

# Aesthetic representation of purposiveness and the concept of beauty in Kant's aesthetics. The solution of the 'everything is beautiful' problem

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*Abstract:* In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant introduces the notion of the reflective judgment and the *a priori* principle of purposiveness or systematicity of nature. He claims that the ability to judge objects by means of this principle underlies empirical concept acquisition and it is therefore necessary for cognition in general. In addition, he suggests that there is a connection between this principle and judgments of taste. Kant's account of this connection has been criticized by several commentators for the reason that it leads to the 'everything is beautiful' problem. In this paper I argue, contrary to these objections, that 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. I avoid 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. Because aesthetic purposiveness is different from logical purposiveness, this allows for the possibility that we can have an object of cognition, without finding this object beautiful.

*Keywords:* free harmony; reflective judgments; principle of purposiveness.

## 1. *Free harmony and the 'Everything is Beautiful' problem*

Kant's task in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was to give an account of how genuine judgments of taste, that is, universally valid judgments about the beautiful, are possible. He claims that the feeling of pleasure of the beautiful depends on a state of mind that we all share and which is required for cognition in general. This state of mind is harmony between imagination and understanding that is not determined by a particular concept (i.e. free harmony). The experience of free harmony between imagination and understanding we have 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 combination. Kant says that the feeling of pleasure is the confirmation of a certain *a priori* principle, which we cannot state (5: 237; 121).<sup>1</sup>

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 subjective *a priori* principle of the purposiveness or systematicity of nature (5: 182; 69). 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. Kant introduces this principle as necessary for empirical concept acquisition. Also in the case of acquiring empirical concepts, the imagination's activity of combining the manifold of intuition is not governed by concepts (these must first be found) and it is therefore an example of an activity between imagination and understanding that is in free play. Kant seems to suggest that the same indeterminate principle of purposiveness that governs free harmony in empirical concept acquisition is also responsible for our ability to make judgments of taste.

However, it has been pointed out by several commentators that identification of the principle of purposiveness or systematicity of nature with the principle of taste leads to the 'everythingisbeautiful' problem. Namely, if the state of mind of free harmony or in other words, our ability to judge objects by the means of the *a priori* principle of purposiveness of nature, is a necessary condition for both judgments of taste and empirical concept acquisition, and if Kant identifies the experience of free harmony with the feeling of pleasure that grounds judgments of the beautiful, then it follows that experience of pleasure is a necessary condition for empirical concept acquisition. In other words, each time one acquires the concept, one must also experience the pleasure of the beautiful.

One might argue that on this account it is not strictly speaking every object of cognition that is experienced with the feeling of pleasure. The argument merely claims that one experiences pleasure in each case of acquiring a new concept. This suggests that in the case of perceiving the object for which I

<sup>1</sup> References to Immanuel Kant will be given in the text to the volume and page number of the Akademie edition (KantsgesammelteSchriften, ed. Königlichen Preußischen [later Deutschen] Akademie der Wissenschaften [Berlin: Georg Reimer (later Walter De Gruyter), 1900]). References are also given, after a semicolon, to the English translation of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2000), which includes the "First Introduction" (vol. 20 of the Akademie edition). References to *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998), are provided using the standard citations of the A and B editions (vols. 3 and 4 of the Akademie edition, respectively).

already have the empirical concept, no pleasurable free harmony occurs. In this case the concept 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. Thus, it is not the case that every object of cognition must be accompanied with pleasure. It is merely that one's *first* perceptual experience of an object, by which one arrives at the concept, is necessarily pleasing.<sup>2</sup>

However, the 'everything is beautiful' problem is much more prevalent than it appears at first sight. Namely, empirical concept acquisition or experiencing free harmony between imagination and understanding logically precedes any conceptual determination. That is, in order to make a cognitive judgment that this X is a dog, one must first have the concept of a dog. But one acquires the concept of a dog through the synthesis of a sensible manifold without a concept (i.e. free harmony). This means that every act of empirical cognition is preceded by the act of free harmony, which is experienced through pleasure. That is, there is always a free harmony in the first act of perceiving the object, even though we might not be always aware of it through pleasure. Thus, every object of cognition must be beautiful.<sup>3</sup>

Different solutions to this problem have been proposed. What they all have in common is to argue against the identification of the principle of purposiveness or systematicity of nature with a principle of taste. In particular, they claim that the principle of systematicity of nature is concerned with the classification of objects under the system of species and genera (i.e., to think of nature as a logical system), while judgments of taste do not have as their aim to classify the object under the concept but is rather concerned with the individual object itself. Such a difference between logical and aesthetic purposiveness presumably implies a difference in the principles underlying them.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Kant suggests something similar in the *Introduction*. 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 (5: 188; 74).

<sup>3</sup> This is nicely pointed out by Rogerson. As he writes, "If we say that every act of concept acquisition requires us to recognize a free harmony, then we run up against something like the 'everything is beautiful charge'. Once upon a time (during initial concept acquisition) every kind of object was 'appreciated' as displaying a free harmony and, one would assume, gave us pleasure. But then it would follow, on Kant's accounting, every kind of object was once appreciated as beautiful" (2007: 3).

<sup>4</sup> Allison (2001: 61-62), Guyer (1997: 44-47), Rueger *et al.* (2005: 232). The view that judgments of taste depend on a different principle than empirical concept acquisition is also defended by Hughes (2007). She distinguishes between the general principle of the purposiveness and its specific expression, that is, the notion of systematicity of nature. Judgments of taste are grounded on the general principle. In a similar way also Zuckert (2007) distinguishes between three kinds of non-determinative judgments, that is, reflective judgments (empirical concept acquisition), judgments of taste and

Since experience of free harmony in empirical concept acquisition is fundamentally different to the experiencing free harmony in judgments of taste, it does not follow that every case of recognizing harmony in empirical concept acquisition results in pleasure.

However, to introduce such a distinction between the state of mind in empirical concept acquisition and in judgments of taste severs the connection between the universal validity of conditions necessary for cognition *in general* and universal validity of conditions for judgments of taste. Namely, Kant derives the universal validity of judgments of taste from the state of mind that underlies cognition in general (empirical concept acquisition), because only this state of mind can be shared by all of us. But if we now propose that the state of mind of judgments of taste is not the state of mind underlying cognition, then it does not follow, strictly speaking, that the aesthetic state of mind is universally communicable.

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 empirical concept acquisition 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.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper I argue, contrary to the majority view, that the notion of the reflective power of judgment is primarily concerned with our ability to conceptualize experience and that this ability is exercised not merely in logical reflective judgments (empirical concept acquisition), but in judgments of taste as well.<sup>6</sup> 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. In addition, I propose a distinction between logical and aesthetic reflective judgments such that it can avoid the 'everything is beautiful' problem.

teleological judgments. All three judgments depend on a general principle, the 'principle of purposiveness without a purpose', concerned with nature being purposive for our cognitive faculties.

<sup>5</sup> See Meerbote (1982: 80-83) who first proposed this dilemma. For a version of this dilemma, applied particularly to empirical concept acquisition, see Rogerson (2008: 18-19).

<sup>6</sup> A judgment is logical when "its predicate is a given objective concept" (20: 223; 25).

## 2. *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 *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Reflective judgments, together with determining judgments, belong to one of the three faculties of thought, that is, to the faculty of judgment. Kant defines the faculty of judgment as the “faculty for the subsumption of the particular under the general” (20: 201; 8). The function of the power of judgment is to connect empirical intuition with the appropriate concept, and thus to attain harmony between the imagination and understanding. This procedure of the power of judgment is attained by the means of a schema. A schema is a sort of an abstract image and a rule at the same time, that is, a rule for linking sensible manifold with its appropriate concept. Kant illustrates 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.<sup>7</sup> Even though there are different kinds of dogs, they all entail this rule or schema in virtue of which they are recognized as dogs. Based on the given empirical intuition 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 empirical intuition in accordance with this schema (that the features such as head, body, fur ought to follow, and arrange them in their specific relations). Kant describes such activity of judging as a determining power of judgment (5: 179; 67). If one already has the schema (rule) of a dog, the power of judgment recognizes this rule in the sensible manifold, that is, it brings the sensible intuition to concepts. The de-

<sup>7</sup> The kinds of schemata properly discussed by Kant are transcendental schemata related to categories. However, there is textual evidence that Kant was also committed to the view that empirical concepts have schemata. For example, he writes: “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). Robert Pippin (1982: 144), who defends this view, writes that if empirical concepts would not have their own schema, then “empirical concepts would have to be nothing but strung-along memories of numerous similar individual and individual properties. For a similar view see also Pendlebury (1995: 777-797).

termining 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 sensible manifold for which we do not yet have a concept. The aim of the power of judgment is to attain harmony between imagination and understanding, but since in this case we have no concept under which to subsume the manifold, this concept must first be found. Ascending from the particular to the universal is the task of the reflective power of judgment. The role of the reflective power of judgment is to find a new concept 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. Since reflective judgment is not governed by determinate concepts (these must be found first), it is an example of activity of judging in which imagination and understanding are in 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” (5: 217; 102).

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, found in the power of judgment itself, and which governs our reflection and search for universals. Kant describes this principle as a principle that represents nature as a system:

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 (20: 212; 15).

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 warmth of the stone being caused by the sun (5: 183; 70).

(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 sys-

tematically organized whole. Categories alone cannot guarantee for the coherence of our empirical cognition (20: 203; 9).

(3) But we do have an experience of purposive forms in nature and of some systematic relations that obtain among forms and laws (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” (20: 213; 16).

According to Kant’s reasoning, we must assume that reflective judgment, which looks for the universal for a particular, operates under the presupposition 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. This assumption of the systematicity of nature is necessary for the rationality and coherency of our reflection, because without it “all reflection would become arbitrary and blind, and hence would be undertaken without any well-grounded expectation of its agreement with nature” (20: 212; 16).

### 3. *The principle of purposiveness and judgments of taste*

Kant discusses the principle of purposiveness or systematicity of nature mainly in relation to its use in empirical concept acquisition. But in addition he suggests that there is a connection between this principle and judgments of taste. This connection is implicit in Kant’s 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) (20: 211; 15). Kant writes that the principle of purposiveness is a necessary presupposition that precedes all reflection and comparison (20: 211; 16), which implies that it precedes comparison specific for judgments of taste as well.

Before proceeding to a full explanation, I briefly want to point out some of the reasons in favor of this position. *First*, Kant claims that the principle of the purposiveness or systematicity 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” (5: 190; 76). 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. 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 intersubjectively 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” (5: 238; 122). 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 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. He writes:

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 (5: 292; 173).

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 (20: 208; 12).

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.<sup>8</sup>

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 purposiveness of nature amounts to. And that is a certain way of seeing

<sup>8</sup> This is also the view suggested by Matthews (2010: 63-79), Baz (2005: 1-32), Ginsborg (1997: 63-78).



the world, that is, for preferring one way of organizing sensible manifold, to another. This preference for organizing manifold of intuition 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). The principle is an idea about how the world is supposed to be, how we expect it to be, so that it allows our understanding to cognize it, and it is an idea that holds only for us, as cognitive beings. Accordingly, the feeling of pleasure is a result of the confirmation or satisfaction of the principle of purposiveness. We appreciate forms that are in accordance with this principle and that reassure us that the world is indeed such as we expect it to be, namely, amenable to our cognitive abilities. On the other hand, feeling of displeasure is a result of the dissatisfaction of our expectation that the world is amenable to our cognitive abilities. This inability to know the world occasions the state of estrangement between us, our mental structure, and the world, which produces the feeling of displeasure.

In fact, 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 (20: 244; 43).

This implies that the principle is not *revealed* in 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, reflecting is comparing one object with other objects in order to find common features (the concept). In judgments of taste, on the other hand, reflecting is comparing a single object with our own faculty of cognition. 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.

Some of the commentators have argued against the view that the principle of the purposiveness or systematicity of nature is the principle of judgments of

taste.<sup>9</sup> 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. This procedure of logical reflection is characterized by comparing different objects with each other in order to find common properties between them. Accordingly, what is considered as purposive is *the relation* between objects. On the other hand, judgments of taste are not 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 object with our cognitive abilities. Accordingly, aesthetic purposiveness is *in the object* itself, and not in the relation between objects. It results in the feeling of pleasure alone, and not in a concept.

The *second* objection is that the feeling of pleasure resulting from the confirmation 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 (5: 187; 73). But the feeling of pleasure in finding an object beautiful is fundamentally different. A beautiful rose sustains one's pleasure no matter how familiar one becomes with it. Aesthetic pleasure does not cease to exist. Overall, the difference between logical and aesthetic purposiveness presumably implies a difference in the principles underlying them.

It is true that Kant explains the distinction between logical (conceptual) and aesthetic purposiveness as a distinction between purposiveness *in the relation between objects* (20: 216; 19) and purposiveness *in the object itself* (5: 190; 76). Purposiveness in the relation between 'objects' 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 objects* and *in the object*) 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 argue that these are different manifestations of the same principle. In each case the principle functions with the 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 repre-

<sup>9</sup> Allison (2001: 61-62), Rueger *et al.* (2005: 232), Caranti (2005: 364-374).

sentations either with others or with one's faculty of cognition, in relation to a concept thereby made possible" (20: 211; 15). Comparing objects with each other results in the formation of an empirical concept and in making a cognitive judgment. The comparison of a single object with our cognitive abilities alone 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. And this process is governed by the principle of the purposiveness of nature.

The connection between the principle of purposiveness and judgments of taste can be legitimized in the following way. Kant claims that judgments of taste are *merely reflective judgments*. And he understands *merely reflective judgments* as judgments concerned with finding the universal: "If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is *merely reflecting*" (5: 179; 66). This indicates that a judgment of taste is also one in which universals for a particular form of the object is being sought, just as in logical reflective judgments. 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". Similarly, he states: "The satisfaction in the beautiful must depend upon reflection on an object that leads to some sort of concept (it is indeterminate which)" (5: 207; 92). 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.

I argue that 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.<sup>10</sup> 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 find the concept for the particular. When we find an object beautiful, we feel there is a tangible account of this, as if beauty were a concept, yet we are unable to define it.<sup>11</sup> In the case of logical reflective judgments, the principle

<sup>10</sup> Kant does not specify his notion of an 'indeterminate concept'. I take it to refer to a sort of a concept which evades articulation and discursive expression. Something similar is suggested by Wolterstorff 1991: 105-127. He interprets an indeterminate concept found in judgments of taste as 'aptness concept'. It is a concept similar to a determinate concept, but which cannot be specified.

<sup>11</sup> AvnerBaz (2004: 67) nicely expresses this characteristic of beauty by saying: "beauty is that

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 confirmed in these cases. Given that the principle of purposiveness is only confirmed 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. 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 objects 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 particular object itself, without comparing it 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. Free harmony in logical reflective judgment always results in recognizing the common properties (determination of the object under the concept).

about the object which calls (...) for articulation and expression, and yet evades all available concepts, or the habitual and common forms of expression".

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. This however does not mean that no universal has been found. It means only that the universal can be grasped through the feeling of pleasure alone. The sole experience of 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)” (5: 211; 96). 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.

Before I continue with the discussion on logical and aesthetic purposiveness, let me first explain in more detail what I mean by the distinction between general and individual properties of an object. This distinction, I take it, refers to Kant’s distinction between schema and a particular image. According to Kant’s epistemological theory, the application of some empirical concepts to the manifold of intuition is necessary in order to have perceptual experience of the object.<sup>12</sup> The concept of the object is applied to the manifold of intuition by the means of a schema (i.e. an abstract form that all objects of its kind share with each other and in virtue of which they are recognized). For example, a schema of a flower is a basic figurative mental representation of an object with petals, leaves and stems in a certain relation that obtain among these features, irrespective of other distinctive features they have. Schema represents a general form that all particular images of a flower have in common.

At the same time, however, the schema differs from the image. A schema represents only the general features of a particular object, hence it is incomplete comparing to the image of an actual object. An image is always a particular representation, and therefore it embodies general features in its own unique way. For example, even though all flowers share the same schema, they display immense diversity in their particular instantiations. 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 manifold of intuition in this particular presentation of a flower. The presence of these additional features which are

<sup>12</sup> To a great extent this has been pointed out by Guyer (2006: 178-181). 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.

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.

Accordingly, it can be said that the 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 manifold of intuition 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. But these distinctive features are not specified by the schema of a human face. Hence, they are product of imagination in its freedom. 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. It is these additional features that occasion aesthetic reflection and which can nevertheless be either in harmony or disharmony with the understanding, resulting in a positive or a negative aesthetic reaction, respectively.

To return to the discussion on purposiveness, 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 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 (5: 187; 73).

The explanation is that pleasure resulting from a successful 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 successful 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 nature that shows itself to be amenable to our cognitive need of subsuming the particular under the concept, yet 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. Aesthetic purposiveness depends on the sole experience of free harmony, where imagination and understanding continuously mutually support and animate each other, thereby prolonging the process of play between them and thus the feeling of pleasure.

To sum up, judgments of logical and aesthetic purposiveness are made in reference to the same principle of the purposiveness or systematicity 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.

I 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 feeling of displeasure. Kant explains the possibility of such disharmony in his description of logical reflective judgments.<sup>13</sup> In this case, displeasure is felt in our inability to find the

<sup>13</sup> Kant writes: "a representation of nature that foretold that even in the most minor investigation

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). In aesthetic reflective judgments, on the other hand, feeling of displeasure is the result of the disagreement between the particular aspects of the object and the principle of purposiveness. Furthermore, 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. 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. 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.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. *The solution of the 'Everything is Beautiful' problem*

Judgments of taste 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 acquisition. Kant's idea is that free harmony is the cause of the feeling of pleasure of beauty. But this implies not only that I feel pleasure in making a judgment of taste (of the beautiful), but I must also experience pleasure each time I acquire the empirical concept. This implies that all objects of cognition must be experienced as beautiful.

The interpretation I have developed can meet this problem. The solution

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" (5: 188; 74).

<sup>14</sup> It has been pointed out by Paul Guyer that Kant's theory of taste cannot accommodate judgments of ugliness. See Guyer (2005: 141-162). For the opposite view see Kuplen (2013: 102-143).



depends on distinguishing between two different ways that the principle of purposiveness is employed in aesthetic and logical reflective judgments. It is only in an aesthetic and not logical reflective judgment that the principle is employed in a way that produces the relevant feeling of pleasure, which leads to judgments of the beautiful. My reasoning is the following.

Based on Kant, an object is considered aesthetically purposive (i.e. beautiful) when its representation is *immediately* connected to pleasure (5: 189; 75). But what is immediately connected with pleasure can only be the reflection on an object's particular combination of properties. Accordingly, only when we reflect on an object as an individual do we in fact make an aesthetic reflective judgment. Kant claims that a judgment of taste concerns a *singular representation of the object*. In aesthetic reflection we are interested in the nature of the particular object and the relation between cognitive powers that this singular representation generates. The subject of aesthetic experience is the *mere* form of the object, say, *this particular* Danxia landform in Zhangye (China) with its dramatic ups and downs mountains and with its unique early morning colors, without the consideration of what the object represents, namely being a rocky landscape. In other words, in aesthetic reflective judgments, the principle of purposiveness is applied to the individual object, but purposiveness of an individual object cannot be grasped in a determinate concept, because as said previously, concepts can only provide a unity of different representation possessing some common features and cannot represent individual features. Hence, purposiveness of an individual object can be revealed through the feeling of pleasure alone. And only this is an aesthetic representation of purposiveness that grounds judgments of the beautiful. In logical reflective judgments, however, the principle of purposiveness is not applied to an individual object; rather it is used to find commonalities between different objects and this purposiveness results in a determinate concept.

In sum, only when we reflect on an object as an individual can the principle of purposiveness give rise to the pleasure of beauty. A beautiful object discloses 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.

Because aesthetic purposiveness (purposiveness of a singular form) is different from logical purposiveness (purposiveness between forms), this 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 the activity of judging in which cognitive powers are in free play. 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 not all objects of cognition are beautiful. That is, 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. Even more, since Kant's conception of reflective judgment allows for the possibility of reflective disharmony, 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 a particular object, say an animal called *fangtooth* belongs to the species called *Anoplogaster Cornuta*, hence finding its concept in the hierarchy of species and genera, while nevertheless finding it 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. The aesthetic feeling of displeasure is a perennial reminder that an object's individual form is not suitable for us and our cognitive abilities.

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