

Aesthetic Theory and Aesthetic Science: Prospects for Integration, with Dominic Lopes, in S. Palmer and A. Shimamura (eds.) *Aesthetic Science: Connecting Minds, Brains, and Experience*, Oxford University Press (2012) 63-79

Researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds propose competing explanations of aesthetic response. Though sometimes heated, these disagreements are not fundamental. Fundamental disagreement occurs when researchers from different backgrounds have different, even incompatible, conceptions of the phenomenon to be explained. There is currently a great deal of fundamental disagreement in research into aesthetic response. The remedy is ideally integration, wherein researchers in the different aesthetic sciences and humanistic studies converge on a common conception of what they are trying to explain, even if they continue to disagree about how to explain it. If it is to be successful, this convergence will require that researchers in both the scientific and humanistic disciplines be sensitive to the limitations that are inherent in each of these two different approaches. On the one hand, we should not expect a conception of aesthetic response that is productive for research across disciplines to be given a precise a priori definition. Aesthetic science, by identifying the mechanisms behind our aesthetic responses, tells us a great deal about the nature of this phenomenon that we would otherwise be unable to discover. On the other hand, aesthetic science must acknowledge that aesthetic response is embedded in critical practice, about which the humanities have a lot to say.