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Kant on Informed Pure Judgments of Taste

ABSTRACT

Two dominant interpretations of Kant's notion of adherent beauty, the conjunctive view and the incorporation view, provide an account of how to form informed aesthetic assessments concerning artworks. According to both accounts, judgments of perfection play a crucial role in making informed, although impure, judgments of taste. These accounts only examine aesthetic responses to objects that meet or fail to meet the expectations we have regarding what they ought to be. I demonstrate that Kant's works of genius do not fall within either of these categories. The distinguishing features of these works, namely, originality and exemplarity, become unrecognizable on these interpretations because originality and exemplarity lie in the work's ability to exceed one's expectations concerning its form and content. They contribute to artistic beauty through alternative transformation methods distinct from that of abstraction, namely, concept expansion and repudiation. These additional accounts of transformation lead to a rather surprising outcome: works of genius turn out to be paradigm cases where one can and indeed ought to form informed pure judgments of taste.

I. INTRODUCTION

Kant's aesthetic theory has been criticized and even mocked¹ due to an apparent implication it has regarding art appreciation, namely, that we do not seem to be able to make *informed* aesthetic assessments of artworks. According to Kant's conception of aesthetic experience, a *pure* judgment of taste (this poem is beautiful) does not involve the subsumption of an object (this poem) under any determinate concept (the concept of beauty) but instead expresses our mental state when we reflect on the representation of an object that we find subjectively purposive for our cognitive faculties. In this framework, no determinate concept determines one's aesthetic evaluations of an object. Furthermore, the content of aesthetic experience is nonconceptual, and therefore analyzing the subjectively purposive form of the object into its further elements cannot improve our understanding of how our judgments come about. Consequently, it seems as though expertise in art history and criticism cannot have any relevance for the aesthetic appreciation of artworks on the Kantian model. The relevance of expertise depends on whether the classification of an artwork under

appropriate concepts or categories of criticism, such as those of artforms, genres, subgenres, periods, styles, schools, movements, and so on, is germane to its aesthetic appreciation. Kant's no determinate concept requirement seems to preclude any role that classification might otherwise play.

From a contemporary point of view, judging art in isolation from art history and criticism causes us to miss out on most of what is meritorious in a work, which cannot be appreciated without placing it in the artworld, locating it with respect to tradition, with respect to the contemporary art scene, and so on. Imagine, for example, what would be involved were we to aesthetically engage with works such as Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* or Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* in isolation. In isolation, one is a urinal and the other a counterfeit Brillo box, but neither would be appreciated as an artwork. As Richard Wollheim writes,

A heroic proposal, deriving from Kant, the aim of which is to ensure the democracy of art, is to define the ideal critic as one whose cognitive stock is empty, or who brings to bear upon the work of art zero knowledge, beliefs, and concepts. The proposal has, however, little to recommend it except its aim. It is all but impossible to

put into practice, and, if it could be, it would lead to critical judgments that would be universally unacceptable. (1980, 130)

It is this representation of Kantian aesthetic theory as overly democratic that I want to correct. I believe that this initial assessment loses its force once we recognize that Kant actually thinks that the use of determinate concepts is called for in the aesthetic appreciation of artworks.

Within the Kantian framework, judgments of perfection (for example, this is a good example of abstract expressionism), which are formed on the basis of determinate concepts (the concept of abstract expressionism), have a crucial role to play in aesthetic assessments. In fact, to defend Kant, several scholars have argued for the possibility of making informed, albeit *impure*, aesthetic assessments of artworks (see Guyer 2005; Zuckert 2007; Rueger 2008; Wicks 1997; Mallaband 2002). While conceding that making *pure* judgments of taste does not involve using determinate concepts, they claim that Kant's judgments of adherent beauty, which are *impure*, allow room for making informed aesthetic assessments. The judgment of adherent beauty (this painting is good), which presupposes the concept of what the object ought to be (concept of abstract expressionism) and the perfection of the object in accordance with it (this painting is a good example of abstract expressionism), seems to be the only informed judgment one can make within the bounds of Kant's democratic aesthetic theory. In this article, I argue that the function of judgments of perfection in making informed aesthetic assessment is not limited to making judgments of adherent beauty. I defend that it is possible to make informed *pure* judgments of taste.

The problem is that unless we provide an alternative interpretation, the extant interpretations cannot provide a satisfactory account of how to judge works of genius that is consistent with Kant's view. These accounts examine only the aesthetic responses to the objects that line up with, or fall short of, the expectations we have about what they ought to be. I demonstrate that Kant's descriptions of works of genius do not fall within either of these categories. The distinguishing features of these works, namely, originality and exemplarity, become unrecognizable on these interpretations because originality and exemplarity, as I argue, lie in the work's ability to exceed one's expectations

concerning its form and content. The extant accounts give us two options: (1) to treat works of genius as adherent beauties by subsuming them under existing critical categories of art, or (2) to treat them as free beauties by abstracting from these categories. Both of these options are non-starters since (1) means that these works are not original or exemplary, provided that they can be subsumed under critical categories, while (2) entails that we will never appreciate their originality or exemplarity if we are lacking a contrast class. I solve this problem by proposing alternative transformation methods distinct from that of abstraction, namely, concept expansion and repudiation. This additional account of transformation leads to a rather surprising outcome: works of genius are paradigm cases where one can and indeed *ought* to form informed *pure* judgments of taste.

II. EXTANT INTERPRETATIONS

There are two dominant interpretations of Kant's judgment of adherent beauty, the conjunctive view and the incorporation view. According to the former, the judgment of adherent beauty results from combining a judgment of perfection with a judgment of taste (Gammon 1999; Allison 2001; Rueger 2008). The latter view claims that it is a consequence of incorporating a judgment of perfection into a judgment of taste (Zuckert 2007). These interpretations, when combined, account for the different ways of forming informed *impure* judgments concerning artworks.

In one of these informed assessments, a positive judgment of perfection can perform a beauty-contributing role by *directly* pointing out which properties of the object we should focus on and which ones to ignore while forming a judgment of taste. Zuckert, partially using Kendall Walton's account in "Categories of Art," claims that the kind concepts we use will assist us in recognizing the standard and variable properties of artworks, which would not have been salient otherwise. For instance, placing Henry Moore's *Reclining Figure* (1969–1970) under the category of abstract sculpture indicates that we should not expect the work to have the property of accurate depiction of a reclining human figure in detail because it is not a standard property with respect to the category of abstract sculpture. *Reclining Figure*, when appreciated under the category of modern classicism,

where realist depiction is standard, might look like “a lumpy hulk of metal” that “suggests a dying mantis or a poorly formed pterodactyl” (Liss et al. 2016).² In fact, it might strike one as “hideous” (2016). However, when appreciated in its appropriate category, *Reclining Figure*’s fluid surface and large size that are variable with respect to the category of abstract sculpture will make us reflect on the distinctive style of the artist in comparison to other artists working within the same genre. Furthermore, since one of the variable features of abstract works is to be nonrepresentational yet expressive, classification as abstract sculpture leads us to investigate whether anything is expressed by the work. In turn, we will realize the psychological effects of the *Reclining Figure*, and we will see that it is meant to present strength in fragility and precarious movement. After classifying the work under the appropriate category and determining its standard and variable properties, we can say that *Reclining Figure* is a good example of abstract sculpture due to the distinctive style of the artist and its expressive power, which can be challenging given the medium. This positive judgment of perfection will inform our overall aesthetic assessment of the work, and perhaps we will not find the work hideous anymore.

Supplementary to the incorporation view’s explanation of informed positive impure judgments of taste, the conjunctive view provides an elucidation of how one can form informed negative aesthetic judgments. As it is possible for us to appreciate an artwork which we were initially indifferent toward or which we find ugly, the reverse is also possible. In these cases, the negative judgment of perfection overrides the positive judgment of taste by directing us to adjust the properties we take to be standard or variable. After this adjustment, we can form two possible responses: either we can greet the work with indifference or we can find it unpleasant or ugly (V-Met/Dohna 28:676).³ For instance, I can judge a poem to be beautiful. However, if I am told that this poem ought to be a sonnet, then I may judge it to be poor in that respect if it strays clumsily from iambic pentameter. Likewise, I may aesthetically appreciate a movie, thinking how its comical scenes are wonderfully crafted until I am told that it is supposed to be a film noir.

The conjunctive view when combined with the incorporation view explains different possible ways to form informed aesthetic assessments.

Whether it is a positive assessment or a negative assessment, our reference point in evaluating the work’s aesthetic merit according to each view is the work’s success in meeting expectations attached to the categories under which we subsume it. If it meets the expectations, the judgment of perfection gets incorporated into the judgment of taste. If it fails to meet them, the judgment of taste is overridden. Aside from these judgments of adherent beauty, the only other possible judgment to make concerning artworks is, of course, a pure judgment of taste. However, according to the extant interpretations this judgment is an uninformed one and can only be formed *via* abstraction.

Indeed, at the end of §16 where the free-adherent beauty distinction is introduced, Kant seems to give us an unrestricted license to employ abstraction in transforming judgments of adherent beauty into pure judgments of taste: “A judgment of taste in regard to an object with a determinate internal end would . . . be pure only if the person making the judgment either had no concept of this end or abstracted from it in his judgment” (*KU* 5:231). This is, for all one can tell, a general claim; no limitations seem to be implied. In §17, however, Kant discusses what appears to be an exception or limitation and at the same time explains how we can employ abstraction. Section 17 is about a distinct kind of adherent beauty, human beauty. The human being is an exception because we know what it means for a human being to be absolutely good in itself in all aspects. Our *a priori* concept of moral perfection determines and fixes the end assigned to the human being. Consequently, we can never abstract from this concept. The idea of moral perfection always accompanies our thoughts regarding human beings. Thus, the judgment of adherent beauty estimates not only the beauty of the object but also its goodness. But aside from human beauty, we can form a pure judgment of taste regarding any other object. An important implication I derive from Kant’s claims in §§16–17 is that, as long as the concept presupposed in the judgment of adherent beauty is not an *a priori* concept or does not determine the end *a priori*, this judgment can be transformed, through abstraction, into a judgment of free beauty. Consequently, because the ends of all objects—other than human beings—are not fixed, we can abstract from the concepts that determine these ends and hence form pure judgments of taste regarding

them. Other than human beings, all objects, including artworks that fall under empirical concepts that do not determine ends *a priori*, can be judged both adherently and freely.⁴

I do not intend to suggest that the transformation through abstraction necessitates abstracting from all the concepts we employ. There are some concepts whose presence does not interfere with pure judgments of taste. For instance, in judging all artworks we need to presuppose the concept of art. Evidently we cannot abstract from this concept since otherwise we would not be treating the work as an intentional product but a product of chance (*KU* 5:310). Paul Guyer gives a convincing argument for accommodating the fact that the intention of the artist, namely, producing pleasure through free play, cannot act as a determinate concept to restrict the free play. The recognition of this kind of intention, Guyer acknowledges, cannot determine the response to a work of art because the existence of the intention does not guarantee the occurrence of pleasure since it is possible for the work to fail to induce pleasure (1994, 278).⁵

There may be other concepts, similar to the concept of art, that can be presupposed without determining our judgment. Depending on the work, it might be possible that in judging a particular artwork the determinate concept of its artform may not interfere with our judgment at all. The reasons for this may be various. Perhaps other concepts are more relevant than the concept of its artform in judging this object. The concept perhaps does not tell us anything at all about which properties of the work are variable and which standard. We are perhaps referring to other categories of criticism to tell us that. If this is the case, then some concepts, even though they are determinate and really do pick out the object in question, do not determine our judgment about the object. Some might dispute this by claiming that whenever we place an object under a determinate concept this concept necessarily determines our judgment. However, I find this possible objection ill founded; after all even Kant's own examples of pure judgments of taste—for example, this rose is beautiful—indicate the presence of a concept that does not interfere with the pure judgment of taste.

Ted Cohen, by employing Kant's distinction between two predicates, shows why this is completely compatible with Kant's account. Kant writes,

In every judgment . . . there are two predicates that we compare with one another, of which one, which comprises the given cognition of the object, is the logical subject, and the other, which is to be compared with the first, is called the logical predicate. (Refl 17:616)

For instance, in the judgment "this building is tall," the logical subject is "building" and the logical predicate is "tall." Even though, Kant here says "every judgment," he is referring specifically to every determinate judgment. Cohen applies this distinction to reflective judgments, particularly to judgments of taste. He rightly claims that even though there is no logical predicate in a judgment of taste (after all the judgment expresses only the state of mind in reflecting on the object), there is a logical subject, which is a concept (1990, 142). He adds that, since the conceptual activity of comparing the logical predicate to the logical subject is what grounds the determinate judgment, by eliminating the logical predicate we can eliminate the activity of comparison. Hence, without this activity the determinate concepts we use as subject-concepts do not necessarily determine the judgment. In aesthetically judging such objects, as well as the objects we are able to subsume under determinate concepts, the activity of comparison is between the reflection on the representation of the object and our cognitive faculties. Hence, as long as we do not allow the determinate concepts under which we subsume the object in question to dictate the set of properties we will reflect on—as they do in judgments of adherent beauty—the judgment we form will be a pure judgment of taste, and we will regard the object as a free beauty.

III. PRODUCTS OF GENIUS

In theory, we should be able to judge works of genius either as adherent beauties or as free beauties. However, neither of these judgments as depicted by the existing interpretations seems to be able to accommodate appropriate appreciation of works of genius. For the production of beautiful art, Kant says, genius is required (*KU* 5:311). In §46, genius is defined as a talent for producing works that display "originality" and "exemplarity." Neither of these characteristics, however, is perceptual. This having been said, they are the means for judging beauty (Refl 16:125). Hence, the original exemplarity of a work is determined in relation to other

works. When we subsume an artwork under existing categories of art, these kind concepts directly single out the rules according to which the work is produced and should be judged. Indeed, Kant seems to think that “every art presupposes rules which first lay the foundation by means of which a product that is to be called artistic is first represented as possible” (*KU* 5:307). What makes an artwork original, however, is that it breaks with these rules. Hence, Kant states that genius is indeed “a **talent** for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition of skill for that which can be learned in accordance with some rule, consequently that **originality** must be its primary characteristic” (*KU* 5:307–308). In this sense, a work, insofar as it breaks with the existing rules, cannot be placed under existing categories of criticism, which endorse these rules. However, originality by itself is not enough to make something into a work of genius, for Kant asserts that

since there can also be original nonsense, its products must at the same time be models, i.e. **exemplary**, hence, while not themselves the result of imitation [*Nachahmung*], they must yet serve others in that way, i.e. as a standard or a rule for judging. (*KU* 5:308)

This description of exemplarity seems to be at odds with the originality requirement. For one thing, Timothy Gould diagnoses that if “works of genius must be imitated . . . [t]hese works of originality must be made in one aspect, precisely in order that they can be received as models—that is, received unoriginally” (1982, 183).⁶ Second, it seems as though the work, upon becoming exemplary, upon becoming a model or standard, can no longer be original.

In order to alleviate the first worry, which also puts at stake the integrity of exemplary originality, Martin Gammon gives an extensive analysis of the development of Kant’s views on exemplarity and its relation to imitation [*Nachahmung*], emulation [*Nachfolge*], replication [*Nachmachung*], and aping [*Nachäffung*]. Gammon argues that a work of genius

can serve either as a pattern (*Muster*) for imitation (*Nachahmung*) by future artists, as a “standard or rule for estimating” their work, as Kant specifies in §46; or, as an archetype (*Urbild*) for the emulation (*Nachfolge*) by future geniuses. If a genial creation is treated as a mere

“pattern” for creativity, then one will merely imitate the manner of its performance; but if one emulates it as an archetype of taste, then one can ignite one’s own “true original.” (1997, 587)

The genius can play this dual role not only because she breaks with the old rules but also because she possesses “a principle of novelty in rules, because she [it] gives new rules” (V-Anth/Pillau 25:784). Genius should break with the old rules, but we need to qualify what this means. Kant writes,

The initiates [*adepten*] of genius, who must necessarily make appeals to genius, [but] also can only estimate their [own] genius by the appraisal of people, are those who have a *communal* [*gemeinschaftliche*], but not a *communicable*, inspiration [*Eingebung*], [and thus share] only a *sympathetic intelligibility*. One must let this inspiration drive their work, but without fretting over it, because one does not actually contradict the spirit [of one’s predecessors], and yet one refutes [*wiederlegen*] it. The artful trick is this: breaking free from science and erudition in consideration of [one’s] original spirit, and being critical of others and of any deep secret religious conviction, which gives consideration to idle talk. (as cited in Gammon 1997, 587; Refl 15:391)

Hence, breaking with old rules does not involve contradicting them, but employing them as a source of inspiration and thereby of refutation. As Gammon points out, the archetypal exemplarity and originality of the predecessors is not contradicted in a work of genius since her talent is ignited by their example; instead, the work refutes the dominance of their example as a pattern for future creativity since it proffers a new pattern for imitation (587). Therefore, contrary to Gould’s worries, the work of genius is not necessarily received unoriginally given that due to its archetypal status it does indeed inspire other works of genius. As Kant clearly states, “the product of a genius . . . is an example . . . for emulation by another genius, who is thereby awakened to the feeling of his own originality” (*KU* 5:318). It does not imply that there is unoriginal reception. Indeed, Gammon lists the possible ways in which a work of genius can be received, which include:

as an archetype (*Urbild*) for the emulation (*Nachfolge*) of future geniuses, as a pattern (*Muster*) for the imitation (*Nachahmung*) of future artists, as model (*Modell*) or precept (*Vorschrift*) for the replication

(*Nachmachung*) by schools, and as an expression of peculiarity (*Eigentümlichkeit*), which may serve for the aping (*Nachäffung*) of counterfeits, plagiarists, and “tyros.” (588)

Gammon’s answer to the first worry allows us to dismiss the second worry I raised as well. Since the archetypal status of a work of genius is never contradicted, it never ceases to be original. In Gammon’s words, “the exemplarity of the genius in fact reinforces its claims to originality, rather than undermines them” (588–589). In this sense, the work of genius never ceases to be original and exemplary. I also take Kant’s claims regarding exemplary originality to signal a twofold approach to products of genius. We do not judge the work of genius only with respect to its antecedents or precedents (since otherwise we cannot determine their originality), but also with respect to its successors (since otherwise their exemplary influence cannot be articulated). However, these features cannot be recognized if the judgments available to us are limited to the ones characterized by the existing accounts of judgments of adherent beauty.

According to both the conjunctive view and the incorporation view, we form judgments of perfection concerning artworks by presupposing the relevant categories of criticism and that these judgments are either combined with or incorporated into judgments of taste. But, in virtue of being original, a work of genius is not subsumable under the existing categories of art in this manner. Were it a good example of its kind, it would not be issuing a new rule but endorsing one of the existing rules. The work, insofar as it is original, is transgressing the rules, and the transgressive or revolutionary aspect of the work cannot be captured by the existing categories. Hence, the work must exhibit contra-standard properties that resist subsumption. Walton argues that there are two responses these types of works can elicit: we can either create a new category where the transgressive contra-standard features of the work become standard or expand the relevant category (1970, 352–354). These two responses result from the exemplarity of the work and prove that the work is not original nonsense. In this sense, because works of genius resist subsumption under existing categories, they cannot be appreciated as instances of adherent beauty. However, one could claim that the new category or the expanded category still determines our judgment. This objection reverses

the order of explanation: we do not decide on the standard and variable properties of the object with respect to the new or expanded category. Rather it is the other way around. Additionally, we cannot abstract from the categories we employ in forming a pure judgment of taste because if we do, then we would be abstracting from the very conditions under which we can judge an artwork to be original and exemplary and hence beautiful. Without presupposing the old rules, how could we know what the work is transgressing or amplifying? One can also argue that we do not need to abstract from the existing relevant categories of criticism because they do not determine our judgment, just as the concept of a rose does not necessarily determine our judgment “this rose is beautiful.” However, this objection is based on a false presupposition. The existing categories of criticism do not function in the subject-concept capacity. If they did, then the work would be subsumable under them. Hence, we seem to have a new problem on our hands: we do not know how to appropriately judge products of genius.

IV. TRANSFORMATION WITHOUT ABSTRACTION

The first step in addressing this problem is to note that even though abstraction is (almost) always *possible*, it may not always be *appropriate*. Although we (almost) always can abstract, sometimes—under certain conditions—we ought not to do so. I want to show in more detail that, for works of genius, abstraction, although possible, is inappropriate and that Kant promotes pure judgments of taste as the correct judgments to make when it comes to such works. The question then is how the transformation into pure judgments of taste can take place *without* employing abstraction. I propose that the transformation occurs due to concept expansion and repudiation.

In order to appreciate why we ought to treat works of genius as free beauties and how to do so, we need to examine Kant’s theory of genius and aesthetic ideas in more detail. Kant states that genius, which is required for producing beautiful art, possesses not only spirit but also taste. Spirit is the principle that animates the mind by purposely setting the mental powers into motion, into a free play (*KU* 5:314). It can animate the mind in such a way because spirit is the faculty for the symbolic presentation of aesthetic ideas

(*KU* 5:314). Aesthetic ideas are products of the imagination that result from transforming what is given in experience into an idea without yielding to the laws of association and creating new associations. As I explain elsewhere (Tuna 2016, especially 404–405), this freedom from the law of association makes it possible for the aesthetic ideas to present rational ideas, empirical concepts, and emotions through aesthetic ideas (*KU*, AA 5:314).⁷ An aesthetic idea is an organization of diverse nonaesthetic internal properties, alongside aesthetic attributes, that come together in a unique fashion to present a rational idea, an empirical concept, or an emotion.⁸ This organization, in order to count as beautiful, should indicate originality and exemplarity (*KU* 5:307f, §46). Thus, genius is the capacity of bringing all of these contingent attributes and/or properties together in an original and exemplary fashion.

Kant states that the “originality of talent . . . can consist either in the product itself and the materials, or in the form; genius really pertains to the latter, for we ourselves cannot produce materials” (V-Anth/Pillau 25:784). Hence, the genius displays originality insofar as the creation of aesthetic ideas comprises not only breaking with the laws of association and the rules of artistic convention but also establishing new associations that have not been imagined by others. Originality indicates that there are no direct rules available for genius to follow for producing beautiful art—otherwise she would not be breaking with the existing rules but merely reproducing or imitating them (*KU* 5:307). However, untamed originality can have negative consequences, namely, it can produce original nonsense. That is why possessing spirit is not enough for producing beautiful art, and genius also needs to possess taste. It is through possessing taste that genius displays exemplarity: the work must be such that it can serve as an archetype, a pattern, a model, or as an expression of peculiarity to others (*KU* 5:308). For the production of an original and exemplary work, an optimal relation between imagination and understanding is required. The imagination finds not only an aesthetic idea but also an expression for this idea (*KU* 5:317). The state of mind of the genius in finding the aesthetic idea is “unnameable” or incommunicable because he or she cannot “bring [this] representation of the imagination to concepts,” that is, he or she cannot “expound” it (*KU* 5:343). The imagination needs to hit upon

the expressions for the aesthetic idea and present that which is “unnameable.” However, the imagination cannot carry out this task without the understanding. It is only with the guidance of the understanding that the imagination transforms what is “unnameable” into something universally communicable (*KU* 5:316–317).

Furthermore, in order to produce something unique that can serve as an example, the genius should be acquainted with the traditions of good art. If the genius lacks knowledge of art history and criticism, how would it be possible for her to create something that has not been thought by others? In fact, Kant states that such knowledge is required for the production of beautiful art: “[I]t has been quite rightly noticed that for beautiful art in its full perfection much science is required, such as, e.g., acquaintance with ancient languages, wide reading of those authors considered to be classical, history, acquaintance with antiquities, etc.” (*KU* 5:305). These historical sciences, which include acquaintance with the products of beautiful art, refer to the body of art historical and critical knowledge in modern terminology. They, Kant says, “constitute the necessary preparation and foundation for beautiful art” (*KU* 5:305). However, he claims that possessing such knowledge and employing it only to mechanically create something academically correct by following the rules cannot constitute the essential condition of art. In the same vein, Kant disparages those who think that they can create something original by rejecting all the rules completely:

Now since the originality of his talent constitutes one (but not the only) essential element of the character of the genius, superficial minds believe that they cannot show that they are blossoming geniuses any better than by pronouncing themselves free of the academic constraint of all rules, and they believe that one parades around better on a horse with the staggers than one that is properly trained. (*KU* 5:310)

Hence, “determinate rules are required, from which one may not absolve oneself”; however, they must be used for inspiration, as a springboard, not for imitation. This also again makes it clear that genius must necessarily possess both spirit and taste and that neither is sufficient on its own to produce beautiful art.⁹ As Kant states, “Genius can only provide rich **material** for products of art; its elaboration and **form** require a talent that has

been academically trained, in order to make a use of it that can stand up to the power of judgment” (*KU* 5:310).

The foregoing exposition of Kant’s theory of aesthetic creation constitutes the preparatory step toward understanding Kant’s account of aesthetic reception and recognizing what makes it possible to appreciate works of genius as instances of free beauty without abstracting from the concepts we use and thereby from what makes it possible to make informed pure judgments of taste regarding works of genius. How do we judge such works? Kant asserts that in judging such works as beautiful, the aesthetic idea is added to the rational idea that it aims to present and “aesthetically enlarges the concept [from reason/delivered by reason] itself in an unbounded way” (*KU* 5:315).¹⁰ He says that this addition of the aesthetic idea corresponds to an addition of “that [which] is unnameable, the feeling of which animates the cognitive faculties and combines spirit with the mere letter of language” to the rational idea (*KU* 5:316). This means that the expression of the aesthetic idea, which is the work itself, arouses certain feelings that recall to the mind the feelings stemming from reflection on a rational idea. This rational idea turns out to be what the aesthetic idea aims to present. It also makes us realize that there are several other representations that arouse the same feelings in us, which can now be seen as different attributes of the same rational idea. Through these new associations the rational idea gets expanded and we find further pleasure in this expansion.

In order to explain what Kant means by “aesthetic expansion of (determinate/indeterminate) concepts” I want to contrast it with the *logical* expansion of empirical concepts. Logical expansion can take place in two ways: the conceptual content can be expanded either *extensively* or *intensively*. For Kant, because human cognition is discursive, it takes place through (general or partial) representations, which take what is common to things, namely, marks, as the ground of cognition (*Log* 9:58). The marks in things, which constitute a part of the cognition of those things, are divided into two kinds: coordinate and subordinate (*Log* 9:58–59). The coordinate marks are immediate marks of things, and their combination is called an aggregate (*Log* 9:59). The subordinate marks are the ones that are represented in the thing only by means of the other marks, and their combination is called a series (*Log* 9:59). The *extensive*

expansion of a concept corresponds to the addition of more coordinate marks to the concept. For instance, the addition of more coordinate marks, such as having a coat with dark blotches or patches separated by light hair, having a long neck and legs, and being a mammal, *extensively* expands the concept of a giraffe. The *intensive* expansion of the concept of “giraffe” takes place when we add other properties to this concept, such as being warm-blooded, through derivation from the mark of being a mammal. Both kinds of expansion make the concept more distinct, either extensively or intensively distinct (*Log* 9:59).

A rational idea, however, which is an indeterminate concept, cannot become more distinct. Therefore, its conceptual content cannot be expanded either extensively or intensively. For either kind of expansion to work, we need to be able to provide adequate intuitions to the concepts that carry the same marks. However, as we have seen, by definition, nothing in sensible intuition is adequate to rational ideas. What is adequate to them are aesthetic attributes or symbols. Since genius makes use of new symbolic associations that we did not think of before, the aesthetic expansion of rational ideas corresponds to the addition of more aesthetic attributes to rational ideas. It is in this experience of the aesthetic expansion of rational ideas by addition of aesthetic attributes beyond the marks of these concepts that we find pleasure.

However, unlike the case of natural beauty where “the mere reflection on a given intuition, without a concept of what the object ought to be, is sufficient for arousing and communicating the idea of which that object is considered as the expression,” when it comes to art we need a concept (*KU* 5:320). After claiming that beauty “in general” can “be called the expression of aesthetic ideas,” Kant says that “only in beautiful art this idea must be *occasioned* [*veranlaßt*] by a concept of the object” (*KU* 5:320, emphasis added). As the wording suggests, our reflection on the given intuitions, namely, on aesthetic ideas, is only occasioned or triggered by the concept; but this does not entail that the concept guides the whole process. Since Kant is not very explicit about what this concept might be, I am going to entertain three possible options and explain why and how none of them can guide the entire process of appreciation.

The possible candidates are the concept of art, the rational idea or the empirical concept the work

presents, and the categories of criticism. (1) If the concept is the concept of art then the process of reflection needs to be triggered by a concept that indicates that the object is not a product of chance but created for the sake of inducing the free play in the audience. As we have seen earlier, Guyer gives a convincing argument that this concept cannot determine our aesthetic responses. (2) If this concept is a rational idea that the aesthetic idea aims to present, given that it is an indeterminate concept, it cannot also determine our response to the work. (3) Another possibility is that this concept refers to kind-concepts, that is, categories of criticism. I think that it is very well possible that we approach the object with certain expectations that are determined by the experiences that we have had with different artworks. Furthermore, I also believe that we need categories of criticism in order to trigger our reflection on aesthetic ideas and determine whether the work in question is original and exemplary, hence beautiful.

The question becomes how we can ensure that a concept of this kind is not going to determine our response to the work. I argue that the categories of criticism we employ get expanded or repudiated each time we encounter a work of genius since the work of genius, which should be both original and exemplary, always exceeds our expectations.¹¹ Indeed its originality and exemplarity is grounded in its success in exceeding our expectations. Works of genius exceed our expectations concerning aesthetic ideas due to the fact that, in creating them, genius not only breaks with the laws of association but also establishes new associations. This in turn opens up the possibility for a rational idea, an empirical concept, or an emotion to be presented in unexpected ways and leads to an aesthetic expansion of this presented concept. In other words, these works exceed our expectations concerning what can be presented and how it can be presented. One obvious question is how we determine that the work exceeds our expectations. I think that it can be done *only indirectly*, and this indirectness accounts for the purity of the informed judgments we make concerning these works.

The main thing we need to keep in mind is that for Kant the new is always understood relationally. In this sense we need to appeal to some categories in order to appreciate the way in which the work exceeds our expectations. The judgment of

taste cannot, however, be the judgment by which we can determine this. After all, it is not based on a determinate concept. This is the point where the judgment of perfection becomes central. Our reflection on the given intuition (that is, the aesthetic idea) is occasioned or triggered by the relevant categories. Recall that in the case of an informed *impure* judgment of taste, the function of a judgment of perfection on the basis of objective classification is to *directly* single out the properties constitutive of the aesthetic idea expressed by the object. A judgment of perfection cannot function in such capacity to judge original and exemplary works, which resist classification and are not good examples of any extant artistic kind. In these cases, the relevant categories, namely, the categories that will be amplified in order to subsume the work or the categories that are repudiated by the work, *indirectly* single out the contra-standard properties of the work. These contra-standard properties, which will become standard with respect to the amplified category or the new category, are constitutive of the aesthetic idea expressed by the work. Hence, we determine whether or not the work exceeds our expectations with respect to what the work presents (the indeterminate or determinate concept or emotion) and how it is presented (the aesthetic idea) *only relationally*, via frustrated attempts at making judgments of perfection.

The reason why categories of criticism cannot determine our responses to works of genius even though they should be used to occasion or trigger our reflection on aesthetic ideas can be most clearly seen in those instances where a work's original exemplarity lies in the fact that its contra-standard features motivate us to reevaluate completely the critical categories we use and warrant formation of a new category under which to subsume the work. One of the most oft-discussed works, due to its transgressive contra-standard features that defied aesthetic classification, Duchamp's *Fountain*, exemplifies such an instance.¹² The characteristics of the work, namely, being anaesthetic and ready-made, become its defining contra-standard features and ground its claim to originality only when considered in relation to the art historical narrative. The presupposition of the relevant categories, by indirectly making the contra-standard features salient, triggers our reflection on the aesthetic idea presented in the work, and this reflection also makes it

possible for us to see what is being presented in the work. Without presupposing them, we would perhaps be baffled by the ridiculous mistake being made in placing the urinal in the exhibition room of an art gallery instead of its bathroom. Only by presupposing the categories does our reflection on the aesthetic idea (which is expressed by something that is anaesthetic and ready-made) direct us to reflect on our conception of art, namely, what it involves and what it can do, and broadens our conception by means of a suggestion that “it might be possible for art to be a form of expression purely for the mind, rather than the eye” (Dutton 2009, 194). Note that the existing categories are not used in the same way when we make judgments of perfection. A judgment of perfection is a report on whether or not a work is a good example of its kind. In the case of *Fountain*, the categories are used to show why the work is uncategorizable under the existing categories and why we need to form a new category, such as conceptual art. This having been said, the status of the work as a work of genius cannot be determined only in relation to prior categories of art; to fully appreciate it we also need to refer to its subsequent influence. This is one of the core reasons why we appreciate the work as it is. *Fountain* has a unique place in the history of aesthetics. Its influence is recognizable not only by means of the subsequent influence it has had on the creation of indiscernibles but also in the change of general attitude of audiences toward artworks (anything can be art, so be cautious!).

As illustrated in this example, the initial categories, which trigger the process of judging by contradicting the properties of a work, cease to determine our judgment. In an encounter with an original and exemplary artwork, the relevant categories we use either expand extensively, by means of the addition of more particulars to the aggregate, or are repudiated, and we form a new category for the work in question. This allows for free play to take place without interruption. It is free because our imagination is being entertained and is not restricted by our understanding since the category, in getting expanded or repudiated, ceases to determine our judgment. What happens in these situations is that our initial attempt at making a judgment of perfection is cancelled out, and we end up with a pure judgment of taste *without abstraction* when we realize that the concepts we started with are not extensive enough to

subsume what is given in the artwork. Or, to put it more accurately, we end up with an informed pure judgment of taste.

In short, just as there are no rules for genius to follow in producing beautiful artworks, so too there are no rules that we can follow in appreciating them either. We judge a work of genius on the basis of an aesthetic idea and a rational idea. However, none of these ideas are fixed, and indeed they get further expanded once we judge the artwork. This expansion is possible because, in judging artistic beauty, even though we start with a concept (whatever it may be), this concept only occasions or triggers the aesthetic ideas; moreover, as I said, it does not determine the whole process. In making a judgment of perfection we check whether or not there is an agreement of the manifold with the concept we have. In judging it, our concept is not getting expanded. We check whether or not the object fits into this concept. However, in forming a judgment regarding a work of genius, the object does not fit into our conception, forcing us to change the kind of judgment we use. The frustrated attempts at making judgments of perfection indirectly lead to a transformation in the initial judgment of taste we make without reference to any category. Perhaps we start with a positive judgment of taste or a negative judgment, or a mistaken judgment of adherent beauty. Only after realizing that the work resists our attempts at making judgments of perfection about it, one of these initial judgments, an uninformed one or a flawed one, is transformed into an informed pure judgment of taste because (1) this work aesthetically expands our conception of rational ideas/empirical concepts/emotions by associating them with different attributes and (2) it exceeds our expectations concerning aesthetic ideas because the genius breaks with the laws of association in forming them. If this were not the case, the work would not display the originality and exemplarity that are requisite for being beautiful. More importantly, we make no use of abstraction when we are forming an informed pure judgment of taste. As a matter of fact, we *should not* abstract from the concepts we use when we are forming a judgment of taste because if we abstract from these concepts, we can never appreciate the object as original and exemplary. We need these concepts to trigger the process. Once our concept gets expanded or repudiated, we can say that the work is original and exemplary, and hence beautiful.¹³

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1. See Crawford (1974, 160–171) and Dutton (1994, 226–241) as examples of the former, and Schopenhauer (1969, 529–532) as an example of the latter.

2. This is the characterization provided by a group of Columbia University students in a student newspaper opened in support of their petition against the installation of Moore's *Reclining Figure* in front of the school's library.

3. All references to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in this article will be to volume 5 and page number(s) of the Akademie Ausgabe (Kant 1900), for example (*KU* 5:265). Translations will follow Kant (2000). All other references to Kant's works follow the translations in the Cambridge edition (Kant 1996, 2000, 2005, 2007, 2012) and provide reference to the Akademie Ausgabe by providing the abbreviated title of each work and volume and page number: V-Met/Dohna: *Metaphysik Dohna*, Refl: *Notes and Fragments*, V-Anth/Pillau: *Anthropology Pillau*, Log: *Logic*.

4. In opposition to the position presented here, Guyer argues, "It is not always in one's power to abstract or divert one's attention from a concept that applies to an object" (2005, 90). He deduces this from the following passage in Kant: "It might be adduced as a counterexample to this definition that there are things in which one can see a purposive form without cognizing an end in them, e.g., the stone utensils often excavated from ancient burial mounds, which are equipped with a hole, as if for a handle, which, although they clearly betray by their shape a purposiveness the end of which one does not know, are nevertheless not declared to be beautiful on that account. Yet the fact that they are regarded as a work of art is already enough to require one to admit that one relates their shape to some sort of intention and to a determinate purpose. Hence there is also no immediate satisfaction at all in their intuition" (*KU* 5:236). Kant clearly states that these objects cannot be called beautiful due to the presupposed purpose. Contrary to Guyer's interpretation, I think what Kant wants to say is that they are not examples of beautiful or liberal art but instead examples of remunerative or mechanical art even though we do not know the purpose some of their parts serve. While the former kind

of art has the feeling of pleasure as its aim, the latter “performs the actions requisite to make it [an object] actual” (*KU* 5:305). The presupposed, though unknown, purpose of the utensils indicates that they are not created for aesthetic contemplation, and hence they are not objects of aesthetic pleasure. Hence, our lack of acquaintance with the possible specific purposes of some artifacts does not necessarily qualify them as objects of beautiful art.

5. Anthony Savile makes the same point (1993, 93).

6. See also Guyer (1996, 295–296).

7. Even though Kant devotes special attention to the presentation of rational ideas, this should not give the impression that aesthetic ideas cannot present other things and that beautiful art should only have rational ideas as its thematic content. For brevity, I explain only how aesthetic ideas present rational ideas. For a more detailed elucidation of how aesthetic ideas can present empirical concepts and emotions, see Matherne (2013, 21–33).

8. See Allison (2001, 283).

9. To those who are familiar with Allison’s distinction between “thick” and “thin” conceptions of genius: since Kant uses the thick notion of genius for setting out what is necessary for the creation of beautiful art I will be working with that notion.

10. I thank one of the judges for revising the quotation.

11. In my earlier article (2016), I also argued that works of genius always exceed our expectations. However, I did not explicitly identify informed pure judgments of taste as the type of judgments we ought to make in evaluating a work of genius.

12. I am not the only one who indicates that Kant’s account provides a valid approach to modern art, particularly conceptual art. See Costello (2007).

13. I would like to thank Alexander Rueger, Octavian Ion, and the anonymous judges of the 2017 Fisher Prize committee for their helpful comments on this article.