ON THE DEFENSIBILITY OF AESTHETIC JUDGMENTS IN CRITICAL THEORIES OF BEARDSLEY AND ISENBERG

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ABSTRACT

In the 20th century one of the most controversial questions in aesthetics for American philosophers is the question of the defensibility of aesthetic judgments. The main reason is that its answer determines whether aesthetic criticism can be a well-founded intellectual enterprise or not. Monroe C. Beardsley is one of the American philosophers who believe that aesthetic evaluations are defensible and he proposes a rationalist theory of objective criticism. According to him, there are normative principles governing aesthetic evaluations and critics can justify their critical verdicts on the artworks by inferring their evaluations from these principles. With regard to this proposal, the questions are as follows: Can such a rationalist theory maintain the essential feature of the aesthetic judgment which demands an internal response, a particular feeling, in addition to its cognitive aspect? If not, can there be an alternative theory for the defensibility of aesthetic evolutions which saves its essential emotive ingredient? In this paper, these questions will be responded to by examining Beardsley's theory and its critical rejection by Arnold Isenberg. As a result, it will be demonstrated that Isenberg formulates the alternative theory which gives equal weight in aesthetic criticism both to the internal emotive aspect and to the validity of an aesthetic judgment.

Keywords: *Aesthetic criticism, Aesthetic judgment, Aesthetic value, Critical communication, Community of feeling*

BEARDSLEY VE ISENBERG'İN ELEŞTİREL KURAMLARINDA ESTETİK YARGILARIN SAVUNULABİLİRLİĞİ ÜZERİNE

ÖZ

Yirminci yüzyılda estetik alanında Amerikan filozofları arasında en çok anlaşmazlığa sebep olan sorulardan biri estetik yargıların savunulabilirliğine dair sorudur. Bunun asıl sebebi, sorunun cevabının estetik eleştirinin sağlam zeminli bir entelektüel faaliyet olup olmadığını belirleyecek olmasıdır. Monroe C. Beardsley estetik değerlendirmelerin savunulabileceğine inanan, nesnel ve rasyonel bir estetik eleştiri kuramı öne süren Amerikan filozoflarından biridir. Ona göre estetik değerlendirmeleri kapsayan normatif ilkeler vardır ve eleştirmen sanat eserinin değerine dair estetik kararını bu ilkelerden çıkarsayarak gerekçelendirebilir. Bu iddiaya dair sorulması gereken sorular şunlardır: Böylesi bir rasyonel kuram estetik yargıların bilişsel boyutuna eklenen ve onun ayırt edici asli özelliğini oluşturan belirli bir duygu ya da içsel bir tepki gerekliliğini muhafaza edebilir mi? Eğer edemezse, estetik yargıları duygusal içeriğinden, yani estetik değerin hissedilmesi gerekliliğinden koparmayacak ama buna rağmen onların rasyonel savunulabilirliğini ileri sürecek başka bir kuram mümkün müdür? Bu makalede bu soruların cevapları Beardsley'in kuramı incelenerek ve kuramın Arnold Isenberg tarafından sunulan eleştirel reddi çözümlenerek verilecektir. Netice itibarıyla Isenberg'in, estetik yargıların hem duygusal boyutuna hem de geçerlilik talebine eşit ağırlık veren bir estetik eleştiri kuramı ortaya koyduğu gösterilecektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Estetik eleştiri, Estetik yargı, Estetik değer, Eleştirel iletişim, Duygu ortaklığı*

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Introduction

In *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant points out the essential tensional nature of aesthetic judgments. They are specific judgments which are neither judgments claiming to know the object nor expressions of personal likings, but have commonality with both of them. Aesthetic judgments in the form "This X is beautiful" are like personal expressions in that they express a kind of subjective, internal response.[1] Kant explicitly writes that "beauty is nothing by itself, without relation to the feeling of the subject."[2] Since the internal response, like feeling pleasure, cannot be a part of the object, aesthetic judgment cannot be a logical judgment; a claim for the knowledge of the object. However, aesthetic judgments are also like logical judgments in that, through an aesthetic judgment, it is spoken as if beauty is the feature of the object itself and the judgment demands a universal validity. Thus, aesthetic judgments differ from other judgments because of this essential tension of containing an internal response and a claim for validity. To explain how the aesthetic evaluations (containing this internal tension) are possible, Kant turns to the reflective use of the power of judgment and formulates one of the most influencing aesthetic theories of the 18th century.[3]

According to Kant, although aesthetic judgments have universal validity and demand everyone's agreement, they cannot do this by means of argumentation or rational proofs. Aesthetic judgement requires immediate perceptual or sensual acquaintance with the aesthetic object. In part 32 of

[1] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 97-102.
[2] Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 103.
[3] Before Kant, in the 17th century, Hume is also interested in aesthetic judgements which he takes to be judgments of taste. Hume thinks that attribution of aesthetic value depends on sentiment which refers to a kind of approbation (praise) or disapprobation (blame). In his essay "Of the Standard of Taste" he writes that the sentiment of a good critic with a good taste can provide the standard of beauty. A good critic is someone who has a sound understanding, delicate imagination, has practiced in a specific area of art, has done myriad comparisons in that area and has succeeded in eliminating his prejudices. However, as Theodore Gracyk points out, given the sentimentalism of Hume, his general ideas on taste cover both moral and aesthetic judgments. Consequently, it can be said that he does not detect a conceptual tension that makes the judgments specifically aesthetic as problematic. David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *David Hume: Selected Essays*, ed. Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 142-148. Theodore Gracyk, "Hume's Aesthetics," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2021 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/hume-aesthetics/.

Critique of the Power of Judgment, Kant insists that the perceptual encounter with aesthetic object is necessary for aesthetic evaluation; to wit, aesthetic spectator has to personally feel aesthetic pleasure or displeasure. Especially in the case of the aesthetic judgments concerning artworks, logical demonstration that some rules apply to the artwork and the subsequent inference that the artwork is a good work can never lead to one's aesthetic judgment unless she feels or enjoys the artwork herself. To summarize in Kant's own words:

> If someone reads me his poem or takes me to a play that in the end fails to please my taste, then he can adduce Batteux or Lessing, or even older and more famous critics of taste, and adduce all the rules they established as proofs that his poem is beautiful; certain passages, which are the very ones that displease me, may even agree with rules of beauty (as they have been given there and have been universally recognized): I will stop my ears, listen to no reasons and arguments, and would rather believe that those rules of the critics are false or at least that this is not a case for their application than allow that my judgment should be determined by means of a priori grounds of proof, since it is supposed to be a judgment of taste and not of the understanding or of reason.[4]

This tensional nature of aesthetic judgments comes to the fore again in aesthetic investigations of the 20th century in the United States. With the linguistic turn in philosophy, philosophers of analytic tradition focus on the statements of aesthetic value; their clarification and confirmation. The main reason of this philosophical interest in aesthetic judgment is the question of the legitimacy of aesthetic criticism.[5] Two significant analytic philosophers of the

[4] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 165.

[5] Assuredly, analytic philosophers are not the only ones who come to grips with the problem of aesthetic criticism in the 20th century. There are major figures in continental tradition too, like Walter Benjamin, who thinks that aesthetic criticism should be the fundamental problem to grapple with in philosophy of art. He starts his own study on aesthetics by criticizing Jena Romantics' concept of art and art criticism. Then he proposes a theory which takes criticism necessary for both the very existence of the art work and aesthetic experience of it. Benjamin can be said to be interested more in possibilities of moral, social and political transformation that the concept of art criticism opens up, of which analytical philosophers can be criticized to be ignoring. Therefore, for him, philosophy of criticism does not amount to finding a critical criterion answering to the tensional nature of aesthetic judgments. For a detailed examination of both Benjamin's theory and other theories of criticism belonging to the German aesthetic tradition see

century, C. Monroe Beardsley and Arnold Isenberg, affirm that philosophy of art should be philosophy of aesthetic criticism.[6] Consequently, philosophers examine the descriptions of artworks used in aesthetic criticism instead of clarifying the concepts of the beautiful and the sublime. Aesthetic judgment, on the other hand, is discussed in terms of the analysis of the aesthetic verdict of the critic.

We can see that Kant's remark on the tensional togetherness of subjective feeling and claim for validity in aesthetic evaluation survives in a new form in the philosophy of aesthetic criticism. How is it possible that critical evaluations are rationally defensible if they are necessarily bound to an internal, private response to an aesthetic object? If aesthetic evaluations are rationally defensible through argumentation and if critical verdicts are inferences from general principles, then it seems that aesthetic judgments lose their connection with the feeling. If aesthetic evaluations necessitate the experience of a certain kind of feeling in the perceptual encounter with the artwork, then trying to find reasons to justify an aesthetic judgment and to rationally persuade others is futile. The following will discuss the possibility of proposing a theory of aesthetic criticism that does not eliminate the tension essential to aesthetic evaluation. In the first part, Beardsley's generalist and formalist approach to aesthetic evaluation will be discussed. In the second part, Isenberg's particularist theory of aesthetic criticism will be presented. It will be concluded that Isenberg can give an account of the internal tension of aesthetic evaluation with his idea that aesthetic criticism aims at the community of feeling. As a concluding remark, the obscure point in Isenberg's theory will be underlined.

Nathan Ross, *The Philosophy and Politics of Aesthetic Experience: German Romanticism and Critical Theory*, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

[6] Beardsley writes that "[a]esthetics can be thought of, then, as the philosophy of criticism, or *metacriticism*." Monroe C. Beardsley *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1958, 4. In parallelism, Isenberg writes that "[p]hilosophical aesthetics is an analysis of the concepts and principles of criticism and other aesthetic studies, such as the psychology of art." Arnold Isenberg, "Analytical Philosophy and the Study of Art," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46, (1987): 125-136, 128.

Beardsley's Theory of Aesthetic Criticism

Beardsley devotes the last three chapters of *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* to the discussions on normative statements of aesthetic criticism. He focuses on the question of the "good reason" given for the aesthetic evaluation.[7] In the chapter called "Critical Evolution" he classifies aesthetic reasons into three categories: Genetic Reasons, Affective Reasons and Objective Reasons. The first two reasons are not good reasons to make the evaluation normative. While the former one is irrelevant to the evaluation, the latter is not, yet it can still impose no normativity on the judgment.[8] Genetic reasons usually include the psychological states, manners, and intentions of the artist before the production of the work. Consequently, critical evaluations that use Genetic Reasons usually take the form "This is a good work because it fulfils artist's intention." However, Beardsley writes, the intentions of the artist can never be known in the case when the artist is dead, like Shakespeare.[9] Moreover, even if it is possible to reach the intentions, the artist herself can be unable to put them into words to compare with the work because intentions grow and change through the productive process. Furthermore, even if the artist can clearly state her intentions and we can discover that they are fulfilled, the artwork can still be a poor work because we can still discuss the worth of the artist's intention. Thus, Beardsley concludes the "internationalist method" used to give Genetic Reasons cannot attribute normativity to the evaluations.[10]

Similar claims can be found in Beardsley's famous article "The Intentional Fallacy" which he wrote with W. K. Wimsatt in 1954. In this article, they problematize the relevancy of intentions to the evaluation, not of artworks in general, but of literary works.[11] They note that the meaning of a literary work is not identical with that which the author intended and base this claim on the private-public distinction. Beardsley and Wimsatt argue that a poem neither belongs to the critic nor to the author, but it belongs to the public because it is a publicly accessible product.[12] Literary works can be full of meanings of which the author is not aware but can be picked publicly through aesthetic evaluation.

[7] Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 454.
[8] *Ibid*., 457, 461.
[9] Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 458-459.
[10] *Ibid*., 460.
[11] W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," The Sewanee Review 54, no 3 (1946): 468-488, 468.
[12] *Ibid*., 470.

Therefore, referring to the intentional reasons to argue for the aesthetic indefensibility is an "Intentional Fallacy." Inaccessibility of the artist's meanings and intentions does not entail the undecidability on the aesthetic value and we can still form valid critical judgments. Considering the public-private distinction and the significance put on the public object rather than the private or subjective aspect, Beardsley's negative attitude towards subjective elements in aesthetics is strongly implicated. To support this implication, whether Affective Reasons are good reasons to defend aesthetic verdict or not should be investigated.

If someone claims that an artwork is a good work because it gives pleasure or it is moving or exciting, she validates her aesthetic praise by Affective Reasons.[13] In other words, aesthetic verdicts are regarded as expressions of subjective affections. Beardsley thinks that emotional responses provide no information with respect to two aspects. The first one is that aesthetic emotional response cannot be differentiated from other emotional responses. The second aspect is that it gives no information about the qualities of the object in giving reasons. If a critic advises us to see an artwork because it is pleasurable, we would still like to know what in the object causes that pleasure since we would like to be informed about the object, not about the subject. To regard affective responses as the standard of aesthetic criticism leads to impressionism and relativism, and arguing for the indefensibility of aesthetic evaluation on the ground of this relativism is "Affective Fallacy."[14] In their article called "Affective Fallacy," Beardsley and Wimsatt write that they chose the term fallacy because the identification of the artwork with the artist's intention or its identification with the emotional response is a confusion regarding that which is judged.[15] In both cases, the object vanishes. If aesthetic theory focuses on subjectivity, it loses the ground of validity for aesthetic evaluations. Therefore, the reasons which directly refer to the artwork (object) and which are called Objective Reasons by Beardsley should be the next point to move on.

Beardsley writes:

> I call a reason Objective if it refers to some characteristic-that is some quality or internal relation, or set of qualities and relations- within the

[13] Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 461.
[14] W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and M. C. Beardsley, "The Affective Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 57, no 1 (1949): 31-55.
[15] *Ibid*., 31.

> work itself, or some meaning relation between the work and the world. In short, either descriptive statements or interpretative statements appear as reasons in critical arguments, they are to be considered as Objective reasons.[16]

Accordingly, one can defend her aesthetic evaluation by describing the properties of the independent and public object. Given that all other conditions are equal, the presence of some properties makes the artworks better, while others make them worse. Beardsley calls them merit and defects.[17] To clarify, he gives the example of an apple with a worm. A worm in the apple is a defect but it is possible that the worm stays in a small patch in the apple and the apple has other properties which make it a good apple in spite of the worm. Beardsley is also aware that some meritorious features in one artwork cannot have the same role in another. Indeed, it can turn to be a defect for another artwork. "[E]xactness in perspective and in the size-distance relations of figures" is a merit in a Rembrandt etching, while their absence is a merit in a Cezanne still life. [18]

Beardsley argues that specific principles of merits can be ultimately subsumed under general principles called "General Canons" which state general merits and which are applicable in all artworks in any form.[19] There are three objective features stated by canons: unity, complexity and intensity. Beardsley concludes that these are Objective Reasons and have justificatory role in any aesthetic judgment by making this particular judgment deducible from this General Canon, although these canons are not universal rules but just general tendencies or statistical generalizations. The critic can judge that a drama is not good because it depicts a thirty years' time period and a long-action time brings disunity to the play. She deduced her claim from the General Canon stating that disunity is a defect in aesthetic objects. However, the real question is the justification of these Canons themselves because the evaluation can still be rejected if the Canons are not accepted. Beardsley responds by giving an instrumentalist definition of aesthetic value and his conception of aesthetic

[16] Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 462.
[17] *Ibid*., 464.
[18] In "On Generality of Critical Reasons" Beardsley clarifies in detail how one single objective feature cannot determine the goodness of the work and how relations and combinations of features make an artwork better or worse. See Monroe C. Beardsley, "On the Generality of Critical Reasons," *The Journal of Philosophy* 59, no 18 (1962): 477-486.
[19] Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 465-66.

experience included in this definition can be addressed as the main reason for missing the essential feeling component of aesthetic evaluations.

Beardsley's point of departure to define aesthetic value is to establish that the adjective 'good' in critical judgments is used adjunctively. It means that critical judgments can be expressed in the form "This is a good X." The condition for using 'good' adjunctively, on the other hand, is that X belongs to a class which Beardsley calls a "function-class." [20] A function-class is a class whose members have something in common so that they can do (function) better than the other classes alike. In other words, the objects have the capacity to function more efficiently in the service of a purpose although it is possible that they are not designed so purposively. Following this analysis, Beardsley maintains that the noun 'aesthetic object' is a function-class because aesthetic objects have the capacity to produce aesthetic experience in common and they function better in this production than the other objects. The next step is to pin down the differentiating characteristics of aesthetic experience. Beardsley thinks that aesthetic experience is not a different kind of experience. It is a special unity of manifold characteristics which can be found in different experiences separately.[21] To describe this combination, he transfers objective qualities from object to the realm of the whole experience. As a result, the qualities cover not only the objective aspect of the experience but also cognitive and affective aspects of the experience as well. Thus, unity, complexity and intensity are also those characteristics which determine the experience as aesthetic experience. To cover all three, he introduces the term aesthetic "magnitude".[22] Accordingly, Beardsley writes: "If it be granted that aesthetic experience has value, then 'aesthetic value' may be defined as 'the capacity to produce aesthetic experience of some magnitude.'"[23] Beardsley concludes General Canons themselves can be justified by saying that only the features unity, complexity and intensity in greater degree can yield an aesthetic experience in greater magnitude and this is what constitutes aesthetic value. Thus, Beardsley grounds the validity of General Canons by the instrumental definition aesthetic value.

Beardsley's reductionist perspective shows itself most clearly when he articulates the role of feelings or internal responses in aesthetic experience.

[20] *Ibid.*, 525.
[21] *Ibid.*, 530.
[22] *Ibid.*, 529.
[23] *Ibid.*, 533.

While describing aesthetic experience, Beardsley mentions emotion, yet in such a way that it loses its subjective phenomenal quality. Emotion in aesthetic experience is reduced to one of the three objective qualities of the experience.[24] To write in his words: "what we call the emotion in aesthetic experience may be simply the intensity of the experience itself."[25] Intensity is the concentrated engagement, the "pervasive feeling-tone," and it can ultimately be clarified as the capacity of the aesthetic object to fix the mind on it itself. [26] He insists that intensity never refers to the intensity of pleasure but refers to the absence of the negative disturbances. Moreover, the significance of subject's "impulses or expectations" comes from not *being felt* but being a part of formal completeness or equilibrium.[27] Subjective reactions are important in so far as they are resolved or counterbalanced by other elements so that the formal quality of unity arises.

Moreover, if Beardsley argues that aesthetic judgments are inferences from General Canons, then it means that aesthetic value is not something that has to be immediately felt; so, the spectator does not have to encounter the artwork itself in order to agree with the critic. In "On Generality of Critical Reasons" Beardsley explicitly writes as follows: "But I should think that the aim of the reasoner—that is, the critic armed with reasons—is not to get people to *like* the poem, but to get them to acknowledge that it is good."[28] This can also be supported by Beardsley's last two comments on the term 'capacity'.[29] Capacity can be understood either as the capacity of the object to produce aesthetic experience or the capacity of the spectator for the experience. Beardsley notes that the capacities are not to be necessarily actualized. An aesthetic judgment states only that it *can* move people, it is capable of producing aesthetic experience of proper magnitude. So, to judge that the object has aesthetic merit, it is sufficient to demonstrate that the object fits to General Canons and it can, could, or would move someone. That to which Nicholas Wolterstorff refers as Beardsley's strategy to overcome the disorderly nature of enjoyment in *The Aesthetic Point of View* applies here too: "he moves from the categorical to the

[24] *Ibid*., 527-28.
[25] Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 527.
[26] *Ibid*., 529.
[27] Georg Dickie calls the affections, feelings, expectations the "phenomenally subjective features" of aesthetic experience. He questions the meaning and possibility of having coherent or complete affects or feelings in an experience. George Dickie, "Beardsley's Theory of Aesthetic Experience," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 8, no 2 (1974): 13-23.
[28] Beardsley, "On the Generality of Critical Reasons," 478.
[29] Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, 531.

counterfactual."[30] Enjoyment can accompany the judgment and can count as evidence of the aesthetic capacity of the object, but it is not included necessarily in the *reasons* of judgment. All these imply that critical enterprise can be carried out without actually enjoying anything and Beardsley's strong opposition to relativism and subjectivism seems to result in abolishing the essential character of aesthetic judgments.

Isenberg's Theory of Aesthetic Criticism

According to Isenberg, the question "Why does X like this poem?" can be responded in two different ways. One response is to take the enjoyment of the poem as a fact and to refer to some qualities of the poem as the causes of this fact. In other words, it is to state the *cause* of the enjoyment which is taken to be a psychological fact. Isenberg writes that asking this question in aesthetic does not demand such kind of psychological explanation.[31] If we ask a critic, whose aesthetic judgment we disagree with, to justify her verdict and then she points to the quality of the artwork, we would see it as just the cause of his bad taste and not as a justification. In asking for justification, we are interested in the normative dimension of the criticism, not in its genitive dimension. This means that Isenberg agrees with Beardsley that psychological explanations cannot serve as justification in aesthetics. To causally explain why one feels in a certain way and to convince another person that a poem is beautiful are different processes.

As Joe Zeccardi clarifies in his article "Rethinking Critical Communication," Isenberg thinks that the normativity of the critical process is thought to depend on its argumentative form.[32] We can read Isenberg as referring to Beardsley's thought. If critical process is thought to be an argument, it is composed of three parts: "There is the value judgment or *verdict* (V): "This picture or the poem is good —"; There is a particular statement or *reason* (R): —

[30] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Beardsley's Approach," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 63, no 2 (2005): 191-195, 193.
[31] Arnold Isenberg, "Critical Communication," in Aesthetics and the Theory of Criticism; Selected Essays of Arnold Isenberg, ed. William Callaghan, Leigh Cauman, Carl G. Hempel, Sidney Morgenbesser, Mary Mothersill, Ernest Nagel, and Theodore Norman, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923, 158.
[32] Joe Zeccardi, "Rethinking Critical Communication," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 68, no 4 (2010): 367-377, 369.

because it has such-and- such a quality—"; and there is a general statement and *norm* (N): "—and any work which has that quality is *pro tanto* good."[33] Accordingly, the verdict is generally accepted as an utterance of blame or praise which expresses a feeling. Then, it is expected that a reason conditions the verdict.[34] If it is to be an argument, there should be a deductive inference from premise to conclusion; that is, from the reason to the verdict. However, the problem is that there is no logical connection between having a quality x and being a good poem. So, we have to think a norm to connect them. The critic can never make the general claim that a quality Q everywhere and every time makes an artwork likable. Moreover, to argue for the norm's truthfulness is neither possible nor necessary. Isenberg stresses that "[t]here is not in all the world's criticism a single purely descriptive statement concerning which one is prepared to say beforehand, 'If it is true, I shall like that work so much the better.'"[35] Thus, truth or falsity of a general principle never adds to or takes weight from the aesthetic value, which is necessarily an experienced or *felt* value. According to Isenberg, the verdict depends on the aesthetic feeling which has a kind of peculiarity in that it is a feeling which is attached to an aesthetic content. It is "embodied."

If the connection of verdict to reasons is explored in order to discuss the role of reasons in aesthetic criticism, two points can be stated. First, Isenberg insists that reasons are not logically related to the verdicts. In order to convince someone, we do not argue that the verdict logically follows from our reasons for it.[36] Second, in aesthetic evaluation verdicts and reasons cannot be easily and clearly differentiated. To recall, reasons given for an aesthetic judgment are usually descriptions of the qualities or the content of the artwork. However, they are not objective descriptions of certain properties of the artwork. They are indeed mixed with blame or praise and they express taste or distaste. For example, the statement "Colors are garish" imparts both information and value. The term 'garish', as Frank Sibley would call it, is an "*evaluation-added* property term"[37] and when an evaluation-added property term is used to describe an

[33] Isenberg, "Critical Communication," 158.
[34] *Ibid*., 158.
[35] *Ibid*., 164.
[36] *Ibid*.
[37] Frank Sibley, "Particularity, Art, and Evolution" in *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical* Aesthetics, ed. John Benson, Betty Redfern, and Jeremy Roxbee Cox, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001, 88-104, 92.

object, it means that a property is attributed to an object with an implication of the speaker's positive or negative evaluation of that property. On this account, we can infer that the terms 'unity,' 'complexity' and 'intensity' which Beardsley suppose as purely descriptive and so objective, are the qualities that are attached with positive feelings (pleasure) of the critic. Yet, the positive feeling might not hold for everyone and therefore a generality cannot be ascribed to these qualities. Therefore, as James Shelly does, Isenberg, can be rightly placed into the particularist side against the generalist one among the theories of aesthetic criticism.[38]

That the aesthetic value is a felt value and primacy in aesthetic evaluation is granted to the particularity of aesthetic experience does not entail that evaluations are relative and arbitrary. Neither does it lead to aesthetic obscurantism which means that a felt quality is ineffable or incommunicable. Isenberg attempts to save his aesthetic theory from these accusations by means of his concept of "critical communication." He explains that quality in an aesthetic experience can be communicated "at the level of the senses" and accordingly the function of aesthetic criticism is "to induce a sameness of vision, of experienced content."[39] In order to get a grip on Isenberg's notion of critical communication, we should contend the separability of the meaning of a judgment from its validity in art criticism. What is transmitted by means of language in aesthetic evaluation is the meaning of the judgment but not the belief or doubt about it because the latter requires an additional act.[40] In critical communication too, we expect the transmission of a meaning. For example, in reading a critical essay on an artwork we desire to get the content of the critics' sentences, the reasons for her verdict. However, this kind of transmission differs from ordinary communication or from the understanding of a scientific statement.

While an ordinary statement or a formal, scientific statement can be understood through the definitions of the terms (fixed connotations) without any dependence on sense, the qualities constituting an artwork whose concepts are used in an evaluative statement necessitate a perceptive act. Neither in ordinary communication nor in scientific one a reference to the sense or

[38] James Shelly, "The Concept of the Aesthetic", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/aesthetic-concept/ .
[39] Isenberg, "Critical Communication," 163
[40] *Ibid*., 156.

perception is needed in order to get the meaning. Contrary to them, the critics' meaning is communicated when it is "filled in" or "rounded out" or completed by the act of perception.[41] Thus, Isenberg believes in semantic dependence of aesthetic judgments on immediate sense or perception. Perception, in turn, Isenberg writes, is the same as the overall appreciation of a particular artwork in its wholeness.[42] So, it seems that Isenberg uses the term 'perception' in such a comprehensive sense that it covers aesthetic experience with all its sensuous, emotive and cognitive aspects. Contrary to Beardsley, in order to understand the aesthetic judgment of the critic, perception is necessary.

By giving reasons for her verdict, the critic's aim is not justification but only to get the others to understand her. At his point we reach the exact answer of the question of what the role the reasons play in an aesthetic evaluation. Since the reasons are descriptions of the qualities that are felt to be valuable, the aim of the critic is to create a *community of feeling* through the perception of the artwork. This community of feeling can be thought as a kind of aesthetic empathy, or aesthetic "feeling with".[43] To clarify this empathetic process, Isenberg gives the example of a small talk about the delightful expression of a face.[44] Imagine that someone utters that a face is delightful and we ask "What is delightful about it?" In response, she would simply say "Didn't you see this smile?" This dialogue demands the appreciation of the immediate experience of the face and while referring to the smile, two people *feel* that they speak of the same thing. Likewise, critics describe the artwork's delightfulness and tries to get us to see what she sees. When we see it, we understand what she means. Thus,

[41] Isenberg, "Critical Communication," 163.
[42] *Ibid*., 169.
[43] Isenberg's conception of community of feeling can be traced back to Kant's concept of *sensus commınus* (common sense); the idea of a common aesthetic 'sense' shared by all. However, Isenberg stresses the perspectival aspect of the evaluation, too. To wit, the critic perceives the work from a particular perspective of which perhaps the spectator is unaware before. Therefore, I used the term "aesthetic empathy" to express the idea that aesthetic spectator should adopt the aesthetic perspective of the critic to feel in the same way. Assuredly, the concept of empathy in aesthetics has a long history going back to its first use by Robert Vischer and Theodor Lipps, but here I follow Jeff Mitscherling's proposal. Mitscherling thinks that empathy concerns characters in the work of art while in our case empathy concerns the critic's experience. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 122-24, 173-176. Jeff Mitscherling, Empathy and Emotional "Coexperiencing in the Aesthetic Experience," *Horizon. Studies in Phenomenology* 9, no 2 (2020): 495-512, 501-502. For a short introduction to the history of empathy see also Magdalena Nowak, "The Complicated History of Einfühlung," *Argument: Biannual Philosophical Journal* 2 (2011): 301-326.
[44] Isenberg, "Critical Communication," 164.

art critic is the one who sees and helps the other one to see what she sees by means of critical discourse.

The community of feeling or the inducement of the sameness of vision through critical communication can happen in two ways. The first one is when the critic takes on the role of a teacher, guides and changes the perspective of the aesthetic spectator by giving direction for perceiving the object. The critic

> … gives us directions for perceiving, and does this *by means of* the idea he imparts to us, which narrows down the field of possible visual orientations and guides us in the discrimination of details, the organization of parts, the grouping of discrete objects into patterns. It is as if we found both an oyster and a pearl when we had been looking for a seashell because we had been told it was valuable. It *is* valuable, but not because it is a seashell.[45]

Isenberg's example of such a critical guidance is Ludwig Goldscheider's aesthetic evaluation of the painter El Greco's work *The Burial of Count Orgaz* (*El Entierro del Conde de Orgaz*). The painting is an example of religious painting and depicts the burial ceremony of Count Orgaz. In the upper part of the painting, we encounter the glory heaven with angles, saints, apostles, martyrs and Christ covered by the clouds. Heaven is split to accept Count of Orgaz. In the lower part of the painting, at the center of the scene is the death body of the count lying in the arms of two saints, Saint Augustine and Saint Stephen, who descended from heaven to service and burry the count. In addition to them we see a monk on the left and a priest on the right. The background is populated by the astonishing faces of the crowd. While presenting his criticism, Goldscheider directs our attention to the outline of the figures on the lower part of the picture, to the quality of the "wavelike contour."[46] He points that the wave is "… steeply upwards and downwards about the grey monk on the left, in mutually inclined curves about the yellow of the two saints, and again steeply upwards and downwards about... the priest on the right."[47] By means of this concept of wavelike curve, Goldscheider orients us to a certain perception of the painting and excludes other possible perspectives and qualities. He leads us to emphasize and groups elements of paintings selectively so that we *see* the wavelike quality

[45] *Ibid*., 162-163.
[46] Isenberg, "Critical Communication," 162-63.
[47] *Ibid*., 162.

in the painting.[48] In this communication, language never functions simply to express the quality of having wavelike contour because not all objects having this contour are aesthetically valuable. This quality is felt aesthetically valuable only as the quality of this unique painting. So, we can conclude that, aesthetic judgments of the art critic orient us to conceive new ways of perception, to feel in a new way and to grasp new kind of value.

The second way to form a community of feeling is not to introduce a new perceptual orientation, but to clarify and give a name to that which is already perceived and felt. In that sense, it can be stated that aesthetic community of feeling already exists, yet an 'a-ha moment' is needed which Isenberg describes as a very delightful experience.[49] According to Isenberg, all perceptions are not endured self-consciously. Some qualities enter to consciousness but they are kept at the fringes of it, away from the center. When the aesthetic evaluation of the critic shifts our attention and refocus it on these qualities, we finally make them clear and distinct, and become aware of our community of feeling. For example, we read that a critic writes that he finds in a book "piled-up clauses, endless sentences, repetitious diction." Through reading the critic's evaluation, we become aware of "the feeling of monotony" that we have experienced while reading the same book.[50] So, the critic finds the expression for our unconscious feeling and makes us aware of this feeling that is shared with the critic. Isenberg thinks that this awareness is not the psychological explanation of aesthetic experience and does not casually depend on it. The realization is included in the aesthetic experience itself as one of its moments, it is "retrial of experienced values."[51] Thus, according to Isenberg, particular encounter with the artwork is necessary for the acceptance of the validity of an aesthetic evaluation. The verdict can only be defended, if it is to be defended, through the community of feeling, not through a logical inference from general canons.

Conclusion

Both Beardsley and Isenberg renounce the belief that aesthetic evaluations cannot be defended because they are the results of purely personal

[48] *Ibid*., 167
[49] *Ibid*.
[50] *Ibid*.
[51] *Ibid*., 168.

affections, relative to the persons. Hence, both of them think that reasons can be given for an aesthetic verdict. We can also point out their agreement in the significance of aesthetic experience for aesthetic evaluation. According to Beardsley, there are objective principles that make an art work better and worse and these principles can be justified by showing that they make aesthetic experience of some magnitude possible. However, Beardsley's conception of aesthetic experience tends to rule out the subjectively phenomenal aspect of it. Feeling is dismissed in three ways. It is either accused to be uninformative or reduced to the intensity of the experience or is taken to be a part of the formal unity of it. So, Beardsley asserts the defensibility of the aesthetic verdicts at the expense of the reduction of the necessary emotive aspect of the evaluative process.

Isenberg criticizes making immediate feeling redundant to the aesthetic evaluation for the sake of objectivity, rationality or generality. According to him, the principles of aesthetic evaluation claimed to be general and objective are already value-laden. He claims that aesthetic perception is an overall appreciation of the artwork and both the critic and spectator have to perceive the work in order to evaluate it. The critic perceives the work, feels in a certain way, and then expresses and communicates her perception. Her aim in critical process is to make the others understand the meaning of the statements of her reasons. The meaning of her statements can be understood through the perception of the artwork when a community of feeling of pleasure or displeasure with the critic is gained. Through critical communication, the critic either gives a perceptual orientation specific to the work or brings some qualities to the awareness of the spectator; the qualities which the spectator has already attended but not in a clear way.

Attentive to both the cognitive and emotive aspects of aesthetic evaluation, Isenberg succeeds both in preserving the essential tension of aesthetic judgments and in ascribing a crucial role to art criticism in aesthetics. Nonetheless, as a concluding remark, theory's own difficult has to be mentioned. The concept of critical communication which gives strength to Isenberg's theory of aesthetic criticism can be said to weaken it as well. Isenberg fails in clarifying the semantic link between perception and concepts included in critical communication. He writes that concepts of critical statements necessitate the perceptive act in order to be understood; so, their meaning can never be grasped in a discursive process. On the other hand, aesthetic perception is not like

perceiving objective qualities because it is not the case that all objects having them are aesthetically valuable. Therefore, Isenberg writes that these concepts relate to perception through neither designation nor denotation and the mediative role of critical language between perceptions is too complex to explain.[52] We are left with the simple explanation that we understand what the critic means when we see it. Since Isenberg does not clarify how it is possible to *see* the meaning of the critic, he cannot avoid the accusation of aesthetic obscurantism that he resolutely tries to repudiate.

[52] Isenberg, "Critical Communication," 166, 168-171.

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