Kant and the Problem of Pure Judgments of Ugliness

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1. Introduction

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

This scene illustrates an important issue in philosophical aesthetics, namely, a question how it is possible that something that we find displeasing and ugly can nevertheless retain our attention and even be highly appreciated. Ugliness depends on the experience of the feeling of displeasure occasioned by an object. Displeasure is the representational state of mind that is discomforting and to which we react by removing our attention away from it. And this *prima facie* implies that ugliness is an indicator of aesthetic disvalue and worthlessness.

A brief look at modern and contemporary art galleries, however, will show that ugliness can be greatly appreciated. De Kooning's painting *Woman I* (1950-1952) holds our attention and captivates our interest precisely because of those features (such as the exaggeration and heterogeneity of colors, shades and forms) that cause frustration and discomfort in the first

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place. Moreover, the characterization of ugliness as aesthetically significant is not distinctive for art works alone, but for natural objects as well, as pointed out by some contemporary writers in environmental aesthetics.[1] The bizarre appearance of the Madagascan primate *aye-aye,* whose bodily features are all out of proportions, evokes a feeling of displeasure in us, yet also a certain fascination due to its ugly features. A general objective of this paper is to give an account of ugliness that entails, as its necessary part, the explanation of its possible appeal. In particular, I propose a solution to the problem, known in philosophical aesthetics as 'the paradox of ugliness', namely how we can value something that we *prima facie* do not like and find positively displeasing.

I develop my explanation of ugliness in light of Kant's theory of taste. Even though Kant did not write about ugliness, I argue that his explanation of the beautiful has much to say about its opposite. This, however, is not immediately apparent. Even more, it has been argued by Paul Guyer that the existence of pure judgments of ugliness is inconsistent with Kant's epistemeological theory. In this paper I argue for the opposite view. I propose a new interpretation of Kant's notion of free harmony, one, that takes into consideration Kant's account of reflective judgments and the *a priori* principle of purposiveness, and which allows for the epistemological possibility of ugliness. Finally, I apply my interpretation of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics to resolve the concurrent problem in contemporary aesthetics, that is, the possibility of appreciating ugliness.

[1] Most notably, Emily Brady, 'Ugliness and Nature,' *Enrahonar: quaderns de filosofia* 45 (2010): 27-40.

2. Does Kant's Theory of Taste Account for Pure Judgments of Ugliness?

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant gives an account of the possibility of pure judgments of taste, that is, judgments that have subjective-universal validity. In short, he claims that the feeling of pleasure (in judgments of the beautiful) is universally valid because it depends on the state of mind that we all share, and which is required for cognition in general. This is the state of mind of harmony between imagination, whose function is to synthesize the manifold of intuition and understanding, which unifies this manifold under the concept of the object. This harmony between cognitive powers is universally communicable, because without it "human beings could not communicate their representations and even cognition itself" (§38, 5:290).[2] Presumably, pleasure in judgments of taste is based on such harmonious relation of cognitive powers, and therefore it must be universally communicable. On the other hand, Kant claims, the perception of the beautiful is also different from cognition. Namely, in judgments of taste the harmonious relation between cognitive powers is in free play, because "no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition" (§9, 5:217). While the relation between cognitive powers in cognitive judgments ends in the application of the concept to the object, the relation between cognitive powers in judgments of taste is merely subjective (it does not apply concepts) and it results in a feeling of pleasure alone.

[2] Citations not otherwise identified refer to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment.* FI refers to the *First Introduction.* ANTH refers to the Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View. MV refers to the Metaphysik Vigilantius.

Kant's discussion of judgment of taste is solely concerned with the analysis of the beautiful and does not devote a separate section to the analysis of the concept of ugliness. But when he discusses pleasure, it is frequently mentioned alongside displeasure, and one would naturally assume that Kant's explanation of taste is wide enough to allow theoretical space for ugliness as well. After all, we do find some objects positively displeasing and for that matter ugly. Consider for example certain kinds of animals, such as the disturbing appearance of an animal called *naked mole rat* with its large front teeth, sealed lips behind the teeth and pink, wrinkled, almost completely hairless skin. I cannot imagine anyone not finding this animal displeasing. An expectation of agreement is a characteristic pertaining to judgments of ugliness as well and so one would imagine that it must find space within Kant's category of pure judgments of taste.

Kant, in fact, did hold such a view, which is evident from his earlier texts on aesthetics. He supported the idea of a tripartite aesthetic structure, that is, beauty, non-beauty (indifference) and ugliness. For instance, he wrote:

> That which pleases through mere intuition is *beautiful*, that which leaves me indifferent in intuition, although it can please or displease, is *non-beautiful*; that which displeases me in intuition is ugly (MV 29: 1010; 480).

And in *Logik Politz* the same idea lingers:

> To distinguish the beautiful from that which is not beautiful (not from that which is ugly, because that

> which is not beautiful is not always ugly), is taste (24; 514).[3]

And even more distinctive he says in *Logik Philippi*:

> Ugliness is…something positive, not a mere lack of beauty, rather the existence of something contrary to beauty (24; 364).[4]

In the third *Critique*, Kant's idea of the two negative aesthetic categories (lack of beauty and ugliness) is not explicitly articulated. Yet, he continues to hold the idea that there are objects, perception of which elicits feelings of displeasure, and that this displeasure belongs to the category of pure aesthetic feelings, by which judgments of taste are made. He seems to ascribe the same characteristics that pertain to pleasure, to displeasure as well. *First*, it is a *disinterested* displeasure. Taste, Kant writes, is: "…the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest." (§5, 5:211) *Second*, it is a displeasure based on the mere form of the object, independently of the idea of the purpose. A pure aesthetic judgment: "…concerns a satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the form of the object" (§30, 5:279). *Third*, displeasure is a universally communicable feeling. When he defines *common sense* as the subjective principle of taste and as a universally communicable aesthetic feeling, the feeling is not merely that of pleasure, but also that of displeasure:

> They must thus have a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and

[3] Cited by Paul Guyer, 'Kant on the Purity of the Ugly.' In *Values of Beauty: Historical Essays in Aesthetics*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 144.
[4] *Ibid*.

> not through concepts, but yet with universal validity (§20, 5:238).

Based on these passages, one is justified to assume that Kant did acknowledge the presence of a universally communicable feeling of displeasure. Even though he does not explicitly connect displeasure with judgments of ugliness, and not with mere judgments of the non-beautiful, he does claim that there are naturally displeasing objects which are ugly:

> Beautiful art displays its excellence precisely by describing beautifully things that in nature would be ugly or displeasing (§48, 5:312).

Accordingly, the universally communicable feeling of displeasure that Kant discerns in the third *Critique* may well be displeasure, constitutive for judgments of ugliness. Furthermore, if such displeasure is universally communicable, then it is presupposed that it depends on the state of mind that we all share. What we all share is a state of mind in which imagination and understanding are in a certain relation to each other and which can either be determined by concepts, resulting in a cognitive judgment, or it can be in a free play, resulting in the feeling of pleasure or displeasure alone. If pleasure is the consequence of free harmony between cognitive powers, then the most plausible alternative left for displeasure, as the opposite of pleasure (not mere lack of pleasure) is that it depends on the state of mind of free disharmony.[5]

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[5] According to Guyer, displeasure of ugliness is not a pure aesthetic quality. He claims that objects are ugly because of their sensory or moral elements that we do not like or agree with or because the object's form is in disagreement with the concept of a purpose, that is, with the idea of how an object's form should look (dependent ugliness). See: Guyer, 'Kant on the Purity of the Ugly,' 151-156. Problem with Guyer's explanation is that it cannot account for all cases of ugliness. For example, a turkey is a straightforward ugly and unpleasant animal to

Indeed, Kant does distinguish between the mental state of free harmony and the mental state of free disharmony or hindering between cognitive powers. He writes:

> For in the power of judgment understanding and imagination are considered in relation to each other, and (…) one can also consider this relation of two faculties of cognition merely subjectively, insofar as one helps or hinders the other in the very same representation and thereby affects the state of mind (F1, VIII, 20:223).

We come across to the same idea in his *Anthropology*, where he states:

> The judging of an object through taste is a judgment about the harmony or discord of freedom, in the play of the power of imagination and the lawfulness of the understanding (ANTH §67).

In sum, there are both implicit and explicit suggestions in Kant's texts in favor of the tripartite aesthetic structure. Pure judgments of taste depend on some relation between cognitive powers in their free play. A given object can prompt a relation between imagination and understanding which is freely harmonious. This is a relation in which cognitive powers mutually

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see due to its disproportionate bodily features (it is not sensory displeasing, nor morally disagreeable); even if it does satisfy our expectations as to how it should look (even the most perfect specimen of a turkey is an ugly animal). Such case of ugliness does not fit into Guyer's definition of displeasure. For a more detailed criticism of Guyer's explanation of ugliness, see: Mojca Kuplen, 'Guyer's Interpretation of Free Harmony in Kant,' in *Postgraduate Journal of Aesthetics* 10 (2) (2013): 17-32. I will argue in what follows that ugliness as relying on free disharmony between cognitive powers is the paradigmatic negative aesthetic concept.

support and help each other. Such play results in the feeling of pleasure. With this formulation, Kant captures nicely the phenomenology of one's pleasing experience. That is, that one's pleasing perception of an object has as its effect the motivation to continue one's experience, to maintain one's attention on the pleasing object. According to Kant's formulation of pleasure, this is caused by the relation of cognitive powers, which is self-supportive through their mutual agreement and animation. Such animation prolongs the process of play between cognitive powers, and accordingly it prolongs aesthetic attention. When we are delighted by a certain object, we want to remain in this state of mind:

> We linger over the consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself (§12, 5:222).

On the other hand, an object can induce a play between cognitive powers that is freely disharmonious. This is the case where the imagination and understanding conflict with each other. Such a play produces the experience of displeasure.[6] If the mutual correspondence of imagination and understanding prolongs the process of their play, then the mutual hindrance or frustration between them obstructs their play. Such activity

[6] Sean McConnell argues that the concept of disharmonious relation is inconsistent with the concept of free play. He claims that imagination and understanding must be in harmony in order for them to produce a play of any sort. Sean McConnell, 'How Kant Might Explain Ugliness,' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48, no. 2 (2008): 214. McConnell's thesis is unconvincing. In music, for example, we can have a combination of sounds that is discordant, and yet this does not necessarily lead to a breakdown of the activity of music making (as for example in free style jazz). Or, consider for example fighting sports, such as boxing. The two players are hurting each other, that is, they are in conflict, yet they are continuing their match. This suggests that disharmony need not break down the activity. What is distinctive for disharmonious play is only that it is unstable and unbalanced, and that it therefore strives to end itself (the conflict between two boxers results in ending the fight), or it strives to find the resolution (in music, discordant singing can eventually find its way back to harmonious singing).

between cognitive powers explains why we react to ugliness by withdrawing attention or turning away from an ugly object: "…displeasure is that representation that contains the ground for determining the state of the representations to their own opposite (hindering or getting rid of them)" (§10, 5:220). We do not like to look (seeing a picture of a *naked mole rat* makes me cover my eyes) or hear (discomforting sounds makes me cover my ears) displeasing objects.

Furthermore, Kant also seems to distinguish a third aesthetic category, that of aesthetic neutrality, characterized by neither pleasure nor displeasure. He appears to identify aesthetic neutrality with objects that have regular forms, and which induce the feeling of boredom. He seems to claim that this is due to the lack of free play between cognitive powers (§22).

3. Paul Guyer on the Epistemological Impossibility of Ugliness

Even though there is textual support for claiming that Kant identified judgments of ugliness as pure judgments of taste, recent studies show the opposite.[7] Among

[7] There are two main objections against the idea that judgments of ugliness are possible within Kantian aesthetics. Because Guyer's objection is the most challenging one, I focus on his. The second objection was made by David Shier, who claimed that the accommodation of the state of mind required for judgments of ugliness is inconsistent with Kant's argument for the universality of judgments of taste. Shier's objection is based on Kant's argument in §9, where it appears that Kant grounds the universality of judgments of taste on the premise that what is universally communicable is only the *state of mind required for cognition* in which cognitive powers are in harmony. Since a harmonious state of mind is identified with pleasure, there is then no possibility to accommodate a universally communicable state of mind required for displeasure. However, Kant offers in §38 a version of the argument that in a strict sense allows for the possibility of the universality of judgments of ugliness. The argument appears to be compatible with Kant's doctrine of the principle of reflective judgments that he discusses in the *Introduction*. The argument states that what is universally communicable is not only the pleasurable *agreement* of the representation with the rule of aesthetic

these, Paul Guyer offers the most challenging argument against the view that judgments of ugliness are pure judgments of taste. He writes that the possibility of the existence of a disharmonious state of mind, on which ugliness would depend, is precluded by Kant's epistemological theory.[8] According to Kant's account of cognition in the *Critique of Pure Reason* there is needed a harmony between imagination and understanding for cognition. That is, to make a judgment of the sort 'X is a chair', the imagination must synthesize the manifold of intuition and understanding must apply the empirical concept (chair) to this manifold. Alongside empirical concepts, which are responsible for forming empirical cognitive judgments, there are pure concepts (categories) that are responsible for the possibility of experiencing objects in the first place (concept of a substance, causality etc.). In order to experience any objects, the *application* of pure concepts to the representation is necessary. Yet, the application of pure concepts, as Guyer points out, is not temporarily prior to the application of empirical concepts. Rather, pure concepts are applied to the representation only through empirical concepts.[9]

But, if the application of pure concepts to the representation is necessary to be conscious of the object, and if the application

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judging (free harmony), but the rules themselves: "Now since the power of judgment in regard to the formal rules of judging, without any matter (neither sensation nor concept), can be directed only to the subjective conditions of the use of the power of judgment in general […] and thus to that subjective element that one can presuppose in all human beings…" (§38, 5: 290). Hence, this allows for the possibility that the representation does not agree with the universally communicable conditions, and that such disagreement, perceived through the feeling of displeasure, is universally communicable.

[8] Guyer, 'Kant on the Purity of the Ugly,' 146-147.

[9] This view has been pointed out by the majority of Kant's scholars. 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. For a detailed discussion see: Hannah Ginsborg, 'Lawfulness without a Law: Kant on the Free Play of Imagination and Understanding.' *Philosophical Topics* 25, no.1 (1997): 37-81.

of pure concepts to the representation depend on the application of empirical concepts, then this means that in order to be conscious of the representation, we must apply empirical concepts. The application of empirical concepts to the manifold of intuition is, in other words, setting the imagination and understanding into a harmonious play. And this means that there always must be a harmony between the imagination and understanding in order to be conscious of a representation. In other words, it is impossible to think or to be conscious of a representation in which cognitive powers were in disharmony. Disharmonious representational state of mind is epistemeologically impossible.[10]

Guyer's argument is fruitfully challenging in that it demonstrates the problematic implications surrounding the notion of a disharmonious state of mind. In addition he shows that the concept of free harmony itself is deeply troublesome. On one hand Kant claims that harmony required for judgments of taste is free of concepts, yet on the other hand, as Guyer points out, this is epistemologically impossible. It is impossible to have a state of mind in which cognitive powers were in free harmony,

[10] Among Kant's scholars, Sean McConnell argues that the impossibility of existence of a disharmonious state of mind does not preclude the possibility of existence of pure ugliness. He claims that the feeling of displeasure depends on the free harmony itself. On his proposal, the feeling produced by the free harmony is not a simple pleasure, but rather a 'pleasure continuum', comprised of pleasure as the maximal point of the 'scale, displeasure as the minimal point on the scale and the sense of indifference in the middle. See: McConnell, 205-228. Even though McConnell's interpretation can accommodate judgments of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics, it suffers from a serious lack of a textual support, as well as intuitiveness. In particular, it is unconvincing why a lesser degree of harmony should lead to the feeling of displeasure, rather than to the feeling of a low degree of pleasure and so leaving the space for the comparative levels of beauty. Kant uses the notion of displeasure as feeling contrary to the pleasure, containing an actual presence of a positive displeasure. He writes in section §48 that there are naturally ugly objects with displeasing value so high that they arouse an emotion of disgust. This implies that displeasure itself has a 'continuum scale'; minimal displeasure and disgust as the maximal point on the scale. This suggests that displeasure cannot be simply identified with the low degree of harmony.

that is, without the application of empirical concepts, as Kant seems to claim that takes place in judgments of taste.[11] Ultimately, the investigation of judgments of ugliness depends on the notion of free harmony as the fundamental concept underlying judgments of taste. That is, in order to find a way to approach ugliness positively, a reevaluation of Kant's concept of free harmony is needed. We need to understand what Kant means by claiming that in judgments of taste the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding are exercised in their freedom, which can either be such that it results in judgments of the beautiful (free harmony) or in judgments of the ugly (free disharmony).

4. A Positive Approach to Ugliness

As the foregoing discussion has shown, Kant's own formulation of the concept of free harmony is deeply unsatisfying. Since the roots to the solution of ugliness is in the beautiful and in the concept of free harmony, the resolution of the problem of beauty is required in order to give a solution on the problem of ugliness. My aim in what follows is to propose an interpretation of the concept of free harmony that allows the possibility of free disharmony, without violating Kant's thesis of the necessity of a harmonious relation between imagination and understanding for cognition. The proposal is that free harmony should be understood as a harmony between *free imagination* and understanding in reflection upon cogni-

[11] Guyer accordingly develops a conception of free harmony based on conceptual harmony. According to his metacognitive approach, free harmony is identified as an excess of conceptual harmony. See: Paul Guyer, 'The Harmony of the Faculties Revisited.' In *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant's Critical Philosophy*, ed. Rebecca Kukla (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 182-193.

tion, rather than in cognition itself. I will argue that the distinction between the harmony necessary for determinate judgments, and harmony required for judgments of taste is derived from the distinction between the two different activities performed by the imagination (and which refers to Kant's distinction between determining and reflective judgments). In determinate judgments, the imagination is rule-governed (organizes sensible manifold in order to fit with the existing concept) and therefore not free. However, in judgments of taste it is free imagination that is in harmony with the understanding. Free imagination is constitutive for the kind of judgments that Kant describes as reflective judgments, among which the judgment of taste is a species, but which is also present in empirical concept acquisition (logical reflective judgments).

In brief, my proposal is the following: I argue, like Guyer, that in order to have perceptual experience, the application of some empirical concepts to the sensible manifold is necessary. In order to have perceptual experience, say of a dog, I must make a determining judgment, that is, my imagination must organize the sensible manifold in accordance with the dog-rule. My perception of the form of the object is therefore conceptually governed. This, however, does not preclude the possibility that the presented form is not guided by the concept, that is, that the imagination is in free play. Conceptual or rule governed perception is not, as one might think, incompatible with free play.

Consider the following scenario of a perceptual experience: if, for example, I do not yet have the concept of a dog, then by encountering a dog, my imagination can of course present some other concept that I already possess (and must do so) and which is the most adequate concept available to me for the present sensible manifold. For example, when seeing a dog, since I do not yet have a concept of a dog, but I have a concept of a four footed animal, then my imagination will activate the schema of

a four footed animal, because it is the best matching schema for the particular manifold. I will see the presented object not as a dog, but as some kind of four-footed animal. For the recognition of an object, the activation of some existing empirical concepts is necessary (as follows from Kant's theory of the threefold synthesis).[12] The role of imagination in this case is rule-governed; it must structure sensible manifold so that the best matching concept can apply. However, after seeing many instances of a dog, I will come to notice that they have common properties, and so I will arrive at a more specific empirical concept that can be applied to these objects. Hence, I will come to form, by means of reflection, a new concept, which I will activate in future perceptual experiences of this animal.

The process of reflection, by which I acquire the new concept, operates *on the perception* instead of preceding it. Reflective judgments, through which I acquire the concept of a dog, afford me with a more refined and distinct cognition (interpretation) of the sensible manifold, but it does not make my perception possible. Determinate judgment, that is, the application of some concept to the manifold, always precedes reflective judgment. Reflection is occasioned subsequently, when the existing concept, say the concept of a four footed animal, does not fully and sufficiently specify the combination

[12] I agree with Malcolm Budd's suggestion that in order to have perceptual experience it is sufficient to subsume the manifold under *general empirical concepts*, such as a concept of the body, or a color. These general empirical concepts are sufficient in order to individuate objects and therefore the subsumption of the manifold under more particular empirical concepts (such as concept of a dog, or a flower, etc.) is not needed. Particular empirical concepts are applied additionally, after we acquire them, and they do not strictly determine the perception of the object's form. For example, Budd writes: "…when the object is brought under a concept it was not formerly brought under there will be no change at all in the perception itself, and so no change in the object's perceived form, but only a change in the interpretation of the object (what kind of object it is) (…) if at one time I see a tree but without the ability to identify its kind, and at a later time, when I have acquired the ability, see it as aspen, its form is not thereby represented to me differently." Malcolm Budd, *Aesthetic Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 113.

of sensible manifold presented by a dog. Therefore, in such cases, perception of an object under a concept is possible even though the concept does not fully specify the combination of sensible manifold presented by the object. But if the existing concept does not fully specify the combination of sensible manifold, this means that there is no rule fully adequate for the combination of sensible manifold. And if there is no rule for a certain combination of sensible manifold, then this is to say that the imagination is not fully governed by the concept. In other words, to the extent that the imagination is not fully governed by the concept in some particular presentation of an object, it is in free play.

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

that necessitates perceptual experience. I will explain this interpretative proposal in detail in what follows.

4.1 The Conception of Free Imagination in Judgments of Taste

Kant offers numerous passages supporting the idea of free harmony as dependent on the notion of free play of imagination. He writes: "the aesthetic power of judgment in judging the beautiful relates the *imagination in its free play* to the understanding, in order to *agree* with its concepts in general (without determination of them)" (§26, 5:256).[13] Later on, he says:

> Only where the *imagination in its freedom* arouses the understanding, and the latter, without concepts, sets the imagination into a regular play is the representation communicated, not as a thought, but as the inner feeling of a purposive state of mind (§40, 5:296).

And:

> *The freedom of the imagination* (thus of the sensibility of our faculty) is represented in the judging of the beautiful as in *accord* with the lawfulness of the understanding (§59, 5:354).

Based on the quoted passages, we can see that Kant makes a clear distinction between (i) the *free play* of imagination, and (ii) the *harmony* of the *free play of imagination* with the understanding. In order to have (ii) which is necessary for the occurrence of pleasure, we must in the first instance have (i)

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

free imagination. For example, Kant writes that in judgments of taste "the understanding is in the service of the imagination" (§22, 5:242), which indicates that the faculty of understanding is not free, but only imagination. In fact, Kant's conception of understanding prevents the possibility of thinking of it as free. That is, understanding is a faculty that continues to attempt to apply concepts to the manifold in order to produce the unity. It never ceases to attempt to establish order over the heterogeneity of the manifold, even though the existing concepts might not be sufficient to fully determine the particular sensible manifold. As Kant claims: "discovery [of the order of nature] is a task for the understanding, which is aimed at an end that is necessary for it, namely, to introduce into it unity of principles" (VI, 5:187). So, since this task is necessary for the understanding, this is the task it will continue to perform whether in judgments of taste or determinate judgments. So what explains the difference in harmony between judgments of taste and determinate judgments is the role of the imagination. In particular, that it is free in the case of judgments of taste.

The problem, indicated by Guyer's argument was how can there be a free play of imagination if the application of concepts to the sensible manifold is necessary in order to have perceptual experience of the object in the first place?

A suggestion to this answer can be found in the following passage: "in the use of the imagination for cognition, the imagination is under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the limitation of being adequate to its concept; in an aesthetic respect, however, the imagination is free to provide, beyond that concord with the concept, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept, but which it applies, not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, for the animation of the cognitive powers" (§49, 5:317). Accordingly, Kant claims that the subject of the judgment of taste is not the material that is

used for cognition, that is, the empirical content determined by the concept, but the additional content, which is not determined by the concept of the object. It is this additional material that occasions aesthetic reflection. But what is also suggested in the mentioned passage is that this material is reflected on subsequently to the cognition. Hence, a determinate judgment precedes aesthetic reflection.

Based on this passage, I propose the following interpretation of the free play of imagination: in order to have a perceptual image, conceptual harmony between imagination and understanding is necessary. We must perceive a certain combination of sensible manifold under some empirical concepts. However, even though recognition of objects proceeds by the means of a schema, an abstract form shared by all members of a certain kind, each particular image also differs from others of its kind. That is, they differ in the additional features which are not determined (entailed) by the concept. For instance, I recognize the flower by the application of the flower-rule to the sensible manifold. The flower-rule is an abstract representation of numerous instances of the same kind. Yet, a particular image of a flower may have a distinct shape of petals in a particular combination of colors. But these distinctive features of this particular flower are not entailed by the concept of a flower. In other words, even though my perception of the flower is governed by the concept of a flower, the concept of the flower is not sufficient to fully determine the combination of sensible manifold in this particular presentation of a flower. The presence of these additional features which are not entailed by the concept shows that the activity of imagination is not fully determined by the concept, and therefore it is in free play.

Such an interpretative proposal is suggested by Kant in the following passage:

> But where only a free play of the powers of representation (although under the condition that the understanding does not thereby suffer any offense) is to be maintained, in pleasure gardens, in the decoration of rooms, in all sorts of tasteful utensils and the like, regularity that comes across as constraint is to be avoided as far as possible; hence the English taste in gardens or the baroque taste in furniture pushes the freedom of the imagination almost to the point of the grotesque, and makes this abstraction from all constraint by rules the very case in which the taste can demonstrate its greatest perfection in projects of the imagination (§22, 5:242).

In this passage Kant talks about regularity and the free imagination and he seems to regard them as inversely proportional. The more regular the form, the less free the imagination is, and conversely, the less constrained by the regularity is the imagination, the more it is in free play. Kant explains later on in the same section that the forms of objects are regular, if "they cannot be represented except by being regarded as mere presentations of a determinate concept, which prescribes the rule for that shape (in accordance with which it is alone possible)" (§22, 5:241). The notion of 'mere presentation' refers to a schema (rule), that is, a presentation that exhibits conditions necessary for cognition. It is suggested that an object's form is regular if it exhibits merely that combination of sensible manifold which is determined by the concept. So the regular form exhibits features that represent the mere idea of some class of objects, rather than anything specific and distinctive to an individual instance of that class. For example, Kant claims:

> One will find that a perfectly regular face, which a painter might ask to sit for him as a model, usually says nothing: because it contains nothing characteristic, and thus expresses

> more the idea of the species than anything specific to a person (§17, 5:235).

Kant appears to identify regular forms with aesthetic neutrality (lack of pleasure and displeasure).[14] On my account this can be explained because such forms do not allow for the freedom of the imagination, because they do not afford any material beyond that fixed by the concept. Consequently, they lack an aesthetic dimension, and hence do not occasion any aesthetic reaction. Even though Kant claims that regularity induces boredom, which is in some sense a reaction, he also adds that this feeling is prompted only when we consider the object aesthetically and when there is no other source of interest in the object:

> All stiff regularity (whatever approaches mathematical regularity) is of itself contrary to taste: the consideration of it affords no lasting entertainment, but rather, insofar as it does not expressly have cognition or a determinate practical end as its aim, it induces boredom (§22, 5:243).

For example, very neutral objects, such as a white wall, are most usually ignored, and so do not produce any aesthetic reactions. However, if we turn our attention to them and consider the aesthetic qualities, we quickly become bored.

To return to the passage in §22, Kant claims that in order for a certain form to have free play of imagination it must be devoid as much as possible of the constraints of regularity, which means that the form of the object ought not be a mere presentation of a concept. In other words, the free play of imagination is due to the distinctive qualities of a specific representation, in contrast to those aspects of the object that are

[14] For Kant, prime examples of regular forms, which are identified with aesthetic neutrality, are geometrical forms (circles, cubes, squares etc.). See: §22

shared by all members of a class and in virtue of which the concept applies. This implies that imagination in the given object is free, not when there is no concept determining the form, but when the form exhibits such a combination of sensible manifold that goes beyond the schematic presentation. The representation, in which the manifold expresses more than the concept requires for the fulfillment of the minimal conditions for objective harmony (schema), is the representation in which the imagination is free. Within this framework we can make sense of the idea that the freedom of the imagination admits of degrees.[15] For example, a simple chair is in greater conformity with the abstract representation (or schema) of a chair, and therefore allows a lower degree of free imagination, than, for example, a modern design of a chair, with its smooth, light and unexpected forms. The imagination becomes even more exuberant in the Baroque style of chairs with its excessive decoration, rich carvings, dramatic lines and curves. Such perceptual forms, which have free imagination, provoke aesthetic reflection, resulting in the feeling of pleasure or displeasure.

In sum, in the given form of the object the imagination can be in free play because the objective (cognitive) relation needs to be restricted only to the extent that it permits the possibility of cognition, and this extent still allows for the free activity of the imagination. For example, when drawing a chair, my imagination can extend beyond the conditions that are necessary in order to think a chair, seen as a figure supported by legs and a seat. Imagination is restricted in drawing a figure with legs and a seat, but it is not restricted in the numerous possibilities of how this figure comes into being in a particular case (numerous different designs of a chair). A particular form of the object can

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

contain such a synthesis of the manifold that extends well beyond the unity provided by the concept of the object.[16] Concepts serve as a rule only for the features of the object common to members of a certain kind, but they cannot be a rule for the individual features and their combinations which are distinct and unique for the particular object itself.

Accordingly, a form of the object can be thought to exist at two levels. A particular flower, for instance, has a general (abstract) form which it shares with other objects of its kind. Yet, this particular flower also has an individual form, that is, the distinctive combination of the general features. The individual form exists within the constraints of the abstract form (schema), and represents a unique employment of the properties that constitute the general form specified by the concept. A judgment of taste takes into consideration those individuated

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[16] Even though on my account all aesthetic perception depends upon first recognizing an object under a concept, it does not mean that all beauty is of an adherent or dependent kind. The difference between free and adherent beauty depends on the difference between the kinds of objects that are aesthetically judged. Objects of adherent beauty are works of art and artifacts, which are made with an aim to perform a function of some sort. For such objects, the concept of the object determines their purpose (what they ought to be) and accordingly it determines the rules for the combination of the manifold. In other words, the concept of the object restrains the free play of imagination. For example, a vase is an object made with the purpose to hold cut flowers. In order to judge the beauty of a vase, we must first take into account what the vase is and this means to take into account its purpose. In order for the object to be a vase, it must fulfill its purpose in the first place. Accordingly, the form of the vase is determined by the purpose it is supposed to fulfill, that is, its form must be in accordance with its purpose. As opposed to artifacts, natural objects are objects of free beauty, which "are not attached to a determinate object in accordance with concepts regarding its end" (§16, 5:229). The concept of the flower does not determine its purpose (we do not know what a flower ought to be, but just what it is, and although we now know that flowers have a biological function as the plant's organs of reproduction, this purpose is not a necessary component of our concept of a flower, since flowers were known and categorized prior to our identification of this function), and therefore it does not determine the rules for the manifold – the imagination is completely free.

and specific features of an object, and which alone constitute aesthetic form.

Aesthetic pleasure is produced, not when the cognitive activity of imagination (responsible for producing a schema) is in harmony with the understanding (this relation is always restricted by the concept and necessary), but when *free imagination*, that is, imagination whose activity goes beyond that required by a concept, is in harmony with the understanding. Because this relation does not take place between the cognitive function of imagination and understanding as necessary for objective (cognitive) harmony, but between the free imaginative manifold and understanding, it allows for the epistemological (and phenomenological) possibility of disharmony. The latter is a disharmony attained in mere reflection, whose very possibility depends on the harmony between the sensible manifold and the categories, applied to the object through general empirical concepts. Accordingly, the possibility of aesthetic disharmony does not contradict Guyer's thesis of the necessity of conceptual harmony for perceptual experience. The object that is being aesthetically reflected on is already before our consciousness.

4.2 The Reflective Power of Judgment and Taste

In the previous section I discussed the notion of free imagination as an essential element in judgments of taste. I argued that for some objects the combination of sensible manifold is not fully determined by the concept of the object, and that this indeterminacy allows the free play of imagination. Kant writes that the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is produced when the *free play of imagination* is in harmony or disharmony with the understanding. Accordingly, an additional explanation of the possibility of such free harmony (or disharmony) is needed. That is, how is it possible that a certain combination of elements, which is not produced in accordance with

any of the rules of the understanding, is after all in harmony with it? The answer to this question lies in Kant's notion of the reflective power of judgment.

Kant writes that the reflective power of judgment is activated when we are presented with a sensible manifold for which we do not yet have a concept. As I argued before, this is the case in which the imagination is in free play. The aim of the power of judgment is to attain harmony between imagination and understanding, but since in this case we have no rule under which to subsume the manifold, this rule must first be found. Ascending from the particular to the universal is the task of the reflective power of judgment (IV, 5:179).

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 an *a priori* principle that governs our reflection and search for universals. This principle is found in the power of judgment itself. More particularly, it is a principle that represents nature as a system: "a principle of the representation of nature as a system for our power of judgment, in which the manifold, divided into genera and species, makes it possible to bring all the natural forms that are forthcoming to concepts (of greater or lesser generality) through comparison" (F1, Vn, 20:212).

In short, this principle presupposes a certain idea about nature, namely, that it is as though it were organized by an understanding similar to ours, so that agreement is possible between our cognitive abilities and the empirical character of nature itself. But since empirical nature is not constituted by the understanding (pure concepts determine nature in the most general way and they do not determine empirical content of specific natural forms), when in fact it does agree with it, such agreement is recognized as contingent. It is suggested by Kant that the principle is necessary for us to have empirical cognition in general. 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 principle does not, however, absolutely guarantee that we will always find regularities among objects and bring them under concepts. That is, the principle does not guarantee that the power of judgment will always attain the harmony between imagination and understanding. The principle is merely a subjective maxim, or "a subjectively necessary transcendental presupposition" (F1, IV, 20:209), as to how we ought to approach nature in order to attain the systematicity of nature, and this means that it is not necessarily guaranteed that nature will in fact always be in accord with the principle of systematicity. The principle does not determine anything about nature, but it only represents an orientation we must take in our investigation of nature. Kant claims that the principle represents only a unique way of reflecting and approaching nature. The principle is an idea about how the world is supposed to be, so that it allows our understanding to cognize it, and it is an idea that holds only for us, as cognitive beings. The principle does not determine the world; rather, it determines us, and our need to see the world in a specific way.

Kant discusses the principle of purposiveness 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 his characterization of the principle of purposiveness as inherently connected to the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure). If one has a certain need, and in this case, the need to systematize our experience of nature for the sake of understanding, then the satisfaction of this need, that is, when we come across such a

system of nature, can produce a feeling of pleasure. Indeed, Kant writes that if the principle determines the subject, then this awareness of the satisfaction (dissatisfaction) of the principle can be given only through the feeling of pleasure (displeasure): "the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is only the receptivity of a determination of the subject, so that if the power of judgment is to determine anything for itself alone, it could not be anything other than the feeling of pleasure, and, conversely, if the latter is to have an *a priori* principle at all, it will be found only in the power of judgment" (F1, III, 20:208). If the principle of purposiveness determines the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in the subject, then these feelings will be experienced in each case of finding systematicity and unity in nature, or their converse, respectively. That is, finding the concept for the particular will be experienced with pleasure.[17]

But Kant writes that a beautiful object also reveals nature's systematicity:

> The self-sufficient beauty of nature reveals to us a technique of nature, which makes it possible to represent it as a system in accordance with laws the principle of which we do not encounter anywhere in our entire faculty of understanding, namely that of a purposiveness with respect to the use of the power of judgment in regard to appearances (§23, 5:246).

The claim is that a beautiful object exhibits a technique of nature, that is, a purposiveness that allows us to represent nature as a system. But, as Kant writes, it is not nature itself that is technical (that is, purposive), but rather "the power of judgment is properly technical; nature is represented technically only insofar as it conforms to that procedure of the power of judg-

[17] Kant writes: "…bringing heterogeneous laws of nature under higher though always still empirical ones, so that if we succeed in this accord of such laws for our faculty of cognition, which we regard as merely contingent, pleasure will be felt" (VI, 5:188).

ment and makes it necessary" (F1, VII, 20:220). In other words, this means that a beautiful object is the result of the conformity of the object with the power of judgment. That is, an object is considered beautiful when it satisfies the principle of purposiveness, which guides the procedure of the power of judgment. But the principle is also satisfied in the case of finding the concept under which to subsume a particular. Accordingly, both beautiful objects and finding the concept for a particular represent the satisfaction of the same principle of nature's purposiveness for our cognitive abilities and therefore the feeling of pleasure will be experienced in both cases.

Moreover, Kant suggests that the principle of purposiveness is properly revealed only in judgments of taste. He writes:

> It is therefore properly only in taste, and especially with regard to objects in nature, in which alone the power of judgment reveals itself as a faculty that has its own special principle and thereby makes a well-founded claim to a place in the general critique of the higher faculties of cognition, which one would perhaps not have entrusted to it (F1, XI, 20:244).

This implies that the principle is not revealed in cognitive inquiries (empirical concept acquisition), even though it is also necessary for them. On my understanding, Kant's thought can be explained with reference to the two kinds of reflection employed in the power of judgment. He writes that in empirical concept acquisition, reflecting is comparing one form with other forms in order to find common features (the concept). In judgments of taste, on the other hand, reflecting is comparing a single form with our own faculty of cognition (F1, V). This means that in the first case the primary result of the comparison made in accordance with the principle is the perception of the commonalities between two objects. However, in judgments of

taste the primary result is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, and it is this feeling that reveals the extent to which the principle of purposiveness is satisfied by the object.

The connection between judgments of taste and the principle of nature's purposiveness can be legitimized in the following way. Kant claims that judgments of taste are *merely reflective judgments* (F1, VIII). And he understands *merely reflective judgments* as judgments concerned with finding the universal:

> If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is *merely reflecting* (IV, 5:179).

This indicates that a judgment of taste is also one in which universals for a particular form is being sought, just as in logical reflective judgments. Indeed, if we take a closer look at the passage where Kant describes the two types of reflection (logical and aesthetic), he claims that both are made "in relation to a concept thereby made possible" (F1, V, 20:211). 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) (§4, 5:207).

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.

Difference between logical and aesthetic reflective judgments is that the concept found in the former case is deter-

minate in the sense in which the criteria of its application can be explicitly articulated, whereas in the latter case the concept is indeterminate, with the judgment depending only on the feeling of pleasure. Even though a judgment of taste does not result in a determinate concept, it does after all satisfy the need of a reflective judgment to conceptualize experience. When we find an object beautiful, we feel that there is a tangible account of this, as if beauty were a concept, yet we are unable to put it into words. 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.

Finding an object beautiful, similarly to finding a determinate concept for the particular, reveals that the object fits with our idea of nature as a system. In the case of logical reflective judgments, the principle of purposiveness is satisfied through finding a determinate concept, this latter being a relation that we recognize as holding *between the forms* of different objects. In the case of judgments of taste, on the other hand, no determinate concept is found, and so this is not a case of recognizing a relation between objects. However, a feeling of pleasure in a judgment of taste indicates that the principle of purposiveness is satisfied in these cases. Given that the principle of purposiveness is only satisfied in judgments where the systematicity of nature is exhibited, and that judgments of taste do not pertain to relations between objects, this systematicity

must be exhibited in the relation between the particular object and our cognitive faculties.

As mentioned previously, only in cases where common properties are found to hold between objects is it possible to find a determinate concept for the particular and so explicitly articulate the way or ways in which the principle of purposiveness is satisfied. In judgments of taste the principle is satisfied without finding common properties, and hence without the possibility of finding a determinate concept, and hence without the possibility of explicitly articulating the criteria by which the principle is satisfied. Nevertheless, the satisfaction of the principle is manifest to us through the feeling of pleasure. That is, a beautiful object discloses the systematicity of nature at the most particular and concrete level and it does that through the feeling of pleasure alone.

A judgment in general, Kant claims, is the ability to think the particular under a universal. A judgment of taste is not an exception. The difference is only that in a judgment of taste, of the form 'this X is beautiful', the predicate does not refer to a determinate concept, since the criteria for its application cannot be explicitly articulated, but consist only in the feeling of pleasure. Hence, in judgments of taste no determinate cognition can be made. This is because Kant understands concepts as representing general properties that different objects share with each other. Purposiveness can result in a determinate concept only when we compare different forms with each other in order to find commonalities among them, since only general features can be explicitly communicated. But in judgments of taste, Kant claims, we reflect on a particular form itself, without comparing this form with others. Aesthetic reflection is a reflection on an object's individual and distinctive properties; hence this purposiveness cannot be grasped in a determinate concept, but is directly connected with pleasure.

In fact, it is precisely because aesthetic purposiveness cannot be grasped in a determinate concept that the experience of pleasure does not cease to exist, as happens in logical reflective judgments. Beautiful object continuously attracts attention. 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 (VI, 5:187). The explanation he gives is that once we acquire the concept for the particular, and once our subsumption of the particular under the concept becomes automatic and spontaneous (procedure of a determinate 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, such as in judgments of taste, then pleasure, produced by the sucessfull unification, cannot become fused with cognition. And if this is so, then, based on Kant's reasoning, the pleasure in a judgment of taste does not cease to exist. The feeling of pleasure in a beautiful object is a perennial reminder of the object's suitability for us and our cognitive abilities.

Kant's view of reflective judgments is consistent with the possibility of reflective disharmony, because in reflective judgments we are concerned with the unification of those individual and particular aspects of nature that are left undetermined by pure concepts. Since these specific empirical aspects of objects are not determined by pure concepts, they do not necessarily find their agreement with our understanding. Even though our reflection on these aspects is not blind, but guided by the transcendental presupposition of the principle of purposiveness, this principle need not be satisfied in all cases. This principle merely claims that we expect to find unity among objects, that is, to be able to discern some pattern between seemingly disparate particulars, and to derive a rule from their comparison, and not that we will actually find it. It is therefore possible that the particular object has a combination of sensible

manifold that resists unification, that is, has a combination for which no appropriate rule can be found. In other words, the particular object resists our idea of how it ought to be, namely, that it ought to fit the structure of our mind. There is then a possibility to experience a disharmony between free imagination and understanding. Kant explains the possibility of such disharmony in his description of logical reflective judgments. He writes that if we come across a particular that resists systematization, and cannot be unified under a concept, displeasure is produced (VI, 5:188). Displeasure in this case is felt in our inability to find the appropriate concept for different heterogeneous individuals. It is *their relation* that resists our idea of purposiveness in its logical employment (to locate the particular in the system of nature).

The subject of a judgment on taste, on the other hand, is a *singular representation of the object*. That is, a singular form, rather than a relation between forms. We are interested in the nature of the particular object and the relation between cognitive powers that this singular representation generates. The principle of reflection applies to the synthesis of features particular to this form itself and not to the synthesis of common features in virtue of which the object belongs to a certain class. We find an object aesthetically purposive, Kant writes, "before its comparison with others is seen" (F1, VIII, 20:223), that is, before noticing what this object has in common with others. Such purposiveness is called aesthetic because the representation is directly connected with the feeling of pleasure, without being generated in a determinate concept. But in the case of empirical conceptualization, the representation is not directly connected to pleasure; rather, it is mediated by a concept. Finding the concept for the particular is the confirmation of the principle of purposiveness, and this confirmation produces pleasure. Accordingly, logical purposiveness is not aesthetic purposiveness. Hence, to bring an object under an empirical

concept is not to make a judgment that this object is beautiful or aesthetically purposive. This allows for the possibility that an object can have cognitive or logical purposiveness (purposiveness between forms), without having aesthetic purposiveness (purposiveness of the form itself). Hence, we can have an object of cognition, that is, we may be able to recognize the manifold under a concept, without this object being regarded as beautiful. More importantly, we can have an object of cognition (that is, classify the object into the system of genera and species), while at the same time this object (its individual aspects) can be perceived as aesthetically displeasing. That is, reflection on an object's individual form can be in disconformity with the principle of the purposiveness, and we can therefore find such an object ugly. For example, we can recognize that an animal called *fangtooth* belongs to the species called *Anoplogaster Cornuta*, hence finding its concept in the hierarchy of species and genera, while nevertheless find it displeasing and ugly. This shows that the fangtooth is not aesthetically displeasing due to the disagreement with the natural kind to which it belongs (it is not dependent ugliness). 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. The animal exhibits features that do not seem to fit together, that is, in the perception of this object we experience a state of mind of discordance and struggle between the power of imagination and understanding, resulting in the feeling of discomfort, displeasure and in judging this animal as ugly.

5. The Paradox of Ugliness Revealed

My interpretation of Kant's notion of the free play of imagination and the *a priori* principle of pruposiveness can help us to resolve 'the paradox of ugliness,' namely how an aesthetically displeasing and ugly object can nevertheless hold our attention and be greatly appreciated.

I argue that this phenomenon can be explained by referring to Kant's notion of the free play of imagination. The idea that objects attract our attention due to the free play of imagination is suggested by Kant in §22. He writes that only when the imagination in the given object plays freely and spontaneously (that is, the sensible manifold is not constrained by determinate rules), then such an object "is always new for us, and we are never tired of looking at it" (§22, 5:243). This idea is additionally supported by Kant's claim that aesthetically indifferent objects such as regular and symmetrical forms, which are constrained by determinate rules, and therefore do not allow for the freedom of the imagination, do not hold one's attention, that is: "the consideration of it affords no lasting entertainment, but rather (…) induces boredom" (§22, 5:243). These passages imply that an object holds (or fails to hold) one's attention due to the presence (or lack) of the free play of imagination. Since free play of imagination is constitutive not only for the experience of beauty, but also for ugliness, as discussed in the previous section, then one can expect that ugliness as well as beauty will hold one's attention. The argument is the following: Kant claims that ugliness is constituted by the free imagination being unrestrained by the understanding's need for order, which means that ugliness pushes the freedom of the imagination to a

Mojca Kuplen, Kant and the Problem of Pure Judgments of Ugliness,
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high degree: "the English taste in gardens or the baroque taste in furniture pushes the freedom of the imagination almost to the point of the grotesque" (§22, 5:242). But if it is the free play of imagination that underlies one's attention to the object, and if ugliness in particular generates a rich degree of free imagination, then it is reasonable to conclude that ugliness holds one's attention more than beauty does, where the free imagination is restricted by the demands of taste. However, the degree of the freedom of the imagination is not the sole factor which governs one's attention, since in the case of beauty the pleasure engendered by the harmonious relation between free imagination and the understanding motivates us to hold our attention on the object, while in the case of ugliness, the displeasure arising from the disharmonious relation between the cognitive powers is a factor which reduces our propensity to attend to the object. Therefore it is not a necessary consequence of this position that our attention is held to a greater degree by an ugly object than by a beautiful object. But the free play of imagination that is constitutive of the experience of ugliness is nevertheless a cause of our continued attention to ugly objects.

The feeling of displeasure in an ugly object depends on the experience of a disharmony between the free imagination and understanding. But if the attention to ugliness depends on the free play of imagination itself, regardless of whether this imagination is in disharmony with the understanding, then one can explain the concurrence of displeasure at an ugly object and continued attention to it by referring to their different sources. That is, displeasure arises from the disharmony between free imagination and the understanding, while our attention is held by an object in virtue of the free play of imagination that it produces. So while displeasure by itself would cause us to withdraw our attention from the cause of the displeasure, the degree of free play produced by an ugly object nevertheless

holds our attention. I will now examine the reasons for this connection between free play and continued attention.

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

So far I have given an explanation as to how an ugly object can hold one's attention in spite of the feeling of displeasure it occasions. However, ugliness is not only considered to be aesthetically interesting, but it can also be captivating, fascinating and aesthetically significant.[18] This appears to be the case, considering in particular the proliferation of ugliness in contemporary artistic production and the positive appreciation of it. This shows that artistic ugliness is not an indicator of an artistic failure and that works of art can be valuable even though they are not beautiful. In fact, this idea is implied in Kant's distinction between free imagination, required for the richness and originality of artistic production, and the reflective power of judgment, required for the judgment of beauty. Kant claims in §50 that it is in virtue of the productive (free) imagination that inspiring objects are produced, but it is in virtue of the reflective power of judgment that beautiful objects are produced. This suggests the possibility that an object can be valuable due to its rich formal properties, which is the product of the free imagination, even though it might not be beautiful. I will give now an explanation of the relation between free imagination and the possibility of appreciating ugliness.

We know so far that the object's form stimulates the free play of imagination if it exhibits a combination of sense data that is not determined by any rules. But if the form of the object is not determined by any known rules and concepts, then this suggests that such an object affords a novel and unique experience, since any production that is governed by known rules must be to that extent imitative, whereas genuine creativity must go beyond these rules. Kant writes that when the artist exercises his power of free imagination, which means that his creation of the work of art is not governed by any known rules, then creative and original works of art are produced:

[18] See: Matthew Kieran, "Aesthetic Value: Beauty, Ugliness and Incoherence," *Philosophy*, 72 (1997): 383-399.

> The proper field for genius is that of the power of imagination, because this is creative and, being less under the constraint of rules than other faculties, it is thus all the more capable of originality (ANTH §57).

Kant's describes productive imagination as one that transforms "another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it" (§49, 5:314). It generates a new combination of existing concepts, ideas and perceptual features. But ugly works of art are also products of the artist's ability to exercise free imagination, since, as mentioned previously, any departure from aesthetic indifference must be the result of free imagination, and this means that ugly works of art can exhibit originality and creativity, and can therefore be valuable in this sense. Indeed, many examples of art works that are evaluated as aesthetically displeasing reinforce this point. For example, John Cage's work *Imaginary Landscape No.2* (1942) is composed of various sounds produced by unconventional instruments, such as tin cans, buzzers, water gongs, conch shells etc. The combination of these sounds produces a raucously noisy and chaotic work; it lacks melody, harmony, and organization, and it is therefore difficult to listen to. However, its originality gives rise to an element of admiration, due to the use of unconventional instruments, exhibiting a novel compositional technique based on chance, and introducing new, unusual and radically different combinations of sounds. His work goes against the traditional rules of music and in this sense exhibits great imaginative freedom and novelty, which is itself valuable.

Furthermore, the connection between the principle of purposiveness and judgments of taste can help us reveal the relation between ugliness and the expression of aesthetic ideas. I argued in the previous section that beauty and ugliness depend on the principle of purposiveness, that is, on the indeterminate

rule that guides our orientation in the world. We appreciate forms that are in accordance with the principle of purposiveness, and that reassures us that the world is indeed such as we expect it to be, namely, amenable to our cognitive abilities. Accordingly, the experience of pleasure is a sign of the familiarity with the world, of feeling at home in the world. Beauty affirms the possibility of knowledge and the intelligibility of the world. In other words, it gives us hope that: "the more we become acquainted with what is innermost in nature (…) the simpler and more perspicuous would we find it." (VI, 5:188) This explains why our experience of beauty is associated in particular with positive feeling value ideas, such as joyfulness, virtue, optimism etc.

On the other hand, forms that resist our expectation that the world is amenable to our cognitive abilities produce displeasure. The inability to know the world occasions the state of estrangement between us, our mental structure, and the world. James Phillips nicely puts this idea by saying:

> The displeasure of ugliness is the displeasure of the thought that the world might not want us to know it.[19]

When our expectations of order and our need of organizing the world in a specific way are violated, we do not merely experience displeasure, but also a sense of loss of control over the organization of experience, and this can occasion feelings of fear, anxiety, horror and a sense of estrangement, powerlessness, alienation, absurdity etc. Ugliness can be a valuable experience, because it is the unique way through which these ideas and emotions, for which there is no adequate sense intuition, can be sensibly expressed.[20]

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[19] James Phillips, 'Placing Ugliness in Kant's Third *Critique:* A Reply to Paul Guyer,' *Kant-Studien* 102, no. 3 (2011): 395.

[20] Kant writes about two kinds of ideas. On one hand, invisible beings, hell, eternity, freedom, mortality, etc., are *rational ideas*. What is distinctive for them

Some have argued, however, that the violation of taste (power of judgment) necessarily implies the unintelligibility of the representation. They claim that accordance with taste is the "condition of all *sense and meaning*."[21] Accordingly, if ugliness consists in a disharmony between imagination and understanding, that is, in discordance with taste, then it must essentially be unintelligible.

However, the discordance with taste does not necessary leads to the unintelligibility of ugliness. Namely, even though the use of free imagination in ugliness is not in accordance with taste, it is nevertheless *related* to taste. Ugliness is *contra-purposive*, rather than *non-purposive*. While in a non-purposive representation elements are disconnected and detached from each other, therefore resulting in a representation that does not make sense, in a contra-purposive representation, on the other hand, elements do relate to each other, that is, they relate to each other through their disagreement and it is through this disagreement that a meaning is conveyed. Ruth Lorand writes:

> New ideas are born out of conflicts between old ideas; new styles are generated out of conflicts with 'old' styles.[22]

This is nicely illustrated by Chatwin's description of an ugly human face. He writes:

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is that they can be thought, but not empirically encountered (one can think of the idea of hell, but have no sensible intuition of it). On the other hand, love, fame, envy, death, etc. are ideas, or more precisely emotions and abstract concepts which can be experienced (we can experience their concrete instances), yet they cannot be directly represented (as objects denoted by determinate concepts can be). (§49)

[21] Angelica Nuzzo *Kant and the Unity of Reason* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2005), 309. See also: Donald W. Crawford, "Kant's Theory of Creative Imagination," in *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays*, ed. Paul Guyer (NewYork: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 170.

[22] Ruth Lorand, *Aesthetic Order: A Philosophy of order, Beauty and Art (London & New York: Routledge, 2000)*, 244.

> He amazed me by his ugliness: the spread of his nose, the wens that covered his forehead; the fleshy, down-hanging lip, and eyes that were hooded by the folds of his eyelids. But what a face! You never saw a face of such mobility and character. Every scrap of it was in a stage of perpetual animation. One second, he was an unbending Aboriginal lawman; the next, an outrageous comic.[23]

The writer illustrates well the intense and stirring effect of the free play of imagination occasioned by the ugly object and the conflict of ideas that it suggests. The ugly face of an aboriginal is not merely the face of a man, but it is the face of both a nobleman and a comic at the same time.

There is an appealing side to ugliness, because it allows for the imagination to be highly effective and expressive of ideas that cannot be represented otherwise. Its constitutive element is disorder and as such it is particularly suggestive for the expression of ideas that celebrate such disorder. It is related to ideas of alienation, estrangement, dehumanization, destruction, degeneration, disconcertion, absurdity, and with emotions evoking terror, horror, anxiety and fear. This shows that ugliness can be aesthetically significant, meaningful and intellectually stimulating, even though the conflicting features produce struggle and discomfort in the apprehension of this idea. Ugliness can be an expression of aesthetic ideas, which are uncomfortable, yet are part of our experience of the world and ourselves and therefore worthwhile attending to.

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[23] Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (London: Vintage, 2003), 285.

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