**Aesthetic Humility: A Kantian Model**

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**Abstract:**

Unlike its moral and intellectual counterparts, the virtue of aesthetic humility has been widely neglected. In order to begin filling in this gap, I argue that Kant’s aesthetics is a promising resource for developing a model of aesthetic humility. Initially, however, this may seem like an unpromising starting point as Kant’s aesthetics might appear to promote aesthetic arrogance instead. In spite of this *prima facie* worry, I claim that Kant’s aesthetics provides an illuminating model of aesthetic humility that sheds light not only on the self- and other-directed attitudes it involves, but also on how aesthetic humility can serve as a corrective to the vices of aesthetic arrogance and aesthetic servility. In addition to revealing the ways in which Kant’s aesthetics prizes humility rather than arrogance, I aim to show that the Kantian model of aesthetic humility can enrich our understanding of humility more generally and contribute to the on-going effort in aesthetics to analyze specific aesthetic virtues and vices.

**§1. Introduction**

The topic of aesthetic humility has been widely neglected. Unlike its moral and intellectual counterparts, the virtue of aesthetic humility has received little attention in recent discussions of humility.[[1]](#footnote-1) Nor has it been taken up in a substantive way in the newly burgeoning field of virtue aesthetics.[[2]](#footnote-2) In order to begin filling in this gap, I argue that Kant’s aesthetics is a promising resource for developing a model of aesthetic humility.

*Prima facie*, though, Kant’s aesthetics may seem like an unpromising starting point for such an endeavor. In the first place, virtue aesthetics is presented as a new approach to aesthetics that shifts primary focus away from the topics that are foregrounded in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, like aesthetic objects (the beautiful, the sublime) and aesthetics states (aesthetic judgments, pleasure, aesthetic experience), toward issues surrounding the character of aesthetic agents.[[3]](#footnote-3)

However, a perhaps deeper worry is that rather than offering us an account of aesthetic humility, Kant’s aesthetics might seem to promote arrogance instead. Consider, for example, Kant’s assertion that,

if [someone] pronounces that something is beautiful, then he expects [*mutet…zu*] the very same satisfaction of others: he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. Hence he says that the **thing** is beautiful, and he does not count on the agreement of others…, but rather **demands** [*fordert*]it from them. He rebukes [*tadelt*] them if they judge otherwise, and denies that they have taste, though he nevertheless requires that they ought to have it. (CPJ 5:212-3)[[4]](#footnote-4)

This passage is in keeping with Kant’s oft-cited claim that when we make a judgment of the beautiful, we speak with a ‘universal voice’ (CPJ 5:216, 237). And these remarks occur in the course of Kant arguing for one of his central theses, viz., that judgments of the beautiful have ‘subjective universality’ and lay claim to the agreement of everyone (CPJ 5:212).[[5]](#footnote-5)

Though there are perhaps some domains, like the moral domain, in which it makes sense for us to place demands and expectations on everyone, when this occurs in the aesthetic domain it might strike us as questionable. By what right can we demand agreement from others when it comes to beauty, let alone rebuke them if they disagree? Especially if one thinks, as Kant does, that there are no objective rules or principles of beauty and that a judgment of taste is based solely on someone’s feeling of pleasure, what, other than our own arrogance, makes us think that because we feel pleasure, we are entitled to demand everyone else follows suit? As Richard Moran articulates this concern, Kant’s aesthetic judge appears to be ‘an overbearing person who seeks to impose on others what is for him a perfectly free liking’ (2012: 317-8).[[6]](#footnote-6)

To feel the force of this worry, imagine a scenario that unfolds in the way Kant outlines in the above passage. Suppose two people are looking at a protea.[[7]](#footnote-7) The first person feels pleasure when she looks at it and declares it to be beautiful. The other disagrees. When faced with this disagreement, the first person demands the other capitulate. When the other explains that they simply do not feel anything when they look at the flower, the first person insists that she called the protea beautiful because she judges ‘for everyone’. Still the other demurs. Eventually the first person reprimands the other and denies that they have taste. Who other than someone arrogant and overbearing would proceed as the first person does?

Though this conduct might be underwritten by personal haughtiness, some have argued that the sort of arrogance Kant’s view promotes is implicated in an aesthetic hierarchy underwritten by Kant’s racist,[[8]](#footnote-8) misogynistic,[[9]](#footnote-9) and classist[[10]](#footnote-10) prejudices. According to this line of critique, although Kant treats the aesthetic judge as one whose demands and expectations track what is ‘universal’, they, in fact, track the judgments and tastes of white men from a privileged socio-economic class. As Monique Roelofs articulates this objection, Kant’s approach ‘falsely universalizes appreciative conditions and values associated with educated, leisured, white, socially quiescent, masculine, middle-class subject-positions’ (2014: 37). Seen from this vantage point, the demands, expectations, rebukes, and denials that Kant’s aesthetic judges arrogantly issue in relation to others appear to manifest their position in an unequal power structure in which the aesthetic is one tool among others for denigration and oppression of difference.

Although one can see why these accusations have been leveled against Kant, I argue that far from promoting aesthetic arrogance, his aesthetics provides a rich and promising account of aesthetic humility. In developing this Kantian model of the virtue of aesthetic humility I have three main goals. My first goal is simply to put aesthetic humility on the map as a topic that warrants attention. If we are to understand the full scope of the virtue of humility, then focusing only on its moral or intellectual manifestations will not do. We also need to acknowledge the ways in which our aesthetic endeavors can manifest this virtue and the vices that might cut against it.

My second goal pertains to how we are to read Kant. I aim to show that, though it might be tempting, it is a mistake to interpret his aesthetics as encouraging arrogance: his aesthetics is one that prizes aesthetic humility instead. Indeed, I hope to bring out the ways in which his aesthetics sheds light on why the aesthetically arrogant go wrong and how aesthetic humility can help counteract these tendencies.

My third goal is to use the Kantian approach to contribute to the on-going effort in aesthetics to analyze specific aesthetic virtues and vices.[[11]](#footnote-11) In recent years, theories of various aesthetic virtues, like good taste,[[12]](#footnote-12) creativity,[[13]](#footnote-13) aesthetic courage,[[14]](#footnote-14) and honesty,[[15]](#footnote-15) and aesthetic vices, like snobbery, have been advanced.[[16]](#footnote-16) And I intend for this Kantian account of the virtue of aesthetic humility and the vices of aesthetic arrogance and servility to further these efforts.

I begin in §2 by outlining the basic conception of the virtue of aesthetic humility and the vices of aesthetic arrogance and servility that I shall operate with. In §§3-5 I then develop a specifically Kantian model of aesthetic humility by exploring the complex of self- and other-directed attitudes that it involves and that serve as a corrective for these two vices. In §3 I argue that one self-directed attitude aesthetic humility involves on the Kantian view is acknowledgment of one’s aesthetic limitations. In §4 I claim that another self-directed attitude Kantian aesthetic humility calls for is ownership of the capacities that one possesses that makes one capable of issuing judgments of the beautiful.[[17]](#footnote-17) In §5 I turn to the other-directed aspects of Kantian aesthetic humility and I explore the respect and esteem for others it involves, as well as how we can act responsibly toward other appreciators in our aesthetic conduct. I conclude in §6.

**§2. The Basic Contours of Aesthetic Humility, Aesthetic Arrogance, and Aesthetic Servility**

Since Kant does not explicitly address the topics of aesthetic humility, aesthetic arrogance, and aesthetic servility, let me say a bit more about how I am conceiving of them.[[18]](#footnote-18) Here, I focus on aesthetic humility, arrogance, and servility as virtues and vices of appreciation, setting aside questions about what role they might play in other aesthetic activities, like artistic creation, criticism, or curation. More specifically, I define aesthetic humility as a virtue in the sense of being a character trait of a virtuous aesthetic appreciator.[[19]](#footnote-19) I understand this virtue to be aesthetic insofar as it is motivated by a concern for aesthetic value and responding appropriately to aesthetic value in one’s appreciative activities, for example, making aesthetic judgments on the basis of aesthetic, rather than non-aesthetic reasons.[[20]](#footnote-20) And I take it that, qua an aesthetic virtue, we have aesthetic cause to care about aesthetic humility to the extent that its possession, or lack thereof, affects our dispositions to respond appropriately to aesthetic value in appreciation.

Furthermore, aesthetic humility, as I understand it, is an aesthetic species of humility. As such, aesthetic humility has the structure of humility in general. I take the basic structure of humility to involve attitudes that are directed both towards oneself, including towards one’s weaknesses and strengths, and toward others.[[21]](#footnote-21) I thus organize the following discussion around an analysis of how these self- and other-directed attitudes are realized in the aesthetic case.

In a broadly Aristotelian spirit, I also conceive of humility in general as a virtue that serves as a corrective for two vices: arrogance and servility.[[22]](#footnote-22) I thus regard the aesthetic species of humility as a virtue that serves as a corrective for the vices of aesthetic arrogance and aesthetic servility. As I am defining it, aesthetic arrogance involves an unjustifiably high regard for one’s own taste and aesthetic judgments and an unjustifiably low regard for those of others, and is often manifest in haughty and contemptuous behavior. Aesthetic servility, by contrast, involves an unjustifiably low regard for one’s own taste and aesthetic judgments and an unjustifiably high regard of those of others, and is often manifest in people being overly timid or deferential in matters of taste. I take concerns about servility to be especially pressing when we consider the harmful ways in which arrogant conduct might encourage timidity and deference in those on the receiving end.[[23]](#footnote-23) And I regard aesthetic humility as a virtue that involves self- and other-directed attitudes that promise to serve as a corrective for these aesthetic vices.

Finally, by my lights, the aesthetic species of humility warrants its own treatment on account of certain features that it possesses in virtue of being operative in the aesthetic domain. According to one prevalent line of thought about the aesthetic domain, unlike in the moral and intellectual domains where we can appeal to principles or rules when making judgments, there are no such principles or rules of taste that we can appeal to when making aesthetic judgments.[[24]](#footnote-24) Instead, we are left to make our aesthetic judgments on the basis of our aesthetic response to an object. And I take it that this distinguishing aspect of the aesthetic domain has implications for the aesthetic species of humility, which motivate an independent discussion of it. For one thing, as I discuss below, this reliance on our aesthetic responses, rather than on principles or rules, gives rise to certain aesthetic limitations and aesthetic capacities that the aesthetically humble person needs to be attentive to. Moreover, this emphasis on aesthetic responses makes being humble particularly difficult in the aesthetic domain. For given this emphasis, it is tempting to either arrogantly over-value our own responses and dismiss those of others or to servilely balk at assigning our responses such significance and become overly deferential to others as a result. Being humble in the aesthetic domain thus seems to pose a unique challenge: how can we be humble, rather than arrogant or servile, in our appreciative activities, while also according to our aesthetic responses this distinctive weight?

With this basic picture in place, I shall now turn to my argument that Kant’s aesthetics provides an illuminating model of aesthetic humility, aesthetic arrogance, and aesthetic servility so construed. By my lights, the Kantian model of aesthetic humility is a promising starting point insofar as it sheds light not only on the self- and other-directed attitudes it involves, but also on why the aesthetic species of humility merits independent attention. More specifically, I contend that his account points toward two self-directed attitudes that aesthetic humility involves. The first self-directed attitude pertains to acknowledging one’s aesthetic limitations and the second concerns owning the capacities that one nevertheless possesses that enable one to make judgments of the beautiful. Meanwhile, in an other-directed vein, I claim that the Kantian view requires that the aesthetically humble person respect and esteem the value of other aesthetic appreciators and act responsibly toward others in their aesthetic conduct. Though not all aspects of these attitudes are distinctively aesthetic, I trace the ones that are back to Kant’s account of the uniqueness of the aesthetic domain, qua a domain in which we have to make judgments on the basis of pleasure and reflection, without the aid of objective rules or principles. And over the course of this discussion, I hope to bring to light the ways in which this set of self- and other-directed attitudes serve as correctives for the vices of aesthetic arrogance and aesthetic servility.

**§3. Acknowledging Aesthetic Limitations**

In this section, I explore the idea that aesthetic humility involves us acknowledging our aesthetic limitations. Many aesthetic limitations vary from person to person: while one person might be particularly insensitive to natural beauties, another might be particularly poor at appreciating poetry. However, in what follows I shall restrict my focus to what it might mean to acknowledge two aesthetic limitations that Kant claims all appreciators share, which I shall refer to as ‘aesthetic fallibility’ and ‘aesthetic egoism’. After discussing what each of these limitations amounts to and why they pose a distinctive challenge in the aesthetic domain, I then turn to what it means to acknowledge them within the Kantian framework.

**3.1. Aesthetic Fallibility**

By ‘aesthetic fallibility’ in the Kantian framework I have in mind the tendency to make aesthetic mistakes in which we erroneously make a judgment of the beautiful because we misunderstand what sort of pleasure we are feeling in response to an object.[[25]](#footnote-25) According to Kant, in order to ‘correctly’ make a judgment of the beautiful, we must base our judgment on pleasure of a certain sort (CPJ 5:237). If the pleasure we feel is of a different sort, then it is ‘incorrect’ to judge something to be beautiful (CPJ 5:290n). An aesthetic mistake on the Kantian account thus amounts to making a judgment of the beautiful when we do not feel the requisite pleasure and fail to grasp that this is the case.

In more detail, on Kant’s view, all aesthetic judgments have their basis in pleasure (CPJ §1). And he distinguishes between three different types of aesthetic judgments, judgments of the beautiful, agreeable, and good, on the basis of the sort of pleasure they involve. In judgments of the agreeable and good he argues that the pleasure we feel has its basis in an ‘interest’, that is, in a ‘desire’ we have for the ‘existence’ of an object (CPJ 5:204). In a judgment of the agreeable, he claims that our pleasure is tied to an interest we have in objects that satisfy our sensible penchants and preferences (CPJ 5:210). For example, I might judge a red shirt to be agreeable because I take pleasure in it given a personal penchant I have for the color red. Meanwhile, in a judgment of the good, Kant maintains that our pleasure is connected to an interest we have in objects measuring up to our concept of what they are ‘supposed to be’ (CPJ 5:207). For example, I might judge a pencil to be good because I take pleasure in it as something that lives up to my concept of how pencils are supposed to be.

In judgments of the beautiful, by contrast, Kant argues that the pleasure we feel is not tethered to any interest. In his words,

One only wants to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me, however indifferent I might be with regard to the existence of the object of this representation.... Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial.... One must not be in the least biased in favor of the existence of the thing but must be entirely indifferent in this respect in order to play the judge in matters of taste. (CPJ 5:205)

In the Second Moment of Taste, Kant further clarifies that in lieu of any interest, our disinterested pleasure in the beautiful has its basis in the so-called ‘free play’ of the cognitive capacities of imagination and understanding (CPJ §9). In general, Kant attributes to imagination the cognitive activity of ‘composing’, that is, spatially or temporally organizing, what we sense, and to understanding the cognitive activity of ‘unifying’ what we sense in thought (CPJ 5:217). And, on his view, unlike in ordinary cognition where these activities are ‘restricted’ by a ‘determinate concept’, in free play this imaginative composition and intellectual unification is not so-restricted (CPJ 5:217). And it is this free and playful exercise of our imagination and understanding that he identifies as the source of the disinterested pleasure that we feel in the beautiful.

For Kant, then, in order to correctly make a judgment of the beautiful, the pleasure that we feel in response to an object must be the disinterested sort of pleasure that has its basis in free play. If it is, instead, a pleasure that has its basis in an interest tied to a sensible preferences or to concepts, then it would be an aesthetic mistake to judge the object to be beautiful. Suppose, for example, I feel pleasure when I look at a red protea and judge it to be beautiful. If the pleasure I feel has its source not in the free play of my imagination and understanding, but rather in my penchant for red, and I fail to grasp this, then I have made an aesthetic mistake in judging it to be beautiful.

According to Kant, we often make aesthetic mistakes of this sort. In this spirit, he says,

[the aesthetic judge] promises himself the assent of everyone: a claim which he would also be justified in making under these conditions, if only he were not often to offend against them and thereby make an erroneous judgment of taste. (CPJ 5:216)

In a similar vein in the Deduction, he argues that certain ‘unavoidable difficulties’ arise when we try to correctly make judgments of the beautiful (CPJ 5:291). For Kant, these ‘offenses’ and ‘difficulties’ stem from a particular challenge involved in making judgments of taste. Recall that, on Kant’s view, there are no objective principles or rules that we can appeal to when making judgments of taste (CPJ 5:231, 285-6). And he takes this to be an important way in which these judgments differ from moral or cognitive judgments in which we can rely on such principles or rules. In the absence of any such principles or rules, Kant claims that we are left to correctly make our judgments of taste on the basis of a feeling of pleasure and a reflective grasp of that pleasure as of the requisite sort. For example, in order to correctly judge that a protea is beautiful, I cannot appeal to any general principle, like proteas are beautiful. I must, instead, feel the requisite pleasure and reflectively grasp that my pleasure is of the disinterested, free play-induced sort. However, Kant claims that our reflective grasp of what motivates our pleasure is often ‘deceptive’ (CPJ 5:291).[[26]](#footnote-26) Though Kant takes this to be a general truth about reflection on hedonic motivation, the reason he thinks it is bound up with ‘unavoidable difficulties’ in the aesthetic domain is because this reflective grasp is precisely what we must rely on when making a judgment of taste in the absence of objective principles or rules of taste. For Kant, then, aesthetic fallibility is a limitation that results from a general tendency to be mistaken in our reflection about what motivates our pleasure coupled with the fact that given the distinctive nature of judgments of taste, we must rely on such reflection.

**3.2. Aesthetic Egoism**

The second aesthetic limitation that Kant emphasizes is aesthetic egoism. Kant defines egoism, in general, as treating oneself as the only relevant ‘touchstone’ in cognitive, practical, and aesthetic matters (see Anth. 7:128-30). The egoist thus takes their own judgments or standpoint to set the standard for what is true, good, or beautiful, refusing or resisting input from others. Kant, moreover, argues that egoism is a position that we naturally default into: ‘From the day that the human being begins to speak by means of ‘I’, he brings his beloved self to light wherever he is permitted to, and egoism progresses unchecked’ (Anth. 7:128).

About the aesthetic species of egoism, Kant says,

The aesthetic egoist is satisfied with his own taste, even if others find his verses, paintings, music, and similar things ever so bad, and criticize or even laugh at them. He deprives himself of progress toward that which is better when he isolates himself with his own judgment; he applauds himself and seeks the touchstone of artistic beauty only in himself. (Anth. 7:129-30)[[27]](#footnote-27)

Here, Kant describes aesthetic egoism as the tendency to mistakenly treat one’s private aesthetic judgments or taste as the only ‘touchstone’ of beauty. Note that aesthetic egoism appears to build in the sort of assumption of aesthetic hierarchy that aesthetic arrogance involves: the aesthetic judge regards her judgments and taste as superior and that of others inferior. For Kant, then, one of our shared aesthetic limitations is the fact that the arrogance of aesthetic egoism is our natural aesthetic starting point.

Note also that although Kant thinks egoism is pervasive in all domains, the fact that there are no objective principles or rules likely compounds aesthetic egoism. For unlike in the moral and cognitive domains where appeals to such principles and rules can put a check on egoism and arrogance, in the aesthetic domain we are beholden to our hedonic responses in a way that makes egoism and arrogance especially gripping.

**3.3. Acknowledging Aesthetic Limitations**

So, what might it mean to acknowledge these shared aesthetic limitations on the Kantian view?[[28]](#footnote-28) Though there are various cognitive, affective, volitional, and behavioral responses that are consistent with acknowledging limitations on the Kantian view, the response that Kant himself devotes the most attention to is reflection. *Per* Kant the fact that we tend to make aesthetic mistakes and egoistically privilege our standpoint in matters of taste gives us reason to be more reflective in our aesthetic endeavors.[[29]](#footnote-29) More specifically, Kant identifies the relevant reflective capacity as the capacity of ‘common sense’. And what I shall argue is that on the Kantian model of aesthetic humility we acknowledge the limitations of aesthetic fallibility and aesthetic egoism by exercising and cultivating the capacity of common sense.

A few words are thus in order about how Kant understands the capacity of common sense. In §40, ‘On taste as a kind of *sensus communis*’, Kant defines common sense as follows:

By ‘*sensus* ***communis***,’ however, must be understood the idea of a communal sense [*gemeinschaftlichen Sinnes*], i.e., a faculty for judging [*Beurtheilungsvermögen*] that in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else’s way of representing in thought…. [T]his happens by one holding his judgment up not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgments of others, and putting himself into the position of everyone else, merely by abstracting from the limitations that contingently attach to our own judging [*Beurtheilung*]. (CPJ 5:294)[[30]](#footnote-30)

I take Kant’s basic idea to be that common sense involves a capacity for reflecting on the grounds of one’s judgments from a universal point of view.[[31]](#footnote-31) However, as the title of §40 suggests, in this passage Kant is particularly interested in the aesthetic species of common sense at issue in taste.[[32]](#footnote-32) For Kant, this aesthetic species of common sense involves the capacity for reflecting on the hedonic grounds of one’s aesthetic judgments from a universal point of view. And this capacity is responsible for our reflective grasp of whether the pleasure we feel is one we can share in ‘common’ with others, hence is of the disinterested sort that has its source in free play, or not (CPJ 5:217-8). Indeed, on Kant’s view, aesthetic common sense is precisely what we must rely on in lieu of objective principles or rules when attempting to correctly make judgments of taste.

According to Kant, exercising aesthetic common sense involves trying to ‘abstract from’ our private standpoint and to project into a ‘universal standpoint’ from which we reflect on the hedonic grounds of our aesthetic judgments (CPJ 5:295). More specifically, from the universal standpoint, Kant thinks we reflect on whether the pleasure we feel is one anyone who shares our cognitive capacities could feel in response to the object or is the result of certain ‘contingent’ features of us. As Kant indicates in the above passage, exercising common sense is not a matter of considering the ‘actual’ response of others. I understand this to mean that it is not a descriptive activity in which we either consider how people have, in fact, responded or predict how people will, in fact, respond. Instead, Kant conceives of the relevant reflective activity as one in which we consider whether anyone who shares our cognitive capacities has reason to respond to the object with free play and disinterested pleasure. And, on Kant’s view, exercising the aesthetic capacity of common sense in this way promises us a more accurate reflective grasp on the ultimate source of our pleasure and whether it is shareable or not.

As I see it, the exercise and cultivation of the aesthetic capacity of common sense are two paradigmatically Kantian ways in which we can acknowledge our aesthetic limitations of aesthetic fallibility and aesthetic egoism. Let’s begin with the point about exercising common sense. Recognizing the need to exercise common sense, rather than rushing to judgment as soon as we feel pleasure, is one way to acknowledge the fact that we tend to make aesthetic mistakes and arrogantly privilege our private standpoint. Exercising common sense is a way of acknowledging our aesthetic fallibility because it involves trying to avoid aesthetic mistakes by taking the reflective measures at our disposal to better grasp what sort of pleasure we feel. It is also a way of acknowledging our aesthetic egoism because it involves us taking reflective steps to avoid our default tendency to privilege our private standpoint and to arrogantly treat ourselves as the only relevant aesthetic ‘touchstone’ when making judgments of taste. By exercising common sense, we acknowledge this egotistical, arrogant default and the contingencies it brings with it, by making an effort to adopt a standpoint that can reveal those defaults and contingencies to us.

However, in addition to exercising common sense, we can acknowledge these limitations by striving to cultivate our aesthetic capacity of common sense through activities that need not involve making judgments of the beautiful. Indeed, given Kant’s claim that reflection on hedonic motivation is often deceptive, we have reason to regard the cultivation of the capacity of common sense as crucial on his view. This cultivation might take shape in a recognition of the need to pursue an aesthetic education as a means for developing common sense and, hence as preparation for attempts to make judgments of the beautiful.[[33]](#footnote-33) It might also manifest in an effort to better understand what sort of ‘contingencies’ influence the pleasure we feel and our reflection on that pleasure in aesthetic contexts. Some of these contingencies will likely attach to our personal preferences and predilections in aesthetic matters. But some of them will likely turn on the way in which our aesthetic endeavors are influenced by prejudices of a racist, misogynist, or classist sort.[[34]](#footnote-34) Insofar as this is the case, one way we can cultivate our common sense is by developing a better understanding of how our personal preferences and reflective patterns develop and are prejudicially influenced, for example, through self-reflection or by reading psychological, sociological, or historical studies on these issues.[[35]](#footnote-35) In another vein, we might attempt to get better at reflectively ‘putting [ourselves] into the position of everyone else’ by engaging with the aesthetic experience of other people (CPJ 5:294). For example, by inviting friends to have aesthetic experiences with us, reading criticism, or attending gallery talks, we can develop a better facility with aesthetic standpoints other than our own. At the very least, this can help us learn how to step outside our own ‘bracketed’ standpoint, but it may also aid us in learning how to project into a universal standpoint (CPJ 5:295). By pursuing an aesthetic education, seeking a better understanding of the personal and social contingencies that might influence us, and sharing aesthetic experience with others, aesthetically humble appreciators can cultivate the aesthetic capacity for common sense in a way that involves acknowledging their aesthetic fallibility and aesthetic egoism.

For Kant, then, the exercise and cultivation of aesthetic common sense are two ways we can try and acknowledge our aesthetic limitations in an effort to become better at making judgments of taste. Though there may be other ways to acknowledge our aesthetic limitations, it is important to note one response to our limitations that is not consistent with Kantian aesthetic humility: giving up on the attempt to make judgments of the beautiful altogether because we think we are incapable of making them. Such an attitude would amount to a kind of aesthetic servility.[[36]](#footnote-36) However, I claimed earlier that aesthetic humility serves as a corrective for this this sort of unjustifiably low regard of one’s aesthetic capability.[[37]](#footnote-37) So, in order to continue filling out the Kantian account of aesthetic humility, I need to turn to the way it involves a positive grasp of the capacities that enable us to make judgments of the beautiful.

**§4. Owning One’s Capacities as an Appreciator**

On Kant’s view, there are certain capacities that all human beings possess that enable them to make judgments of the beautiful. In the Four Moments of Taste, he highlights two sets of capacities in particular: the capacities of imagination and understanding and the aesthetic capacity of common sense. And I shall argue that on the Kantian model of aesthetic humility, owning these capacities serves as a corrective for the sort of servility we might be tempted to feel given our aesthetic limitations, while at the same time guarding against arrogance.

As I discussed above, in the Second Moment of Taste, Kant argues that the pleasure that we feel in the beautiful has its source in the free play of our imagination and understanding. Kant characterizes these capacities as capacities of ‘cognition in general’ that all human beings possess in virtue of being capable of cognition (CPJ 5:217, see also 292). Indeed, one of Kant’s central claims is that it is because the pleasure we feel in the beautiful is grounded in the free play of these universally shared capacities that this pleasure is ‘universally communicable’ (CPJ 5:218). For Kant, then, part of what makes us all capable of judgments of the beautiful is the fact that we are cognizers who possess the basic capacities of imagination and understanding.

Meanwhile, in the Fourth Moment of Taste, Kant singles out common sense as a capacity that we have reason to ‘presuppose’ in human beings that also enables us to make judgments of the beautiful.[[38]](#footnote-38) As we have seen, according to Kant, the aesthetic species of common sense is a reflective capacity that enables us to grasp whether our pleasure is the universally shareable sort required for judgments of the beautiful or not. And insofar as we are all capable of aesthetic common sense, Kant takes us to be capable of engaging in the sort of reflection on our pleasure required to make a judgment of the beautiful.

For Kant, then, all human beings are able to make judgments of the beautiful, in part, because they share the same basic cognitive capacities and are capable of the aesthetic capacity of common sense. And I take owning these capacities in ourselves to be something that Kant’s model of aesthetic humility calls for us to do as a way of correcting for the vices of aesthetic servility and arrogance. Beginning with the curb on servility, when we own these capacities we recognize that, for all our aesthetic limitations, in virtue of being a human being, we have the capacities that enable us to make judgments of beautiful.[[39]](#footnote-39) This sort of aesthetic self-esteem, moreover, promises to serve as corrective in scenarios where this timidity or diffidence has been the result of humiliation, intimidation, or oppression perpetuated by the aesthetically arrogant. Being attentive to these capacities can also serve as a corrective to arrogance because they are not the purview of some subset of human beings; they are capacities we are all capable of qua human beings.[[40]](#footnote-40) Owning these capacities can thus help curtail someone’s arrogant tendency to assume that they are in the unique possession of some superior set of capacities that position them to be the ‘touchstone’ in matters of taste.

So far, I have considered two self-directed attitudes that the Kantian model of aesthetic humility involves: acknowledging one’s aesthetic limitations of aesthetic fallibility and egoism and owning the basic human capacities that one nevertheless has that enable one to make a judgment of the beautiful. However, in addition to these self-directed attitudes, I have claimed that aesthetic humility involves adopting appropriate attitudes towards others as well. And it is to this other-directed component of Kantian aesthetic humility that I shall now turn.

**§5. Appropriate Attitudes Toward Other Aesthetic Appreciators**

In this section I shall explore three other-directed attitudes that I take the Kantian view of aesthetic humility to involve. The first two concern how we regard other aesthetic appreciators, and the third concerns how we can act responsibly toward them by holding ourselves accountable to certain standards before we lay claim to their agreement in the aesthetic domain.

The first attitude that I take the humble Kantian appreciator to direct towards others is the moral attitude of respect. On Kant’s view, we have a moral duty to show respect to other persons in all of our interactions with them, aesthetic interactions included. And Kant explicitly condemns arrogance as something that violates this moral duty:

*Arrogance* [*Hochmuth*] (*superbia* and, as this word expresses it, the inclination to be always *on top*) is a kind of ambition (*ambitio*) in which we demand that others think little of themselves in comparison with us…. [A]rrogance demands from others a respect it denies them.... [The arrogant] thinks he is entitled to treat [others] with contempt. It is obvious that this is *unjust*. (MM 6:465; see also Anth. 7:272)

According to Kant, an arrogant person demands that others respect her, but fails to show respect to them. In so doing, Kant claims that the arrogant person treats others as ‘worthless’ and fails to acknowledge that they have ‘*dignity* (*dignitas*)..., that is, ... a worth that has no price’ (MM 6:462). From the perspective of Kant’s moral philosophy, then, we have a moral duty to respect other persons, a duty that extends to our engagement with them in an aesthetic domain. And part of the aesthetically arrogant person’s failure is that they, whether for reasons of personal haughtiness or racist, misogynist, or classist prejudices, morally fail to respect the dignity of others. An aesthetically humble person, by contrast, would respect her aesthetic interlocutors.

However, on the Kantian view of aesthetic humility, we do not just owe other aesthetic appreciators respect as moral persons, Kant also suggests that there is a kind of ‘esteem’ that we should direct toward others, qua aesthetic appreciators. This emerges in §59 of the third *Critique*, where he explicitly argues that judgments of the beautiful are like moral judgments, in part, because they both involve recognizing the value of others. To this end, he claims that in moral judgments and judgments of the beautiful,

[we are] aware of a certain ennoblement and elevation above the mere receptivity for a pleasure from sensible impressions, and also esteem the value of others in accordance with a similar maxim of their power of judgment. (CPJ 5:353)

I understand Kant’s basic thought to be that in both sorts of judgments, we ‘esteem the value of others’ because we recognize in them certain capacities that ‘ennoble’ and ‘elevate’ them above ‘mere receptivity’. In the moral case, this turns on a recognition that human beings are not just passively determined by inclination, but have certain moral capacities that ‘ennoble’ and ‘elevate’ them; hence making them worthy of respect. In the aesthetic case, we recognize that in the hedonic sphere, human beings are not just passively determined by their interests and desires, but have capacities, like imagination, understanding, and common sense, that enable them to have a ‘free’ kind of pleasure and to make judgments of the beautiful (CPJ 5:210). And it is in virtue of these ‘ennobled’ and ‘elevated’ capacities that Kant thinks we have reason to ‘esteem the value’ of others as aesthetic appreciators. Insofar as this is the case, on Kant’s view, the aesthetically humble person is someone who not only shows moral respect to others qua persons, but also esteems the value of others qua aesthetic appreciators.

Though respect and esteem for others are an important component of the Kantian model of aesthetic humility, there is a further other-directed element of this model that I want to bring out, which turns on us acting responsibly toward other appreciators by acknowledging that we are only licensed in laying claim to their aesthetic agreement if we have met certain standards ourselves.[[41]](#footnote-41) On Kant’s view, you are not licensed in demanding aesthetic agreement from others simply because you feel pleasure.[[42]](#footnote-42) However, as we have also seen, he does not think that there are objective principles or rules that you can appeal to in issuing this demand, as you can in moral and cognitive cases. In the aesthetic case, he maintains that you can only ‘rightly’ demand agreement of others if the pleasure you feel is the disinterested sort generated through free play and if you reflectively grasp this is the case through an exercise of common sense. As he makes this point about having the requisite pleasure,

someone who feels pleasure in mere reflection on the form of the object… *rightly* makes claim to the assent of everyone else… since the ground for this pleasure is to be found in the universal… condition…, namely the purposive correspondence of an object… with the relationship of the cognitive faculties among themselves (of the imagination and the understanding). (CPJ 5:191, my emphasis)

And with regard to aesthetic common sense, Kant claims that it is a ‘condition’ and ‘presupposition’ of being able to ‘*rightfully* make a judgment… into a rule for everyone’ (CPJ 5:239, my emphasis). To return to the protea example once more, a judge can only be licensed in demanding that others agree with her judgment, ‘This protea is beautiful’, if she feels the requisite disinterested, free play-induced pleasure and reflectively grasps this through common sense. If she fails to meet these conditions, but still demands agreement, out of arrogance perhaps, then she is doing something unjustified and illegitimate from the Kantian perspective. On Kant’s view, then, in order to proceed in a legitimate fashion, an appreciator needs to show a kind of appropriate regard for other appreciators by recognizing that in order to be able to rightfully demand their aesthetic agreement she must first meet certain demands herself.

Aesthetic humility in the Kantian framework thus involves showing a proper attitude toward others not only by respecting and esteeming them, but also by holding ourselves to certain standards as a pre-requisite for laying claim to their aesthetic agreement. And I take these other-regarding attitudes to be something that the Kantian model of aesthetic humility requires over and above the self-regarding attitudes I discussed earlier, which are needed to fully correct for the tendencies toward either aesthetic arrogance or servility. For when we respect others as moral persons, esteem others as aesthetic appreciators, and recognize that we can only rightfully place aesthetic demands on others if we first meet demands ourselves, we humbly come to see other aesthetic appreciators as neither unjustifiably inferior nor superior to us, but as equally capable in matters of taste.

**§6. Conclusion**

Though the virtue of aesthetic humility has received little attention, it has an important role to play in aesthetic appreciation. Without aesthetic humility, we run the risk of being either arrogant, overbearing, and denigrating or servile, timid, and diffident in our aesthetic pursuits. But with aesthetic humility, we find ways to be honest with ourselves about our limitations and prospects as appreciators and to be responsible in how we interact with other appreciators.

In order to begin filling in the aesthetic gap in our treatment of humility, I have argued that, as unlikely as it may initially seem, Kant’s aesthetics is a valuable resource to draw on. Indeed, I have made the case that in spite of the concern that his aesthetics promotes arrogance, a closer look reveals that his view provides a promising model for analyzing the virtue of aesthetic humility, as well as the opposing vices of aesthetic arrogance and servility. To this end, I have explored a Kantian model of aesthetic humility as a virtue that involves three components: acknowledging the aesthetic limitations we all share as aesthetic appreciators, owning the basic human capacities we all have that enable us to make judgments of the beautiful, and respecting, esteeming, and responsibly engaging with others in our aesthetic endeavors. I have also stressed the distinctively aesthetic dimensions and challenges involved in aesthetic humility in light of Kant’s analysis of the uniqueness of the aesthetic domain, qua a domain in which we cannot rely on objective rules or principles, but must instead rely on our pleasure and reflection when making judgments of taste. I have, moreover, argued that this complex of self- and other-directed attitudes can serve to correct the overly high regard for oneself and low regard for others that the aesthetically arrogant person has, and the overly low regard for oneself and high regard for others that marks the aesthetically servile. For these various reasons, I submit that the Kantian model is a promising starting point for understanding what the aesthetic species of humility is, how we can steer between aesthetic arrogance and servility, and how to aspire to become appreciators who proceed in a careful way, sensitive to what we owe ourselves and others in matters of taste.[[43]](#footnote-43)

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1. To note a few examples, in the *Routledge Handbook to the Philosophy of Humility* there is no entry devoted to the topic of aesthetic humility and it appears to be mentioned only once in a footnote in Metz (2021: 265n1). There is also no mention of aesthetic humility in the overview of humility offered by Bommarito (2018) and Snow (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Woodruff (2001), Goldie (2007; 2008; 2010), Lopes (2008; 2018: 214-16), Kieran (2010; 2011; 2012; 2014a; 2014b), Hills (2018; 2020), Pouivet (2018), and Roberts (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Pouivet makes this explicit, arguing that virtue aesthetics is ‘a break with… the aesthetics inherited from Kant… [which] emphasize[s] the notion of *experience*’ (2018: 365; see also §2). This seems implicit in Goldie’s (2010: 830) distancing of virtue aesthetics from an aesthetics that focuses on the conditions of appreciation and occurrent psychological states of an individual, including her judgments and pleasures. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. References to Kant are to the volume and page of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*. Anth: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*; CPJ: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*; MM: *Metaphysics of Morals*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This is the upshot of the Second Moment of Taste. Kant pursues a similar line of thought in the Fourth Moment, where he seeks to establish that judgments of the beautiful involve ‘subjective necessity’ and claim to be ‘exemplary’ for ‘all’ (CPJ 5:237). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See also Nanay who says, ‘politely and in awe of the intellectual achievement of Kant’s philosophy’ that Kant’s universalist position is ‘one of the most arrogant ideas in the history of aesthetics’, and who suggests that aesthetic humility, defined as ‘thinking about just how contingent our own position and cultural background is compared to the vast diversity of cultures’, is needed instead (2019: 63, see also 69-71, 104-105). See also Nehamas (2017: 79-80, 84) for concerns over the Kantian aesthetic judge’s ‘contemptuous’ attitude and thought that those who disagree are ‘slightly defective’. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. I have chosen an example of a flower because it is arguably one of the simplest cases of a ‘free beauty’ (CPJ 5:229). Feel free to insert another one of Kant’s examples, like a bird, a marine crustacean, a design *à la grecque*, foliage on a border or on wallpaper, or a musical fantasia (CPJ 5:229). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Roelofs (2014: 36-7) for overt racism in ‘Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime’ (1764) and the implicit racism in Kant’s account of the allegedly ‘barbaric’ nature of the taste of non-white persons at CPJ 5:204, 223, 297. See Hoffman (2016) for the racist underpinnings of Kant’s ‘ideal’ of beauty in CPJ §17. See Armstrong (1996) for racism in Kant’s account of the sublime in ‘Observations’. See Hall (1997) for the argument that Kant’s account of common sense in the third *Critique* involves colonialist presuppositions of violence and conquest. See Bindman (2002: ch.3) for the connections between Kant’s theory of race and his aesthetics. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See Kneller (1993) for misogyny in the third *Critique* and *Anthropology*. See Battersby (1995), Armstrong (1996), and Klinger (1995) for misogyny in Kant’s theory of the sublime. See Wiseman (1993) for misogyny in ‘Observations’. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See Bourdieu for a (1984) classic defense of this. See also Shusterman (1989), Wynter (1992: 248-51), Wolff (1993), Korsemeyer (1998: 150), and Roelofs (2014: 37). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This said, a Kantian approach will certainly differ from Goldie’s (2007; 2008; 2010) Neo-Aristotelian approach to aesthetic virtue as oriented to the fundamental value of well-being and as involving habit (see Kant’s claim that virtue is distinct from habit at MM 6:407, 409, 383-4). I take it to be more of an open question how Kant’s approach would relate to Neo-Moorean approaches, which treat aesthetic virtue as oriented toward the fundamental value of aesthetic value (see Lopes 2008 and Hills 2018; 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Lopes (2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. See Woodruff (2001: 28) and Kieran (2013: 28-30; 2014a; 2014b). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See Woodruff (2001: 29), Kieran (2011: 42), and Wilson (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. See Kieran (2011: 41-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Kieran (2010) and Patridge (2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Although I am sympathetic to the ‘limitations-owning’ account of intellectual humility defended by Whitcomb et al. (2017), I find it more natural to use the language of ‘owning’ to refer to the humble person’s attitude toward their strengths and ‘acknowledging’ for their attitude toward their limitations. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Kant does touch on the topic of humility in his moral writings, for example, in the *Metaphysics of Morals* and in his ethics lectures (see MM 6:435 and the Herder lectures 27:39-41, Collins lectures 27:348-50, and Vigilantius lectures 27:609-11 collected in *Lectures on Ethics*). For discussion of Kant’s theory of moral humility, see Dillon (2004; 2015; 2021), Grenberg (2005), and Louden (2007). However, insofar as I conceive of aesthetic humility as an aesthetic virtue, I am not defining it as a virtue in Kant’s technical terms as something pertaining to ‘moral strength of will’ (MM 6:405). And I here set aside the question of whether and how a Kantian approach to aesthetic virtue would account for the ‘unity’ of moral, aesthetic, and (perhaps) cognitive virtue. See Goldie (2007: 383-4; 2010: §4.2), Gomes (2009), Kieran (2014a: §5), and Hills (2018: §IV) for discussion of the unity of aesthetic and moral virtue. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In treating aesthetic humility as a trait of character, I am conceiving of it as a ‘trait’ virtue that a responsible aesthetic agent has, rather than a ‘faculty’ view that a reliable aesthetic agent has (see Roberts 2018 for this distinction). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. I take this aspect of my account to be in the spirit of the general accounts of aesthetic virtue defended by Woodruff (2001); Goldie (2007), (2008), (2010); Kieran (2011), (2013); Roberts (2018); and Hills (2018), (2020). Woodruff (2001) and Goldie (2010) explicitly model this account of aesthetic virtue on Zagzebski’s (1996) model of intellectual virtue. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. There is debate in the contemporary literature about whether humility is constituted by self-directed attitudes (see Driver 1989; 2001, Roberts and Wood 2007, Garcia 2006, Whitcomb et al. 2017, and Hazlett 2021), other-directed attitudes (see Priest 2017, and Pritchard 2019; 2020), or by both self- and other-directed attitudes (see Snow 1995, Sinha 2012, Samuelson and Church 2015, Nadelhoffer and Wright 2017, and Tanesini 2021). My approach to aesthetic humility falls in this third camp. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For other analyses of humility as a virtue that serves as a corrective to opposing vices, see Hurka (2001): 110, Roberts and Wood (2007), Church (2016), Tanesini (2016), Whitcomb, et al. (2017): 516-17, Kallestrup and Pritchard (2017), Hazlett (2021). Kant also proceeds in this fashion in his discussion of moral humility (see MS 6:435, Herder 27:39-41, Collins 27:348-50, V 27:609-11) (see Dillon (2021): §5.2 for discussion). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Tanisni (2016: §III; 2018) discusses how the intimidation, humiliation, and silencing perpetuated by the intellectually arrogant causes harm to those on the receiving end by increasing the likelihood of them being timid or servile. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. In Kant’s language, there are no ‘objective’ rules or principles of taste. Or in Sibley’s terms, the application of aesthetic concepts is not ‘condition- or rule-governed’ (1959: 435). See also Isenberg (1949) and Mothersill (1984) for classic formulations of this. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Kant has much less to say about cases in which we fail to feel pleasure in something that deserves it (see CPJ 5:284), so I shall set these sorts of aesthetic mistakes aside. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. As Guyer nicely puts it, on Kant’s view, our aesthetic errors are tied to the ‘opacity of pleasure’ and the recognition that ‘it is often so hard to sort out our pleasures with respect to the different perceptual, conceptual, emotional, and ideological routes by which they arise’ (1997: 105; see also 182-3, 278-9, 292). See Kieran (2011: 36) for a similar point. For a recent discussion of Kant’s account of the opacity of aesthetic judgment, see Russell (ms). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. This example is reminiscent of the young poet example that Kant offers at CPJ 5:282. For a lengthier discussion of the young poet example and the role egoism plays in it, see Matherne (2019), (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. As noted above, although I use language of ‘acknowledging’ limitations rather than ‘owning’ them, I am sympathetic to the ‘limitations-owning’ account of intellectual humility from Whitcomb, et al (2017) and, especially, to their idea that the humble person should not just pay attention to their limitations, but should actively do something to counteract them. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. See Pritchard (2019) for a discussion of the role reflection plays in intellectual humility. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Although I here treat common sense as a capacity, Kant also describes it as a ‘principle’ and ‘feeling’ (see CPJ 5:238-9). For discussion of Kant’s theory of common sense in general, see Guyer (1997): 249–250; Allison (2001): Ch. 7; Longuenesse (2006), Dobe (2010); Cohen (2018), Matherne (2019), and Stoner (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. This general reading of common sense builds on Cohen (2014; 2018). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. This aesthetic reading of common sense builds on Matherne (2019). For the debate over whether Kant distinguishes between two species of common sense, a cognitive and aesthetic species, or acknowledges only one kind of common sense, see Allison (2001): Ch. 7, Dobe (2010), Cohen (2018), and Matherne (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. For more discussion of Kant’s account of the cultivation of common sense through aesthetic education and the corrective this provides for the egoism of the young poet (CPJ §32), see Matherne (2019), (2021). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. In his discussion of common human understanding in §40, Kant does discuss prejudice as something that gives rise to a ‘passive’ way of thinking in which we are not ‘legislative for’ ourselves, and which requires enlightenment to overcome (CPJ 5:294, 294n). The proximity of these remarks to his account of aesthetic common sense, at least, hints that prejudices are relevant in the aesthetic domain as well. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. See, e.g., Kieran (2011) and Nanay (2017) for a discussion of the relevance of psychological studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. I take the despondency about one’s inability to make judgments of the beautiful at all to be different from an acknowledgment that one has not developed the capacities requisite to make judgments about particular domains of the beautiful, e.g., about atonal music. However, this sort of domain-specific acknowledgment is consistent with believing that one is capable of making judgments of the beautiful in some domain or other. It is aesthetic servility marked by a belief that one is incapable of making judgments of the beautiful at all that I am interested in here. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. See, e.g., Church (2016): 421-3, (2017): 1080-1 and Tanesini (2021): 287. Whitcomb, et al (2017) attempt to account for servility in terms of ‘over-owning’ one’s limitations; however, the worry is that unless humility involves an awareness of one’s own strengths, then it cannot serve as a corrective to servility, and one can, therefore, be at once servile and humble. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. There is some question about whether Kant conceives of common sense as something that is ‘natural’ or ‘acquired’ (CPJ 5:240; see Crawford 1974; Savile 1987: 190-1; Guyer 1997: 264–273; Kemal 1997: 62–8, 87–103, 108; Longuenesse 2006; Dobe 2010; and Matherne 2019). Either way, I take it to be the case that Kant conceives of common sense as something all human beings are at least capable of. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Discussing this in the context of fallibility, Allison argues that even though Kant thinks we can never be entirely certain, Kant’s argument establishes that a judgment of the beautiful is ‘attainable by beings such as ourselves’ (2001: 179). Allison (2001): 109-10 and Guyer (1997): 138, 278 also point out that even though Kant thinks that we cannot be absolutely certain what motivates our aesthetic judgments, this is also true in Kant’s account of moral actions. Nevertheless, they both insist that Kant thinks we are still able to capable of moral action, and the same is true in the aesthetic case: even given the opacity of our motivations, we are still capable of judgments of the beautiful. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. I do not mean to deny that the aesthetically humble person might also be aware that she has certain superior aesthetic capacities, for example, an expertise in modernist design or ukiyo-e. My point is that the aesthetic capacities that the humble person should attend to as a corrective for aesthetic arrogance are those that she shares in common with all other human beings. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. It is perhaps also worth pointing out that in order to lay claim to the agreement of others you do not, in fact, have to verbalize a demand that someone else agrees with you. On Kant’s view, the claim to agreement is part of the normative structure of a judgment of taste, which is in place even if the subject makes the judgment in isolation. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Describing an intellectual analogue, Tanesini argues that an intellectually arrogant person assumes that the ‘sheer ‘mine-ness’ of his thought ‘is sufficient in his mind to reassure him that he has the epistemic standing to its content which is required for assertion’ (2018: 84). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. For invaluable feedback on the ideas in this paper, I would like to thank Jay Bernstein, Paul Boghossian, Nic Bommarito, Angela Breitenbach, Alix Cohen, Anil Gomes, Keren Gorodeisky, Jenny Judge, Alex King, Robbie Kubala, Antonia Peacocke, Nick Riggle, Luke Roelofs, Gina Schouten, Susanna Siegel, Andrew Stephenson, Kenny Walden, two anonymous referees, the Editors at *Mind*, and audiences at the Kant Congress, New York German Idealism Workshop, Central APA, Boston Area Kant Colloquium, Aesthetics in the Reasons Revolution Workshop in Edinburgh, Dartmouth Art and Ethics Workshop, Fordham German Aesthetics Workshop, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Philosophie, and NYU. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)