

Replies to Farrell and Compton

REPLY TO JONATHAN FARRELL

Jonathan Farrell¹ engages with the view of art that I articulate in my book *Aesthetic Creation*.² Farrell considers my strategies for accommodating avant-garde works within the Aesthetic Creation Theory—and for our purposes here, our discussion can include any aesthetic theory of art. My motive was not the defensive one of saving a definition from counterexamples. That's not a game I find very interesting. Instead, I was pursuing an adequate understanding of the works in question.

I claimed that Duane Hanson's sculptures have a second-order status. They are deviant sculptures. Kendall Walton is right about *these* cases.³ These sculptures ought to be seen as second-order works; and that is essential to what they are. (Farrell worries about art-critical essays on sculptures; but presumably, those essays are not meant to be seen as sculptures.) I am unsure whether this strategy should count as disjunctive; for the second-order works essentially involve first-order works—it is part of the essence of those second-order works. And the first-order works essentially involve aesthetic functions or properties. Therefore the second-order works essentially involve aesthetic functions or properties.

Farrell prefers a different strategy for treating works such as Hanson's sculptures and also Duchamp's anti-aesthetic works. He suggests that we broaden the notion of the aesthetic so that properties such as wittiness turn out to be aesthetic characteristics. Well, we can use the word 'aesthetic' however we like. There is no firmly established ordinary usage to which we must defer. Given a broader notion of the aesthetic, perhaps Duchamp's *In Advance of the Broken Arm* and similar artworks will turn out to be aesthetic works, since they have aesthetic characteristics, such as wittiness, that supervene in part on their context.

My worry is that the notion of the aesthetic thus widened will no longer be a useful and interesting category. I ask: is there an interesting unity to the faculties of mind that are involved when something is judged to have an aesthetic feature in the wider sense? I am skeptical. Farrell supplies nothing to ease this concern. In my first book, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*,⁴ I supply an account of what 'aesthetic' might usefully mean, which gave it a narrow sense, one that is likely to exclude some avant-garde works. I stapled the notion of the aesthetic to beauty and ugliness, not just to any features that works of art happen to have. There is surely no interesting category of the aesthetic corresponding to the latter. We could just call those 'artistic' properties. However, a definition of art in such terms would be patently unilluminating. I proposed a beauty-centered account of the aesthetic, and if that is to be rejected another must be put in its place. What we cannot do is operate with a casual and tacit notion of the aesthetic. Farrell says that he wants to show that a view of art that deploys a broader notion of the aesthetic "warrants further investigation." I concede that. I am not saying that it is certain that an account of art in terms of

some broader notion of the aesthetic cannot be maintained. But I would say that Farrell has a lot of work to do.

REPLY TO ELIZABETH ZERON COMPTON

Elizabeth Zeron Compton⁵ considers my views of the metaphysics of aesthetic properties as articulated in one chapter of *Metaphysics of Beauty*.⁶ She takes me to assert that aesthetic properties are mind-dependent, whereas in fact I argue that they are *not* mind-independent, which is not the same thing. For example, I say “Aesthetic properties are either mind-dependent or non-existent.”⁷ I do *consider* the view that aesthetic properties are non-rigidly response-dependent with respect to our *sensory* responses as opposed to our aesthetic experiences.⁸ But I do not endorse that view. My main target was physicalist aesthetic realism, and my positive conclusion was disjunctive: either a response-dependent or an illusionist view.⁹

Compton’s critique focuses on my argument against realism about sensory properties. I claimed that aesthetic properties depend on sensory properties and so are only as real as those sensory properties. I am pleased that Compton agrees with this dependence claim even though she diverges over the status of sensory properties.

Compton sets up the primary/secondary quality distinction differently from the way I do. My distinction was a relatively standard one according to which a property is secondary if it depends on human experiences, and primary if not;¹⁰ but for Compton, the primary/secondary quality distinction seems to correspond to the categorical/dispositional property distinction.

My key argument in sections 3.3 and 3.5 *against* the mind-independence of sensory properties began with our tolerance of divergence in judgment given different sensibilities. (I drew on an argument that Margaret Wilson finds in Berkeley.)¹¹ I then added that fact of tolerance to a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic dispositions, and between rigid and non-rigid response-dependent views.¹² I argued, roughly, that if we tolerate divergence in judgment, then we cannot be referring to a property that depends solely or rigidly on intrinsic properties of the object. My disjunctive conclusion was that sensory properties are either non-rigidly response-dependent or illusory.

In response, Compton says that secondary qualities are dispositional properties that can be instantiated independently of whether they are manifest; and she holds a rigidly response-dependent view, which she thinks is compatible with realism. Perhaps it is. Let me grant such a possible position in logical space. The question is whether sensory properties such as colors occupy that position. I argued that they do not—and this is where the tolerance-of-divergence argument was supposed to be effective.

For the most part, Compton seems simply to assume the correctness of her realist rigid view of sensory properties. But Compton does touch on my tolerance-of-divergence argument in passing, and she objects that I seem to be inferring a metaphysical claim from a conceptual claim.¹³ Now suppose that our tolerance of divergence in color experiences and judgments is a conceptual feature of color thought. Then the folk metaphysics of color cannot be intrinsic and rigid, since it is obvious that an intrinsic property cannot both be instantiated by a thing and not be instantiated by it. But if the folk metaphysics of a property is not intrinsic (for example, the property of being a cousin), then I do not see how it can turn out that the true metaphysics of that property is intrinsic after all. I can see how folk intrinsic properties (perhaps space-time location) might turn out not to be intrinsic—but not how a folk non-intrinsic property could turn out to be intrinsic. If so, the argument goes through: the fact that our conception of sensory properties allows for tolerance of divergence means that sensory properties are not intrinsic properties.

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1. Jonathan Farrell, "Must Aesthetic Definitions of Art be Disjunctive?," *American Society for Aesthetics Graduate E-journal* 1 (Fall 2008 / Winter 2009).
2. Nick Zangwill, *Aesthetic Creation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007).
3. Kendall Walton, "Categories of Art," *The Philosophical Review* 79, no. 3 (1970), 334–67.
4. Nick Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
5. Elizabeth Zeron Compton, "Varieties of Response-Dependence: A Critique of Zangwill," *American Society for Aesthetics Graduate E-journal* 1 (Fall 2008 / Winter 2009).
6. Zangwill, *Metaphysics of Beauty*, chapter 11.
7. *Ibid.*, 195.
8. *Ibid.*, 196.
9. *Ibid.*, 195–200.
10. *Ibid.*, 186.
11. Margaret Wilson, "Berkeley on the Mind-Dependence of Color," in *Ideas and Mechanism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
12. Zangwill, *Metaphysics of Beauty*, 189.
13. Compton, 4.