also be indefinable. It seems that this communicability should stand even with the concerns of precision in judgement. Coleman doubted we could ever know the depth of our aesthetic purity; after all, how often can we say precisely *what* is ugly about a piece or performance? Berger likewise thought that each individual with their own experience and personality would necessarily have a unique account of beauty and ugliness.

The large and growing body of literature dealing with Kant and ugliness may seem at times to be an example of the subject: confusing, conflicting, and at times incomprehensible. But even in this sense it serves as a testimony to ugliness' undeniability. Allison believed there *must* be a place in Kant's system for negative judgements of taste, because the system seemed to demand it. But for aesthetics in general we may say that there *must* be a place in any system for ugliness, because it forces consideration of the system itself. In all the myriad ways we are met with, and meditate on, ugliness, the experience forms a riddle with which we must reckon. By taking the above literature into consideration *en masse* I have shown that ugliness can be described as simultaneously stultifying and enlivening, offensive and fascinating, and raising as many questions about the experiencer as it does the experience.

CHAPTER V

KANT'S SUBLIME AND INGENIOUS INSIGHTS INTO JUDGEMENTS OF THE UGLY

ERIN BRADFIELD

I shall explore the question of whether Kant's theory in the *Critique of Judgement* can account for judgements of taste regarding the ugly. While there has been much debate regarding this issue in recent decades, many scholars consider the harmonious free play of the faculties to be central to this question. Harmony between the imagination and understanding is stressed in a series of articles regarding pure judgements of taste of the ugly beginning in the mid-1990s and extending into the 2000s. I shall here investigate the status of harmony in relation to judgements of taste and assess whether harmony among these faculties is necessary to free play. In order to do so, I compare three cases and consider how they relate to cognitive activity: judgements of taste of the beautiful, sublime experience, and judgements of taste regarding works of genius. I argue that pure judgements of taste of the ugly are indeed possible by analysing the cognitive activity produced in the aforementioned cases. These instances show that in Kant's system, cognitive harmony may not be necessary to free play. Rather, disharmony can also be produced by our aesthetic experience with the sublime, works of genius, and the ugly. I argue that in spite of the contrapurposiveness and disharmony that experience with the ugly spurs, it nonetheless can serve to further cognitive activity and quicken the mind, cultivate taste, and develop community, thus revealing a higher, and perhaps unexpected, purposiveness.

Harmony and Pure Judgements of Taste: The Beautiful as a Test Case

As a basis for considering whether judgements of taste of the ugly are possible on Kant's terms, we must first establish Kant's position regarding

judgements of taste of the beautiful, (Kant's focus in *The Critique of Judgement*, specifically in the "Analytic of the Beautiful").[1] As a general sketch, Kant's aesthetic theory as presented in the *Critique of Judgement* requires that: 1) our judgements of taste be disinterested; 2) our judgements of taste be subjectively universal; 3) our mental state be marked by the free play of the imagination with the understanding; and 4) we be able to express this common state of mind to others through judgements of taste. According to Kant, in order to express our judgements of taste as universally derived claims of beauty, in a way that is not merely the communication of our preferences and opinions, but is still not based on laws or determinate concepts, we must share the same mental state. That is, we must judge in a way that is disinterested and not based upon experience or specific concepts. As Kant argues, we must judge art from a pure and impartial position in which no prejudices, biases, or inclinations impinge upon our judgements. This ensures that our judgements of taste are pure. As a result, everyone ought to agree with our assessments of whether something is beautiful because we occupy the same disinterested, unbiased mental state. This shared feeling based upon the relationship of our imagination and the understanding is required in order to establish our "sensus communis" or "common sense" of taste in Kant's terminology.[2] The precondition for the possibility of this subjective universality is a mental state marked by the free play of the imagination and understanding. Not only do we deem that others ought to agree with our judgements of taste, but we demand assent to them.[3]

Some recent articles on Kant and the ugly add an additional condition to the aforementioned sketch of what is necessary to Kant's account of judgements of taste in the "Analytic of the Beautiful:" The free play of imagination and understanding must be *harmonious*. At first blush, this might appear to be a straightforward statement. However, the claim

[1] Throughout this essay, I focus on beauty and ugliness in art rather than in nature.
[2] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner Pluhar, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), §40. Kant states, "Instead, we must [here] take *sensus communis* to mean the idea of a sense *shared* [by all of us] i.e. a power to judge that in reflecting takes account (a priori), in our thought, of everyone else's way of presenting [something], in order *as it were* to compare our own judgement with human reason in general and thus escape the illusion that arises from the ease of mistaking subjective and private conditions for objective ones, an illusion that would have a prejudicial influence on the judgement." Cf., §20, and "Introduction," pp. lx, lxii. Subsequent citations will provide section number, Ak. pagination, and reference to page number in Pluhar's translation.
[3] *Ibid.*, §8, Ak. 214, pp. 57-58; §36, Ak. 289, p. 153.

regarding the interconnection (and perhaps put more strongly, the dependence) of the free play of the faculties upon their harmonious relationship is quite contentious and warrants further examination. David Shier's argument in "Why Kant Finds Nothing Ugly" and Sean McConnell's argument in "How Kant Might Explain Ugliness" treat free play as dependent upon the harmonious relationship of the imagination and the understanding.[4] They proceed to argue that judgements of taste of the ugly do not exhibit this harmonious relationship among the faculties. Therefore, they argue, judgements of the ugly are not possible utilising Kant's framework. Put differently, this proposed "necessary" harmony serves as the cornerstone of arguments against the possibility of pure judgements of the ugly.

In other arguments, the issue of harmony figures quite differently, offering an opportunity to present a case for how pure judgements of the ugly may indeed be consistent with Kant's system. Christian Wenzel argues in "Kant Finds Nothing Ugly?" that we can have a *disharmonious* free play of the imagination and the understanding based primarily upon evidence from the *Reflections*, the *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy*, and to a lesser extent, from *The Critique of Judgement*.[5] At first, Wenzel focuses on showing that there is an a priori basis for judgements of the ugly and that these judgements serve as counterparts to a priori judgements of the beautiful. He goes on to argue that for Kant's account in *The Critique of Judgement* to have traction, we must have the ability to disagree about judgements of taste, requiring that one individual can claim that "X is beautiful" while another claims that "X is ugly." Moreover, Wenzel argues that ugliness is a *positive* quality, not a mere lack of beauty. In other words, our judgements of taste of the ugly are not just the recognition of a lack of beauty; they pick out some positive, and in this case, ugly, quality. This means that "X is not beautiful" and "X is ugly" are significantly different claims.[6]

In what follows, I make a complementary argument to Wenzel's by exploring whether we must have a harmonious relationship between the imagination and understanding in order to make a pure judgement of taste. Utilising evidence from *The Critique of Judgement*, I argue that disharmony among the faculties is consistent with free play, looking in particular to

[4] See David Shier, "Why Kant Finds Nothing Ugly," *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 38,4 (1998): 412-418 and Sean McConnell, "How Kant Might Explain Ugliness," *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 48 (2) (2008): 205-228.
[5] See Christian Wenzel, "Kant Finds Nothing Ugly?" *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 39,4 (1999): 416-422.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 416 and p. 418.

our responses to sublime experience and works of genius as support for this point. I further argue that this disharmonious and contrapurposive state of the faculties shows us a way to understand how judgements of the ugly are possible within Kant's theoretical framework and what purpose such disharmony ultimately serves. My argument aims to preserve the free play of the faculties, but also to open up the possibility that not all judgements of taste are harmonious, nor do they have to be harmonious given Kant's commitments. This position helps to account for both positive aesthetic experience of pleasure and negative aesthetic experience of displeasure in response to art. My argument allows for a way to square the idea that our faculties must experience free play in order to make a pure, disinterested judgement of taste, with the disharmony or displeasure that we sometimes experience in response to art.

Free Play and the Case for Disharmony

In part, my inspiration for this argument regarding freedom and disharmony stems from a disagreement with David Shier's position in "Why Kant Finds Nothing Ugly." In the final paragraph of this article, Shier summarises his argument quite succinctly:

> Since harmonious free play is always pleasurable, and since all judgements of taste are accompanied by harmonious free play, it follows that every judgement of taste must be accompanied by the feeling of pleasure in the subject. But any judgement of taste in which the subject's feeling is that of pleasure is, by definition, an affirmative judgement of taste. Therefore, within Kant's aesthetics, and contrary to the obvious fact of the matter, negative judgements of taste about free beauty are quite impossible.[7]

Although I find his overall argument to be remarkably clear, I disagree with Shier's conclusion. I object, in particular, to Shier's premise that connects free play with a harmonious relationship between the faculties. I grant that harmonious free play results in a feeling of pleasure. However, I disagree with the notion that all judgements of taste must be accompanied by *harmony*. Could some judgements of taste be accompanied by *disharmonious* free play instead?[8]

[7] Shier, *op.cit.*, p. 418.

[8] While I focus on the work of Shier as my example here, the issue of harmony permeates contemporary scholarship on Kant and the ugly. For scholarship on the issue of harmony in relationship to judgements of the ugly see Sean McConnell, "How Kant Might Explain Ugliness," *op.cit.*; David Shier, "Why Kant Finds Nothing Ugly," *op.cit.*; Paul Guyer, "Kant and the Purity of the Ugly," *Kant e-Prints*, 3,3 (2004): 1-21; Christian Wenzel, "Kant Finds Nothing Ugly?", *op.cit.*; and Hud Hudson, "The Significance of an Analytic of the Ugly in Kant's Deduction of Pure Judgements of Taste," in *Kant's Aesthetics*, eds. Ralf Meerbote and Hud Hudson, (Atascadero, CA: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1991) pp. 87-103.

In order to address this question regarding harmony, let me first consider what Kant means by "free play." There are several different senses of freedom built into Kant's phrase that require further elaboration. First, we must consider freedom as it is related to Kant's notion of "disinterested interest" in the "Analytic of the Beautiful." Here, Kant argues that our judgements should not be biased or prejudiced by personal inclination towards or interest in the object's existence.[9] Kant further claims that we ought to have a disinterested interest in the object as we contemplate and judge it.[10] We can extend this reasoning to argue that we should not be biased by personal inclinations *against* the object or its existence either, as might be the case in our experience of ugly objects. As Wenzel argues, nothing about the ugly seems to imply that we could not be free to contemplate it in a disinterested way. Wenzel ponders,"If I see something and find it ugly, why should it not occupy my mind? Why should I not contemplate it, although with displeasure?"[11] We should be free to contemplate the ugly in a disinterested fashion just as we are to contemplate the beautiful, especially because we are judging the *form* of the object, rather than its content or subject matter.

Second, a lack of prejudice is connected to the notion that we judge freely when we are not constrained or guided by a determinate concept in judging the object. In judgements of taste, we do not refer the given object to a specific concept with which to compare or judge it. This, properly speaking, is what makes judgements of taste aesthetic rather than logical in nature. There is no determinate concept with which we can compare the object in question in order to judge it. In §1 of the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant states:

> If we wish to decide whether something is beautiful or not, we do not use understanding to refer the presentation to the object so as to give rise to cognition; rather, we use imagination (perhaps in connection with understanding) to refer the presentation to the subject and his feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Hence a judgement of taste is not a cognitive judgement and so is not a logical judgement but an aesthetic one, by which

[9] Kant, §2, Ak. 204, p. 45.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Wenzel, p. 421.

> we mean a judgement whose determining basis *cannot be other* than *subjective* ... here the subject feels himself, [namely] how he is affected by the presentation.[12]

The lack of a determinate concept sets our imagination and understanding into motion. It activates them into free play searching for the concept that will fit our aesthetic experience in order to judge whether the object is beautiful or not. Kant further argues:

> If, then, we are to think that the judgement about this universal communicability of the presentation has a merely subjective determining basis, i.e. one that does not involve a concept of the object, then this basis can be nothing other than the mental state that we find in the relation between the presentational powers [imagination and understanding] insofar as they refer a given presentation to *cognition in general*. When this happens, the cognitive powers brought into play by the presentation are in free play, because no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition.[13]

Taking these passages in conjunction, judgements of taste regarding the ugly can satisfy both conditions of freedom outlined here, and therefore are consistent with Kant's position in *The Critique of Judgement*. Just as in the case of the beautiful, when judging ugly objects, we should not (and need not) refer the object to a determinate concept. Moreover, in principle, we can be disinterested in ugly objects if we judge from an unbiased and unprejudiced standpoint, just as with judgements of the beautiful. As I argued earlier, if we judge the form of the object, it should not affect our disinterested contemplation of the object if it happens to be ugly.[14]

Now, having established the possibility of free play with respect to judgements of taste of the ugly, let me turn to the question of harmony and disharmony in relationship to such free play. Consider the following argument (a counter-argument to Shier of sorts) about Kant's theory in *The Critique of Judgement*:

1. All judgements of taste involve free play of the imagination and understanding.

[12] Kant, §1, Ak. 204, p. 44.
[13] *Ibid.*, §9, Ak. 217, p. 61-62.
[14] There is certainly more to say about cases in which we are *not* disinterested but judge the object ugly. However, that falls outside the scope of this paper.

2. But not all free play involves a harmonious relationship among the faculties.[15]
3. Harmony among the faculties implies or gives rise to pleasure.
4. Judgements of taste in response to pleasure are judgements of taste of the beautiful.
5. Disharmony among the faculties implies or gives rise to displeasure or negative pleasure.
6. Judgements of taste in response to displeasure or negative pleasure are judgements of taste of the ugly.
7. Therefore, Kant's system accommodates both positive and negative judgements of taste.
8. Therefore, Kant's system accommodates judgements of taste about the beautiful and judgements of taste about the ugly.

In order to support what I take to be the key and most contentious claim in my argument, premise two, I will turn to *The Critique of Judgement* and cases in which we experience displeasure based upon the relationship among our faculties. In the sections that follow, I will explore sublime experience and works of genius in order to show how each spurs displeasure and disharmony in aesthetic response.

Sublime Experience

Having established the possibility of free play with respect to judgements of taste of the ugly, let me turn to the question of harmony and disharmony in relationship to free play. The relationship of our faculties in sublime experience illuminates our investigation of the cognitive activity underlying judgements of taste of the ugly. In particular, sublime experience shows a case in which we experience both pleasure *and* displeasure in response to aesthetic experience.

Kant begins the "Analytic of the Sublime" by comparing the feelings we have in response to the beautiful and the feelings we have in response to the sublime. Whereas the beautiful inspires restful contemplation and pleasure, the sublime inspires a feeling of indirect pleasure, displeasure, negative pleasure, seriousness, or respect.[16] Recall that contemplation of the beautiful enlivens the individual. As Kant puts the point in the "Analytic of the Beautiful," "the subject feels himself" and experiences

[15] This is the key premise of my argument. I will provide support for this claim in the arguments that follow regarding the analysis of sublime experience and works of genius.
[16] Kant, §23, Ak. 245, p. 98.

pleasure in response to art.[17] Sublime experience, on the other hand, forces an individual to recognise the superiority of the rational vocation of his cognitive powers (reason) over the greatest power of sensibility (imagination).

Sublime experience is both a source of pleasure and displeasure for the subject due to the tension among the faculties. This is due to the failure of the imagination to achieve its given goal of apprehending various intuitions and then comprehending them. As such, Kant variously refers to our feeling in response to sublime experience as one marked by "displeasure,"[18] "negative pleasure,"[19] "agitation,"[20] "respect"[21] and "vibration, with a rapid alternation of repulsion from, and attraction to, one and the same object."[22] The imagination hits its limit and then attempts to exceed it in order to be adequate to its vocation. As Kant puts the point, the imagination pours forth all the more powerfully when it confronts its boundaries:

> [What happens is that] our imagination strives to progress towards infinity, while our reason demands absolute totality as an idea, and so [the imagination], our power of estimating the magnitude of things in the world of sense, is inadequate to that idea. Yet this inadequacy itself is the arousal in us of the feeling that we have a supersensible power; and what is absolutely large is not an object of sense, but is the use that judgement makes naturally of certain objects so as to [arouse] this (feeling), and in contrast with that use any other use is small. Hence what is to be called sublime is not the object but the attunement that the intellect [gets] through a certain presentation that occupies reflective judgement ... *Sublime is what even to be able to think proves that the mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense.*[23]

Sublime experience forces the imagination to recognise its inadequacy, because just as the imagination strives to accomplish its goal of presenting in a single intuition a totality or unity, it is unable to do so. While apprehension proceeds to infinity, (continually grasping intuitions), comprehension (joining these intuitions together into a unity) reaches its

[17] *Ibid.*, §1, Ak. 204, p. 44.
[18] *Ibid.*, §27, Ak. 259, p. 116.
[19] *Ibid.*, §23, Ak. 245, p. 98.
[20] *Ibid.*, §24, Ak. 247, p. 101, and §27, Ak. 258, p. 115.
[21] *Ibid.*, §27, Ak. 257, p. 114.
[22] *Ibid.*, §27, Ak. 258, p. 115.
[23] *Ibid.*, §25, Ak. 250, p. 106.

limit.[24] There is pleasure in stretching the imagination's boundaries, but displeasure in confronting the imagination's limits. As Kant puts the point, "he has the feeling that his imagination is inadequate for exhibiting the idea of a whole, [a feeling] in which imagination reaches its maximum, and as it strives to expand that maximum, it sinks back into itself, but consequently comes to feel a liking...".[25]

Although sublime experience highlights a strained relationship among our faculties (imagination and reason as well as imagination and understanding), it is nonetheless purposive for us because it manifests the superiority of reason, according to Kant. As Kant articulates the point,

> The *quality* of the feeling of the sublime consists in its being a feeling, accompanying an object, of displeasure about our aesthetic power of judging, yet of a displeasure that we present at the same time as purposive. What makes this possible is that the subject's own inability uncovers in him the consciousness of an unlimited ability which is also his, and that the mind can judge this ability aesthetically only by that inability."[26]

Kant claims that while sublime experience may expose the inadequacy of imagination (the sublime's contrapurposiveness), it also reveals our higher vocation and forces us to recognise the superiority of reason over our other faculties and over Nature (the sublime's purposiveness). In other words, sublime experience helps us to discover the power of pure and independent reason as a supersensible faculty.[27]

As has been shown in this section, sublime experience is a source of both pleasure and displeasure. It indicates a conflict, tension, or disharmonious relationship among the faculties. As aforementioned, such experience generates a feeling of respect in which we recognise reason as our most powerful faculty. As the imagination stretches its boundaries and encounters its limits, it pours forth all the more powerfully. As it does so, it engages with the understanding and experiences a kind of play. To be clear, this play may be of a different sort than we experience in our

[24] As Kant argues, "...comprehension becomes more and more difficult the farther apprehension progresses, and it soon reaches its maximum ... For when apprehension has reached the point where the partial presentations of sensible intuition that were first apprehended are already beginning to be extinguished in the imagination, as it proceeds to apprehend further ones, the imagination then loses as much on the one side as it gains on the other; and so there is a maximum in comprehension that it cannot exceed," *ibid.*, §26, Ak. 252, p. 108.
[25] *Ibid.*, §26, Ak. 252, p. 109.
[26] *Ibid.*, §27, Ak. 259, p. 116.
[27] *Ibid.*, §27, Ak. 259, p. 115.

encounters with beauty because it does not involve restful contemplation. Rather, encounters with the sublime would generate a kind of serious, tense, or even violent play. Insofar as the imagination and understanding engage with one another in sublime experience, both faculties are enlivened and spring into action. The displeasure we experience in response to the sublime, in conjunction with the resulting stressed relationship among the faculties, leads to a disharmonious, frustrated play in which the faculties pour forth all the more powerfully. In the next section, I will explain how frustrated play is present in the case of works of genius in order to further the overall argument regarding the possibility of disharmonious play and of judgements of taste of the ugly.

Works of Genius

Before turning to works of genius and the complication they present for the relationship of the faculties, it is crucial to investigate Kant's notion of aesthetic ideas.[28] Kant asserts that an aesthetic idea is a "presentation of the imagination which prompts much thought, to which no determinate concept is adequate, so that no language can express it completely and also allow us to grasp it."[29] We search for a unified concept (or set of concepts) by which to comprehend the meaning of the art we encounter, yet the multitude of partial and related presentations makes this process difficult. Kant states:

> Now if a concept is provided with [*unterlegen*] a presentation of the imagination such that, even though this presentation belongs to the exhibition of the concept, yet it prompts, even by itself, so much thought as can never be comprehended within a determinate concept and thereby the presentation aesthetically expands the concept itself in an unlimited way, then the imagination is creative in [all of] this and sets the power of intellectual ideas (i.e. reason) in motion: it makes reason think more, when prompted by a [certain] presentation, than what can be apprehended and made distinct in the presentation (though the thought does pertain to the concept of the object [presented]).[30]

Thus, the excess of aesthetic ideas stretches the bounds of our concepts. The result is a struggle to fit our experience into a concept that is too

[28] This will further develop our understanding of aesthetic experience of all types, including our experience of the beautiful.
[29] *Ibid.*, §49, Ak. 314, p.182.
[30] *Ibid.*, §49, Ak. 314-315, p. 183.

constrictive for it. While concepts fail to adequately capture the meaning of the work of art, we still attempt to find them. Because our ready-to-hand concepts are too narrow, too weak, or both, to engage adequately with works of art, the surplus produces further thought and activity in the attempt to process and comprehend it.

Kant argues that because aesthetic ideas challenge and stretch conceptual boundaries, they expand the mind itself. Aesthetic ideas activate and quicken the mental faculties through the excess that they contain.

> [W]e present something that prompts the imagination to spread over a multitude of kindred presentations that arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words. These aesthetic attributes yield an *aesthetic idea*, which serves the mentioned rational idea as a substitute for a logical exhibition, but its proper function is to quicken [*beleben*] the mind by opening up for it a view into an immense realm of kindred presentations ... that give the imagination a momentum which makes it think more in response to these objects, though in an undeveloped way, than can be comprehended within one concept and hence in one determinate linguistic expression.[31]

Aesthetic ideas quicken the mind to engage in what Kant calls reflective judgement, in which we search for the right concept to apprehend a sensuous particular. The imagination strives to attain its goal of fitting a concept to the presentations. This quickens the faculties and thus drives more cognition.[32] Put another way, aesthetic ideas "make reason think more" by trying to join together a multiplicity of partial and kindred presentations. It is interesting to note that Kant comments on the undeveloped activity of the mind here. The faculties spring into action, but they are not well directed. The understanding is unable to craft a concept that fits the experience and the imagination is unable to successfully join together the multiplicity of presentations due to the excess of aesthetic ideas. Compare this scenario to the outpouring of the imagination that occurs in response to sublime experience. The imagination pours forth with the aim of being adequate to its vocation, but struggles to achieve its goal. These cases hold interesting parallels regarding disharmonious mental activity and the resulting feelings of pleasure and displeasure.

To continue, the work of art both stimulates our cognitive faculties and also *frustrates* them; we are unable to fully cognise our experience and yet

[31] *Ibid.*, §49, Ak. 315, p. 183-184.
[32] *Ibid.*, §49, Ak. 315, p. 183. Cf. "Translator's Introduction," §2, xxx-xxxix, especially xxxviii-xxxix; §9 on the harmony of the faculties, Ak. 218-219; and §35, Ak. 287.

are driven to do so all the same. For Kant, this is both a source of pleasure and displeasure for the subject. This excess is pleasurable because it enlivens our faculties; we gain even more pleasure in our attempt to make something productive out of this excess. It results in the expansion of the mind beyond its current bounds and in the quickening of its faculties. This expansion and quickening of the mind are part of what we like about art and why we find it to be valuable. The displeasure, on the other hand, stems from the inability to fully align all the presentations into a single, well-formed concept or expression.

We can compare this situation to what occurs in sublime experience in terms of both pleasure and displeasure. On the one hand, we experience pleasure based upon the stretching of our faculties and the desire to reach each faculty's vocation; on the other hand, we experience displeasure and frustration as those same faculties reach their limits. A parallel situation occurs in response to aesthetic ideas. This process is exacerbated with works of genius due to the way that they "set the rule to art" through their innovative exemplarity. Because they make a new contribution to communication and culture, works of genius are even more difficult to comprehend, and thus, they increase the struggle of the imagination and the understanding. In response to sublime experience and works of genius, there is a tension among the faculties based upon the drive to be adequate to their vocation coupled with the inability to complete the task in question. The imagination, in particular, struggles to grapple with these experiences.

With this prelude on the complexity of aesthetic ideas in mind, let me turn to works of genius more directly in order to understand the complications they present for our faculties. Kant defines genius as "the talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art. Since talent is an innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature, we could also put it this way: *Genius* is the innate mental predisposition [*ingenium*] *through which* nature gives the rule to art."[33] To explain, Kant claims that works of genius must be more than just innovative. They must also be exemplary. The art cannot simply be novel; it must also have some quality that sets it apart and by which it becomes an exemplar for future works to follow. Such art sets a (new) rule to art and thereby offers a new model in the sphere of aesthetic expression. Simply put, genius is the

[33] Kant, §46, Ak. 307, p. 174. Kant uses the term "genius" in a slightly different sense than we might today. Genius is the force or power [*Gewalt*] of nature working through the subject; an *individual* is not a genius, but rather, she *exhibits* genius. Put differently, genius is *nature in the subject*. This force is what makes works of art *Geistreich*, or "full of spirit," *ibid.*, §47, Ak. 308, p. 176.

talent, endowed by nature, through which subjects give the rule to art through original and exemplary art-making.[34]

Kant further establishes the importance of genius by claiming that "fine art cannot itself devise the rule by which it is to bring about its product. Since, however, a product can never be called art unless it is preceded by a rule, it must be nature in the subject (and through the attunement of his powers) that gives the rule to art, in other words, fine art is possible only as the product of genius."[35] Moreover, since the rule isn't supposed to "hover before the eyes of the artist,"[36] the new rule can only be discerned in retrospect when it becomes a guide for future works. This does not mean that the productions are wholly unruly, but only that rules didn't guide the production process. Instead, the rules are the *result* of the new work inspired by genius. Because the rule does not precede the production, but emerges only afterward, there is no ready-to-hand guide to understanding or communicating about works of genius. Thus, clarity of expression in making judgements proves even more difficult when dealing with works of genius because there is no established rule to follow in one's judgements of ingenious work. Again, just as in the case of sublime experience, works of genius engender a tense relationship among the faculties.

Insofar as fine art cannot advance without the creativity of the imagination, genius is crucial to the development of art and expression. But because works of genius introduce new rules to art, we may have difficulty understanding and communicating about them. Kant pushes the conflict to a critical level, arguing that genius requires "wing clipping," (a form of restriction on expression) in order to promote communication and culture. Kant claims:

> Taste, like the power of judgement in general, consists in disciplining (or training) genius. It severely clips its wings, and makes it civilised, or polished; but at the same time it gives it guidance as to how far and over what it may spread while still remaining purposive. It introduces clarity and order into a wealth of thought and hence makes the ideas durable, fit for approval that is both lasting and universal, and [hence] for being followed by others and fit for an ever advancing culture.[37]

[34] *Ibid.*, §46, Ak. 307-308, p. 175-176.
[35] *Ibid.*, §46, Ak. 307, p. 175.
[36] *Ibid.*, §45, Ak. 307, p. 174. Kant states, "There must be no hint that the rule was hovering before the artist's eyes and putting fetters on his mental powers."
[37] *Ibid.*, §50, Ak. 319, p. 188.

Kant praises the imagination (and thereby genius) for provoking much thought that cannot be contained in a single concept,[38] for "mak[ing] reason think more,"[39] and for quickening the mental faculties through increased activity.[40] Note the similarity in response to aesthetic ideas and to sublime experience. Genius spurs activity that enlivens the mind, quickening the faculties. Nonetheless, as Kant indicates in this passage, genius is expected to advance culture, but it must be "tamed" or "refined" before it can do so. As genius moves beyond the strictures of taste and towards the establishment of new rules and modes of artistic expression, taste restricts it.

When taste and genius come into conflict, Kant is willing to sacrifice this natural talent to the purposes of culture.[41] As stated above, wing clipping is done in order to refine ingenious ideas and make them durable and lasting. This durability is attained through civilising genius's expressions, making them fit for and understandable by culture. From there, we can deduce that taste clips the wings of genius for the sake of *communication*, through which culture advances. Put another way, Kant values understanding and communication over innovation in expression. As he frames the issue, innovative but nonsensical expressions are restricted for the sake of expressions that will make a "greater" contribution to mutual understanding.[42] While genius moves culture and communication forward, it is in jeopardy if its expressions are too wild or nonsensical. That is, Kant values understanding over imagination in terms of advancing culture.

So what does this tension imply about the relationship of the faculties in response to works of genius? Kant promotes the free play of imagination and understanding, but only until a conflict arises. Then the freedom of the imagination must submit to the rule-boundedness of the understanding. This restriction doesn't destroy the free play of the faculties, however. Instead, it forces the imagination to harmonise with the

[38] *Ibid.*, §49, Ak. 314, p. 182.
[39] *Ibid.*, §49, Ak. 314, p. 183.
[40] *Ibid.*, §49, Ak. 315, p. 183-184.
[41] Kant is explicit about this point: *Only* when a conflict arises between taste and genius does he side with taste in products of art, §50, Ak. 320, p. 188f.
[42] Kant states: "Therefore, if there is a conflict between these two properties [taste and genius] in a product, and something has to be sacrificed, then it should be on the side of genius; and judgement, which in matters [*Sachen*] of fine art bases its pronouncements on principles of its own, will sooner permit the imagination's freedom and wealth to be impaired than that the understanding be impaired," Kant, §50, Ak. 320, p. 188-189.

understanding in a way that limits its own freedom to an extent.[43] While there is a tense relationship between imagination and understanding, Kant nonetheless argues that they can be made to *adapt* to one another—through the power of judgement. Imagination should not be lawless in its freedom; rather, it should be made to conform to the understanding. Due to their conflict in response to works of genius, the imagination and understanding are in a tense or potentially *disharmonious* relationship. The way Kant frames the point in the above passage suggests that while limits should be placed on the imagination's freedom, disharmonious but lawful free play with the understanding is still possible. Moreover, Kant suggests that the imagination and understanding may be made to harmonise with one another, "adapting" to one another more carefully through the power of judgement.

The case of works of genius has much in common with the foregoing cases of the beautiful and the sublime. In sublime experience and works of genius, the faculties are in a disharmonious relationship in which the possibility of play is preserved. The complication that we find with works of genius regards the issue of freedom rather than harmony, especially when we investigate the restriction of wing clipping. While above, I discussed the issue of freedom from the perspective of the relationship of the faculties, here it is important to consider the restriction on freedom of expression that wing clipping presents. Certainly, the limiting of expression for the sake of culture restricts the freedom of works of genius as well as our responses to them. This leads to further concerns regarding marginalisation and censorship. So while Kant advocates for the importance of works of genius, he also argues that works of genius need a form of restriction called "wing clipping" in order to contribute to communication and culture.

[43] Kant makes a similar point in the "General Comment on the First Division of the Analytic": "It seems therefore that only a lawfulness without a law, and a subjective harmony of the imagination with the understanding without an objective harmony—where the presentation is referred to a determinate concept of an object—is compatible with the full lawfulness of the understanding (which has also been called purposiveness without a purpose and with the peculiarity of a judgement of taste," Ak. 241, p. 92. Here, Kant makes the point that in pure judgements of taste the imagination is *not* referred to a determinate concept of the object, even if the imagination obeys the laws of the understanding.

Conclusion: The Implications of Contrapurposiveness

Throughout my analysis, I have drawn parallels among aesthetic experiences of the beautiful, the sublime, and works of genius in order to show how the activity of the faculties in these cases is similar to our experience of the ugly. A disharmonious, but nonetheless free relationship of the faculties shows how pure judgements of the ugly are possible within Kant's system in *The Critique of Judgement*. As a conclusion to this argument, I will briefly show how our experience of the ugly in art is contrapurposive for our faculties, but purposive for our growth as critics and community members. First, I show how the contrapurposiveness of the ugly may inspire a tension among the faculties, and thus, function in a fashion similar to the sublime. Second, I argue that experience with ugliness in art can be beneficial to our aesthetic training. Finally, I argue that the ugly in art can serve as an opportunity for community formation or solidification.

First, as Kant argues, sublime experience is a source of both pleasure and displeasure for us. On the one hand, our faculties are enlivened as the imagination stretches its boundaries in order to forge a concept that fits the experience. On the other hand, the tension created by the inability of the imagination to be adequate to its vocation is a source of displeasure. Nonetheless, Kant claims that the sublime reveals the superiority of reason over imagination and nature. The recognition of reason's superiority is one of the most productive aspects of sublime experience. Moreover, in spite of the sublime's contrapurposiveness, thwarting the imagination's goal, it also exercises and stretches our faculties. So too, the ugly in art may exercise and expand the bounds of our faculties in a way similar to sublime experience. If we allow the ugly to occupy our minds, we may experience a similar form of mental grappling to that generated by sublime experience.[44] In spite of the disharmony and displeasure we experience, this mental activity could expand the bounds of our faculties. As we attempt to understand our aesthetic experience and to judge the (ugly) art in question, our faculties are enlivened and honed.

Second, gaining experience with both the beautiful and the ugly in art could be educative for us as critics of art. Through such experience, we can develop the delicacy of our faculties, and thereby, become better able to judge art. If we practice in this way and strive to be unprejudiced, we can develop taste that is fit to be followed by others. As Hume wrote:

[44] Wenzel, p. 421. Recall Wenzel ponders "If I see something and find it ugly, why should it not occupy my mind? Why should I not contemplate it, although with displeasure?"

> a true judge in the fine arts is observed, even during the most polished ages, to be so rare a character: strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty.[45]

Hume argues that one can develop the skills required to become a discerning judge of the arts. In part, such a critic must be able to recognise both the beauty and the defects in art. If one is unable to do so, "[h]e must conclude, upon the whole, that the fault lies in himself, and that he wants the delicacy, which is requisite to make him sensible of every beauty and every blemish, in any composition and discourse."[46] Thus, the ugly may be purposive insofar as it expands our arsenal of aesthetic considerations and our practice in aesthetic judgement of beauty and blemish. The ugly could serve as an important contrast with the beautiful, thereby helping us to discern which qualities we find beautiful or ugly in art. While this is a Humean line of argument, Kant would certainly endorse the honing of our faculties through repeated unbiased practice. Just as experience with the ugly could help us to broaden our aesthetic horizons, so too could our experience with the challenges presented by works of genius.

This leads to my final point regarding the development of community through judgements of both the beautiful and the ugly. While Kant presents disgust as a limit case—as that which one cannot be disinterested in due to the visceral nature of our responses—ugliness spurs disharmony among our faculties from which we can gain adequate distance in order to make disinterested judgements of taste—and to exchange them with others. I have argued elsewhere that works of genius can spur community formation based on interest in understanding and communicating about specific works of art or artists.[47] So too, the ugly in art may generate discussion that ultimately leads to community formation based upon interest in a given work or artist, for reasons of approbation or disapprobation.[48] Because of how personal our responses to art are it is

[45] David Hume "Of the Standard of Taste," *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985), p. 241.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 236.
[47] See Erin Bradfield, "Productive Excess: Aesthetic Ideas, Silence, and Community," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 48,2 (Summer 2014): 1-15.
[48] While I shall not discuss it here, there is much to be said regarding what happens when the ugly in art generates approbation and whether a depiction of ugly subject-matter can be transfigured if successfully rendered aesthetically. So too,

important to consider how negative judgements of taste relate to community formation and maintenance through the preservation of free expression in and about art.

there is much to be said regarding the relationship of the ugly, the disgusting, and the horrific in art. That however is the subject of another paper.

CHAPTER VI

THIS MIGHT BE UNPLEASANT

JANE FORSEY

When I bought my current home, I announced that I simply could not live in it until the rooms had been painted. They were what one might euphemistically describe as somewhere between apricot and salmon, but to my mind they were really what in my childhood was called "fleshtone" Crayola Crayon (one in a package of colouring sticks). Further, the walls had a slight sheen to them, making them *sweaty* fleshtone Crayola Crayon, or maybe *feverish* fleshtone Crayola Crayon. Never mind the structural work required on an old wooden house exposed to Canadian prairie winters—like a new roof, perhaps—it was the paint that had to go. Immediately.

Now, it should be clear that I found the walls ghastly, even dreadful. And I hope it is equally apparent that my response to them was aesthetic, although in this case negatively so. But what is particularly interesting is that my judgement was attended by a spur to action: I did not simply dislike or reject the walls (I did buy the house, after all): instead I strove to change them. And this kind of response—that is simultaneously negative but creatively motivating—holds some aesthetic promise. As a reader of Kant, my impulse has been to call this a judgement of the unpleasant: I would like to suggest that it is an aesthetic category worthy of consideration.

When philosophy talks about aesthetic experience, it is most often in terms of our *responses*: to art and (natural) beauty for instance, and largely with responses that are pleasurable and positive, as we see with Kant's judgements of the beautiful. But I think that the aesthetic tenor of our lives is more complex than this, and can engage us more actively. One of the goals of the recent movement in Everyday Aesthetics has been the inclusion in the scope of aesthetic experience *action* rather than mere observation. Yuriko Saito, for instance, seeks to include aesthetic responses that "do not presuppose or lead to such spectator-like experiences but rather prompt us towards actions" such as cleaning, purchasing and