THE PROBLEM OF UGLINESS IN LIGHT OF KANT'S AESTHETICS

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Philosophy

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

Supervisor:

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Budapest, Hungary

2012

I hereby declare that this dissertation contains no materials accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions and not materials previously written and/or published by another person unless otherwise noted.

Budapest, December 2012 Mojca Küplen

Abstract

In the history of aesthetic thought, beauty has been construed as aesthetic value *par excellence*. According to aesthetic theories, beautiful is that which gives rise to the feeling of pleasure within us. Hence, aesthetic value of both nature and art works is measured in terms of the feeling of pleasure they occasion in us. Ugliness, correlated to the feeling of displeasure, on the other hand, has been traditionally theorized as an aesthetic category that stands in opposition to beauty, and therefore associated with aesthetic disvalue and worthlessness.

In recent years, and particularly with the development of modern art, this traditional aesthetic picture has been widely criticized. It has been pointed out, based on the proliferation of art works that evoke intense feelings of displeasure, that ugliness can be greatly appreciated. Moreover, the characterization of ugliness as aesthetically significant and interesting is not distinctive for art works alone, but for natural objects as well, as pointed out by some contemporary writers in environmental aesthetics. A general objective of this dissertation is to give an account of ugliness that entails, as its necessary part, the explanation of its possible appeal. In particular, I propose a solution to the problem, known in philosophical aesthetics as 'the paradox of ugliness', namely how we can value something that we *prima facie* do not like and find positively displeasing.

I develop my explanation of ugliness in light of Kant's theory of taste put forward in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment.* Even though Kant did not write about ugliness, I argue that his explanation of the beautiful has much to say about its opposite. This, however, is not immediately apparent. Even more, recent studies have argued that Kant's explanation of the feeling of pleasure in the beautiful leaves no possibility to accommodate judgments of ugliness. In short, the argument is the following: according to Kant, judgments of taste have a

subjective universal validity, because they depend on the state of mind of free harmony between imagination and understanding that we all share, and which is a subjective condition of cognition. But this state of mind of free harmony produces the feeling of pleasure alone. Hence, there is no possibility to accommodate judgments of ugliness, that is, a universally communicable state of mind of free disharmony between imagination and understanding that would give rise to the feeling of displeasure within us. Worse yet, it has been argued by Paul Guyer that the existence of a disharmonious state of mind is inconsistent with Kant's epistemological theory. A harmonious relation between cognitive powers is required for the basic awareness of the representation itself. Accordingly, we cannot even be conscious of a representation in which imagination and understanding were in disharmony. Hence, pure ugliness is epistemologically impossible.

In this dissertation I argue for the opposite view, namely, that Kant's theory of taste does allow for the possibility of pure judgments of ugliness. I critically review the main interpretations of Kant's central notion of the free play of imagination and understanding, and then develop a new interpretation of free play, one, that takes into consideration Kant's account of reflective judgments and the *a priori* principle of purposiveness, and which allows for the epistemological possibility of a disharmonious state of mind and ugliness. Finally, I apply my interpretation of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics to resolve two main problems in contemporary aesthetics, that is, the possibility of appreciating natural and artistic ugliness, and the role of disgust in contemporary artistic representation.

Acknowledgments

Most of all I would like to thank my supervisor Professor David Weberman for all his help and invaluable guidance in writing this dissertation. I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Kenneth Rogerson for his encouragement and constructive criticism, which I appreciate more than I can express. It was during my research at Florida International University under his supervision that I truly started to believe in my work.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents for their moral support during the time of writing this thesis, to all my dear friends that I was fortunate enough to meet during my studies at CEU and which helped me immensely with being there for me and supporting me throughout. I am forever grateful to my late friend Slavko Švenda for all his care, love and in particular for never ceasing to believe in me.

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Abbreviations

Below is a list of abbreviations for Kant's works along with information of English translations that I used. References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the standard A and B pagination of the first and second editions respectively. Unless otherwise noted, references cited by sections are from the *Critique of the Power of Judgment.*

AN	*Anthropology Notes from 1769-1778. Notes and Fragments*, trans. Curtis Bowman, Paul Guyer and Frederick Rauscher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 481-518.
ANTH	*Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
BL	*Logik Blomberg. The Blomberg Logic*. In *Lectures on Logic*, trans. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5-246.
CPJ	*Kritik der Urteilskraft*. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
CPR	*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996).
D-WL	*Logik Dohna-Wundlacken*. *The Dohna-Wundlacken Logic*. In *Lectures on Logic*, trans. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 431-516.
FI	*Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft, Nachlass*. *First Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
JL	*Jäsche Logik. The Jäsche Logic*. In *Lectures on Logic*, trans. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 521-640.
MV	*Metaphysik Vigilantius*. In *Lectures on Metaphysics*, trans. Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 417-506.
OBS	*Beobeachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).
ROBS	Bemerkungen zu den *Beobeachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen. Remarks in the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764-65). In *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings*, ed. Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 65-202.

INTRODUCTION

In an episode of the comedy show, *Seinfeld*, there is a scene of an elderly couple standing in front of a painting in which is depicted a character from the show named Kramer. The couple is arguing about the aesthetic value of the art work. The woman is pleased by the painting, finds it beautiful, and expressive of spiritual ideas, whereas the man finds it displeasing, dreadful, and ugly. Surprisingly, however, they are both moved by the painting, admire it and cannot look away from it.

This scene illustrates two significant issues in philosophical aesthetics. *First*, a widely discussed question is whether aesthetic judgments of beauty and ugliness are merely subjective judgments, which have only private validity, or if it is possible a characteristic for them to have universal validity. *Second*, a question which has drawn little attention and research from aestheticians is how it is possible that something that we find displeasing and ugly can nevertheless retain our attention and even be highly appreciated.

Immanuel Kant, the founder of modern aesthetics, offered a sophisticated and intricate solution to the first question, claiming that judgments of taste have a subjective - universal validity, but unfortunately did not write much on the nature of experiencing ugliness. This is not surprising for 18th century aesthetics which was occupied primarily with taste and beauty as aesthetic values *par excellence*, while ugliness was considered an unfavorable aesthetic concept, denoting lack of aesthetic value and beauty, and therefore not deserving much attention.

Contemporary artistic production, however, has challenged this traditional aesthetic picture. This is demonstrated by the proliferation of art works that evoke (and aim to evoke) negative aesthetic feelings of ugliness and repulsion and the positive appreciation of them. A brief

look at modern and contemporary art galleries such as the Tate Modern in London will show that artistic ugliness is highly valued and appreciated. Examples that evoke negative aesthetic experience, yet are recognized as valuable works of art, include Asger Jorn's semi-abstract painting *Letter To my Son (1956-7)* in a childlike and chaotic style, Francis Bacon's distorted depiction of a human face in *Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne (1966)* and Jean Dubuffet's flattened figure of a female body in *The Tree of Fluids (1950).* The problem that such examples illustrate is known in philosophical aesthetics as "the paradox of ugliness", namely, how we can like, attend to, and value something that we *prima facie* do not like, find positively displeasing or even repellent?

In contemporary aesthetics two main solutions to this problem have been offered. Briefly, the first solution claims that what we like and value in such works of art is not the ugly subject matter, but the beautiful representation of ugliness.[1] That is, an art work may evoke negative aesthetic feelings due to the ugly objects that it depicts, but what we value is the creative artistic representation of ugly subject matter. What we value is therefore not ugliness, but the beautiful artistic representation of ugliness. The second solution, on the other hand, claims that such works of art have cognitive, not aesthetic value.[2] That is, through artistic ugliness, certain cognitive ideas and attitudes can be represented and explored, that could not otherwise be. Since artistic ugliness is merely fictional and imaginative, it allows us to attend to and enjoy our cognitive and intellectual inquiry, and this is itself a valuable experience, which compensates for aesthetic displeasure. So what we value in such art works is not ugliness, but the pleasure of intellectual exploration that artistic ugliness affords.

[1] See: Ruth Lorand, *Aesthetic Order: A Philosophy of order, Beauty and Art* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 260-262.
[2] See: Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London & New York: Routledge, 1990), 182-186.

Even though these two proposals can explain some cases of pleasure we feel when confronted with artistic ugliness, they do not, however, explain the fascination with ugliness itself. More particularly, they cannot account for the appreciation of those works of art that have no representational elements, such as abstract art, and which do not engage our cognitive interest, yet which are considered to be aesthetically displeasing (for example see Asger Jorn's *Oui, chérie, 1961).* Moreover, they cannot explain our experience of ugliness in nature, which can retain our attention and be fascinating, even though it is not artistically converted into something beautiful, nor does it have as its purpose the exploration of cognitive ideas. The bizarre appearance of the Madagascan primate *aye-aye*, or the monstrous looking *angler fish*, hold our attention and captivate our interest precisely because of those features that cause displeasure and frustration in the first place. What is required therefore is an account of ugliness which explains this appeal.

A general objective of this dissertation is to provide such an account of natural and artistic ugliness, by exploring and refining the most sophisticated and thoroughly worked out theoretical framework of philosophical aesthetics, Kant's theory of taste, which was put forward in part one of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. There are three goals to this project. *First*, I explore the possibility of incorporating a negative aesthetic concept, ugliness, into the overall Kantian aesthetic picture. *Second*, I give an interpretation of Kant's notion of free harmony of the imagination and understanding, constitutive of judgments of the beautiful. That is, since the roots to the solution of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics is in the beautiful and in the concept of free harmony, the resolution of the problem of beauty is required in order to give a solution on the problem of ugliness. *Third*, I apply my interpretation of ugliness to resolve certain issues that that have been raised in contemporary aesthetics, namely the possibility of appreciating artistic and natural ugliness and the role of disgust in artistic representation.

In the first chapter, I begin with an analysis of Kant's argument for the possibility of pure judgments of taste, that is, judgments that have subjective-universal validity. Kant claims that the feeling of pleasure, on which judgments of the beautiful depend, is universally valid because it depends on a state of mind that we all share, and which is required for cognition in general. That is, a state of free harmony between imagination and understanding. Second, I consider whether Kant's argument, which is based solely on judgments of the beautiful, allows for the accommodation of judgments of ugliness and the feeling of displeasure. I argue, together with David Shier, that a straightforward interpretation of Kant's argument poses a problem for the possibility to accommodate ugliness, and I point out that such an interpretation also has the consequence that everything that we cognize must be beautiful, a conclusion that I argue Kant would reject. Third, I consider three major proposals for solving the problem of ugliness in Kant (Hudson, Wenzel and McConnell) and point out their inadequacies. In addition, I consider the most challenging objection against the possibility of ugliness, that is, Guyer's argument for the epistemological impossibility of ugliness, and I argue against his interpretation of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics. In conclusion, I point out that in order to give a positive solution to the problem of ugliness, it is necessary first to examine in detail Kant's account of the notion of *free* harmony and to resolve some of the problems that pertain to it. In particular, I will examine the problem that, on one hand, Kant claims that free harmony is a subjective condition of cognition, yet this account has as its conclusion that pleasure is a necessary concomitant of cognition. On the other hand, however, he claims that free harmony is different from cognition, in that it is not determined by concepts, but this idea has as the consequence that free harmony cannot be a universally communicable experience since it is not required for cognition.

In the second chapter, I take a closer look at the role of imagination and understanding in ordinary cognition, and compare it with their role in judgments of taste, when they are in free

play. I argue that according to Kant's epistemological theory, a conceptual harmony between cognitive powers is required for perceptual experience. Based on this I conclude that the notion of free harmony cannot amount to the play of imagination and understanding without the presence of concepts, as Kant seems to suggest. Next, I examine and reevaluate four different interpretative suggestions of the notion of free harmony (precognitive, abstractive, multicognitive, and metacognitive) and point out some difficulties they face. I argue that none of these interpretations offers a full solution to the problems attending the concept of free harmony. In particular, none of these interpretations can accommodate three of Kant's belief, that is, the universality of judgments of taste, his theory of the threefold synthesis, and the possibility of accommodating judgments of ugliness. Nonetheless, I point out that the partial solutions that they offer can indicate a path to a positive interpretation of free harmony. In particular, I claim that the positive interpretation must be able to reconcile, on one hand, the idea that free harmony is in some sense required for cognition (in particular, for empirical concept acquisition), and on the other hand, Kant's theory of the threefold synthesis, namely, that the application of some concepts to the manifold of intuition is required for the possibility to have perceptual experience in the first place. I argue that one way of reconciling these two ideas is to claim that free harmony comes up additionally, once we already have a representation of an object, that is, once conceptual harmony has taken place.

In the third chapter, I develop my interpretation of the concept of free harmony. I propose a distinction between the *free play* of imagination and the *harmony* between the free play of imagination with the understanding that is necessary for the occurrence of pleasure. In the first two sections I give an explanation as to what the free play of imagination amounts to. In brief, I claim that imagination is in free play if the particular form of the object contains a synthesis of the manifold that extends well beyond the unity provided by the concept of the

object. On this proposal, judgments of taste can depend on the concept of the object, which is required for the recognition of an object, yet still be compatible with Kant's claim that judgments of taste are not determined by the concept of the object. Next, I proceed with an explanation of the possibility of recognizing free harmony, that is, how it is possible that a certain combination of sense data which is not produced according to a rule of the understanding can be felt to be in harmony with the understanding after all. My explanation is based on Kant's notion of *reflective judgments* and the *a priori principle of purposiveness* presented in the *Introduction* to the *Critique* as the principle required for empirical concept acquisition. I argue that the same principle is also responsible for our ability to make judgments of taste. First, I examine Kant's argument for postulating the principle of purposiveness for cognition in general and then proceed to examine the connection between this principle and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. I claim that pleasure (or displeasure) designates satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) of our expectations regarding the organizational structure of the world. Since this expectation is necessary for all of us, that is, we all have the same need to systematize experience and to attain the agreement between the world and our cognitive abilities, the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) is presupposed to be universally valid. Furthermore, I offer a detailed distinction between aesthetic reflection concerned with an object's individual properties and logical reflection concerned with the object's general properties. Even though they both depend on the experience of free harmony, it does not follow that all objects for which empirical concepts are found are aesthetically pleasing. Beauty is a purposiveness of distinctive and individual aspects of the object, while cognition is a purposiveness of an object in virtue of general properties which it shares with other objects of its kind and which results in a concept. This allows for the possibility that an object can be recognized under a concept, yet be ugly or aesthetically displeasing due to the object's individual form being in disconformity with the principle of purposiveness.

In the fourth and final chapter, I bring together the resources developed in the previous chapters to offer an explanation of ugliness in Kantian aesthetics. I begin by proposing a solution to the two main problems (Shier's and Guyer's) with accommodating judgments of ugliness. Next, I proceed with the analysis of artistic beauty, in contrast to natural beauty, and examine the role of aesthetic ideas in art. Based on Kant's distinction between the productive imagination and the reflective power of judgment I propose an explanation of artistic ugliness. Next, I give my solution to the problem of ugliness in general, namely how an object that is displeasing can retain our attention and captivate our interest after all. My explanation is based on Kant's notion of the free play of imagination. I argue that even though displeasure arises from the disharmonious state of mind which motivates us to withdraw our attention, the degree of free play of imagination produced by an ugly object nevertheless holds our attention. I argue that this is so because of the principle of purposiveness, the *a priori* belief that the world is amenable to our cognitive abilities. We continue to hold our attention on an ugly object in spite of the frustration that it causes because of our expectation that a certain harmony and order will eventually be found. Furthermore, I explain why ugliness is not merely attention-holding, but also captivating and aesthetically significant. This is because it is not produced according to some determinate rules, but it is a production of imagination in its free play. In this respect it can offer a novel, original and unique aesthetic experience. Furthermore, by connecting ugliness with aesthetic ideas, I conclude that artistic ugliness can be a valuable experience because it is a unique way through which those ideas and emotions, which cannot be fully and sensibly experienced, can be expressed. In the final section I offer my interpretation of Kant's notion of disgust in contrast to ugliness, and more closely interrogate the role of disgust in contemporary art.

CHAPTER 1: JUDGMENTS OF TASTE AND ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM OF UGLINESS IN KANT'S AESTHETICS

At the end of section §6 in the *Analytic of the Beautiful,* Kant defines taste as the: "…faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest. The object of such a satisfaction is called beautiful." On the face of it, Kant's definition of taste includes both; positive and negative judgments of taste. Moreover, Kant's term 'dissatisfaction' implies not only that negative judgments of taste are those of the non-beautiful (lack of pleasure), but also that of the ugly, depending on the presence of an actual displeasure. This idea has not been questioned for a long time. In recent years, however, and particularly with David Shier's paper *Why Kant Finds Nothing Ugly,* the idea that Kant does not find ugliness to be a pure judgment of taste, has become a subject of much debate.[3] In short, Shier argues that judgments of taste must be universally communicable, yet, that according to Kant's argument nothing can be universally communicable but the state of mind of free harmony. But the state of mind of free harmony is the ground for positive judgments of taste. Hence, there is no possibility for judgments of ugliness. As a result, a number of different interpretations have been proposed. On one hand, there are attempts in favor of rescuing the possibility of judgments of ugliness and arguing for the tripartite aesthetic structure (beauty, ugliness and neutrality with respect to beauty and ugliness). On the other hand, those less sympathetic to the inclusion of ugliness into Kant's aesthetic theory and arguing rather for the dual aesthetic structure (beauty and non-beauty or aesthetic neutrality). My objective in the following chapter is to explain in detail the argumentative strategies of both groups, and point out some of the difficulties they face. Before proceeding, I will give a brief introductory account of Kant's theory of judgment of taste in order to specify the problematic implications of the concepts of displeasure and ugliness.

[3] David Shier, "Why Kant Finds Nothing Ugly," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 38, no. 4 (1998): 412-418.

1.1 An introduction to Kant's theory of judgments of taste

Kant's task in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was to give an account of how genuine judgments of taste, that is, judgments of the beautiful (and ugly), are possible. His objective was to resolve an apparent contradiction between the two characteristics pertaining to judgments of taste.

The first idea is that judgments of taste are subjective, that is, their determining ground can be nothing else but the subject's experience of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. One must necessarily feel pleasure in order to judge an object beautiful. That one aesthetically likes (dislikes) the object must necessarily result from one's feeling of being delighted, moved or pleased (displeased) by the object and it cannot be imputed to someone by means of rational consideration. Kant captures this subjective character of taste nicely by saying: "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" (§33).

Accordingly, beauty and ugliness are not objective properties of a thing itself, but merely represents the way in which we respond to the object. When we claim that a certain object is beautiful, we do in fact claim something about the object, that it is beautiful. Yet, we are unable to formulate what it is in the object that makes it beautiful. All that we can say is that

the object is beautiful because we feel so, because it elicits in us a certain pleasurable feeling. Kant claims accordingly that judgments of taste are not based on the concept of the object. Judgments of taste are contrasted with cognitive judgments. The former refers the representation to the subject's experience of the object, while cognitive judgments, on the other hand, refer the representation to the concept of the object. Accordingly, the truth or falseness of cognitive judgments such as 'X is a chair' can be proven by rational consideration; the judgment 'this X is a chair' is true if it satisfies the necessary conditions for the application of the concept of a chair. The concept is the rule for the criteria of cognitive judgments.

On the other hand, no such truth verification is possible in the case of judgments of taste. A judgment of taste is non-conceptual, Kant claims, which means that it is not determined by the concept of the object, but merely by the feeling: "If one judges objects merely in accordance with concepts, then all representation of beauty is lost. Thus there can also be no rule in accordance with which someone could be compelled to acknowledge something as beautiful. Whether a garment, a house, a flower is beautiful: no one allows himself to be talked into his judgment about that by means of any grounds or fundamental principles. One wants to submit the object to his own eyes" (§8). Whether an object is beautiful is not discerned by whether it satisfies the properties of a concept. That is, a given object may be a perfect example of the kind it belongs to, yet still be ugly. If judgments of taste depend solely on the feeling of pleasure (displeasure), and because feelings are not corrigible, that is, one cannot be wrong about their own feelings, or as Hume says: "All sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it,"[4] then judgments of taste have merely subjective validity.

[4] David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Selected Essays*, ed. Stephen Copley & Andrew Edgar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 136.

Yet, Kant observes, even though judgments of taste are grounded on the subjective feeling of pleasure (displeasure), it is a characteristic for them to have universal validity: "The judgment of taste exacts agreement from every one; and a person who describes something as beautiful insist that everyone ought to give the object in question his approval and follow suit in describing it as beautiful" (§19). We argue in matters of taste, which suggests that judgments of taste contain an implicit demand that others ought to agree with us and that some universal agreement can be established: "For wherever it is supposed to be possible to argue, there must be hope of coming to mutual agreement; hence one must be able to count on grounds for the judgment that do not have merely private validity and thus are not merely subjective" (§56). When one claims that a certain object is beautiful, one feels his judgment is correct and that he is entitled to expect that others agree with him. And if they do not, he often dismisses them, claiming that they are not seeing the object in an appropriate way and that their judgment is wrong. Yet, the validity of judgments of taste cannot be objective (as in cognitive judgments), since beauty is not a property of objects. Since beauty resides in the subject's feeling of pleasure, the validity of judgments of taste is a 'subjective universal' validity. The universal validity of judgments of taste is grounded on the universal validity of subject's feeling of pleasure: "…universality that does not rest on concepts of objects (even if only empirical ones) is not logical at all, but aesthetic, i.e., it does not contain an objective quantity of judgment, but only a subjective one, for which I also use the expression common validity, which does not designate the validity for every subject of the relation of a representation to the faculty of cognition but rather to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure" (§8).

The reconciliation of the seemingly incompatible characteristics of judgments of taste, that is, subjectivity and universality, is the main objective of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment:* "How is a judgment possible which, merely from one's own feeling of pleasure in an object, independent of its concept, judges this pleasure, as attached to the representation of

the same object in every other subject, *a priori*, i.e., without having to wait for the assent of others?" (§36)

Kant found the solution to this question in the concept of the harmony of the cognitive faculties in their free play. His, otherwise deeply troublesome argument, can be roughly summarized in the following way: the universal validity of pleasure can be justified by claiming that the feeling of pleasure depends on the state of mind that we all share. But what we all share is the state of mind "that is encountered in the relation of the powers of representation to each other insofar as they relate a given representation to cognition in general" (§9). This is the state of mind of harmony between imagination and understanding. Kant claims that cognition is necessitated by the mental activities of imagination, whose function is to synthesize the manifold of intuition, and of the understanding, which unifies this manifold under the concept of the object. This harmony between the imagination and understanding is required for cognition, and is universally communicable, because without it "human beings could not communicate their representations and even cognition itself" (§38). Presumably, pleasure in judgments of taste is based on such harmonious relation of cognitive powers, and therefore it must be universally communicable.

On the other hand, Kant claims, the perception of the beautiful is also different from cognition. He draws the distinction by claiming that in judgments of taste the harmonious relation of cognitive powers is in free play, because "no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition" (§9). This relation is *merely* subjective, Kant claims, since it refers only to the mutual relation between cognitive powers in the subject, without its relation to the object. Accordingly, while the relation between cognitive powers in cognitive judgments is not merely subjective, but ends in the application of the concept to the object, and therefore in a cognitive judgment, the relation between cognitive powers in judgments of

taste is merely subjective (it does not apply concepts) and it results in a feeling of pleasure alone.

Accordingly, the concept of free harmony, underlying judgments of taste reconciles the two characteristics of taste. With regard to its subjectivity, judgments of taste are not based on concepts, but merely on the free play between imagination and understanding, which is experienced through the feeling of pleasure: "Thus the state of mind in this representation must be that of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for cognition in general" (§9). With regard to its universal validity, even though cognitive powers are set into play without the application of the concept, they are in a harmonious relation, as it is required for cognition and thus expected to be the same in everyone: "This pleasure must necessarily rest on the same conditions in everyone, since they are subjective conditions of the possibility of a cognition in general, and the proportion of these cognitive faculties that is required for taste is also requisite for the common and healthy understanding that one may presuppose in everyone" (§39).

What follows is a straightforward reconstruction of Kant's argument for the universal validity of the pleasure in judgments of taste (based on §9):

1. Cognition and judgments in general are universally communicable.
2. Cognition and judgments in general depend on the subjective condition of cognition, that is, on the harmonious relation between imagination and understanding.
3. If cognition and judgments in general are universally communicable, then the subjective condition of cognition must also be universally communicable. (1+2)
4. In judgments of taste, the pleasure derived from the beautiful object is the consequence of these subjective conditions of cognition.
5. Hence, pleasure in judgments of taste is universally communicable. (4+3)

The argument is grounded on the basic epistemological claim that cognitive judgments are universally valid. Kant's thought is that, if one claims that 'X is a chair,' then one is justified to assume that everyone will come to the same conclusion. According to Kant's theory this is true, because cognition depends on the state of mind that we all share. This state of mind is harmony between imagination and understanding. He writes: "…if cognitions are to be able to be communicated, then the mental state, i.e., the disposition of the cognitive powers for a cognition in general, and indeed that proportion which is suitable for making cognition out of a representation (whereby an object is given to us) must also be capable of being universally communicated; for without this, as the subjective condition of cognizing, the cognition, as an effect, could not arise" (§21). But pleasure in judgments of taste is also a consequence of such harmonious state of mind: "The animation of both faculties (the imagination and the understanding) to an activity that is indeterminate but yet, through the stimulus of the given representation, in unison, namely that which belongs to cognition in general, is the sensation" (§9). The difference is that while in cognitive judgments this harmony is constrained by the concept of the understanding, in judgments of taste, where no such concept restricts imagination, their play is free: "The subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a cognition in general)" (§9). This state of free play produces pleasure: "this merely subjective (aesthetic) judging of the object, or of the representation through which the object is given, precedes the pleasure in it, and is the ground of this pleasure in the harmony of the faculties of cognition" (§9). Hence, pleasure is a universally communicable feeling: "on that universality of the subjective conditions of the judging of objects alone is this universal

subjective validity of satisfaction, which we combine with the representation of the object that we call beautiful, grounded" (§9).

In sum, Kant claims that judgments of taste are universally communicable, because they depend on the state of mind that we all share. In judgments of the beautiful such a state of mind is the free harmony between cognitive powers. But Kant also seems to identify negative judgments of taste depending on the feeling of displeasure. If, however, pleasure depends on the free harmony, then displeasure, as a feeling contrary to pleasure, must be dependent on the state of mind of free disharmony. Kant in fact does mention the existence of such a state of mind. Before I proceed analyzing the problematic implications surrounding the notion of free disharmony, I will first give a short account of judgments of ugliness as implicitly and explicitly offered by Kant.

1.2 Does Kant's theory of taste account for judgments of ugliness?

In the previous section I outlined Kant's account of judgments of taste, which is based solely on the analysis of judgments of the beautiful. Yet, since it has always been considered that beauty has an opposite of some sort, it is natural to ask whether Kant's theory admits such negative aesthetic concepts. I will argue below that ugliness is the paradigmatic negative aesthetic concept. After all, we do find some objects positively displeasing and for that matter ugly. Consider for example certain kind of animals, such as the monstrous, creepy, and repulsive *angler fish*, with its exceptionally large mouth, alien-like, long, sharp teeth and a shiny lure coming out of its head. Or, for example, the utterly disturbing appearance of an animal called *naked mole rat* with its large front teeth, sealed lips behind the teeth and pink, wrinkled, almost completely hairless skin. I cannot imagine anyone not finding these animals displeasing. An expectation of agreement is a characteristic pertaining to judgments of

ugliness as well and so one would imagine that it must find space within Kant's category of judgments of taste.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant does not devote a separate section to the analysis of the concept of ugliness, and he is solely concerned with the analysis of the beautiful. But when he discusses pleasure, it is frequently mentioned alongside displeasure, and one would naturally assume that Kant's explanation of judgments of taste is wide enough to allow theoretical space for ugliness as well. After all, Kant claims that we do quarrel about taste and have genuine disagreements about the beauty of an object, which implies that there must be some objects that we do not like, moreover, that we find positively ugly. It is true, however, that from the observation that we quarrel about taste, it does not necessarily follow that pure displeasure of the ugly must exist. We may disagree whether we like or we do not like the object without the presence of the positive feeling of displeasure. We may not like the object simply because we acknowledge no presence of the feeling of pleasure. This may occur in a situation where one expects the presence of beauty in the object, yet the object fails in this respect. For example, if I have a great aesthetic expectation regarding a particular artistic performance, yet this performance fails to carry out such an aesthetic appeal, then I may well react with a negative aesthetic reaction, even though the performance itself may not actually be aesthetically displeasing. A negative aesthetic reaction is in this case the result of the lack of pleasure when pleasure is expected. Paul Guyer, for example, concluded accordingly that in order to quarrel about taste it is sufficient to operate with binary aesthetic concepts.[5] That is, pleasure of the beautiful and lack of pleasure of the non-beautiful. We may disagree about whether an object succeeds in giving pleasure or not.

[5] Paul Guyer, "Kant on the Purity of the Ugly," in *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005), 143-144.

Even though, theoretically, a binary aesthetic system may suffice in order to have genuine disagreements in matters of taste, our experiences with the aesthetic evaluation of objects clearly conflicts with this rather simple picture of the aesthetic domain. An aesthetic experience of different kinds of objects comes in various degrees and classes. A tulip and a rose are both beautiful flowers, and yet one may be more pleasing than the other. A bird of paradise, with its delightful combination of colors, is a pleasure to the eye, while a pigeon, on the other hand, appears rather dull and insignificant. And there are also birds that are straightforward ugly and unpleasant to see, such as the African Marabou Stork. And even in the case of the artistic domain, where some aesthetic aspiration is expected, we may distinguish clearly between objects that are merely aesthetically disappointing, in the sense of lacking any positive aesthetic value, and objects that are suffused with a presence of positive displeasure and are judged as ugly (for example *A Serbian Film*, 2010, by Srdjan Spasojevic). Furthermore, the phenomenological experience of displeasure itself can be distinguished into different degrees and classes. There is, for example, a specific feeling of displeasure experienced in the grotesque, composed of reaction of horror and laughter[6] (for example, the monstrous image of a bird-headed Satan in the Hieronymus Bosch painting *The Garden of Earthly delight*), or displeasure with a strong physiological component in the experience of disgust (for instance Cindy Sherman's work *Untitled 250* and her sexually vulgar use of plastic body parts juxtaposed distortedly). These examples imply that there is a phenomenological and theoretical distinction between the category of aesthetic indifference (lack of pleasure) and category of ugliness (presence of positive displeasure), even though both of them may be classified as negative aesthetic categories.[7]

[6] See: Geoffrey Harpham, "The Grotesque: First Principles," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 34, no. 4 (1976): 461-468.

[7] Ruth Lorand, for example, distinguishes more than two negative aesthetic concepts, such as the kitsch, the meaningless, the boring, the insignificant, and the irrelevant. Ruth Lorand, "Beauty and Its Opposites," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, no. 4 (1994): 399-406.

Based on this, it is reasonable to argue in favor of a tripartite aesthetic structure. Kant, in fact, did hold such a view, which is evident from his earlier texts on aesthetics. For instance he wrote: "That which pleases through mere intuition is *beautiful*, that which leaves me indifferent in intuition, although it can please or displease, is *non-beautiful*; that which displeases me in intuition is ugly" (MV 29: 1010; 480). And in *Logik Politz* the same idea lingers: "To distinguish the beautiful from that which is not beautiful (not from that which is ugly, because that which is not beautiful is not always ugly), is taste" (24; 514).[8] And even more distinctive he says in *Logik Philippi*: "Ugliness is…something positive, not a mere lack of beauty, rather the existence of something contrary to beauty" (24; 364).[9] In the *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic* he holds the same idea and adds that between beauty and ugliness there is a "middle term, dryness (…) it is a grade of perfection that mathematics possesses, because it has dryness" (D-WL 708; 445). Kant obviously supported the idea of a categorical demarcation between beauty, non-beauty and ugliness, where ugliness denotes the presence of a positive feeling of displeasure, contrary to the one of pleasure.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment,* Kant's idea of the two negative aesthetic categories (lack of beauty and ugliness) is not explicitly articulated. Yet, he continues to hold the idea that there are objects, perception of which elicits feelings of displeasure, and that this displeasure belongs to the category of pure aesthetic feelings, by which judgments of taste are made. This idea at least can be discerned in the following passage: "…the judgment of taste, which, if it is pure, immediately connects satisfaction or dissatisfaction to the mere consideration of the object without respect to use or to an end" (§22). Furthermore, he seems to ascribe the same characteristics that pertain to pleasure, to displeasure as well. *First*, it is a *disinterested* displeasure, that is, a displeasure arising from the mere contemplation of the object, without any interest in the existence of the object (it is not pathologically conditioned

[8] Cited by Guyer, *"*Kant on the Purity of the Ugly," 144.
[9] Ibid.

displeasure of the senses, nor displeasure arising from the violation of the concept of goodness). Taste, Kant writes in §5, is: "…the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest." *Second*, it is a displeasure based on the mere form of the object, independently of the idea of the purpose (what the object should be). A pure aesthetic judgment, Kant writes: "…concerns a satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the form of the object" (§30). *Third*, displeasure is a universally communicable feeling. When he defines *common sense* as the subjective principle of taste and as a universally communicable aesthetic feeling, the feeling is not merely that of pleasure, but also that of displeasure: "They must thus have a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity" (§20).

Based on these passages, one is justified to assume that Kant did acknowledge the presence of a universally communicable feeling of displeasure. Even though he does not explicitly connect displeasure with judgments of ugliness, and not with mere judgments of the non-beautiful, he does claim in §48 that there are naturally displeasing objects which are ugly: "Beautiful art displays its excellence precisely by describing beautifully things that in nature would be ugly or displeasing." Accordingly, the universally communicable feeling of displeasure that Kant discerns in the third *Critique* may well be displeasure, constitutive for judgments of ugliness. Furthermore, if such displeasure is universally communicable, then it is presupposed that it depends on the state of mind that we all share. If pleasure is the consequence of free harmony between cognitive powers, then displeasure, as the opposite of pleasure, must be the consequence of the state of mind of free disharmony.

Indeed, Kant does distinguish between the mental state of free harmony and the mental state of free disharmony or hindering between cognitive powers. He writes: "For in the power of judgment understanding and imagination are considered in relation to each other, and (…)

one can also consider this relation of two faculties of cognition merely subjectively, insofar as one helps or hinders the other in the very same representation and thereby affects the state of mind" (F1, VIII). We come across to the same idea in his *Anthropology*, where he states: "The judging of an object through taste is a judgment about the harmony or discord of freedom, in the play of the power of imagination and the lawfulness of the understanding" (ANTH §67).

Accordingly, we have the following picture of the aesthetic experience induced by a certain relation of cognitive powers. A given object can prompt a relation between imagination and understanding which is freely harmonious. This is a relation in which cognitive powers mutually support and help each other, that is: "…in the given representation the faculty of the apprehension of the one and the faculty of presentation of the other are reciprocally expeditious" (F1, VIII). Such play results in the feeling of pleasure. With this formulation, Kant captures nicely the phenomenology of one's pleasing experience. That is, that one's pleasing perception of an object has as its effect the motivation to continue one's experience, to maintain one's attention on the pleasing object. According to Kant's formulation of pleasure, this is caused by the relation of cognitive powers, which is self-supportive through their mutual agreement and animation. Such animation prolongs the process of play between cognitive powers, and accordingly it prolongs aesthetic attention. When we are delighted by a certain object, we want to remain in this state of mind. Pleasure, Kant writes, "has a causality in itself, namely that of maintaining the state of the representation of the mind and the occupation of the cognitive powers without a further aim. We linger over the consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself" (§12).

On the other hand, an object can induce a play between cognitive powers that is freely disharmonious. This is the case where the imagination and understanding conflict with each other. Such a play produces the experience of displeasure. If the mutual correspondence of

imagination and understanding prolongs the process of their play, then the mutual hindrance or frustration between them obstructs their play. Such activity between cognitive powers explains why we react to ugliness by withdrawing attention or turning away from an ugly object. We do not like to look (seeing a picture of a *naked mole rat* makes me cover my eyes) or hear (discomforting sounds makes me cover my ears) displeasing objects. Kant writes: "…displeasure is that representation that contains the ground for determining the state of the representations to their own opposite (hindering or getting rid of them)" (§10). Furthermore, he also seems to distinguish a third aesthetic category, that of aesthetic neutrality or 'dryness', characterized by neither pleasure nor displeasure. He appears to identify aesthetic neutrality with objects that have regular forms, and which induce the feeling of boredom. He seems to claim that this is due to the lack of free play between cognitive powers (§22).

In sum, there are both implicit and explicit suggestions in Kant's texts in favor of the tripartite aesthetic structure. Judgments of taste depend on some relation between cognitive powers in their free play. If such a relation is harmonious, then the consequence is the feeling of pleasure and a judgment of the beautiful. But a relation between cognitive powers can also be disharmonious, in which case displeasure and a judgment of ugliness result. On the other hand, a lack of any free play between cognitive powers is a determining ground of judgments of aesthetic neutrality.

1.3 Setting the problem: David Shier's challenge and the argument of the impossibility of judgments of ugliness

In the previous section I argued that there is a good reason to believe that Kant's theory of taste encompasses not merely judgments of the beautiful, but judgments of the ugly as well, depending on the state of mind in which cognitive powers are in a disharmonious relation.

Yet, when one tries to accommodate such a disharmonious state of mind within Kant's argument of the universal validity of judgments of taste, then one is confronted with a serious problem. Kant argues that judgments of taste must depend on the state of mind that is universally communicable. And that nothing is universally communicable but cognition (for example 'X is a square') or the state of mind that refers to cognition (a certain relation between our cognitive powers that brings about cognition). Since a judgment of taste is not cognition, it can only depend on the state of mind that refers to cognition. But the state of mind that refers to cognition can only be the state of mind of free harmony of cognitive powers. Recall, Kant claims that in order for cognition to occur there always must be a harmony between imagination and understanding. A state of mind that refers to cognition, but without the application of the concept, can then only be the state of mind of free harmony. But free harmony produces pleasure. But this means that the universal state of mind of judgments of taste can only be the state of mind that produces pleasure. Consequently, judgments of taste are judgments of the beautiful alone. In other words, Kant seems to leave no theoretical space for a connection between disharmony and universally communicable state of mind. And if displeasure fails to have connection to universal validity, then, since it is essential characteristic of a pure judgment of taste its subjective universality, displeasure of the ugly cannot be a pure judgment of taste.

This indeed is the conclusion of the well-known paper *Why Kant finds nothing ugly* written by David Shier, claiming that Kant's theory of taste leaves no possibility to accommodate judgments of ugliness. The reconstruction of Shier's argument is the following:

1. All judgments of taste must depend on the universal communicability of the state of mind in the given representation. (Kant)
2. Nothing however can be universally communicated except cognition or the state of mind that refers to cognition. (Kant)

3. In judgments of taste the mental state is not that of cognition (intuition subsumed under a concept). (Kant)
4. Hence, all judgments of taste must depend on the state of mind that refers to cognition. (1+2+3)
5. A mental state that refers to cognition must be a mental state in which cognitive powers are in free harmony. (Shier, based on Kant in §9)
6. Free harmony necessarily produces pleasure. (Kant)
7. A mental state that refers to cognition necessarily produces pleasure. (5+6)
8. All judgments of taste depend on pleasure. (4+7)
9. All judgments of taste which depend on pleasure are judgments of the beautiful. (Kant)
10. Hence, all judgments of taste are judgments of the beautiful. (8+9)

On the face of it, this seems to be a sound reconstruction of Kant's argument in §9. The crucial premise, which precludes the possibility to accommodate judgments of ugliness, is premise 5. It identifies the state of mind that refers to cognition exclusively with free harmony, leaving no possibility that such a state of mind may also be disharmonious. This premise appears to be correct, because Kant seems to identify the state of mind that refers to cognition with the state of mind that is a necessary subjective condition of cognition. Since it is necessary for cognition to occur that cognitive powers harmonize, then the state of mind that refers to cognition, and which is not yet determined by the concept, can be nothing else but the state of mind of free harmony. Shier writes: "What is required for cognition in general is that the cognitive faculties must agree with each other, they must harmonize. No cognition whatsoever can possibly take place unless the understanding and the imagination interact harmoniously. Every definite cognition rests upon such harmony of the cognitive powers. A

state of mind which refers to cognition in general can only be this state of harmonious free play, for this is the subjective condition of cognition."[10]

Indeed, this seems to be Kant's view. He writes: "The subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a cognition in general): for we are conscious that this subjective relation suited to cognition in general must be valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable, just as any determinate cognition is, which still always rests on that relation as its subjective condition" (§9). Accordingly, judgments of taste depend on free harmony, because this is a subjective condition of cognition, and for that matter universally communicable state of mind. Because free harmony necessitates pleasure, there is no possibility for displeasurable experience of the same kind. Hence, there are no pure judgments of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics.[11] Furthermore, as Shier concludes, this does not need to imply that all objects are beautiful. It implies only that objects cannot be judged as ugly by the means of taste, but that they can be judged as non-beautiful.

However, based on Shier's interpretation of Kant's argument in §9, the idea that some objects are not beautiful, does not seem to be possible. If it is true that Kant grounds judgments of taste on the subjective condition of cognition, which is free harmony, and if free harmony produces pleasure, then it follows that the feeling of pleasure is a necessary subjective condition of cognition. The argument is the following: (i) the state of mind necessary for cognition (the subjective condition of cognition) is free harmony; (ii) free harmony produces

[10] Shier, 416.

[11] The claim that there are no pure judgments of ugliness does not mean that one cannot find anything ugly. It means only that finding something ugly cannot be a pure judgment of taste, that is, a judgment that exacts agreement from everyone.

pleasure; (iii) hence, state of mind that is necessary for cognition is a pleasurable state of mind. Accordingly, it follows that in order to carry out cognition one must experience pleasure. In other words, all objects of cognition must be beautiful. Among Kant's contemporaries, this problem is referred to as the 'everything is beautiful' problem.[12]

In sum, Shier's interpretation of free harmony as a necessary subjective condition of cognition precludes the possibility to accommodate negative judgments of taste within Kantian aesthetics. Even more, it implies that pleasure accompanies all cognition. But this is a consequence that hardly anyone would agree with. In response to Shier's paper, numerous different solutions to Kant's problem have been proposed. In the following, I will critically review three major proposals, given by Christian Wenzel, Hud Hudson and Sean McConnell.

1.4 Christian Wenzel and displeasure as the negative subjective purposiveness[13]

Wenzel's proposal is to distinguish between the harmony of cognitive powers that underlies cognitive judgments (when intuition is subsumed under concepts) and harmony of cognitive powers that underlies judgments of taste (in free play). Cognitive and aesthetic states of mind are substantially different. He claims that free harmony is not a subjective condition of cognition: "the free harmonious play is not a preliminary stage towards a judgment of cognition."[14] This is because aesthetic reflection does not have as its aim to make cognition, but only to "reflect (with pleasure) about the form of the object regarding the possibility of cognition (without having a specific concept in mind) and find it suitable for cognition in general."[15] If, however, aesthetic reflection does not have as its aim to cognize the object,

[12] Ralf Meerbote first pointed out this problem. See: Ralf Meerbote, "Reflection on Beauty," in *Essays in Kant's Aesthetics*, ed. Ted Cohen and Paul Guyer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 55-86.
[13] Kant uses the term 'subjective purposiveness' to signify a freely harmonious relation between cognitive powers.
[14] Christian Wenzel, "Kant Finds Nothing Ugly?" *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39, no. 4 (1999): 422.
[15] Ibid.

then it is not necessary that cognitive powers are in a relation that leads to cognition. In other words, it is not necessary that cognitive powers harmonize.

According to Wenzel's account, the premise 5 in Shier's argument (that the state of mind that refers to cognition must be free harmony), is false. This is because it is based on a false assumption that the state of mind that refers to cognition, and which underlies judgments of taste, is the state of mind that is a necessary condition of cognition: "why should a given representation not be 'referred' to cognition in general when we find the representation not suitable for cognition in general, and we find it resisting a possible subsumption of intuition under a concept?"[16] If this is the case, then it does not follow that the state of mind that refers to cognition must necessarily be harmonious. It can also be disharmonious. Since, based on Kant's argument in §9, it is not only cognition that is universally communicable, but also the state of mind that refers to cognition, this means that, harmonious as well disharmonious state of mind are universally communicable. Accordingly, judgments of ugliness can be accommodated within Kant's theory of taste.

Wenzel writes that the disharmonious state of mind can be a state of mind that refers to cognition. Even though cognitive powers are in conflict, they can still cooperate with each other and prolong their play: "…they occupy, challenge, and thus strengthen each other in a relationship that can be regarded as being in this sense purposeful for each of the faculties involved and hence as purposeful for cognition in general."[17] Disharmonious play is negatively purposive, Wenzel writes. Free disharmony is a relation which is still purposeful for the cognition in general, even though it is not suitable for cognition.

On the face of it, Wenzel's interpretation of free harmony seems to give a reasonable solution to the problem of disharmony and ugliness. However, it fails to meet other requirements of

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 421.

the Kantian aesthetic view. Let me point out some of the difficulties that Wenzel's interpretation faces.

First, the idea that the displeasure of the ugly is constituted by the concept of the negative subjective purposiveness in which cognitive powers are in disharmony, yet in a mutually supportive relation, and therefore purposeful, is hardly Kant's view. Kant explains displeasure as a representation which entails a determining ground to change the representational state into its opposite, that is, the representational state is removed. As I argued before, this is the natural state of experiencing ugliness; one immediately withdraws one's attention away from it. If, however, one explains disharmony as a state of mind in which cognitive powers strengthen each other, then this means that we keep being attentive to ugliness, just as we do in the state of mind that produces pleasure. Yet, this fails to explain the phenomenology of displeasure, that when we experience something irritating and discomforting, we try to get rid of. Ugliness is truly offensive and we typically react to it by removing our attention from it. We do not like to be in a displeasing state of mind. Wenzel's interpretation, however, puts forth the paradoxical view that displeasure in the ugly is a feeling that we like and in which we strive to remain.

Second, Wenzel's explanation of displeasure as negative subjective purposiveness conflicts with the idea of displeasure as constituting an independent and autonomous aesthetic category contrary to pleasure, as Kant seems to hold. Kant identifies subjective purposiveness (free harmony) with pleasure: "Thus nothing other than the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object without any end (…) can constitute the satisfaction" (§11). But if displeasure is constituted by the *negative* subjective purposiveness, then it seems that displeasure is not a particularly different aesthetic category than pleasure, but merely a species of it. But this view conflicts with Kant's idea of the tripartite aesthetic distinction (beauty, neutrality, ugliness), and his explanation of displeasure as a contrary to pleasure; that

is, of the existence of a positive feeling of displeasure and a genuine case of ugliness. But according to Wenzel's interpretation there is no object that is positively displeasing. Beauty, as well as ugliness, is constituted by pleasure, though in the latter case it is a mere negative pleasure.[18]

Furthermore, the idea that displeasure is a negative subjective purposiveness is denied by Kant in one of the passages in the Introduction to the *Critique of The Power of Judgment*, where he states that displeasure is the result of the representational state of mind that contravenes the subjective purposiveness. Even though in this particular passage Kant is discussing on judgments of empirical systematicity, the nature of such judgments refers to the nature of reflective judgments in general, to which judgments of taste also belongs. Accordingly, he claims that: "…a representation of nature that foretold that even in the most minor investigation of the most common experience we would stumble on a heterogeneity in its laws that would make the unification of its particular laws under universal empirical ones impossible for our understanding would thoroughly displease us; because this would contradict the principle of the subjective-purposive specification of nature in its genera and our reflecting power of judgment with respect to the latter" (VI). Accordingly, displeasure arises because the relation between imagination and understanding fails to harmonize, the representation *fails* to be subjectively purposive for our judgment; hence, not that it is negatively purposive.

Third, in order to accommodate judgments of ugliness, Wenzel claims that the state of mind underlying judgments of taste is not the subjective condition of cognition. However, this distinction conflicts with Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste.

[18] That Wenzel does not seem to view ugliness as an autonomous aesthetic category is also implicit in his claim that an object may be disharmonious, yet it can become harmonious through a change in one's perspective. See: Christian Wenzel, *An Introduction to Kant's Aesthetics: Core Concepts and Problems* (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 2005), 132.

Kant derives the universal validity of judgments of taste from the state of mind that underlies cognition, because only this state of mind can be shared by all of us. For example, he claims: "A representation which, though singular and without comparison to others, nevertheless is in agreement with the conditions of universality, an agreement that constitutes the business of the understanding in general, brings the faculties of cognition into the well-proportioned disposition that we require for all cognition and hence also regard as valid for everyone (for every human being) who is determined to judge by means of understanding and sense in combination" (§9). But if we now propose that the state of mind of judgments of taste is not the state of mind underlying cognition, as Wenzel seems to claim, then it does not follow, strictly speaking, that the aesthetic state of mind is universally communicable. The state of mind that is universally communicable is that relation between cognitive powers that underlies cognition. If the aesthetic state of mind (harmonious or disharmonious) does not underlie cognition, then it does not necessarily follows that such a state of mind is also universally valid. Or, as Paul Guyer points out: "Once a capacity which is not an absolutely necessary condition of knowledge is introduced into the explanation of aesthetic response, so is an element of contingency, and the possibility of an entirely justifiable a priori imputation of aesthetic response to others is precluded."[19] Ultimately, Wenzel's solution to Shier's problem fails.

1.5 Hud Hudson and ugliness as the subjective contra-purposiveness

Hudson's solution to Shier's argument is to propose a distinction between different proportions in the relation between imagination and understanding that is required for cognition. He claims that it is false to identify the state of mind that refers to cognition with free harmony (premise 5 in Shier's argument). Instead, he argues that the condition of cognition is identified with the concept of general attunement or accordance: "…it is this

[19] Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 287.

general relation of attunement, which is neither subjective purposive or subjective contra-purposiveness, which is a necessary condition of cognition in general."[20] Furthermore, this attunement can have different proportions. His reasoning relies on Kant's statement in section §21 where he writes that attunement has different proportions depending on different objects that are given. Hudson states that "unique relations between the imagination and understanding are simply particular degrees of attunement between two cognitive faculties."[21] In cognitive judgments, this attunement is constituted by the proportions which are determined by the concept of the object and which can vary depending on the different objects. In judgments of taste, however, which are not determined by concepts, the attunement is constituted either by proportions between cognitive powers that are harmonious or subjectively purposive (judgment of the beautiful) or by proportions between cognitive powers that are disharmonious or subjectively contra-purposive (judgments of the ugly). While in the case of beauty the proportion of attunement is in the best degree (optimal proportion), the case of ugliness signifies "the worst degree of attunement in which this inner relation is least conductive to the (mutual) quickening of the two cognitive powers with a view to cognition in general."[22] Presumably, the weakest degree of attunement is one in which cognitive powers are in disharmony.[23] This disharmony, Hudson claims, exhibits 'subjective contra-purposiveness': "It is this subjective contra purposiveness in the presentation of the mere form of an object, that is, to say, "as if the object were designed in order to frustrate the power of imagination in its working with the understanding," that is

[20] Hud Hudson, "The Significance of an Analytic of the Ugly in Kant's Deduction of Pure Judgments of Taste," in *Kant's Aesthetics*, ed. Ralf Meerbote (Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1991), 98.
[21] Ibid., 99.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Hudson writes that the German word '*Stimmung*', translated as 'attunement,' has a wider meaning. While 'attunement' signifies some degree of harmony, *'Stimmung'*, on the other hand, permits not only harmony, but also a relation that is disharmonious. Ibid., 100.

connected with a universal disliking, and that prompts a judgment of taste (of reflection), when it is a judgment of ugliness."[24]

By drawing a distinction between attunement and harmony, with harmony being only one of the degrees (the best one) of attunement, Hudson believes that the disharmonious relation of cognitive powers can be accommodated. Disharmony is in this case one of the degrees of attunement (the minimal degree). If it is the general relation of attunement that is identified with the state of mind required for cognition, and if the state of mind required for cognition is universally communicable, then any degree or a proportionate relation of this attunement is universally communicable as well. Harmony and disharmony are each degrees of a general attunement, hence they are universally communicable. Hudson writes: "Therefore, the determining ground of judgment of taste (of reflection) consists in a subjective relation of the cognitive powers, namely, in a certain degree of attunement. Now, these degrees of attunement (or subranges of degrees) are universally communicable mental states (i.e., they satisfy one condition for a successful deduction), for if the different proportions which constitute the different degrees of attunement were not themselves universally communicable, then cognition, which depends on their universal communicability, could never arise. Thus, we might say that the universal communicability of the proportions which constitute attunement is a necessary condition of cognition in general. In other words, if cognition is to be shareable process, it is necessary that the different proportions are communicable."[25] I reconstruct Hudson's argument as follows:

1. Cognition and judgments in general are universally communicable.
2. Cognitions and judgments in general depend on the subjective condition of cognition.

[24] Ibid., 93.
[25] Ibid., 100.

3. If cognition and judgments in general are universally communicable, then the subjective conditions of cognition must also be universally communicable. (Kant, 1+2)
4. Subjective conditions of cognition are constituted by the general relation of attunement between imagination and understanding. (Hudson)
5. The general relation of attunement is universally communicable. (4+3)
6. This general relation of attunement has different proportions or degrees of attunement. (Hudson based on Kant §21)
7. If the general relation of attunement is universally communicable, then any degree of this general relation of attunement is universally communicable. (5+6)
8. In the judgment of taste the degree of this general attunement is harmony or disharmony. (Hudson)
9. Harmonious and disharmonious degrees of attunement are universally communicable. (7+8)
10. Harmonious and disharmonious degrees of attunement produce pleasure and displeasure, respectively.
11. Pleasure and displeasure are universally communicable. (9+10)

The argument as it stands seems to be logically valid. If any relation of attunement is universally communicable, and if harmony and disharmony constitute different degrees of such relation, then they are universally communicable. Hudson's strategy of differentiating between different degrees of attunement allows the accommodation of the tripartite aesthetic structure. The best degree of attunement (harmony) necessitates pleasure, the worst degree of attunement, displeasure and some (middle) degree of attunement necessitating an indifferent aesthetic reaction. Furthermore, since it is not free harmony that is identified with the necessary condition of cognition, it does not follow that all objects of cognition must be

beautiful. Hudson's strategy appears to meet Shier's problem. However, there is much to be said about the difficulties accompanying such an argumentative strategy.

First, Hudson's strategy seems to put forward two contrary claims. On one hand, he claims that, for cognition, the relation of attunement is constituted by some definite proportion determined by the concept. For example, he says: "…when the judgment is cognitive, the attunement is constituted by some definite proportion which is a function of the subsumption of a given intuition under a determinate concept of the understanding…"[26] This means that for cognition some particular degree of the general relation of attunement is required, a degree that is determined by the concept. And this suggests that it is only this degree of attunement that is the necessary condition of cognition. On the other hand, he claims that the subjective condition of cognition is not some particular degree of attunement (a definite degree determined by concept), but some general relation of attunement. Aesthetic harmony and disharmony are different degrees of this attunement. Each of the claims, however, has troublesome implications.

If he holds the first claim, that is, that it is only one particular degree of attunement that is in fact required for cognition, and that this degree is determined by the concept, then strictly speaking it is only this degree that is universally communicable. Recall that according to Kant's argument, it is only that relation of cognitive powers that is required for cognition that is universally communicable. If Hudson identifies this relation with some particular degree of attunement, and if harmony (pleasure) and disharmony (displeasure) refer to some other degree of attunement, then it does not follow that harmony and disharmony are also

[26] Ibid., 99.

universally communicable.[27] Hence, on this account, Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste fails.

If, on the other hand, Hudson holds the second idea, that is, the idea that it is the general attunement that is a subjective condition of cognition, then it follows that harmony and disharmony, as different degrees of this attunement, are universally communicable. But it also follows that harmony and disharmony are subjective conditions of cognition. The argument is as follows:

1. The general relation of attunement is a necessary condition of cognition. (Hudson)
2. The general relation of attunement has different degrees. (Hudson)
3. If general relation of attunement is a necessary condition of cognition, then some degree of this general relation of attunement determined by the object is a necessary condition of cognition. (1+2)
4. Harmonious or disharmonious relations are different degrees of general attunement (Hudson).
5. Thus, harmonious or disharmonious relations are necessary conditions of cognition with respect to the object which gives rise to them. (3+4)

But if this is true, then it follows that pleasure (effect of harmony) or displeasure (effect of disharmony) is a necessary accompaniment of cognition of certain objects. It is true that on this account it is not all objects of cognition that are beautiful (since objects can occasion different kinds of proportionate attunement) and that some of them will be ugly, depending on the objects given. However, on this account it is impossible to cognize a beautiful or ugly object, without at the same time experiencing pleasure or displeasure, respectively, and this is

[27] Similar objection is raised by Miles Rind, "Can Kant's Deduction of Judgment of Taste be Saved?" *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie*, Walter de Gruyter 84, no.1 (2002): 32.

at least a questionable claim, and argued against by Miles Rind.[28] For example, it seems at least possible for a beautiful object to be identified without occasioning pleasure each time, but a consequence of Hudson's account is the denial of this possibility. To conclude: if Hudson endorses the first claim and it is a specific degree of attunement that is the necessary subjective condition of cognition, then it is only this degree that attains universal communicability. Hence, judgments of taste are not universally valid. If, however, he holds the second claim, and identifies a necessary subjective condition of cognition with any relation of general attunement, then it follows that harmony and disharmony are universally valid proportions, but at the cost of compromising the notion of cognitive judgments (it must be accompanied with aesthetic feelings).

Second, Hudson grounds his argument on the premise that there is a distinction between Kant's use of terms 'attunement' and specific degrees of this attunement, harmony and disharmony, and this distinction in fact is not textually supported. Rather, Kant uses terms such as 'attunement', 'agreement' and 'harmony' interchangeably; signifying one and the same relation of cognitive powers. There is therefore no textual support to view harmony and disharmony as one of the degrees of some general attunement. Kant does not support the idea of difference in the degrees of attunement; that is, one degree required for cognition and some other degree for judgments of taste. On the contrary, he makes explicit that it is the same proportion of cognitive powers that is required for cognition that is also required for judgments of taste. For example, he writes: "This pleasure must necessarily depend for everyone on the same conditions, for they are subjective conditions of the possibility of a cognition in general; and the proportion between these cognitive faculties requisite for taste is also requisite for that ordinary sound understanding which we have to presuppose in everyone" (§39). Accordingly, it is implied that the same proportion between cognitive

[28] Rind, 40.

powers (call it harmony, attunement, agreement) which is necessary for cognitive judgments that is also necessary for judgments of taste (of the beautiful). And if it is not justified to distinguish between the proportions constitutive for cognition and proportion constitutive for judgments of taste, then Hudson's argumentative strategy fails.

1.6 Sean McConnell: ugliness as the minimal subjective purposiveness[29]

Sean McConnell argues, contrary to the majority view, that displeasure is not an outcome of the free disharmonious relation between cognitive powers, but of the free harmonious relation, which as we know so far Kant identifies with pleasure.[30] The reason why McConnell rejects the identification of displeasure with the concept of disharmonious relation is because he believes that such relation is inconsistent with the concept of free play. He argues that imagination and understanding must be in a mutually supportive relation in order for them to produce a play of any sort.[31] Accordingly, if there were a disharmony between cognitive powers, no such play or interaction between cognitive powers would begin. Disharmony precludes the activity of play of any kind: "The disharmonious free play would be the loss or malfunction of this procedure on the part of the imagination and the understanding in which case there would be no free play whatsoever and the very possibility of the judgment of taste destroyed. If the imagination cannot apprehend the object and present it so that the understanding can attempt to grasp it (in accordance with a rule or unifying principle), than play of any sort (aesthetic or cognitive) cannot begin and so no judgment of taste can be

[29] Description of McConnell's account as the 'minimal subjective purposiveness,' is not his, but mine, for the reasons explained in the text.

[30] This idea has been previously anticipated by Theodore Gracyk, "Sublimity, Ugliness, and Formlessness in Kant's aesthetic theory", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 45, no. 1 (1986): 49-66. Yet, because McConnell's version is the most elaborative one, I will focus on his.

[31] A similar argument against the possibility of disharmonious play has also been given by Reinhard Brandt, "Die Schönheit der Kristalle und das Spiel der Erkenntniskräfte. Zum Gegenstand und zur Logik der ästhetischen Urteils bei Kant," In *Autographen, Dokumente und Berichte: zu Edition, Amtsgeschaften und Werk Imanuel Kants*, ed. Reinhard Brandt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994), 40.

made." [32] Therefore, McConnell concludes: "the harmony of the imagination and the understanding is a necessary condition of all cognitive activity."[33]

McConnell's solution to Shier's argument is not to argue against the premise 5 in Shier's argument (that the state of mind that refers to cognition must be free harmony), but to argue against the premise 6. That is, McConnell rejects the idea that free harmony necessary produces pleasure. On his proposal, the feeling produced by the free harmony is not a simple pleasure, but rather a 'pleasure continuum': "…harmonious free play is not always simply pleasurable as opposed to displeasurable; the feelings lie on a continuum."[34] The 'pleasure continuum' produced by free harmony, is comprised of simple pleasure as the maximal point of the 'pleasure continuum' scale, displeasure as the minimal point on the scale and the sense of indifference in the middle of the scale.

The three aesthetic categories (pleasure, indifference, displeasure) or degrees of the 'pleasure continuum' scale are determined by the different proportions or degree of the free harmonious play. Different objects exhibit different degree of harmony (degree to which the object is unified) which in turn produces different degrees of 'continuum pleasure' feeling. The maximum degree of harmony means that an object expresses a unifying rule wholly. In such case pleasure is produced. On the other hand, if an object exhibits minimal degree of unity, then the cognitive powers will be in a low degree of free harmonious relation and the consequence will be displeasure: "If an object does not realize its indeterminate unifying rule wholly, that is, it exhibits unity to a lesser degree, then the faculties will be quickened or animated to a lesser degree – one is not confident to a greater or lesser extent. This is the feeling of 'lesser pleasure' or 'displeasure' that prompts a judgment of ugliness." [35]

[32] Sean McConnell, "How Kant Might Explain Ugliness," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48, no. 2 (2008): 214.
[33] Ibid., 214.
[34] Ibid., 218.
[35] Ibid., 221.

Accordingly, what distinguishes pleasure from displeasure is the degree or different proportions in the harmonious play of cognitive powers which itself is determinate by the difference in the degree to which the form of an object exhibits the unifying rule.

Based on McConnell's strategy, displeasure of the ugly can be accommodated within Kant's aesthetics. On his account, displeasure is produced by the minimal harmonious relation between cognitive powers. Furthermore, because free harmony does not necessary produces pleasure (but also other feelings on the 'pleasure continuum'), it does not follow that all objects are beautiful. However, even though McConnell's interpretation appears to meet Shier's problem, it suffers from a serious lack of a textual support, as well as intuitiveness.

First, Kant makes clear in many occasions that free harmony is identified with the feeling of pleasure and with the judgment of the beautiful alone. He clearly holds this view when he characterizes free harmony as a relation in which imagination and understanding mutually support and help each other and therefore pleasure, as its effect: "…has a causality in itself, namely that of maintaining the state of the representation of the mind" (§10). In other words, when the object elicits pleasure in us, this pleasure has inherent causality to maintain our attention and this is due to the mutually animating function of the cognitive powers. This means that if displeasure of the ugly was a product of such mutually supportive activity of cognitive powers, even though in a low or minimal degree, than displeasure as well shares this essential characteristic. But, I argued before, that this is counterintuitive. When we find an object ugly, there is a tendency to turn away and remove one's attention to the object in question. The process of the activity of cognitive powers behind the ugliness is therefore opposite to the process involved in pleasure.

Second, it is unconvincing why a lesser degree of harmony should lead to the feeling of displeasure, rather than to the feeling of a low degree of pleasure (less degree of unity in the

object), and so leaving the space for the comparative levels of beauty. The notion of displeasure in the broadest sense refers to a state of experiencing no pleasure and consequently no harmonious relation either. In this sense displeasure is the lack of pleasure. Furthermore, Kant clearly uses the notion of displeasure as feeling contrary to the pleasure, containing an actual presence of a positive displeasure. He has this in mind when he writes in section §48 that there are naturally ugly objects with displeasing value so high that they arouse an emotion of disgust. This implies that displeasure itself has a 'continuum scale'; minimal displeasure and disgust as the maximal point on the scale. And this suggests that displeasure cannot be simply identified with the low degree of harmony.

Third, McConnell's thesis that a disharmonious relation between cognitive powers precludes the possibility of their play is unconvincing. In music, for example, we can have a combination of sounds that is discordant, and yet this does not necessarily lead to a breakdown of the activity of music making (as for example in free style jazz). Or, consider for example fighting sports, such as boxing. The two players are hurting each other, that is, they are in conflict, yet they are continuing their match. This suggests that disharmony need not break down the activity.[36] What is distinctive for disharmonious play is only that it is unstable and unbalanced, and that it therefore strives to end itself (the conflict between two boxers results in ending the fight), or it strives to find the resolution (in music, discordant singing can eventually find its way back to harmonious singing).

1.7 The final attack: Paul Guyer on the epistemological impossibility of ugliness

Paul Guyer offers the most challenging argument against the view that judgments of ugliness are pure judgments of taste. He argues that the notion of disharmonious play between

[36] This idea has also been argued for by Dieter Lohmar, "Das Geschmacksurteil über das faszinierend Hässliche," in *Kants Ästhetik, Kant's Aestheics, L'esthétique de Kant*, ed. Herman Parret (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 498-512.

cognitive powers is not merely incompatible with Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste, but it is incompatible with his own epistemological theory. While previously outlined approaches have been concerned only with finding a space for ugliness within Kantian aesthetic theory, Guyer on the other hand is concerned with the overall cognitive and aesthetic framework, and the relation between the two areas. I will first outline Guyer's objection against pure judgments of ugliness and proceed to his interpretation of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics.

Guyer claims that judgments of ugliness can only be possible if there is a representation which sets cognitive powers into disharmonious play. However, he writes that the possibility of the existence of such representation is precluded by Kant's epistemological theory. According to Kant's account of cognition in the *Critique of Pure Reason* there is needed a harmony between imagination and understanding for cognition. That is, to make a judgment of the sort 'X is a chair', the imagination must synthesize the manifold of intuition and understanding must apply the empirical concept (chair) to this manifold. Alongside empirical concepts, which are responsible for forming empirical cognitive judgments, there are pure *a priori* concepts (categories) that are responsible for the possibility of experiencing objects in the first place (concept of a substance, causality etc.). In order to experience any objects, the application of pure concepts to the representation is necessary. Kant emphasizes this point in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as well: "…we first find in the grounds of the possibility of an experience something necessary, namely the universal laws without which nature in general (as object of the senses) could not be conceived; and these rest on the categories, applied to the formal conditions of all intuition that is possible for us, insofar as it is likewise given to us *a priori"* (V). Yet, the application of pure concepts, as Guyer points

out, is not temporarily prior to the application of empirical concepts. Rather, pure concepts are applied to the representation only through empirical concepts.[37]

But, if the application of pure concepts to the representation is necessary to be conscious of the object, and if the application of pure concepts to the representation depend on the application of empirical concepts, then this means that in order to be conscious of the representation, we must apply empirical concepts. This means that empirical concept application is a necessary condition, not merely for cognition of the object, but to have an experience of the object in the first place. The application of empirical concepts to the manifold of intuition is, in other words, setting the imagination and understanding into a harmonious play. And this means that there always must be a harmony between the imagination and understanding in order to be conscious of a representation. It is impossible to think or to be conscious of a representation in which cognitive powers were in disharmony. Disharmonious representational state of mind is epistemologically impossible.

Furthermore, Guyer's argument also shows that there cannot be a harmony between cognitive powers devoid of any conceptual applicability. It is impossible to have a state of mind in which cognitive powers were in free harmony, that is, without the application of empirical concepts, as Kant seems to claim that takes place in judgments of taste. In order to find an object beautiful and experience free harmony, we must in the first place have conceptual harmony which necessitates the experience of an object. Guyer accordingly develops a conception of free harmony based on conceptual harmony. That is, according to his metacognitive approach, that I will explain more in detail in the next chapter, free harmony is defined as an excess of conceptual harmony.

[37] This view has been pointed out by the majority of Kant's scholars. I will come back to this argument and discuss on it more explicitly in the next chapter. In short, the argument is that categories cannot differentiate between various images, because they are abstract concepts, and hence in order to have any particular image my sense impressions must be governed by empirical concepts as well.

Based on Guyer's account, there are no pure judgments of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics. However, he writes that the impossibility of pure displeasure does not imply the view that all objects of experience are beautiful and that no negative judgments of taste can be given. He claims that negative judgments of the non-beautiful may suffice. It is not needed an actual displeasure in order to make negative judgments of taste. If, however, we do have an experience of positive displeasure of ugliness, Guyer proposes, that this experience must depend on some other source. He suggests three such sources: an object is ugly because, either (i) its sensory elements are displeasing (such as taste, touch, simple sound or color), (ii) it is displeasurable because it is in disagreement with our moral standards, or (iii) an object's form is displeasurable, however not in itself, but rather because it is in disagreement with the concept of a purpose, that is, with the idea of how an object's form should look. As a main example of ugliness of types (i) and (ii), Guyer puts forward Kant's example of the devastations of war. Devastations of war are ugly because they cause physical pain and are therefore disagreeable to our senses, and because they violate our moral standards.[38]

If ugliness is not of type (i) or (ii), then Guyer suggests it must be of type (iii). An object's formal qualities can be ugly if they are in disagreement with our idea of how it should look (category-dependent ugliness). For example, he writes: "…an asymmetry that we might find beautiful in an Art Nouveau home could strike us as hideous in a Renaissance church, or a sequence of notes that we might accept in an atonal piece by Schonberg might be jarring in a sonata by Hayden."[39] In this case it is not formal qualities by themselves that cause displeasure, but displeasure is caused because they fail to fulfill our preconceived expectations of how an object should look: "And no doubt in many cases our judgment that a work is ugly is really an expression of our discomfort at its failure to satisfy our expectations for objects in a certain group rather than the result of a free engagement with that object itself

[38] Guyer, "Kant on the Purity of the Ugly," 151.
[39] Ibid.

unhampered by preconceptions as to how it ought to be."[40] In sum, on Guyer's account judgments of taste are comprised of judgments of the beautiful (presence of free harmony) and judgments of aesthetic indifference (lack of free harmony), but there is no pure judgments of ugliness (presence of free disharmony). Objects are ugly because of their sensory or moral elements that we do not like or agree with, or because the object's form is not adequate to our standards as to how they should look. [41]

Even though Guyer's account of ugliness is at least plausible for some cases of displeasure (and it is true that we do sometimes find objects ugly because they deviate from our established standards), it cannot however account for all of them. In order for there to be category-dependent ugliness of an object's form, there must in the first place be a standard for how an object should look. It is true that, for example, regarding the human face we have a standard of how a face should look. Based on that we can judge, say, a severe disfigurement of a face to be displeasing, because it is in disagreement with our preconceived idea of how the face of a normal person should look. But this does not mean that for every object's form that we find ugly, we also have an idea of how it should look.

Even if we have a concept with which we can categorize an object, this does not necessarily mean that a dependent aesthetic standard can be derived from the concept, because the concept may simply be too general. For example, in the case of dance, a dependent aesthetic judgment can be made according to some standard only if the concept with which we are

[40] Ibid., 156.

[41] For a similar interpretation of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics see: Hannah Ginsborg, "Aesthetic Judging and The Intentionality of Pleasure", *Inquiry* 46 (2) (2003): 164-18, 177-178. Frank Sibley offers a similar interpretation of ugliness, independently of Kant's theory. He claims that beauty and ugliness are to some extent asymmetrical. Beauty is an ambifunctional adjective, meaning, that it can work either as a predicate (without knowledge of a standard) or as an attribute, meaning that it is ideal-related. Ugliness, on the other hand, is essentially attributive. That is, an object is ugly only if it deviates from the normal idea of what it is supposed to be. He does not allow that an object's form could be ugly by itself: "Hence, considered for itself alone, as an object, while it might or might not be beautiful, it cannot be ugly." See: Frank Sibley, "Some Notes on Ugliness," in *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*, ed. John Benson, Betty Redfern and Jeremy Roxbee Cox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 205.

judging the bodily movements is sufficiently contentful. More specifically, we can judge whether a specific sequence of bodily movements is a beautiful or ugly ballet on one hand, and also whether the same sequence of movements is a beautiful or ugly Polynesian war dance, because the standards are sufficiently contentful in each case. That the aesthetic evaluations made on the basis of the respective standards is likely to be different even given the same sequence of movements, shows that these are indeed aesthetic evaluations dependent on a standard. However, it is not the case that simply because we can categorize an object under a concept that this necessarily supplies us with a standard against with which a dependent aesthetic judgment can be made. The concept of dance, for instance, is not on its own adequately contentful to supply us with such a standard. If all that it is known about the sequence of bodily movements is that it is a dance, we have no standard with which to make a dependent aesthetic evaluation, but we can still judge it to be ugly. The case is similar for paintings, because the objects belonging to this category are so fundamentally various that the categorization of an object as a painting on its own is again insufficient to supply us with a standard despite our being able to find a painting ugly, even though we categorize it no more specifically than that it is a painting. The case with paintings is especially clear in the case of abstract art where the freedom of form within the medium is so broad that no prior determinate idea of what such a painting should look like can be given. An abstract painting is just lines and colors, and it is not credible to say that we have some idea of what lines and colors *should* look like. However, we can find some composition of lines and colors ugly even though we have no standard for it (for example Karel Appel: *Untitled,* 1957). Similarly, we can find some arrangement of lights, as for example in Christmas decorations, distasteful, even though we have no available standard of how a formal composition of lights should look. We simply find some of these free formal arrangements offensive to our aesthetic sense.

Furthermore, the fact that an Art Nouveau home is ugly if regarded as a Renaissance church, does not explain why in the first place we find an Art Nouveau home beautiful. Equally, we can find some object's form ugly independently of preconceptions as to how it should look. Dependent ugliness, according to Guyer, comes from an object not satisfying criteria specified by its concept, that is, how it should look. However, there can be cases where an object is still ugly even if it does satisfy our expectations as to how it should look. For example, a turkey can satisfy completely the criteria belonging to the concept of a turkey while nevertheless being ugly, because even the most perfect specimen of a turkey is an ugly animal. Such cases of ugliness do not fit into Guyer's definition of displeasure. Furthermore, it is also not true that we find all displeasure of the senses ugly. For example, if a violinist plays a tone wrongly, I do not necessarily find such a tone ugly, but merely discomforting or uneasy to my ear. Also, painful sensory stimuli are all displeasurable, but few if any of these could really be called ugly. Therefore, not all displeasures of the senses are ugly. Accordingly, Guyer's explanation of ugliness is inadequate for a comprehensive theory of ugliness.

1.8 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to formulate the problem of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics, and to analyze the weaknesses in the attempted solutions. Even though there is textual support for claiming that Kant identified judgments of ugliness as pure judgments of taste, his explanation of judgments of taste, which is focused solely on judgments of the beautiful, seems to preclude any possibility to accommodate judgments of ugliness within it. The essential characteristic of judgments of taste, Kant claims, is their universal communicability, which presupposes that they depend on a state of mind that we all share. What we all share is a state of mind that is required for cognition, that is, harmony between

cognitive powers. Since judgments of taste do not apply concepts (they are not cognitive judgments), they can only depend on a state of mind of free harmony. But free harmony produces pleasure. Hence, there is no possibility to accommodate judgments of ugliness.

The strategy on the side of those who argue in favor of pure judgments of ugliness is to argue either against the identification of the state of mind required for cognition with free harmony (Wenzel, Hudson), or to argue against the identification of free harmony with pleasure (McConnell). The first strategy seems to be more reasonable and consistent with Kant's account. It supports a view of ugliness as depending on a disharmonious state of mind. On the face of it, such a proposal seems to be coherent with our intuition regarding ugliness. We do find some objects displeasing, for example, when we find a certain composition of features in an animal such as *Naked Mole Rat,* discomforting; composed from incongruent elements. The displeasure at seeing such an animal is accompanied with the feeling of incorrectness due to a combination of features that ought not to be combined in such a way.

However, in order to accommodate disharmony within Kant's account, one must either make a distinction between the state of mind required for judgments of taste and the state of mind required for cognition (Wenzel), or to distinguish different proportions between cognitive powers, a proportion necessary for cognition, and some other proportion necessary for judgments of taste (Hudson).

However, to introduce a distinction between the aesthetic and cognitive state of mind severs the connection between the universal validity of conditions necessary for cognition and universal validity of conditions for judgments of taste. Recall that Kant derives the universal validity of judgments of taste from the universal validity of the state of mind that underlies cognitive judgments. But if we now make a distinction between the two, then the universal validity of judgments of taste is compromised.

Among contemporary scholars, this problem in Kant's theory is inflicted by the following dilemma: either the state of mind of judgments of taste is identified with the state of mind underlying cognitive judgments or it is not. If it is, then this state of mind can be nothing else than free harmony and the possibility of judgments of ugliness is precluded. Moreover, it follows from this account that there are no negative judgments of taste *in general*. If free harmony is required for cognition, and since free harmony produces pleasure, then all objects of cognition are accompanied by pleasure. If however, the state of mind of judgments of taste is different from the state of mind underlying cognition, then even though judgments of ugliness may be possible, the universal validity of judgments of taste is not.[42]

Furthermore, the proposed solutions cannot meet the most challenging objection raised against the idea of pure judgments of ugliness, that is, Guyer's argument showing that the state of disharmony is epistemologically impossible. A certain harmony between imagination and understanding is always needed in order to be conscious of a representation. Moreover, this harmony must be conceptually determined. And this means that a case of genuine disharmony between cognitive powers is precluded.

To conclude: the accommodation of judgments of ugliness within the Kantian aesthetic framework depends on the explanation of the concept of free harmony underlying judgments of the beautiful. Yet, the analysis of Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste has shown that the concept of free harmony is deeply troublesome. Kant claims that free harmony is a universally communicable state of mind because it is a subjective condition of cognition. But such an explanation is accompanied by undesirable implications, which Kant himself denies, namely, that pleasure is a necessary concomitant of cognition. Furthermore, this account suggests that free harmony precedes cognition, that is, it precedes the application of a concept. But, as Guyer has argued, this is epistemologically impossible.

[42] See a version of this dilemma in Meerbote, 80-83.

We cannot be conscious of a representation without prior application of concepts, that is, without some conceptual harmony between cognitive powers.

Indeed, if we turn to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, we see that the conception of free harmony as a subjective condition of cognition does not make much sense. Namely, we learn that concepts are not merely applied to the synthesis of imagination, but they *determine* the process of synthesis. A concept, Kant says, is a rule for the synthesis of the manifold (CPR A106). The synthesis of sense impressions performed by imagination is not an independent activity. Rather, the imagination combines sense impressions and produces a perceptual image according to the concept: "The thought is echoed in the sight, the concept is alive in the perception," Peter Strawson writes.[43] This is, in a nutshell, Kant's view on the nature of the relation between cognitive powers in cognitive judgments: imagination and understanding must be in harmony in order to present an object of perceptual experience, and this harmony is governed by concepts. As Kenneth Rogerson points out, "A concept does not merely recognize orderliness, but constitutes the order."[44] But if this is so, then the concept of free harmony that underlies judgments of taste and in which, allegedly, the synthesis of imagination is free (not determined by a concept), cannot be identified with the subjective condition of cognition. That is, there is a substantial difference between the constitution of harmony in cognitive judgments and harmony in judgments of taste. But if the concept of free harmony amounts to a state of mind significantly different to the state of mind required for cognition, then the problem is how it can attain universal validity.

Ultimately, the investigation of judgments of ugliness depends on the notion of free harmony as the fundamental concept underlying judgments of taste (of the beautiful). But, as the

[43] Peter Strawson, "Imagination and Perception," in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 64.
[44] Kenneth F. Rogerson, *The Problem of Free Harmony in Kant's Aesthetics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 60.

foregoing discussion has shown, Kant's own formulation of the concept of free harmony is deeply unsatisfying. Hence, in order to give a positive solution to the concept of ugliness, it is necessary to gain a more thorough understanding of the concept of free harmony. We need to understand what Kant means by claiming that in judgments of taste the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding are exercised in their freedom, which can either be such that it results in judgments of the beautiful (free harmony) or in judgments of the ugly (free disharmony). Therefore, in order to find a way to approach ugliness positively, a reevaluation of Kant's concept of free harmony is needed.

CHAPTER 2: THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN THE PLAY OF IMAGINATION AND UNDERSTANDING

In the previous chapter I discussed the problem of ugliness and different solutions that were proposed in order to solve it. This discussion showed that none of the proposed solutions were successful, mainly due to Kant's unsatisfactory formulation of the concept of free harmony constitutive of judgments of taste (of the beautiful). Accordingly, a positive explanation of ugliness and of the notion of *free disharmony* cannot proceed without first settling on a proper understanding of the notion of free play between cognitive powers. This is a difficult task to begin with, particularly as Kant provides merely a negative definition of free harmony as a harmony between imagination and understanding that is not restricted by the concept of the object. Furthermore, he views the notion of free harmony as intimately connected with the activity of imagination and understanding in ordinary cognition. It is a central tenet of his theory of taste that it depends on the relation between cognitive powers that is universally communicable, and that nothing can be universally communicable but the relation between cognitive powers that is required for cognition.

But when one turns to Kant's explanation of cognition in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in order to clarify what this state of mind amounts to, one is left with a rather puzzling and unsatisfying explanation. We learn from Kant's epistemological theory that: *first*, a judgment is made universally valid by the application of concepts. Concepts serve as the universal standard upon which agreement is achieved. Cognitive judgments can be correct or incorrect depending on the concept, serving as a rule against which the content can be judged. But in judgments of taste the play between cognitive powers is not determined by concepts, which means that there is no standard against which the content can be judged. The justification for the universal validity of judgments of taste does not depend on concepts, Kant writes, and if

there is no rule against which the action can be judged, then how can we claim that such judgments can be correct or incorrect. *Second*, we also learn from his theory that concepts are rules for the synthesis of the manifold (A106). Accordingly, in the case of cognition, the imagination is not free, but governed by concepts provided by the understanding. In judgments of taste, however, Kant claims that the imagination synthesizes the intuition freely; since no concept determines how it ought to be (there is no rule to which it ought to conform). Free harmony is, as Kant writes, 'lawful but without a law' (§22). But if understanding is the faculty of concepts or rules, and no such rules are present in the synthesis of the imagination, then how can imagination be in harmony or disharmony with the faculty of concepts or rules, without any particular rule prescribed to it?

The reconciliation of Kant's account of the role of imagination and understanding in ordinary cognition with their role in judgments of taste is the main subject of the contemporary debate on Kant's aesthetics. It is not surprising that it has resulted in a variety of different interpretations, none of which, however, offer a full and satisfactory account. This is because none of the interpretations given so far can accommodate all three beliefs that Kant seems to hold. *First*, that understanding is the faculty of concepts, providing rules for the synthesis of imagination. Hence, free harmony, as a play between imagination and understanding cannot be a play independent of all rules. *Second*, that free play is similar enough to the play of cognitive powers in cognition so that it can attain universal validity, and it is dissimilar enough that it does not necessarily accompany every object of cognition. Some objects of cognition do not have free play. That is, they produce no aesthetic feelings. The dilemma propounded by Ralf Meerbote must be avoided. *Third*, that there are judgments of ugliness as depending on a disharmonious free play between cognitive powers. This is the part of Kant's aesthetic theory that I particularly emphasize, and argue that any interpretation which cannot successfully explain the possibility of ugliness within Kant's aesthetics is unsuccessful.

My aim in the present chapter is to examine and reevaluate these interpretative suggestions. Because Kant's aesthetics has become a subject of great interest over the past forty years, the number of these interpretations is not insignificant. Paul Guyer classified them as precognitive, multicognitive and metacognitive approaches, and thereby provided a coherent and unified picture of the field.[45] I will follow his classification by focusing on the main representatives of each group, and raise a number of questions about the adequacy of their explanations (whether they satisfy all three beliefs mention above). While none of the approaches provide a full solution to the problems of the concept of free play, the partial solutions that they do offer can indicate ways in which the whole problem can be addressed. Before proceeding, I want to turn to Kant's theory of cognition in order to clarify his epistemological views on the nature of the relation between the imagination and understanding. A closer look at his theory of cognition may shed light on the appropriateness of existing approaches.

2.1 Kant's view on the role of the imagination and understanding in cognitive judgments

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant explains what he means by the subjective conditions of cognition. This explanation is known as the doctrine of the threefold synthesis (synthesis of apprehension, synthesis of reproduction, synthesis of recognition): "these three syntheses guide us to three subjective sources of cognition that make possible the understanding itself and, through it, all experience, which is an empirical product of the understanding" (A97). I will now provide a short explanation of these syntheses.

The first synthesis is *'synthesis of the apprehension in intuition'*, whose function is to have "gone through and gathered together" the manifold of intuition (A99). Every intuition

[45] Paul Guyer, "The Harmony of the Faculties Revisited," in *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant's Critical Philosophy*, ed. Rebecca Kukla (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 162-193.

contains a manifold in it, but this manifold is indiscriminate when received through senses, and becomes understandable only through the synthesis of apprehension. Kant holds a view, contrary to the empiricist's idea, that in order to perceive an image, the mere receptivity of sense impressions will not do, and that what is needed is the synthesis of sense impressions: "although intuition offers a manifold, yet intuition can never bring this manifold about as a manifold, and as contained moreover *in one presentation*, unless a synthesis occurs in this process" (A99). This synthesis is performed by the faculty of imagination and it is called apprehension: "Hence there is in us an active power to synthesize this manifold. This power we call imagination; and the act that it performs directly on perceptions I call apprehension. For the imagination is to bring the manifold of intuition to an *image;* hence it must beforehand take the impressions up into its activity, i.e., apprehend them" (A120). Because every intuition occurs in time, the mind must distinguish the time in the apprehension of these elements: "This manifold would not be presented as such if the mind did not in the sequence of impressions following one another distinguish the time" (A99). Only when the apprehension occurs, can we have a perception of a spatial and temporal object: "…by *synthesis of apprehension* I mean that assembly of the manifold in an empirical intuition whereby perception, i.e., empirical consciousness of the intuition (as appearance), becomes possible" (B160). The synthesis of apprehension is empirical (synthesis of empirical intuition or sense impressions), as well pure or a priori, that is, synthesis of apprehension of pure representation of space and time. The empirical synthesis of apprehension is ultimately conditioned by a pure apprehension: "Empirical intuition is possible only through pure intuition (of space and time) […] The synthesis of spaces and times, which are the essential form of all intuition, is what also makes possible the apprehension of appearance, hence makes possible any outer experience, and consequently also makes possible all cognition of the objects of this experience" (A166/B207).

The synthesis of apprehension is conditioned by the second synthesis, that is, *synthesis of reproduction*. Kant argues that it is not enough to combine the intuitions, but since they occur in time, we must be aware of how each intuition occurs before or after the other. That is, I must remember or keep in mind how each intuition proceeds: "If I want to draw a line in thought, or to think the time from one noon to the next, or even just to present a certain number, then I must, first of all, necessarily apprehend in thought one of these manifold presentations after the other. But if I always lost from my thoughts the preceding presentations (the first part of the line, the preceding parts of the time, or the sequentially presented units) and did not reproduce them as I proceeded to the following ones, then there could never arise a whole presentation" (A102). If I would not be able to keep in mind the succession of intuitions that I have apprehended, then the apprehension would be useless, since I would forget how each representation follows the other. Accordingly, the reproductive power of imagination is necessary for the successful act of apprehension: "even this apprehension of the manifold would, by itself, produce as yet no image and no coherence of impressions, if there did not also exist a subjective basis for summoning up a perception from which the mind has passed to another (and bringing it) over to the subsequent ones – and for thus exhibiting entire series of perceptions. i.e., in addition to apprehension we need a reproductive power of imagination" (A121). In order to have a complete representation of an object I must remember (reproduce) how each representation that I previously apprehended occurs before the other, together with the occurrence of the present apprehension. As there is empirical synthesis of reproduction, there is also a priori or pure synthesis of reproduction, performed by the pure or transcendental imagination.

The synthesis of reproduction is furthermore presupposed by the third synthesis, that is, *synthesis of recognition in the concept*, because, as Kant says: "Without the consciousness that what we are thinking is the same as what we thought an instant before, all reproduction

in the series of presentations would be futile. For what we are thinking would in the current state be a new presentation, which would not belong at all to the act by which it was to be produced little by little. Hence the manifold of the presentation would never make up a whole, because it would lack the unity that only consciousness can impart to it" (A103). This consciousness is characterized by the 'synthesis of recognition in the concept'. The unity of the manifold is conveyed by the consciousness which Kant identifies with the concept, and with the understanding, as the faculty of producing such concepts. Kant has a twofold definition of concepts. On one hand, concept is "this one consciousness" that "unites in one presentation what is manifold, intuited little by little, and then also reproduced" (A103). On other hand, a concept is also a rule: "A concept, in terms of its form, is always something that is universal and that serves as a rule" (A106) for the synthesis of sense impressions: "This unity is impossible, however, unless the intuition can be produced according to a rule through a certain function of synthesis, viz., a function of synthesis that makes the reproduction of the manifold necessary a priori and makes possible a concept in which the manifold is united" (A105).[46]

Accordingly, concepts are not merely applied to the synthesized manifold (perceptual image), but since Kant formulates them as rules and as a single consciousness, they themselves guide the synthesis of imagination into one unified (organized) representation. And through this mental process it also presents this unity in my consciousness of the representation: "Without being related to consciousness (…) appearances could never become an object to us, hence it would be nothing to us" (A119). For example, Kant writes, that the concept of the body

[46] Kant understands concepts in two ways. *First*, a concept is a set of "characteristic that may be common to several things" (A320/B377). For example, the concept of a dog is a set of marks such as animal, four legs, fur, barking. *Second*, a concept is also a rule for the organization of the sense data. First and the second definition of a concept correspond to the matter (content) and the form of the concept respectively: "With every concept we are to distinguish *matter and form.* The matter of concepts is the *object*, their form *universality"* (JL 33; 589). For a fine discussion on Kant's theory of concepts as marks and rules see: Steven M. Bayne, "Marks, Images, and Rules: Concepts and Transcendental Idealism," in *Kant's Idealism: New Interpretations of a Controversial Doctrine*, ed. Dennis Schulting and Jacco Verburgt (London & New York: Springer, 2010), 127-142.

serves as "a rule for intuitions" by representing "the necessary reproduction of the manifold of appearances" (A105) and therefore "to represent the synthetic unity in the consciousness of the appearances" (A105). Through this procedure we come to have a perceptual experience of a body: "Thus the concept of a body makes necessary, when we perceive something outside us, the representation of extension, impenetrability, shape, etc." (A105). The idea is that concepts are rules for the reproduction of sense impressions (keeping in mind how each representation occurs before the other) and since reproduction necessitates apprehension, by which perception is possible, it follows that concepts are in fact necessary for perception: "The concepts not only serve to make appearances reproducible, they also, by doing so, serve to determine an object for their intuition" (A107). The procedure of recognition in the concept is not only empirical (recognition in the empirical concept), but also transcendental (recognition in the pure concept). But while empirical concepts, such as the concept of a body, serve as a necessary condition for experience of some objects, transcendental concepts serve as the necessary condition for all experience: "pure understanding, by means of the categories, is a formal and synthetic principle of all experiences" (A119).

In sum, the theory of the threefold synthesis represents the activity of the cognitive powers required for cognition. This activity is carried out by the imagination, mediating between the intuition (receptivity of sense impressions) and concepts, and by the understanding as the faculty of concepts, responsible for providing the necessary unity of the synthesized manifold. The power of imagination performs two kinds of acts: (i) the apprehension of the manifold, which Kant identifies with perception; (ii) the reproduction or recollection of sense impressions necessary for the cohesion of apprehended sense impressions. The synthesis of imagination, however, is guided by the concept. Kant claims that concepts are rules for the synthesis of intuition, specifically, for the "necessary reproduction of the manifold of appearances" (A105). If concepts determine the synthesis of reproduction, and if the

synthesis of reproduction conditions the synthesis of apprehension, then it follows that concepts determine the perception itself. Hence, concepts are not only applied to the perceptual image, rather, they are applied to the intuition itself. That is, they determine how we will come to perceive the object. Robert Pippin nicely puts this idea, by saying that: "Knowledge by means of universals occurs when a universal rule is applied to the material of intuition, and determines it in this or that way, not when individuals are recognized as instances of a general type."[47]

Such an interpretation of perceptual experience can be found in many places of Kant's first *Critique*. *First*, in his emphasis, that each of the syntheses, in order to function properly, must presuppose the other, and ultimately, all the syntheses depends on the concepts and the faculty of understanding: "Hence, the categories underlie all formal unity in the synthesis of imagination, and, by means of this synthesis, underlie also the formal unity of all empirical use of the imagination down to the appearances (i.e., its use in recognition, reproduction, association, apprehension)" (A125). The possibility of perceptual experience begins with categories and ends with the empirical application of the categories in recognition, down to reproduction and apprehension. Thus, it is concepts that take place prior to the synthesis of imagination and make possible perceptual experience. *Second*, in the B Deduction of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant in fact identifies the act of synthesis with the understanding: "Hence all combination is an act of understanding. (…) I would assign to this act of understanding the general name synthesis, in order to point out at the same time: that we cannot present anything as combined in the object without ourselves' having combined it beforehand" (B130). But if the synthesis of apprehension is in fact performed by the understanding, then, as Kant claims: "all synthesis, the synthesis through which even perception becomes possible, is subject to the categories" (B161). Even though Kant

[47] Robert Pippin, "The Schematism and Empirical Concepts," in *Immanuel Kant: Critical Assessments*, ed. Ruth Chadwick and Clive Cazeaux (London: Routledge, 1992), 288.

describes imagination as an "indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no cognition" (A78), he also adds that this function is 'blind', suggesting that it needs to be directed by the understanding which provides the rules as to how or in what manner the synthesis must proceed. Without this rule, the imagination would not be able to pick up and hold together the intuitions in a way that the concept could apply and cognition to arise.

An explanation of perceptual experience, as rule governed, represents the dominant view among Kant's scholars. Hannah Ginsborg particularly emphasize the normative character of concepts and offers a fine illustration of how the normativity-rule is imposed on the synthesis: "Recognizing this as a dog implies recognizing that I ought to synthesize my representations in one way rather than other, for example, that I ought to see the tail as belonging with the head and legs rather than with the tree in the background, or that I ought to reproduce prior perceptions of barking, rather than, say, mewing or neighing. Recognizing the applicability of a concept, then, is recognizing a normative rule which governs the activity of my imagination in its reproduction of the manifold. It is because concepts serve in the first instance to specify ways, in which the manifold ought to be synthesized, not just ways in which the manifold is synthesized, that they can be identified with rules for the synthesis of the manifold." [48]Accordingly, the concept prescribes how the synthesis *should* be carried out and how the discrimination among the sense impressions *should* proceed. Robert Wolff writes that the rule works as a "set of prescriptions in conformity with which the activity is done."[49] Similarly, Paton explains a rule as a sort of a plan. In the example of the perception of a house he writes: "…although the synthesis of imagination is controlled by what is given in sensation, (as for example when we look at the house from every side), the principle at work in the synthesis is the empirical concept of "house". The successively given intuitions

[48] Hannah Ginsborg, "Lawfulness without a Law: Kant on the Free Play of Imagination and Understanding," *Philosophical Topics* 25, no. 1 (1997): 51.
[49] Robert Paul Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), 122.

(…) are all combined in accordance with a single plan: and this plan is what is thought generally in the concept of "house". In judging that this is a house, or that this house is red, we are conceiving the general plan or rule which is manifested in the synthesis of imagination, and only so can the intuitions synthesized form for us one object of knowledge."[50]

According to this suggestion, two things can be concluded. *First*, that if the synthesis (combination of sense data) proceeds according to a plan (rule), then this implies that the rule, the concept, must precede the synthesis. Perception does not begin with some image on which we apply the concept. Rather, this procedure begins with the concept, determining the way we come to construct the image. I will come to perceive the image in a certain way, that is, I will perceive a particular combination of sense impressions as a dog for instance. Accordingly, perception is already an interpretation of sense impressions. *Second*, that there is a distinction between the two ways that understanding operates in the activity of judging. First, understanding provides the rule according to which the synthesis is performed. Secondly, it recognizes this rule in the specified concept. This act of understanding refers to the explicit judgment of cognition and it is dependent on the former activity.[51] When I make the judgment 'X is a house', I am explicating the rule manifested in my perception of the house. To know that 'X is a house' is to conceive the plan (rule) of the synthesis. As Paton writes: "Hence, when we know the synthesized manifold by means of concept, we are in some degree making explicit the rule which is manifested in the synthesis of imagination; in Kant's language we are "bringing the synthesis to concepts."[52] Such interpretation I believe explains why Kant defines the final act of the synthesis as *recognition in the concept*. The

[50] H. J. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience,* (New York: The Humanities Press, 1965), 272.
[51]This distinction is also defended by Longuenesse. In the first case, the understanding is "a rule giver for the syntheses of imagination." *(63).* In the second case, the understanding is discursive: "the apodeictic statement of the marks of the concept." (50) See: Beatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
[52] Paton, 273.

term ‘recognition’ suggests that we must already have some acquaintance with the thing which is being subsumed under or recognized. Hence, to recognize the manifold in the concept (to make a cognitive judgment) means to recognize the rule inherent in the perceptual synthesis.

Based on this discussion, two conclusions can be made regarding the nature of the relation between the imagination and understanding in cognition: (i) the harmony between cognitive powers is guided by concepts. Imagination is not free in synthesizing the manifold of intuition, rather, it is constrained or subordinated by the rules of understanding; (ii) conceptual harmony between cognitive powers is required not only for making explicit cognitive judgments, such as ‘X is a house’, rather, concepts are applied to the manifold at the more fundamental level, that is, to make possible the experience through which we come to perceive the object in the first place. Conceptual harmony is necessary in order to perceive the object.

2.2 Productive imagination and the role of schema in ordinary cognition

The product of the synthesis of imagination is an experience of a particular image (say, an image of a dog). This synthesis is made possible by what is given in empirical intuition and apprehended by the imagination, and by the concept, serving as a rule for the synthesis. Recognition of the rule in the manifold results in cognition (identification of the object). Kant explains the procedure of applying a concept to the sensible manifold with his notion of *schema*. Kant’s explanation of schema appears under the heading: *Transcendental doctrine of the Power of Judgment.* Power of judgment (*Urteilskraft)* is, “the ability to *subsume* under rules, i.e., to distinguish whether something does or does not fall under a given rule” (A132/B171). Our mind is equipped with many concepts, but how we apply them to each set of sense data is a matter of the power of judgment, which Kant identifies with a special talent

or capacity. The power of judgment is represented by a schema, which Kant understands as a procedure by which we link a given sensible manifold with its appropriate concept. It is a result of the productive imagination, representing both sensibility and understanding, that is, the combination of sense impressions and a concept. As Weldon appropriately describes, schema is "a quasi-concept and a quasi-picture."[53]

Kant begins his exposition of the schematism by emphasizing the importance of schema in the case of applying pure concepts to the intuition. Because pure concepts are forms of thought and have no images, transcendental schema is needed in order to make homogenous pure concepts and sensible intuition. However, Kant extends the necessity of schema in the case of empirical concept application as well: "Even less is an object of experience or an image thereof ever adequate to the empirical concept; rather, that concept always refers directly to the schema of imagination" (A141/B180). This is because one's perceptual experience is always an experience of objects with its particular distinctive properties, each differing from one another even though belonging to the same kind. Even though I have the concept, this does not immediately guarantee that I know how to use such concept in each particular case. Or, as Walsh says: "to use a word with meaning it is not enough to have in mind what it applies to."[54] Kant gives an example of a judge who knows all the rules, but lacks the ability to apply them in each particular case (A134/B173). Analogously, I may have a concept, say of a tree, by which I come to know that a tree is a plant with branches, leaves, and trunk. What I need in order to apply correctly the concept of a tree to the relevant sense data is a schema of a tree. A schema represents a concept. That is, a schema of a tree contains the essential features of a tree and the relations that obtain among them, irrelevant of other distinctive properties they have. If empirical concepts would not have their own schema,

[53] T.D. Weldon, "Schematism," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 48 (1947): 143.
[54] W.H. Walsh, "Schematism," in *Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Paul Wolff (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 76.

then, as Robert Pippin nicely puts it "empirical concepts would have to be nothing but strung-along memories of numerous similar individual and individual properties."[55] Empirical concepts do not contain the data of all the individual instances; rather, they contain a schema, that is, a record of their common properties.

Kant offers different characterizations of a schema. It is (i) "a presentation of a universal procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image" (A141/B180); (ii) a monogram of imagination, a "whole's outline" (A834/B862) or a "shadowy image' (A570/B598); (iii) a "rule for determining our intuition in accordance with such and such a general concept" (A141/B180). Accordingly, a schema is a sort of an image and a rule at the same time, that is, a rule for linking a set of sense data with its appropriate concept.[56] Kant ilustrates the function of a schema in the following way: "The concept dog signifies a rule whereby my imagination can trace the shape of such a four-footed animal in a general way, i.e., without being limited to any single and particular shape offered to me by experience" (A141). Accordingly, a concept of a dog specifies the essential characteristics of a dog, such as a four-footed animal. A schema on the other hand represents an abstract image of the essential properties and the relations that obtain between them. For example, a schema of a dog contains physical properties such as head, body, four legs, tail, fur in their typical size and shape, and the arrangment of these properties, such as, that the head is attached to the body, the tail to the back side of the body, the legs to the bottom part of the body etc. Even though there are different kinds of dogs, they all entail this rule in virtue of which they are recognized as dogs. It is through the schema that "images become possible in the first place" (A142). Kant writes that the concept must always be schematized in order to produce a

[55] Robert B. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form: Essays on Critique of Pure Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 144.

[56] Eva Schaper describes schema as a diagram or a blueprint, which prescribes how a certain activity must proceed. See: "Kant's Schematism Reconsidered," in *Immanuel Kant: Critical Assessments*, ed. Ruth Chadwick and Clive Cazeaux (London: Routledge, 1992), 307. Brent Kalar describes schema as an "abstract, yet intuitive patterns, which represent what is common among several individual empirical intuitions." Brent Kalar, *Demand of Taste in Kant's Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 49.

particular image: "the images must always be connected with the concept only by means of the schema that they designate; in themselves the images are never completely congruent with the concept" (A142/B181). Schema makes possible the perception of an image, by determining the apprehension of sense impressions. Based on the given sense data, a schema selects which properties are to be picked up and combined together. For example, perceiving features such as a tail and four feet will activate the schema 'animal' or more specific schema 'dog' and organize the sense data in accordance with this schema (that the features such as head, body, fur ought to follow, and arrange them in their specific relations).[57] A schema organizes our perceptual experiences. Even though Kant formulates both, concept and schema in the same way – being a rule for the determination of intuition, it is in fact the schema that is the rule at work. The concept is a set of marks common to different instances of the same kind; a schema on the other hand is a rule that organizes the combination of sense data in accordance with its concept. Robert Pippin writes: "the imagination gives the concept a figure, a shape (…) a form, a recognizable character by virtue of which correct or incorrect inclusion can be discussed."[58] We come to recognize a particular image when we recognize the universal (schema) in the manifold of intuition.

2.3 The role of imagination and understanding in judgments of taste

Kant claims that judgments of taste depend on the same subjective conditions (the relation between imagination and understanding) that are required for cognition. The connection between judgments of taste and cognition is essential, since Kant wants to claim that judgments of taste are universally communicable, because they depend on state of mind that is required for cognition. Yet, Kant claims there is a difference. Namely, the relation between imagination and understanding in judgments of taste is not determined by concepts, and so

[57] The term 'activation of schema' is not used by Kant, but by the modern schema theories. See for example: Sandra P. Marshall, *Schemas in Problem Solving* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[58] Pippin, "The schematism and Empirical Concepts," 298.

cognitive powers are in free play. Having in mind Kant's characterization of concepts as rules, this means that judgments of taste depend on the relation between imagination and understanding that is not rule governed. There is no concept guiding the imagination as to how it ought to combine sense impressions, as is the case in determinate cognition, where the manifold of sense impressions is organized according to the rule.

Kant claims that the subject of taste is the *mere* form of the object, without the consideration of what the object represents. In other words, the subject of taste is the *mere* combination of sense impressions (apprehension), that is not restricted to a particular rule and it is therefore free as to how it ought to synthesize the manifold: "If pleasure is connected with the mere apprehension (*apprehensio*) of the form of an object of intuition without a relation of this to a concept for a determinate cognition, then the representation is thereby related not to the object, but solely to the subject, and the pleasure can express nothing but its suitability to the cognitive faculties that are in play in the reflecting power of judgment, insofar as they are in play, and thus merely a subjective formal purposiveness of the object" (CPJ VII). Kant seems to have a view that what we perceive in judgments of taste is the combination of sense impressions, that is, form, without this form being conceptually determined: "A merely **reflecting** judgment about a given individual object, however, **can be aesthetic** if (before its comparison with others is seen), the power of judgment, which has no concept ready for the given intuition, holds the imagination (merely in the apprehension of the object) together with the understanding (in the presentation of a concept in general) and perceives a relation of the two faculties of cognition which constitutes the subjective, merely sensitive condition of the objective use of the power of judgment in general (namely the agreement of those two faculties with each other)" (F1, VIII).

Before proceeding, let me summarize what Kant actually claims here. Judgments of taste are constituted by the free play of cognitive powers, that is, by operation of cognitive powers

without the concept of the object. Kant claims that when we judge aesthetically, say a flower, the concept of the flower should not impinge upon our reflection (it is irrelevant what the object under consideration is). This could mean that in the case of a flower, we judge merely its form without considering whether this form satisfies all the features thought in the concept of the flower (whether this flower is the perfect instance of the kind it belongs to). This in fact is a common occurrence in aesthetic judgments. For example, I can find a certain form of the flower pleasing, even though it is flawed example of a flower. Or, I can find certain other flowers displeasing, even though they represent a perfect example of the flower. However, Kant seems to be holding a more restrictive notion of free play than merely the irrelevance of attributes entailed by the concept. Free play is constituted not only by disregarding the concept of the object in judging the beauty of the form of the object, rather, the concept is not present in the apprehension of the form, or as Kant claims in the above passage, 'the concept is not ready for the given intuition'. Accordingly, not only the concept of the object is absent in aesthetic judgments, but the concept is absent in perceiving the form of the object. The concept of free play, presumably, is formulated as the play between cognitive powers in which apprehension is not guided by the concept.

However, such conception of free play opposes Kant's explanation of the subjective conditions required for cognition. The discussion on the theory of the threefold synthesis showed that the apprehension is guided by concepts and they are necessary in order to have a representation of a certain image. Kant claims that perception is the empirical consciousness, and since the consciousness is provided by connecting the sensible manifold with the concept (through schema), the latter is necessary in order to have a perceptual experience. Hence, it is impossible to have a representation of a *mere* form of the object. But this means that free play cannot be a play between apprehension (imagination) and understanding without the presence of the concept, because the concept is already present in the apprehension. In other words, it

is impossible to perceive the *mere form* of the object independently as to how this form is conceptualized. But then, the question is what does the free play amounts to, if it cannot be a play without a concept.

Some have argued that free play amounts to a play between cognitive powers that is free of empirical concepts, but not of categories. The apprehension in judgments of taste is guided by the categories, but not by the empirical concepts. Such a strategy was proposed by Mary J. Gregor and Rudolph Makkreel. They argue that synthetic unity of apperception, by which Kant means the consciousness of the representation (the manifold must be necessarily brought to the self-consciousness) is a necessary condition of any perceptual experience: "The I think must be capable of accompanying all my representations, for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought; in other words, the representation would either be impossible, or at least it would be nothing to me" (B131). The synthetic unity of apperception is achieved by the means of categorical rules: "The manifold in an intuition, which I call mine, is represented by means of the synthesis of the understanding, as belonging to the necessary unity of self-consciousness, and this takes place by means of the category" (B143). Hence, categories are necessary for perceptual experience and therefore for aesthetic perception as well: "In reflecting on the form of the object we are relating elements - lines, tones – to each other and ultimately to the unity of the representation "this," which is clearly a product of human consciousness and involves the categories."[59] But, it is not necessary the application of empirical concepts. Makkreel, for example, formulates free play as a play between the imagination (apprehension) and the categories, without the use of empirical concepts: "The 'free conformity' of the aesthetic imagination to the laws of the understanding means that the imagination may not violate the

[59] Mary J. Gregor, "Aesthetic Form and Sensory Content in the Critique of Judgment: Can Kant's 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgment' Provide a Philosophical Basis for Modern Formalism?" in *The Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, ed. Richard Kennington (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 195.

categorical framework of the understanding, although it may explicate possibilities left open by that framework."[60] Accordingly, free play involves the application of categories to the manifold of intuition, but not the application of empirical concepts (such as the concept of a flower, house, dog etc.).

However, this strategy has been proven to be mistaken. It has been pointed out by numerous Kant's scholars, that Kant's conception of categories precludes the possibility that they can be applied to the sensible manifold, without the assistance of empirical concepts. The reasoning is the following: (1) Categories (such as substance, cause and effect etc.) are rules of the synthetic unity of all appearances, that is, for the possibility of all experience (A128). (2) Categories do not have their own images: "A schema of a pure concept of understanding, on the other hand, is something that one cannot bring to any image whatsoever" (A142/B181). Also: "Pure concepts of understanding, on the other hand, are quite heterogeneous from empirical intuitions (indeed, from sensible intuitions generally) and can never be encountered in any intuition" (A137/B176). That is, there is no image of a category of a substance or an image of the category of cause and effect. As Pippin puts this idea: "we cannot search around for 'images' or instances of substance (…) We cannot because there are no such images. There are no substances as such in experience; there are just houses, mountains, dogs, and so forth."[61] All the images and laws we encounter in the empirical world are merely particular determinations of the categories: "all empirical laws are only particular determinations of the pure laws of understanding" (A128). For example, an image of a house, or an image of a dog is only a particular determination of the category of a substance, and the law that 'the sun is the cause of the warmness of the stone' is a particular determination of the category of cause and effect. (3) But if categories must be applied to the

[60] Rudolf Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 47.
[61] Pippin, *Kant's theory of form*, 137.

sensible manifold (in order to have perceptual experience), and if categories do not distinguish between particular images and laws (the category of a substance does not distinguish between the image of a house, or an image of a dog), this means that in order to have an experience of a particular image, my sense impressions must be guided, not only by the categories, but by the particular empirical concepts as well. That is, in order to have an image, say of a dog, the manifold of sense impressions must be guided not only by the category of a substance, but by the empirical concept of a dog as well. Accordingly, in order for categories to function as rules for the synthesis of any manifold of sensible impressions, they can do so only through the assistance of empirical concepts: "…empirical concepts refer directly to intuitively given data whereas a priori concepts refer to data only by way of empirical concepts."[62] But this in turn means that it is not only pure concepts that precede the synthesis of sensible manifold, but empirical concepts as well. Empirical concepts are necessary for the experience of objects, because only through them, the categories, required for the unity of consciousness, can be applied to the sensible manifold. Hannah Ginsborg nicely puts the argument in the following way: "…we cannot perceive or imagine something as, say, a substance *tout court* (…) We can perceive or imagine something as a substance only by perceiving or imagining it as, say, a dog, or an armadillo, or some other particular kind of substance. But this implies that, to the extent that I am governed by the concept of substance in my synthesis of the given empirical intuitions, I must at the same time be governed by the concept of dog or of armadillo or whatever the relevant empirical concept is. I cannot, as it were, first synthesize my intuitions according to the concept of substance and then, on the basis of that synthesis, perceive the object as a dog. Rather, the pure and the empirical concept go together: my synthesis can be governed by pure concepts only insofar as

[62] George Schrader, "Kant's Theory of Concepts," in *Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. R. Wolff (New York: Doubleday, 1967), 138.

it is governed by some empirical concept or other."[63] But this in turn means that the apprehension of the form in aesthetic perception cannot be guided only by the categories, but must also be guided by the application of empirical concepts.

Accordingly, we are presented with a difficulty as to how to understand the concept of free play, constitutive of judgments of taste, if such a play cannot be constituted by the complete absence of empirical concepts. A variety of interpretations of the concept of free play emerged in order to reconcile the following contradictory theses that Kant seems to hold:

(i) Judgments of taste do not depend on the (empirical) concept of the object, but on the *mere* form of the object, or the presentation through the free play of imagination and understanding.

(ii) Judgments of taste have the perception of the form of the object as their subject.

(iii)The perception of the form of the object depends on an (empirical) concept.

In the following I will reexamine these interpretations, following Guyer's helpful classification of these interpretations into three main classes, that is, precognitive, multicognitive and metacognitive interpretation, the last one argued for by Guyer. In addition to these, I also consider one more approach, that is, an abstractive approach, as defended by Malcolm Budd. In a nutshell, the main strategy of the precognitive approach is to hold premise (i) and (ii) but deny premise (iii). They claim that perception can occur without application of empirical concepts. Multicognitive approach holds premise (ii) and (iii) with a revision of (i). Metacognitive approach holds premise (ii) and (iii), yet denies (i). It holds that aesthetic perception is dependent on empirical concepts. The abstractive approach holds all three premises, yet it fails because of its specific interpretation of premise (i). While some of

[63] Ginsborg, "Lawfulness without a Law," 56.

the difficulties with the first two approaches have been already tackled by Guyer, I will in addition to those, point out some more.

2.4 Precognitive interpretation of the concept of free play

According to this interpretation, free play is a play between imagination and understanding taking place prior to the actual conceptualization of the empirical intuition. The most advanced and established version of this approach has been suggested by Hannah Ginsborg and Henry Allison.[64]

2.4.1 Ginsborg's interpretation

Hannah Ginsborg develops an account according to which free harmony is achieved by the satisfaction of the first two syntheses (apprehension and reproduction), without conceptualization. She claims that we must be able to experience such non-conceptual synthesis in order to explain the possibility of empirical concept acquisition. Namely, there is a problem within Kant's account of perceptual experience, which on one hand, claims that empirical concepts are rules for the synthesis, while on the other hand, he claims that empirical concepts are derived from experience. But this account is circular. If (1) empirical concepts are derived from perceptual experience, and (2) categories are rules for the synthesis of sense impressions which makes possible perceptual experience, but (3) categories cannot be applied to sense impressions without empirical concepts, this means that (4) perceptual experience presupposes prior application of empirical concepts, whose origin is supposed to be derived from perceptual experience itself.[65] The question then is how we come to arrive at

[64] The origins of this interpretation can also be found in Donald Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 90. Something similar is suggested by Henrich Dieter, *Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 37-38. Paul Guyer defended this approach in his earlier work *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 76.

[65] Kant claims that we come to acquire empirical concepts by the acts of comparison, reflection and abstraction. He gives a following explanation of acquiring the concept of a tree: "I see, e.g., a spruce, a willow, and a linden. By first comparing these objects with one another I note that they are different from one another in regard to the

empirical concepts, if they cannot be derived from the synthesis of sense impressions, since the synthesis presupposes the assistance of such empirical concepts in the first place (they are rules for the synthesis), nor from non-synthesized sense impressions, since, as Kant famously claims, "intuitions without concepts are blind" (CPR A51/B75).[66]

Ginsborg offers a solution to this problem with her unique interpretation of the concept of free harmony. She writes that the synthesis of sense impressions, by which we come to form a perceptual image is not guided by empirical concepts, but is rather a natural process of combining sense impressions into forms and patterns: "…it is as though one moves the pencil automatically, carried along by sequence of blind impulses, and can recognize only afterwards, by examining the result, what it is that one has come to depict."[67] This activity, however, is not arbitrary. The process of synthesizing has an inherent awareness of the appropriateness of the synthesis. This awareness, which Ginsborg calls 'perceptual normativity', works in the following way: "…we understand the subject's activity of synthesis, in spite of it character as a naturally determined process, as involving her awareness that she is synthesizing as she ought. (…) And she has this sense of appropriateness even though her reproducing the intuition in question is not guided by any appreciation of what she ought to be doing (…) Her consciousness of normativity in what she

trunk, the branches, the leaves, etc.; but next I reflect on what they have in common among themselves, trunk, branches and leaves themselves, and I abstract from the quantity, the figure, etc., of these; thus I acquire a concept of a tree" (JL 94; 592). As Allison pointed out such an explanation is problematic: "We supposedly arrive at the concept of a tree by reflecting on precisely those features of the perceived objects (trunk, branches, leaves, etc.) in virtue of which we recognize them to be tree, and by abstracting form those that are irrelevant. But how could one recognize and select these 'tree-constituting' features unless one already had the concept of a tree, which is precisely what was supposed to have been explained?" (Henry Allison, 2001, *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22. For a more detailed discussion on the problem of empirical concept acquisition and criticism of different proposals, see Hannah Ginsborg, "Thinking the Particular as Contained under the Universal," in *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant's Critical Philosophy*, ed. Rebecca Kukla (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 35-60.

[66] One of the solutions, proposed by Schrader is that empirical concepts are not acquired from experience, but that they are product of the faculty of understanding, just as categories are. He regards empirical concepts as *a priori* concepts: "…the difference between empirical and a priori concepts must be construed as one of the degree rather than of kind. Categorical rules are no more necessary and no more a priori than empirical rules. It is only that they are more general and more abstract. In many respects empirical rules are more certain and determinate than the categorical rules they implement." In "Kant's Theory of Concepts," 153.

[67] Hannah Ginsborg, "Kant and the Problem of Experience," *Philosophical Topics* 34, no. 1&2 (2006), 73.

is doing is 'primitive' in that it does not presuppose the antecedent grasp of a specific rule: she is aware of her act of reproduction as being as it ought to be, but where its being as it ought to be does not depend on its satisfying an antecedently specified constraint."[68]

In illustrating the case of perceptual normativity, Ginsborg offers an analogous example of the activity of speaking one's native language (English). Speaking English, she writes, is an activity that is guided by the rules of grammar. But, we do not learn to speak English by learning these rules first; rather, we learn it through actual speech behavior, that is, through the activity itself of speaking English: "…it is simply a basic feature of the activity of speaking English, or any other natural language, that the facts of actual usage determine the rules."[69] Accordingly, the act of speaking English is exemplary of rules: "An activity exemplifies rules if its actual performance determines the rules according to which it ought to be performed."[70] How English ought to be spoken, is the way it is spoken. Speaking English carries its own normativity as to how it ought to be spoken. This activity is tantamount to 'primitive judging' by which no prior rule or standard as to how an activity (speaking English) ought to be is set down, rather, it is the case that the way the activity is performed set its own standards, based on which we derive rules (rules of grammar or how English ought to be spoken). The explication of rules, Ginsborg writes, is an example of 'derivative judging'. Derivative judgment is an articulation and specification of a rule (such as the rules of grammar) derived from the primitive judging (from the activity of speaking English). It is an explicit recognition of rules of which the activity is an exemplar and based on which we can judge determinately whether the activity is performed correctly or not.

[68] Hannah Ginsborg, "Aesthetic Judgment and Perceptual normativity," *Inquiry* 49, no. 5 (2006): 403- 437. Obtained from: http://philosophy.berkeley.edu/file/8/AJPN_Nov05_.pdf, (ref. 60).
[69] Ginsborg, "Lawfulness without a Law," 61.
[70] Ibid.

Analogously empirical concept acquisition proceeds. The synthesis of imagination is an activity which is an exemplary of rules, that is, an activity that sets its own standard. The way the synthesis of the empirical intuition proceeds, is the way it ought to be. It is not determined by concepts beforehand, rather, concepts (rules) are grasped in the activity itself: "like the activity of speaking one's native language, imagination's activity in perception is a natural process performed without the guidance of rules. But we may nonetheless take it to have a normative dimension insofar as it exemplifies rules for the perception of the objects which affects us. That is, I may take the actual features of my imaginative activity in the perception of a given object to serve as rules or standards governing how my, or indeed, anyone else's imaginative activity ought to be in the perception of that object."[71]

The activity of normative synthesis explains how empirical concepts are acquired. I come to arrive at the concept, say of a dog, not by a prior rule-guided activity of synthesizing sense impressions. Rather, the reproduction of sense impressions (recalling in the mind previous intuitions I had when seeing a dog) proceeds naturally, with a sense of appropriateness. I am reproducing my sense impressions in one way rather than other, that is, forming an image of a dog rather than, say of a cat, because it is a naturally determined process with an inherent awareness, that the way I reproduce is the way it ought to be reproduced. The process of imaginative synthesis is embedded with my primitive 'knowledge' that the way I am reproducing is the right way and that everyone else ought to be reproducing similarly: "In reproducing a previous impression with the sense that this is what is called for or required by her present circumstances, she is in effect making a normative demand: that she, and anyone else in her circumstances, ought to synthesize in just this way."[72] By perceiving one way rather than another (perceiving sense impressions in accordance to the dog-pattern rather than a cat-pattern), I am not making an explicit statement, in the sense of ascribing a determinate

[71] Ibid., 65.
[72] Ibid., 63.

feature to the object (such as a feature of being a dog). This kind of primitive judging does not have a reference to the veridicality. It merely amounts to having awareness that the way I reproduce and perceive the object is appropriate. Based on this primitive knowledge I come to make an explicit knowledge claim, that what I perceive is in fact a dog. The grasp of the concept is derived from my awareness that the way I synthesize is appropriate: "In so far as she takes her way of perceiving to serve as a model or exemplar of how the object ought to be perceived, by her and everyone else, she thereby comes to grasp a rule for the perception of the object, a rule whose content is specified by the demonstrative *this way*. (…) And her grasp of this rule will in turn either itself amount to, or at least serve as a basis for, a grasp of the concept…"[73]

Ginsborg offers an ingenious account of the imaginative synthesis that can accommodate empirical concept acquisition, as well judgments of taste (of the beautiful). Common to both is that they depend on the synthesis of sense impressions that is not guided by the concept, and it is therefore a free synthesis. At the same time the synthesis is lawful, that is, harmonious with the understanding: "The role of understanding is exhausted by our appreciation, in synthesizing, that we are synthesizing as we ought."[74] But this is the conception of free harmony that Kant connects with judgments of the beautiful and pleasure. Free harmony is universally communicable, because it carries its own normativity, that is, there is an implicit awareness that one way of perceiving of an object is appropriate, and that everyone else ought to perceive that object in the same way. But this means that pleasure in judgments of the beautiful, resulting from the free harmony, is universally communicable.

However, Ginsborg's explanation of free harmony, as it stands, is not without difficulties. In particular, her formulation of free harmony does not avoid one aspect of the dilemma,

[73] Ginsborg, "Aesthetic Judgment and Perceptual Normativity," 26-27.
[74] Ginsborg, "Kant and the Problem of Experience," 64.

namely, that the identification of the subjective conditions required for empirical concept acquisition with the conditions sufficient for pleasure, has the consequence that every case of non-conceptual perception must necessarily be accompanied with pleasure. If the process of empirical concept acquisition depends on the free harmony, and if Kant identifies the consciousness of the free harmony with pleasure, then it follows that each time one acquires the concept, one must also experience pleasure. On this account, it is not strictly speaking every perception that is accompanied with pleasure. For example, I do not need to experience the appropriateness of my perception in the case of perceiving the object for which I already have the empirical concept. In this case the rule is already acquired; hence, my perception is governed by the concept. For example, my judging of the object as a chair is automatic, since I already have the concept of a chair, which determines how I will come to perceive the object. I do not need to question the appropriateness of my perception. However, it is still the case, that my *first* perceptual experience of an object, by which I come to arrive at the concept, is necessarily pleasing.[75]

Ginsborg is aware of this problem and tries to challenge it, by suggesting the following distinction: even though the free harmony is constitutive for both empirical concept acquisition and judgments of the beautiful, this free harmony is not explicitly recognized as such in the case of empirical concept formation. She writes that in the act of concept formation I do not "consciously take my imagination, in the particular act of perceptual synthesis through which I arrive at an empirical concept, to conform indeterminately to rules, or to be, in the primitive sense, as it ought to be."[76] That is, I am not explicitly aware of the

[75] Kant suggests something similar in the *Introduction* (CPJ VI). He claims that the experience of acquiring empirical concepts produces the feeling of pleasure. But that this pleasure eventually subsides in the course of becoming familiar with the object and so we do not notice it anymore. Such an explanation of pleasure was particularly emphasized by J.M Bernstein, who argued that judgments of taste (of the beautiful) are a reminiscence of the lost common sense: "…judgments of beauty are memorial; in making aesthetic judgments we judge things 'as if' from the perspective of our lost common sense." *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1992), 60.
[76] Ginsborg, "Lawfulness without a Law," 69.

primitive perceptual normativity (free harmony), and this is because "in the act of perceptual synthesis through which I acquire, say, the concept of a tree, I take my act of imagination not only to exemplify but also to be governed by the concept 'tree'."[77] Free harmony in empirical concept formation is accompanied by an epistemic intention to make a cognitive judgment (to find the rule), and hence, it results in recognizing this harmony in the concept, that is, ascribing the objective property to the object. The sense of appropriateness that our way of perceiving an object is as it ought to be is 'hidden' by the recognition in the concept. The experience of free harmony in empirical concept acquisition simply is an experience of cognitive judgment (explicit awareness of the rule): "the acquisition of a concept cannot take place in isolation from the recognition of its applicability. The act through which I acquire the concept "tree" is at the same time my first act of judging something to be a tree. So I am no more aware of the free or indeterminate lawfulness of my imagination in first coming to grasp the concept 'tree' than I am in any subsequent judgment that something is a tree."[78] Accordingly, because in empirical concept acquisition one does not have a pure experience of free harmony, pleasure is not produced. Experience of free harmony in the primitive sense takes place only in the case when one is not concerned with cognition and with ascribing an objective feature to the object: "The consciousness that we are perceiving as we ought, in this primitive sense, thus stands out clearly in its own right, rather than being obscured by the consciousness that our perception is appropriate in the sense of being veridical."[79]

However, if the distinction between the empirical concept formation and judgments of taste is merely in the explicit recognition or awareness of free harmony, then this is not much of a distinction. Namely, if my first perceptual experience of an object is constituted by the free harmony, yet without having an explicit awareness of it, then one could still argue that in

[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ginsborg, "Aesthetic Judgment and Perceptual normativity," 39.

principle every object must be beautiful, even though we do not always experience it as such. There is always a free harmony in the first act of perceiving the object, but we are not always aware of it through pleasure. Such an explanation does not allow for the possibility that some objects necessitate a relation between imagination and understanding that is not freely harmonious, and that therefore can be experienced with a feeling of displeasure.

On the other hand, the way Ginsborg proposes the distinction between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic case of free harmony, seems to imply a more substantial difference. She seems to suggest that the distinction is not merely in the *awareness* of free harmony, but *in* the nature of free harmony itself. This is implied in the following statement: "It is true that I do not grasp this concept antecedently to my act of synthesis, since it is precisely this act of synthesis which is required if I am to acquire the concept in the first place. But I come to grasp it in the act of synthesis, which means that I take my act of synthesis itself – the very act through which I come to grasp it – to be governed by the concept."[80] Accordingly, it is implied that free harmony does not precede the act of grasping the rule; rather, the rule is grasped within the act of the free harmony. Hence, the free harmony itself is governed by concepts. But if free harmony in the empirical concept acquisition is also at the same time governed by concepts then it is not *as free*, as it is harmony in judgments of the beautiful, where it is not governed by concepts. But this means that free harmony required for judgments of taste is fundamentally different from free harmony required for empirical concept acquisition. This idea seems to be suggested in the following: "The free play of the faculties does not take place in every or, indeed, in any act of cognition. It is only when I take my imaginative activity in the perception of some particular object to exemplify how it ought to be with respect to that object that my faculties may be said to be in free play. And that does not happen in perceptual cognition, but only in the special case of aesthetic experience: for it

[80] Ginsborg, "Lawfulness without a Law," 69.

is only in aesthetic experience that I take my imaginative activity to be as it ought to be without having in mind any determinate rule to which it conforms"[81] But if free harmony in judgments of taste is not required for cognition (for empirical concept acquisition), then it does not follows that judgments of taste are universally valid. If what is universally communicable is the experience of free harmony in empirical concept acquisition and if this free harmony is of a different nature than the free harmony in judgments of taste, then it does not follow that judgments of taste are universally valid. Accordingly, Ginsborg's interpretation of free harmony does not avoid the dilemma, but merely heightens it: either free harmony required for empirical concept acquisition is sufficient for the occurrence of pleasure or it is not. If it is, then it follows that every object is beautiful, even though we do not always experience it as such. And if it is not, then the universal validity of free harmony required for pleasure cannot be derived from the universal validity of free harmony required for empirical concept acquisition.[82] Accordingly, Ginsborg's account fails to offer a full and satisfactory account of free play.

2.4.2 Allison's interpretation

Henry Allison takes a similar strategy to Ginsborg's and tries to explain free harmony as an ability that we exercise in empirical concept formation. This ability is an essential activity of reflective judgments.[83] Allison claims that a reflective judgment exercises nonconceptual judging. He explains the possibility of nonconceptual judging by referring to Longuenesse's account of the schematic performance of imagination. In brief, the idea is that the imagination

[81]Ibid., 74.

[82] See also Rogerson's version of the objection against Ginsborg's account, in *The Problem of Free Harmony in Kant's Aesthetics*, 18-19.

[83] Kant distinguishes between two kinds of judgments. When the concept is given, then the power of judgment is determinative; it merely subsumes the particular under the universal (concept). This takes place in everyday processes of identifying objects for which we already have concepts. If, however, I am presented with a particular for which I have no concept yet, then I must first find the concept in question in order to identify the particular. The power of judgment that looks for the concept is a reflective power of judgment (CPJ IV).

has the ability to synthesize the manifold and produce schemata (rules for apprehension) without being guided by concepts. In empirical concept acquisition we reflect by the acts of comparison, reflection and abstraction, on the schemata, which are not acquired prior to the act of such comparison, but are the subject as well as product of it.[84] A schema is acquired when one is confronted with similar representations, comparing them with each other in order to find what they have in common. By grasping a schema, the concept is acquired (full recognition of the rule in the set of marks).

Allison claims that a similar nonconceptual judging is exercised in judgments of taste. But in this case we are not comparing different representations with each other in order to find the rule. Rather, as Kant writes, we are comparing a single representation with one's own cognitive ability of judging (F1, V). This is the case of *mere* reflective judgment. Allison identifies *mere* reflection as "an act of aesthetic appraisal, which involves a suspension of our ordinary cognitive concern with classification and explanation…"[85] In mere reflection, the activity between imagination and understanding is not only nonconceptual (not governed by concepts), but also *free*, since it is not restricted by the epistemic intention to find a determinate rule. On the other hand, the activity between imagination and understanding in empirical concept formation is *not free*, even though it is nonconceptual. This is because empirical concept acquisition is an act of reflection determined by the cognitive objective to find the rule under which to subsume the manifold and to identify the object. Nonconceptual harmony in empirical concept acquisition always results in recognizing the common

[84] As Longuenesse writes: "…to compare schemata, by means of the three joint acts of comparison, reflection, and abstraction, is first of all to generate these schemata. Thus the schemata result from the very act of universalizing comparison of which they are the object." Longuenesse, 117. The process of acquiring schemata is beforehand guided by the concepts of reflection or concepts of comparison (identity-difference, agreement-conflict, inner-outer, matter-form): "the concepts of comparison (…) govern the comparison of sensible representations that generate empirical schemata and thus also empirical concepts…" (Ibid., 127).
[85] Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 187.

properties (determination of the object under the concept). Hence, the experience of harmony in empirical concept acquisition is not an experience of free non-conceptual harmony.

The distinction between nonconceptual reflective judgment (in empirical concept formation) and nonconceptual *mere* reflective judgment (in judgments of taste) avoids the 'everything is beautiful' problem. Harmony that produces pleasure is attained between cognitive powers in their free play, while harmony attained in empirical concept formation is not free, but determined by the epistemic intention to find the particular concept. Accordingly, not every case of recognizing nonconceptual harmony results in pleasure.

Allison claims that what is produced in mere reflection is a type of schema, but not a schema of some particular concept (as in empirical concept formation), rather schema of an indeterminate concept. He calls such aesthetic schema a 'schema-like.' It is constituted not by some common properties but by "a pattern or order (form) which suggests and indeterminate number of possible schematizations (or conceptualizations), none of which is fully adequate, thereby occasioning further reflection or engagement with the object."[86] Allison identifies the production of aesthetic schema with maximal or ideal harmony. It is universally communicable just as the schema produced in empirical concept acquisition is because it "corresponds with the norm required for cognition without itself amounting to cognition." [87] The difference is only that this norm (of beauty) is indeterminate. Pleasure occurs as the result of the agreement in the comparison between a single representation with this indeterminate norm: "…in such a judgment, a comparison is made between the actual relationship of the faculties in question in the perception of a given object and their maximal or ideal relationship."[88]

[86] Ibid., 51.
[87] Ibid., 50.
[88] Ibid., 49.

The positive outcome of Allison's approach is the possibility to accommodate comparative judgments of beauty, as well as negative judgments of taste. The degree of pleasure is determined by the degree of the accord with the maximal harmony. An object A may be more beautiful than the object B, depending on the degree to which it approximates the indeterminate norm. The indeterminate norm serves as a criterion of comparison. Similarly, lack of agreement with the indeterminate norm results in displeasure. Because the indeterminate norm is universally communicable, the lack of presence of this norm is experienced by the universally communicable feeling of displeasure: "this lack of accord must be universally communicable, since it is apprehended with reference to the same universally communicable norm. The difference is simply that this lack of accord is apprehended with a displeasure, rather than pleasure. Since *ex hypothesi*, this norm is universally communicable, a feeling of displeasure in its violation may be universally imputed."[89] Nonetheless, Allison's account is not fully successful.

First, Allison's distinction between nonconceptual reflective harmony and nonconceptual *mere* reflective (free) harmony does not solve the problem of the universality of judgments of taste. Namely, the following can be argued: if empirical concept acquisition is universally communicable, then it is also universally communicable the state of mind required for empirical concept acquisition. This state of mind, according to Allison's proposal is nonconceptual reflective harmony. But judgments of taste depend on a different state of mind, that is, on a nonconceptual *free* harmony. Recall, Allison identifies it not with a specific schema, but with a schema suggesting multiple conceptualizations none of which is adequate. But this is not an experience of nonconceptual harmony that is required for empirical concept acquisition. If so, then it does not necessarily follow that nonconceptual

[89] Henry Allison, "Pleasure and Harmony in Kant's Theory of Taste: A Critique of the Causal Reading," in *Kants Ästhetik, Kant's Aestheics, L'esthétique de Kant*, ed. Herman Parret (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 480.

free harmony is universally communicable. Just because we have to presuppose, for the sake of empirical concept acquisition, that everyone will be able to experience nonconceptual reflective harmony in the same way, it does not follow that everyone will also be able to experience nonconceptual *free* harmony in the same way.

Second, Allison's explanation of negative judgments of taste is not fully successful. He distinguishes two kinds of negative judgments of taste: (i) judgments of the non-beautiful indicating lack of aesthetic value (positive and negative), and (ii) judgments of ugliness indicating an actual positive displeasure. Both result from the lack of the accord with the indeterminate norm or maximal harmony, but in the case of ugliness this lack of accord takes the form of an actual disharmony.[90] However, this explanation does not avoid Guyer's argument of the epistemological impossibility of disharmony, that is, that there always must be some cooperation between cognitive powers in order to have an experience of the object (see chapter 1.7). Even though Allison claims that this cooperation does not need to be guided by the empirical concept, the idea is that there still must be some harmony in order to have perceptual experience. But this means that it is impossible to have an experience of an actual nonconceptual disharmony, even though attained in mere reflection. The only kind of negative judgment of taste that Allison's account can allow is the judgment of the non-beautiful depending on the lack of free harmony.

Third, Allison's conception of free play as necessitated by the state of mind of mere reflection is not supported by Kant. If a certain activity of cognitive powers becomes free just by the act of mere reflection in which we ignore what the object has in common with others in order to classify it, then this implies that each object has a free play of cognitive powers, as long as we *merely* reflect on it. However, this is not what Kant seems to have in mind. Namely, he writes in §22 that there are objects that, when we consider them aesthetically or

[90] Ibid., 480-481.

in mere reflection, have no free play (such as geometrical forms, regular face etc.). But this means that free play is not necessitated by the act of mere reflection. Overall, Allison's account is not fully successful.

2.5 An abstractive interpretation (Malcolm Budd)

Malcolm Budd argues, contrary to the precognitive approach, that empirical concepts are necessary for perceptual synthesis and therefore for judgments of taste: "Since the regularity leading to the concept of an object is the indispensable condition (condition sine qua non) for apprehending the object in a single representation and determining the manifold in the objects form, although a pure judgment of taste does not itself attribute a perceptible property to an object, and so it is not itself a perceptual judgment, in the reflection involved in a pure judgment of taste the manifold is brought under the concept of an object, the requirements of the possibility of perceptual judgment must be satisfied."[91] The imagination must synthesize sense impressions in accordance with some empirical concept and hence present a structure, that is, a perceptual image in a particular way.

However, Budd claims that conceptual harmony does not preclude the possibility of having free harmonious experience. What is required is merely abstracting the concept from our reflection on the object and focusing on the *mere* form of the object: "rather than being concerned to identify what kind of thing a given object is, what is in common between this object and others in virtue of which they fall under a certain empirical concept (…) – we are concerned with just the individual form of the given object, the form itself, not what kind of thing it is the form of."[92]

[91] Malcolm Budd, *Aesthetic Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 108.
[92] Ibid., 109.

Yet, this possibility seems to oppose Kant's explanation of the threefold synthesis. Namely, if the synthesis of sense impressions is directed by empirical concepts, then it is impossible to have a perception of the form itself, independently as to how this form is conceptualized. If concepts determine how sense impressions will be combined together, that is, how we will come to perceive the form, then it seems impossible to abstract the concept from the form of the object.

Budd meets this objection by arguing the following: in order to have perceptual experience it is necessary to subsume the manifold under general empirical concepts, such as a concept of the body, or a color. These general empirical concepts are sufficient in order to individuate objects (being rules for the synthesis) and therefore the subsumption of the manifold under more particular empirical concepts (such as concept of the flower, or a table, etc.) is not needed. Particular empirical concepts are applied additionally, after we acquire them, and they do not strictly determine the perception of the object's form. Hence, there may be independence between the form of the object and its conceptualization under specific empirical concepts after all. For example, Budd argues: "…when the object is brought under a concept it was not formerly brought under there will be no change at all in the perception itself, and so no change in the object's perceived form, but only a change in the interpretation of the object (what kind of object it is) (…) if at one time I see a tree but without the ability to identify its kind, and at a later time, when I have acquired the ability, see it as aspen, its form is not thereby represented to me differently."[93] This seems to be a reasonable suggestion. I may mistakenly identify a particular form of the flower as a rose and find out later that this flower is in fact an orchid. But recognizing this flower as an orchid, instead of a rose, does not result in perceiving its form differently. Accordingly, there is a possibility that one can abstract the particular empirical concept (orchid), and have the perception of the *mere* form.

[93] Ibid., 113.

It is by this act of abstraction that imagination and understanding are set into a free play. The understanding is free because it is not concerned with the identification of the object and imagination is free because "it is not restricted by a particular rule of cognition, that is, it is not required to be adequate to some particular (empirical) concept."[94]

The free play of cognitive powers, however, does not need to be harmonious. Budd is very careful to avoid the 'everything is beautiful' problem related to the abstractive interpretation. Namely, if free harmony is constituted solely by virtue of the abstraction of the concept from the form of the object, then all objects are beautiful, since all objects, in order to be objects of experience, must poses some kind of harmony.[95] Budd therefore claims that pleasure occurs only if there is a harmony of a special kind, in which cognitive powers mutually enliven each other, and this can be attained only by some forms, exhibiting the 'multiplicity in unity,': "for an object to be beautiful its perceptual structure must have certain complexity but this structure must be such that its elements relate to one another in harmonious fashion, composing a highly unified whole in which each element appears to be an integral part of the design fittingly related to the other elements."[96] There must be a special composition of the elements constituting the form, which is diverse, yet still easy for the understanding to grasp it. Accordingly, even though all objects of perception have cognitive harmony, it is not every object that has the special free harmony. Beauty is the property that only some objects may induce, objects, which structure has an 'extra' layer of diversity in unity.

Even though Budd's interpretation avoids the 'everything is beautiful' problem, it fails to meet other challenges. *First*, it cannot accommodate judgments of ugliness. If beautiful objects are those which attain the special free harmony and non-beautiful objects those who

[94] Ibid., 114.
[95] For a version of this objection see: Carl J. Posy, "Imagination and Judgment in the Critical Philosophy", in *Kant's Aesthetics*, ed. Ralf Meerbote (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1991), 39.
[96] Budd, 119.

lack this special harmony, then the only possibility left for judgments of ugliness is no harmony. But this is not possible according to Guyer. There always must be some harmony between cognitive powers in order to have a perceptual experience. Hence, disharmony is epistemologically precluded.

Second, it does not meet the universality problem. Budd distinguishes between the (cognitive) harmony required for perceptual experience and special free harmony required for judgments of the beautiful. But if the special free harmony is not required for ordinary perception (this can be attained without having special free harmony), then we have no rationale to claim that it can also attain universality.

Third, the idea of abstraction as the condition of the free play of cognitive powers is not supported by Kant. Budd claims that imagination and understanding are in free play only if we abstract the concept from the form of the object. This implies that if no such abstraction takes place, there is no possibility to experience free play of the faculties. Kant claims that artworks and artifacts cannot be perceived independently of the concept: "…the fact that they are regarded as a work of art is already enough to require one to admit that one relates their shape to some sort of intention and to a determinate purpose" (§17n). Based on Budd's proposal this would mean that in the case of artworks and artifacts we cannot experience free play. But this is not what Kant says. Namely, he claims that even though judgments of taste regarding artworks and artifacts are adherent judgments of taste (dependent on the concept of purpose), they can still occasion free play of imagination and understanding. But if there can be a free play of cognitive powers even in the case of objects where no abstraction of the concept is possible, then Budd's formulation of the free play seems to be wrong. The abstraction of the concept is not a condition of a free play. But if so, Budd's account is insufficient to explain the notion of free play in judgments of taste.

2.6 Multicognitive interpretation

According to the multicognitive approach, as Guyer classifies it, the free play of cognitive powers is attained not by the absence of concepts, but by the application of the multiplicity of concepts. The employment of a multitude of concept in aesthetic perception precludes the synthesis of sense impressions to be determined (by one concept) and go one way, rather than another. It rather allows, as Guyer describes, "the mind to flit back and forth playfully and enjoyably among different ways of conceiving the same object without allowing or requiring it to settle down on one determinate way of conceiving the object."[97] A judgment of taste is similar to the ordinary cognitive judgment, because it employs concepts, but while cognitive judgments end up with the subsumption of the manifold under one concept, judgments of taste, on the other hand, do not apply a definite concept, but rather plays with the multitude of them, offering therefore a variety of different perceptions of a form. What is constitutive for ordinary perception is that among many possible ways the manifold could be synthesized it ends up with just one synthesis, which is determined by a particular concept. On the other hand, aesthetic reflection, which does not aim to cognize the object and resulting in a determinate judgment, is free to entertain the possible ways that the manifold could be synthesized, not 'settling down' or actualizing any of them.

Fred Rush, one of the proponents of such an approach, describes free play as: "…a potentially endless ranging over the manifold of intuition by the imagination, engaged in the activity of modeling it as unifiable in any of the multifarious ways that the spatial and temporal properties of that manifold permit."[98] An object's form which offers a display of

[97] Guyer, "The Harmony of the Faculties Revisited," 166.
[98] Fred L. Rush, "The Harmony of the Faculties," *Kant Studien* 92, no. 1 (2001): 58.

perceptual alteration or "possible ways to unite the manifold"[99] will be apprehended with a feeling of pleasure.

A similar explanation is proposed by Paul Crowther. He argues that an object is beautiful, if its form is such that "it offers, as it were, rich possibilities of different 'trial runs', thus opening out multiple possibilities of interaction between imagination and understanding, instead of the discursive rigidity of ordinary cognition."[100] Free harmony is experienced if the form of the object has a combination of elements that affords apprehension from different perceptual viewpoints, that is, under indefinite number of possible empirical conceptualizations. As an example, Crowther gives the case of clouds, claiming that they are beautiful because their structure allows perceptual shifting: "The light playing through the clouds grows and diminishes in its intensity of brightness and creates extremely complex gestalt effects. First, perhaps, a set of light billows defined against a dark ground is seen but a few minutes later the form has reconfigured to suggest an entirely different figure of dark billow set against a light ground."[101] Presumably, the formal configuration of clouds has enough diversity that stimulates the imagination to rearrange, reconstruct the shape, color, lines etc. of the manifold and therefore allows to be perceived under different concepts (different perceptual images). Crowther explains that this conceptualization is not a definite or an actual one, but merely apparent: "…the unities involved here are mainly apparent: they exist on the level of appearances as disclosed from different perceptual viewpoints."[102] Concepts do not actually apply to the manifold; the manifold merely suggests possible conceptualizations.

[99] Ibid., 59.
[100] Paul Crowther, *The Kantian Aesthetics: From Knowledge to the Avant-garde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 82.
[101] Ibid., 80.
[102] Ibid., 82.

The multicognitive interpretation raises many difficulties, in addition to being the least supported by Kant's text. Some of its difficulties have already been pointed out by Guyer, particularly important among which is his criticism of the connection between perceptual shifting and pleasure. That is, this interpretation does not explain why a play between the manifold and the multitudes of concepts (shifting back and forth from one concept to another and not settling down to any of them) should be pleasurable, rather than confusing and irritating.[103] Beside this objection I want to point out several more.

First, it does not meet the universality problem. Based on multicognitive approach, there is a distinction between the state of mind required for cognition (when then manifold is subsumed under a concept) and the state of mind required for judgments of taste (multiple conceptualizations). But, according to Kant's argument, what is universally communicable is the state of mind required for cognition. But if the state of mind required for judgments of taste (perceiving the object under different kinds of concepts, none of which are determinately applied to the manifold) is not required for cognition, then there is no justification to claim that it must be universally communicable.

Second, it cannot accommodate judgments of ugliness. If a beautiful form is such that it forces us to perceive it under different conceptual possibilities, and an indifferent form does not do that (we perceive it under one perceptual aspect necessitated by the empirical concept), then the only possibility left for an ugly object would be that we do not perceive it under any concept at all. But this again is not epistemologically possible according to Guyer's argument.

Third, the idea of beauty as identified with perceptual explorations is denied by Kant himself. In §22 he proposes a distinction between the beautiful objects and beautiful *views* on the

[103] Guyer, "Harmony of the Faculties Revisited," 177.

object, and he claims that the latter case is not beauty proper, since it does not depend on the play between the imagination and the understanding as required for judgments of taste. He writes: "…beautiful objects are to be distinguished from beautiful views of objects (which on account of the distance can often no longer be distinctly cognized). In the latter, taste seems to fasten not so much on what the imagination apprehends in this field as on what gives it occasion to invent, i.e., on what are strictly speaking the fantasies with which the mind entertains itself while it is being continuously aroused by the manifold which strikes the eye, as for instance in looking at the changing shapes of a fire in a hearth or of a rippling brook, neither of which are beauties, but both of which carry with them a charm for the imagination, because they sustain its free play." Accordingly, the pleasure invoked by the object that suggests different perceptual images (such as different shapes produced by the flickering fire) is not a pleasure of the beautiful. This is because the pleasure in this case is not a product of a play between the apprehension (imagination) and understanding, but of the fantasies that are being prompted by the object and its various shapes. These fantasies, Kant claims, are involuntary products of the imagination, similar to the ones we experience in dreams (ANTH §28). These images do not amount to perception proper, since they are not connected to the rules of experience. And since aesthetic perception is a reflection regarding the perception of the object (apprehension responsible for producing perceptual images), such fantasies do not count as a proper subject of judgments of taste.

2.7 Metacognitive interpretation (Paul Guyer)

According to Guyer's recent interpretation, free harmony is constituted by the conceptual synthesis exercised in a high degree. In order to experience free harmony we must first experience cognitive harmony, which is responsible for ordinary perceptual experience of an object. This cognitive harmony refers to the operation of imagination and understanding by

which we come to identify or recognize an object according to a conceptual rule. While all objects have this kind of harmony in order to be represented by us, not all of them have free harmony. Free harmony is a cognitive harmony exercised to a high degree, that is, which exhibits order or unity that extends beyond the unity necessary for the recognition of an object "as it were, an excess of felt unity or harmony," or as a "further degree of unity".[104] Guyer describes free harmony in the following way: "free and harmonious play of imagination and understanding should be understood as a state of mind in which the manifold of intuition induced by the perception of an object and presented by the imagination to the understanding is recognized to satisfy the rules for the organization of that manifold dictated by the determinate concept or concepts, on which our recognition and identification of the object of this experience depends, yet as one in which it is also felt that - or as if - the understanding's underlying objective or interest in unity is being satisfied in a way that *goes beyond* anything required for or dictated by satisfaction of the determinate concept or concepts on which mere identification of the object depends."[105] Accordingly, in order for an object to induce aesthetic pleasure, the necessary conditions of cognition must be satisfied in the first place. That is, we must recognize the object under some specific concept. Free harmony is produced only if this cognitive harmony by which identification of an object takes place, exhibits an extra amount of unity, exceeding the basic unity that is required for ordinary cognition: "A beautiful object can always be recognized to be an object of some determinate kind, but our experience of it always has even more unity and coherence than is required for it to be a member of that kind."[106]

Guyer's approach reconciles Kant's theory of concepts as rules necessary for perceptual experience, and his theory of free harmony characteristic for judgments of the beautiful. Even

[104] Guyer, "Kant on the Purity of the Ugly," 149-150.
[105] Guyer, "Harmony of the Faculties Revisited," 183.
[106] Ibid.

though perception is governed by concepts and to this extend it has no freedom, it can still attain freedom by exhibiting unity to a high degree. Accordingly, it is not all objects that are beautiful, but only those that have this high degree of unity. This explains why only some objects belonging to a given kind (determined by a given concept) are beautiful, while others are not. For example, this chair is beautiful, but not the other, even though they apply the same concept. To experience perceptual harmony and to identify the object under the concept is not a sufficient condition to find the object beautiful. An additional degree of this harmony is needed and this can be obtained only by some objects. Nonetheless, Guyer's approach is not fully satisfactory. Let me point out some of the difficulties that his interpretation faces.

First, it cannot accommodate judgments of ugliness. If aesthetic harmony is a high degree of cognitive harmony and if the lack of this high degree of cognitive harmony is sufficient (given the basic degree of harmony required for cognition) for the occurrence of aesthetically indifferent objects, then the only possibility left for ugliness is to depend on the lack of cognitive harmony. But, this is not possible according to Kant's epistemological theory; an object without cognitive harmony would be an object of which we could not be conscious. Hence, judgments of ugliness are impossible.[107]

Second, it does not fully meet the universality problem. Guyer identifies free harmony with cognitive harmony exercised to a high degree. But this means that he distinguishes between different degrees of cognitive harmony. If what is required for cognition is some basic degree of harmony, then it does not strictly speaking follows that a degree of harmony, which exceeds the basic organization of the manifold, will also attain universal validity. Guyer claims that free harmony is a harmony that exceeds the normal requirement for cognition, and

[107] For a detailed discussion on Guyer' argument against the epistemological impossibility of judgments of ugliness, see chapter 1.7.

this implies that free harmony is not a requirement for cognition. And if this is so, then it does not necessarily follow that free harmony is universally communicable.

Third, Guyer's explanation of free harmony as a further degree of cognitive harmony is not convincing. My reasoning is the following: according to Kant's theory of perception, cognitive agreement between imagination and understanding is necessary for the recognition of an object to take place. For example, my recognition of an object as a tree depends on recognizing the common properties that all trees have in common (they all have properties such as leaves, branches, trunk as specified by the concept of a tree). Kant writes that this agreement between cognitive powers can be exercised in different degrees or proportions (§21). Henry Allison gives a fine explanation as to what these degrees of cognitive powers in perceptual experience amount to.[108] He claims that, because imagination and understanding are characterized by different objectives, one by particularity and the other by universality, respectively, they pull in different directions, and therefore it is often the case that friction between them occurs. This happens, Allison writes, when the apprehension of the manifold is atypical and therefore the subsumption under the concept more difficult to obtain. For example, it is more difficult to recognize an image of a three legged dog as a dog, than an image of a dog that satisfies all the prototypical features of a dog. This is an example of perceptual experience with a low or minimal degree of agreement between cognitive powers. On the other hand, an image of a dog that satisfies all of the prototypical properties of a dog is an experience of cognitive powers being in a higher degree of agreement. The object is immediately recognized as a dog. Accordingly, a low or high degree of cognitive harmony amounts to the level of difficulty of perceptual recognition of an object. An image of a three legged dog is more difficult to recognize than the image of a four legged dog.

[108] Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 48-50.

But Guyer claims that a high degree of cognitive harmony is the experience of free harmony that produces pleasure. If this is true, then it follows that every object which represents a perfect instance of the kind it belongs to must be experienced with pleasure. But this seems wrong. Namely, I may recognize with ease the image that exemplifies all the essential conditions of, say a turkey, or an equally perfect instance of a dog, but it is not true that I find them necessarily beautiful. On the contrary, even the perfect instance of a turkey is displeasing. Hence, even though there is a high cognitive harmony between the imagination and understanding, there is no pleasure. The opposite is also the case. There are objects that are more difficult to recognize under the concept, and therefore have a low degree of cognitive harmony, yet they are pleasing (for example, identifying a flower called *Rafflesia* as a flower is more difficult, since it does not have stems or leaves and therefore it does not satisfy all of the prototypical conditions thought in the concept of a flower. Still, it has a pleasing appearance). Therefore, high cognitive harmony cannot be simply identified with free harmony and with pleasure.

Furthermore, Guyer's explanation of free harmony cannot explain the possibility that there are objects belonging to the same kind and that each example of this kind is pleasing. That is, Guyer's account requires that beautiful objects have certain properties that distinguish them from aesthetically indifferent members of their kind. Guyer claims that an object is beautiful if it exceeds the minimal unity required for the recognition of the object as a member of its kind. Accordingly, a rose is beautiful if it has more unity than is needed for an ordinary experience of a rose, while a rose that does not have this additional harmony is an indifferent one.[109] But there is at least a possibility that there are kinds whose members are all beautiful. For example, one could make a strong case for the claim that all roses are beautiful. Hence, nothing further is required to find a rose beautiful than what is minimally required to

[109] Guyer discusses the example of a beauty of a rose in his: *Knowledge, Reason and Taste: Kant's response to Hume* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008), 232-233.

recognize that it is a member of its kind. An ordinary experience of a rose is an experience of a beautiful rose. But if this is even a possibility, then Guyer's account is wrong.

2.8 Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter was to examine and reevaluate contemporary interpretations of the concept of free play that is constitutive of judgments of taste. This discussion showed that none of the interpretations given so far are fully successful. Namely, none of them presented a formulation of the concept of free play such that it can accommodate all three beliefs that Kant holds. The following table illustrates how these interpretations satisfy these beliefs.

	Ginsborg's precognitive interpretation	Allison's precognitive interpretation	Budd's abstractive interpretation	Multicognitive interpretation	Metacognitive interpretation
Universality	**YES**	NO	NO	NO	NO
Threefold synthesis	NO	NO	**YES**	**YES**	**YES**
Negative judgments of taste/judgments of ugliness	NO/NO	**YES**/NO	**YES**/NO	**YES**/NO	**YES**/NO

However, each of the interpretations, even though not offering a full solution, offer a partial solution to one of the many problems that the concept of free play is faced with, and these partial solutions can indicate the way to proceed in formulating a positive interpretation of free play.

First, in order for judgments of taste to be universally communicable, they must depend on the state of mind that is required for cognition. Since Kant is clear on the fact that the state of

mind of judgments of taste (of the beautiful) is free harmony, this implies that in order for free harmony to be universally communicable, free harmony must be in some sense required for cognition. Ginsborg's account satisfies this requirement by proposing that free harmony is required for empirical concept acquisition. *Second*, Kant's theory of the three-fold synthesis showed that the application of concepts to the manifold of intuition is necessary in order to have perceptual experience. This means that there must be in the first place a conceptual (cognitive) harmony that makes possible the representation of an object. Furthermore, that what is necessary is not only the application of categories, but application of empirical concepts as well. The accommodation of free harmony with this requirement of conceptual harmony can proceed by claiming that the former comes up subsequently to the latter. Budd's proposal is that free harmony is made possible by abstraction; Guyer's proposal is that free harmony is a further degree of conceptual harmony, and the multicognitive proposal is that free harmony allows not only one, but multiple conceptualizations. However, none of these approaches are successful. Beside specific problems, their conception of free harmony does not seem to be required for cognition, and therefore it cannot satisfy the requirement of universality. Free harmony that comes up subsequently to conceptual harmony must in some sense also be required for empirical concept acquisition. *Third*, negative judgments of taste must be accommodated, that is, the 'everything is beautiful' problem must be precluded. All of the approaches that have been able to accommodate negative judgments of the non-beautiful (Allison, Budd, multicognitive and metacognitive approach), have done so by arguing for a distinction between the harmony required for cognition and harmony required for judgments of taste. Not all objects can attain the latter; hence not all objects are beautiful. However, their distinction precludes the possibility of universality. *Fourth*, judgments of ugliness must be accommodated, that is, there must be a possibility of a disharmonious state of mind. So far, none of the existing approaches have been successful in satisfying this

requirement, because none of them have met Guyer's challenge. Namely, that there must always be a (conceptual) harmony between cognitive powers in order to be conscious of a representation. The only way to accommodate judgments of ugliness within a Kantian theory is to propose that the states of mind in which cognitive powers are in free play occurs once we already have a representation of an object. Since the requirements of conceptual harmony are satisfied, this additional free play does not need to be harmonious, and it may well be disharmonious. However, this additional free play should not be understood as constituted by a special act of reflection, such as by abstraction (Budd), or by a mere reflection (Allison).

I believe that there is a way to formulate a positive approach. Budd's interpretation can indicate how to proceed. Even though his abstractive interpretation of free play is unsuccessful, his idea that it is the general empirical concepts, rather than particular empirical concepts, that guide the synthesis of perception, is promising. I believe this idea can be further developed in a way that can explain the possibility of empirical concept acquisition, as well as judgments of taste.

According to Kant, there always must be a harmony between cognitive powers in order to have perceptual experience. Furthermore, this harmony is established by the empirical concepts serving as rules for the synthesis of the manifold. The problem, stressed by Ginsborg and Allison, was how empirical concepts can precede the synthesis, while at the same time they are supposed to be acquired from the experience. Budd's idea seems to fit the bill. Namely, perceptual experience is necessitated by the application of general empirical concepts that are already acquired. With the help of these concepts, one may begin the acquisition of more particular or specific empirical concepts. Perceptual experience is never concept-free. Even though I come across of an object that I am unable to identify, that is, I have no concept ready for the present sensible manifold; my perception is always guided or oriented by the previously acquired empirical concepts. For example, Umberto Eco writes

that when the Aztecs first came across a horse, they thought it was a deer.[110] The perception of this unknown animal was guided by the schema of a deer, the animal they had been acquainted with. Their perception of the unknown animal was guided by the best fitting schema they had, since the new animal exhibited similar features to a deer. But they also noticed dissimilarities, and after seeing many examples of this 'riding deer,' as they called the unknown animal, they come to acquire a new schema for it.

The acquisition of an empirical concept is guided by the previously acquired empirical schemas, and by the present manifold of sense impressions for which no previously acquired schema is fully appropriate or sufficient. Similarly, I can come across a flower that I have never seen before. My perception is guided by the schema of a flower (this unknown species has petals, leaves, stem), but I am unable to identify what kind of flower this is. Many schemas can be activated in my attempt to identify this unknown flower (such as a schema of a rose, a schema of a tulip etc.), but none of these schemas are fully appropriate. Namely this flower has a combination of features not contained in any of the previously acquired schemas I have in my mind. Accordingly, we can say that my perceptual experience of this unknown flower is conceptually guided (it is guided by the concept of a flower). But none of the schemas I have is adequate to the sensible manifold presented to me. The combination of sense impressions does not fit with any of the concepts. But this is to say, that there is no rule for the apprehension of sense impressions. But this is the meaning of Kant's concept of free play: "The powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition." (§9)

Accordingly, this idea reconciles, on one hand, Kant's claim that perception is conceptually guided activity, and, on the other hand, that there is a freedom of the imaginative synthesis constitutive for judgments of taste. Furthermore, this freedom can result in harmony

[110] Umberto Eco, *Kant and the Platypus* (London: Vintage, 2000), 128.

(pleasure) or in disharmony (displeasure). Free disharmony is in this case epistemologically possible (avoids Guyer's argument), because it is a disharmony between the *free* imaginative manifold and the understanding, and not between the imagination and understanding that necessitates perceptual experience. I will explain this interpretative proposal in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: A POSITIVE ACCOUNT OF THE CONCEPT OF FREE PLAY

In the previous chapter I examined the main contemporary interpretations of the notion of free harmony and pointed out their inadequacies. My aim in the present chapter is to propose a different interpretation of the concept of free harmony; an interpretation that allows the possibility of free disharmony, without violating Kant's thesis of the necessity of a harmonious relation between imagination and understanding for cognition. Furthermore, the account I propose is consistent with universal validity, not merely for judgments of beauty, but also for judgments of ugliness. The proposal is that free harmony should *not* be understood as a harmony between those cognitive powers that are at work in determinate judgments, but rather as a harmony between *free imagination* and understanding in reflection upon cognition, rather than in cognition itself. I will argue that the distinction between the harmony necessary for determinate judgments, and harmony required for judgments of taste is derived from the distinction between the two different activities performed by the imagination (and which refers to Kant's distinction between determining and reflective judgments). In determinate judgments, the imagination is rule-governed (organizes sense data in order to fit with the existing concept) and therefore not free. However, in judgments of taste it is free imagination that is in harmony with the understanding. Free imagination is constitutive for the kind of judgments that Kant describes as reflective judgments, among which the judgment of taste is a species, but which is also present in empirical concept acquisition.

In brief, my proposal is the following: I argue, like Guyer, that in order to have perceptual experience, the application of some empirical concepts to the manifold of intuition is necessary. In order to have perceptual experience, say of a dog, I must make a determining

judgment, that is, my imagination must organize the sense data in accordance with the dog-rule. My perception of the form of the object is therefore conceptually governed; it is a determinate form that I perceive. This, however, does not preclude the possibility that the presented form is not guided by the concept, that is, that the imagination is in free play. Conceptual or rule governed perception is not, as one might think, incompatible with free play.

Consider the following scenario of a perceptual experience: if, for example, I do not yet have the concept of a dog, then by encountering a dog, my imagination can of course present some other concept that I already possess (and must do so) and which is the most adequate concept available to me for the present sense data. For example, when seeing a dog, since I do not yet have a concept of a dog, but I have a concept of a four footed animal, then my imagination will activate the schema of a four footed animal, because it is the best matching schema for the particular sense data. I will see the presented object not as a dog, but as some kind of four footed animal. For the recognition of an object, the activation of some existing concepts is necessary (as follows from Kant's theory of the threefold synthesis). The role of imagination in this case is rule-governed; it must structure sense data so that the best matching concept can apply. However, after seeing many instances of a dog, I will come to notice that they have common properties, and so I will arrive at a more specific empirical concept that can be applied to these objects. Hence, I will come to form, by means of reflection, a new concept, which I will activate in future perceptual experiences of this animal.

The process of reflection, by which I acquire the new concept, operates *on the perception* instead of preceding it, as the precognitive approach claims. Reflective judgment, through which I acquire the concept of a dog, affords me with a more refined and distinct cognition (interpretation) of the sense data, but it does not make my perception possible. Determinate judgment, that is, the application of some concept to the sense data, always precedes

reflective judgment. Reflection is occasioned subsequently, when the existing concept, say the concept of a four footed animal, does not fully and sufficiently specify the combination of sense data presented by a dog. Therefore, in such cases, perception of an object under a concept is possible even though the concept does not fully specify the combination of sense data presented by the object. Furthermore, even when one has attained the concept of a dog, this concept still does not fully specify the combination of sense data in any particular perception of an actual dog. But if the existing concept does not fully specify the combination of sense data, this means that there is no rule fully adequate for the combination of sense data. And if there is no rule for a certain combination of sense data, then this is to say that the imagination is not fully governed by the concept. In other words, to the extent that the imagination is not fully governed by the concept in some particular presentation of an object, it is in free play.

Accordingly, we can have a perception of a form which depends on the empirical concept (imagination is rule-governed), yet at the same time it does not require that the imagination be fully determined by any concept (imagination is free). Imagination in a particular form of the object is free if there is no concept that fully determines the particular combination of sense data. Free imagination stimulates the reflective power of judgment and its need to find the rule for those aspects of the manifold that are not determined by the rule. In other words, imagination and understanding are set into a free play. Such free play is constitutive of reflective judgments, and is present both in empirical concept acquisition and in judgments of taste. Both represent an example of a judgment which looks for a rule for the non-rule-governed combination of sense data. But while in empirical concept acquisition, free play results in a determinate concept, in judgments of taste it results in a feeling of pleasure or displeasure alone.

My objective in the remainder of this chapter is to explain in more detail the proposal that I sketched above. I will begin with the explanation of the role of free imagination in judgments of taste, compared to its role in determinate cognition. Next, I will focus on the meaning of the notion of free harmony or what Kant calls 'lawfulness without a law.' That is, I will offer an explanation as to how a certain combination of sense data can be in accordance with a law, but without any law that can be articulated in a determinate concept. I will argue that the *principle of the purposiveness of nature*, which Kant identifies as the principle of reflective judgments in the Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, fits the role of the indeterminate law underlying judgments of taste. During this discussion other segments of Kant's aesthetics will also be clarified, namely, the universal validity of judgments of taste and the explanation of the pleasure (or displeasure) we take in a beautiful (or ugly) object. Furthermore, the discussion will indicate a resolution of the problem of disharmony in judgments of ugliness, which will finally be addressed in the next chapter.

3.1 The conception of free imagination in judgments of taste

So far we know from the *Critique of Pure Reason* that a certain harmonious relation between imagination and understanding is necessary in order to have a perceptual experience, and that concepts serve as rules for the combination of sense data. Imagination must synthesize the sense data according to the specification of the concept. Accordingly, imagination in determining cognition is not a free and autonomous activity, but it is subordinated to the understanding and its rules.

But in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant puts forward a different role for imagination in judgments of taste, such that it plays freely in the given form of the object, and is not governed by determinate rules of understanding. For example, he writes that: "when the imagination is compelled to proceed in accordance with a determinate law, then how its

product should be, as far as its form is concerned, is determined through concepts; but then (...) the judgment is not a judgment by means of taste" (§22). Rather, the imagination involved in judgments of taste is free, that is, "not as reproductive, as subjected to the laws of association, but as productive and self-active (as the authoress of voluntary forms of possible intuitions)" (§22). But if we operate with two different roles for imagination in judgments of taste and determinative judgments (one rule governed and one not rule governed), then this allows that the harmonious activity in judgments of taste, and the harmonious activity in determining judgments is different. Because the role of imagination in judgments of taste is different to its role in determinative judgments, then its interaction with the understanding in these kinds of judgments is different. Hence, what it means for this interaction to be harmonious can also differ in these different kinds of judgments. Indeed, the nature of the harmony in each of these cases must be different, since in the case of determinative judgments, harmony consists in imagination being determined by the concept, and this is precisely what Kant excludes from judgments of taste.

Indeed, Kant offers numerous passages supporting the idea of free harmony (that takes place in judgments of taste), not as an instance of cognitive harmony (in determining judgments) in which the imagination is rule-governed, but as a special kind of harmony that takes place between *free imagination* and understanding. For example, he writes: "…in the judgment of taste the imagination must be considered in its *freedom"* (§22).[111] Later on, in §26: "the aesthetic power of judgment in judging the beautiful relates the *imagination in its free play* to the understanding, in order to *agree* with its concepts in general (without determination of them)." In §35: "…the judgment of taste must rest on a mere sensation of the reciprocally animating *imagination in its freedom* and the understanding with its lawfulness (…) Taste, as a subjective power of judgment, contains a principle of subsumption, not of intuitions under

[111] In this and the following quotations in this paragraph the emphases are mine.

concepts, but of the faculty of intuitions or presentations (i.e., of the imagination) under the faculty of concepts (i.e., the understanding), insofar as the *former in its freedom* is in *harmony* with the latter in its lawfulness." In §40: "Only where the *imagination in its freedom* arouses the understanding, and the latter, without concepts, sets the imagination into a regular play is the representation communicated, not as a thought, but as the inner feeling of a purposive state of mind." In §58: "subjective purposiveness (...) rests on the *play* of *the imagination in its freedom.* " And in the next section: "*The freedom of the imagination* (thus of the sensibility of our faculty) is represented in the judging of the beautiful as in *accord* with the lawfulness of the understanding" (§59).

Based on the quoted passages, we can see that Kant makes a clear distinction between (i) the *free play* of imagination, and (ii) the *harmony* of the *free play of imagination* with the understanding. In order to have (ii) which is necessary for the occurrence of pleasure, we must in the first instance have (i) free imagination. The harmony required for judgments of the beautiful is harmony between *free imagination* and understanding. The concept of free harmony between cognitive powers is primarily dependent on the notion of free play of imagination. For example, Kant writes that in judgments of taste "the understanding is in the service of the imagination" (§22), which indicates that the faculty of understanding is not free, but only imagination. In fact, Kant's conception of understanding prevents the possibility of thinking of it as free. That is, understanding is a faculty that continues to attempt to apply concepts to the manifold in order to produce the unity. It never ceases to attempt to establish order over the heterogeneity of the manifold, even though the existing concepts might not be sufficient to fully determine the particular sensible manifold. As Kant claims in the *Introduction*: "discovery [of the order of nature] is a task for the understanding, which is aimed at an end that is necessary for it, namely, to introduce into it unity of principles" (CPJ, VI). So, since this task is necessary for the understanding, this is the task it

will continue to perform whether in judgments of taste or determinative judgments. So what explains the difference in harmony between judgments of taste and determinative judgments is the role of the imagination. In particular, that it is free in the case of judgments of taste.

Before proceeding to the explanation of the notion of free imagination, let me summarize the two ideas that I am arguing for. *First*, I argue that Kant ascribes to the imagination different roles in judgments of taste and determinative judgments. In determinative judgments the imagination is governed by the concept, while in judgments of taste it is free and autonomous. *Second*, I argue that a determinative judgment is necessary in order to have perceptual experience of an object in the first place. The form of the object (combination of sense data) is determined by the concept to some degree. In order to recognize a particular object, say a dog, the imagination must follow the dog-rule, that is, it combines specific features such as a tail, four legs, a head, etc., as the dog-rule prescribes. Without this cooperation between the imagination and understanding there would be no perceptual experience of an object. Kant claims that the subject of aesthetic reflection is the form of the object. Therefore, in order to have a perception of the object, the cognitive (conceptual) harmony must take place prior to aesthetic reflection. Mary Warnock nicely expresses this point as follows: "In order for the imagination to work aesthetically, it has to concentrate on one object. If that object were not such as to be capable of being produced before the mind's eye as an image, and reproduced again and again, we could not concentrate on it; there would be nothing except a random jumble of sensations."[112]

On the face of it, the two ideas that I argue for seem to be incompatible. If the subject of judgments of taste is the form of the object, and if the form of the object is conceptually determined, then how can there be after all a free play of imagination, as is required for a judgment of taste.

[112] Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1976), 50.

In order to have a perceptual image, conceptual harmony between imagination and understanding is necessary. We must perceive a certain combination of sense data under some empirical concepts. However, even though recognition of objects proceeds by the means of a schema, an abstract form shared by all members of a certain kind, each particular image also differs from others of its kind. That is, they differ in the additional features which are not determined (entailed) by the concept. For instance, I recognize the flower by the application of the flower-rule to the sense data. The flower-rule is an abstract representation of numerous instances of the same kind. Yet, a particular image of a flower may have a distinct shape of petals in a particular combination of colors. But these distinctive features of this particular flower are not entailed by the concept of a flower. In other words, even though my perception of the flower is governed by the concept of a flower, the concept of the flower is not sufficient to fully determine the combination of sense data in this particular presentation of a flower. The presence of these additional features which are not entailed by the concept shows that the activity of imagination is not fully determined by the concept, and therefore it is in free play. A form of the object in which imagination is free occurs, if the sensible manifold apprehended by the imagination exhibits such features that exceed the general conditions (schema), which are necessary requirements for the concept to be applied. The schema is provided so that the concept can be applied (cognitive harmony), but the manifold affords more than what is required by the application of the concept. However, these additional features can nevertheless be either in harmony or disharmony with the understanding. It is the accord or discord of the free imaginative manifold with the understanding that results in a positive or a negative aesthetic reaction, respectively.

Such an account of free imagination is suggested by Kant in the following passage: “in the use of the imagination for cognition, the imagination is under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the limitation of being adequate to its concept; in an aesthetic

respect, however, the imagination is free to provide, beyond that concord with the concept, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept, but which it applies, not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, for the animation of the cognitive powers" (§49). Accordingly, Kant claims that the subject of the judgment of taste is not the material that is used for cognition, that is, the empirical content determined by the concept, but the additional content, which is not determined by the concept of the object. It is this additional material that occasions aesthetic reflection. But what is also suggested in the mentioned passage is that this material is reflected on subsequently to the cognition. Hence, a determinate judgment precedes aesthetic reflection.

A more revealing passage as to what the free play of imagination amounts to, can be found in §22, where Kant writes the following: "But where only a free play of the powers of representation (although under the condition that the understanding does not thereby suffer any offense) is to be maintained, in pleasure gardens, in the decoration of rooms, in all sorts of tasteful utensils and the like, regularity that comes across as constraint is to be avoided as far as possible; hence the English taste in gardens or the baroque taste in furniture pushes the freedom of the imagination almost to the point of the grotesque, and makes this abstraction from all constraint by rules the very case in which the taste can demonstrate its greatest perfection in projects of the imagination" (§22). In this passage Kant talks about regularity and the free imagination and he seems to regard them as inversely proportional. The more regular the form, the less free the imagination is, and conversely, the less constrained by the regularity is the imagination, the more it is in free play. Kant explains later on in the same section that the forms of objects are regular (and he refers particularly to the geometrical shapes such as circles, squares, cubes), if "they cannot be represented except by being regarded as mere presentations of a determinate concept, which prescribes the rule for that

shape (in accordance with which it is alone possible)" (§22). The notion of 'mere presentation' or *Darstellung* refers to a schema (rule), that is, a presentation that exhibits conditions necessary for cognition. Accordingly, it is suggested that an object's form is regular if it exhibits merely that combination of sense data which is determined by the concept.[113] So the regular form exhibits features that represent the mere idea of some class of objects, rather than anything specific and distinctive to an individual instance of that class. For example, Kant claims: "One will find that a perfectly regular face, which a painter might ask to sit for him as a model, usually says nothing: because it contains nothing characteristic, and thus expresses more the idea of the species than anything specific to a person" (§17).

Kant appears to identify regular forms (that is, forms that are mere presentations of a concept) with aesthetic neutrality (lack of pleasure and displeasure). On my account this can be explained because such forms do not allow for the freedom of the imagination, because they do not afford any material beyond that fixed by the concept. Consequently, they lack an aesthetic dimension, and hence do not occasion any aesthetic reaction. Hence, a judgment of aesthetic neutrality is not a proper judgment of taste, since it lacks the essential element constitutive for taste, that is, free imagination. Even though Kant claims that regularity induces boredom, which is in some sense a reaction, he also adds that this feeling is prompted only when we consider the object aesthetically and when there is no other source of interest in the object: "All stiff regularity (whatever approaches mathematical regularity) is of itself contrary to taste: the consideration of it affords no lasting entertainment, but rather, insofar as it does not expressly have cognition or a determinate practical end as its aim, it induces boredom" (§22). For example, very neutral objects, such as a white wall, are most usually

[113] Kant writes something similar in his other texts. He opposes beauty to logical perfection (or to cognition through concepts). He claims that beauty and logical perfection are potentially in conflict: "For if one goes only slightly too far with beauty, one immediately does damage to logical perfection. If, on the other hand, one really wants to further logical perfection, then one becomes dry and loses the beautiful" (BL 54; 39). And: "if we cognize something through logical perfection, then we very easily lack aesthetic liveliness, etc., and we fall into dryness" (BL 128; 100). Kant writes that logical perfection is connected with dryness, which is possessed by regular (mathematical) forms and identified with aesthetic neutrality.

ignored, and so do not produce any aesthetic reactions. However, if we turn our attention to them and consider the aesthetic qualities, we quickly become bored.

To return to the passage in §22, Kant claims that in order for a certain form to have free play of imagination it must be devoid as much as possible of the constraints of regularity, which means that the form of the object ought not be a mere presentation of a concept. In other words, the free play of imagination is due to the distinctive qualities of a specific representation, in contrast to those aspects of the object that are shared by all members of a class and in virtue of which the concept applies. This implies that imagination in the given object is free, not when there is no concept determining the form, but when the form exhibits such a combination of sense data that goes beyond the schematic presentation. The representation, in which the manifold expresses more than the concept requires for the fulfillment of the minimal conditions for objective harmony (schema), is the representation in which the imagination is free. Within this framework we can make sense of the idea that the freedom of the imagination admits of degrees.[114] For example, a simple chair is in greater conformity with the abstract representation (or schema) of a chair, and therefore allows a lower degree of free imagination, than, for example, a modern design of a chair, with its smooth, light and unexpected forms (see for example designs of chairs by *Jolyon Yates*). The imagination becomes even more exuberant in the Baroque style of chairs with its excessive decoration, rich carvings, dramatic lines and curves. Such perceptual forms, which have free imagination, provoke aesthetic reflection, resulting in the feeling of pleasure or displeasure.

In sum, in the given form of the object the imagination can be in free play because the objective (cognitive) relation needs to be restricted only to the extent that it permits the possibility of cognition, and this extent still allows for the free activity of the imagination.

[114] The degree of imagination, however, does not correlate with the degree of beauty. The degree of beauty correlates with the degree of harmony.

For example, when drawing a chair, my imagination can extend beyond the conditions that are necessary in order to think a chair, seen as a figure supported by legs and a seat. Imagination is restricted in drawing a figure with legs and a seat, but it is not restricted in the numerous possibilities of how this figure comes into being in a particular case (numerous different designs of a chair). A particular form of the object can contain such a synthesis of the manifold that extends well beyond the unity provided by the concept of the object. Concepts serve as a rule only for the features of the object common to members of a certain kind, but they cannot be a rule for the individual features and their combinations which are distinct and unique for the particular object itself. As Sarah Gibbons, in her analysis of Kant's imagination, puts it: "Concepts can only provide a discursive unity of diverse representations possessing some common feature; they do not represent those diverse representations as parts of a single encompassing whole."[115]

Aesthetic pleasure is produced, not when the cognitive activity of imagination (responsible for producing a schema) is in harmony with the understanding (this relation is always restricted by the concept and necessary), but when free imagination, that is, imagination whose activity goes beyond that required by a concept, is in harmony with the understanding. [116] Furthermore, because this relation does not take place between the cognitive function of imagination and understanding as necessary for objective (cognitive) harmony, but between the free imaginative manifold and understanding, it allows for the epistemological (and phenomenological) possibility of disharmony.

[115] Sarah Gibbons, *Kant's theory of imagination: Bridging Gaps in Judgment and Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 44.

[116] So far, I am focusing solely on the explanation of the concept of free imagination as a necessary aesthetic element in judgments of taste, which can either be harmonious or disharmonious with the understanding. I will discuss the possibility of this harmony or disharmony later on in this chapter (section 3).

3.2 The distinction between restricted and free imagination as a distinction between a schema and a particular image

In the previous section I put forward my interpretation of the free play of imagination, and its relation to the schematic presentation of an object. In this section I want to describe this relation in more detail.

We know so far, that according to Kant's epistemological theory, the conceptual harmony between imagination and understanding is needed in order to have perceptual experience. We recognize a particular combination of sense data, say as a flower, because we recognize the rule (schema) inherent in the combination of the manifold. This implies that when we make a judgment of taste about a form of the object, this form has already been subjected to conceptual determination, and so our judgment of taste occurs subsequently, after cognitive judgments has been made. In judgments of taste we reflect on the perception that was the result of the conceptual determination. Jennifer McMahon, who defends a version of the metacognitive approach in Kantian aesthetics, nicely expresses this idea by claiming that a judgment of taste is a 'second-order perception'. She writes: "The aesthetic characterization operates upon the perceptual object; that is, it is a second order perception. In other words, a concept of the object is processed prior to the formation of an aesthetic characterization."[117]

The concept of the object is applied to the sense data by the means of a schema, that is, a universal form that all objects of its kind share with each other and in virtue of which they are recognized. A schema is the product of a restricted activity of imagination, because its purpose is cognition (unity of the manifold), and it is determined by a concept of the understanding. However, even though it is through a schema that images are first encountered as objects of possible experience, they also differ from the schema, even though they are both

[117] Jennifer McMahon, *Aesthetics and Material Beauty: Aesthetics Naturalized* (New York & London: Routledge, 2007), 44.

products of the synthesis of imagination. An image is always a particular representation, and therefore it embodies universal form in its own unique way. The general features by which the object is recognized can be instantiated or realized in numerous different ways. The synthesis of these specific and individual aspects of the general features is not determined by the concept, and so it is the work of imagination in its freedom.

The relation between a schema and a particular image is best explained by the analogy of the relation that exists between an artist's sketch, say of a human face, and the final product of such a sketch, a drawing of the particular face itself. The drawing is not a direct outcome of the artist's idea. Rather, the idea is first translated into a basic design or a sketch. Gombrich explains such a sketch, or what he calls 'artistic schemata', as a "starting point of the artist's vocabulary."[118] An artist's sketch of a human face is a basic representation of essential features that make up a face. It represents a model or a plan of a human face in general, and which an artist will gradually start to modify by filling it with distinctive features and characteristics, and which alone are a product of the artist's creativity and originality.

A similar procedure is at work between a schema and a particular image. An image becomes possible, not by the direct application of the concept to the sensible manifold, but by translating the concept into the schema or a model first: "For its execution the idea requires a schema" (A833/B861). At the same time, however, the schema differs from the image, just as the artist's sketch differs from his final drawing. A schema represents only the general features of a particular object, hence it is incomplete comparing to the image of an actual object. For example, a schema of a flower is a basic figurative mental representation of an object with petals, leaves and stems in a specific relation; hence it represents a general form that all particular images of a flower have in common. Nevertheless, even though all flowers

[118] E.H.Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 183.

share the same schema, they display immense diversity in their particular instantiations. A particular instantiation of the concept represents the individuation or specification of the common features. Such a specification of the abstract (general) form can be referred to as an object's individual form.

Accordingly, a form of the object can be thought to exist at two levels. A particular flower, for instance, has a general (abstract) form which it shares with other objects of its kind. Yet, this particular flower also has an individual form, that is, the distinctive combination of the general features. The individual form exists within the constraints of the abstract form (schema), and represents a unique employment of the properties that constitute the general form specified by the concept. Consider, for example, the painting '*Weeping Woman'* (1937) by Pablo Picasso. One can immediately recognize that this is a painting of a human face. By making a determining judgment that this is a human face, that the painting represents, the imagination is not free, since it combines the sense data in accordance with the concept. One perceives the head, eyes, nose, and lips, as presented by the schema of a human face. But one also perceives a specific and distinctive configuration of these features. The face is painted in different geometrical shapes, split into fragments; the shapes of the mouth, teeth, tears and the handkerchief used to dry the tears are almost fused into each other; the sides of the face are juxtaposed in such a way that they offer simultaneously a frontal and profile perspective of the face. These distinctive features are not specified by the schema of a human face. Hence, they are product of imagination in its freedom. Art in general represents the kind of activity which intentionally stimulates the free play of imagination and it is therefore an example of an essentially aesthetic activity.

A judgment of taste is a judgment about the beauty (or ugliness) regarding the individual form of the object, and in order to have an experience of a form at the most general level

(schema), concepts must be applied to the manifold (determinate judgment must be made).[119] This implies that in making a judgment of taste one is using some empirical concepts, namely those, by which we experience the object. Kant clearly must have such an idea in mind when he claims that: "By the designation 'an aesthetic judgment about an object' it is therefore immediately indicated that a given representation is certainly related to an object" (CPJ, VII). And in §22 he writes that the apprehension of the imagination in judgment of taste "…is of course bound to a determinate form of this object." Accordingly, the form that we judge aesthetically is not some undetermined set of sense impressions, but is the combination of sense impressions as determined by the concept. What is at the back of Kant's mind is simply this: we must refer our judgments of taste to the representation that we are all able to perceive in the same way. The first step in guaranteeing the universal communicability of judgments of taste then is to guarantee that we all have the same representation of an object, that is, that we all perceive the same thing. This is guaranteed by producing synthetic unity, that is, by the unification of a manifold of intuition under a concept. A judgment of taste therefore depends on the concept of the object.

This idea has been advocated by many of Kant's commentators. Christopher Janaway, for example, stresses the importance of concepts in judgments of taste in the following way: "The free play of imagination and understanding was never meant to constitute the totality of any experiential episode. S is perceiving *o*, perhaps in a complicated, changing environment, in which *o* must first be identified as an object (moreover an object available to other

[119] That it is the individual aspects of the object that are taken into consideration in aesthetic judgments, is also suggested by Ted Cohen. He writes that: "in an experience of beauty, one is attending to the absolute and complete particularity of the beautiful object (…) This is the point that it is not on account of anything they have in common that beautiful objects are beautiful." Ted Cohen, "Three Problems in Kant's Aesthetics," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42, no. 1 (2002): 3. Something similar is also suggested by Rachel Zuckert: "Precisely because the properties of a beautiful object are aesthetically valuable only in the context of this very object, we experience the objects as an individual unity – specifically, a unity of diversity." Rachel Zuckert, "The Purposiveness of Form: A Reading of Kant's Aesthetic Formalism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 44(4) (2006): 610. She defends the same idea in her book: *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 190-195.

subjects) and then fastened upon with sufficient stability for the free play of the cognitive faculties to occur and the characteristic pleasure to be felt. These features demand that S is operating with concepts in experiencing *o*."[120] In fact, this seems to be what Kant is doing, when he talks about beautiful *flowers*, beautiful *birds*, beautiful *seashells* etc. He is using determinate empirical concepts by which he differentiates these objects, and one's judgment that a bird is beautiful is dependent on recognizing that it is a bird.

This proposal that judgments of taste depend on the concept of the object can still be compatible with Kant's essential claim that judgments of taste are not determined by the concept of the object. Kant claims that the pleasure (or displeasure) cannot be grounded on the concept of the object. On my account these two ideas can be reconciled. Pleasure in a judgment of taste depends on the combination of features that is not determined by the concept of the object (individual form), and therefore it is true that pleasure is not grounded on the concept of the object. That is, even when the cognitive judgment or the recognition of the object is the same, a judgment of taste can vary. For example, a colorful Danxia landform greatly differs in its aesthetic character from the landscape of Cappadocia, even though they both satisfy the same concept, that is, being a rocky landscape. This shows that an object's aesthetic character does not depend on the properties in virtue of which it is recognized as a particular kind of object. In other words, the pleasure or displeasure is not derived from the concept of the object, but must depend on some other features that not all objects of the same kind share with each other, and which are distinctive for a particular object itself. Hence,

[120] Christopher Janaway, "Kant's Aesthetics and the 'Empty Cognitive Stock'," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 189 (1997): 472. For a similar view see: Ted Cohen, "An Emendation in Kant's Theory of Taste," *Nous* 24, no. 1, On the Bicentenary of Immanuel Kant's Critique of Judgment (1990): 137-145. Similar position is also held by Ameriks. He writes that: "the non-conceptuality of aesthetic judgment is apparent from the fact that we do not believe that a matter of taste can be proved by concepts alone. (…) Obviously, this point still does not rule out all use of concepts in taste. (…) What Kant's argument shows at most is that in taste the consideration of concepts, or at least of some types of concepts in certain kinds of ways, is not sufficient, not that it is not (in some ordinary sense) essential." Karl Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 296-297.

Kant's idea that in judgments of taste the concept of the object is irrelevant in judging the beauty of the object is after all true. The subject of taste is a "singular representation of an object" (§8), that is, a particular image of an object (this particular bird, this particular flower etc.). A judgment of taste takes into consideration those individuated and specific features of an object, and which alone constitute aesthetic form.

To conclude based on my interpretation of the concept of free play both of the premises that Kant seems to hold can be true. The occurrence of a judgment of taste depends on a concept without which no perceptual experience of the form of the object would be possible. But it is also true that the outcome of judgments of taste do not depend on the concept of the object, because in different perceptual experiences the same cognitive judgments may be made, while judgments of taste differ. The determinate concept of the object cannot be the criterion of whether an object is beautiful, because that concept does not determine the distinctive combination of sense data that we take into consideration in judgments of taste. While the concept of the object is necessary for the representation of an object in the first place, it is not sufficient for a judgment of taste, because the properties responsible for the beauty (or ugliness) of the object are not those properties that are required for recognizing the object as a member of its kind. Hence, knowing for instance that a turkey is a bird, is irrelevant for making the judgment of taste regarding its form, even though on the basic level its form is conditioned by the concept of the object (such as concept of a bird).

Kant classifies judgments of taste as aesthetic reflective judgments. And he explains reflective judgments *in general* as an example of judgments that look for a rule (universal) for the particular. But this does not imply that this particular is not dependent on some concept, rather what it means is that the concept does not determine the particular. As Kant writes: "the reflecting power of judgment is supposed to subsume under a law that is not yet given and which is in fact only a principle for reflection on objects for which we are

objectively entirely lacking a law or a concept of the object that would be adequate as a principle for the cases that come before us" (§69). Accordingly, a reflective judgment depends on some determinate concept, but which is insufficient for the combination of sense data that we perceive. Therefore, a new concept must be found. But what is unique about judgments of taste, comparing to other types of judgments which also employ reflection (such as empirical concept acquisition), is that judgments of taste do not result in producing a determinative concept, but only in a feeling of pleasure or displeasure.

3.3 The notion of free harmony and the indeterminate principle of purposiveness

In the previous sections I discussed the notion of free imagination as an essential element in judgments of taste (of the beautiful and ugly). I argued that for some objects the combination of sense data is not fully determined by the concept of the object, and that this indeterminacy allows the free play of imagination.

Kant writes that the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is produced when the free play of imagination is in harmony or disharmony with the understanding. Aesthetic reflection is occasioned by the free play of imagination, that is, by the aspects of the manifold that are not fully determined by the concept of the object. If in such reflection the free play of imagination harmonizes (or disharmonizes) with the understanding, then pleasure (or displeasure) is produced. Accordingly, an additional explanation of the possibility of such free harmony (or disharmony) is needed. That is, how is it possible that a certain combination of elements, which is not produced in accordance with any of the rules of the understanding, is after all in harmony with it? If there is no concept governing the organization of some material, then how can we claim that the organization of this material exhibits rule-like order, as required in the Kantian understanding of a judgment of the beautiful? Kant claims that a beautiful object expresses *'lawfulness without a law'*. He writes: "only a lawfulness without

law and a subjective correspondence of the imagination to the understanding without an objective one – where the representation is related to a determinate concept of an object – are consistent with the free lawfulness of the understanding (which is also called purposiveness without an end) and with the peculiarity of a judgment of taste" (§22). That is, an object is beautiful if the combination of its elements is in harmony with the understanding (it is lawful), but without this harmony being determined by any particular concepts of the understanding (it is without a law). The experience we have of *lawfulness without a law*, when we feel that a certain combination of elements in the object is just the right one, in which elements suit and complement each other, without however having any determinate rule that would serve as a basis for the justification of the appropriateness of the specific combination. It is the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) alone that expresses the appropriateness (or inappropriateness) of a certain composition. Kant says that the feeling of pleasure is the confirmation of a certain *a priori* principle, which we cannot state (§18).

In fact, when in the Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant discusses the difference between determining and reflective judgments, he writes that the latter is governed by the *a priori* principle of the purposiveness or systematicity of nature (CPJ, V). He claims that this principle is a necessary presupposition that guides us in our reflection on nature. The presupposition is that nature in its empirical diversity and heterogeneity is after all arranged coherently and systematically, and that it is therefore compatible with our faculty of understanding and our ability to cognize nature. Even though Kant introduces this principle as necessary for our cognitive investigation of nature, there is reason to believe that the same principle is also responsible for our ability to make judgments of taste. This is the thesis that I will argue for in the rest of this chapter.

Before proceeding to a full explanation, I briefly want to point out some of the reasons in favor of my position. *First*, the principle of the purposiveness of nature (PPN) represents

nature as being amenable to our cognitive abilities, that is, as allowing for harmony between the imagination and understanding. But this is the meaning of the pleasure in a beautiful object: "the pleasure can express nothing but its suitability to the cognitive faculties that are in play in the reflecting power of judgment, insofar as they are in play, and thus merely a subjective formal purposiveness of the object" (CPJ, VII). Hence, it is justified to assume that PPN is the principle underlying judgments of taste (PJT) as well. *Second,* Kant formulates PPN as the subjective *a priori* principle of the power of judgment (CPJ, V). That is, the principle determines the subject alone, and not objects. It is a principle that is necessary for all subjects in their reflection on nature; hence it is an inter-subjectively valid principle, rather than objective. But judgments of taste also depend on: "a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity" (§20). Hence, PPN and PJT are both exclusively concerned with the subject and so cannot be distinguished on this basis. *Third,* PPN is a necessary principle for empirical cognition. More particularly, Kant describes it as the indeterminate rule that guides our reflection on nature and our ability to acquire empirical concepts. But Kant also characterizes PJT as the principle that is necessary for cognition in general. In §21, Kant identifies common sense, that is, the PJT, as the necessary condition of the universal validity of any cognition in general: "since the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a common sense, the latter must be able to be assumed with good reason, and indeed without appeal to psychological observations, but rather as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition, which is assumed in every logic and every principle of cognitions that is not skeptical." He also writes that: "pleasure must necessarily rest on the same conditions in everyone, since they are subjective conditions of the possibility of cognition in general and the proportion of these cognitive faculties that is required for taste is also requisite for the common and healthy understanding that one may presuppose in

everyone" (§39). Accordingly, PJT is the principle which grounds the possibility of having cognition, but to have empirical cognition depends on PPN. *Fourth*, Kant claims that PPN is inherently connected to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. He writes: "the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is only the receptivity of a determination of the subject, so that if the power of judgment is to determine anything for itself alone, it could not be anything other than the feeling of pleasure, and, conversely, if the latter is to have an *a priori* principle at all, it will be found only in the power of judgment" (F1, III). Therefore, both PPN and PJT determine the subject through the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. Taking all of these points together we are justified in concluding that PPN and PJT are one and the same principle.

While *prima facie*, it seems controversial to claim that a single principle is responsible for cognitive inquiry and for experiencing beauty, this connection can be legitimized by pointing out what, at the basic level, the principle of PPN amounts to. And that is a certain way of seeing the world, that is, for preferring one way of organizing sense data, to another. This preference for organizing sense data in a certain way, more particularly, in a way that represents nature as a system, is reflected in our cognition, but also occasionally in the feeling of pleasure in finding an object beautiful. For example, in preferring certain combinations (such as the spiral structure of petals in a rose) and disliking others (such as the disorganized aftermath of a storm or tornado). Let me explain in more detail the role that the principle of purposiveness has in our experience of nature.

3.3.1 Reflective judgments and the principle of the purposiveness of nature

Judgments of taste are *aesthetic* reflective judgments, that is, we judge the object according to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Kant discusses the reflective power of judgment *in general* in the Introduction to the third *Critique*. Reflective judgments, together with

determining judgments, belong to one of the three faculties of thought, that is, to the faculty of judgment (understanding and reason being the other two). Kant defines the power of judgment as the "faculty for the subsumption of the particular under the general" (F1, II). The function of the power of judgment is to connect empirical intuition with the appropriate concept, and to attain harmony between the imagination and understanding. It is the power of judgment that organizes sense data in a way that the concept can apply. We know so far, that this procedure is attained by the means of a schema. Each set of sense data activates an appropriate schema, which connects intuition with its concept. Kant describes such activity of judging as a determining power of judgment: "If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) is given, then the power of judgment, which subsumes the particular under it (…) is determining" (CPJ, IV). If one already has the schema (rule) of a flower, the power of judgment recognizes this rule in the sensible manifold, that is, it brings the sensible intuition to concepts. In the determining power of judgment, the concept of the object is the principle under which we subsume the particular intuition: "the underlying concept of the object prescribes the rule to the power of judgment and thus plays the role of the principle" (F1, V). The determining power of judgment is under the control of the understanding and its concepts, governing the imaginative synthesis of intuition. Accordingly, the imagination in determining judgments is not a free activity.

The reflective power of judgment, on the other hand, is activated when we are presented with a manifold (combination of sense data) for which we do not yet have a concept. As I argued before, this is the case in which the imagination is in free play. The aim of the power of judgment is to attain harmony between imagination and understanding, but since in this case we have no rule under which to subsume the manifold, this rule must first be found. "For this [power of judgment] is not merely a faculty for subsuming the particular under the general (whose concept is given), but is also, conversely, one for finding the general for the

particular" (F1, IV). Ascending from the particular to the universal is the task of the reflective power of judgment: "If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is merely reflecting" (CPJ, IV). The role of the reflective power of judgment is to find a new concept (rule) under which the particular can be subsumed, so that the determining judgment can be made. The reflective power of judgment is necessary to make more specific determining cognitive judgments, when one does not already have the concept.

To find the universal for a particular, that is, to make a reflective judgment, is however not an arbitrary procedure. Kant claims that there is in fact a principle that governs our reflection and search for universals. This principle is found in the power of judgment itself: "The reflecting power of judgment, therefore, can only give itself such a transcendental principle as a law, and cannot derive it from anywhere else (for then it would be the determining power of judgment), nor can it prescribe it to nature: for reflection on the laws of nature is directed by nature, and nature is not directed by the conditions in terms of which we attempt to develop a concept of it that is in this regard entirely contingent" (CPJ, IV). Kant describes this principle as a "principle of purposiveness for our faculty of cognition" (CPJ, V). More particularly, it is a principle that represents nature as a system: "a principle of the representation of nature as a system for our power of judgment, in which the manifold, divided into genera and species, makes it possible to bring all the natural forms that are forthcoming to concepts (of greater or lesser generality) through comparison" (F1, Vn).

In short, this principle presupposes a certain idea about nature, namely, that it is as though it were organized by an understanding similar to ours, so that agreement is possible between our cognitive abilities and the empirical character of nature itself.[121] But since empirical

[121] Christel Fricke explains the purposiveness that we attribute to nature as 'hypothetical purposiveness'. We view nature as purposive (a product of intentional activity), but not assuming that it is the product of a *human*

nature is not constituted by the understanding, when in fact it does agree with it, such agreement is recognized as contingent. It is suggested by Kant that the principle is necessary for us to have empirical cognition in general.[122] Only so far as we ground our reflection on nature on the principle of purposiveness "can we make progress in experience and acquire cognition by the use of our understanding" (CPJ, V).

Kant's argument for postulating the principle of purposiveness as necessary for empirical cognition can be reconstructed in the following way: (1) we are in possession of pure concepts of the understanding, which determine nature in the most general way. However, these concepts do not determine the empirical content of specific natural forms, such as dogs, stones, flower, fish, or of particular events, such as the warmness of the stone being caused by the sun: "the universal laws of nature yield such an interconnection among things with respect to their genera, as things of nature in general, but not specifically, as such and such particular beings in nature" (CPJ, V). (2) Since the categories do not determine the empirical content of specific natural forms, then, without any further presupposition, there could be such a diversity of natural forms and events that we could never understand nature as a unified and coherent system. There could be so many ways of organizing these particular experiences, that without the presupposition of underlying unity we could never understand nature as a systematically organized whole. Categories alone cannot guarantee for the coherence of our empirical cognition: "For although experience constitutes a system in accordance with transcendental laws, which contain the condition of the possibility of

intentional activity: "Nature is hypothetically considered as the product of the intentional action of a *divine* understanding." Christel Fricke, "Explaining the Inexplicable: The Hypotheses of the Faculty of Reflective Judgment in Kant's Third Critique," *Nous* 24, no. 1, On the Bicentenary of Immanuel Kant's Critique of Judgment (1990): 47.

[122] The connection between the principle of a reflective judgment and cognition has been also emphasized by Ginsborg, "Reflective Judgment and Taste," 64-67. See also her book: *The Role of Taste in Kant's Theory of Cognition* (New York & London: Garland Publishing Company, 1990), 182-190. See also Paul Guyer's discussion in his book *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11-73. A great discussion has also been put forward by Fiona Hughes, *Kant's Aesthetic Epistemology* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 248-269.

experience in general, there is still possible such an infinite multiplicity of empirical laws and such a great heterogeneity of forms of nature, which would belong to particular experience, that the concept of a system in accordance with these (empirical) laws must be entirely alien to the understanding, and neither the possibility, let alone the necessity, of such a whole can be conceived" (F1, II). (3) But this is not true. We do have an experience of empirical nature as a system (for example, a classification of biological forms into the system of genera and species). (4) Hence, this means that in addition to the pure concepts of the understanding, there must be a principle which guides us in making our experience of empirical nature coherent and systematic. As Kant writes, the principle "makes it possible for our power of judgment to find consensus in the comparison of natural forms and to arrive at empirical concepts, and their interconnection with each other, through ascent to more general but still empirical concepts" (F1, Vn). This principle is nothing else but a necessary presupposition of the power of judgment that "nature [in] the specification of the transcendental laws of understanding (principles of its possibility as nature in general), i.e., in the manifold of its empirical laws, proceeds in accordance with the idea of a system of their division for the sake of the possibility of experience as an empirical system" (F1, XI).

According to Kant's reasoning, we must assume that reflective judgment, which looks for the universal for a particular, operates under the pressuposition that nature in its specificity forms a system in which all phenomena are related to each other and divided into the genera and species. This assumption makes it possible for reflective judgment to look for the commonalities in natural forms, and therefore to bring them under the universals: "the reflecting power of judgment, given its nature, could not undertake to classify the whole of nature according to its empirical differences if it did not presuppose that nature itself specifies its transcendental laws in accordance with some sort of principle. Now this principle can be none other than that of the suitability for the capacity of the power of judgment itself for

finding in the immeasurable multiplicity of things in accordance with possible empirical laws sufficient kinship among them to enable them to be brought under empirical concepts (classes) and these in turn under more general laws (higher genera) and thus for an empirical system of nature to be reached. (…) The principle of reflection on given objects of nature is that for all things in nature empirically determinate **concepts** can be found" (F1, V). This assumption of the systematicity of nature is necessary for the rationality and coherency of our reflection, because without it, as Kant says: "all reflection would become arbitrary and blind, and hence would be undertaken without any well-grounded expectation of its agreement with nature" (F1, V). Kant claims that the principle is a "heuristic principle" (F1, II). It represents a method or a maxim by which we must orient ourselves in pursuing empirical investigations.[123] Namely, only if our reflection on nature is guided by a belief that nature forms a system, in which all natural forms are interrelated, in other words, if we believe that "nature has observed a certain economy suitable to our power of judgment and a uniformity that we can grasp" (F1, V), only then can the search for empirical concepts proceed by the way of using "the principles for the explanation and the understanding of one for the explanation and comprehension of the other as well, and to make an interconnected experience out of material that is for us so confused" (CPJ, V).[124]

This principle does not, however, absolutely guarantee that we will always find regularities among objects and bring them under concepts. That is, the principle does not guarantee that the power of judgment will always attain the harmony between imagination and understanding. The principle is merely a subjective maxim, or "a subjectively necessary transcendental presupposition" (F1, IV), as to how we ought to approach nature in order to

[123] Kant writes that some such maxims or particular determinations of the principle are following: "nature takes the shortest route (...) she makes no leaps in the manifold of forms (...) she is rich in species but sparing with genera etc" (F1, IV).

[124] For example, Guyer explains the method of the principle as one of "formulating and testing hypotheses." The hypothetic rule that fits best into the established network of rules and laws is then accepted. In: *Kant's System of Nature and Freedom*, 64.

attain the systematicity of nature, and this means that it is not necessarily guaranteed that nature will in fact always be in accord with the principle of systematicity. The principle does not determine anything about nature, but it only represents an orientation we must take in our investigation of nature. It is a merely regulative (not constitutive) principle for our understanding to find the systematicity in nature, but it does not guarantee that this cognitive need of ours will always be fulfilled. Fiona Hughes puts it nicely: "But this necessity is a necessary possibility and not a necessity which is already secured. It is necessary in anticipation at the basis of all synthetic activity. While it is the basis of undertaking the activity of judging with an expectation of success, it is not the basis for our being assured that we will always be able to make sense of the contingency with which we are faced."[125]

3.4 The principle of purposiveness and judgments of taste

Kant discusses the principle of purposiveness mainly in relation to its use in empirical concept acquisition and scientific investigation of nature. But in addition, he suggests that there is a connection between this principle and judgments of taste. This connection is implicit in his formulation of a judgment of taste as a reflective judgment, in which we compare a representation of the object with our own cognitive faculty (ability to bring intuition to concepts) (F1, V). Kant writes that the principle of purposiveness is a necessary presupposition that precedes all reflection and comparison (F1, V), which implies that it precedes comparison specific for judgments of taste as well. Accordingly, one has a good reason to favor the idea that the principle of purposiveness is also the principle underlying judgments of taste.

Indeed, this idea comes out explicitly in the following passages: "In a critique of the power of judgment the part that contains the aesthetic power of judgment is essential, since this alone

[125] Fiona Hughes, "The Technique of Nature: What Is Involved in Judging?" in *Kants Ästhetik, Kant's Aestheics, L'esthétique de Kant*, ed. Herman Parret (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 190.

contains a principle that the power of judgment lays at the basis of its reflection on nature entirely *a priori*, namely that of a formal purposiveness of nature in accordance with its particular (empirical) laws for our faculty of cognition, without which the understanding could not find itself in it" (CPJ, VIII). And also: "although aesthetic judgments themselves are not possible a priori, nevertheless a priori principles are given in the necessary idea of an experience, as a system, which contain the concept of a formal purposiveness of nature for our power of judgment, and from which the possibility of aesthetic judgments of reflection, as such, which are grounded on a priori principles, is illuminated a priori" (F1, IX). And once again: "all judgments about the purposiveness of nature, be they aesthetic or teleological, stand under principles *a priori*, and indeed such as belong especially and exclusively to the power of judgment, since they are merely reflecting and not determining judgments" (F1, X).

The main idea that these passages suggest is that judgments of taste depend on an *a priori* principle, and that this principle is the necessary presupposition of the purposiveness of nature. This principle states that nature is a systematic unity, and therefore amenable to our cognitive abilities. It is therefore a principle that is necessary for empirical concept acquisition. Accordingly, finding an object beautiful and finding the concept under which to subsume the particular are made in reference to the same principle, and to the same cognitive need we have, that is, to systematize experience: "The self-sufficient beauty of nature reveals to us a technique of nature, which makes it possible to represent it as a system in accordance with laws the principle of which we do not encounter anywhere in our entire faculty of understanding, namely that of a purposiveness with respect to the use of the power of judgment in regard to appearances" (§23). The claim is that a beautiful object exhibits a technique of nature, that is, a purposiveness that allows us to represent nature as a system. But, as Kant writes, it is not nature itself that is technical (that is, purposive), but rather "the power of judgment is properly technical; nature is represented technically only insofar as it

conforms to that procedure of the power of judgment and makes it necessary" (F1, VII). In other words, this means that a beautiful object is the result of the conformity of the object with the power of judgment. That is, an object is considered beautiful when it satisfies the principle of purposiveness, which guides the procedure of the power of judgment. But the principle is also satisfied in the case of finding the concept under which to subsume a particular: "The reflecting power of judgment thus proceeds with given appearances, in order to bring them under empirical concepts of determinate natural things, not schematically, but technically (…) in accordance with the general but at the same time indeterminate principle of a purposive arrangement of nature in a system, as it were for the benefit of our power of judgment, in the suitability of its particular laws (about which understanding has nothing to say) for the possibility of experience as a system" (F1, V). Accordingly, both beautiful objects and finding the concept for a particular represent the satisfaction of the same principle of nature's purposiveness for our cognitive abilities.[126]

Moreover, Kant suggests that the principle of purposiveness is properly revealed only in judgments of taste. He writes: "It is therefore properly only in taste, and especially with regard to objects in nature, in which alone the power of judgment reveals itself as a faculty that has its own special principle and thereby makes a well-founded claim to a place in the general critique of the higher faculties of cognition, which one would perhaps not have entrusted to it" (F1, XI). This implies that the principle is not revealed in cognitive inquiries (empirical concept acquisition), even though it is also necessary for them. On my understanding, Kant's thought can be explained with reference to the two kinds of reflection employed in the power of judgment. He writes that in empirical concept acquisition,

[126] This is also the view suggested by Ginsborg, "Reflective Judgment and Taste," 66-68. This idea is also defended by Patricia Matthews, *The Significance of Beauty: Kant on Feeling and the System of the Mind* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2010), 63-79. See also: Avner Baz, "Kant's Principle of Purposiveness and the Missing Point of (Aesthetic) Judgments," *Kantian Review*, 10, no. 1 (2005): 1-32. And: Rolf–Peter Horstmann, "Why Must There Be a Transcendental Deduction in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*?" in *Kant's Transcendental Deductions*, ed. Eckart Förster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 157-176.

reflecting is comparing one form with other forms in order to find common features (the concept). In judgments of taste, on the other hand, reflecting is comparing a single form with our own faculty of cognition (F1, V). This means that in the first case the primary result of the comparison made in accordance with the principle is the perception of the commonalities between two objects. However, in judgments of taste the primary result is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, and it is this feeling that reveals the extent to which the principle of purposiveness is satisfied by the object.

One might object at this point to the view that a single principle can underlie two different abilities, that is, an ability to make cognitive judgments and an ability to make judgments of taste. Namely, to find an object beautiful is not to attribute an objective property to the object, as cognitive judgments do: "beauty is not a concept of the object, and the judgment of taste is not a judgment of cognition" (§38). Rather, it is the result of a relation between us and the object, that is, that the object gives us a feeling of pleasure. Kant's characterization of the principle of purposiveness, however, does not preclude the possibility that the principle can ground such different abilities. Even though the principle governs our search for empirical concepts, and is therefore used for cognition, it does not make any determinate claims about the object (this can be done only by the determining judgment). Kant claims that the principle represents only a unique way of reflecting and approaching nature: "concept [of the technic of nature] does not ground any theory and does not, any more than logic, contain cognition of objects and their constitution, but only gives a principle for progress in accordance with laws of experience, whereby the investigation of nature becomes possible. But this does not enrich the knowledge of nature by any particular objective law, but rather only grounds a maxim for the power of judgment, by which to observe nature and to hold its forms together. (…) For the representation of nature as art is a mere idea, which serves as a principle, merely for the subject, for our investigation of nature, so that we can where possible bring interconnection,

as in a system, into the aggregate of empirical laws as such, by attributing to nature a relation to this need of ours" (F1, II). We have certain ideas about the world and we orient ourselves in the world according to these ideas. The principle is an idea about how the world is supposed to be, so that it allows our understanding to cognize it, and it is an idea that holds only for us, as cognitive beings. The principle does not determine the world; rather, it determines us, and our need to see the world in a specific way: "this transcendental concept of a purposiveness of nature is neither a concept of nature nor a concept of freedom, since it attributes nothing at all to the object (of nature), but rather only represents the unique way in which we must proceed in reflection on the objects of nature with the aim of a thoroughly interconnected experience, consequently it is a subjective principle (maxim) of the power of judgment" (CPJ, V). But if the principle does not determine objects, but only represents a subject's orientation in the world, then it becomes easier to see how it can be the principle for non-cognitive judgments, such as judgments of taste, as well.

Furthermore, since the principle concerns subjects alone and their preference to see the world organized one way rather than another, then one can see the connection between the principle and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. That is, if one has a certain need, and in this case, the need to systematize our experience of nature for the sake of understanding, then the satisfaction of this need, that is, when we come across such a system of nature, can produce a feeling of pleasure. Indeed, Kant writes that if the principle determines the subject, then this awareness of the satisfaction of the principle can be given only through the feeling of pleasure and displeasure: "the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is only the receptivity of a determination of the subject, so that if the power of judgment is to determine anything for itself alone, it could not be anything other than the feeling of pleasure, and, conversely, if the latter is to have an *a priori* principle at all, it will be found only in the power of judgment" (F1, III). If the principle of purposiveness determines the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in

the subject, then these feelings will be experienced in each case of finding systematicity and unity in nature, or their converse, respectively. That is, pleasure will be experienced not only in judgments of taste, but also in reflective judgments by which we acquire empirical concepts. In judgments of taste, where the subject's relation to the object is directly compared with the principle, what we experience is the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) alone. But in empirical concept acquisition, where the principle is used to find the common properties among objects, finding the concept will also be accompanied with the feeling of pleasure, since finding the concept indicates that nature is systematically arranged, and in that case the principle must have been satisfied.

Kant explains in more detail the connection between the principle of purposiveness and the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in section VI of *Introduction*. His explanation of this connection refers to the feeling of pleasure that we experience in finding the concept under which to subsume the particular, yet it can be applied to the explanation of the feeling of pleasure in judgments of taste as well. The explanation Kant gives is that pleasure is the result of a contingent accordance between nature and our cognitive abilities. In short, the argument can be reconstructed in the following way: (1) We have a certain need to unify and systematize experience (to find universals for the particulars): "The lawful unity in a combination that we cognize as in accordance with a necessary aim (a need) of the understanding but yet at the same time as contingent in itself is represented as a purposiveness of the objects (in this case, of nature)" (CPJ, V). (2) The satisfaction of this need is not guaranteed. The principle of purposiveness is a presupposition that holds good for us, but not necessarily for nature. This means that when this presupposition of purposiveness is met with in nature, that is, when the harmony between imagination and understanding is established, then this harmony is considered as contingent: "that the order of nature in its particular laws, although its multiplicity and diversity at least possibly surpass all our power

of comprehension, is yet fitted to it, is, as far as we can see, contingent" (CPJ, VI). We expect the world to exhibit systematicity, but the satisfaction of this expectation is not guaranteed. (3) Satisfaction of every need, when this satisfaction is not guaranteed,[127] produces the feeling of pleasure: "The attainment of every aim is combined with the feeling of pleasure" (CPJ, V). (4) Hence, to find purposiveness in nature (to satisfy our cognitive need), produces the feeling of pleasure: "bringing heterogeneous laws of nature under higher though always still empirical ones, so that if we succeed in this accord of such laws for our faculty of cognition, which we regard as merely contingent, pleasure will be felt" (CPJ, VI). Pleasure, in other words, is the relief of a need: "hence we are also delighted (strictly speaking, relieved of a need) when we encounter such a systematic unity among merely empirical laws, just as if it were a happy accident which happened to favor our aim" (CPJ, V). Pleasure designates that our expectations about the world are fulfilled. In other words, we feel pleasure in the experience of the contingent harmony between nature and our cognitive abilities.

Furthermore, because all judging subjects share the same cognitive need, or as Guyer has put it "craving for cognition"[128], it follows that the feeling of pleasure in the satisfaction of the universal cognitive need is universally valid: "The attainment of every aim is combined with the feeling of pleasure; and, if the condition of the former is an *a priori* representation, as in this case a principle for the reflecting power of judgment in general, then the feeling of pleasure is also determined through a ground that is *a priori* and valid for everyone" (CPJ, VI). Accordingly, everyone will experience the feeling of pleasure in the free harmony between imagination and understanding, because this harmony is presupposed *a priori* by the principle of purposiveness, which is shared by everyone.

[127] Pleasure, Kant writes, is not experienced by the application of categories to the sense data. This is because this procedure is automatic. It is simply given that the understanding applies the categories on the sense data (CPJ, VI).

[128] Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 104.

On the other hand, if our aim to find nature's purposiveness remains unsatisfied, then a feeling of displeasure is produced: "a representation of nature that foretold that even in the most minor investigation of the most common experience we would stumble on a heterogeneity in its laws that would make the unification of its particular laws under universal empirical ones impossible for our understanding would thoroughly displease us; because this would contradict the principle of the subjective-purposive specification of nature in its genera and our reflecting power of judgment with respect to the latter" (CPJ, VI). Because we all have the same cognitive need to find purposiveness in nature, the feeling of displeasure, resulting from the dissatisfaction of this need, is also universally valid. The principle of purposiveness is merely a necessary subjective presupposition about nature, hence it does not follow that nature's purposiveness is always guaranteed. It is possible that we come across such heterogeneity and diversity of natural forms that we are unable to unify them (bring them under concepts). The feeling of displeasure in this case results from experiencing a conflict or disharmony between nature and our cognitive abilities.

3.5 Aesthetic representation of purposiveness and the concept of beauty

In the previous section I argued in favor of the idea that the principle of the purposiveness of nature is the principle of taste. We have a need to systematize experience, that is, to attain agreement between nature and our cognitive abilities. The systematization of experience is our mode of approaching and organizing nature, so that we are able to cognize it. Arata Hamawaki nicely puts this idea by saying that: "it is the business of the power of judgment to project ahead of itself the terms under which nature can offer itself to me as knowable (…) This projection is not under the constraint of nature, but rather constrains nature to yield its laws to us."[129] This projection of the power of judgment is embodied in the idea of the

[129] Arata Hamawaki, "Kant on Beauty and the Normative Force of Feeling," *Philosophical Topics* 34, no. 1&2 (2006): 130.

principle of purposiveness, which serves as our guide in nature. This principle guides our reflection through the feeling of pleasure (nature conforms to the principle) or displeasure (nature does not conform to the principle).

Even though determinate judgments also represent the conformity of nature with our cognitive abilities, that is, a successful synthesis of intuition and concepts, nevertheless no pleasure occurs in them. This is because the synthesis in determining judgments is governed by the understanding and its concepts, and accordingly the synthesis is assured. If we already have a concept for the particular, then the synthesis proceeds automatically. The feeling of pleasure accompanies a successful synthesis only if this synthesis is not governed by concepts, but by the principle of the purposiveness alone, and therefore its success is merely presupposed, but not secured. The feeling of pleasure is the satisfaction of the principle of the purposiveness, and it can occur only in judgments where this principle is employed.

Judgments which are governed by the principle of purposiveness are reflective judgments. The aim of the reflective power of judgment is to find the universal for the particular, that is, to conceptualize the experience. This happens either in logical reflective judgments, where the universal found is an empirical concept, or in aesthetic reflective judgments (judgments of taste), where the universal found is grasped through the feeling of pleasure alone.[130] Kant writes: "One has good reason to assume, in accordance with transcendental principles, a subjective purposiveness of nature in its particular laws, for comprehensibility for the human power of judgment and the possibility of the connection of the particular experiences in one system of nature; where among its many products those can also be expected to be possible which, just as if they had actually been designed for our power of judgment, contain a form so specifically suited for it that by means of their variety and unity they serve as it were to

[130] A judgment is logical when "its predicate is a given objective concept" (F1, VIII).

strengthen and entertain the mental powers (which are in play in the use of these faculties), and to which one has therefore ascribed the name of **beautiful** forms" (§61). The idea is that the principle of purposiveness, which makes it possible to cognize nature as a system and to find concepts for particulars, is also responsible for finding certain individual forms beautiful. A beautiful object complements our idea of nature as a system. Finding a concept and making a judgment of taste are determined by the same principle of judgment. And since they both represent a successful application of the principle of purposiveness in nature, the feeling of pleasure occurs in both cases. But while in logical reflection the pleasure occurs when finding a determinate concept, in judgments of taste, where purposiveness is not grasped in a determinate concept, the feeling of pleasure is the sole experience of a successful synthesis. And only this experience is the aesthetic experience of the purposiveness. I will shortly explain the distinction between the aesthetic and logical experience of purposiveness in more detail, but first I want to consider some objections to the view I argue for.

Some of the commentators have argued against the view that the principle of the purposiveness of nature (idea of nature as a system) is the principle of judgments of taste.[131] Ordinarily, two main objections against this view are raised. *First*, that the principle of the purposiveness of nature is concerned with finding the empirical determinate concepts for particulars, and therefore with the classification of objects under species and genera. The principle is used for logical or conceptual reflection, to think of nature as a logical system (that nature in its multiplicity can be classified into a hierarchy of concepts). The procedure of logical reflection is characterized by comparing different forms with each other in order to find common properties between them. Accordingly, what is considered as logically purposive is *the relation* between forms. On the other hand, judgments of taste are not

[131] These are: Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 61-62. Similar objection is raised by Alexander Rueger and Sahan Evren, "The Role of Symbolic Presentation in Kant's Theory of Taste", *British Journal of Aesthetics* 45, no. 3 (2005): 232. See also: Luigi Caranti, "Logical Purposiveness and the Principle of Taste," *Kant-Studien* 96, no. 3 (2005): 368. See also: Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 44-47.

cognitive judgments and do not have as their aim to find a concept under which to classify the object. Aesthetic reflection proceeds by comparing an individual form with our cognitive abilities. Accordingly, aesthetic purposiveness is *in the form* of the object, and not in the relation between forms. It results in the feeling of pleasure alone, and not in a concept. But such a difference between logical and aesthetic purposiveness presumably implies a difference in the principles underlying them.

The *second* objection is that the feeling of pleasure resulting from the satisfaction of the principle of purposiveness is not an aesthetic pleasure. Kant writes that the feeling of pleasure resulting from finding conceptual purposiveness ceases to exist once we have become familiar with the object (CPJ, VI). But the feeling of pleasure in finding an object beautiful is phenomenologically different. A beautiful rose sustains one's pleasure no matter how familiar one becomes with it. As Kant writes, beautiful object "repeatedly attracts attention" (§12). Aesthetic pleasure, therefore, does not cease to exist. Furthermore, Kant claims that aesthetic pleasure is disinterested pleasure: "satisfaction only that of the taste for the beautiful is a disinterested and **free** satisfaction; for no interest, neither that of the senses nor that of reason, extorts approval" (§5). But if we claim that aesthetic pleasure is the result of the satisfaction of our cognitive need, and if having a need presupposes that we have an interest in satisfying this need, then it follows that such pleasure must be interested. But, aesthetic pleasure is not interested. Hence, it cannot be the result of satisfying our cognitive need, as the pleasure in logical reflective judgments is. Overall, the difference in the phenomenology of the feeling of pleasure in logical and aesthetic purposiveness presumably implies difference of the principles. I will begin considering first objection.

It is true that Kant explains the distinction between logical (conceptual) and aesthetic purposiveness as a distinction between purposiveness *in the relation between forms* and

purposiveness *in the form itself*. Of the former he writes: "these forms themselves are not thereby thought of as purposive, but only their relation to one another and their fitness, even in their great multiplicity, for a logical system of empirical concepts" (F1, V). And of the latter he says: "the ground of the pleasure is placed merely in the form of the object" (CPJ, VII). Purposiveness in the relation between forms leads to the formation of a determinate concept. But the purposiveness of a particular form itself leads to the feeling of pleasure alone.

However, the fact that purposiveness can be thought to exist at two levels (that is, between forms and in the form) does not necessarily imply that there must be two different principles of reflective judgments, that is, a principle of logical purposiveness and a principle of aesthetic purposiveness. I will argue later that these are different manifestations of the same principle. For now, suffice it to say that in each case the principle functions with aim of producing a synthesis between intuition and concepts (attain the agreement between nature and our cognitive abilities). The difference is due to the scope of that on which the principle acts in each case. Kant writes that reflection on the object can proceed in two ways: "To reflect (to consider), however, is to compare and to hold together given representations either with others or with one's faculty of cognition, in relation to a concept thereby made possible" (F1, V). Comparing forms with each other results in the formation of an empirical concept and in making a cognitive judgment. The comparison of a single form with cognitive abilities results in aesthetic pleasure and in making a judgment of taste. Yet, both kinds of reflection satisfy the same cognitive aim of a judgment, that is, to find the universal for the particular (to conceptualize experience). And this process is governed by the principle of the purposiveness of nature.

Kant claims that judgments of taste are *merely reflective judgments* (F1, VIII). And he understands *merely reflective judgments* as judgments concerned with finding the universal. He writes: "If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is *merely reflecting"* (CPJ, IV). This indicates that a judgment of taste is also one in which universals for a particular form is being sought, just as in logical reflective judgments. Furthermore, it is clear from this and other passages that Kant uses the terms 'universal' and 'concept' interchangeably. Indeed, if we take a closer look at the passage where Kant describes the two types of reflection (logical and aesthetic), he claims that both are made "in relation to a concept thereby made possible" (F1, V). Similarly, he states in §4: "The satisfaction in the beautiful must depend upon reflection on an object that leads to some sort of concept (it is indeterminate which)." Based on this, we can say that Kant understands both types of judgments as leading to a concept, and since the principle of purposiveness is precisely that which allows the power of judgment to find concepts, it must be that each type of judgment is made in reference to this same principle. It remains to be seen, then, in what way the two types of reflective judgment are in fact distinct.

As I will argue, the difference between logical and aesthetic reflective judgments is that the concept found in the former case is determinate in the sense in which the criteria of its application can be explicitly articulated, whereas in the latter case the concept is indeterminate, with the judgment depending only on the feeling of pleasure. Even though a judgment of taste does not result in a determinate concept, it does after all satisfy the need of a reflective judgment to conceptualize experience. Anthony Savile expresses a similar idea by saying that a beautiful object "appears to cater for a need that we have to make cognitive sense of the world."[132] Finding an object beautiful, similarly to finding a determinate concept for the particular, reveals that the object fits with our idea of nature as a system. In the case of

[132] Anthony Savile, *Kantian Aesthetics Pursued* (Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press, 1993), 89.

logical reflective judgments, the principle of purposiveness is satisfied through finding a determinate concept, this latter being a relation that we recognize as holding between the forms of different objects. In the case of judgments of taste, on the other hand, no determinate concept is found, and so this is not a case of recognizing a relation between objects. However, a feeling of pleasure in a judgment of taste indicates that the principle of purposiveness is satisfied in these cases. Given that the principle of purposiveness is only satisfied in judgments where the systematicity of nature is exhibited, and that judgments of taste do not pertain to relations between objects, this systematicity must be exhibited in the relation between the object and our cognitive faculties. Put another way, there are several levels at which the systematicity of nature can be exhibited, corresponding to the levels of generality with which concepts can be applied. For example, the differing levels of generality exhibited in the following hierarchically ordered concepts: organism, vertebrate, fish, shark and so on. At each level at which a determinate concept can be found, this is the result of the recognition of common properties between different objects. We feel pleasure in such cases because they indicate the contingent conformity between nature and our cognitive faculties, that is, the satisfaction of our assumption of the systematicity of nature. The satisfaction of this assumption without the need for the recognition of common properties between objects (and hence without finding a determinate concept) can then only be the result of the relation between a specific concrete object and our cognitive faculties. The systematicity of nature is thereby exhibited not through a relation between the forms of different objects, but rather through the relation that a particular object alone has to our cognitive faculties. As mentioned previously, only in cases where common properties are found to hold between objects is it possible to find a determinate concept for the particular and so explicitly articulate the way or ways in which the principle of purposiveness is satisfied. In judgments of taste the principle is satisfied without finding common properties, and hence without the possibility of finding a

determinate concept, and hence without the possibility of explicitly articulating the criteria by which the principle is satisfied. Nevertheless, the satisfaction of the principle is manifest to us through the feeling of pleasure. That is, a beautiful object discloses the systematicity of nature at the most particular and concrete level and it does that through the feeling of pleasure alone.

A judgment in general, Kant claims, is the ability to think the particular under a universal. A judgment of taste is not an exception. The difference is only that in a judgment of taste, of the form 'this X is beautiful', the predicate does not refer to a determinate concept, since the criteria for its application cannot be explicitly articulated, but consist only in the feeling of pleasure. Hence, in judgments of taste no determinate cognition can be made.

This is because Kant understands concepts as representing general properties that different objects share with each other. Purposiveness can result in a determinate concept only when we compare different forms with each other in order to find commonalities among them, since only general features can be explicitly communicated. But in judgments of taste, Kant claims, we reflect on the combination of sense data in a particular form itself, without comparing this form with others. Aesthetic reflection is a reflection on an object's individual and distinctive properties; hence this purposiveness cannot be grasped in a determinate concept. We can explicitly articulate criteria for why we would classify something as a flower, or a face, but we cannot state such criteria that uniquely identify particular objects in all their detail. For instance, it is impossible to give a description that would apply completely accurately and uniquely to the flower on my windowsill, and yet this particular thing is the object of aesthetic reflection. A direct acquaintance with this object is the only way to make a judgment of taste concerning it. This contrasts with the case of a logical reflective judgment, since in this case we could know whether a determinate concept applies simply by a

sufficient enumeration of its properties, without having to be directly acquainted with the object itself.

The purposiveness in a judgment of taste, on the other hand, cannot depend on whether a determinate concept applies, but is revealed through the feeling of pleasure alone. Kant writes: "An aesthetic judgment in general can therefore be explicated as that judgment whose predicate can never be cognition (concept of an object) (although it may contain the subjective conditions for a cognition in general). In such a judgment the determining ground is sensation" (F1, VIII). But that the predicate cannot become cognition (a determinate concept) does not mean that no universal has been found.[133] It means only that the universal or the systematic unity of an individual object can be grasped only through the feeling of pleasure. The feeling of pleasure in judgments of taste substitutes for the role of determinate concepts in cognitive judgments. Kant alludes to such an idea when he writes: "…as if beauty were a property of the object and the judgment logical (constituting a cognition of the object through concepts of it), although it is only aesthetic and contains merely a relation of the representation of the object to the subject, because it still has the similarity with logical judgment that its validity for everyone can be presupposed" (§6). The feeling of pleasure is the way one recognizes purposiveness in an individual object, just as a determinate concept is the way one recognizes the purposiveness of an object's general properties: "Thus that subjective unity of the relation can make itself known only through sensation" (§9).

Both logical and aesthetic purposiveness represent the satisfaction of our cognitive aim to find purposiveness in nature. In logical reflective judgments, finding a determinate concept for the particular is the confirmation of our principle of purposiveness, hence, pleasure is

[133] Nicholas Wolterstorff calls such an undetermined concept found in judgments of taste 'aptness concept'. It is a concept similar to a determinate concept, but which cannot be specified. See: "An Engagement with Kant's Theory of Beauty," in *Kant's Aesthetics*, ed. R. Meerbote (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeview Publishing, 1991), 105-127.

indirectly produced. But in aesthetic reflective judgments, where purposiveness cannot be grasped in a determinate concept, the confirmation of the principle can be experienced directly through the feeling of pleasure alone. In fact, it is precisely because aesthetic purposiveness does not result in a determinate concept that the experience of pleasure does not cease to exist, as happens in logical reflective judgments.

Kant claims that the feeling of pleasure resulting from finding a determinate concept for the particular ceases to exist once we become familiar with the object. He writes: "we no longer detect any noticeable pleasure in the comprehensibility of nature and the unity of its division into genera and species, by means of which alone empirical concepts are possible through which we cognize it in its particular laws; but it must certainly have been there in its time, and only because the most common experience would not be possible without it has it gradually become mixed up with mere cognition and is no longer specially noticed" (CPJ, VI). The explanation is that pleasure resulting from a sucessfull unification of nature (in a concept) ceases to exist once it becomes fused with cognition. What Kant means by this is that once we acquire the concept for the particular, and once our subsumption of the particular under the concept (identification of the object) becomes automatic and spontaneous (procedure of a determining judgment), then the object no longer gives us pleasure. This explanation implies that in a case of the unification of nature which does not result in a determinate concept, then pleasure, produced by the sucessfull unification, cannot become fused with cognition. And if this is so, then, based on Kant's reasoning, the pleasure does not cease to exist. But the experience of the unifiability of nature which does not result in a determinate concept is an aesthetic experience of purposiveness. Hence, the feeling of pleasure in a judgment of taste does not cease to exist.

Furthermore, the feeling satisfies the condition of being disinterested, even though it is the result of a satisfaction of our cognitive need. Kant claims that a feeling of pleasure is interested if it is "determined not merely through the representation of the object but at the same time through the represented connection of the subject with the existence of the object. Not merely the object but also its existence please" (§5). But the feeling of pleasure resulting from satisfaction of our cognitive need is determined "merely through the relation of the object to the faculty of cognition" (CPJ, VI), hence without the connection to the existence of the object. Accordingly, pleasure as the result of satisfaction of our cognitive need is not interested pleasure. Taken all together, we do not need to assume the existence of a separete principle in order to explain different phenomenological character of aesthetic pleasure, thereby meeting the second of the two objections mentioned previously.

To sum up, judgments of logical and aesthetic purposiveness are made in reference to the same principle of the purposiveness of nature, and they are both accompanied by pleasure. The difference is that in aesthetic reflective judgments the feeling of pleasure does not cease to exist because purposiveness does not result in a determinate concept. The feeling of pleasure in a beautiful object is a perennial reminder of the object's suitability for us and our cognitive abilities.

According to Kant, an object is aesthetically purposive if its representation is directly connected to the feeling of pleasure, without the mediation of a concept: "The object is therefore called purposive in this case only because its representation is *immediately* connected with the feeling of pleasure; and this representation itself is an aesthetic representation of the purposiveness" (CPJ, VII). This immediate experience of the feeling of pleasure is the determining ground of the reflective judgment, which is called aesthetic for this reason. In fact, Kant distinguishes two kinds of aesthetic representation of purposiveness.

Namely, formal aesthetic purposiveness, and material aesthetic purposiveness, corresponding to the two kinds of aesthetic judgments, judgments of taste and aesthetic judgments of sense respectively (F1, VIII). Both kinds of judgments are called aesthetic because they are grounded directly on the feeling of pleasure. [134] But they differ considerably in that in a judgment of taste the representation of the object refers directly to the universally communicable feeling of pleasure, while in an aesthetic judgment of sense, the representation is referred directly to pleasure that has a mere private validity: "such a pleasure would be none other than mere agreeableness in sensation, and hence by its very nature could have only private validity, since it would immediately depend on the representation through which the object is given" (§9). The feeling of pleasure in an aesthetic judgment of sense is merely subjective, because it depends only on "the matter of the representations, namely mere sensation" (§14), and the matter of the representation is not something that is felt in the same way by all of us: "the quality of the sensations themselves cannot be assumed to be in accord in all subjects, and it cannot easily be assumed that the agreeableness of one color in preference to another or of the tone of one musical instrument in preference to another will be judged in the same way by everyone" (§14).

In a judgment of taste, however, the pleasure is universally valid, because it is determined by the *a priori* principle of purposiveness. Reflective judging of the object precedes pleasure and is its cause: "this merely subjective (aesthetic) judging of the object, or of the representation through which the object is given, precedes the pleasure in it, and is the ground of this pleasure in the harmony of the faculties of cognition" (§9). The assumption of the purposiveness of nature is *thought* before the pleasure is *felt* and its satisfaction is the cause of the pleasure: "if the reflection on a given representation precedes the feeling of pleasure (as the determining ground of the judgment), then the subjective purposiveness is thought

[134] Kant writes that: "aesthetic judgment of sense (…) relates a given representation (but not by means of the power of judgment and its principle) to the feeling of pleasure" (F1, VIII).

before it is felt in its effect" (F1, VIII). Because the subjective purposiveness is an assumption that is necessary for all of us, the pleasure as its effect is universally communicable, that is, expected to be experienced in the same way by all of us.

Kant claims that a judgment of taste concerns a *singular representation of the object*. That is, a singular form, rather than a relation between forms. We are interested in the nature of the particular object and the relation between cognitive powers that this singular representation generates. The principle of reflection applies to the synthesis of features particular to this form itself and not to the synthesis of common features in virtue of which the object belongs to a certain class. This is implied by Kant in the following passage: "A merely **reflecting** judgment about a given individual object, however, **can be aesthetic** if (before its comparison with others is seen), the power of judgment, which has no concept ready for the given intuition, holds the imagination (merely in the apprehension of the object) together with the understanding (in the presentation of a concept in general) and perceives a relation of the two faculties of cognition which constitutes the subjective, merely sensitive condition of the objective use of the power of judgment in general (namely the agreement of those two faculties with each other)" (F1, VIII). We find an object aesthetically purposive, Kant writes, *before we compare it with others*, that is, before noticing what this object has in common with others. Such purposiveness is called aesthetic because the representation is directly connected with the feeling of pleasure, without being generated in a determinate concept. The representation of an object is subsumed under the conditions of a reflective judgment alone: "to the power of judgment, under whose subjective but nevertheless still universal conditions the representation of the object is subsumed" (F1, VIII). These subjective conditions refer to our ability to judge (§35), to the principle of the purposiveness that governs our reflection, and which presupposes that there is a harmony between nature and our cognitive abilities. What we perceive in a judgment of taste (of the beautiful) is the conformity of the object with

this principle, that is, a harmony between imagination and understanding, and this is experienced through the feeling of pleasure alone: "the ground for this pleasure is to be found in the universal though subjective condition of reflecting judgments, namely the purposive correspondence of an object (be it a product of nature or of art) with the relationship of the cognitive faculties among themselves (of the imagination and the understanding) that is required for every empirical cognition" (CPJ, VII). We should point out here that it is consistent with this interpretation that the opposite can also be the case. If our apprehension of the object disagrees with our understanding, that is, if our representation of nature contradicts the principle of purposiveness, then this relation will cause a universally communicable feeling of displeasure alone.

Furthermore, the distinction I make between aesthetic reflection and logical (conceptual) reflection can solve some of the major difficulties pertaining to Kant's conception of free harmony, which were discussed in chapters 1 and 2. If aesthetic reflective judgments concern a particular combination of properties, whereas logical reflective judgments concern properties shared with other objects, then this means that aesthetic purposiveness is not required for a logical reflective judgment, even though both kinds of reflective judgments depend on free harmony or subjective purposiveness. In other words, it allows for the possibility that not all objects, for which empirical concepts are found, are aesthetically pleasing or beautiful just because their cognition depends on free harmony. Beauty is a purposiveness of an object's individual properties, while cognition is a purposiveness of an object in virtue of its common properties, and this allows for the possibility that objects of cognition can be ugly in virtue of the particular combination of properties being in disconformity with the principle of purposiveness.

3.6 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to give a more satisfactory account of Kant's notion of free harmony constituting judgments of taste (of the beautiful), than has been given so far. More particularly, I proposed an interpretation of free harmony that allows for the possibility to accommodate pure judgments of ugliness, and is consistent with Kant's overall aesthetic and epistemological theory.

The notion of harmony between imagination and understanding refers to our ability to connect intuitions with concepts, and this ability is called the *power of judgment*. Kant distinguishes between a determining power of judgment, where the attainment of harmony is governed by the concept of the understanding, and a reflective power of judgment, where the attainment of harmony is governed, not by concepts, but by the subjective *a priori* principle of the purposiveness of nature. We judge reflectively when we are presented with a manifold for which we do not yet have the appropriate concept. In other words, we are presented with a manifold that is not fully conceptually determined. I claimed that such a manifold is one in which the imagination is in free play (see section 1 and 2 of the present chapter). Kant further distinguishes between two kinds of reflective judgments, namely, logical and aesthetic reflective judgments. I argued that they both operate by the means of the principle of purposiveness which aims to conceptualize the manifold, that is, to find the appropriate concept. On my view, Kant's concept of beauty has inherent cognitive ambitions. It belongs to a general plan of our power of judgment to conceptualize every aspect of experience and make it cognizable for us, that is, to organize it in a way that fits with our cognitive abilities.

The idea that beauty corresponds to our need to cognize experience can shed more light on Kant's dubious argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste. Recall that Kant claims in §9 and §21 that judgments of taste depend on the same universally communicable

subjective conditions (harmony between imagination and understanding) that are required for cognition in general. This argument has been considered problematic for two main reasons: (i) Kant claims that a judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment, but an aesthetic one, and so grounded on pleasure rather than on concepts. Accordingly, it is not clear without further explanation how one and the same relation between cognitive powers can ground both cognitive judgments and judgments of beauty; (ii) Kant claims in CPR that cognition is constituted by conceptually determined harmony, whereas in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant claims that judgments of taste depend on harmony which is not determined by concepts. Furthermore, conceptually determined harmony is universally communicable because concepts serve as a universal point of reference, but harmony in judgments of the beautiful is not governed by concepts and hence it is unexplained how it can be universally communicable.

However, much of these discrepancies can be solved by examining Kant's notion of reflective judgments and the principle of the purposiveness of nature, which he puts forward in the Introduction to CPJ. He claims that we have an ability to judge objects without being fully determined by concepts, and that this ability is due to the *a priori* principle of purposiveness. This ability to judge objects by means of the principle of purposiveness underlies our empirical concept formation, and is therefore necessary for cognition *in general.* Aesthetic reflective judgments are due to the same principle, and depend on the same ability to experience free harmony. Furthermore, they are universally valid because they are due to the principle of purposiveness, which is necessary for all of us, and without which we would not be able to form empirical concepts and therefore to have cognition at all. But what is so unique for aesthetic reflective judgments, compared to logical reflective judgments, is that they do not result in a determinate concept, but in a mere feeling of pleasure. That is, both our ability to acquire a determinate concept and our ability to find an

object beautiful depends on our ability to experience free harmony or subjective purposiveness. But whereas aesthetic reflection depends on *mere* subjective purposiveness, logical reflection, in addition, results in a determinate concept. Kant writes: "pleasure can express nothing but (…) merely a subjective formal purposiveness of the object" (CPJ, VII). But the fact that beauty does not result in a determinate concept does not suggest that a judgment's aim for conceptualization is not satisfied, but only that this conceptualization cannot be explicitly articulated. Avner Baz nicely expresses this characteristic of beauty by saying: "beauty is that about the object which calls (…) for articulation and expression, and yet evades all available concepts, or the habitual and common forms of expression."[135] When we find an object beautiful, we feel that there is a tangible account of this, as if beauty were a concept, yet we are unable to put it into words.

Judgments of taste (of the beautiful) depend on our ability to experience free harmony between imagination and understanding, in other words, on our ability to judge objects by the means of the *a priori* subjective principle of the purposiveness of nature. This ability also underlies empirical concept formation. Kant's idea is that free harmony is the cause of the feeling of pleasure. But this implies not only that I feel pleasure in making a judgment of taste, but I must also experience pleasure each time I acquire the empirical concept for an object. This implies that all objects of cognition (or at least in those cases where we find a concept for the first time) must be experienced as beautiful. The interpretative strategies given so far which argue that free harmony is a necessary subjective condition for empirical concept formation, cannot meet the 'everything is beautiful' problem.[136]

[135] Avner Baz, "What's the Point of Calling Out Beauty?" *British Journal of Aesthetics* 44, no. 1 (2004): 67.
[136] Recall that the 'everything is beautiful' argument is not problematic for interpretations that do not claim that free harmony is necessary for cognition. But then again, these interpretations have problems with solving the universal validity of judgments of taste.

The interpretation I have developed can meet this problem. Recall that Kant claims that an object is considered aesthetically purposive when its representation is *directly* connected to the feeling of pleasure. But in the case of empirical conceptualization, the representation is not directly connected to pleasure; rather, it is mediated by a concept. Finding the concept for the particular is the confirmation of the principle of purposiveness, and this confirmation produces pleasure. Accordingly, conceptual purposiveness is not aesthetic purposiveness. Hence, to bring an object under an empirical concept is not to make a judgment that this object is beautiful or aesthetically purposive. An object is aesthetically purposive only if its representation is directly connected to the feeling of pleasure. But what is directly connected with pleasure, without the mediation of a concept, can only be the reflection on an object's particular combination of properties, since pleasure from a judgment involving general properties must be the result of finding a concept. Accordingly, only when we reflect on an object's individual properties do we in fact make an aesthetic reflective judgment. A judgment of taste is a singular judgment, meaning that the predicate 'beautiful' cannot be generalized. That is, the predicate beautiful is ascribed to the individual and not to the set of individuals belonging to the same kind.[137] An object is judged as beautiful in virtue of its distinctive and individual aspects, and these aspects are not entailed by features which an object shares with members of its kind. The experience of pleasure we feel in finding the concept for an object is not the pleasure that we feel in finding the systematic unity of an object's individual properties.

Aesthetic purposiveness is different from logical purposiveness, and so we need not conclude that it is necessary for cognition nor that it is a high degree of cognition.[138] This allows for

[137] For example, a judgment 'this rose is beautiful' is a singular judgment and cannot automatically be applied to all roses. See: CPJ §8

[138] First conclusion follows from Ginsborg's account (see chapter 2.4.1). The idea that aesthetic purposiveness is necessary for cognition has also been suggested by Ido Geiger, "Transcendental Idealism in the Third Critique" in *Kant's Idealism: New Interpretations of a Controversial Doctrine*, ed.by Dennis Schulting and Jacco

the possibility that an object can have cognitive purposiveness (purposiveness between forms), without having aesthetic purposiveness (purposiveness of the form itself). Hence, we can have an object of cognition, that is, we may be able to recognize the manifold under a concept, without this object being regarded as beautiful. More importantly, we can have an object of cognition (that is, classify the object into the system of genera and species), while at the same time this object (its individual aspects) can be perceived as aesthetically displeasing. That is, reflection on an object's individual form can be in disconformity with the principle of the purposiveness, and we can therefore find such an object ugly. For example, we can recognize that an object belongs to the class of Angler fish, hence finding its concept in the hierarchy of species and genera, while nevertheless finding it ugly. A more detailed exposition of the possibility of aesthetic ugliness will be given in the next chapter.

Verburgt (London & New York: Springer, 2010),71-87. Second conclusion follows from Paul Guyer's account (see chapter 2.7).

CHAPTER 4: THE EXPLANATION OF UGLINESS IN KANTIAN AESTHETICS

There is a Latin proverb, which states: "we never really know what a thing is unless we are able to give a sufficient account of its opposite."[139] This turns out to be particularly true for beauty and its opposite aesthetic concept, ugliness, in Kantian aesthetics. Since Kant's explanation of judgments of taste is based exclusively on the notion of free harmony, constitutive of judgments of the beautiful alone, the explanation of ugliness could not begin without a prior analysis of a positive aesthetic concept, beauty. This analysis was made in the previous chapter, where I proposed an interpretation of the notion of free harmony, based on Kant's general account of a reflective judgment and the subjective *a priori* principle of purposiveness. This analysis of the concept of beauty has also anticipated how ugliness can be included in Kantian aesthetics, which I will explain more deeply in the present chapter.

The discussion will proceed as follows: based on my interpretation of the concept of free harmony I will first propose a solution to the two main problems (Shier's and Guyer's) with accommodating judgments of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics. I will proceed with the analysis of Kant's notion of artistic beauty, in comparison to natural beauty, and apply my interpretation of free harmony to the explanation of *aesthetic ideas*, a significant component of Kant's conception of art. Based on this discussion, I will propose an explanation of artistic ugliness. My main objective is to give a solution to the recurrent problem of ugliness in art, namely, how artistic ugliness, experienced through the feeling of displeasure, can be valuable after all, as is evident in much contemporary art. Finally, in the concluding section I will discuss a much neglected topic in Kant's aesthetics, that is, the notion of disgust in contrast to ugliness. This discussion will have important implications for the understanding of our

[139] Cited by Lorand, "Beauty and Its Opposites," 399.

emotional response to, and evaluation of, contemporary art which deals with repulsive subject matter.

4.1 The solution to problems with judgments of ugliness in Kantian aesthetics

In the first chapter I introduced two main objections to the idea that judgments of ugliness are possible in Kantian aesthetics. The first objection was made by David Shier, who claimed that the accommodation of the state of mind required for judgments of ugliness is inconsistent with Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste. The second objection was made by Paul Guyer who claimed that the state of mind required for judgments of ugliness is not merely inconsistent with Kant's argument for the universality of judgments of taste, but also with his epistemological theory. Based on my interpretation of the concept of free harmony, I will now propose a solution to these problems, beginning with Shier's argument.

In the third *Critique*, Kant offers three versions of the argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste, in §9, §21 and §38, the last being the official version of the argument, entitled *"Deduction of judgments of taste"*. Shier's objection against judgments of ugliness is based on Kant's argument in §9, where it appears that Kant grounds the universality of judgments of taste on the premise that what is universally communicable is only the *state of mind required for cognition*, that is, the state of mind in which cognitive powers are in harmony. But a harmonious state of mind is identified with pleasure alone; hence, there is no possibility to accommodate a universally communicable state of mind required for displeasure and ugliness.[140]

In §38, however, Kant offers an argument that allows for the possibility of the universal validity of judgments of ugliness. The argument appears to be compatible with Kant's

[140] See 1.3 for a detailed analysis of Shier's argument.

doctrine of the principle of reflective judgments that he discusses in the *Introduction*. Accordingly, what is universally communicable is not only determinate cognition or the state of mind required for determinate cognition, but also our ability of reflective judging, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, is necessary for empirical concept acquisition, and therefore for the possibility to have cognitions in the first place. The activity of reflective judging is, as David Bell puts it: "a necessary condition of the possibility of all rule-governed thought and judgment."[141] Kant's full argumentation in §38 is as follows: "If it is admitted that in a pure judgment of taste the satisfaction in the object is combined with the mere judging of its form, then it is nothing other than the subjective purposiveness of that form for the power of judgment that we sense as combined with the representation of the object in the mind. Now since the power of judgment in regard to the formal rules of judging, without any matter (neither sensation nor concept), can be directed only to the subjective conditions of the use of the power of judgment in general (which is restricted neither to the particular kind of sense nor to a particular concept of understanding), and thus to that subjective element that one can presuppose in all human beings (as requisite for possible cognitions in general), the correspondence of a representation with these conditions of the power of judgment must be able to be assumed to be valid for everyone *a priori*. I.e., the pleasure or subjective purposiveness of the representation for the relation of the cognitive faculties in the judging of a sensible object in general can rightly be expected of everyone."

The first premise states that what pleases in judgments of taste is the *mere form* of the object, that is, the combination of sense data not determined by concepts of the understanding. Accordingly, pleasure is the result of the subjective purposiveness (or free harmony) of the form of the object for the power of judgment. In the second premise, Kant wants to find the rules of aesthetic judging and he claims that they refer to the *subjective conditions of the*

[141] David Bell, "The Art of Judgment," in *Immanuel Kant: Critical Assessments*, ed. Ruth Chadwick and Clive Cazeaux (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), 30.

power of judgment in general. This is a restatement of Kant's claim in §35 where he writes that: "the judgment of taste (…) is grounded only on the subjective formal condition of a judgment in general." He further identifies these subjective conditions of judgment with the: "faculty for judging itself, or the power of judgment" (§35). But from the *Introduction* we know that this faculty for judging is nothing other than the reflective power of judgment: "The reflecting power of judgment is that which is also called the faculty of judging" (F1, V). Accordingly, the rules of aesthetic judging refer to the reflective power of judgment, which is governed by the principle of the purposiveness of nature for our faculty of cognition. Hence, we can say that the rule of aesthetic judging is the principle of reflective judgment itself. In fact, this is explicitly confirmed by Kant's heading of §35, namely: "The principle of taste is the subjective principle of the power of judgment in general."

After locating the rule of aesthetic judging in the principle of reflective judgments, Kant proceeds to legitimate the universal communicability of this principle or the subjective condition of the power of judgment, by claiming that it is required for the possibility of having cognitions in general. This claim is compatible with Kant's statement in the *Introduction,* namely that the principle of reflection is required for the possibility to acquire empirical concepts, hence, for the possibility of determinate cognitions. Finally, the fourth premise states that the agreement of representation with these subjective conditions must also be universally communicable. In other words, if we all judge from the universal standpoint (principle), then the result of such judgments must also be universally communicable. Hence, the conclusion of the argument: since the agreement of the representation with the principle produces pleasure, pleasure must be universally communicable.

Based on this argument, the possibility of a disharmonious state of mind can be accommodated. The argument states that what is universally communicable is not only the

pleasurable *agreement* of the representation with the rule of aesthetic judging (free harmony), but the rules themselves. Hence, this allows for the possibility that the representation does not agree with the universally communicable conditions, and that such disagreement, perceived through the feeling of displeasure, is universally communicable. If we judge the object based on the universally communicable conditions, the feeling of displeasure, resulting from the disagreement of the representation with these conditions, is also universally valid. Hence, Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste can accommodate judgments of ugliness.

The second objection, raised by Paul Guyer, is that the disharmonious state of mind required for ugliness is epistemologically impossible.[142] His argument is based on the premise that according to Kant's theory a conceptual harmony between imagination and understanding is required not only for cognition, but to have an experience of the object in the first place. But this means that it is impossible to be conscious of a representation in which cognitive faculties are in disharmony. The possibility of the state of mind of sheer disharmony required for judgments of ugliness is therefore epistemologically precluded.

Guyer's conclusion logically follows if one identifies the harmonious activity between cognitive powers required for judgments of taste with the harmonious activity of determinate cognition (required for the basic awareness of the representation). However, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, this identification is mistaken. The harmony required for judgments of taste is one in which imagination is in free play, while the harmony required for perceptual experience is merely the basic requirement that the manifold can be brought under the concepts of the understanding, but in which the imagination is not necessarily determined by concepts. The interaction between the imagination and understanding, and the nature of the harmony differs in these different cases. Therefore, even though it is true that one cannot be

[142] See 1.7 for a full argumentation of Guyer's objection.

conscious of a representation in which the cognitive powers are in complete disharmony (some conceptual harmony is required), it is not necessarily true that one cannot be conscious of free disharmony. The latter is a disharmony attained in mere reflection, whose very possibility depends on the harmony between the sensible manifold and the categories, applied to the object through general empirical concepts. The reflective judgment comes up additionally to determining judgments. We reflect on the perception, that is, on the object that has already been subsumed under some concepts, and therefore where conceptual harmony has already been attained. Accordingly, the possibility of aesthetic disharmony does not contradict Guyer's thesis of the necessity of conceptual harmony for perceptual experience. The object that is being aesthetically reflected on is already before our consciousness.

I claimed in the previous chapter that a reflective power of judgment is responsible for making new concepts to more completely systematize our experience of nature, that is, "of bringing about a greater unity in our experience."[143] In reflective judgments we take into consideration those aspects of the object that are not determined by any known concepts, and search for new concepts under which to subsume it. The acquisition of such yet unknown rules is governed by the principle of purposiveness. Based on Kant's explanation, this principle merely presupposes that we will find the rule for the combination of sense data, and therefore experience harmony between the imagination and understanding. But this presupposition is not necessarily satisfied. It is therefore possible that the particular object has a combination of sense data that resists unification, that is, has a combination for which no appropriate rule can be found. In other words, the particular object resists our idea of how it ought to be, namely, that it ought to fit the structure of our mind.

[143] Michael Kraft, "Kant's Theory of Teleology," in *Immanuel Kant: Critical Assessments*, ed. Ruth Chadwick and Clive Cazeaux (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), 82.

As I have argued, Kant's view of reflective judgments is consistent with the possibility of reflective disharmony, because in reflective judgments we are concerned with the unification of those individual and particular aspects of nature that are left undetermined by pure concepts. Since these specific empirical aspects of objects are not determined by pure concepts, they do not necessarily find their agreement with our understanding. Even though our reflection on these aspects is not blind, but guided by the transcendental presupposition of the principle of purposiveness, this principle need not be satisfied in all cases. This principle merely claims that we expect to find unity among objects, that is, to be able to discern some pattern between seemingly disparate particulars, and to derive a rule from their comparison, and not that we will actually find it. There is then a possibility to experience a disharmony between free imagination and understanding. Kant explains the possibility of such disharmony in his description of logical reflective judgments. To recall, he writes that if we come across a particular that resists systematization, and cannot be unified under a concept, displeasure is produced.

In logical reflective judgments, displeasure is felt in our inability to find the appropriate concept for different heterogeneous individuals. It is their relation that resists our idea of purposiveness in its logical employment (to locate the particular in the system of nature). Logical purposiveness (or contra-purposiveness) does not however imply aesthetic purposiveness (or contra-purposiveness). The subject of an aesthetic reflective judgment is a singular representation and the individual aspects of the object that are not entailed in the concept. That is, the subject of taste is, as Kant writes: "unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept" (§49). Accordingly, it is the additional content, distinctive for the particular object alone, that is aesthetically evaluated. Beauty or ugliness is the experience of the individual form itself as compared with the principle of purposiveness, independent of the object's comparison to

others. The aesthetic feeling of displeasure is the result of the disagreement between the particular aspects of the object and the principle of purposiveness. It is a perennial reminder that an object's individual form is not suitable for us and our cognitive abilities.

Since aesthetic purposiveness is independent of logical purposiveness, the beauty or ugliness of an object does not depend on the concept of the natural kind to which it belongs. For this reason, one can have a cognition of an object, that is, one can recognize a particular object, say an animal called *fangtooth* as belonging to the species called *Anoplogaster Cornuta*, yet still find the animal utterly displeasing and ugly. This shows that the fangtooth is not aesthetically displeasing due to the disagreement with the natural kind to which it belongs. This particular animal may be a perfect specimen of its kind, that is, it can satisfy all the conditions required for an object to belong to this kind, yet still be ugly. The fangtooth is judged to be one of the most grotesque sea creatures by virtue of its black body, disproportionately large head, wide open jaw and long, sharp teeth. It is in virtue of the distinctive combination of the fangtooth's features that displeasure is occasioned, even though these features are shared by all members of this natural kind.

4.2 The application of the concept of free harmony to fine art

I have been discussing Kant's general theory of beauty (and ugliness), without yet discriminating between natural objects and art works, and considering whether this distinction implies a difference in their aesthetic appreciation. At first sight, this seems to be true for many cases, in view of the fact that the same object can be judged naturally ugly, yet artistically beautiful. For example, Modigliani's portraits of female faces are beautiful, even though they have disproportionate features with long necks, thin noses, blank eyes and small lips, which we would ordinary find displeasing in a real human. This distinction does not,

however, imply that Kant holds two different conceptions of beauty.[144] He writes that natural and artistic beauty both depend on the same standard, that is, on the free harmony between cognitive powers: "whether it is the beauty of nature or of art that is at issue: that is beautiful which pleases in the mere judging (neither in sensation nor through a concept)" (§45). The judgment of artistic beauty, Kant claims, is "a mere consequence of the same principles which ground the judgment of natural beauty" (F1, XII). And that is the principle of the reflective power of judgment: "aesthetic art, as beautiful art, is one that has the reflecting power of judgment (…) as its standard" (§44).

The difference in aesthetic appreciation of Modigliani portraits and an actual human being is based on the distinction between the concepts of fine and natural objects. In judging artistic beauty, Kant writes "one must be aware that it is art, and not nature" (§45). In judging artistic beauty we must take into account the purpose of the object (what it ought to be) and hence the perfection of the object with this purpose, which is not the case in judging natural beauty: "if the object is given as a product of art, and is as such supposed to be declared to be beautiful, then, since art always presupposes an end in the cause (and its causality), a concept must first be the ground of what the thing is supposed to be, and, since the agreement of the manifold in a thing with its inner determination as an end is the perfection of the thing, in the judging of the beauty of art the perfection of the thing will also have to be taken into account, which is not even a question in the judging of a natural beauty (as such)" (§48).

The distinction between artistic and natural beauty comes down to Kant's distinction between adherent beauty (which presupposes the concept of the purpose) and free beauty (which does not presuppose the concept of a purpose), respectively. In judging artistic beauty, it is not

[144] The opposite view has been suggested by D.W.Gotshalk, "Form and Expressions in Kant's Aesthetics," in *Immanuel Kant: Critical Assessments*, ed. Ruth Chadwick and Clive Cazeaux (London & New York: Routledge, 1992): 147-157. He claims that Kant holds formalist theory of natural beauty and expressionistic theory of artistic beauty.

only the form itself that is taken into account, but the purpose that governs the creation of the work as well. *Prima facie*, the notion of adherent beauty seems problematic, considering that for Kant beauty is purposiveness without purpose (or free harmony). That is, harmony in the given object must be attained freely, without being determined by the concept of the purpose with which the object was produced. Kant writes that to judge the object based on the concept of a purpose is to make a judgment of perfection, rather that one of taste: "when the imagination is compelled to proceed in accordance with a determinate law, then how its product should be, as far as its form is concerned, is determined through concepts; but then, as was said above, the satisfaction is not that in the beautiful, but in the good (of perfection, in any case merely the formal kind), and the judgment is not a judgment by means of taste" (§22).

On my view, however, the dependence of artistic beauty on the concept of a purpose does not preclude the possibility of free harmony. As I claimed in the previous chapter, all judgments of taste depend on the concept of the object, but this is not sufficient to determine the beauty of the object. Similarly, judgments of adherent beauty depend on the concept of the purpose with which the object is created, but this is also not a sufficient criterion for adherent beauty. Even though the concept of the purpose restricts the free play of imagination to some degree, it does not restrict the harmony (or disharmony) between the free imagination and the understanding.[145] Let me elucidate.

For Kant, objects of adherent beauty are works of art and artifacts, which are made with an aim to perform a function of some sort. For such objects, the concept of the object determines

[145] Similar interpretations of adherent beauty, but with different arguments, have also been suggested by Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste,* 138-14 and Paul Guyer, "Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal," in *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 129-140). Se also: Alexander Rueger, "Beautiful surfaces: Kant on Free and Adherent Beauty in Nature and Art," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16, no. 3 (2008): 535-557. And: Robert Stecker, "Free Beauty, Dependent Beauty, and Art," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 21, no. 1 (1987): 89-99.

their purpose (what they ought to be). In so far as the concept determines the purpose of the object, it determines the rules for the combination of the manifold (the form of the object). In other words, the concept of the object restrains the free play of imagination. For example, a vase is an object made with the purpose to hold cut flowers. In order to judge the beauty of a vase, we must first take into account what the vase is and this means to take into account its purpose. In order for the object to be a vase, it must fulfill its purpose in the first place. Accordingly, the form of the vase is determined by the purpose it is supposed to fulfill, that is, its form must be in accordance with its purpose.

However, the concept of the purpose does not preclude the free play of imagination completely and therefore it does not preclude free harmony (or disharmony). There are numerous different forms that satisfy the purpose of the vase, yet not all of them are beautiful. The beauty (or ugliness) of a vase is not determined by the satisfaction of the purpose, even though it depends on it. Within the constraint of the purpose, the imagination has an ability to play freely and therefore allows for the possibility of free harmony (or disharmony). The satisfaction of the purpose of the vase is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of its beauty (or ugliness).[146]

As opposed to artworks and artifacts, natural objects are objects of free beauty, which "are not attached to a determinate object in accordance with concepts regarding its end" (§16). The concept of the flower does not determine its purpose (we do not know what a flower ought to be, but just what it is, and although we now know that flowers have a biological function as the plant's organs of reproduction, this purpose is not a necessary component of our concept of a flower, since flowers were known and categorized prior to our identification

[146] I agree with Paul Guyer on this point. He writes similarly, that: "the suitability of an object's appearance to its intended use is a necessary condition for our finding the object beautiful, even if finding it beautiful is not reducible to finding its form suitable to its use. Beauty is not identical with utility, but where an object should have utility, then its utility is a necessary condition for its beauty." Paul Guyer, "Beauty and Utility in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 3 (2002): 448.

of this function), and therefore it does not determine the rules for the manifold – the imagination is completely free: "No concept of any end for which the manifold should serve the given object and thus which the latter should represent is presupposed, by which the imagination, which is as it were at play in the observation of the shape, would merely be restricted" (§16).

In sum, the difference between free and adherent beauty depends on the difference between the kinds of objects that are aesthetically judged. In order to give an appropriate aesthetic judgment regarding a certain object, we must take into account what the object really is. If the object is a vase, then we must take into account what the vase truly is, that is, an object whose purpose is to cut flowers. Judging the beauty of the vase therefore presupposes the knowledge of the vase's purpose which determines its existence as a vase. We may judge the beauty of the vase independently of the knowledge of its purpose, but then our aesthetic judgment of the vase is not an appropriate one, since we do not judge the object as it actually is.[147] The consideration of the purpose of the object restricts the range of the appropriate forms, that is, it restricts the freedom of the play of imagination, but it does not preclude it. And as long as in the apprehension of a given object the imagination can be free, the genuine judgment of taste, based on free harmony (or disharmony) can be given.

In fact, as Kant noticed, even though a given object has been created for some purpose, its beauty can be almost as free as in the case of natural objects, because for some objects "the ends are not adequately determined and fixed by their concept" (§17). Kant gives an example of the beauty of a home. The beauty of a home depends on the concept of its purpose (it ought to be a building meant for dwelling), hence it is an adherent beauty. But since its purpose is not sufficiently determined, also the rule for the combination of the manifold is

[147] Mallaband writes that: "to cause the appropriate hedonic response, an experience of *o* must contain substantial conceptual content pertaining to the true nature of the object." Philip Mallaband, "Understanding Kant's Distinction between Free and Dependent Beauty," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 52, no. 206 (2002): 81.

indeterminate. Hence, the concept of a purpose does not restrict the freedom of the imagination, and the latter can play almost as freely as in the case of natural objects. As we will see, this is particularly the case for objects of fine art.

Artistic beauty presupposes the concept of a purpose and it is therefore beauty of the adherent kind: "For something in it must be thought of as an end, otherwise one cannot ascribe its product to any art at all; it would be a mere product of chance" (§47). That is, the organizational structure of an art work is not accidental, but is made in accordance with a certain purpose in the artist's mind. This means that there are certain rules that govern the artist in creating his work: "For every art presupposes rules which first lay the foundation by means of which a product that is to be called artistic is first represented as possible" (§46).

The purposes of art works cannot be reduced to a single concept; rather, they are created with numerous purposes in mind. The artist may intend to express a certain emotion, represent certain ideas and concepts, express a political and social commentary, capture a certain event, or merely exercise free imagination in the play of colors and forms (abstract art). One may notice that, in comparison to those artifacts that have a practical function, the purposes of art are such for which no determinate rules can be given. For example, an artist's purpose may be to represent a certain idea, such as an idea of loneliness and the complexity of human existence (consider Ingmar Bergman's movie *Cries and Whispers,* 1972). Yet, one does not know what the idea of loneliness ought to look like, that is, one does not have an appropriate schema for such an idea (in comparison to the schema of, say, a table). But if one does not have a schema for a certain idea, then one does not have determinate rules in accordance with which to produce a manifold for such idea. Accordingly, what is distinctive for artistic beauty is that in spite of its dependence on the concept of a purpose, the imagination can be almost as free as in the case of natural objects. That is, art works are *unlike* natural objects in that the

former depend on the concept of a purpose (what the art work ought to be), yet, they are *like* natural objects in that no determinate rules for the combination of a sensible manifold can be given. This is, in a nutshell, the idea that Kant has in mind when he says that: "art can only be called beautiful if we are aware that it is art and yet it looks to us like nature" (§45). In other words, in order to judge the beauty of an art work, one must be aware that the object is an art work and that is created for some purpose, and therefore in accordance with some rules. Yet, these rules cannot be of a determinate kind: "It cannot be couched in a formula to serve as a precept, for then the judgment about the beautiful would be determinable in accordance with concepts" (§47). The purposiveness in an art work must be free of rules, as if a product of a spontaneous and accidental activity: "the purposiveness in its form must still seem to be as free from all constraint by arbitrary rules as if it were a mere product of nature" (§45).

Kant claims that the rules governing the creation of an art work must be the rules of a genius: "since without a preceding rule a product can never be called art, nature in the subject (and by means of the disposition of its faculties) must give the rule to art, i.e., beautiful art is possible only as a product of genius" (§46). The artist's production of the work is not governed by any known rules; rather, he himself creates the rule for the combination of sensible manifold. In creating the new rule, the artist is governed by his nature alone, and this nature is the ability to exercise the free play of his cognitive powers: "genius is the exemplary originality of the natural endowment of a subject for the **free** use of his cognitive faculties" (§49). Accordingly, even though artistic beauty depends on the concept of a purpose, its purposiveness is nevertheless the result of the same freedom in the play of cognitive powers, that one can recognize in judging the beauty of nature.

In order to create artistic beauty, two main abilities are required: the ability to exercise free productive imagination and the ability to create harmony between free imagination and

understanding (that is, taste). An art work must have a form, which is not governed by any determinate rules (freely imaginative manifold), yet this form must exhibit free harmony: "the imagination, in its freedom from all guidance by rules, is nevertheless represented as purposive for the presentation of the given concept" (§49). The artist's use of free imagination must be governed by taste in order not to result in excessiveness and disharmony: "Taste, like the power of judgment in general, is the discipline (or corrective) of genius, clipping its wings and making it well behaved or polished; but at the same time it gives genius guidance as to where and how far it should extend itself if it is to remain purposive" (§50).

Kant implicitly distinguishes between representational and nonrepresentational art, and the object of aesthetic judgment differs in these different types of art works. Nonrepresentational art is the mere "play of shapes (in space, mime, and dance), or mere play of sensations (in time)" (§14), that is, mere form of the object. Judging the beauty of nonrepresentational art depends solely on its perceptual form, and on the immediate feeling of pleasure that this form, restrained by taste, occasions.[148] This restriction by taste is particularly well exhibited by Joan Miro's beautiful abstract work, called *The Gold of the Azure,* 1967. The painting gives the appearance of a free and spontaneous combination of irregular forms and colors, but also of a certain control and organization to which these elements seem to be subordinated

[148] Kant's position on the status of nonrepresentational art seems *prima facie* inconsistent. Namely, in §48 he claims that *all* artistic beauty presupposes the concept of a purpose and therefore is of adherent kind. Since nonrepresentational art is made with a certain purpose in artist's mind, namely to produce free play of cognitive powers and evoke certain aesthetic feelings, its beauty must also be of adherent kind. However, in §16 Kant writes that some nonrepresentational art, such as music without words, are free beauties. He holds similar position in §51 where he writes that: "the decoration of rooms by means of wallpaper, moldings, and all kinds of beautiful furnishings, which merely serve to be **viewed**; likewise the art of dressing with taste (rings, pill boxes, etc.) (…) the judgment of taste concerning what is beautiful in this art is determined in a single way: namely, to judge of only the forms (without regard to an end) as they are offered to the eye." But to judge the object only in regard to its form is to make judgments of free beauty (§16). I believe there is a way to reconcile Kant's confusing position regarding the status of such kind of art. Namely, it is true that strictly speaking nonrepresentational art has adherent kind of beauty, since it is made with a certain purpose. However, since the purpose of such art is free or purposeless beauty itself, that is, to give satisfaction in virtue of its form alone, judging the beauty of such art is judging it freely. In other words, there is no difference between adherent and free aesthetic judgments in the case of nonrepresentational art.

and which makes the work aesthetically integrated and harmonious. The lack of taste in the use of free imagination, on the other hand, leads to incoherence, disorder and consequently to ugliness. For example, Asger Jorn's painting *The Garden of Eating Flowers* (1963) exhibits an uncontrolled, aggressive and frantic combination of colored brush strokes which do not seem to fit together. The use of colors, the movement of the brush strokes and their composition seem impulsive and accidental, yet without an underlying order. The painting appears chaotic, disintegrated and displeasing. Even though an unrestrained freely imaginative manifold can appear exciting and energetic, it can never be beautiful. Artistic ugliness, as this example illustrates, is an effect of the conflict between the productive (free) imagination and taste (reflective power of judgment).

In representational art, the object of an aesthetic judgment is not perceptual form alone. Representational art, Kant writes, is a "beautiful representation of a thing" (§48). That is, representational art always represents or expresses something (an idea or a concept), which must be taken into account in order to judge its beauty appropriately. Nonetheless, the criterion of its beauty is not the subject depicted (its purpose), but the manner with which the subject is depicted, that is, the artistic representation itself. Beautiful representation, Kant writes, is "the form of the presentation of a concept by means of which the latter is universally communicated" (§48). Representational art is judged as beautiful if the form of the presentation of the concept itself is beautiful. Accordingly, even though one's appreciation (and production) of an art work is restrained by the concept of the object depicted, the depicted object does not determine the beauty of the art work. For the latter to occur, the artistic representation itself must not be governed by concepts, but by the free imagination in conformity with taste. Kant writes: "the pleasing form which one gives to it is only the vehicle of communication and a manner, as it were, of presentation, in regard to

which one still remains to a certain extent free, even if one is otherwise bound to a determinate end" (§48).

Kant claims that concepts, rather than governing the creation of an art work, serve as the material for the artist and his imaginative power to transform something that is familiar and empirically experienced into something that one can never encounter in nature: "The imagination (as a productive cognitive faculty) is, namely, very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it. We entertain ourselves with it when experience seems too mundane to us; we transform the latter […] into something entirely different, namely into that which steps beyond nature" (§49). It is through such a transformative power of the imagination that *ideas, emotions, attitudes, values etc.*, for which we do not have a full empirical counterpart, can be expressed and communicated. For example: "The poet ventures to make sensible rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc., as well as to make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g., death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature" (§49). We see that Kant writes about two kinds of ideas. On one hand, invisible beings, hell, eternity, god, freedom, mortality, etc., are *rational ideas (ideas of reason).* They are: "concept[s] to which no intuition (representation of imagination) can be adequate" (§49). What is distinctive for them is that they can be thought, but not empirically encountered (one can think of the idea of hell, but have no sensible intuition of it). On the other hand, love, fame, envy, death, etc. are ideas, or more precisely emotions and abstract concepts which can be experienced (we can experience their concrete instances), yet they cannot be directly represented (as objects denoted by determinate concepts can be). In a certain respect these ideas go beyond sensory experience, because as Rogerson nicely clarifies: "while we may have some experience of such things

their full import is yet beyond ordinary experience, for example, our psychological attitudes to such things."[149] We can see that what is distinctive for both kinds of ideas is that their sensible representation cannot be governed by any determinate rules, and this means that it is a representation of imagination in its free play. This is evident from Kant's definition of such sensible representations of ideas, which he terms *aesthetic ideas*: "by an aesthetic idea, however, I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., **concept**, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible" (§49).

An aesthetic idea is represented by way of using concepts and their presentations (images) as its elements, yet it "aesthetically enlarges the concept itself in an unbounded way" so that the representation "gives more to think about than can be grasped and made distinct in it" (§49). Such aesthetic expansions of the concept, Kant writes, occasion the free play of imagination, by suggesting various thoughts that cannot be represented literally. For example, Salvador Dali in his work *The Persistence of Memory, 1931,* depicts a clock in a malformed, melting way and thereby aesthetically expand the concept of the clock itself, by suggesting more thoughts that can be grasped by the concept of the clock itself, namely, the idea of the relativity of time. Since the idea of the relativity of time cannot be represented directly, it can only be depicted through the synthesis of an ordinary and symbolic presentation of the concept of a clock.

Kant calls such symbolic representations *aesthetic attributes.* Aesthetic attributes are certain images, that is: "forms which do not constitute the presentation of a given concept itself, but, as supplementary representations of the imagination, express only the implications connected with it and its affinity with others" (§49). Aesthetic attributes are not just ordinary

[149]Kenneth F. Rogerson, *Kant's Aesthetics: The Roles of Form and Expression* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1986), 99.

presentations of concepts, rather, they are metaphorical (or symbolic) representations, attached to a concept and which extend the concept's meaning, by causing the imagination "to spread itself over a multitude of related representations, which let one think more than one can express in a concept determined by words" (§49). A specific arrangement of such aesthetic attributes constitutes an aesthetic idea, as I will illustrate by means of Frida Kahlo's painting *Diego on My Mind (1943).*

The painting is a portrayal of Frida in a traditional Mexican wedding dress. On her forehead there is a picture of her husband Diego, and on her head there is a crown made of flowers and leaves. One can see the veins of the leaves growing out of the crown and intertwining with Frida's hair and with the threads of her wedding dress, forming a beautiful image of a net. These images constitute the perceptual form of the painting. Yet the perceptual form is not the artistic form of this painting, since there is much more to it than its visual form alone. The painting's artistic form is a collection of these images as aesthetic attributes. The photograph of Diego on Frida's forehead is not a mere representation of Diego, but an aesthetic attribute standing for the constant preoccupation with the loved one, and the image of Frida's hair intertwined with her dress is not a mere representation of a net, but it may be an aesthetic attribute of one's feeling of being trapped. The collection of these aesthetic attributes constitutes the aesthetic idea, a concrete sensible representation of an idea, such as the idea of captivity and the feeling of hopelessness that marriage or an addictive relationship can induce.

Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas shows that one can appreciate aesthetically those types of art works, such as conceptual art, whose value does not lie in the perceptual properties alone, but in the ideas, concepts and meaning that they evoke. If beauty (or ugliness) does not necessarily depend on the perceptual properties alone, but can be occasioned by the

combination of thoughts and meanings induced by certain perceptual images, then conceptual art can have an aesthetic value.[150] For example, Merret Oppenheim's sculpture *My Nurse (1936)* is made of a pair of shoes, tied together, topped with paper ruffles used to decorate a roasted chicken, and presented on a silver plate. If one would judge the value of this artwork solely by its visual form, then one would miss the point of this work, the idea that it aims to express. The visual form of the sculpture is not particularly aesthetically interesting. However, the aesthetic value of the work changes if we take into account the idea behind this form. The free play of imagination is stimulated through the collections of associations that the visual form evokes. The aesthetic attribute of the pair of shoes is the woman's body (the shoes are composed in a way that resembles a woman lying on her back, with legs spread apart), and the aesthetic attribute of the silver plate refers to the idea of consumption. The combination of aesthetic attributes forms the aesthetic idea of the work, a symbolic presentation of the consumption of a female body, through which the idea of the objectification of women is expressed. In this case, our imaginative powers are evoked by the combination of thoughts and associations triggered by the perceptual image.[151]

To conclude, the experience of artistic beauty is not that different from the experience of natural beauty. They both depend on the experience of the free harmony between imagination and understanding, even though, at the most basic level, this experience is restricted by

[150] Among contemporary writes, Costello in particular reinforces the importance of Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas for the explanation of contemporary art. See: Diarmuid Costello, "Danto and Kant, Together at Last?," in *Danto and His Critics*, ed. Mark Rollins (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 153-171. Also his: "Kant After LeWitt: Towards an Aesthetics of Conceptual Art," in *Philosophy and Conceptual Art*, ed. Peter Goldie and Elisabeth Schellekens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 92-115. An attempt of reconciling Kant's aesthetic theory and conceptual art has been made by: Robert J. Yanal, "Duchamp And Kant: Together at Last," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2002): 161-167. See also Danto's attempt of integrating Kant's notion of aesthetic ideas with his cognitive theory of art: Arthur C. Danto, "Embodied Meanings, Isotypes, and Aesthetical Ideas," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65, No. 1, Special Issue: Global Theories of the Arts and Aesthetics (2007): 121-129.

[151] The view that free imagination can be occasioned by ideas in the relation to the perceptual form is also argued for by Paul Guyer. See his: "Formalism and Theory of Expressions in Kant's Aesthetics," *Kant-Studien* 68, no. 1-4 (1977): 46-70. He also discusses this idea in: "Kant's conception of Fine Art," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, no. 3 (1994): 275-285.

determinate concepts and ideas. The aesthetic appreciation of natural objects, say of a flower, depends on the concept of the flower, but which is insufficient to fully determine the combination of sense data in a particular flower, and accordingly, the sensible manifold allows the imagination to be in free play. Similarly, artistic beauty depends on the concept of the purpose but this is insufficient to determine the particular artistic representation. Accordingly, the artistic representation can be in free play. In both cases, the freely imaginative manifold stimulates the aesthetic reflection and our ability to detect harmony (or disharmony) between free imagination and the understanding, resulting in a feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) respectively.

4.3 Towards the explanation of artistic ugliness

In the previous section I put forward the view that the free play of imagination can be stimulated not only by perceptual properties alone, but by ideas and thoughts as well. For such art works, their artistic form (imaginative manifold) is the aesthetic idea itself.[152] An aesthetic idea is a representation of imagination for which no determinate concept is fully

[152] Not all art works occasion free play by the means of aesthetic ideas, but rather some do so by means of their perceptual features alone. Hence, it is not required that an art work is an expression of aesthetic ideas. Kant claims that an art work is more valuable, the richer it is in aesthetic ideas (and accordingly poetry, which offers a wealth of thoughts, holds the highest aesthetic value among arts). The art of tones (pure music), however, which does not entertain the faculty of reason, for "it speaks through mere sensations without concepts, and hence does not, like poetry, leave behind something for reflection" (§53), is the least valuable among the arts. Even though pure music does suggest some kind of ideas, Kant writes, these are not the result of free play, but rather an automatic byproduct of associations produced by the feeling that we connect with a certain tone: "every expression of language has, in context, a tone that is appropriate to its sense; that this tone more or less designates an affect of the speaker and conversely also produces one in the hearer, which then in turn arouses in the latter the idea that is expressed in the language by means of such a tone" (§53). The ideas suggested by pure music are very vague and general ideas that we naturally connect with certain sensations (such as sadness, happiness etc.). They are "merely personal associations or reveries," as Coleman points out, and do not leave much behind for reflection. See: Francis X. J. Coleman, *The Harmony of Reason: A Study in Kant's Aesthetics* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), 175. The art of colors (abstract art) works similarly. Even though they can suggest certain ideas, these ideas are merely the result of a certain effect that a color produces and therefore they do not communicate anything specific or interesting about the idea. Their aesthetic value depends solely on their perceptual form. For example, while Wu Guanzhong's abstract painting entitled *Alienation* (1992) can evoke a certain feeling of alienation, it does not express anything substantial about the idea of alienation itself, as for example Edvard Munch's painting *Evening on Karl Johan Street* (1892) does. Through the depiction of a crowd of people, with indistinctive faces, detached and isolated from one another, Munch represented the idea of social alienation itself, that is, its manifestation, and therein lies the aesthetic value of the painting.

adequate, which in other words means that an aesthetic idea is a representation of imagination in its free play. This implies that an aesthetic idea is merely a product of a productive (creative) imagination, which Kant in fact confirms in §49, by saying that the ability to express an aesthetic idea is "only a talent (of the imagination)."

However, what is required to judge an object as beautiful (or ugly) is not only to experience the free play of imagination, but to experience the harmony (or disharmony) between free imagination and understanding. In other words, the freely imaginative manifold must be subsumed under the principle of reflective judgment. But if an aesthetic idea is a mere product of imagination in its freedom, then this implies that an aesthetic idea is not necessarily beautiful. That is, there is a possibility that an aesthetic idea can be ugly as well.

The possibility of an ugly aesthetic idea is not explicitly acknowledged by Kant. However, his discussion of the distinction between the ability to express aesthetic ideas and the ability to experience beauty (free harmony) allows the possibility to accommodate an ugly aesthetic idea into the overall aesthetic picture. In §50 Kant analyses the value of an art work in terms of its productive imagination and in terms of its reflective power of judgment (or taste). He appears to regard the two faculties as independent, performing two different kinds of functions.[153] While it is in virtue of a productive imagination that aesthetic ideas are produced, it is in virtue of the reflective power of judgment that art can be judged or appreciated as beautiful. Taste is not a productive faculty, but "merely a faculty for judging" (§48). He writes: "Now since it is in regard to the first of these [imagination] that an art deserves to be called inspired, but only in regard to the second [the power of judgment] that it deserves to be called a beautiful art, the latter, at least as an indispensable condition (*conditio sine qua non*), is thus the primary thing to which one must look in the judging of art as

[153] This distinction has also been pointed out by Bradley Murray, "Kant on Genius and Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 47, no. 2 (2007): 201.

beautiful art" (§50). Accordingly, an art work can be an expression of aesthetic ideas and for that matter valuable on its own (inspiring), yet in order to be beautiful one must in addition experience free harmony. That is, one must subsume the production of aesthetic ideas – the wealth of ideas for which no concept can be adequate, under the reflective power of judgment: "To be rich and original in ideas is not as necessary for the sake of beauty as is the suitability of the imagination in its freedom to the lawfulness of the understanding. For all the richness of the former produces, in its lawless freedom, nothing but nonsense; the power of judgment, however, is the faculty for bringing it in line with the understanding" (§50). This means that for an aesthetic idea to be beautiful, the artist must subject his creative process (productive imagination) under the reflective power of judgment, which: "gives genius guidance as to where and how far it should extend itself if it is to remain purposive; and by introducing clarity and order into the abundance of thoughts it makes the ideas tenable, capable of an enduring and universal approval" (§50).

It follows from the above that the production of aesthetic ideas and the production of *beautiful* aesthetic ideas are logically independent activities. One does not need taste in order to produce aesthetic ideas. The converse is also true; the object does not need to express aesthetic ideas in order to be beautiful (in accordance with taste). The latter is explicitly acknowledged by Kant in §49, where he writes that there are some works of art that are beautiful, yet they lack the spirit, which is required for the production of aesthetic ideas. He writes: "One says of certain products, of which it is expected that they ought, at least in part, to reveal themselves as beautiful art, that they are without **spirit**, even though one finds nothing in them to criticize as far as taste is concerned. A poem can be quite pretty and elegant, but without **spirit.** A story is accurate and well organized, but without spirit. A solemn oration is thorough and at the same time flowery, but without spirit. Many a conversation is not without entertainment, but is still without spirit; even of a woman one

may well say that she is pretty, talkative and charming, but without spirit."[154] But if the production of aesthetic ideas and the production of beauty are independent activities, that is, taste is not required for the production of aesthetic ideas, then it follows that aesthetic ideas are not necessarily beautiful. Consequently, an aesthetic idea can be ugly, that is, exhibit disharmony and produce the feeling of displeasure.

An object is judged as beautiful (or ugly) if its form occasions the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure). In some cases of art works, their artistic form is the aesthetic idea. This means that for such cases of art works, their beauty or ugliness depends on the beauty (or ugliness) of an aesthetic idea. A beautiful aesthetic idea is one which is subsumed under the reflective power of judgment. What this means is that free imagination, occasioned by the combination of ideas and perceptual form, is brought into accordance with the understanding. Jeremy Proulx nicely explains this accordance in the following way: "The freedom of the imagination must be united around the task of concept exhibition (…) Imagination only comes up with presentations; it is the task of reflective judgment to find the combination that expresses a rational concept in a way that makes sense to others."[155] In other words, a beautiful aesthetic idea consists in a purposive and appropriate combination of aesthetic attributes in respect to the idea it aims to express, that is, in the clarity and consistency with which the idea is conveyed and apprehended.

An ugly aesthetic idea, on the other hand, consists in a conflicting combination of aesthetic attributes. Since it is through the combination of aesthetic attributes that the general idea is carried out, the incompatibility of aesthetic attributes implies the incongruity and ambiguity of thoughts conveyed. The disharmony between the imaginative manifold (combination of

[154] Kant claims that imitations of nature are examples of art works that can be beautiful, yet without expressing aesthetic ideas: "The painter of nature (…) is not the beautiful spirit, because he only imitates; the painter of ideas is the master of beautiful art" (ANTH §71).
[155] Jeremy Proulx, "Nature, Judgment and Art: Kant and the Problem of Genius," *Kant Studies Online* (2011): 47.

aesthetic attributes) and the understanding results in the feeling of displeasure and in the judgment of artistic ugliness. Even though the artist may intentionally produce an ugly aesthetic idea, the satisfaction of the artist's intention does not make the object beautiful. Knowledge of the artist's intentions and the theoretical background of the art work can justify the ugliness of the artistic form and the displeasure it occasions, but it cannot transform it. For instance, my displeasing aesthetic experience of De Kooning's painting *Woman I* did not change after I learned more about the idea behind the painting, but only my understanding and interpretation of the painting.

Artistic ugliness depends on the experience of the feeling of displeasure occasioned by an art work. Displeasure, Kant writes, is the representational state of mind that is discomforting and to which we react by removing our attention away from it. And this *prima facie* implies that artistic ugliness is an indicator of artistic failure. In recent years, however, and particularly with the development of modern art, this definition of artistic ugliness has been widely criticized. Namely, it has been pointed out that many art works are aesthetically displeasing and ugly, yet they may also be greatly appreciated.[156] Among contemporary writers, artistic ugliness and grotesqueness has been characterized as aesthetically significant, interesting, astonishing, captivating, and fascinating, which *prima facie* contradicts the definition of ugliness and the experience of displeasure. Moreover, such an experience of ugliness is not distinctive for art works alone, but for natural objects as well, as pointed out by some contemporary writers on the aesthetics of nature.[157] Indeed, one can notice that certain animals such as the *star-nosed mole* with its pink fleshy tentacles at the end of its snout, or the *naked mole rat* with its wrinkled, hairless skin and protruding teeth, which are utterly disturbing and dreadful to look at, also evoke a certain curiosity, interest and fascination due

[156] Most notably, this has been pointed out by Matthew Kieran, "Aesthetic Value: Beauty, Ugliness and Incoherence," *Philosophy*, 72 (1997): 383-399. See also his book: *Revealing art* (London & New York: Routledge, 2005), 75-86.
[157] Most notably, Emily Brady, "Ugliness and Nature," *Enrahonar: quaderns de filosofia* 45 (2010): 27-40.

to their ugly features. Accordingly, the explanation of ugliness must entail, as its necessary part, the explanation of its possible appeal.

Before I proceed to give a full explanation of ugliness, however, it is necessary to refine the distinction between *'genuine artistic ugliness'* and *'artistic presentation of ugliness'*. Namely, even though there have been some attempts in contemporary aesthetics to resolve the paradox of ugliness in art, these putative solutions are nevertheless ineffective, because they have been based on examples of art works that are not representative of genuine artistic ugliness in the first place.[158] That is, certain art works can present ugliness, without themselves being ugly.[159] This distinction is implicit in Kant's statement that: "A beauty of nature is a beautiful thing; the beauty of art is a beautiful representation of a thing" (§48). In other words, an art work can present ugly subject matter, without itself being ugly (beautiful representation of an ugly thing). Only if the artistic representation of a (beautiful or ugly) thing is itself ugly, can we say that we have genuine artistic ugliness. Based on Kant's distinction and his other writings on this matter, I propose to distinguish the following categories of ugliness in art:

First, the transformation of an ugly subject matter into a pleasing one: an art work can present an otherwise ugly object in a beautiful way. Kant writes: "Beautiful art displays its excellence precisely by describing beautifully things that in nature would be ugly or displeasing" (§48). For example, Fernando Botero depicts obese women and children with congenital abnormalities, which we would ordinarily find ugly, while in his paintings they look pleasing. The transformation of an ugly subject matter into a beautiful one proceeds

[158] An example is Jerome Stolnitz, "On ugliness in Art," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 11, no. 1 (1950): 1-24. And: Lucius Garvin, "The Problem of Ugliness in Art," *The Philosophical Review* 57, no. 4 (1948): 404-409. An exception is Ruth Lorand and her interpretation of ugliness in: *Aesthetic Order: A Philosophy of order, Beauty and Art* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 259-264.

[159] Within Kantian aesthetics, this has been pointed out by Mary A. McCloskey, in *Kant's Aesthetic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 10-12. A similar idea, independently of Kant's aesthetics, has been suggested by John W. Cook, "Ugly Beauty in Christian Art," *The Grotesque in Art & Literature: Theological Reflections*, ed. James Luther Adams and Wilson Yates (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 125-141.

through stylistic manipulation. Botero uses soft colors and shades, smooth lines and calm form for the representation of his subjects. The women, the subject matter of his paintings, are still obese, but their obesity is no longer displeasing. That is, the ugliness of women lingers in the painting, yet the feeling of displeasure is suspended.

Second, an ugly subject matter in a beautiful artistic form: an object that we would ordinarily find ugly remains ugly in the art work. That is, the subject matter is not transformed into something beautiful and it keeps its negative aesthetic value, yet the artistic form itself is aesthetically pleasing. Kant writes that "it is not the sensation directly (the material of the representation of the object), but rather how the free (productive) power of imagination joints it together through invention, that is, the form, which produces the satisfaction in the object" (ANTH §67). Artistic beauty is not the result of the beauty of its elements, but of the beauty of their structure and organization (artistic form). Hence, even though the elements of the artistic form are displeasing, this does not necessarily render its combination ugly as well. The artistic form can nonetheless exhibit harmony and be positively aesthetically appreciated. What is distinctive for such art works is that we experience them with mixed sensations – the feeling of displeasure in the perception of the subject matter and the feeling of pleasure derived from the overall structure of the work. Most works that have been described as ugly or grotesque belong to this category of ugliness. For example, Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delight* (1504) features disturbing and grotesque animal figures, yet the work itself, as the combination of these features, exhibits a great aesthetic order. Francis Bacon's *Self-portrait* (1972) is an unsettling depiction of a deformed human face, which overall exhibits a wisely planned composition. And Jenny Saville's photograph *Closed Contact A* (2002) depicts the artist's obese, naked body, squeezed onto glass. The disfiguration and grotesqueness of this image is highly discomforting, yet one cannot stop

admiring the beautiful composition, the combination of colors, lines and shades that this distorted image conjures.

I want to point out, however, that not all art works that evoke mixed sensations of displeasure and pleasure belong to this category of ugliness. Some beautiful art works induce painful feelings, without the subject matter actually being aesthetically ugly. Not everything that is displeasing is considered to be ugly. The experience of ugliness is the result of aesthetic reflection, yet certain art works occasion feelings of displeasure due to non-aesthetic reasons as well. I consider three such reasons (the first two explicitly distinguished by Kant in §5): (i) an art work can occasion displeasure because it features morally repugnant ideas or events, such as evil, injustice, or human-induced suffering. In this case, the feeling of displeasure is the result of the violation of our concept of moral goodness. We feel displeasure by something that we find morally objectionable, but which can be represented with beautiful aesthetic attributes. For example, Lars Von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009) depicts a scene of a mother who allows her child to fall from a window while she makes love to a man. One certainly reacts with moral displeasure at the presentation of this scene, but also with the bewilderment at the beautiful presentation of it; (ii) an art work can be apprehended with displeasing feelings because it contains material that is sensory displeasing. For example, a vocal tone in the music of Diamanda Galas is utterly disturbing to the point of nausea, yet one less sensitive to the high pitched tones can appreciate her works greatly; (iii) for some works of art, the unsettling experience they evoke is due to the portrayal of negative feeling-value ideas, such as mortality, death, despair, poverty, misery, loneliness, etc. For example, Bela Tarr's movie *Karhozat* (1987) is visually stunningly beautiful, yet an excruciating expression of despair and hopelessness.

Third, *the disgusting art*: some art works, distinctive for contemporary art and recognized under the name 'abject art' are considered to be ugly because they represent disgusting objects and evoke strong feelings of revulsion. Such works of art operate with strong realistic visual manifestations of disgusting substances, such as feces (*Mike Kelley & Paul McCarthy: Secession,* 1998), food, vomit and blood (*Cindy Sherman: Untitled #175*, 1978), or mutilated and slaughtered bodies (*Chapman Brothers: Great Deeds Against The Dead,* 1994), which arouse strong visceral reactions. Even though disgusting art is considered to belong within the category of ugly art, I argue against this view and claim that the disgusting is not an instance of ugliness, but a theoretically and phenomenologically distinct category. On my account, art that features disgusting objects can never be judged as aesthetically beautiful (or ugly), because disgust occasions a unique phenomenological experience, which prevents the possibility of disinterested aesthetic reflection that is required for aesthetic evaluation in the first place. Accordingly, the disgusting is an anti-aesthetic category. I will explain my account in more detail in the next section.

Fourth, *artistic ugliness*: some art works are experienced with aesthetic displeasure not because they depict ugly subject matter, but because the artistic representation is itself displeasing. An art work can present ugliness, but as long as this presentation itself remains pleasing, the art work can be aesthetically appreciated. But if the artistic form, that is, the composition of the elements that constitutes the art work is itself displeasing then we have a case of genuine artistic ugliness. For example, Willem de Kooning's painting *Woman I* (1950-1952) is a representation of a woman's body. We can distinguish certain features of a female's body, such as her invasive breasts, bulging eyes, teeth spreading into a grinning smile, while the rest of the body - her arms and torso - is disintegrated, dismembered and dissolved into the spontaneous and dynamic brush strokes, with frantic lines and garish colors. The ugliness of this painting is not merely in the subject depicted, but in the

composition of its features, that is, in the artistic representation itself. The combination of colors and shapes seem inappropriate and incoherent, arousing the feeling of discomfort, frustration and displeasure.

De Kooning's painting is an exemplary instance of a genuine artistic ugliness, and one illustrating nicely the paradoxical character of ugliness, namely, that we can still find value in looking at an object that we aesthetically dislike. De Kooning's painting holds our attention and it does that precisely because of those features (such as the exaggeration and heterogeneity of colors, shades and forms) that cause frustration and discomfort in the first place. How can the concurrence of displeasure and continued attention to ugliness be explained?

I argue that this phenomenon can be explained by referring to Kant's notion of the free play of imagination. The idea that objects attract our attention due to the free play of imagination is suggested by Kant in §22. He writes that only when the imagination in the given object plays freely and spontaneously (that is, the sensible manifold is not constrained by determinate rules), then such an object "is always new for us, and we are never tired of looking at it." This idea is additionally supported by Kant's claim that aesthetically indifferent objects such as regular and symmetrical forms, which are constrained by determinate rules, and therefore do not allow for the freedom of the imagination, do not hold one's attention, that is: "the consideration of it affords no lasting entertainment, but rather (…) induces boredom" (§22). These passages imply that an object holds (or fails to hold) one's attention due to the presence (or lack) of the free play of imagination. Since free play of imagination is constitutive not only for the experience of beauty, but also for ugliness, as discussed in the previous chapter, then one can expect that ugliness as well as beauty will hold one's attention. The argument is the following: Kant claims that ugliness is constituted

by the free imagination being unrestrained by the understanding's need for order, which means that ugliness pushes the freedom of the imagination to a high degree: "the English taste in gardens or the baroque taste in furniture pushes the freedom of the imagination almost to the point of the grotesque" (§22). But if it is the free play of imagination that underlies one's attention to the object, and if ugliness in particular generates a rich degree of free imagination, then it is reasonable to conclude that ugliness holds one's attention more than beauty does, where the free imagination is restricted by the demands of taste. However, the degree of the freedom of the imagination is not the sole factor which governs one's attention, since in the case of beauty the pleasure engendered by the harmonious relation between free imagination and the understanding motivates us to hold our attention on the object, while in the case of ugliness, the displeasure arising from the disharmonious relation between the cognitive powers is a factor which reduces our propensity to attend to the object. Therefore it is not a necessary consequence of this position that our attention is held to a greater degree by an ugly object than by a beautiful object. But the free play of imagination that is constitutive of the experience of ugliness is nevertheless a cause of our continued attention to ugly objects. This continued attention is easily noticed in one's phenomenological experience of ugliness. Namely, one can notice that ugliness not merely captivates our attention, but also paralyses our senses and continues to linger in our minds long after the object ceases to be present to the senses.[160] One can mention as examples the striking appearance of the *aye-aye*, a Madagascan primate, or the monstrous *angler fish*.

The feeling of displeasure in an ugly object depends on the experience of a disharmony between the free imagination and understanding. But if the attention to ugliness depends on the free play of imagination itself, regardless of whether this imagination is in disharmony

[160] The stirring effect of ugliness is nicely described in: John Rickman, "On the Nature of Ugliness and the Creative Impulse," in *Selected Contributions to Psycho-analysis*, ed. John Rickman (London: Karnac Books, 2003), 85-86.

with the understanding, then one can explain the concurrence of displeasure at an ugly object and continued attention to it by referring to their different sources. That is, displeasure arises from the disharmony between free imagination and the understanding, while our attention is held by an object in virtue of the free play of imagination that it produces. So while displeasure by itself would cause us to withdraw our attention from the cause of the displeasure, the degree of free play produced by an ugly object nevertheless holds our attention. I will now examine the reasons for this connection between free play and continued attention.

According to Kant, the apprehension of the free imaginative manifold stimulates our cognitive need to find a resolution or harmony for the manifold. Pleasure (or displeasure) indicates that a harmonious (or disharmonious) relation between cognitive powers has been attained. A disharmonious relation is one in which free imagination conflicts with the understanding's need for order and the experience of such disharmony is itself painful and frustrating. Nevertheless our attention can be held because of other features of this state. While in comparison to beauty, where the resolution of the manifold proceeds smoothly or harmoniously, in the case of an ugly object, the resolution is thwarted due to the disagreement between the particular manifold and the understanding. Ugliness generates substantially rich and excessive imagination, which is more difficult for our cognitive abilities to process and to find a resolution for it. But it is the search for a resolution which is the manifestation of the principle of purposiveness, the *a priori* belief that the world is amenable to our cognitive abilities. This means that our search for order in the manifold does not end at the first failed attempt, but we are instead enticed to continue our reflection on the manifold in the expectation that a prolonged observation of the manifold will eventually bring resolution. In other words, one keeps reflecting on an ugly object, in spite of the frustration that it causes, because of the expectation that a certain order and harmony will

eventually be found. The principle of purposiveness will continue to guide our reflection on the object even though the object fails to show its conformity to our cognitive abilities. That is, we will keep expecting that the object must eventually find its agreement with our mental structure. This explains why a rich and unrestrained degree of free imagination holds our attention to the object.

So far I have given an explanation as to how an ugly object can hold one's attention in spite of the feeling of displeasure it occasions. However, as pointed out previously in this section, ugliness is not only considered to be aesthetically interesting, but it can also be captivating, exciting and aesthetically significant. This appears to be the case, considering in particular the proliferation of ugliness in contemporary artistic production and the positive appreciation of it. For example, De Kooning's painting *Woman I* is in spite of its displeasing appearance considered to be one of the greatest works in modern art. This shows that artistic ugliness is not an indicator of an artistic failure and that works of art can be valuable even though they are not beautiful. The positive aesthetic experience (beauty) of the work of art is not the sole criterion of its aesthetic value. In fact, this idea is implied in Kant's distinction between free imagination, required for the richness and originality of artistic production, and the reflective power of judgment, required for the judgment of beauty. To recall, Kant claims in §50 that it is in virtue of the productive (free) imagination that inspiring objects are produced, but it is in virtue of the reflective power of judgment that beautiful objects are produced. This suggests the possibility that an object can be valuable due to its rich formal properties, which is the product of the free imagination, even though it might not be beautiful. I will give now an explanation of the relation between free imagination and the production of valuable works of art.

We know so far that the object's form stimulates the free play of imagination if it exhibits a combination of sense data that is not determined by any rules. But if the form of the object is not determined by any known rules and concepts, then this suggests that such an object affords a novel and unique experience, since any production that is governed by known rules must be to that extent imitative, whereas genuine creativity must go beyond these rules. Kant writes that when the artist exercises his power of free imagination, which means that his creation of the work of art is not governed by any known rules, then creative and original works of art are produced. Kant accordingly ascribes to artists a "talent for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition of skill for that which can be learned in accordance with some rule, consequently that originality must be its primary characteristic" (§46). But this talent to produce original works of art is in fact the power to exercise free imagination: "The proper field for genius is that of the power of imagination, because this is creative and, being less under the constraint of rules than other faculties, it is thus all the more capable of originality" (ANTH §57). Kant's describes productive imagination as one that transforms "another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it" (§49). It generates a new combination of existing concepts, ideas and perceptual features. But ugly works of art are also products of the artist's ability to exercise free imagination, since, as mentioned previously, any departure from aesthetic indifference must be the result of free imagination, and this means that ugly works of art can exhibit originality and creativity, and can therefore be valuable in this sense.[161] Indeed, many examples of art works that are evaluated as aesthetically displeasing reinforce this point. For example, John Cage's work *Imaginary Landscape No.2* (1942) is composed of various sounds produced by unconventional instruments, such as tin cans, buzzers, water gongs, conch shells etc. The combination of these sounds produces a raucously noisy and chaotic work; it lacks melody,

[161] For the opposite view see: Brigitte Sassen, "Artistic Genius and the Question of Creativity," in *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays*, ed. Paul Guyer (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 171-180.

harmony, and organization, and it is therefore difficult to listen to. However, its originality gives rise to an element of admiration, due to the use of unconventional instruments, exhibiting a novel compositional technique based on chance, and introducing new, unusual and radically different combinations of sounds. His work goes against the traditional rules of music and in this sense exhibits great imaginative freedom and novelty, which is itself valuable. Another example is Stockhausen's *Helicopter String Quartet (1995),* which is a highly appraised work, due to its creativity and originality. It combines the rhythm of the helicopters' rotor blades and four string players flying in the helicopters. The unconventional combination of classical music and the sound of the helicopters is highly disharmonic and unpleasant, yet it also affords a rich, unusual and novel aesthetic experience.

Similarly, De Kooning's painting is a highly imaginative and novel representation of a female body. The elusiveness of the woman's bodily parts, chaotically fused with a violent and exaggerated combination of colors affords an intense and rich aesthetic experience, despite the discomforting nature of the experience. More importantly, the painting nicely illustrates that ugliness, even though constituted by a conflicting combination of elements, can still be expressive and thoughtful, but this differs from beautiful works in that such conflict produces disorder and instability in the expression of ideas, contrary to a unified expression of the beautiful. Artistic ugliness is therefore not meaningless; rather, it implies a certain ambiguity, uncertainty and plurality of meaning due to the disorderly artistic form.[162] For example, one can notice that De Kooning's *Woman I* has no straightforward interpretation, but it motivates an interpretative exploration of its meaning. The physical destruction of a female body might symbolically represent the destruction of the classical notion of a woman as a beautiful,

[162] Lorand explains the difference between meaningless and ugly objects in that in the former, the elements are disconnected and indifferent to each other, while in ugliness, the components rather clash with each other. See: Lorand, *Aesthetic Order*, 245.

virtuous and sensitive human being.[163] This idea is suggested by the violence of the brushstrokes, the chaotic and aggressive combination of colors, the idea of sexual dominance expressed through the accentuation of the women's breasts, and the maliciousness, hostility and pretense conveyed by her grinning smile. The expression of this idea is stimulating, thought-provoking, and for this reason aesthetically significant, even though it is perceived with displeasure. De Kooning depicted a woman by distorting and destroying her bodily form, and thereby aesthetically expanded the concept of a woman, by suggesting more thoughts and ideas than can be grasped by the concept of a woman itself. Through his unique representation of a woman, he managed to express an idea which cannot be represented otherwise, that is, he succeeded to express an aesthetic idea in the sense discussed earlier, and this in itself is a valuable experience, even though the resulting work is ugly.[164] And as long as one considers the value of an art work to be due to the aesthetic experience and exploration of the object it affords, an ugly artwork can have an artistic value even though experiencing it is displeasurable.

The aesthetic significance of ugliness is not distinctive for art works alone, but for natural objects as well. Emily Brady, one of the main opponents of the positive aesthetics in nature,[165] claims that ugly and displeasing natural objects can be fascinating and captivating of one's imagination. She emphasizes the aesthetic importance of natural ugliness because it "expands our emotional range and widens our experience of challenging things, leading to a

[163] For a more extensive and insightful analysis of De Kooning's paintings see: Leesa Fanning, "Willem De Kooning's Women: The body of the Grotesque," in *Modern Art and the Grotesque*, ed. Frances S. Connelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 241-261.

[164] Rogerson endorses a similar view. He writes: "Expression of aesthetic ideas is valuable since it is the only way in which we can have some kind of "representation" of those objects and states of affairs that go beyond empirical knowledge." In: *The Problem of Free Harmony in Kant's Aesthetics*, 39.

[165] Positive aesthetics is the view that all nature has only positive aesthetic qualities. The most prominent advocate of this view is Allen Carlson. He claims that even though nature may seem ugly and exhibit negative aesthetic qualities; this is only due to the ignorance of the spectator lacking appropriate scientific understanding of nature. He claims that perceiving nature under its correct scientific category will always result in a positive aesthetic appreciation. See: Allen Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), 63-95.

richer awareness of environments both familiar and strange. We might say that it increases our 'aesthetic intelligence' through developing engaged attention to the great diversity of aesthetic qualities."[166] Carolyn Korsmeyer agrees and based on this concludes that "beauty does not have the monopoly on either aesthetic or artistic excellence, and that not all of the contrast between the beautiful and the not-beautiful serve to separate aesthetic value from disvalue."[167] Ruth Lorand similarly praises the importance of ugliness and claims that: "Ugliness is interesting and even inspiring because it expresses a struggle of conflicting forces. New ideas are born out of conflicts between old ideas."[168]

The conflict of ideas and fascination with ugliness is especially nicely evoked by Chatwin's description of an ugly human face. He writes: "He amazed me by his ugliness: the spread of his nose, the wens that covered his forehead; the fleshy, down-hanging lip, and eyes that were hooded by the folds of his eyelids. But what a face! You never saw a face of such mobility and character. Every scrap of it was in a stage of perpetual animation. One second, he was an unbending Aboriginal lawman; the next, an outrageous comic."[169] The writer illustrates well the intense and stirring effect of the free play of imagination occasioned by the ugly object and the conflict of ideas that it suggests. The ugly face of an aboriginal is not merely the face of a man, but it is the face of both a nobleman and a comic at the same time. That is, it is a representation of imagination that suggests more thoughts than can be grasped by the concept of a human face alone – ugliness expands the concept and as such has the ability to evoke aesthetic ideas. There is an appealing side to ugliness, because it allows for the imagination to be highly effective and expressive of ideas that cannot be represented otherwise. The conflicting features in the object produce disorder and struggle in the representation of ideas.

[166] Emily Brady, "The Ugly Truth: Negative Aesthetics and Environment," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 69 (2011): 96.
[167] Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Terrible Beauties," in *Contemporary Debates in Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Matthew Kieran (Malden, Ma: Blackwell, 2006), 56
[168] Lorand, *Aesthetic Order*, 244.
[169] Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (London: Vintage, 2003), 285.

In contrast to beauty, where imagination and understanding form a stable unity and therefore the idea is clearly and harmoniously expressed, in the case of ugliness, such ideas are formed from a conflicted ground, and to this extent their expression is not unified, resulting in an ambiguous response to the object. This however does not suggest that ugliness is devoid of meaning; rather it expresses the incompatibility of ideas and meanings, and not one unified interpretation, as Chatwin's description nicely illustrates. It is for this reason that ugliness is considered a challenging aesthetic notion, one which "is inexhaustible and always provocative,"[170] due to the lack of resolution. Its constitutive element is disorder and as such it is particularly suggestive for the expression of ideas that celebrate such disorder. It is related to ideas of alienation, estrangement, dehumanization, destruction, degeneration, disconcertion, absurdity, and with emotions evoking terror, horror, anxiety and fear.

The association of ugliness with such ideas and feelings can be explained by referring to Kant's notion of the reflective power of judgment and the *a priori* principle of purposiveness. I argued in the previous chapter that beauty and ugliness depend on the principle of purposiveness, that is, on the indeterminate rule that guides our orientation in the world. We appreciate forms that are in accordance with the principle of purposiveness, and that reassures us that the world is indeed such as we expect it to be, namely, amenable to our cognitive abilities. Accordingly, the experience of pleasure is a sign of the familiarity with the world, of feeling at home in the world. On the other hand, forms that resist our expectation that the world is amenable to our cognitive abilities produce displeasure. The inability to know the world occasions the state of estrangement between us, our mental structure, and the world. James Phillips nicely puts this idea by saying: "The displeasure of ugliness is the displeasure

[170] Fanning, 242.

of the thought that the world might not want us to know it."[171] Hence, by producing ugliness, an artist can affectively express such ideas.

Furthermore, such an explanation of ugliness can explain the experience of ugliness as being not merely displeasing, but also horrifying, paralyzing and shocking.[172] There is a proverb saying that: "beauty is only skin-deep, but ugly is to the bone,"[173] which nicely captures the intensity of the experience of ugliness, in comparison to our response to beauty. The reason for this is the following: if our responses to beauty and ugliness depend on our expectations as to how the world is supposed to be, namely, to exhibit harmony between the imagination and the understanding, then the violation of this expectation produces not only the state of mind of displeasure, but also one of unwelcome and unexpected surprise. It is for this reason that ugliness is experienced as a sudden and shocking disturbance of the mind.

So far I have been discussing the notion of ugliness, particularly in its relation to art, and I suggested a view according to which artistic ugliness is not an indicator of artistic failure. Even though displeasing, artistic ugliness satisfies the criterion of expressiveness, originality and creativity and can therefore be regarded as aesthetically significant and valuable. But if artistic ugliness is not an indicator of artistic failure then it is required to establish what that might be. My answer, consistent with Kant's theory, is that bad works of art are those that are aesthetically insignificant because they do not occasion any aesthetic reaction (pleasure or displeasure). Kant identifies aesthetic neutrality with regularity, that is, with forms that are a mere presentation of a concept.[174] In other words, an object is judged as aesthetically neutral if its form is fully determined by the concept. Accordingly, the essential characteristic of

[171] James Phillips, "Placing Ugliness in Kant's Third *Critique:* A Reply to Paul Guyer," *Kant-Studien* 102, no. 3 (2011): 395.
[172] This is pointed out by George Hagman, *Aesthetic Experience: Beauty, Creativity, and the Search for the Ideal* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2005), 108-111. Also by: R. W. Pickford, "The Psychology of Ugliness," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 9, no. 3 (1969): 258-270.
[173] Cited by Robert Martin Adams, "Ideas of Ugly," *The Hudson Review* 27, No. 1 (1974): 55.
[174] See chapter 3.

aesthetic neutrality is the lack of the free play of imagination, and consequently the absence of aesthetic experience. For Kant, an art work must be a product of a free use of cognitive powers, and so if a certain object fails to afford the free play of imagination, then the object fails as an art work. If we expect an object to be an art work, and so to occasion free play of imagination, yet the object fails in this respect, then our judgment of the object will be accompanied by the feeling of disappointment. Hence, even though strictly speaking the aesthetically neutral object is characterized by the lack of pleasure or displeasure, in the case where some aesthetic value is expected, judgments of aesthetic neutrality will be accompanied with the feeling of displeasure. Therefore, a judgment of aesthetic neutrality is a proper negative aesthetic judgment in the case of art works. Failure to produce an aesthetic experience is the indicator of artistic failure.[175]

4.4 The notion of disgust in comparison to ugliness[176]

In the contemporary discussion of Kant's aesthetics, little attention has been given to Kant's view of disgust in contrast to ugliness. This is due to the prevalent view that disgust is only an extreme form of ugliness, and therefore does not require a separate discussion.[177] Such a view is not surprising, considering that Kant himself introduces disgust in this way. He writes: "only one kind of ugliness cannot be represented in a way adequate to nature without destroying all aesthetic satisfaction, hence beauty in art, namely, that which arouses loathing [*Ekel*]" (§48). Nonetheless, a more detailed analysis of Kant's discussion of disgust and its aesthetic implications, in this and other works, shows that Kant considered disgust to be a

[175] Not every artistic failure, however, is a failure of producing an aesthetic experience (i.e. free play of cognitive powers). For example, some works of art have the ability to occasion an aesthetic experience and they could be regarded as beautiful, yet because they force this experience of pleasure on us, they fail to occasion a sincere and genuine aesthetic experience. Pretentious and kitschy works of art are of such type.

[176] This section is part of my article "Disgust and Ugliness: a Kantian Perspective," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 9 (2011). Available from: http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=615&searchstr=mojca+kuplen

[177] For such view see Herman Parret, "On the Beautiful and the Ugly," *Trans/Form/Ação* 34, no. 2 (2011). Available from: http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0101-31732011000400003&script=sci_arttext.

phenomenologically and conceptually unique emotion in contrast to ugliness and one consistent with contemporary views of this subject.

I will now make a detailed comparison between Kant's treatment of disgust and contemporary studies on this matter and, on this basis, explain Kant's thesis of the anti-aesthetic effect of disgust, particularly in its relation to art works. I will conclude that there is an important theoretical difference between disgust and the concept of ugliness.

4.4.1 The concept of disgust: An overview of Kant's treatment of disgust in comparison with contemporary studies

Whereas Kant did not give any theoretical explanation of the concept of disgust, he nevertheless anticipated conditions that accompany it and that have been adopted in the contemporary analysis as fundamental conditions of disgust. Going beyond linking the phenomenon of disgust with oral consumption, the idea of disgust in Kant's analysis can also include ethical conditions, and thus it is introduced as a rather complex phenomenon. Above all, he expounded the concept of disgust by examining its aesthetic implications in artistic representation. A brief exposition in §48 reveals a rich insight into the nature of disgust: "For in this singular sensation, which rests on mere imagination, the object is represented as it were obtruding itself for our enjoyment, while we strive against it with all our might. And the artistic representation of the object is no longer distinguished from the nature of the object itself in our sensation, and thus it is impossible that it can be regarded as beautiful." There are two particularly striking features that must be stressed: (1) disgust's intrusive nature and (2) the anti-aesthetic effect resulting from it. Let me begin with the first one.

The fact that the object of disgust has the ability to be intrusive, especially through its visual representation, indicates its indispensable relationship with sense experience. This is taken in contemporary examinations as a condition *sine qua non* of disgust, particularly its elemental

relation with the senses of taste and smell. In the *Anthropology* Kant characterizes disgust as a vital sensation connected particularly with the 'lower' senses of smell and taste. Compared to the 'higher' class of senses (touch, sight and hearing), smell and taste do not contribute to the cognition of objects, but are more related with producing pleasure: "…the idea obtained from them is more a representation of enjoyment" (ANTH §16). That is, smell and taste are less responsible for perceiving the surface of an object than they are pleasure-related senses, linked with the oral intake. Because such intake is less free in the case of smell than in taste, and since we cannot choose entirely what will be taken in, the aversion through smell is particularly forced on our enjoyment: "For taking something in through smell (in the lungs) is even more intimate than taking something in through the absorptive vessels of mouth or throat" (ANTH §21). The intimacy of the intake is conditioned by the fact that smell more directly consumes the material feature of the object than taste does and thus provokes disgust more straightforwardly as a defensive physiological reaction manifested through nausea or vomiting: "Thus it happens that nausea, an impulse to free oneself of food through the shortest way out of the esophagus (to vomit), has been allotted to the human being as such a strong vital sensation" (ANTH §21). Disgust's biological relation to the sense of taste and smell, as well as its dependence on direct sensory information about the object, is well established here.

Jonathan Haidt et al. refer to such a food-related emotion as "core disgust" and define it as: "revulsion at the prospect of (oral) incorporation of an offensive object."[178] The offensiveness of an object, contrary to mere bad taste or sensory dislike, intrinsically includes an idea of contamination. It is not necessary that the object of disgust is actually a contaminant, but merely that the idea of it is sufficient to provoke disgust: "Disgust is triggered off not primarily by the sensory properties of an object, but by ideational concerns about *what it is*,

[178] Jonathan Haidt et al., "Body, Psyche, and Culture: The relationship Between Disgust and Morality," *Psychology and Developing societies* 9, no.1 (1997): 109.

or *where it has been*."[179] For disgust to be triggered it is sufficient that the object be associated, by means of other senses, with the contaminant object. For example, it is highly plausible that we will avoid eating or even touching a chocolate in the form of excrement.

Disgust, however, is not triggered merely through the sense of taste and smell, but also through visual perception. Kant, for example, distinguished a type of disgust that concerns violation of ethical, hygienic and sexual appropriateness. He writes: "an old woman is an object of disgust for both sexes except when she is very cleanly and not a *coquette*" (ROBS 20:155; 172). Unfortunately, he does not offer any explanation of the nature of such disgust. The most thorough attempt to define the nature of visual disgust has been given by contemporary writers. Haidt et al. define such type of disgust as "animal-reminder" disgust, which threatens particularly through visual perception, by reminding us of our animal origins. This category of disgust includes violations of the body envelope (amputations, injuries), sexual deviations and hygienic concerns, that is, deviations from well-established standards of cleanliness and purity in all three spheres: "We fear recognizing our animality because we fear that, like animals, we are mortal. We thus attempt to hide the animality of our biological processes by defining specifically human ways to perform them."[180] The phenomenological explanation of disgust given by Aurel Kolnai alludes even more explicitly to the issue of mortality. He interprets substances that evoke disgust as embodying the idea of putrefaction, dissolution, decay, rottenness and as being intrinsically related to the idea of transformation from living into dead matter. Accordingly, what is inherent in the nature of disgust is the idea of life and vitality: an object must first exist and live in order to be decomposed into death.

[179] Ibid., 109.
[180] Ibid., 115.

Only an object that evokes an idea of life, can elicit disgust; a life that is vanishing, decaying. For this reason, inorganic or non-biological items are excluded from the subject of disgust.[181]

The idea of an abundance of life and vitality, inherent in disgust, is not an exceptional one. William Miller interprets disgust as a reaction mechanism against a surplus of unconscious and conscious pleasures. While the first type functions as a blockade of unconscious desires, the second one punishes the gluttony of it. It is: "a time-activated barrier that judges (usually too slowly) when enough has been enough."[182] Disgust originating from the excess or overindulgence of pleasure and vitality was also emphasized by Kant in *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie*: "[T]he disgusting is excess. Very sweet or fat."[183] Furthermore, it does not arise merely from oral consumption, but also from intellectual or mental enjoyment: "…there is also a mental pleasure, which consist in the communication of thoughts. But if it is forced on us (…) the mind finds it repulsive (as in, e.g., the constant repetition of would-be flashes of with or humor, whose sameness can be unwholesome to us)" (ANTH §21). Disgust in this case also functions as a defense reaction. It serves as a protector from "drowning in pleasure."[184] In this 'satiated disgust', the object does not simply cease to be pleasant, but the accumulation of enjoyment itself presupposes its own failing: "One cannot say that what we have here is simply a pleasure that has ceased to be pleasurable, rather, that the pleasure involved becomes merely shallow, barren, reduced to a state where it is in perceptible contrast with the will to life of the person."[185]

Common to all such interpretations is an understanding of disgust as a product of cultural and social determination. Beside animal-reminder disgust that has roots in social preferences for distinguishing the rational side from the animal one, psychological studies of 'core' or food-

[181] Aurel Kolnai, *On Disgust* (Chicago: Open Court, 2004), 30.
[182] William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997), 110.
[183] Cited by Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: The Theory and History of a Strong Sensation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 106.
[184] Kolnai, 63.
[185] Ibid., 63.

related disgust have shown that it is not so much a biological instinct against contaminated objects, but more a result of cultivation: "Disgust may have some roots in evolution, but it is also clearly a cultural product. Like language and sexuality, the adult form of disgust varies by culture, and children must be "trained-up" in the local rules and meaning."[186] Kant anticipated the necessity of cultural and social conditions for disgust's existence long before. In *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie* he writes: "We also find that disgust at filth is only present in cultivated nations; the uncultivated nation has no qualms about filth. Cleanliness demonstrates the greatest human cultivation, since it is the least natural human quality, causing much exertion and hardship."[187] The idea that the boundaries of disgust (what offends and what not) are culturally and socially determined demarcates the displeasure of disgust from the mere unpleasantness of sensations (distaste) and thus defines it as a high cognitive emotion. Whether the object has the quality of being disgusting is determined by the culturally developed ideas of physical and moral contamination. Hence, as Miller concludes, a feeling of disgust, even though highly physiologically effective and visceral, is nevertheless an emotion "connected to ideas, perceptions, and cognitions and to the social and cultural context in which it makes sense to have those feelings and ideas."[188]

An explanation of disgust as originating from the decline of vitality, life and pleasure reveals its compelling and ambivalent nature. In spite of the initial rejection of the object of disgust, we are on the other hand attracted to it (there is a special appeal in watching horror movies, peeking at disgusting events such as car accidents or visiting disgusting art exhibitions). It is not merely curiosity or a peculiar pleasure that we have in the transgression of standards, but the pleasure that is contained in disgust itself that allures us. The phenomenon of fascination with disgust and its celebration in mainstream art can thus be explained by dissecting its very

[186] Haidt et.al., 111.
[187] Cited by Menninghaus, 108.
[188] Miller, 8.

ambivalent character: desire and displeasure. However, the latter moment must in the end prevail in order to evoke repulsion, and in order to judge an object as disgusting. Disgust is after all a defense mechanism (in its purest form indicated by nausea) against threatening (contaminated) objects. Although the insinuation of fear does not have a rational validity, it is nevertheless inherently present in disgust. Fear of being contaminated (defiled, dishonored) by the repulsive object guides our rejection of it: "…every feeling of disgust, without necessarily including fear, yet alludes to it somehow."[189]

But what exactly is it that is fearsome and for that matter rejected? Not the fullness and vitality of life or pleasure, but its decline. What is being discarded, as Kolnai writes, is the surplus of life coming to the end of its existence; either actual decline of living material (decomposition of body or food) or the threatening collapse of an escalating vitality (in mental or ethical disgust): "…as if through the surplus of life that is here so pronounced we were to become caught, as it were, in a short-circuit towards death, as if this intensified and concentrated life should have arisen out of an impatient longing for death, a desire to waste away, to over-spend the energy of life, a macabre debauchery of matter."[190] Such an explanation of disgust as an integration of disturbed pleasure and rejection captures its alluring nature in many works of art.

4.4.2 The nature of visual disgust and its anti-aesthetic effect in art

The primal origins of disgust are to be found in the senses of smell, taste and touch, because, as pointed out, they grasp the material essence of the object more fully. They are properly regarded as the transmitters of contamination. Nevertheless, seeing a flying cockroach or someone picking their nose in public equally arouses aversion, despite the fact that senses of smell, taste and touch are not involved in such a situation. Here we have a genuine example

[189] Kolnai, 32.
[190] Ibid., 74.

of visual disgust, that is, disgust evoked by the mere visual appearance of the object. Even though there is no danger of being contaminated by merely seeing a disgusting object, the fear of being touched by it is still present, sometimes intensified to the point of a physical reaction of nausea. Why does the idea of contamination sneak into visual cases?

One of the reasons, as Kolnai writes, is that the visual sensation grasps the object more comprehensively and in its more fully constituted way. It represents the object's features more clearly and thus it is capable of bringing up the imaginative powers of other sensations.[191] To be repulsed by the mere sight of an object is to be disgusted by it through the associative thinking of how the object must be felt by tasting, touching or smelling it. Visual cases presuppose that the imaginative working of the other senses is necessary. The idea that the object of visual disgust is contaminated is then brought in by linking it with other senses. Similarly, Miller points out: "sight works by suggesting the prospect of unnerving touches, nauseating tastes, and foul odors or by suggesting contaminating processes like putrefaction and generation."[192] It is not even necessary that the object that visually evokes disgust have a bad taste or smell. Even seeing a chocolate in the form of feces, although pleasing to taste, is still highly repulsive. The reason for this is that the mere visual form, by associative thinking of an object that is contagious (feces), brings up the idea that this object is also contagious and thus elicits disgust. Similarly, an object can look good, as for example a delicious looking steak, but if it is made out of dog meat, it will nevertheless arouse disgust (in some cultures). Such cases illustrate that visual disgust need not be aroused by the way things look, but by the mere fact of knowing what the object is or what it represents.

[191] Ibid., 48-52.
[192] Miller, 80.

The behavior of visual disgust in non-fictional situations is comparable to its effect in fictional situations, such as in the arts of painting, photography, cinematography, the plastic arts, or performance art. As Plantinga points out, the difference is merely in the degree of disgusting feeling and not in the type of emotion.[193] In fictional visual representation we still experience disgust as a unique defense reaction manifested as nausea, turning away from the image or even physically distancing oneself from it.

What I am interested in here is the question of the validity of Kant's thesis about the anti-aesthetic effect of disgust in art, that is, whether an object that excites disgust by its visual representation necessarily fails to be aesthetically appealing. I will reexamine this question by considering three different types of disgust, as distinguished by Haidt et al., and their behavior in the case of fictional visual representation.

Let me begin with the first one: 'core' disgust, where repulsion is provoked by the senses of smell and taste. In this case there is no necessary connection that an object that excites disgust by the mere sense of smell and taste will also excite disgust by its mere visual appearance. For example, seeing chocolate made with cockroaches, while otherwise orally disgusting, does not excite visual disgust. A similar case can be found in Dieter Roth's work *Shit Hare (1975)* a chocolate Eastern bunny made out of excrement. While taste-disgusting, this fact alone does not alter its visually pleasing properties. However, such orally disgusting objects can provoke visual aversion in the case of seeing someone eating the object. Such a reaction of visual disgust is suggested by Kant: "The sight of others enjoying loathsome things (e.g., when the Tunguse rhythmically suck out and swallow the mucus from their children's noses) induces the spectator to vomit, just as if such a pleasure were forced on him" (ANTH §32). Visual disgust is here evoked not by the object itself that is taste-disgusting, but by the image of someone consuming that object. This illustrates a special

[193] Carl Plantinga, »Disgusted at the movies, « *Film Studies* 8 (2006): 81-92.

power of transmittance between different types of disgust, which Miller also points out: "We see the thing chewed on and swallowed; we have, in other words, muscular actions that can be sympathetically triggered by the sight."[194] Visual disgust is in this case evoked by the suggestive imaginative powers of the sense of taste, but there can be a similar transference between visual and tactile disgust (for example seeing someone touching a rat).[195]

Cinematography has, in particular, recognized this principle of communication between oral and visual disgust and thus deliberately provokes them in horror and other intentionally repulsive movies. Moreover, it uses this principle to accentuate visual disgust by connecting 'animal reminder' and oral disgust. For example in *Pink Flamingos (1972)* by John Waters, the highlight of disgust is not when Crackers (Danny Mills) and Cotton (Mary Vivian Pierce) slaughter and cut off the ear of Cookie (Cookie Mueller), but when Divine eats it. The violation of the body envelope heightens the emotion of disgust when connected with oral consumption. This demonstrates the intrinsic relation of disgust with the sense of taste and in general with the sense experience of an object.

The second type of disgust is a 'social moral disgust,' that is, the aversion at the violation of the 'spirit envelope' or "human dignity in the social order."[196] For example, the photograph of a crucifix inundated in a glass of the artist's urine, called *Piss Christ* (1987), by an American artist Andres Serrano, was proclaimed by many as an offending, abhorrent art work, for the reason that it violates the purity and holiness of Christian faith. Nevertheless, in spite of the moral disgust that the object elicits, the aesthetic properties of it are not altered by such disgust; moreover the art work itself remains extremely aesthetically pleasing. Moral disgust in Serrano's art work is not evoked by the sight of the object, nor solely by the

[194] Miller, 81.
[195] However, no such communication between visual and olfactory disgust is to be found. This is because the activation of olfactory disgust does not need a presence of the object. That is, we do not need to see the object in order for it to be smell-disgusting. Consequently, visual representation does not translate well the sense of smell. See: Miller, 81.
[196] Haidt et al., 121.

knowledge that it uses the artist's urine, but by the fact that the crucifix is placed in the urine: something that is sacred is associated with bodily excretion. Serrano's art work was not judged as morally repugnant because of its properties, but because of its meaning, that is, the message it conveys.

The aesthetic value of artistic representation is however endangered more by the depiction of 'animal-reminder disgust,' which elicits repulsion most entirely through the sense of sight. For example, disgust provoking animals (cockroaches, rats, maggots) and decaying or mutilated bodies do not elicit disgust through the senses of smell and taste, but through sight. More importantly, aversion is not provoked by the way they look (by the arrangement of visual properties), but how we look at them; as a reminder of our animal origins. The feeling of disgust, as already pointed out, depends on what the object represents, on the meaning hidden behind it. Nevertheless, visual disgust is highly controversial in the realm of art because it provokes the tension between the nature of the disgusting object and its artistic representation which can easily collapse. When this happens, it is impossible to aesthetically enjoy the depicted object. It is for this reason that disgust has an anti-aesthetic effect. If the nature of the represented object interferes with the artistic image, we cannot distinguish artistic representations of that object from the nature of that object itself. Thus disgust precludes the possibility of aesthetic reflection which is necessary for the successful aesthetic representation of an object. We can no longer distinguish between the cognitive effect of the real existence of that object and its mere representation; hence the aesthetic reflection is destroyed.

An experience of disgust is a strong emotional reaction. Even though the object is perceived only by sight, its strong sensuous nature gives an impression of its nearness, increasing the feeling of being threatened by it, and making us reject it. In general, the feeling of disgust is described as the most visceral emotion of all, being essentially tied to sensory experience. A

disgusting object, even though perceived merely visually, affects all our senses and as Miller writes "invokes the sensory experience of what it feels like to be put in danger by the disgusting, of what it feels like to be too close to it, to have to smell it, see it, or touch it."[197] Because of this feeling of sensory nearness, disgust acts anti-aesthetically. Since it prevents the possibility of distinguishing between the nature of the object and its artistic representation, it makes it impossible to perceive it in the mode of disinterested reflection. This means that such an object does not satisfy the condition of falling under reflective evaluation at all and thus cannot be possibly regarded as beautiful.

Such an anti-aesthetic effect of visual disgust is captured well by art works such as *Sex and Death* (2003) by Chapman Brothers, depicting the skull of the corpse with a red clown nose covered by snails, maggots, spider, snakes and flies. The nature of the object, as realistically represented in the work, obstructs any possibility of finding this work aesthetically attractive. A similar anti-aesthetic eruption of the portrayal of mutilated bodies, coprophagia, physical violation, sexual degradation, urophilia and humiliation of moral dignity is evident in the infamous movie *The 120 Days of Sodom* (1975), by Pier Pasolini. While some have judged it as a masterpiece because of the idea it embodies and its technical aspects, the movie is visually hard to follow and enjoyed for its abhorrent visual attributes.

What exactly is the disruptive factor that determinates the anti-aesthetic effect of such works? One reason lies in the realistic manner with which the disgusting object is presented. Its nature is forced more strongly on the artistic representation. This could explain why for example Frida Kahlo's painting *Las Dos Fridas* (1939) does not disturb, in spite of its use of animal-reminder disgust. It skillfully beautifies the object with colors, lines, and shades, so that disgusting depiction loses its negative feeling value, and can therefore be experienced aesthetically. This explains further why depiction of disgusting objects in photography

[197] Miller, 9.

provokes rejection more directly than in painting. This is because the nature of the object is more sensibly presented and thus more easily provokes our imaginative powers on which disgust depends.

Such a technique of beautification is not the only method of overcoming disgust for there are many examples of art works of extraordinary beauty in spite of the vivid and cruel depictions of repulsive objects. Slavenka Drakulić in the novel *The Taste of a Man (1997)* describes an event in which the protagonist murders, slaughters and eats parts of the body of her beloved man with such an explicit description that would in ordinary cases provoke repulsion, yet in this case renders the enjoyment. It is not merely the intelligent style with which this episode is written that furthers the suspension of the disgust's anti-aesthetic effect, but the context of the depicted object. We are not confronted here with a mere body violation for its own sake, because of the protagonist's pure enjoyment in the brutality, but because this act embodies an idea of spiritual sacrifice. Defiance of the body, which would in an ordinary case excite disgust, as an animal reminder reaction, is in this case associated with the idea of love.[198] The context of the disgusting object alters the feeling with which we enter into it.

Many art works illustrate that disgust's anti-aesthetic effect and our receptivity to those works can be suspended by connecting the object with ideas. These latter are contrary to the reminder of animality in that they emphasize rationality, love, moral and ethical dignity, and humanity; thus imbue the object with a more profound meaning. This is one of the reasons, I argue that Kant insisted on the importance of aesthetic ideas in art. The influence of aesthetic ideas is not just in prolonging and enhancing pure formal aesthetic pleasure, which has a tendency to exhaust itself if not connected to rational ideas. (§52) But furthermore, as an embodiment of the ideas of reason they have the capacity to transubstantiate the anti-aesthetic effect of disgust.

[198] Similar idea is also suggested by Miller, 132-142 and Kolnai, 88.

4.4.3 The possibility of a positive aesthetic of disgust

There are many examples of art works with positive aesthetic qualities in spite of their disgusting subject matter, such as Frida Kahlo's *Without Hope (1945*), depicting Frida lying ill in the hospital bed and vomiting, or Matthias Grunewald's *The Dead Lovers (1528),* depicting the bodies of a couple, riddled with snakes, worms, and leeches. How can the existence of an aesthetically pleasurable representation of a disgusting object be consistent with Kant's thesis of the anti-aesthetic effect of disgust? In order to resolve this problem, we must turn to Kant's argument.[199]

What Kant argues in §48 is not that disgusting subject matter ruins the aesthetic representation by itself, but it does so only if the object is depicted in such a way that its repulsive nature forces itself on the aesthetic enjoyment of the object and thus threatens it. This happens when the nature of the object is represented so that it activates our associative sensuous experience of it (by the means of imagination), which results in the rejection of the representation completely. Because disgust is a strong visceral and physiological emotion, we are unable, in such a depiction, to remain indifferent to or disinterested in its artistic representation. In Kant's words, we are unable to distinguish the nature of the object from its formal representation and consequently to find it aesthetically appealing. The depiction of disgusting subject matter is aesthetically unsuccessful only if its nature is represented in such a way that it destroys disinterested reflection, that is, when our attention is not focused on the imaginative representation of disgust, but on its existence.

[199] What I am interested in here is the question of the possibility of aesthetic appreciation of disgust and not the possibility of artistic appreciation of disgust. That is, there are art works that deals with the disgusting subject, yet lacks aesthetic aspirations. The so called 'abject art' intentionally manipulates with the depiction of the disgusting in order to decode the psychological, social and cultural components of disgust, or to provoke certain philosophical or social issues (such as the sculpture of the Chapman Brother's, entitled *DNA Zygotic, 2003,* which depicts mutated children's bodies, through which it explores the issues of genetic damage and forces us to reflect on its experimental possibility). Contrary to Kant's principle of disinterested reflection, such art demands an aesthetic breakdown. The collapsing of the difference between reality and art is required in order to achieve the cognitive function at which such art aims.

On the other hand, if the representation of the disgusting object does not threaten its artistic image, that is, if we are still able to retain distance to the nature of the object, the aesthetic representation can remain successful. In this case we have a genuine situation in which the visceral reaction to the disgusting object has been suspended. To remain in the mode of disinterested reflection on the object is partly conditioned by the type of the art form. For example, visual and plastic arts are, in comparison to literary art, more sensitive to such aesthetic collapsing, since they are more inclined to represent an object with regard to its nature. This is particularly true for plastic arts, and it is not without reason that Kant suggested substituting any depiction of disgusting material in the art of sculpture by its symbolic or allegoric representations (§48). In the visual arts, photography is again more inclined to provoke aversion than painting is (for example, compare the portrayal of a naked old female body in the painting by Matthias Grunewald *Death and the Age of Man*, 1540 and in the photography by Andres Serrano: *Budapest,* 1994. Or, the depiction of butchered bodies as in the paining of Francisco Goya: *The Disaster of War,* 1810-1820 and as represented by the sculpture made by Chapman Brothers': *Great Deeds Against The Dead,* 1994). On the other hand, literary art has the most power to manipulate the beautification of a disgusting topic. This is because the representation of the disgusting object through words is more distant from the appeal to our senses and hence we are more able to focus our reflection on the formal portrayal of the subject matter. The more the artistic representation of the disgusting matter is distant from the nature of the object, the more its aesthetic appreciation can be successful.

Properly speaking, there can be no positive aesthetic of disgust, because by definition disgust contains a rejection of the object before an aesthetic evaluation of it could even begin. Disgust by its own logic contradicts aesthetic beauty, because it contravenes the fundamental condition of entering into aesthetic apprehension: the principle of disinterestedness. Aesthetic

properties in general, as well as disgust, are related to sensual experience, yet disgust is an experience which, contrary to pure aesthetic beauty (and ugliness), is essentially connected to the cognitive ideas of contamination and putrefaction. For this reason, disgust is more attached to the material nature of the object and to what it represents, than with its formal configuration, as beauty and ugliness are. This is evident from the phenomenological experience of disgust, which is not a reflective experience, but a visceral one. We feel disgust with the entire body. Even in visual representation, there is a feeling of physical nearness with the aversive object. Thus, when we do find a disgusting object aesthetically attractive, as in the case of some works of art, it is because we do not have a genuine disgust reaction, but the displeasure of disgust in which the original disgust reaction is suspended. What we have is a deceptive or 'pseudo-disgust" experience that is still painful, yet without the sensuous impact which would destroy the aesthetic illusion.

4.4.4 The phenomenological and theoretical demarcation of the concepts of disgust and ugliness

In everyday discourse there is a habitual use of the words disgust and ugly when referring to objects of displeasure, frequently interwoven with each other, when describing our dislike towards offending, incongruent and distorted objects. The concept of ugliness has a predisposition, like disgust, to pervade moral evaluations and disagreements, much more than its opposite, beauty, has.[200] Leaving aside the semantic oddity of the concept of ugliness, what I am interested in, in the context of this topic, is merely its aesthetic function.

[200] For more on the discussion of the multifaceted nature of the concept of ugly see: G.P. Henderson, "The Concept of Ugliness," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 6, no. 3 (1966): 219-229. And: Peter A. Carmichael, "The Sense of Ugliness," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30, no. 4 (1972): 495-498. For a more historical, social and political perspective on the notion of ugliness, see: Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Ugliness," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson & Richard Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 281-295.

Disgust and ugliness have in common a dependence on a negative feeling value, a feeling of displeasure. Furthermore, this feeling can be in both cases intentional. In the case of ugliness it is a conscious response to the formal arrangement of qualities, that is, to its disharmonious display. In the case of disgust it is a response to the idea of putrefaction or contagiousness of the offending objects and hence the feeling of displeasure in repulsive objects necessarily alludes to the emotion of fear. There is then a strict and apparent phenomenological difference between the feelings of ugliness and disgust. While feelings of danger and fear are essential for the emotion of disgust (which is after all a defense reaction feeling), the displeasure of the ugly is an effect of a mere dissatisfaction with the disagreement between formal qualities, independently of the concept of the object or to the ideas that the object occasions. In order to find an object's features discordant, there is no need to know what the object is about (leaving aside Kant's category of adherent aesthetic properties). What matters is merely its formal appearance as it affects our aesthetical common sense.

Furthermore, both disgust and ugliness have their own phenomenological feeling tonalities of displeasure. An object can be more or less aesthetically ugly, depending on the level of discord between formal qualities. Likewise, an object can more or less evoke disgust, depending on how strongly the idea of putrefaction pervades it. We are usually less disgusted at the sight of filth, than at an injured body, although it also depends on the individual sensitivity for the disgusting.[201] That the concepts of disgust and ugliness have different sources is evident more clearly from the fact that we can find some objects strongly repulsive, without a trace of any pure aesthetic ugliness (for example, snakes can be quite repulsive animals for many of us, though in some cases they can exhibit high aesthetic beauty in the arrangement of their colors; such as coral and corn snakes). Also, the opposite is the case.

[201] Kolnai explains the minimal feeling of disgust at dirt as the consequence of the fact that dirt is less related to the idea of life in decay, but it is merely a sign that there was life (56).

There can be aesthetic ugliness for example in listening to a concert, where players consistently play the wrong notes, yet without any kind of trace of disgust.

As a matter of fact, dance and music (such as instrumental music) are the only art forms in which disgust does not feature. The reason why the art of dance and of pure music cannot be disgusting is because they are merely a perception of pure formal qualities - the play of bodily movement in space in the first place and play of sound in time in the latter.[202] Disgust can be found only in the art forms which are not merely expressions of formal qualities, but where content is explicitly involved. This observation reinforces the argument for the dissimilarity of disgust and ugliness. While ugliness refers exclusively to the composition of object's features, disgust refers to the meaning of the depicted, the idea that the object represents or embodies. Moreover, the fact that disgust can be found merely in organic and biological items (or in items associated with them), while ugliness is not limited in this way, supports the view of their different natures. Disgust is inherent in the idea of putrefaction (because only living things are destined to die), while ugliness is in the formal configuration of an object.

The conceptual demarcation of disgust and ugliness can be reinforced by Kant's appeal to the different cognitive faculties that disgust and ugliness employ. As he writes in §48, disgust depends on nothing else but the imagination of the senses, while aesthetic feelings of beauty and ugliness depend on the mental state of free harmony (or disharmony) between the faculty of imagination and the faculty of understanding; this is the fundamental structure of its aesthetic purity and universal validity, which is lacking in disgust. In the light of these considerations it is legitimate to argue that disgust and ugliness, although both experienced

[202] I am referring here to the art of dance in the strict sense; that is, merely as an expression of formal qualities such as composition of bodily movements of one or more dancers; and all art of bodily movements that do not involve any other activities or performances. Similarly, in the art of music I refer to pure music, without any verbal communication.

through the feeling of displeasure, are dissimilar in the most fundamental phenomenological and theoretical aspects. The feeling of ugliness is an effect of a reflective mental state in which the faculty of understanding is necessarily employed, whereas disgust belongs to the special domain of sensory experience.

Nevertheless, as Kant writes, the disgusting prevents the possibility to find the object beautiful and hence its jurisdiction reaches aesthetic territory also. In this context, disgust and ugliness both preclude aesthetic pleasure, though their approach differs significantly. An object that is disgusting simply influences aesthetic appreciation from a non-aesthetic realm. The content prevents the possibility that an aesthetic reflection even enters into our perception of the object. It does that by hindering the possibility of a disinterested attitude to the object in the first place. To disinterestedly regard the object means in other words to subsume it under the aesthetic reflection which determines whether the object is beautiful or not (depending on the harmony or disharmony of cognitive powers through the feeling of pleasure or displeasure). And if disgust prevents the possibility of an object of being evaluated aesthetically in the first place, that is, if the object cannot be aesthetically evaluated at all, then *a fortiori* it cannot be evaluated positively, that is, as beautiful. It is for this reason that disgust functions anti-aesthetically, because it interferes with the aesthetic process 'from the outside,' that is, from the meaning of the depicted.

The feeling of ugliness, on the other hand, does not interfere with aesthetic reflection, as disgust does, but on the contrary, it is an outcome of it. To evaluate objects as aesthetically ugly is to acknowledge that the reflective operation took place and that its outcome was an aesthetic feeling of ugliness, which therefore must be regarded as a proper counter-part to beauty, more than disgust is. An object that is aesthetically evaluated as ugly can by definition never be regarded as beautiful, while an object of disgust can exhibit, on certain occasions (when the aesthetic illusion between the nature of the object and its representation

does not collapse) aesthetic beauty. Both ugliness and disgust are counterparts to beauty. While ugliness as a negative aesthetic partner of beauty is its proper opponent, disgust on the other hand is much more resistant to beauty than ugliness is. Kant nevertheless writes that there can be a beautiful portrayal of an ugly object, but not of a disgusting one (§48). Disgust is the most hostile opposition to beauty, not because disgust would be the most extreme form of ugliness, but precisely because of its different nature. Disgust is a sign of an immediate failure. In contrast to ugliness, disgust fails without aesthetic examination. It is a symptom of failure, before even entering into aesthetic reflection, just as a feces-like chocolate fails to be appreciated before even tasted and sensibly evaluated. Disgust is the enemy of beauty precisely because it prevents any aesthetic evaluation. It is a turn-off without even being aesthetically inspected.

4.5 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to give a positive account of judgments of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics and to apply this account to help to solve certain issues in contemporary aesthetics, such as the possibility of the appreciation of ugly art and the place of disgust in aesthetics.

Judgments of taste belong to the category of reflective judgments, governed by the *a priori* principle of purposiveness, which aims to conceptualize everything that we encounter in the world and so to attain the harmony between the world and our cognitive abilities. The feeling of pleasure indicates that the object suits our cognitive abilities, even though this cannot be articulated by means of concepts. The feeling of displeasure, on the other hand, indicates that the object is not fitted for our cognitive abilities, and that its organization is unfamiliar to our ways of organizing the world.

I pointed out in the previous chapter that the subject of a judgment of taste is the additional material that is not determined by the concept of the object. Therefore, the concept of the object cannot serve as a standard for our aesthetic judgment. And this means that genuine judgments of taste, independent of the concept of the object, can be given. Judgments of ugliness also satisfy this criterion. That is, an object can be ugly, such as an *angler fish*, independently of the natural kind to which it belongs, because even the most perfect specimen of an angler fish is still ugly.

It is not only in nature that genuine judgments of ugliness can be made, but in art works as well. Even though art works are made with a certain purpose, this purpose is nevertheless insufficient to fully determine the organizational structure of the art work, and hence, art works attain an element of the freedom and indeterminacy characteristic of natural objects. Kant writes that it is the *nature* of the artist, i.e. the talent to freely use his cognitive powers, which shapes the work. This indicates that art works are aesthetically appreciated in the same way as natural objects, by means of the same principle of purposiveness. This means that genuine cases of ugliness can be found in art works just as in nature.

Artistic ugliness, however, does not indicate artistic failure. Ugliness depends on the feeling of displeasure, yet it also has a positive quality in that through it an artist can express certain ideas and emotions that cannot be fully represented literally, such as alienation, dehumanization, mortality, absurdity, anxiety, fear, horror etc. Ugliness evokes these ideas and emotions because it represents the disruption of order and harmony that we expect to find in the world. When our expectations of order and our need of organizing the world in a specific way are violated, we do not merely experience displeasure, but also a sense of loss of control over the organization of experience, and this can occasion feelings of fear, anxiety, and a sense of estrangement, powerlessness, etc. Artistic ugliness can be a valuable

experience, because it is the unique way through which these ideas and emotions themselves can be sensibly represented. As Kant wrote in unpublished *Anthropology Notes* from 1769-1770: "much genius and little taste brings forth crude, yet valuable products" (AN 15:297; 491). Accordingly, even unrestrained creative imagination can produce valuable works of art. What is valuable is the artist's ability to express aesthetic ideas. That is, in virtue of productive imagination, the artist has an ability to express things for which there is no adequate sense intuition. For example, while we may experience our own state of being alienated, there are limits to the degree of understanding of the idea of alienation itself that is available only from our own states. Through an artistic representation, however, we can gain a different perspective on this idea, for example, what alienation might look like, which can consequently contribute to a richer understanding of this idea. Aesthetic experience therefore stimulates intellectual interest, by giving us the possibility to go beyond what our personal experience affords. An artist is not limited to nature, its concepts and laws, but has an ability to free his imagination from the constraint of the understanding and to create new nature, that is, nature imbued with ideas. In other words, an artist has the ability to reach beyond sensory experience (towards ideas), making it sensible.[203] An art work is valuable because it occasions the experience of freedom from the natural world and gives an opportunity to intuit and apprehend that which cannot ever be fully presented by sensory experience alone. As Paul Bruno nicely puts it, art works that express aesthetic ideas are important because they

[203] Angelica Nuzzo accordingly writes that art work is: "the highest form of mediation between nature and freedom, the sensible world and the supersensible." *Kant and the Unity of Reason* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2005), 303. Similarly, Donald Crawford praises the value of artistic creativity because "in its exercise of the creative imagination the possibility of our real freedom, our dominion over the causally determined world of nature, is symbolized." Donald W. Crawford, "Kant's Theory of Creative Imagination," in *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays*, ed. Paul Guyer (NewYork: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 168.

are “means of occupying the emptiness” that concepts on their own would have without sense intuitions.[204]

But it is not only artistic ugliness that can be edifying in expressing aesthetic ideas, but natural ugliness as well. Kant writes that natural forms “contain a language that nature brings to us and that seems to have a higher meaning” (§42). For example, the white color of the lily evokes the idea of innocence, or the bird’s song evokes the idea of joyfulness (§42). The communication of aesthetic ideas is not intentional in natural objects, rather “this is how we interpret nature, whether anything of the sort is its intention or not (§42). But if positive aesthetic experience of nature is important due to the ideas its perceptual form suggests and evokes, such as innocence, virtue and joyfulness, then negative aesthetic experience can be valuable as well. Ugliness brings forth negative aesthetic ideas, which are uncomfortable, yet are part of our experience of the world and ourselves and therefore worthwhile attending to. Even though perceived with displeasure, ugliness affords an unfamiliar and unexpected perspective on the phenomenal world and an intimation of the world of ideas. And this in itself makes ugliness a valuable and significant experience.

[204] Paul W. Bruno, *Kant’s Concept of Genius: its Origin and Function in the Third Critique* (London & New York: Continuum, 2010), 137.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation has been to propose an account of ugliness that can provide a solution to the so called 'paradox of ugliness', namely, how can we value something that we *prima facie* find positively displeasing. I constructed my account of ugliness by exploring and amending Kant's aesthetic theory. I concluded, contrary to some recent studies, that Kant's theory of taste can be made to accommodate the existence of ugliness as a pure negative aesthetic experience, which displeases independently of determinate concepts and with a universal validity.

Before developing my interpretation of ugliness, I first examined Kant's argument for the possibility of pure judgments of taste, and the central notion of Kant's aesthetics, that is, the concept of free harmony between imagination and understanding. I concluded that there is a problem with Kant's argument, as recent studies have shown, in that it seems to preclude the possibility to accommodate pure judgments of ugliness. Even more, since on Kant's account free harmony, which produces pleasure, is identified with the state of mind required for cognition, it follows that all objects of cognition must be beautiful. Next, I critically examined different contemporary solutions to Kant's problem and argued that the most viable solution, namely to distinguish between the aesthetic and cognitive states of mind, is unsuccessful, because it undermines Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste. I considered Guyer's argument for the epistemological impossibility of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics. I argued that, even though his interpretation of ugliness is unsuccessful, his argument is fruitfully challenging in that it demonstrates the problematic implications of Kant's notion of free harmony. That is, on one hand Kant claims that free harmony between cognitive powers is a subjective condition of cognition, yet on the other hand, based on his epistemological theory, he claims that for cognition it is necessary that the concept governs

the activity of imagination. As a result, cognitive powers are not in free play. Based on this I concluded that in order to solve the problem of ugliness it is necessary first to examine in detail Kant's deeply unsatisfying account of the concept of free harmony constitutive of judgments of the beautiful.

This examination of the concept of free harmony was carried out in the second chapter. I compared the role of imagination and understanding in ordinary cognition, as presented in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* with their role in judgments of taste, and concluded that the notion of free harmony cannot be understood as the play between imagination and understanding devoid of any concepts because it contradicts Kant's theory of the three-fold synthesis. Based on this judgment, I critically examined major contemporary interpretations of the notion of free harmony (precognitive, abstractive, metacognitive, multicognitive) and argued that none of them is fully successful. Nonetheless, I claimed that they offer partial solutions on Kant's problem, which I took into consideration in developing my interpretation. In particular, I aimed to integrate the following three ideas: in order for judgments of taste to be universally communicable, free harmony must be required for cognition, namely for empirical concept acquisition, as Ginsborg argued; Guyer's idea that free harmony comes up additionally once the requirements of conceptual harmony are satisfied; and Budd's suggestion that it is general, rather than particular, empirical concepts that guide the synthesis of perception. Based on this, I constructed an interpretation of free play such that it is able to reconcile on one hand Kant's idea that perception is conceptually governed activity and, on the other hand, that there is freedom of the imaginative synthesis constitutive of judgments of taste.

I presented my interpretation of free harmony in the third chapter. I argued that the distinction between the harmony necessary for ordinary cognition and the harmony required for judgments of taste is derived from the distinction between the two different functions

performed by the faculty of imagination, and which refers to Kant's distinction between determining and reflective judgments respectively. I claimed that free harmony should be understood as a harmony between *free imagination* and understanding in reflection upon cognition. I argued that a determining judgment is necessary in order to have perceptual experience of an object in the first place, that is, imagination must combine the sense data in accordance with some empirical concepts. However, a particular form of an object can nevertheless contain such a synthesis of the manifold that extends beyond the harmony provided by the concept of the object. The representation, in which the manifold expresses more than the concept requires for the fulfillment of the minimal conditions for objective harmony, is the representation in which the imagination is free. Aesthetic pleasure is produced when the free imagination, that is, imagination whose activity goes beyond that required by a concept, is in harmony with the understanding. Furthermore, I gave an explanation of the possibility of recognizing such free harmony by appealing to Kant's theory of reflective judgments and the *a priori* principle of purposiveness. Kant introduced this principle as a unique way of approaching and reflecting on nature, namely, that it is as though nature were organized by an understanding similar to ours so that harmony between our cognitive abilities and nature can be found. The ability to judge objects by means of the principle of the purposiveness of nature underlies our empirical concept acquisition and it is therefore necessary for cognition in general. I defended a thesis that the same principle is also responsible for our ability to make judgments of taste and to experience pleasure and displeasure. Both finding an object beautiful and acquiring the concept represent the satisfaction of the same principle of nature's purposiveness, which refers to the same cognitive need we have, that is, to systematize experience. Since this expectation is necessary for all of us, the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) is presupposed to be universally valid. However, even though both logical reflection and aesthetic reflection depend on the same

ability to experience free harmony, it does not follow that all objects for which empirical concepts are found are aesthetically pleasing. I avoided the 'everything-is-beautiful' problem by arguing that aesthetic reflection refers to the synthesis of object's individual and distinctive properties, while logical reflection refers to the synthesis of object's general properties that it shares with other objects of its kind. A beautiful object discloses the purposiveness of nature at the most concrete and particular level which for this reason cannot be grasped in a determinate concept, but in the feeling of pleasure alone. The feeling of pleasure in a beautiful object is a constant reminder of the object's suitability for our cognitive abilities. Because aesthetic purposiveness is different from logical purposiveness, this allows for the possibility that we can have an object of cognition, that is, we may be able to subsume the particular under a concept, without finding this object beautiful, moreover, finding the object ugly or aesthetically displeasing.

Based on my interpretation of the notion of free harmony, I proceeded to give an account of ugliness in more details. *First,* I proposed a solution to the problem of accommodating judgments of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics. I argued that Kant's account of reflective judgments is consistent with the possibility of reflective disharmony. That is, since specific individual aspects of nature are left undetermined by pure concepts, they do not necessarily find their agreement with our understanding. There is then a possibility to experience a disharmony between free imagination and understanding. The feeling of displeasure is the result of the disagreement between the particular aspects of objects and the principle of purposiveness. *Second,* I applied my interpretation of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics, together with his theory of aesthetic ideas in art, to solve some of the recurrent problems in contemporary philosophical aesthetics. By arguing that free play of imagination and understanding can be occasioned not only by perceptual properties alone, but by the combination of thoughts and associations triggered by the perceptual image, I indicated a

possible solution to the problem of the aesthetic appreciation of conceptual art. More importantly, I proposed a solution to the 'paradox of ugliness', namely how an object that is displeasing can retain our attention and be greatly appreciated. Based on my interpretation of the notion of free play in Kant's aesthetics, I argued that even though a disharmonious relation, on which ugliness depends, is itself painful and frustrating, our attention can nevertheless be held because of other features of this state. In particular, ugliness generates a rich imagination, which is difficult for our cognitive abilities to process, yet because we are governed by the *a priori* belief that the world is amenable to our cognitive abilities and that a certain harmony ought to be found, we are led to continue our reflection on the ugly object in the expectation that the object must eventually find its agreement with our cognitive structure. However, since ugliness is considered to be not only attention-holding, but also captivating and aesthetically significant, an additional explanation was needed in order to explain the possibility of positive appreciation of ugly works of art. I argued that ugliness can offer a unique and novel aesthetic experience, because it is not produced according to some determinate and known rules, but is rather result of the artist's ability to exercise free imagination. In this respect it can offer new combinations of existing ideas and perceptual features, which is by itself a valuable experience, even though accompanied with displeasure. Furthermore, by connecting ugliness with Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas, I argued that ugliness can be a valuable experience because it is a unique way through which certain ideas that cannot be directly represented, such as ideas of alienation, mortality, death, anxiety, horror etc., can be expressed. In addition, I offered a detailed analysis of the notion of disgust in the light of Kant's aesthetics and defended a view that disgust is phenomenologically and conceptually unique emotion in contrast to ugliness.

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