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REVISITING KANT'S DEDUCTION OF TASTE: THE "EASY" SOLUTION TO THE PARTICULARITY PROBLEM

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Introduction

In §38 of the third *Critique*, Kant provides a deduction that purports to ground the universal validity of aesthetic judgments. If the deduction is valid, whenever a person judges an object to be beautiful, they can legitimately expect others to judge the object similarly. The deduction itself is remarkably brief and—if Kant's own evaluation can be trusted—relatively "easy." Recently, however, some have worried that Kant's deduction may be rather *too* easy, suggesting that it is not sufficient to prove that particular objects must always produce the same response in those who encounter them under suitable circumstances.[1] In response to this problem (what has been called the "particularity problem"), it has become increasingly popular for commentators to introduce several—on the face of it, unrelated—third *Critique* notions to secure the deduction's claim.[2]

In this essay, my main concern is to provide an interpretation of Kant's §38 deduction that reveals it to be sufficient on its own, that is, valid without appeal to any premises not explicitly employed in the deduction itself. In section 1, I begin by briefly discussing the epistemological character of the deduction. Because the deduction licenses normative claims concerning what counts as an appropriate judgment, some commentators have thought that the deduction must include premises that explicitly connect aesthetic judgments with moral judgments. If this is correct, my claim concerning the sufficiency of Kant's deduction is wrong. In section 2, I reformulate the particularity problem in terms that better reflect the deduction's actual goal and offer a final interpretation of §38 that maintains that the deduction is not only successful but strikingly straightforward. Finally, in section 3, I consider and defend the independent plausibility of Kant's two central premises.

1. The Normativity of Judgment

According to Kant, a judgment of beauty licenses an agent to expect that others "*should* approve of the object in question and . . . declare it beautiful" (KU, 5:237).[3] The explicitly normative force of this conclusion, along with Kant's association of beauty with morality, has led some to think that the deduction must culminate in "a transition from the aesthetic realm to the realm of morality." Thus, Donald Crawford writes, "Kant's argument is . . . that the beautiful is a symbol of the morally good, and consequently it gives pleasure with a justifiable claim for the agreement of everyone" (1974, 68–69). Because this account of what a successful deduction requires is incompatible with the interpretation I give later in the paper, it is important to clarify the sense in which judgments of beauty are normative for Kant.

In the brief "Remark" appended to §38, Kant compares the normativity of aesthetic judgment to that of logical judgment. Because the demand for universal assent appropriate to a logical judgment clearly lacks moral force, this comparison permits us to see the way in which the claim appropriate to aesthetic judgment might also be morally neutral. For Kant, the claim that someone ought to find the meadow beautiful is normative in the same sense that a person ought to apply the concept "dog" to the furry, tail-wagging, animal I call Fido. Clearly, in the latter case—that of correctly applying the concept "dog"—the demand for universal assent is grounded (at least on the Kantian picture) in a common capacity to represent objects (that is, some story about shared faculties of cognition) and social agreement regarding the concept that refers to a given representation. Even if we were to concoct some strange moral duty pertaining to the correct use of the concept "dog," there would remain a distinctly epistemological expectation that others agree with us concerning the proper concept to be applied to Fido.

Just as we can talk about an epistemological duty with respect to logical judgments, the expectation of agreement that accompanies judgments of beauty does not necessarily carry any moral force. For this reason, we need not assume that Kant's deduction of taste—as it is presented in §38—requires any premises that link the beautiful to the moral. The normative force of the deduction's conclusion, coupled with the fact that Kant later explicitly associates natural beauty with morality, does not in itself ensure that the universal assent legitimated by aesthetic judgment is specifically moral. This, along with the conspicuous absence of any reference to the moral value of beauty in the section that explicitly contains the deduction of taste, strongly suggests that the deduction's conclusion is purely epistemological.[4]

Though there is good reason to think that Kant's deduction was never intended to ground a moral prescription, the interpretive enterprise of securing the deduction by appeal to additional "moral premises" will remain attractive if the deduction fails to stand on its own. For this reason, the best argument against such interpretations is to show the deduction's sufficiency. Before offering my account of the deduction, it will be instructive to revisit briefly what Kant purports to prove. In the final line of the deduction, Kant concludes, "[T]he pleasure . . . in the judging of a sensible object in general can rightly be expected of everyone," that is, if someone correctly judges an object to be beautiful, he is justified in expecting others to affirm the same (KU, 5:290). Thus, Kant's account of the "particularity problem" has little to do with isolating what it is about objects that occasion judgments of beauty. Instead, he is merely interested in grounding the claim that a particular experience of beauty can be universalized. If the deduction fails, it must fail in precisely this respect.

Though it seems clear that this is the only way to flesh out the particularity problem in terms that harmonize with Kant's more general account, Henry Allison claims that the deduction has nothing to do with particular judgments at all, that Kant's intent was merely to show that aesthetic judgments are possible by grounding the subjective principle of taste.[5] There are at least two reasons to think that Allison is mistaken about this. First, Allison improperly concludes from the fact that one can never be certain that their aesthetic judgment is pure (that is, truly disinterested), that the deduction itself is not meant to license such judgments. Kant himself, however, never draws this conclusion. Second, in the sections leading up to the deduction proper, Kant gives several examples of particular aesthetic judgments (poems, flowers, and such) (KU 5:281–84). If such individual judgments are not justified by the deduction, Kant's lead-up to the deduction is grossly misleading.

Given that Kant has little to say about what specifically makes an object beautiful, we might wonder whether the deduction can play any significant role in cases of aesthetic disagreement. Because Kant's formulation of the particularity problem seems to leave this issue wholly unanswered, I will—at the conclusion of the paper—return to the issue of aesthetic disagreement to explain how Kant's account might make headway in such cases.

2. The Deduction

Though the deduction is written in such a way as to obscure the precise number and content of the required premises, Kant kindly attaches a footnote that confirms the need for just two. Even with this extra hint, however, the literature is far from agreement concerning the number of

steps employed.[6] In light of this, I will begin by justifying my particular selection. If I am right about the premises at work in the deduction, the deduction's validity should be apparent. Slightly less obvious, however, is the plausibility of the premises themselves. After briefly defending my selection of the premises and explaining their role in the deduction, I will address what I take to be the more interesting problem of Kant's argument, its independent plausibility.

The §38 deduction reads as follows:

> If it is admitted that in a pure judgment of taste the satisfaction in the object is combined with the mere judging of its form, then it is nothing other than the subjective purposiveness of that form for the power of judgment that we sense as combined with the representation of the object in the mind. Now since the power of judgment in regard to the formal rules of judging, without any matter (neither sensation nor concept), can be directed only to the subjective conditions of the use of the power of judgment in general (which is restricted neither to the particular kind of sense nor to a particular concept of understanding), and thus to that subjective element that one can presuppose in all human beings (as requisite for possible cognitions in general), the correspondence of a representation with these conditions of the power of judgment must be able to be assumed to be valid for everyone *a priori*. I.e., the pleasure or subjective purposiveness of the representation for the relation of the cognitive faculties in the judging of a sensible object in general can rightly be expected of everyone (KU, 5:289–90).

Our first task is to determine the argument's steps. Though, as already mentioned, Kant suggests that just two premises are required, this recommendation has been largely ignored. Some commentators conclude that the most complete version of the deduction occurs much earlier in §21, while others have found it necessary to supplement the §38 argument with additional premises. Karl Ameriks is a prominent example of the former, and Miles Rind the latter. I will briefly consider the arguments of each before offering my own reading.

In his essay "How to Save Kant's Deduction of Taste," Ameriks provides an analysis of Kant's §21 argument as "the first thorough . . . presentation of a deduction of taste." He restates the argument as follows:

(1) Cognitive judgments are communicable.

(2) Each cognition has an accompanying subjective state.

(3) If cognitions are communicable, then so are their accompanying subjective states.

(4) These subjective states involve various proportions in the activities of our faculties, and there is some such proportion

which is "most beneficial" for the relation of imagination and understanding.

(5) States with such a proportion are communicable.

(6) *They are aesthetic*.

(7) Therefore aesthetic judgment is valid. (Ameriks 1982, 295).

The most important thing to note about Ameriks's reconstruction is that it succeeds as a "deduction of aesthetic judgment" only insofar as it introduces a notion that appears nowhere in the body of §21, namely, the idea of an "aesthetic state." In reality, §21 seeks to establish something much more general than the validity of aesthetic judgments: the conditions that must be in place for ordinary cognition. Despite, however, containing no explicit reference to aesthetic judgment, §21 does refer to certain cognitive "feelings" that might easily be interpreted as the pleasure that accompanies aesthetic judgment. Kant writes,

> But this disposition of the cognitive powers has a different proportion depending on the difference of the objects that are given. Nevertheless, there must be one in which this inner relationship is optimal for the animation of both powers of the mind (the one through the other) with respect to cognition (of given objects) in general; and this disposition cannot be determined except through the feeling of it. (KU, 5:238–39).

While the discussion leading up to §21 has trained the reader to associate talk of "dispositions," "proportions," and "feelings" with aesthetic judgment, in this passage Kant makes it very clear that he is referring to the conditions for "cognition in general," that even our more ordinary judgments depend on a specific relationship between the imagination and the understanding that is accompanied by its own feeling. Because §21 is concerned with the conditions of ordinary cognition, we should not read it—as Ameriks does—as a deduction of taste. Despite this, and as I will soon show, §21 *does* play a crucial role establishing one of the deduction's central premises.[7]

Miles Rind belongs to the second class of interpreters: he thinks that the success of Kant's §38 deduction requires more than the two premises recommended by Kant. Rind reconstructs the deduction as follows:

(1) In a pure judgment of taste, the pleasure for which we claim subjective universal validity is a pleasure in the mere judging of the form of the object.

(2) Therefore, it is identical with the purposiveness of the given intuition for the subjective formal conditions of judgment.

(3) Cognitions and representations (i.e., at least some of these) are universally communicable.

(4) Therefore, the subjective formal conditions of judgment are the same for everyone.

(5) Therefore, the pleasure in a pure judgment of taste is universally valid (Rind 2002, 24).

There are two ways we can read Rind's reconstruction: either as an account that *makes explicit* certain suppressed premises of the deduction or as one that *adds* premises to the argument. Rind seems to think he is doing the latter. For instance, he suggests that Kant's footnote—instead of straightforwardly recapitulating the argument from the main text—introduces a novel premise: "the premise that cognition is universally communicable" (2002, 23). What Rind fails to note is that the move from premise (3) to (4) has already been argued for in §21, the passage we just considered with Ameriks.[8] In §21, Kant suggests that the ability to communicate a judgment assumes a "common sense," what Rind lists in premise (4) as "the subjective formal conditions of judgment." So when Kant asserts (4) without first explicitly noting (3), he is not mistakenly leaving out a necessary premise. To the contrary, premise (3) is tacitly, and legitimately, assumed as part of (4).

This is confirmed in Kant's footnote when the claim about communicability is appended—as a kind of afterthought—to the deduction's primary claim about shared cognitive capacities. The relevant section of the footnote reads thus: "In all human beings, the subjective conditions of this faculty, as far as the relation of the cognitive powers therein set into action to a cognition in general is concerned, are the same, which must be true, since otherwise human beings could not communicate their representations and even cognition itself" (5:290). The last clause of this sentence is what Rind focuses on, but—in so doing—fails to note that Kant is not introducing new argumentative material. To the contrary, Kant is just reminding the reader of what he takes himself to have shown in §21, that the experience of communication is sufficient to establish one of the deduction's core premises, namely, that human beings share the same cognitive faculties.[9]

With this in mind, we can amend Rind's reconstruction to better represent the structure of the deduction as it is actually given by Kant in §38. (Starred premises represent my attempt to combine Rind's premises as Kant himself does in the main text of the deduction. [3*is a combination of Rind's [3] and [4].):

(1) In a pure judgment of taste, the pleasure for which we claim subjective universal validity is a pleasure in the mere judging of the form of the object.

(2) Therefore, it is identical with the purposiveness of the given intuition for the subjective formal conditions of judgment.

(3*) The cognitive faculties (that is, the subjective formal conditions of judgment) necessary for aesthetic pleasure are present in the same way, and function in the same way, in all human beings.

(4) Therefore, the pleasure in a pure judgment of taste is universally valid.

This version of the argument still contains one more premise than Kant himself lists because, in the deduction proper, Kant represents (1) and (2) as a single premise. Just as Kant thinks that (3*) possesses all of the content Rind includes in (3) and (4), Kant combines (1) and (2). Kant has previously argued that, because aesthetic judgments are strictly *formal* (Rind's first premise), they must be grounded in a feeling of aesthetic pleasure that is caused by the harmony of the faculties (Rind's second premise). With this argument in the background, Kant condenses (1) and (2) into a single premise, allowing him to present the deduction in just two steps:

(1*) *Aesthetic formalism*: A pure judgment of taste is grounded in a feeling of aesthetic pleasure caused by the interplay of a human being's cognitive faculties.[10]

(2*) *Sensus communis*: The cognitive faculties sufficient to produce aesthetic pleasure are present in the same way, and function in the same way, in all human beings.[11]

(3*) *Conclusion*: A pure judgment of taste is valid for all human beings.[12]

Here, we have a reconstruction of the deduction that parallels the summary Kant offers in his footnote. I quote the note with my own inserted brackets to identify the lines relevant for each premise:

> [3* *Conclusion*] In order to be justified in laying claim to universal assent for judgments of the aesthetic power of judgment resting merely on subjective grounds, it is sufficient to admit: [2* *Sensus communis*] 1) In all human beings, the subjective conditions of this faculty, as far as the relation of the cognitive powers in general is concerned, are the same . . . [1* *Aesthetic formalism*]. 2) The judgment has taken into consideration solely this relation (hence, the formal condition of the power of judgment), and is pure, that is, mixed with neither concepts of the object nor with sensations as determining grounds (n5:290).

Given both that the opening line of the footnote is an obvious restatement of the deduction's conclusion and that Kant claims just two steps are needed to establish it, it is surprising that so few commentators reconstruct the deduction as such. One possible reason for this is that most commentators take this version of the argument to be incomplete and, thus (in a spirit of charity), add steps to make it valid. Though I have sympathy for the spirit of this maneuver, I am not convinced it is necessary. Having given an account of the number and content of the premises of the deduction, I will now consider how they work together to justify Kant's conclusion.

(1*) *Aesthetic formalism*: The first premise of the deduction is a statement of Kant's aesthetic formalism; it describes the relationship between an object and our cognitive faculties that occasions the feeling of aesthetic pleasure. Though much ink has been spilled[13] trying to discern how exactly this works, it seems clear that, in cases of aesthetic judgment, the sensory manifold is given in a way that is particularly well suited to our cognitive aims.[14] This striking "fit" between the manifold and our powers of cognition induces the harmony of the faculties. For the purposes of Kant's deduction, the most important quality of this relationship is its *disinterestedness*.[15] Insofar as an object's ability to occasion the free play has nothing to do with any of its isolated material traits, aesthetic judgment is purified of any interests that are unique to a particular subject. For example, if the sight of Wyoming's Grand Teton occasions the free play of my cognitive faculties (that is, I experience a feeling of pure aesthetic pleasure), then this occurs without regard to any particular like or dislike I may have for national parks, objects that include the word "Grand" in their title, or fond remembrances of hikes past. Kant insists that an experience of beauty has nothing to do with any perspectival quirks unique to me.[16]

(2*) *Sensus communis*: Though the deduction's second premise needs little explanation (it is a simple hypothesis regarding the nature of human cognition), Kant's assumption that a "common sense" can be presupposed in all rational agents is a move that generally has not been well received. I will return to address the plausibility of this more controversial premise after finishing my exposition of the deduction.

(3*) *Conclusion*: Now that we have the two premises in place, we can see how they combine to ground the demand for universal assent. If (following premise one) an aesthetic judgment is not grounded in any eccentricities of a particular agent and (following premise two) we can reasonably expect all agents to possess the same cognitive faculties, then when an agent encounters an object that triggers an experience of aesthetic pleasure, she can legitimately assume that any similarly placed

agent will have the same experience. In more concrete terms, when the sight of Grand Teton induces the harmony of the faculties, I experience a feeling of disinterested pleasure. Because this experience is grounded strictly in the formal relationship between an object and my faculties of cognition and the faculties of cognition are assumed to be the same for all humans, I can legitimately expect that anyone like me (where a person "like me" is someone I take myself to be able to communicate with) will judge Grand Teton to be beautiful as well. In this (perhaps modest) respect, Kant's deduction answers the particularity problem, securing as it does the universal scope of a particular agent's judgment of taste.

3: The Role of *Sensus Communis*

Now that we have the argument, we can revisit some concerns that grow out of Kant's second premise, his claim about a "common sense." The first worry concerns the legitimacy of the premise itself: whether we can (as Kant seems to think) simply presuppose that other humans possess "the subjective element" requisite for aesthetic judgment (5:290). Because the second premise plays such a vital role in the deduction, we should expect an account of how such presuppositions are justified, something that is not present in §38. A second worry arises when we take seriously Kant's passing suggestion that the conditions for aesthetic judgment can be presumed to be ubiquitous because they form the ground of cognition in general. Far from justifying the presuppositions of premise two, commentators have worried that grounding cognition in aesthetic judgment saddles Kant with the unacceptable conclusion that every object—in virtue of being cognized—is experienced as beautiful.

To justify the second premise, Kant needs us to accept just two ideas: that we are beings capable of both 1) cognition and 2) communication. From here, Kant can craft an argument that grounds the second premise of the deduction. Combining elements from §38 and Kant's treatment of the *sensus communis* (§§20–22) we can reconstruct the following argument (which I will artlessly call "the argument for Kant's second premise"):

(1) We are capable of cognition.

(2) Cognition requires a specific set of properly functioning cognitive faculties.

(3) The cognitive faculties sufficient for cognition in general are also sufficient for aesthetic judgment.[17]

(4) We take it that we can communicate with others.

(5) Taking ourselves to be capable of communication requires that we presuppose that those we communicate with cognize in the same manner as ourselves.[18]

(6) From 4 and 5, we must presuppose that those we communicate with have the same cognitive faculties as ourselves.

(7) We must presuppose that those we communicate with possess the faculties of cognition sufficient for aesthetic judgment (that is, there is a *sensus communis*).

Temporarily granting premise three, premise five seems to be the only premise requiring significant justification. The first thing we should notice about the fifth premise is that it is concerned only with how we must *view* those we communicate with, not their actual nature. Because Kant needs only to justify certain *presuppositions* that ground communication, he does not need to show that other people actually cognize in one way as opposed to another. Failing to grasp this distinction has led some commentators to hold an unrealistically high bar for Kant's argument, requiring that he both prove the existence and character of other minds. Paul Guyer, for instance, writes,

> But it is far from obvious that different observers must have similar faculties in similar dispositions in order to be capable of shared knowledge. . . . At the least, it seems that the premise that the communicability of knowledge entails an identity in the subjective conditions or dispositions on which knowledge is based must be proved rather than just assumed.[19]

Compare this to Kant's more modest claim in §21: "[B]ut since the universal communicability of a feeling *presupposes* a common sense, the latter must be able to be *assumed* with good reason and indeed without appeal to psychological observations." In §22 Kant adds, "This indeterminate norm of a common sense is really *presupposed* by us: our presumption in making judgments of taste proves that" (5:239; my emphasis). So, against Guyer, all Kant needs to show is that communication presupposes that *we take* others to cognize, and thus see the world, in a similar way. This is not something that Kant posits ad hoc. To the contrary, Kant thinks it is a transcendental condition of communication itself; any time we communicate with someone, we make certain basic assumptions about their ability to represent objects and make judgments.[20]

Can Kant legitimately assert even this weaker claim? I think so. If (following a certain Wittgensteinian line of thought) communication requires a shared view of the world (a *form of life*), and (following a certain Kantian line of thought) we think that the manner in which we cognize has an important role in shaping that view, it seems like we

must project a similar cognitive constitution on those we communicate with.[21] The basic mental characteristics that we presumptuously extend to our neighbors (particularly the sensations that accompany cognitive dispositions like judgments of knowledge and beauty) comprise what Kant calls the *sensus communis*, a regulative norm that underwrites our aesthetic judgments by presupposing cognitive likeness in those we communicate with. These presuppositions regarding the mental constitution of others are not justified insofar as they accurately describe the world as it exists outside our own mind (though they may, in fact, do this), but rather because the basic practices they underwrite require them. We simply could not conduct the everyday business of rational agency without them. So while Guyer may be right in suggesting that Kant has not shown that all agents are *actually* similar enough to ground the claims of the deduction, Kant does not need to prove this.

Though I think these considerations help motivate the role of communicability in Kant's larger argument, it is possible that this account may do too much work. Consider the following objection. Presumably we can also communicate judgments about what is agreeable, for instance, that, "This chocolate cake is delicious." If communication presumes, as I suggest above, that those I communicate with are similarly constituted, why am I not also permitted to judge that they *ought* to like the cake? In other words, does Kant's "communicability" thesis explain the normativity of aesthetic judgment at the expense of explaining, rather implausibly, the normativity of judgments about the agreeable?

In response, Kant would need to argue that the presumption of cognitive similarity holds with respect to features that are relevant in judgments of beauty and not with respect to judgments of the agreeable. Since Kant thinks that judgments of beauty exclude reference to an object's sensible content (for example, its color, tone, taste, and so forth) in favor of its form (shape, arrangement, form, and such), the relevant norms of communication would require that agents expect similarity with respect to only those cognitive features responsible for representing an object's formal characteristics. In Kant's defense, it seems plausible that shared cognition of an object's formal features is central to communication in a way that shared cognition of a thing's sensible qualities is not.[22] For instance, while I can straightforwardly imagine communicating with someone who does not share whatever it is about my cognitive makeup that causes me to perceive cake as sweet, it is more difficult to make sense of what it would mean to communicate with someone who lacked the ability to cognize the cake as an object with a particular shape. If this is right, then it makes sense to think that communication presumes *limited* similarity: I must take other agents to be like me with respect to their ability to cognize an object's

formal features. Unsurprisingly, these are precisely the features that Kant takes to be at issue in cases of aesthetic judgment.

Having defended the plausibility of premise five, we can turn to premise three (*the cognitive conditions sufficient for cognition are also sufficient for aesthetic judgment*), the premise that has led some to assume mistakenly that Kant is committed to the idea that *every* cognized object must also be experienced as beautiful. The line from which I have taken the second premise of the deduction reads as follows: "and thus to that subjective element that one can presuppose in all human beings (as requisite for possible cognitions in general)." (KU, 5:290). There are two ways to interpret this passage, one that leads to the traditional and problematic conclusion that all cognized objects are also experienced as beautiful and a second that merely concludes that the cognitive faculties sufficient for cognition are also sufficient for aesthetic judgment. Because the second reading is the third premise of my "argument for Kant's second premise," it will be helpful to say a word about why we should think it is the right way to read the passage in dispute.

In Kant's §21 discussion of the *sensus communis*, we learn that there is a particular proportion of fit (what Kant calls a cognitive *disposition*) that a given object possesses with respect to the imagination and understanding. We also learn that a cognitive disposition is accompanied by a distinctive sensation, a feeling that signals to the agent the precise character of her judgment. Just as there is a distinctive feeling that accompanies a judgment of knowledge, there is a distinctive feeling that accompanies a judgment of taste.[23] In the deduction, when Kant refers to a "subjective element" that can be presupposed for all, he is not referring to any specific disposition (for example, the sensation that grounds an aesthetic judgment). The subjective element refers to the more general phenomenon that accompanies any judgment at all. Though, of course, there are specific subjective conditions indicative of aesthetic judgments (that is, aesthetic pleasure), Kant is here only asking us to presuppose the necessary conditions for judging in general, the presence of certain properly functioning cognitive faculties. If people possess these general faculties, then they also possess the subjective element required for the more specific process of aesthetic judgment. So, to put it a bit more succinctly, aesthetic judgments do not serve (as some have mistakenly supposed) as the ground for cognition in general. Kant is putting forward the considerably less problematic thesis that the cognitive mechanisms required for aesthetic judgment are also required for cognition in general. If an agent has the faculties required for the latter (which we take it she does: see above), she also has the faculties required for the former.

If I am right in thinking that Kant does not take the subjective conditions peculiar to aesthetic judgment to ground cognition in general, I need to make sense of passages like the following from the introduction:

> To be sure, we no longer detect any noticeable pleasure in the comprehensibility of nature and the unity of its division into genera and species, by means of which alone empirical concepts are possible through which we cognize it in its particular laws; but it must certainly have been there in its time, and only because the most common experience would not be possible without it has it gradually become mixed up with mere cognition and is no longer specially noticed (KU, 5:188).

Though, on its face, this passage appears to challenge my interpretation directly, it should be noted that nowhere in §VI does Kant mention aesthetic pleasure in particular. Kant does, however, tell us that the "attainment of every aim is combined with the feeling of pleasure" (KU, 5:187). Insofar as cognition in general can be appropriately described as an attainment of an aim (namely, finding a dispositional balance between the imagination and understanding), it is unsurprising that pleasure would accompany it as well. So while all judgments may be accompanied by a "feeling" that is engendered by a certain purposive relationship between the faculties, it is not obviously the case that Kant takes the feeling associated with ordinary cognition to be phenomenologically identical to the feeling of aesthetic pleasure. Thus, even if we assume that ordinary cognition involves a judgment of purposiveness, we have yet to show that such a judgment is indistinguishable from a judgment of purposiveness in a uniquely aesthetic context.

But perhaps this does not settle things. We can easily imagine someone willing to grant Kant's claim about common faculties while still wondering why there is good reason to think that those shared faculties function in exactly the same way. Presumably, Kant's answer involves referencing the necessary conditions for basic cognition. In the same way that he thinks the understanding applies the categories with strict necessity, Kant is committed to the idea that there cannot be any variability in the way the imagination and understanding cooperate to cognize the formal features of an object, that is, the features pertinent in aesthetic evaluation. Without this kind of constancy, an agent cannot have experiences of any kind. Importantly (and I address this above), this does not mean that there is no room for cognitive idiosyncrasy. It just means that idiosyncrasy enters into the picture at the level of sensation, that is, the qualities pertinent in judgments about the agreeable.

Up to this point in the paper, I have attempted to motivate the claim that Kant's deduction is—as he himself suggests—straightforwardly valid and plausibly sound. Furthermore, insofar as the conclusion of the deduction justifies an agent's expectation that all agents will agree with his particular judgment, Kant satisfactorily answers the only particularity problem we can appropriately ask of his account. In spite of this, however, one might still wonder whether answering this specific formulation of the particularity problem is at all noteworthy. After all, the motivation to present a content interpretation (for example, Chignell and Savile) is grounded in a pressing need to say something substantive about what it is that makes an object aesthetically pleasing. Because my interpretation of what can and cannot be legitimately attributed to Kant appears to restrict Kant's ability to offer help in cases of aesthetic disagreement, I will close with a few words about the virtues and limitations of Kantian art criticism.

Conclusion: Returning to the Particularity Problem

One might wonder why Kant's deduction merely grounds our ability to expect agreement instead of ensuring that agreement, in fact, occurs. If, as Kant suggests, judgments of beauty are grounded in a disinterested encounter with the manifold, beauty should, it seems, always be experienced equally. Kant's answer to why this stronger claim cannot be inferred relates directly to how his account handles the problem of aesthetic disagreement. Though it is always true that an object that occasions a pure aesthetic judgment in one person can and should occasion the same response in another, in practice this does not always occur. Because the free play of the faculties is grounded in disinterestedness, it may happen that a particular subject's "overinterest" in an object undermines the free play of the faculties. Instead of allowing the Taj Mahal to show itself qua Taj Mahal, it may be that a recent foray into Kafka has made it difficult to see castle-like structures without emotional duress.[24]

If I am right about why it is that some people fail to experience beauty where others do, an interesting solution to the problem of aesthetic disagreement reveals itself. When I fail to experience a particular artwork as beautiful (we will assume one that in optimal circumstances I would judge to be beautiful), my inability is linked to some kind of overt interestedness I bring to my experience of the object. Unlike a content interpretation of beauty where I am told what it is about an artwork that makes it beautiful (presumably by an art critic) and expected to cultivate a taste for it, Kant's formal account of aesthetic judgment leaves open the possibility that what provokes beauty is not subject to the whims of mere cultivation, but rather is

anchored in a nonconceptual relationship between me and an object. On Kant's account, if I fail to properly experience an object as beautiful, it is because I am *overcultivated*, that is, my ability to let the object speak has been undermined by various associations I bring to the experience of the object. Though Kant's answer to the problem of aesthetic disagreement may run counter to our intuitions concerning the manner in which aesthetic disagreement is resolved in practice, his interpretation is uniquely situated to preserve beauty as something more than mere cultivation: judgments of beauty are an exercise in individual autonomy. This, along with the fact that Kant provides a sufficiently rich and plausible account of how disagreement arises and is overcome, suggests that a formal interpretation of beauty might be an improvement over more *content-centric* views.

One might also worry about the reverse: that particular idiosyncrasies can cause a person to judge something as beautiful that is not actually beautiful. This issue seems especially problematic since it threatens to undermine an agent's right to demand that others agree with her, which is, of course, precisely what the deduction purports to license. Consider, for instance, a particularly reflective agent who knows that, in any given situation, her experience of aesthetic pleasure may be triggered by something that is, from an aesthetic perspective, accidental. Doesn't this knowledge about potential error undermine an ability to make legitimate claims on other people?

On this issue, it is instructive to compare the aesthetic case to the moral case.[25] While Kant admits that agents can never *really* know whether their own actions are performed from duty, he still thinks that agents can legitimately appraise their own actions, even judge that others ought to judge them precisely as they judge themselves. An agent's license to judge in this way is not, it seems, dependent on an ability *always* to judge accurately, but rather the fact that such judgments are possible: people can act from respect for the moral law.[26] Similarly, our judgments about the beautiful, while vulnerable to mistake, are licensed because agents have the ability to engage disinterestedly with objects in virtue of cognitive abilities that they share with others: people are capable of pure aesthetic judgment. While more needs to be said about the parallel between the moral and aesthetic cases, I think that it stands to offer important help in explaining the justification of aesthetic judgment and Kant's answer to the particularity problem. The ever-present possibility of mistake is not sufficient to defeat normative confidence.[27]

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NOTES

1. See, for example, Guyer (1993, 12) and Chignell (2007).

2. Chignell (2007) is a notable attempt to do precisely this. With the hope of providing a solution to the particularity problem, Chignell appeals to Kant's account of *aesthetic ideas* to identify what it is about an object that induces a judgment of beauty. Though Chignell is by no means the sole proprietor of this view (what we might call an aesthetic ideas account), his interpretation is instructive insofar as it claims to overcome certain nagging faults that plague its predecessors. See, for instance, Crawford (1974) and Savile (1987).

3. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are from Guyer and Matthews (2000). Parenthetical references are to the *Akadamie* edition, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*.

4. Paul Guyer addresses this concern further in *Kant and the Claims of Taste*. See Guyer (1997, 232–33).

5. See Allison (2001, 177–78).

6. See, for example, Allison (2001, 175); Ameriks (1982, 295–96); Guyer (1997, 274–93); and Rind (2002, 24).

7. Though §21 should not be read as an independent argument for the validity of aesthetic judgments, its argument for a *communal sense* is assumed in the §38 deduction. Thus, Ameriks is right to think that it plays a necessary role in the justification of aesthetic judgments. The primary difference between my view and Ameriks's comes down to §21's sufficiency. Ameriks thinks §21 provides a full deduction. I think that, at best, it provides support for one of the deduction's two premises.

8. In other words, Rind's mistake consists in his misleading suggestion that the main text of §38 does not contain all the necessary premises. Against Rind, I contend that the §38 footnote is simply a recapitulation of the main text. Rind, on the other hand, claims that the footnote adds material that the main text lacks.

9. Later on, I say more about the relationship between the ability to "communicate" and the *sensus communis*.

10. Taken from the following lines of text: "If it is admitted that in a pure judgment of taste the satisfaction in the object is combined with the mere judging of its form, then it is nothing other than the subjective purposiveness of that form for the power of judgment that we sense as combined with the representation of the object in the mind" (KU, 5:289–90).

11. Taken from the following lines of text: "Now since the power of judgment in regard to the formal rules of judging, without any matter (neither sensation nor concept), can be directed only to the subjective conditions of the use of the power of judgment in general (which is restricted neither to the particular kind of sense nor to a particular concept of understanding), and thus to that subjective element that one can presuppose in all human beings (as requisite for possible cognitions in general)" (KU, 5:290).

12. Taken from the following lines of text: "[T]he correspondence of a representation with these conditions of the power of judgment must be able to be assumed to be valid for everyone *a priori*. I.e., the pleasure or subjective purposiveness of the representation for the relation of the cognitive faculties in the judging of a sensible object in general can rightly be expected of everyone" (KU, 5:290).

13. For a summary of recent scholarship on the topic of the free play, see Guyer (2005). Guyer's own "metacognitive" interpretation speculates that the free play is occasioned by objects that are unified in a way "that *goes beyond* anything required or dictated by satisfaction of the determinate concept or concepts on which mere identification of the object depends." Chignell too appears to interpret the free play in this way. See Chignell (2007, 416).

14. That the manifold possesses some kind of preconceptual unity or coherence can be gleaned from what Kant says in his General Remark following §22:

> [A]lthough in the apprehension of a given object of the senses it is of course bound to a determinate form of this object and to this extent has no free play (as in invention), nevertheless it is still quite conceivable that the object can provide it with a form that contains precisely such a composition of the manifold as the imagination would design in harmony with the lawfulness of the understanding in general if it were left free by itself. (KU, 5: 241)

15. There are two senses in which Kant's analysis can be considered "formal." In my analysis, I emphasize the formal relationship between the imagination and understanding that gives rise to aesthetic pleasure. It is also the case, however, that Kant thinks that the free play of the imagination that gives rise to aesthetic pleasure is itself caused by certain formal features of an object, for instance, an object's shape or composition. This sense of "formal" is not explicitly addressed in my representation of the deduction because Kant thinks the two senses are intimately related. A pure aesthetic experience—that is, one that is accompanied by the relevant feeling of pleasure—can only be triggered by the formal features of an object. This means that the formal relationship between the imagination and understanding that is depicted in premise (1*) already assumes that the formal features of an object have been sufficiently isolated. Why Kant thinks that only the formal features of an object can elicit this cognitive response is a separate question. I pick this issue up again at the end of the paper when I consider the success of Kant's answer to the particularity problem.

16. Kant's most detailed discussion of disinterestedness comes in §§1–5. In §2 he writes,

> It is readily seen that to say that [the palace] is beautiful and to prove I have taste what matters is what I make of this representation in myself, not how I depend on the existence of the object. Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. 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. (KU, 5:205)

17. In §21, Kant speaks of "the subjective condition of cognizing," that is, a particular "disposition" shared by the imagination and understanding that permits cognition to occur. Later in §38, he again refers to the "subjective element (as requisite for possible cognitions in general)." In the context of §38, the "subjective element" is something that (1) we can presuppose all humans possess and (2) is required to secure the validity of aesthetic judgment. Though I will address each of these claims later in the paper, I will briefly say something about (2) in order to motivate the third premise of my argument. That human beings possess the "subjective condition of cognizing" is vital for the claim of the deduction because aesthetic judgment depends on the same faculties (and no others) as cognition in general. Thus, if we can presuppose that all humans have the faculties requisite for cognition, then we can also presuppose they have the faculties requisite for aesthetic judgment. Again, this quick defense will be expanded later in the paper.

18. In §21, Kant writes:

> Now since this disposition itself must be capable of being universally communicated, hence also the feeling of it (in the case of a given representation), but since the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a common sense, the latter must be able to be assumed with good reason, and indeed without appeal to psychological observations, but rather as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition." (KU, 5:239)

19. See Guyer (1997, 261–62).

20. It is important to distinguish this claim from a similar claim made by Hannah Ginsborg. While I am suggesting that intersubjectivity (that is, communicability) may presume that agents—at least implicitly—take each other to cognize in a similar fashion, Ginsborg defends the stronger claim that empirical cognition depends on intersubjectivity. See Ginsborg (1990), especially 102–70. As far as I can tell, my claim is neutral with respect to Ginsborg's. Thanks to one of my reviewers for pushing me to clarify this.

21. After giving this paper at a recent conference, an audience member presented an interesting empirical challenge to Kant's thesis concerning the universality of aesthetic judgment. The gentleman claimed that he—*pace* Kant—did not expect most people to agree with his judgment that Mozart's music is beautiful. When asked why he did not expect such agreement, his response was telling: he thought that most people were too unsophisticated in taste to appreciate it. In other words, his inability to view other people as sufficiently similar to himself—to see them as fellow *community* members—prevented him from making a genuine aesthetic judgment (insofar as aesthetic judgments are accompanied by a demand for universality). Though, following Kant, presupposing similar cognitive faculties in others surely is a necessary condition for communication, perhaps it is not sufficient. Genuine communication may also presuppose that we take the beliefs and values of others seriously.

22. By "sensible qualities," I just mean the qualities at stake in judgments of agreeableness.

23. Kant writes, "Nevertheless, there must be [a disposition] in which this inner relationship is optimal for the animation of both powers of the mind . . . with respect to cognition . . . in general; and this disposition cannot be determined except through the feeling [of being in that disposition]" (KU 5:238–39).

24. One might also worry about the reverse: that particular idiosyncrasies cause me to judge something as beautiful that is not actually beautiful.

25. While clearly there are differences between the moral and aesthetic cases, I do not think those differences undermine the comparison. The key issues at stake in the particularity problem are (i) a concern about the legitimacy of aesthetic judgment in light of the possibility of error and (ii) the cognitive similarity of rational agents. Even though moral judgments are determinate in a way that aesthetic judgments are not, they are still vulnerable to the kind of error that threatens the latter.

26. Importantly, this is a judgment about whether one has acted from the moral law, not about what the law itself demands.

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