

Beauty and Aesthetic Properties: Taking Inspiration from Kant

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What is the relationship between beauty and aesthetic properties? What is the relationship between the beauty of Richter's Cage 4 painting and its sheering white, gray and red colours? How does the beauty of a still northern lake on a cloudless autumn afternoon stand to the mirror-like quality of the water, its luminous midblue colour and the crisply textured reflections of trees in autumn light?

Philosophers tend to place beauty on a continuum with aesthetic properties, with lists such as the following: graceful, balanced, elegant, garish, powerful, dainty, dumpy ... beautiful. Often the suggestion is made that beauty is a central or paradigm case of an aesthetic property. In one sense, such lists are unobjectionable since whatever the considered view of beauty may turn out to be, it will signify a property of the objects that have it. If beauty is a promise of happiness as Alexander Nehamas suggests for example (cf. Nehamas 2007) – or the object of love as he reminds us Plato holds (cf. *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*) – then Richter's Cage 4 has the property of being a promise of happiness or the object of love. If artistic beauty is the expression of aesthetic ideas by aesthetic attributes, as Kant suggests (cf. CJ), then Richter's Cage 4 has the property of expressing certain aesthetic ideas through its aesthetic attributes. If beauty is a disposition some objects have to elicit pleasure that is open to disagreement (even among 'ideal' critics) so that it does not hold normative force as subjectivists hold, then Richter's Cage 4 has the property of evoking pleasure in some of us that is open to disagreement and lacking normative force.¹

But this sense in which some objects have the property of being beautiful does not give support to the "... " on which philosophical lists trade – it does not support the implicit claim that there is some dimension along which aesthetic properties and beauty lie on a

¹ For subjectivist views of aesthetic properties see Alan Goldman (1995), John W. Bender (1996, 2003).

continuum. On Plato's view aesthetic properties are not the object of love in the same sense as beauty. Only beauty can lead us to recollect its form and pursue knowledge since "beauty alone has this privilege, to be the most clearly visible and the most loved." (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250D). Similarly, aesthetic properties do not themselves promise happiness on Nehamas' view as does the beautiful whole of which they are a part. If artistic beauty is the expression of aesthetic ideas through aesthetic attributes, as Kant suggests, then beauty is not in the same dimension as the aesthetic attributes through which aesthetic ideas are expressed. A subjectivist view of beauty is not enough to place beauty on a continuum with aesthetic properties, since it is not clear that what makes Richter's particular shearing of coloured paint aesthetic is that it elicits pleasure of the same kind as the beauty of the whole.

Listing a few clichéd aesthetic properties with beauty tagging along at the end can be used to voice suspicion of the concept of aesthetic properties or to uphold it. Bence Nanay, for example, suggests that we turn to the more modest or manageable task of trying to understand aesthetically relevant properties by casting doubt on the notion of aesthetic properties, in part, by their very association with the notion of the beautiful since "millennia of hard thinking about the nature of beauty and other aesthetic properties" did not get us "particularly far." (Nanay 2016: 71). On the other hand, Nick Zangwill uses the usual sort of list to support the strong endorsement that aesthetic properties are for the sake of beauty.²

² Nick Zangwill argues that substantive aesthetic properties – such as being dainty or dumpy – determine the beauty or aesthetic value of a work and our substantive aesthetic judgements about such properties are for the sake of understanding the beauty of a work (or our verdictive judgements of the work). "Understanding a work of art is not just a matter of understanding which substantive aesthetic features it has, but of understanding which substantive aesthetic properties determine its aesthetic value. The suggestion is that *the point of substantive judgements* is to describe that which determines aesthetic value. And this is why it is misguided to lose interest in beauty and focus instead on the dainty and the dumpy, or forget about goodness and concentrate instead on robustness or vibrancy. Substantive judgements *have no point except* to describe that which determines merit or demerit. And this is asymmetrical. Beauty is the icing

I suggest that such lists are misleading at best without an account that addresses the relationship between beauty and aesthetic properties. This paper will try to steer a middle course between casting doubt on aesthetic properties through their association with beauty or defending them through that association in the strongest terms as being for the sake of beauty. The discussion here will be restricted to artworks. Moreover, I will focus on beauty and aesthetic properties of artworks that are perceptible, and specifically visual. I will argue that Kant's account of pure judgements of beauty and of the aesthetic attributes of beautiful artworks provide insight into aesthetic properties of artworks more generally.³

The first section of the paper sets the stage by bringing together two core intuitions about aesthetic properties. Aesthetic properties are pleasing – in the sense that encompasses that an artwork that is dissonant or disturbing pleases. Aesthetic properties are experiential and our experience of them is distinctive. I suggest that we bring these core insights together to think about the pleasure that perception of properties can yield; and that to do so, we stop demarcating aesthetic properties from 'simple visual properties' such as colours and contours. The view that any perceptible property may be aesthetic depending on context allows a clearer focus.

The second and third sections draw on Kant's account in *The Critique of Judgement* for inspiration for an account of aesthetic properties. The second section focuses on two parts of Kant's view and the third draws out repercussions for our understanding of aesthetic properties in general. Kant argues that pure aesthetic judgements of beauty are grounded in the free play of the 'powers' of 'imagination and understanding' which yields a distinctive pleasure. Such free play of the faculties allows us to feel that presentations (the work of the imagination) are subsumable within the conditions of concepts (the work of the understanding). This is to feel the nature of the particular perceptual experience – which brings particular presentations within the conditions of thought – and thereby also the

on the aesthetic cake. ... Among aesthetic concepts, beauty is top dog." [my emphases] (Zangwill 1995: 328). See also his (2001).

³ I believe that the approach here can be extended to aesthetic properties of natural objects but the detailed explanation lies beyond the scope of this paper.

nature of experience and its value more generally. With respect to art, Kant argues that the beauty of artworks expresses aesthetic ideas through aesthetic attributes – this is what evokes a free play of imagination and understanding. His view links the attributes of beautiful works with their content. I suggest that Kant’s work can help us appreciate that aesthetic properties of artworks – in general and not only those of beautiful artworks – are integral to conveying the content of a work, and that the pleasure we feel has the potential to make us aware of the experience, its nature and value.

One proviso before we begin. It is important to keep clear that the notion of beauty is different from that of aesthetic value. We make judgements of the aesthetic value of artworks and other objects that are not judgements of beauty, and aesthetic properties can contribute to the aesthetic value of an object without thereby contributing to its beauty. The distinction pops out in artworks that strike us as aesthetically valuable but not beautiful. For example, consider an Andy Warhol silkscreen of Marilyn Monroe in green and orange (from 1967) – many would say that the silkscreen is aesthetically striking and valuable but not beautiful.

1 Aesthetic properties, pleasure and perceptual experience

A core intuition about aesthetic properties is that they are pleasing – in the sense that encompasses that an artwork that is dissonant or disturbing pleases – and that the pleasure lies in apprehending them. This phrasing derives from Mary Mothersill’s use of St Thomas Aquinas’ view that aesthetic properties are those “of which the apprehension in itself pleases” with emphasis that it is “*apprehensio ipsa*” or the “apprehension in itself” that pleases (Mothersill 1984: 321). I want to draw out that insofar as the “apprehension in itself” of a property pleases, it has the potential to make us aware of the apprehension or experience and its value. This can include making us aware of how the experience relates us to its subject matter or to the object. Some examples follow shortly.

But a philosophical way of taking a second core intuition can deflect us from examining the experience of aesthetic properties and its specific pleasure. The intuitive view is that aesthetic properties are closely related to but also somehow different from simple

perceptible properties such as colours and contours that we can ‘just see.’ In part, the intuition is that apprehending aesthetic properties differs from ordinary exercises of our perceptual capacity. One straightforward reason is that we often explain or justify judgements of aesthetic properties by appeal to perceptible properties such as colours and contours – and most works have several colours and contours. To get someone to perceive the aesthetic properties we do, we might point to the way that a work’s colours or contours work together. Arnold Isenberg’s classic example is that one might explain that the four foreground figures of El Greco’s *The Burial of Count Orgaz* are like ‘the contour of a violently rising and falling wave’ by pointing to the work’s colours and contours.⁴

This intuitive point can be taken in a philosophical direction to suggest that there is a principled distinction between aesthetic properties and perceptible properties such as colours and contours on which the former depend.⁵ This suggests further that to understand aesthetic properties, at least in part, we need to consider how they are determined or dependent on ‘simple’ perceptible properties such as colours.

But a monochromatic work that is an expanse of a single colour, such as one of Gerhard Richter’s all over grey paintings, *Grau 1967* (CR 194–14) for example, can have aesthetic effect. Because there is only a single expanse of colour and that expanse of colour has aesthetic impact, a monochrome work puts pressure on a categorical divide between non-aesthetic basic visual properties and aesthetic

⁴Isenberg (1949: 335). Isenberg is quoting Ludwig Goldscheider: “Like the contour of a violently rising and falling wave is the outline of the four illuminated figures in the foreground: steeply upwards and downwards about the grey monk on the left, in mutually inclined curves about the yellow of the two saints, and again steeply upwards and downwards about ... the priest on the right. The depth of the wave indicates the optical centre; the double curve of the saint’s yellow garments is carried by the greyish white of the shroud down still farther; in this lowest depth rests the bluish-grey armor of the knight.” Isenberg does not provide the reference for this quotation in the original journal article but it is given in (Isenberg 1973). The quotation is from Goldscheider (1949: 13).

⁵ For recent example of an approach that demarcates aesthetic properties and non-aesthetic properties, see Rafael De Clercq (2002).

properties. On the view that separates aesthetic properties from ‘basic’ perceptible properties, the single grey colour of the work would be an aesthetic property and that same colour would also be a non-aesthetic property.⁶

Monochrome works also highlight the relevance of contextual facts to aesthetic properties. A large canvas painted all over with a particular shade of grey would have a certain range of aesthetic properties if it is a sample in a paint shop – gloomy or elegant or lifeless. A canvas of the same size painted with the same grey paint would have a different range of aesthetic properties if it is a painting made by a particular artist in a specific context such as Gerhard Richter. One might find the same colour gloomy for example, but in the case of the painting it would be gloominess intentionally conveyed or expressed, rather than the gloomy effect of a certain colour. Some of Richter’s works explore or exploit the difference between the aesthetic effect of a paint sample and an artwork by being like paint samples but changing something, layout or size or the number of colours.⁷ For example, some paintings are laid out like ‘paint sample strips’ but are the same size as a full body portrait and confront the viewer as another human body would. Though the colours and characteristic glossy finish are the same, the works highlight how different is their range of aesthetic properties from those possessed by paint samples.

These examples of Richter’s monochromatic paintings and ‘paint sample’ works support the view that (i) any perceptible property may be aesthetic – including those held to be non-aesthetic basic properties like colours – (ii) depending on the context in which they figure. The discussion above focused on the context provided by the artwork in which the properties figure, though a more in-depth examination might address the context provided by the work’s content or the work’s broader art historical or social context.

⁶ The absence of a clear distinction in kind between non-aesthetic and aesthetic properties also tells against approaches that hold that aesthetic properties are supervenient on non-aesthetic properties, though space does not allow getting into arguments over aesthetic supervenience here.

⁷ For reproductions of a range of works and discussion see Gerhard Richter (2015).

Insofar as aesthetic properties are context-dependent, our apprehension or experience of them needs to be such as to take context into account. This means that our apprehension or experience of aesthetic properties needs to involve understanding of relevant contextual facts – for example, that what we are seeing is an artwork rather than a paint sample.⁸

I suggest that we examine experience of aesthetic properties and the pleasure it holds without a principled demarcation between simple perceptible properties and aesthetic ones. Rather than making matters worse, the absence of such demarcation can be helpful. We can focus on perceptible presence: what is it about perceptible properties and our experience of them that is or may be aesthetic? What is it about a particular shade of grey or a simple line or a symmetrical arrangement that may be aesthetic? Consider some examples.

Not all cases of simplicity are aesthetic, but the simplicity of a line in a Picasso drawing such as *Dove of Peace* [1949] is aesthetic insofar as it stands out for us in its perceptible character and the way it conveys meaning. In making us feel the specific connection between simplicity of line and what it conveys, we feel the potency, the meaningful potential of a simple line and our experience of it.

Not all cases of symmetry are aesthetic, for example the symmetrical arrangement of beige worn tiles on the subway platform may not stand out or be noticeable in the least as one walks the same platform day after day. But that same symmetrical arrangement might pop out in a photograph that captures the mundane, grim repetitiveness of an early morning commute to work. In standing out in the particular photograph, this specific – grimy and gritty – symmetrical arrangement makes us feel its potential and ability to convey something about our circumstances.

Not all instances of grey are aesthetic, the ubiquitous shadings of concrete and asphalt form an unnoted backdrop of our lives. But those tonalities might stand out in a hyper realist painting of highways, such as Christopher Pratt's *Solstice Drive to St. Anthony* 2008, or a photograph such as Edward Burtynsky's *Highway #2, Intersection 105 & 110 Los Angeles, California*, 2003. The particular

⁸ A fuller development of these ideas is in my (forthcoming) and (2016: chapters 5 and 6).

shadings in Pratt's twilight work bring out the presence of the frozen deep asphalt grey amidst the soft hues of snow all around. In feeling affected by the use of grey in the painting, we are aware of the potency, the meaningful potential of that grey and our experience of it.

These examples highlight how perceptible properties may stand out in specific contexts so that we feel pleasure in apprehending their particular perceptible character. The examples suggest that the pleasure we feel lies not just in apprehending particular instances of properties but in apprehending how the properties contribute to what a work conveys. Such pleasure has the potential to alert us to the nature of the experience and its value.

2 Aesthetic Ideas and Aesthetic Attributes

Kant's account of the beauty of art can lead us towards a deeper appreciation of the point just reached: that the distinctive pleasure of apprehending aesthetic properties has the potential to make us aware of the nature of our experience of them and how they help convey a work's content. Kant's focus is on pure aesthetic judgements of beauty and he argues that such judgements are grounded in a harmonious yet free play of the imagination and understanding. The play of these faculties is pleasurable and it intimates that the power or capacity of imagination is suitable for and can be brought within the conditions of the capacity for conceptual understanding. Within this broader frame, Kant's account of artistic beauty specifies the relationship of aesthetic properties to the beauty of a work: aesthetic attributes help convey the aesthetic ideas that beautiful works express. To see how Kant's account gives insight into aesthetic properties of artworks more generally without the restriction to beautiful works, let's focus on these two parts of his view and how they work together.

First, Kant's analysis of pure aesthetic judgements of beauty finds that they are grounded in the harmonious yet free play of the imagination and understanding, which is pleasurable.

The imagination is Kant's term for the capacity that deals in presentations of individuals and properties, while understanding deals in concepts that subsume particulars, including presentations of particular individuals and properties. These two capacities come

together in what we might think of as two dimensions – reflective and determining – of judgement, which is “the ability to think the particular as contained under the universal” common to perception and cognition.⁹ According to Kant, these two dimensions achieve integration in empirical or logical judgements – such as “The canvas is soaked and washed in pale paints” or “This is a paint soaked canvas” – but not in judgements of beauty. Our judgements of the beauty of objects elude determination by concepts so that such judgements are only reflective: presentations of individuals are collected together without that collection being achieved in integration with a concept that specifies conditions of beauty. A beautiful object prompts one to think about and to present its features imaginatively along with others that one might recall or envision. Herein lies beauty’s distinctive pleasure: conceptions and presentations keep reciprocally stimulating one another rather than uniting in one conception. We feel the harmonious but ‘free play’ between our capacities to entertain presentations and concepts.

As Kant emphasizes, what we feel is that:

“... this subsumption is not one of intuitions under concepts, but, rather, one of the power of intuitions or exhibitions (the imagination) under the power of concepts (the understanding), insofar as the imagination *in its* freedom harmonizes with the understanding *in its* lawfulness.” (CJ §35, 287)

It is precisely insofar as the capacities harmonize but remain in a free play without unifying as they do in ordinary seamless judgement that we feel that the imagination is subsumable within the capacity for conceptual understanding. In other words, in the free play that grounds a pure aesthetic judgment of beauty we feel that presentations are suitable for the conditions of thoughts. That is how, in feeling a particular free play of our faculties in response to a beautiful work, we feel the nature of the particular experience and potentially even of experience in general.

⁹ The reflective dimension of judgements collects resembling particulars in *integration* with the determining dimension which provides conditions for particulars through a concept.

Second, Kant proposes that we call “beauty (whether natural or artistic) the *expression* of aesthetic ideas” (CJ §51, 320) and specifies that in the case of art, aesthetic ideas are presented through aesthetic attributes, “aesthetic attributes yield an aesthetic idea.” (CJ §49, 315) My discussion follows Paul Guyer and Henry Allison, in taking Kant’s analysis of pure aesthetic judgement of beauty to allow for an account of fine art where beautiful works evoke a free play of the faculties in response to the aesthetic ideas that such works present.¹⁰

Kant’s view is that the subject matters of beautiful artworks are unique in that they expand our understanding beyond conceptual conditions – they are aesthetic ideas and experiences of aesthetic ideas involve a free play of the faculties. “[B]y an aesthetic idea I mean a presentation of the imagination which prompts much thought, but to which no determinate thought whatsoever, i.e., no [determinate] *concept*, can be adequate, so that no language can express it completely and allow us to grasp it.” (CJ §49, 314). For example:

“A poet ventures to give sensible expression to rational ideas of invisible beings, the realm of the blessed, the realm of hell, eternity, creation, and so on. Or again, he takes [things] that are indeed exemplified in experience, such as death, envy, and all the other vices, as well as love, fame, and so on: but then, by means of an imagination that emulates the example of reason in reaching [for] a maximum, he ventures to give these sensible expression in a way that goes beyond the limits of experience, namely, with a completeness for which no example can be found in nature.” (CJ §49, 314)

For our purposes, it is important to note that the expansion is achieved by means of aesthetic attributes, such as metaphoric uses of language in poetry or visual means developed by artists.

“Jupiter’s eagle with the lightning in its claws is an attribute of the mighty king of heaven, and the peacock is an attribute of heaven’s stately queen. [Through] these attributes, unlike [through] *logical attributes*, [we] do not present the content of our concepts of the sublimity and majesty of creation, but present something different, something that prompts the imagination to

¹⁰ Guyer (1997), Allison (2001, especially “Fine Art and Genius” 271–301).

spread over a multitude of kindred presentations that arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words.” (CJ §49, 315)¹¹

Note that Kant is suggesting that when we cannot put the beauty of something we perceive into words that is not because the experience of beauty is outside of the conceptual realm – rather it is precisely by being within that domain that experience of beauty can elude conceptual expression.¹² Only insofar as presentations are subsumable within the capacity for conceptual understanding, can aesthetic attribute stimulate and expand our understanding beyond the logical conditions of specific concepts, such as “the sublimity and majesty of creation.”

In sum, Kant is clear about the role of aesthetic attributes: they are the means for conveying the aesthetic ideas that beautiful works express, they are the means for expanding – through presentational means – our apprehension of certain subject matters beyond the logical conditions that govern our conceptions of them. These expansions involve the free play of the faculties and such free play can intimate that the capacity for presentations is subsumable within the conditions of the capacity for conceptual thought. This can intimate the nature and value of perceptual judgement and singular judgement more broadly.

¹¹ Here is Paul Guyer’s translation in *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000). “Thus Jupiter’s eagle, with the lightning in its claws, is an attribute of the powerful king of heaven, as is the peacock of the splendid queen of heaven. They do not, like logical attributes, represent what lies in our concept of the sublimity and majesty of creation, but something else, which gives the imagination cause to spread itself over a multitude of related representations, which let one think more than one can express in a concept determined by words; and they yield an aesthetic idea...”)

¹² There is a strong divide between conceptualist and non-conceptualist readings of Kant’s work in the *Critique of Judgement* that lies outside the scope of this paper. It seems to me that conceptualist readings are correct and for the purposes of this paper I appeal to Karl Ameriks’ argumentation as support. See especially Ameriks (2003).

3 Contents and Aesthetic Properties

What does Kant's work suggest about aesthetic properties in general? Since Kant's account holds that judgements of beauty are distinctive in eluding conceptual determination and writes only of the aesthetic attributes of beautiful artworks, the details of his analysis are restricted to the aesthetic attributes of beautiful works. But their import extends to aesthetic properties as follows.

First, recall that Kant specifies that aesthetic ideas are conveyed through aesthetic attributes. Kant's central example, of an eagle with lightning in its claws makes clear that aesthetic attributes are crucial for expanding what is being conveyed beyond the conditions of a conceptual grasp of particulars: "attributes that accompany the logical ones and that give the imagination a momentum which makes it think more in response to these objects, though in an undeveloped way, than can be comprehended within one concept and hence in one determinate linguistic expression." (CJ §49, 315)

This suggests that the difference between aesthetic attributes of beautiful artworks and aesthetic properties of artworks more generally is that the latter convey significance or contents that are not 'aesthetic ideas' in Kant's full sense – such contents do not expand beyond the conditions encompassed in concepts. Rather, the significance or content of an artwork is inextricably connected with and conveyed by the presentational aspect of the work so that these elude full description and invite perceptual or singular judgement.

Second, Kant's view suggests that aesthetic properties of artworks draw pleasure not simply in response to themselves and to our experience of them but to their relationship with 'what' the artwork conveys and to our experience of this relationship. The apprehension itself of these properties pleases, but Kant helps us recognize two connected points. (i) The pleasure of apprehension *is not isolated from but involves* understanding that strives to grasp the content of an artwork. (ii) Insofar as it is the apprehension in itself that pleases, this has potential to draw attention to the nature of the experience.

For illustration, consider James Elkins' discussion of Giovanni Bellini's *The Ecstasy of St. Francis* in "Weeping over Bluish Leaves." (Elkin 2001: 57–69) Elkins explores the ability that

paintings have to move us to tears. If we had to put Elkins' discussion of the aesthetic properties of Bellini's *The Ecstasy of St. Francis* (1474–80) in a one word tag or two, it would be 'sacred' or 'revelatory' or 'mysterious.'

Elkins highlights the subtlety of the painting, how it does not use the usual "machinery" of depicting a moment of revelation when the saint receives the stigmata.

"The painting shows how a miracle might look with the volume turned way down. It takes place in an almost ordinary midafternoon, and produces only a few spots of blood. There is no angel and no costume melodrama. Instead, the landscape is the miracle. Because nothing is quite what it should be, *everything is partly sacred*. The rocks and trees are nearly supernatural, so that the sky and the saint can be practically normal." (Elkin 2001: 82)

The moment of revelation is pictured through the contrast in the ordinary light of a bright sunny afternoon in the background, and a strange bluish light in the foreground where St Francis is standing.

"The color is a mystery. Some rocks are safety-glass blue. Others are bottle blue, or the blue of cold, wet glass. The blue deepens downward toward St Francis' feet. Above his head the cliffs are creamy, perhaps they are reflecting yellowish light from the afternoon sun. ... (Elkin 2001: 80)¹³

"Bellini's rocks are blue because they are reflecting a revelation. The little plants at the saint's feet, clinging to slight depressions in the rock, are more than just scraps that nature has thrown down" "they are witnesses, bathed in a holy light." "The Ecstasy of St Francis is an entire world where every twig and thorn has its measure of holiness." (Elkin 2001: 83)

Elkins' description suggests that it isn't that the rocks are various shades of "safety-glass blue" "bottle blue" or "the blue of cold, wet

¹³ Elkins continues: "Strangely there is no green between the yellow and blue. As any painter knows, that's a trick, since even a dab of blue paint will turn yellow into a bright leafy green. Somehow Bellini avoids the trap, and his candent yellows settle into somnolent blues, without even a hint of green. Some of the blues are stained by browns – there are a scatter of fine dirt, and a fuzz of blighted grass – but nothing around the saint is normal, healthy plant green." [80]

glass” on which the aesthetic properties of the work depend. It is the fact that the rocks have these colours in the midst of an ordinary sunny afternoon on which the aesthetic impact of the colours and the painting as a whole depend. The blue colours are aesthetic in the way they show that ‘nothing is the way it should be’ around the Saint. The aesthetic quality of the shades of blue in the painting is integral to the painting’s content, the moment of revelation that those shades help to convey. Being moved at how bluish leaves convey the holiness of the least significant of nature’s creations has the potential to make us aware of the nature of our experience and its value.

Conclusion: Nature, Beauty, and Aesthetic Properties

Can this approach expand beyond the restriction introduced for this paper? Can the approach expand from the aesthetic properties of perceptible artworks to the aesthetic properties of literary works?

We have seen that Kant includes the art of poetry in explaining aesthetic ideas, indeed he goes on to suggest that the aesthetic attributes of poetry best convey aesthetic ideas: “it is actually in the art of poetry that the power [i.e., faculty] of aesthetic ideas can manifest itself to full extent.” (CJ §49, 314) Aesthetic ideas and aesthetic attributes are envisioned by Kant in the domains available at his time – where some are perceptible and some are the combined work of perception with our complex capacity for reading. A Kantian approach readily encompasses the full range of art because the central notion of aesthetic judgement might be either perceptual or more broadly singular. In responding to a work’s aesthetic attributes and how these convey an aesthetic idea, we make a singular or a specifically perceptual judgement that this work is beautiful, a judgement that is grounded in the free play of imagination and understanding. Aesthetic properties more generally may also encompass arts to which we respond with singular or specifically perceptual judgements.

Finally, to return to our starting point, what is the relationship between beauty and aesthetic properties? We have seen that Kant’s work suggests similarities between the aesthetic attributes of beautiful artworks and aesthetic properties in general. But what does it

suggest about the issue as it is typically framed: what is the relationship between aesthetic properties and beauty, taken as a property?

On the view I have sketched, the respects in which aesthetic properties and artistic beauty are similar are also respects in which there is discontinuity. I have suggested that aesthetic properties are pleasing in that they heighten and draw awareness of their presentational character and their internal relationship with what a work conveys. This is similar to the effect that the beauty of a work has on us. But beautiful works are an extreme case – a discontinuous case – in that *only* beautiful works can evoke a *free* play of the imagination and understanding in response to their beauty, which is to say to the aesthetic ideas such works express by means of aesthetic attributes. I have suggested that Kant's approach draws our attention to the presentational significance of aesthetic properties, to the fact that such properties are the means for what a work conveys even while that approach explains beauty as an extreme case. Presentational significance can elude full description though it is not outside of conceptual determination or subsumption. Only beauty can evoke a play of the faculties at aesthetic attributes that releases our understanding beyond experience.

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