is not a kind of value. In light of the above discussion, I hope that this claim no longer sounds contradictory, although it probably still sounds provocative. The falsity of the identification claim can be argued for in a way that very closely parallels the case against the kind thesis presented in Chapter 4.

That is to say, the arguments that show that aesthetic value is not a kind of value are at their heart the same arguments as those which earlier showed that aesthetic properties are not kinds of aesthetic value.

In the discussion so far, I have not specified whether the value and identification claims concern being *pro tanto* or overall aesthetically valuable. This is because the conclusion of the last section – that the identification claim entails the value claim but not *vice versa* – holds on both understandings, so long as both claims are understood as concerning the same notion.

The distinction becomes important, however, when it comes to assessing the truth of the claims. My argument against the identification claim exactly mirrors the earlier case against the kind thesis presented in Chapter 4. As before, it takes the form of a dilemma: should the view in question be understood as a claim about what is the case *pro tanto* or overall? Depending on how the identification claim is read, it faces different but equally serious problems. Section 7.2.1 considers the horn of the dilemma which understands the identification claim as one about *pro tanto* aesthetic value. Sections 7.2.2 and 7.2.3 examine the other horn, which concerns overall aesthetic value.

Before I proceed with the arguments, one question still needs to be addressed. What do I mean by ‘value’ in the phrase ‘kind of value’? ‘Value’ can be understood in a multitude of ways. However, it is precisely for this reason that I do not want to limit my discussion to any single notion. I believe that aesthetic value is not a kind of value in any sense of ‘value’ in its second occurrence. The arguments that follow should therefore apply to any specific understanding of the term ‘value’. However, after presenting these arguments, I will return to the question of how to understand ‘value’ in Section 7.3.1.

7.2.1. Against the *pro tanto* identification claim

Suppose that the identification claim is understood as the *pro tanto identification claim*, i.e. as the view that aesthetic value is a kind of *pro tanto* value. Just like the *pro tanto* kind thesis, this view encounters two issues.

Firstly, it is unclear whether there are any *pro tanto* properties. But the *pro tanto* identification claim is committed to their existence: there can be no kinds of P without P. A view that commits to kinds of *pro tanto* value therefore commits to *pro tanto* value. However, it is unclear whether there are any *pro tanto* properties. As I have argued in Section 4.1.1, the claim that X makes its bearer *pro tanto* Y is most naturally read as saying that X contributes positively or negatively to its Y-ness. The only property of Y in which we need to believe for this to be true is overall Y. We should doubt that there is a property of *pro tanto* value because we have reason to be suspicious of whether there are any *pro tanto* properties.

Secondly, even if the existence of *pro tanto* properties is conceded, the *pro tanto* identification claim is highly implausible. Again, the issue is the same as the second problem which arises for the *pro tanto* kind thesis (see Section 4.1.2). Suppose that there is such a property as *pro tanto* value. Whatever it is, it differs from overall aesthetic value in one respect and one respect only: partiality. That is, *pro tanto* value is exactly the same thing as overall value with the sole difference that it obtains in some respect rather than overall (however the notion of ‘in some respect’ is to be spelled out). This means that the identification claim could be true in only one way: if overall aesthetic value is a kind of overall value while *pro tanto* aesthetic value is a kind of *pro tanto* value. Since *pro tanto* and overall value cannot differ in anything other than partiality, they cannot differ in their kinds (except, that is, in the partiality of their kinds).

The problem with the *pro tanto* identification claim is the following: it either violates the constraint discussed above or entails the overall identification claim and is therefore no alternative to it. To see this, consider the following question: should the *pro tanto* identification claim say that *pro tanto* or overall aesthetic value is a kind of *pro tanto* value? According to the constraint outlined above, it should say that *pro tanto* aesthetic value is a kind of *pro tanto* value. This would allow for a parallel claim to be made about overall aesthetic value and value, and such parallelism is precisely, as explained above, what is required. Understood that way, the *pro tanto* identification claim would simply entail the overall identification claim. This in itself is no problem – indeed, it is as things should be – but it means that the *pro tanto* identification claim is not an alternative to the overall identification claim.

The *pro tanto* identification claim would be a genuine alternative to the overall identification claim if it claimed that overall aesthetic value is a kind of *pro tanto* value. But it would be an alternative with extremely implausible commitments. It would be implausible because it would require rejecting the parallelism of the kinds of *pro tanto* and overall value. As a result, it would postulate a difference beyond one in partiality between *pro tanto* and overall value. But this is extremely implausible: whatever the phrase ‘*pro tanto* value’ refers to must be the same sort of thing as overall value but obtaining in some respect.

The *pro tanto* identification claim, then, is either not an alternative to the overall identification claim or a highly implausible alternative. Either way, the tenability of the identification claim now hangs on that of the overall identification claim.

7.2.2. Objection from strict sufficiency

The second horn of the dilemma embraces the *overall identification claim* according to which aesthetic value is a kind of overall value. This view faces two problems which again are analogous to those encountered by the overall kind thesis. These are the objections from strict sufficiency, which will be discussed in this section, and determinate incompatibility, to be discussed in the next.

The objection from strict sufficiency plays out in a similar way for the overall identity claim as it does for the overall kind thesis. The simplest version of the objection depends on a constraint: if aesthetic value is a kind of value, then aesthetic goodness is a kind of overall goodness, and aesthetic badness is a kind of overall badness. This is most plausibly seen as simply an articulation of what is meant by the identification claim rather than as an additional premise (by analogy to the valency constraint as applied to the kind thesis). This is especially so given that the identification claim is supposed to be supported by the value claim. And the value claim certainly should be understood as claiming that aesthetic goodness makes its bearers good and aesthetic badness makes its bearers bad.

Presumably, if aesthetic value is a kind of overall value, it is not the only one. Moral value would also plausibly be a kind of overall value. Nothing depends on this particular choice except that it provides clear examples. Any other alleged kind of value would do. Just as above, it is also reasonable to assume that if moral value is a kind of overall value, then moral goodness would be a kind of overall goodness and moral badness would be a kind of overall badness.

The problem is the following: if all of the above were true, then nothing could be both aesthetically good and morally bad or *vice versa*. But this clearly is possible. Many works of art are beautiful but immoral. A person can be ugly but

kind-hearted. A state of affairs can be morally praiseworthy but aesthetically regrettable: for example, when the beauty of a neighbourhood is sacrificed to provide much-needed high-rise housing. All of the above seems true and can be so regardless of how one stands on the knotty issue of whether moral and aesthetic value interact. That is, regardless of whether an object's moral value can enhance or detract from its aesthetic value (or *vice versa*), it seems possible that things can be aesthetically good overall and morally bad overall (or *vice versa*).

To see why the identification claim cannot account for these facts, let us run with the example of *The Triumph of the Will*, an artwork which is widely acknowledged to be immoral but aesthetically excellent. Because *The Triumph of the Will* is aesthetically good overall, it is thereby good overall (since we are supposing that aesthetic goodness is a kind of overall goodness). And because *The Triumph of the Will* is morally bad overall, it is thereby bad overall (since we are supposing that moral badness is a kind of overall badness). Both inferences proceed by means of kind inheritance, which is a conceptual truth about kinds and has already been discussed many times:

Kind inheritance. For any property P, whatever has a kind of P thereby has P.

If aesthetic goodness is a kind of overall goodness, then nothing that has aesthetic goodness can fail to have overall goodness, just as nothing that is scarlet can fail to be red. The same can be said about moral badness if it is a kind of overall badness. So, under the current assumptions, *The Triumph of the Will* cannot fail to be both good overall and bad overall. But nothing can be both good overall and bad overall. Therefore, we should deny that aesthetic goodness is a kind of goodness while both moral badness is a kind of badness.

It is vital to keep in mind that this argument concerns overall, not *pro tanto* value. It would not be sound for *pro tanto* value because things plainly *can* be both *pro tanto* good and *pro tanto* bad at the same time. But nothing can be overall good and overall bad at the same time. This is why a natural response to this argument would be to shift to the *pro tanto* identification claim. However, I have already argued that the *pro tanto* identification claim is either consistent with the overall identification claim or highly implausible. It therefore offers no escape from the objection from strict sufficiency.

The problem here arises because kinds are strictly sufficient for the properties of which they are kinds. Earlier, I argued that if elegance is a kind of overall aesthetic goodness and monotony is a kind of overall aesthetic badness, then nothing can be both elegant and monotonous because it would have to be both aesthetically good and bad overall. The argument I have presented now is exactly analogous.

7.2.3. Objection from determinate incompatibility

The second argument against the identification claim is the objection from determinate incompatibility. Whereas the objection from strict sufficiency relied on kind inheritance, a general property of kindhood, this objection proceeds by appeal to the following notable feature of the determination relation:

Maximal determinate incompatibility: If x has determinate P of determinable Q at time t , then x can have at t some other determinate R of Q only if x has some determinate S of Q which is a determinate of both P and R .

One difference between the two arguments is therefore that one concerns any relationship of kindhood while the other only concerns that of determination. It therefore has a narrower target. However, as argued in Section 1.2.3, the

determination relation is particularly interesting because, uniquely among kindhood relations, it is both pluralist and entails a unity among kinds. Furthermore, this narrower understanding of the identification claim has been endorsed in recent years (Shelley 2023; 2024).⁸¹

Maximal determinate incompatibility says, in short, that two determinates of a single determinable co-occur just in case a property which is a determinate of both is instantiated. This means that if aesthetic and moral value are both determinates of value, then things can have both just in case they have a property which is a determinate of both. This again means that any object's determinate aesthetic value will be identical to its determinate moral value wherever the two co-occur. By analogy: if something is both blue and pale, then the determinate blue that it has is identical to the determinate pale colour it has. At the most determinate level, its colour is a pale blue.

This, however, is an implausible way of understanding the relationship between aesthetic and moral value. These considerations are analogous to those which applied to the determination thesis. The first is that aesthetic and moral value seem too different to share determinates whenever they co-occur. This is clearest in cases where their valencies come apart. The specific evil of *The Triumph of the Will* just does not seem identical to its specific beauty, even if the two interact. But the same is true even in cases where the valencies are the same. Beautifully designed

⁸¹ A different argument drawing on determinate incompatibility has recently been presented by Kyle Kirby (forthcoming, 4–7; also see Wodak 2020, 66–67). However, Kirby appeals to what Section 4.3.1 called levelled determinate incompatibility, a statement which does not capture some ways in which determinates can co-occur. As a result, he takes the problem to do with determinate incompatibility to be that the identification claim would predict that nothing could have both aesthetic and moral value. This is not quite right: rather, the problem is that it predicts that aesthetic and moral value can co-occur only if a determinate of both does.

social housing may be both morally and aesthetically good but it is implausible to think that its determinate moral and aesthetic value are the same property.

The second reason is that it is not unusual to perceive something's aesthetic value without perceiving its moral value or *vice versa*. One may, for example, notice the immorality of *The Triumph of the Will* but fail to see its aesthetic goodness or *vice versa*. Meanwhile, this can only be the case with two determinables of a single determinate in exceptional cases. Only when one is distracted or in a hurry is it possible to register that a colour is pale, for example, but to form only a hazy idea about its hue. But one can perceive aesthetic value without moral value or *vice versa* even under sustained attention.

I have given an argument against the *pro tanto* identification claim and two against the overall identification claim. The entire case is very closely analogous to that which I have earlier levelled at the kind and determination theses. How could the identification claim be defended from these criticisms?

7.3. Responses

I will now consider three responses to the above arguments against the overall identification claim. Section 7.3.1 discusses how 'value' should be understood in the phrase 'kind of value' and asks whether the arguments presented above could be avoided on any understanding. Section 7.3.2 considers the prospects of denying that aesthetic and moral value can come apart. Section 7.3.3 discusses the suggestion that aesthetic and moral value may always have different bearers. I argue that none of the three attempts to avoid the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility succeed.

7.3.1. What does 'value' mean in 'kind of value'?

The arguments against the overall identification claim given above require us to make sense of the claims 'aesthetic value is a kind of value' and 'moral value is a kind of value'. But one may object that it is unclear what is meant by 'value' in the phrase 'kind of value'. This, I admit, is a matter that I have left open. This omission is harmless in so far as the arguments are sound for any understanding of 'value' that does not equivocate. Still, until the meanings of 'value' are examined, one may suspect that I have smuggled in some illicit assumptions.

This section explores the range of ways in which the word 'value' in the phrase 'kind of value' can be understood. Some may seem to promise an escape from the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility. None, I argue, actually offers such an escape. In fact, many understandings shed additional doubt on the identification claim.

There are many ways in which one can understand the word 'value' in the phrase 'kind of value' in the sentences 'aesthetic value is a kind of value' and 'moral value is a kind of value'. Firstly, as value *simpliciter*. Secondly, as some specific notion of value distinct from value *simpliciter*. Thirdly, as different things in each sentence. Finally, as the disjunction of all the things that 'value' can refer to. I will now address them in turn.

In the phrase 'kind of value', the word 'value' stands unqualified. This should prompt the question: is this occurrence of 'value' elliptical for some longer expression or not? Let's first consider the latter possibility. On this reading, 'value' refers to the property of value *simpliciter*, being good or bad *full stop*.

One might think that this reading raises a problem for the objections discussed above. After all, according to many there is simply no such property as

value *simpliciter*. Whatever its merits, scepticism about value *simpliciter* is widespread (Geach 1956; Ziff 1960; Foot 2001; Thomson 2008; for criticism see Pigden 1990; Cosker-Rowland 2016). If such scepticism is correct and if value *simpliciter* is the relevant notion of value, then one may think that my objections incur an implausible commitment.

This response misunderstands the dialectic. I am not committed to the existence of value *simpliciter*, even if it is what is meant by ‘value’ in ‘kind of value’. The overall identification claim is committed to it. One cannot claim that aesthetic value is a kind of overall value *simpliciter* without committing to value *simpliciter*. This means that, on this understanding of ‘value’, not only is the overall identification claim open to the arguments of the previous section, but it also incurs a controversial commitment to the existence of value *simpliciter*. This would give sceptics about value *simpliciter* an additional reason to reject the overall identification claim so understood.

All the more, a sceptic about value *simpliciter* who wants to hold on to the overall identification claim needs to make sense of what ‘value’ means in ‘kind of value’ in some other way. The claims ‘aesthetic value is a kind of value’ and ‘moral value is a kind of value’ aim to categorise aesthetic and moral value, respectively. But one cannot categorise without believing in the relevant category.

Perhaps the relevant category is not value *simpliciter* but rather, as mentioned above, ‘value’ may be elliptical for some longer expression. Such expressions can follow a variety of patterns: being a good or bad X, X-ly good or bad, good or bad for X, at X, as X or with X, etc.⁸² Suppose that the sense in which both aesthetic and

⁸² For systematic studies of such expressions, see von Wright (1963) and Thomson (2008).

moral value are supposed to be kinds of value can be illuminated in this way. For example, it may be that moral goodness and aesthetic goodness are both kinds of being good for people.

All objections of Section 7.2 apply to the overall identification claim so understood. All that matters for their success is that there is a single meaning of 'value' which is supposed to apply to aesthetic and moral value. Nothing can be both overall good and overall bad in *any* unequivocal sense of 'good' and 'bad'.

Suppose, however, that 'value' does equivocate. That is, the sense of 'value' in which aesthetic value is supposed to be a kind of value is different from that in which moral value is supposed to be one. For example, moral value may be a kind of goodness or badness for people while aesthetic value may be a kind of goodness or badness as an object of appreciation.

If no single meaning of 'value' applies to aesthetic and moral value, then the arguments of Section 7.2 all fail as stated. Consider the objection from strict sufficiency. If both aesthetic and moral value are kinds of overall value, then some things can be both good overall and bad overall, since things can be aesthetically good and morally bad. If the word 'value' does not equivocate in this context, then this is a contradiction, since nothing can be unequivocally good and bad overall. However, if it does equivocate, then no contradiction arises. Things can be good overall in one sense and bad overall in another. The overall identification claim is off the hook.

In a similar way, the overall identification claim can escape the clutches of the objection from determinate incompatibility. If 'value' equivocates, then there is no reason to think that aesthetic and moral value are not determinates of a single determinable. And it is this claim that led to implausible consequences.

However, the arguments only fail because they are stated using the example of moral value. Yet the same case can be made using almost any other purported kind of value so long, crucially, that it is supposed to be a kind of value in the same sense of 'value' in 'kind of value' as aesthetic value. So long as 'value' does not equivocate, analogous arguments could be constructed using economic value, sentimental value, epistemic value, prudential value and so on. If any such property is supposed to be a kind of value in the same sense of 'value' as aesthetic value, the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility can show that neither is a kind of value.

To avoid all such cases aesthetic value would have to be a kind of value in a sense of 'value' in which nothing else is a kind of value. The trouble with this is that any notion that would fit this description seems to build an implausibly large amount of content into the notion of value. Take the example I have given earlier: the proposal that aesthetic value is a kind of goodness or badness as an object of appreciation. This may be a reasonable thing to believe about aesthetic value, but it is almost certainly not what anyone means when they say that aesthetic value is a kind of value. It is simply not plausible to think that 'value' in 'kind of value' is elliptical for anything so complex. To reiterate: this is not to deny that this might be a correct analysis of what aesthetic value is. The point is that it is not plausible to understand in this way what is meant by the claim that aesthetic value is a kind of value.

The overall identification claim is therefore in a double bind. The meaning of 'value' in 'kind of value' must be reasonably generic or else it is not plausible to understand it as elliptical. But if it is generic, then there is bound to be some other

kind of value in the same sense of ‘value’ which provides grounds for the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility.

I have been insisting on the need to disambiguate what ‘value’ means in ‘kind of value’. However, perhaps one could understand ‘value’ in ‘kind of value’ as the disjunction of all the things that can be referred to as ‘value’. One could then say that what it is to be a kind of value is to be one of the things can be referred to by the word ‘value’. However, as superficially tempting as such an understanding may be, this understanding of ‘kind of value’ commits to a highly implausible view of what it takes to be a kind.

In a similar vein, Judith Jarvis Thomson speaks of the property of being good in some respect or other which she understands broadly enough to include being a good X, X-ly good, good for X, at X, as X or with X, etc. (Thomson 2008, 6, 10, 244–45). In fact, she means anything that can be denoted by the word ‘good’ with its many possible modifications.⁸³ Georg Henrik von Wright and Rach Cosker-Rowland refer to properties of this sort as ‘varieties of goodness’ (von Wright 1963; Cosker-Rowland 2019).

If all that it takes to be a kind of value is to be a property that can be called ‘value’, then aesthetic value certainly is a kind of value. After all, its name suffices for that. Furthermore, such an understanding of ‘kind of value’ would undermine both objections against the overall identification claim considered in Section 7.2, since it could count both aesthetic and moral value as kinds of value while denying that there is any single sense of ‘value’ of which both are kinds.

⁸³ With the exception of non-sentential uses of ‘good’ as in ‘Good morning!’ (Thomson 2008, 6).

However, it is extremely implausible to understand kinds as individuated linguistically in this way. River banks and financial banks are not kinds of banks. Siberian tigers and Tasmanian tigers are not kinds of tigers. It is a conceptual truth that the fact that two things can be referred to as 'P' is not sufficient for those things to be kinds of P.

We do not, then, individuate kinds linguistically. We also shouldn't. Suppose that we counted river banks and financial banks as kinds of banks. What does the word 'bank' mean in the phrase 'kind of bank'? It cannot refer to the word 'bank' since neither river banks nor financial banks are words. And if it refers to some non-linguistic piece of reality, what is it? It cannot be river banks or financial banks, since each would exclude the other. The most plausible candidate would be the disjunctive property that includes all the things to which the word 'bank' can refer, including river banks and financial banks. This would be analogous to the understanding of 'value' under consideration. So understood, the claim that river banks and financial banks are kinds of banks would not be one about language. However, it would be parasitic on language in a way that renders it uninteresting. A notion of kindhood that counts river banks and financial banks as kinds of banks would be one that does not require any real similarity at all between kinds. In fact, with suitable modifications of language, anything could be a kind of P, for any P. Not only therefore is our notion of kindhood one that does not count all referents of 'P' as kinds of P. We also have reason to avoid using such a notion. This is because a notion of kindhood that admits a merely linguistic unity between kinds and what they are kinds of is not an interesting one.

This point is worth emphasising because there is a strong temptation to call almost any property that has 'value', 'goodness' or 'badness' in its name a kind of

value. Indeed, this is even true of philosophers who go to great lengths to deny that there is a single property of value which all such properties share (von Wright 1963; Cosker-Rowland 2019). But it is a conceptual truth that one cannot speak of kinds, types, forms or varieties of value without committing to a property of value of which the properties in question are kinds. This is precisely the commitment that such philosophers are at pains to deny. Thomson does well in calling being a good X, good for X, etc. ‘goodness properties’ instead (2008, 30–31).

Of course, it may be convenient to use phrases such as ‘kinds of value’ to refer to any of the many properties that can be denoted by ‘value’, ‘good’ or ‘bad’ with their many modifications. Such loose usage is economical and in the case of von Wright and Cosker-Rowland it causes no confusion, since it is clear that they deny that there is a single property of value which properties that bear that name all share. But philosophers speak loosely at their peril. Talk of kinds carries metaphysical commitments that are too easily overlooked. The identification claim looks almost tautologous. In fact, as I have argued, there is excellent reason to think that it is false.

7.3.2. The unity thesis

Another response to the arguments that I have given is to deny that aesthetic and moral value can come apart. The objection from strict sufficiency said that if aesthetic goodness is a kind of overall goodness and moral badness is a kind of overall badness, then something that is both aesthetically good and morally bad would have to be both good and bad overall. This, however, is impossible if ‘value’ in ‘kind of value’ does not equivocate: nothing is both good and bad overall.

A possible response is to deny the premise that it is possible to be aesthetically good overall and morally bad overall or *vice versa*. This is, I concede, a genuine way in which one can endorse the identification claim. However, it comes at the cost of endorsing a highly controversial view, one that simply bites the bullet on the objection from determinate incompatibility.

To endorse this line of thought is to say that whatever is morally good overall is aesthetically good overall and *vice versa*. Let's call this the *unity thesis*. Here are some claims that the unity thesis is committed to. No immoral artwork is beautiful. No ugly artwork is moral. A morally good person cannot be ugly. An ugly person cannot be moral. If it is morally praiseworthy that much-needed high-rise housing has been constructed, then it cannot be aesthetically regrettable. And if it is aesthetically regrettable that the blocks of flats went up, then their construction couldn't have been moral.

This all seems wrong. It seems that we can assess things as morally good and aesthetically bad or *vice versa*. A very strong argument would be needed to show that things are otherwise.

It is important to distinguish the unity thesis from the more moderate view of *ethicism*, which claims that 'a work [or other object] is always aesthetically flawed in so far as it possesses an ethical demerit that is aesthetically relevant; and a work [or other object] is always aesthetically meritorious in so far as it possesses an ethical merit that is aesthetically relevant.' (Gaut 2007, 52). Ethicism has been the subject of an enormous amount of controversy and is generally considered the most full-blooded view about the interaction between aesthetic and ethical value. However, it pales in comparison with the unity thesis. Firstly, it concedes that an object may have ethical merits or demerits that are not aesthetically relevant, i.e. which do not

affect its aesthetic value. However, according to the unity thesis this cannot be the case. What ethical merits and demerits something has is always relevant to whether it is good or bad overall. And whether it is good or bad overall is always relevant to whether it is aesthetically good or bad, since the unity thesis says that they can never come apart. Secondly, the merits and demerits ethicists concerns are *pro tanto* ones. Gaut's claim is not that being morally good overall always makes its bearer aesthetically good overall. It is that being morally good *pro tanto* in an aesthetically relevant way always makes its bearers *pro tanto* aesthetically good (the same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for badness).

To illustrate this point, let's return to the case of *The Triumph of the Will*. An ethicist would say that the film is made aesthetically worse by its overall immorality. Its overall immorality is a *pro tanto* defect. This is consistent with the film being aesthetically good overall. The ethicist acknowledges that *The Triumph of the Will* is morally bad overall and aesthetically good overall and explains how these two facts are related. The proponent of the unity thesis does not. Rather, they must say one of the following: *The Triumph of the Will* either isn't morally bad overall or it isn't aesthetically good overall. It is by steering this radical course that the unity thesis can rescue the identification claim. But doing so comes at the cost of radically revising our pre-theoretical beliefs, according to which moral and aesthetic value can come apart.

Having said all of the above, there is a long tradition of identifying ethics and aesthetics which counts Plato and Wittgenstein among its adherents (Wittgenstein 1922, sect. 6.421; 2014; Riegel 2014). Although the burden of proof for the claim that aesthetic and moral value can never come apart is considerable, such defence is not without precedent. Nonetheless, this is an extremely controversial view.

Appealing to it in an attempt to salvage the overall identification claim is also bound to be controversial. This is a far cry from the original impression that the identification claim is tautologous.

7.3.3. Difference in bearers

Another response to the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility denies the same premise but does so without endorsing the unity thesis. That is, it denies that it is possible to be aesthetically good overall and morally bad overall or *vice versa*.⁸⁴ But it also denies that whatever is morally good overall is aesthetically good overall and *vice versa*. This can be done by claiming that aesthetic value and moral value never have the same bearers. If nothing can have both aesthetic and moral value, then we can admit that aesthetic value and moral value are kinds of overall value without incurring the contradictory commitment that some things can be both good and bad overall.⁸⁵ Furthermore, if aesthetic and moral value never co-occur, the implausible commitments of the objection from determinate incompatibility are also avoided.

For example, one may deny that *The Triumph of the Will* has both aesthetic and moral value. One may claim, for instance, that it is not the film that is immoral, but rather the outlook that it expresses. Similarly, it could be denied that people can be assessed both morally and aesthetically. One may instead insist that only a person's body may be beautiful or ugly, but it is their mind that is morally good or

⁸⁴ Thus, this view would be an aesthetic analogue to the view about artistic value known as *radical autonomism* which says that works of art cannot be morally good or bad and that therefore nothing can have both artistic and moral value (Gaut 2007, 51–52).

⁸⁵ A similar response is considered by Kirby (forthcoming).

bad. And one may claim that the state of affairs that the high-rise block of flats has gone up is morally good, but deny that it is aesthetically bad, insisting for example that states of affairs cannot have aesthetic value. The aesthetic fact in the vicinity may be, for example, that the tower blocks are themselves aesthetically bad.

This is certainly a possible way of denying my argument. However, what needs to be given is a principled reason for which we should deny that aesthetic and moral value can never be possessed by the same objects. Both in ordinary speech and in philosophical discourse, artworks, people and states of affairs are among objects that seem to be open to both moral and aesthetic assessment.

Still, there may well be principled reasons to think that moral and aesthetic value always have different bearers. However, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the objections I have presented do not need to appeal to moral value. Analogous cases can be constructed using any property which is alleged to be a kind of value in the same sense of 'value' as aesthetic value. Thus, in order to pursue this defence one would have to claim that the bearers of aesthetic value cannot possess *any* other kind of value (in the same sense of 'value' in 'kind of value'). Providing an argument for this conclusion is a much taller order than doing the same just for moral value. Until we see an argument of this sort we can reasonably doubt that it could be given.

7.4. Aesthetic value as formal value

Section 7.3 considered three ways of resisting the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility. I have argued that they all fail. This section and the next will provide additional reasons to doubt the identification claim. They are weaker than the objections raised in Section 7.2 in that they take a hypothetical form.

It is a common thought that ‘value’ can be used to denote two families of properties. What (if anything) exactly marks the distinction is a matter of much debate, but examples should illuminate it enough for our purposes.

Suppose that on a whim I make up a rule that everyone should stand on one leg. It follows that by the standard of my rule it is bad that some people are not standing on one leg. But one may well think that this is an uninteresting notion of goodness. Sure, standing on one leg is good according to my rule, but it isn’t *really* good. Games, etiquette and the law are often thought to be like this in that the fact that something is good by the lights of some game, law or standard of etiquette does not entail that it is really good (Enoch 2019). Value of this sort gets called attributive (Geach 1956) or, by analogy to terms used to refer to normativity, formal (McPherson 2011; Plunkett and Shapiro 2017; Enoch 2019) or institutional (Cowie 2019).

Contrast this with morality. If something is morally good, then it is *really* good, not just good in the sense in which it is good in light of my made-up rule if people stand on one leg. Value in this sense is variously described as *simpliciter* (Cosker-Rowland 2016), *absolute* (Kraut 2011), or *predicative* (Geach 1956). By generalising to value terms applied to normativity, it could also be called *authoritative*

(McPherson 2010), *robust* (McPherson 2011; Plunkett and Shapiro 2017), *normative* (Joyce 2011; Cowie 2019) or *full-blooded* (Enoch 2019; Plunkett and Shapiro 2017).

Both the existence of this distinction and a principled way of articulating it are controversial. Some suspect that there is little substance behind the italicised ‘*really*’. Be that as it may, the sense that there is an important distinction here is widespread and that is enough for our purposes.

If anything should be classified as robust value, then moral value should. This is witnessed by the fact that the notion of robust value is almost invariably explained by using a moral example, as I have done above. What about aesthetic value? This has been a topic of some debate, although it has seldom been approached directly.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, it is certainly a possibility that aesthetic value may be formal rather than robust.⁸⁷

This thought can bolster the case against the identification claim. Formal value, many are tempted to say, is not *really* value. So, if aesthetic value is formal, many would say that it is not *really* value, not in the sense that matters.

7.5. Definition by grounding properties

I will now present a different argument against the identification claim which, again, takes a hypothetical form. Some definitions of aesthetic value are constructed according to the following template:

⁸⁶ Exceptions include Hills (2023) and a brief discussion in Matravers (2021, 195). See also Stecker (2019, 10–16) and King (2021, 10–12).

⁸⁷ Analogous debates have appeared regarding epistemic value (Cote-Bouchard and Littlejohn 2018; Cowie 2019) and artistic value (Hanson 2017).

Aesthetic value is the value possessed in virtue of ...

Here are two examples:

Kantian hedonism: Aesthetic value is the value possessed in virtue of affording disinterested pleasure.

Liberalism: Aesthetic value is the distinctive value possessed in virtue of a correct and complete experience of an object's sensory features.⁸⁸

It may well be the case that some other definition of this form is correct, even if neither of the two examples above are. However, if any such definition is correct, then aesthetic value is not a kind of value. Definitions of the sort are inconsistent with the identification claim.

Why is this? The first thing to notice is that definitions of this form are definite descriptions. Different definite descriptions can denote the same property. Here is an example to illustrate this point. The animal that Flopsy is and the animal Mopsy is are not two different kinds of animal. They are one kind of animal, namely a rabbit. Here is another example. The weight that a stone paperweight has and the weight a glass paperweight has need not be different kinds of weight. The two may weigh the same and there is no difference in kind between stone weight and glass weight. To generalise, that a definite description cites different grounds or bearers does not mean that it denotes different kinds. Applied to the question at hand, this means that a definition of the form under discussion may fail to denote a kind of value. It is consistent with Kantian hedonism as defined above, for example, that the value possessed in virtue of affording disinterested pleasure is no different than the

⁸⁸ This is a modified version of the view defended by Antonia Peacocke (2021, 13).

value possessed in virtue of donating to charity, or gaining useful knowledge or affording the pleasure of eating chocolate.

This may not be enough to worry an advocate of the identification claim. After all, that a plausible definition is consistent with the denial of the identification claim is not yet a reason to doubt the identification claim's truth. But there is more. Kinds may sometimes be identifiable by reference to their grounds. However, they are never defined by their grounds. Because all definitions of the form under discussion define aesthetic value by reference to its grounds, they cannot define genuine kinds of value.

Suppose that there are many kinds of X. It cannot be that these kinds are distinguished *only* by what they obtain in virtue of. If they differed in their grounds and nothing else, then what we would have at hand is a single multiply-realizable property of X rather than a multitude of kinds of X. What makes the different kinds distinct is not what their grounds are, even if it is true that different grounds give rise to different kinds of X. Identifying grounds never captures what a kind is. Kinds of X can be *identified* by their grounds, but they cannot be *defined* by them. Therefore, if a definition of aesthetic value of the form under discussion is correct, then aesthetic value is not a kind of value.

Now, one may wonder whether the argument that I have given could be easily avoided with a simple change to the template for definitions of aesthetic value. If aesthetic value is defined as a kind of value, no one could deny that aesthetic value is a kind of value. Thus, the argument given could not possibly show that aesthetic value is not a kind of value if some definition based on the following template is correct:

Aesthetic value is the kind of value possessed in virtue of ...

I concede that aesthetic value would be a kind of value if this fact were baked into its definition. However, two points need to be made about such definitions. Firstly, in light of the arguments of this chapter, they would be implausible. Or at the very least the inclusion in the definition of the claim that aesthetic value is a kind of value would have to be argued for. Secondly, and more importantly, a definition in accordance with the revised template does not achieve what one might imagine it to do. Let's revise the Kantian hedonist view in accordance with the new template:

Revised Kantian hedonism: Aesthetic value is the kind of value possessed in virtue of affording disinterested pleasure.

I take it that anyone who would be tempted to advance revised Kantian hedonism would want to maintain that only things that afford disinterested pleasure can be aesthetically valuable. But the definition above allows other things to be aesthetically valuable as well. As explained above, the same property of X can obtain in virtue of different properties. Similarly, the same *kind* of property of X can also obtain in virtue of different properties. For instance, a glass and a metal weight of 1 kilogram have the same kind of weight in virtue of different properties. The revised template therefore lacks the appeal of the original one. Here is why: because the appealing definitions constructed according to the first template, the ones which defined aesthetic value by reference to grounding properties, are inconsistent with aesthetic value being a kind of value.

One response to the arguments of this section may be that they only show that definitions of the form encapsulated by the first template are less plausible than they may strike us initially. Another is that they are only plausible if treated as means

of identifying aesthetic value rather than real definitions. These responses may be right. However, definitions of this form have widely been considered plausible. If what I have argued is correct, then the case in favour of any such definition will also be a case against the identification claim.

7.6. Conclusion

The claim that aesthetic value is not a kind of value sounds like a contradiction. I have argued that it is not only not contradictory but in fact true. Recognising its truth does not require denying that being aesthetically valuable is a way of being valuable. The reason why these facts can be so easily overlooked is that the notion of a kind seems innocent, whereas it carries hefty commitments. Once these are recognised, the claim that aesthetic value is a kind of value turns out to have highly implausible commitments.

8. Conclusion

The two main questions addressed in this thesis have been the following. What is the relationship between aesthetic properties and aesthetic value? And what is the relationship between aesthetic value and value? In response to both questions, many have said that the relationship is one of kindhood. These responses often assume an air of inevitability. What else could aesthetic properties possibly be other than kinds of aesthetic value? And how could aesthetic value fail to be a kind of value?

I have argued that neither of the above views is inevitable. In fact, there is strong reason to think that they are both false and that alternative accounts, especially those which take the relevant relations to be realization, fare much better. Philosophers have consistently overlooked or discounted features of kindhood generally, and determination more specifically, that make it a very poor fit for the relations in question.

When the problems caused by these features have been overlooked, it has generally been because they have not been articulated with enough precision. This is especially true of determinate incompatibility, which has been discussed frequently but often in a cursory manner, without an attempt to fully articulate the conditions under which determinates of a determinable are incompatible. As a result, the challenge that determinate incompatibility poses has been misidentified.

However, even when the troublesome features are acknowledged, they can too easily be discounted. Both the objection from strict sufficiency and the objection from determinate incompatibility can be elegantly avoided by a simple manoeuvre. This is to shift to a *pro tanto* version of the view: to claim that aesthetic properties are

kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value or that aesthetic value is a kind of *pro tanto* value. The objection from strict sufficiency was effective because nothing can be both (aesthetically) good and bad overall. But things can certainly be both (aesthetically) good and bad *pro tanto*. Similarly, the objection from determinate incompatibility depended on an articulation of the conditions under which determinates can co-occur. But these conditions do not constrain *pro tanto* co-occurrence. Only with the arguments against their *pro tanto* versions is the case against the kind and determination theses complete. And these arguments have never so far been acknowledged.

Here is a summary of the arguments. I conduct them for the *pro tanto* kind thesis, but an exactly analogous argument applies against the *pro tanto* identification claim, which says that aesthetic value is a kind of *pro tanto* value. *Pro tanto* and overall aesthetic value must be exactly the same with the sole difference that one obtains in a partial respect and the other does not. Since the two properties must be the same bar partiality, they have the same kinds bar partiality. That is, the only difference between their kinds is that the kinds of one obtain in a partial respect and those of the other do not. This opens up a dilemma for the *pro tanto* kind thesis. If it concerns *pro tanto* aesthetic properties (e.g. *pro tanto* elegance or *pro tanto* garishness), then it is not an alternative but a complement to the overall kind thesis. In that case, the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility retain their bite. On the other hand, if the *pro tanto* kind thesis concerns overall aesthetic properties (e.g. overall elegance or overall garishness), then it has the consequence that corresponding *pro tanto* and overall aesthetic properties differ in more than just their partiality. If overall elegance is a kind of *pro tanto* aesthetic value, then it becomes obscure what *pro tanto* elegance is a kind of and what kinds overall aesthetic value has

(see Section 4.1.2). The systematic conceptual relationships between corresponding *pro tanto* and overall properties would need to be denied. This gives reason to reject the *pro tanto* kind thesis.

By way of conclusion, I would like to briefly consider the prospect of applying these patterns of argumentation more broadly. The points that I make should all be taken as suggestions that would properly need more detailed attention and argument. I would also like to point out some questions that have emerged over the course of discussion, whose significance extends far beyond aesthetics.

8.1. Parallel debates

At various points throughout the discussion I have gestured at analogous debates regarding aesthetic concepts, moral properties, thick properties and concepts more broadly, as well as many of the properties that can be called ‘value’. So far, discussion of these topics has been by and large relegated to footnotes. This is because any attempt to discuss them in parallel would have carried the risk of running them together. And although the debates are parallel in many respects, we cannot assume in advance that there will be no dissimilarities.

Conceptual analogues of the kind and determination theses, whether about aesthetic, moral or more broadly thick concepts, have generally been the centre of attention, with similar debates about properties appearing less frequently (Tappolet 2005; Oddie 2005, 160–61; Harcourt and Thomas 2013; Zangwill 2013; for criticism see Väyrynen 2016b; 2013, 230; Kirchin 2017; Cannon 2020). Kindhood and determination have often been understood as the sorts of relations that can hold between concepts. However, their applicability to concepts strikes me as less obvious than their applicability to properties. The colour scarlet is a kind, more

specifically a determinate, of the colour red. But it is unclear that the concept scarlet is a kind or determinate of the concept red. The two concepts represent a determinate and a determinable. But it is far from clear that the concepts must themselves relate to each other in the same way as their representations do. I suspect therefore that many of the views that have been advanced as concerning concepts may be best understood as concerning the properties they represent. Indeed, this seems to be how at least some others who talk about determination or kindhood relations between concepts understand the claims (Väyrynen 2013, 230; 2016b; Harcourt and Thomas 2013). If so, then these discussions concern the metaphysics of properties, not concepts. If it is aesthetic concepts they speak of, then their subject is at most superficially different from that of this thesis.

However, let us suppose for sake of the argument that these questions are distinct from analogous questions about aesthetic properties, bracketing how exactly kindhood and determination relations could hold between concepts. Thus, some may endorse what I will call the *conceptual kind thesis* and the *conceptual determination thesis*, which say respectively that aesthetic concepts are kinds or determinates of the concept of aesthetic value. Although these views are by hypothesis distinct from the kind and determination theses, they are vulnerable to analogous objections, the outlines of which I will now present. Again, they proceed by distinguishing the overall and *pro tanto* versions of the views.

The overall conceptual kind thesis falls prey to the objection from strict sufficiency. Suppose that the concept of elegance is a kind of the concept of overall aesthetic goodness and the concept of monotony is a kind of the concept of overall aesthetic badness. Suppose also that both the concepts of elegance and monotony apply to an object. In that case, both the concepts of overall aesthetic goodness and

badness should apply to an object. But both concepts cannot apply to the same object. So, the conceptual kind thesis is false.

The objection from determinate incompatibility similarly applies to the overall conceptual determination thesis. The concepts of elegance and melancholy can co-apply only if a concept applies which is a determinate of both. But it is implausible to suppose that some concept is a determinate of both elegance and melancholy. So, there is reason to reject the overall conceptual determination thesis.

These objections can be avoided by the *pro tanto* conceptual kind thesis. Furthermore, one of my original complaints against the *pro tanto* kind thesis may not apply to its conceptual analogue. I have argued that it is doubtful whether there are any *pro tanto* properties, a commitment that the *pro tanto* kind thesis incurs. But the analogous commitment of the *pro tanto* conceptual kind thesis is not obviously objectionable in the same way. Even if there are no *pro tanto* properties, there may still be concepts of them. Or at least a case would have to be made against the existence of such concepts.

Crucially, the other objection does apply. If the *pro tanto* conceptual kind thesis is true, then the concepts of *pro tanto* and overall aesthetic value have to be the same bar partiality. That is, the only difference between them must be that one is in some sense partial and the other is not. This in turn means that they must have the same kinds bar partiality. Then, the *pro tanto* conceptual kind thesis faces the dilemma: does it concern *pro tanto* or overall aesthetic concepts? If it concerns the former, then the *pro tanto* conceptual kind thesis is not an alternative to the overall conceptual kind thesis. And if it concerns the latter, it has the consequence that corresponding *pro tanto* and overall aesthetic concepts do not differ just in their

partiality. It would become obscure what kinds the concept of overall aesthetic value would have and what the concept of *pro tanto* elegance would be a kind of.

The above is of course a sketch of an argument, but it strongly suggests that the kind thesis and conceptual kind thesis are analogous enough to be mostly vulnerable to the same arguments.

Similar arguments also apply to moral properties such as honesty, cowardice, generosity, cruelty, diligence and the like. Properties of this sort are usually referred to as ‘thick’ to contrast with ‘thin’ properties such as moral goodness and badness or rightness and wrongness. What exactly marks out the contrast between the thick and the thin is a knotty issue, as is the question whether the distinction makes sense both for properties and for concepts (Eklund 2013). Still, in so far as some grip on the contrast can be secured by means of examples (which is also how the aesthetic/non-aesthetic contrast was articulated), it should be enough for at least the beginnings of an argument. The views in question would then be the *moral kind thesis* and *moral determination thesis*, which claim that moral properties are, respectively, kinds and determinates of moral value.

Here is a simple statement of the objections that I have presented as applied to the moral kind and determination theses. A person can be honest but cruel. So, if honesty and cruelty were both kinds of overall moral value, then such a person should be both overall good and bad, which is impossible. Furthermore, if honesty and cruelty were both determinates of aesthetic value, then whenever they co-occurred a property that is a determinate of both honesty and cruelty would have to be instantiated. This, however, seems wrong: no kind of honesty is a kind of cruelty. Supposing that honesty and cruelty are kinds of *pro tanto* aesthetic value involves supposing that *pro tanto* properties exist, which I have argued against. In addition,

even if there are such properties, the view that honesty and cruelty are kinds of *pro tanto* moral value would fail to be a plausible alternative to the view that they are kinds of overall moral value. If it concerned *pro tanto* honesty and cruelty, it would fail to be an alternative to the view. And if it concerned overall honesty and cruelty, it would not be plausible because it would require a difference in more than partiality between corresponding *pro tanto* and overall properties.

Such is the outline of the case against the moral kind and determination theses. Assessing it would take more than merely filling out the details which can be found in Chapters 4 and 7. It would also require attention to the ways in which moral properties may differ from aesthetic properties.

Some of these differences support my case. For one thing, the moral analogue of the kind thesis is likely to be viewed by many as less plausible than the kind thesis in the first place. All kinds of P are ways of being P. But some ethicists, notably consequentialists, deny that being honest is a way of being morally good. Consequentialists may happily admit that honesty is neither here nor there as far as moral goodness is concerned. And although it is also controversial whether being elegant is a way of being aesthetically good (see Section 2.1.2), it is hard to imagine a dismissal quite as insouciant as that with which consequentialists shrug off many moral properties. Relatedly, consequentialists would be likely to reject the mutual supervenience of moral properties and moral value, a necessary condition for the moral determination thesis.

Perhaps the objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility could be resisted by appealing to the classical doctrine of the unity of the virtues (Cooper 1998; Wolf 2007; Toner 2014). There are many versions of this claim but it says roughly that one cannot possess one virtue without possessing all

the others at least to some positive extent. If this were really the case, then it may not be possible to be truly honest if one is cruel. Whether this route for defence is promising depends on how strongly one interprets the unity of the virtues. But the stronger the unity, the more straightforwardly it is vulnerable to counterexamples of honest but cruel Robespierres.

The broad strokes of the arguments presented above apply equally to moral concepts as well as thick concepts and properties beyond aesthetics and morality. Whether they are convincing needs to be considered on a case-by-case basis. But, at the very least, the arguments that I have given represent the general form of a serious challenge.

The exact same challenge also applies a level higher to many of the properties that can be called ‘value’, ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’. Chapter 7 argued on parallel grounds that neither aesthetic nor moral value are kinds of value. For analogous reasons, it is far from obvious whether any of the following are kinds of value: epistemic value, prudential value, being a good tennis player, being good for the health or being bad at driving. Each case warrants independent consideration, but the doubts provoked by my arguments cast a long shadow. Importantly, however, these doubts do not mean that these properties cannot make their bearers valuable, even necessarily so.

The theme that emerges is that claims about kinds can be deeply controversial even where they seem to be innocent. In a similar vein, Section 6.6 argued that we have at least some reason to doubt qualitative pluralism about aesthetic value, i.e. the view that aesthetic value has both qualitative and quantitative determinates. Analogous considerations may also apply to qualitative pluralism about aesthetic properties, which says that aesthetic properties have both qualitative and

quantitative determinates. I am not sure whether either of these views is true or false. Much more explicit attention would be needed to settle the question either way.

8.2. The metaphysics of the *pro tanto*

The objections from strict sufficiency and determinate incompatibility are only effective against the overall versions of the views that they were levelled against. The availability of *pro tanto* versions of the views has allowed both objections to be dismissed. Meanwhile, the problems that affect the *pro tanto* versions of the views have gone unrecognised. This is an instance of a broader phenomenon.

It is striking that a concept that is such a familiar part of philosophers' vocabulary as *pro tanto* has been undertheorised. In particular, very little explicit attention has been devoted to the metaphysics of what it is for something to be the case *pro tanto*. As a result, theories have been constructed with heavy reliance on a concept whose metaphysical import is not well understood.

This is not only of interest to aesthetics. The problem of making metaphysical sense of what is the case *pro tanto* is analogous to crucial important issues such as the metaphysics of modality and time.

Here is a line of thought that sets up a problem for the metaphysics of modality and time. The Hagia Sophia still stands today, although it could have long been destroyed. It is now a mosque, although it used to be a church and a museum. Both claims are surely true. Yet the Hagia Sophia as a mosque has an obvious reality that Hagia Sophia as a church and as a museum do not have. Similarly, the many ways in which the Hagia Sophia could be do not obviously have the same reality as the way in which the Hagia Sophia actually is. The past lacks the obvious reality of

the present. The merely possible lacks the obvious reality of the actual. The challenge is to say how we can speak truly of mere possibilities and the past if they lack the obvious reality of the actual and the present.

I expect that many will find the above use of the term ‘reality’ frustratingly vague or question-begging. My point, however, is that whatever reality possibilities and the past may have is not obvious. What is actual and current belongs in our metaphysics by default. Possibilities and the past may also, in one way or another, belong in our metaphysics. But whether and how they belong is an open question.

The same is true of the *pro tanto*. It is probably true that even a building as splendid as the Hagia Sophia is aesthetically bad in some respect. But whatever that *pro tanto* aesthetic badness is, it does not obviously have the reality of the Hagia Sophia’s overall aesthetic goodness. We need to make sense of how claims about what is the case *pro tanto* can be true. But it is an open question how this is to be done. Section 4.1.1 considered some possibilities that seem to be dead ends and made a positive proposal. I suggested that to be *pro tanto* P is to contribute positively or negatively to an object’s overall P. However, given the near-complete neglect of this topic, there is certainly much more to be said. Indeed, if the analogy to the metaphysics of modality and time is anything to go by, I have in all likelihood barely scratched the surface of an issue the relevance of which extends far beyond aesthetics.

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