

Studies in German Idealism 17

Mojca Küplen

Beauty, Ugliness and the Free Play of Imagination

An Approach to Kant's Aesthetics

 Springer

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An Approach to Kant's Aesthetics

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For My Parents

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Abbreviations of Kant's Works

References to Immanuel Kant are given in the text to the volume and page number of the standard German edition of his collected works: *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (KGS). References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the standard A and B pagination of the first and second editions. References are also given, after a comma, to the English translation of *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2000), which includes the “First Introduction” (KGS 20). Listed as follows are the original works and translations that I have used:

- A/B *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (KGS 3–4). *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1996.
- Anthro *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (KGS 7). *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert B. Louden. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Beob *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (KGS 2). *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. Paul Guyer. In *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Other Writings*, ed. Patrick Frierson & Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- BL *Logik Blomberg* (KGS 24). *The Blomberg Logic. Lectures on Logic*, trans. Michael Young. (*The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 5–246.
- FI *Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft* (KGS 20). *First Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 3–51.
- JL *Jäsche Logik* (KGS 9). *The Jäsche Logic, Lectures on Logic*, trans. Michael Young. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 521–640.
- KU *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (KGS 5). *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

- LD-W *Logik Dohna-Wundlacken* (KGS 24). *The Dohna-Wundlacken Logic. Lectures on Logic*, trans. Michael Young. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 431–516.
- MV *Metaphysik Vigilantius* (KGS 29). *Lectures on Metaphysics*, trans. Karl Ameriks and Steve Naragon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 417–506.
- R *Reflexionen* (KGS 15–19). *Notes and Fragments*, trans. Curtis Bowman, Paul Guyer & Frederick Rauscher. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 481–518.

Chapter 1

Introduction

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

This scene illustrates two significant issues in philosophical aesthetics. First, a widely discussed question is whether aesthetic judgments of beauty and ugliness are merely subjective judgments, which have only private validity, or if it is possible a characteristic for them to have universal validity. Second, a question which has drawn little attention and research from aestheticians is how it is possible that something that we find displeasing and ugly can nevertheless retain our attention and even be highly appreciated.

Immanuel Kant, the founder of modern aesthetics, offered a sophisticated and intricate solution to the first question, claiming that judgments of taste have a subjective – universal validity, but unfortunately did not write much on the nature of experiencing ugliness. This is not surprising for eighteenth century aesthetics which was occupied primarily with taste and beauty as aesthetic values *par excellence*, while ugliness was considered an unfavorable aesthetic concept, denoting lack of aesthetic value and beauty, and therefore associated with aesthetic disvalue and therefore not deserving much attention.

Contemporary artistic production, however, has challenged this traditional aesthetic picture. This is demonstrated by the proliferation of art works that evoke (and aim to evoke) negative aesthetic feelings of ugliness and repulsion and the positive appreciation of them. A brief look at modern and contemporary art galleries such as the Tate Modern in London will show that artistic ugliness is highly valued and appreciated. Examples that evoke negative aesthetic experience, yet are recognized as valuable works of art, include Asger Jorn's semi-abstract painting *Letter To my Son* (1956–1957) in a childlike and chaotic style, Francis Bacon's

distorted depiction of a human face in *Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne* (1966) and Jean Dubuffet's flattened figure of a female body in *The Tree of Fluids* (1950). The problem that such examples illustrate is known in philosophical aesthetics as 'the paradox of ugliness', namely, how we can like, attend to, and value something that we *prima facie* do not like, find positively displeasing or even repellent?

In contemporary aesthetics two main solutions to this problem have been offered. Briefly, the first solution claims that what we like and value in such works of art is not the ugly subject matter, but the beautiful representation of ugliness (Lorand 2000, pp. 260–262). An art work may evoke negative aesthetic feelings due to the ugly objects that it depicts, but what we value is the creative artistic representation of ugly subject matter. What we value is therefore not ugliness, but the beautiful artistic representation of ugliness. The second solution, on the other hand, claims that such works of art have cognitive, not aesthetic value (Carroll 1990, pp. 182–186). Through artistic ugliness, certain cognitive ideas and attitudes can be represented and explored, that could not otherwise be. Since artistic ugliness is merely fictional and imaginative, it allows us to attend to and enjoy our cognitive and intellectual inquiry, and this is itself a valuable experience, which compensates for aesthetic displeasure. So what we value in such art works is not ugliness, but the pleasure of intellectual exploration that artistic ugliness affords.

Even though these two proposals can explain some cases of pleasure we feel when confronted with artistic ugliness, they do not, however, explain the fascination with ugliness itself. Among contemporary writers, ugliness has been characterized as aesthetically significant, interesting, astonishing and captivating (Kieran 1997; Brady 2010). A notably distressing scene in the David Lynch's movie *The Elephant Man* (1980) illustrates the peculiar appeal of the ugly which attracts as the same time as it repels. The main character John Merrick is chased by a crowd of people eager to gawp at his severely disfigured face. Psychoanalyst John Rickman (2003, p. 86) describes well such a stirring effect of ugliness by saying: "Ugliness is not merely displeasing in the highest degree, a cause of mental pain, giving no promise of peace, it is something which stirs phantasies so profoundly that our minds cannot let the object alone." Indeed, if we take a closer look at the Jenny Saville's photograph *Closed Contact # 3* (1995), which depicts the artist's obese, naked body, squeezed onto glass, we can notice that the photograph captivates our attention precisely for the same reason it repels us, namely due to the grotesque disfiguration of this image. Even though the artist may intentionally produce ugliness, the satisfaction of the artist's intention does not make the object beautiful. Knowledge of the artist's intentions and the theoretical background of the art work can justify the ugliness of the artistic form and the displeasure it occasions, but it cannot transform it.

Furthermore, the proposed solutions cannot account for the appreciation of those works of art that have no representational elements, such as abstract art, and which do not engage our cognitive interest, yet which are considered to be aesthetically displeasing. For example, Asger Jorn's abstract painting *Oui, chérie* (1961) is just lines and colors, without representing anything, yet the chaotic composition of these colors and lines makes the work discomforting to look at. Another example is

Stockhausen's *Helicopter String Quartet* (1995). This highly appraised instrumental piece of work combines the rhythm of the helicopters' rotor blades and four string players flying in the helicopter. The unconventional combination of classical music and the sound of the helicopters do not represent anything; nevertheless it is highly disharmonic, displeasing and difficult to listen to.

Similar is the case of our experience of ugliness in nature, which can retain our attention and be fascinating, even though it is not artistically converted into something beautiful, nor does it have as its purpose the exploration of cognitive ideas. The bizarre appearance of the Madagascan primate *aye-aye*, or the monstrous looking *angler fish*, hold our attention and captivate our interest precisely because of those features that cause displeasure and frustration in the first place.

Some have argued, however, that in comparison to art, no real ugliness exists in nature. Allen Carlson (2002), the most prominent proponent of such a view, claims that appreciating nature in the light of scientific knowledge will always result in positive aesthetic appreciation. Such scientific knowledge relevant for aesthetic appreciation includes placing the natural object under its correct scientific category (for example, that the whale is a mammal, not a fish) and also more specific scientific knowledge of that category (what its natural function is and how it contributes to the positive performance of the environment in general). Because establishment of scientific categories depends on the principle of intelligibility, that is, the correct scientific category for a natural object is the one that best explains nature as possessing qualities of order and balance, and since qualities of order, balance and harmony are qualities that are appreciated as positive aesthetic qualities, it follows that perceiving a natural object under its correct scientific category will always result in a positive aesthetic experience of the object.

There are many problems with this kind of explanation. In order for Carlson's argument to be successful he must show that it is impossible for someone to have scientific knowledge of a particular natural object and not find that object aesthetically pleasing or beautiful. But this he cannot do. Consider for example the straightforwardly ugly animal called the *Naked Mole Rat*. Even though we know that its physiological structure is well adapted to living in an underground environment, this knowledge does not prevent us finding this animal extremely displeasing and revolting. In fact, it is precisely because of these particularly well adapted features of the *naked mole rat* (such as – its large front teeth, which help the animal to burrow, and its sealed lips behind the teeth, which prevent earth from filling its mouth), that the animal appears particularly displeasing. A natural object may be a perfect specimen of its kind, can exhibit great fitness and adaptation to its environment, and hence their perceptual structure may exhibit great natural order, yet at the same time the same perceptual structure is experienced in an aesthetically displeasing way. This shows that there is a significant difference between the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the appreciation of natural purposes that objects fulfill. While the former refers to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in the immediate experience of perceptual features of the object, the latter refers to the agreement of such perceptual structure with the object's function or natural purpose,

which can certainly produce a type of pleasure, yet not of an aesthetic kind.¹ Scientific knowledge cannot account for correct aesthetic appreciation of nature because science represents natural objects as members of a specific class, rather than as individual entities. The science-based approach claims that aesthetically relevant properties are only those properties that all members of a natural kind share with each other. But this is not true. When we experience nature, we do not experience it as species, but as individual objects. And as separated into individual objects, nature can have aesthetic properties that are not entailed by its scientific description.² Natural science can explain, for instance, the formation of the waterfall, but it has nothing to say about our experience of the majestic Victoria Falls when viewed at sunset, its reds and oranges myriad and mesmerizing; geology can explain the formation of the Ngorongoro Crater in Tanzania, but not its painful and breathtaking beauty at sunrise, the fog slowly lifting above the crater and a lone Hippopotamus dark and dense in the lake; oceanography can explain the formation of the waves, but about the sublime sound of winter waves crashing on the rocks at Valentia island, science does and must remain silent. Science may explain the structure of natural phenomena and how they fit into a larger natural system, but it does not offer and cannot give a full account of perceptual content as we experience it from the inside and hence as we experience it aesthetically. Thus, science must remain silent about the perceptual content of our experience of nature, insofar as that experience has aesthetic significance for us. Consequently, no amount of scientific knowledge, no matter how interesting or revelatory in itself, can transform our experience of nature as ugly and displeasing into a positive aesthetic reaction. Hence, the paradox of ugliness still remains unsolved. That is, how it is possible that the *star-nosed mole* with its pink fleshy tentacles at the end of its snout, or the *naked mole rat* with its wrinkled, hairless skin and protruding teeth, are disturbing and dreadful and yet also evoke curiosity, interest and fascination. And curious, interesting and fascinating not because of what we learn about them from science but precisely in virtue of the very features we experience as ugly. What is required therefore is an account of ugliness which explains this paradoxical appeal.

The main objective of this book is to provide such an account of natural and artistic ugliness, by exploring and refining the most sophisticated and thoroughly worked out theoretical framework of philosophical aesthetics, Kant's theory of taste, which was put forward in part one of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

Within Kant's theory of taste, there is an implicit distinction between two meanings of 'beautiful' and of its negative counterpart 'ugliness.' The term 'beautiful,' in its most commonsensical use, refers to the property that we attribute to what is pleasant to perceive, to what is agreeable to look at, to hear, touch, smell or taste. Correspondingly, the term 'ugliness' in its commonsensical use refers to the property that we attribute to what is unpleasant to perceive, and

¹Also Malcolm Budd (2000, p. 149) argues that natural order does not necessarily imply the presence of an aesthetic order.

²See also Ronald Moore (1999, pp. 42–60) for making a similar point.

which is disagreeable to our senses. However, this is not what Kant is interested in when he describes pure judgments of taste as judgments about whether an object is beautiful or not. Both kinds of judgments, that is, judgments of taste and empirical aesthetic judgments of sense are called aesthetic judgments because they are grounded directly on the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. But they differ considerably in that in a judgment of taste the representation of the object refers directly to the universally communicable feeling of pleasure, while in an aesthetic judgment of sense, the representation is referred directly to pleasure that has a mere private validity. The feeling of pleasure in an aesthetic judgment of sense is merely subjective, because it depends only on the sensations (the material qualities of an object) and sensations are not something that is felt in the same way by all of us. In a judgment of taste, however, the pleasure is universally valid because it depends on the universally communicable mental activity of harmony between the faculties of imagination and understanding that is also required for cognition in general. This mental activity is required for our apprehension of formal qualities of the object (the combination or synthesis of material qualities that are given in sensation). It is the perception of formal qualities alone (not mingled with sensations or concepts) that for Kant constitutes a proper aesthetic experience of beauty (and ugliness) and that is best made explicit in terms of aesthetic merit (and aesthetic demerit).

Kant recognizes how easily one can misidentify pleasure (or displeasure) in the sensation for the pleasure (or displeasure) in the beautiful (or ugly). In such cases he claims that what is required is a cultivation of taste, that is, the person should require more skills in distinguishing between different kinds of judgments and more skill in identifying the source of his own pleasure or displeasure. Once the distinction between two kinds of pleasures (or displeasures) is made explicit, one can easily see that Kant's aesthetic theory allows for the possibility that one and the same object can be judged as ugly in the commonsensical meaning of the term, that is, disagreeable to our senses, yet at the same time as beautiful, in the sense of having an aesthetic merit. The problem of ugliness is not so much that something can have an aesthetic merit and yet may be intuitively judged as ugly (commonsensical use of the word). Rather, the problem of ugliness comes up when we are confronted with objects that are displeasing in the Kantian meaning of the word (that is, ugliness of the presentation of the object or of an art work itself), yet which still hold our attention and are considered to be aesthetically interesting and fascinating.

Kant did not write much about pure judgments of ugliness and his analysis of taste is focused on the analysis of the judgments of the beautiful alone. Nonetheless, I argue that his explanation of the beautiful has much to say about its opposite. This, however, is not immediately apparent. Even more, recent studies have argued that Kant's explanation of the feeling of pleasure in the beautiful leaves no possibility to accommodate judgments of ugliness (Shier 1998). In short, the argument is the following: according to Kant, judgments of taste have a subjective universal validity, because they depend on the state of mind of free harmony between imagination and understanding that we all share, and which is a subjective condition of cognition. But this state of mind of free harmony produces the feeling of pleasure alone. Hence, there is no possibility to accommodate judgments of ugliness, that is, a

universally communicable state of mind of free disharmony between imagination and understanding that would give rise to the feeling of displeasure within us. Worse yet, it has been argued by Paul Guyer (2005a) that the existence of a disharmonious state of mind is inconsistent with Kant's epistemological theory. A harmonious relation between cognitive powers is required for the basic awareness of the representation itself. Accordingly, we cannot even be conscious of a representation in which imagination and understanding were in disharmony. Hence, pure ugliness is epistemologically impossible.

In this book I argue for the opposite view, namely, that Kant's theory of taste does allow for the possibility of pure judgments of ugliness and it is my goal to address the paradoxical character of natural and artistic ugliness in light of the solution to the problem of pure judgments of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics. There are three goals to this project. First, I explore the possibility of incorporating a negative aesthetic concept, ugliness, into the overall Kantian aesthetic picture. Second, I give an interpretation of Kant's notion of free harmony of the imagination and understanding, constitutive of judgments of the beautiful. That is, since the roots to the solution of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics is in the beautiful and in the concept of free harmony, the resolution of the problem of beauty is required in order to give a solution on the problem of ugliness. Third, I apply my interpretation of ugliness to resolve certain issues that have been raised in contemporary aesthetics, namely the possibility of appreciating artistic and natural ugliness and the role of disgust in artistic representation.

I begin with an analysis of Kant's argument for the possibility of pure judgments of taste, that is, judgments that have subjective-universal validity. I consider whether Kant's argument, which is based solely on judgments of the beautiful, allows for the accommodation of judgments of ugliness and the feeling of displeasure. I argue that a straightforward interpretation of Kant's argument poses a problem for the possibility to accommodate ugliness, and I point out that such an interpretation also has the consequence that everything that we cognize must be beautiful, a conclusion that I argue Kant would reject. I consider three major proposals for solving the problem of ugliness in Kant and point out their inadequacies. In addition, I consider the most challenging objection against the possibility of ugliness, that is, Guyer's argument for the epistemological impossibility of ugliness, and I argue against his interpretation of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics. In conclusion, I point out that in order to give a positive solution to the problem of ugliness, it is necessary first to examine in detail Kant's account of the notion of free harmony and to resolve some of the problems that pertain to it. In particular, I will examine the problem that, on one hand, Kant claims that free harmony is a subjective condition of cognition, yet this account has as its conclusion that pleasure is a necessary concomitant of cognition. On the other hand, however, he claims that free harmony is different from cognition, in that it is not determined by concepts, but this idea has as the consequence that free harmony cannot be a universally communicable experience since it is not required for cognition.

In the third chapter, I take a closer look at the role of imagination and understanding in ordinary cognition, and compare it with their role in judgments of taste, when they are in free play. I examine and reevaluate different interpretative suggestions of the notion of free harmony (precognitive, abstractive, multicognitive, metacognitive and symbolic) and point out some difficulties they face. I argue that none of these interpretations offers a full solution to the problems attending the concept of free harmony. Nonetheless, I point out that the partial solutions that they offer can indicate a path to a positive interpretation of free harmony.

In the fourth chapter, I develop my interpretation of the concept of free harmony. I propose a distinction between the *free play* of imagination and the *harmony* between the free play of imagination with the understanding that is necessary for the occurrence of pleasure. In the first two sections I give an explanation as to what the free play of imagination amounts to. Next, I proceed with an explanation of the possibility of recognizing free harmony, that is, how it is possible that a certain combination of sensible manifold which is not produced according to a rule of the understanding can be felt to be in harmony with the understanding after all. My explanation is based on Kant's notion of *reflective judgments* and the a priori *principle of purposiveness* presented in the *Introduction* to the *Critique* as the principle required for empirical concept acquisition. I examine Kant's argument for postulating the principle of purposiveness for cognition in general and then proceed to examine the connection between this principle and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. I offer a detailed distinction between aesthetic reflection concerned with an object's individual properties and logical reflection concerned with the object's general properties and on the basis of that give a solution to the well-known problem in Kant's aesthetics, that is, the 'everything is beautiful' problem.

In the fifth chapter, I bring together the resources developed in the previous chapters to offer an explanation of ugliness in Kantian aesthetics. My main task in this chapter is to discuss the problem of appreciating artistic and natural ugliness in light of the solution to the problem of accommodating judgments of ugliness within Kant's theory of taste. My explanation is based on Kant's notion of the free play of imagination in connection with Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas. In the last chapter, I offer my interpretation of Kant's notion of disgust in contrast to ugliness, and more closely interrogate the role of disgust in contemporary art. I make a detailed comparison between Kant's treatment of disgust and contemporary studies on this matter and, on this basis, explain the relationship between beauty and ugliness, and the notion of disgust, particularly in its relation to art works.

Chapter 2

Judgments of Taste and Analysis of the Problem of Ugliness in Kant's Aesthetics

At the end of section §6 in the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, Kant defines taste as the “faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest” (KU 5:211, p. 96). On the face of it, Kant's definition of taste includes both; positive and negative judgments of taste. Moreover, Kant's term ‘dissatisfaction’ implies not only that negative judgments of taste are those of the non-beautiful (lack of pleasure), but also that of the ugly, depending on the presence of an actual displeasure.

This idea has not been questioned for a long time. In recent years, however, and particularly with David Shier's paper *Why Kant Finds Nothing Ugly*, the idea that Kant does not find ugliness to be a pure judgment of taste, has become a subject of much debate. In short, Shier argues that judgments of taste must be universally communicable, yet, that according to Kant's argument nothing can be universally communicable but the state of mind of free harmony. But the state of mind of free harmony is the ground for positive judgments of taste. Hence, there is no possibility for judgments of ugliness.

As a result, a number of different interpretations have been proposed. On one hand, there are attempts in favor of rescuing the possibility of judgments of ugliness and arguing for the tripartite aesthetic structure (beauty, ugliness and neutrality with respect to beauty and ugliness). On the other hand, those less sympathetic to the inclusion of ugliness into Kant's aesthetic theory and arguing rather for the dual aesthetic structure (beauty and non-beauty or aesthetic neutrality). My objective in the following is to explain in detail the argumentative strategies of both groups, and point out some of the difficulties they face. Before proceeding, I will give a brief introductory account of Kant's theory of judgment of taste in order to specify the problematic implications of the concepts of displeasure and ugliness.

2.1 An Introduction to Kant's Theory of Judgments of Taste

Kant's task in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was to give an account of how genuine judgments of taste, that is, judgments of the beautiful (and ugly), are possible. His objective was to resolve an apparent contradiction between the two characteristics pertaining to judgments of taste.

The first idea is that judgments of taste are subjective, that is, their determining ground can be nothing else but the subject's experience of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. One must necessarily feel pleasure in order to judge an object beautiful. That one aesthetically likes (dislikes) the object must necessarily result from one's feeling of being delighted, moved or pleased (displeased) by the object and it cannot be imputed to someone by means of rational consideration. Kant captures this subjective character of taste nicely by saying:

If someone reads me his poem or takes me to a play that in the end fails to please my taste, then he can adduce Batteux or Lessing, or even older and more famous critics of taste, and adduce all the rules they established as proofs that his poem is beautiful; certain passages, which are the very ones that displease me, may even agree with rules of beauty (as they have been given there and have been universally recognized): I will stop my ears, listen to no reasons and arguments, and would rather believe that those rules of the critics are false or at least that this is not a case for their application than allow that my judgment should be determined by means of a priori grounds of proof, since it is supposed to be a judgment of taste and not of the understanding or of reason. (KU 5:284, p. 164)

Beauty and ugliness are not objective properties of a thing itself, but merely represents the way in which we respond to the object. When we claim that a certain object is beautiful, we do in fact claim something about the object, that it is beautiful. Yet, we are unable to formulate what it is in the object that makes it beautiful. All that we can say is that the object is beautiful because we feel so, because it elicits in us a certain pleasurable feeling. Kant claims accordingly that judgments of taste are not based on the concept of the object. Judgments of taste are contrasted with cognitive judgments. The former refers the representation to the subject's experience of the object, while cognitive judgments, on the other hand, refer the representation to the concept of the object. The truth or falseness of cognitive judgments such as 'X is a chair' can be proven by rational consideration; the judgment 'this X is a chair' is true if it satisfies the necessary conditions for the application of the concept of a chair. The concept is the rule for the criteria of cognitive judgments. On the other hand, no such truth verification is possible in the case of judgments of taste. A judgment of taste is non-conceptual, Kant claims, which means that it is not determined by the concept of the object, but merely by the feeling:

If one judges objects merely in accordance with concepts, then all representation of beauty is lost. Thus there can also be no rule in accordance with which someone could be compelled to acknowledge something as beautiful. Whether a garment, a house, a flower is beautiful: no one allows himself to be talked into his judgment about that by means of any grounds or fundamental principles. One wants to submit the object to his own eyes. (KU 5:215, p. 101)

Whether an object is beautiful is not discerned by whether it satisfies the properties of a concept. That is, a given object may be a perfect example of the kind it belongs to, yet still be ugly. If judgments of taste depend solely on the feeling of pleasure (displeasure), and because feelings are not corrigible, that is, one cannot be wrong about their own feelings, then judgments of taste have merely subjective validity.

Yet, Kant observes, even though judgments of taste are grounded on the subjective feeling of pleasure (displeasure), it is a characteristic for them to have universal validity: "The judgment of taste ascribes assent to everyone, and whoever declares something to be beautiful wishes that everyone should approve of the object in question and similarly declare it to be beautiful" (KU 5:237, p. 121). We argue in matters of taste, which suggests that judgments of taste contain an implicit demand that others ought to agree with us and that some universal agreement can be established. When one claims that a certain object is beautiful, one feels his judgment is correct and that he is entitled to expect that others agree with him. And if they do not, he often dismisses them, claiming that they are not seeing the object in an appropriate way and that their judgment is wrong. Yet, the validity of judgments of taste cannot be objective (as in cognitive judgments), since beauty is not a property of objects. Since beauty resides in the subject's feeling of pleasure, the validity of judgments of taste is a subjective universal validity. The universal validity of judgments of taste is grounded on the universal validity of subject's feeling of pleasure:

universality that does not rest on concepts of objects (even if only empirical ones) is not logical at all, but aesthetic, i.e., it does not contain an objective quantity of judgment, but only a subjective one, for which I also use the expression common validity, which does not designate the validity for every subject of the relation of a representation to the faculty of cognition but rather to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. (KU 5:214, p. 100)

The reconciliation of the seemingly incompatible characteristics of judgments of taste, that is, subjectivity and universality, is the main objective of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*:

How is a judgment possible which, merely from one's own feeling of pleasure in an object, independent of its concept, judges this pleasure, as attached to the representation of the same object in every other subject, a priori, i.e., without having to wait for the assent of others?" (KU 5:288, p. 168)

Kant found the solution to this question in the concept of the harmony of the cognitive faculties in their free play. His argument can be roughly summarized in the following way: the universal validity of pleasure can be justified by claiming that the feeling of pleasure depends on the state of mind that we all share. But what we all share is the state of mind "that is encountered in the relation of the powers of representation to each other insofar as they relate a given representation to cognition in general" (KU 5:217, p. 102). This is the state of mind of harmony between imagination and understanding. It is Kant's view that cognitive judgments are necessitated by the mental activities of *imagination*, whose function is to synthesize the manifold of intuition in order to bring it into an image, and of the

understanding, which unifies this manifold under the concept of the object. For example, we recognize a certain object as a chair by the application of the concept of the chair to the manifold of intuition. This harmonious activity between the faculty of imagination and understanding is required for cognition, and is universally communicable, because without it "human beings could not communicate their representations and even cognition itself" (KU 5:290, p. 170). Presumably, pleasure in judgments of taste is based on such harmonious relation of cognitive powers, and therefore it must be universally communicable.

On the other hand, Kant claims, the perception of the beautiful is also different from cognition. He draws the distinction by claiming that while in cognitive judgments harmony between imagination and understanding is constrained by the concept of the understanding, in judgments of taste, where no such concept restricts imagination, their harmony is in free play:

The subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a cognition in general). (KU 5:218, p. 103)

This relation is *merely* subjective, Kant claims, since it refers only to the mutual relation between cognitive powers in the subject, without its relation to the object. Accordingly, while the relation between cognitive powers in cognitive judgments is not merely subjective, but ends in the application of the concept to the object, and therefore in a cognitive judgment, the relation between cognitive powers in judgments of taste is merely subjective (it does not apply concepts) and it results in a feeling of pleasure alone:

this merely subjective (aesthetic) judging of the object, or of the representation through which the object is given, precedes the pleasure in it, and is the ground of this pleasure in the harmony of the faculties of cognition. (KU 5:218, p. 103)

The concept of free harmony, underlying judgments of taste reconciles the two characteristics of taste. With regard to its subjectivity, judgments of taste are not based on concepts, but merely on the free play between imagination and understanding, which is experienced through the feeling of pleasure. With regard to its universal validity, even though cognitive powers are set into play without the application of the concept, they are in a harmonious relation, as it is required for cognition and thus expected to be the same in everyone.

In sum, Kant claims that judgments of taste are universally communicable, because they depend on the state of mind that we all share. In judgments of the beautiful such a state of mind is the free harmony between cognitive powers. But Kant also seems to identify negative judgments of taste depending on the feeling of displeasure. Insofar pleasure in the experience of beauty consist in a harmonious free play between imagination and understanding, displeasure in the experience of ugliness must consist in a similar free play of cognitive powers, although in an opposite manner, namely, in the state of mind of free disharmony between imagination and understanding. Kant in fact does mention the existence of such a

state of mind. Before I proceed analyzing the problematic implications surrounding the notion of free disharmony, I will first give a short account of judgments of ugliness as implicitly and explicitly offered by Kant.

2.2 Does Kant's Theory of Taste Account for Judgments of Ugliness?

In the previous section I outlined Kant's account of judgments of taste, which is based solely on the analysis of judgments of the beautiful. Yet, since it has always been considered that beauty has an opposite of some sort, it is natural to ask whether Kant's theory admits such negative aesthetic concepts. I will argue below that ugliness is the paradigmatic negative aesthetic concept. After all, we do find some objects positively displeasing and for that matter ugly. Consider for example certain kind of animals whose bodily features are all out of proportions, such as the *angler fish*, with its exceptionally large mouth, alien-like, long, sharp teeth and a shiny lure coming out of its head. I cannot imagine anyone not finding this animal ugly. An expectation of agreement is a characteristic pertaining to judgments of ugliness as well and so one would imagine that it must find space within Kant's category of judgments of taste.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant does not devote a separate section to the analysis of the concept of ugliness. Yet when he discusses pleasure of the beautiful, it is frequently mentioned alongside displeasure, and one would naturally assume that Kant's explanation of judgments of taste is wide enough to allow theoretical space for ugliness as well. After all, Kant claims that we do quarrel about taste and have genuine disagreements about the beauty of an object, which implies that there must be some objects that we do not like, moreover, that we find positively ugly.

It is true, however, that from the observation that we quarrel about taste, it does not necessarily follow that displeasure of the ugly must exist. We may disagree whether we like or we do not like the object without the presence of the positive feeling of displeasure. We may not like the object simply because we acknowledge no presence of the feeling of pleasure. This may occur in a situation where one expects the presence of beauty in the object, yet the object fails in this respect. For example, if one has a great aesthetic expectation regarding a particular artistic performance, yet this performance fails to carry out such an aesthetic appeal, then one may well react with a negative aesthetic reaction, even though the performance itself may not actually be aesthetically displeasing. A negative aesthetic reaction is in this case the result of the lack of pleasure when pleasure is expected. Paul Guyer (2005a), for example, concluded accordingly that in order to quarrel about taste it is sufficient to operate with binary aesthetic concepts. That is, pleasure of the beautiful and lack of pleasure of the non-beautiful. We may disagree about whether an object succeeds in giving pleasure or not.

Even though, theoretically, a binary aesthetic system may suffice in order to have genuine disagreements in matters of taste, our experiences with the aesthetic evaluation of objects clearly conflicts with this rather simple picture of the aesthetic domain. An aesthetic experience of different kinds of objects comes in various degrees and classes. A *tulip* and a *rose* are both beautiful flowers, and yet one may be more pleasing than the other. A *bird of paradise*, with its delightful combination of colors, is a pleasure to the eye, while a *pigeon*, on the other hand, appears rather dull and insignificant. And there are also birds that are straightforward ugly and unpleasant to see, such as the *African Marabou Stork*. And even in the case of the artistic domain, where some aesthetic aspiration is expected, we may distinguish clearly between objects that are merely aesthetically disappointing, in the sense of lacking any positive aesthetic value, and objects that are suffused with a presence of positive displeasure and are judged as ugly (consider for example a movie *Pink Flamingos* 1972, by John Waters). Furthermore, the phenomenological experience of displeasure itself can be distinguished into different degrees and classes. There is, for example, a specific feeling of displeasure experienced in the grotesque, composed of reaction of horror and laughter (for example, the monstrous image of a bird-headed Satan in the Hieronymus Bosch painting *The Garden of Earthly Delight*, 1503–1504), or displeasure with a strong physiological component in the experience of disgust (for instance Cindy Sherman's sexual obscene use of plastic body parts juxtaposed distortedly in the work *Untitled 250*, 1992). These examples show that there is a phenomenological and theoretical distinction between the category of aesthetic indifference (lack of pleasure) and category of ugliness (presence of positive displeasure), even though both of them may be classified as negative aesthetic categories.

Based on this, it is reasonable to argue in favor of a tripartite aesthetic structure. Kant, in fact, did hold such a view, which is evident from his earlier texts on aesthetics. For instance he wrote: "That which pleases through mere intuition is *beautiful*, that which leaves me indifferent in intuition, although it can please or displease, is *non-beautiful*; that which displeases me in intuition is ugly" (MV 29: 1010, p. 480). He states the same idea in the following: "To distinguish the beautiful from that which is not beautiful (not from that which is ugly, because that which is not beautiful is not always ugly), is taste" (LPo 24: 514 cited in Guyer 2005a, p. 144). And even more distinctive he says: "Ugliness is . . . something positive, not a mere lack of beauty, rather the existence of something contrary to beauty" (LPh 24: 364 cited in Guyer 2006, p. 144). In the *Dohna-Wundlacken Logic* he holds the same idea and adds that between beauty and ugliness there is a "middle term, dryness (. . .) it is a grade of perfection that mathematics possesses, because it has dryness" (LD-W 24:708, p. 445).

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant's idea of the two negative aesthetic categories (lack of beauty and ugliness) is not explicitly articulated. Yet, he continues to hold the idea that there are objects, perception of which elicits feelings of displeasure, and that this displeasure belongs to the category of pure aesthetic feelings, by which judgments of taste are made. He seems to ascribe

the same characteristics of aesthetic purity that pertain to pleasure, to displeasure as well. First, it is a disinterested displeasure, that is, a displeasure arising from the mere contemplation of the object, without any interest in the existence of the object (it is not pathologically conditioned displeasure of the senses, nor displeasure arising from the violation of the concept of goodness). As Kant writes, taste is "the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest" (KU 5:211, p. 96). Second, it is a displeasure based on the mere form of the object independently of the idea of the purpose (what the object should be). A pure aesthetic judgment, Kant states "concerns a satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the form of the object" (KU 5:279, p. 160). Third, displeasure is a universally communicable feeling. When he defines *common sense* as the subjective principle of taste and as a universally communicable aesthetic feeling, the feeling is not merely that of pleasure, but also that of displeasure: "They must thus have a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity" (KU 5:238, p. 122).

Even though Kant does not explicitly connect the feeling of displeasure with judgments of ugliness, and not with mere judgments of the non-beautiful, he does acknowledge in §48 that there are naturally displeasing objects which are ugly: "Beautiful art displays its excellence precisely by describing beautifully things that in nature would be ugly or displeasing" (KU 5:312, p. 190). Given this, one is justified to assume that the universally communicable feeling of displeasure that Kant discerns in the third *Critique* may well be displeasure, constitutive for judgments of ugliness. Furthermore, if such displeasure is universally communicable, then it is presupposed that it depends on the state of mind that we all share. What we all share is a state of mind in which imagination and understanding are in a certain relation to each other and which can either be determined by concepts, resulting in a cognitive judgment, or it can be in a free play, resulting in the feeling of pleasure or displeasure alone. If pleasure is the consequence of free harmony between cognitive powers, then the most plausible alternative left for displeasure, as the opposite of pleasure (not mere lack of pleasure) is that it depends on the state of mind of free disharmony. In fact, in the first introduction to the third *Critique* Kant does acknowledge the existence of such a mental state. He writes that the relation between cognitive powers is not merely harmonious, but also disharmonious:

For in the power of judgment understanding and imagination are considered in relation to each other, and (. . .) one can also consider this relation of two faculties of cognition merely subjectively, insofar as one helps or hinders the other in the very same representation and thereby affects the state of mind. (FI 20:223, p. 25)

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

The judging of an object through taste is a judgment about the harmony or discord of freedom, in the play of the power of imagination and the lawfulness of the understanding. (Anthro 7:241, p. 137)

In sum, there are both implicit and explicit suggestions in Kant's texts in favor of the tripartite aesthetic structure. Judgments of taste depend on some relation between cognitive powers in their free play. A given object can prompt a relation between imagination and understanding which is freely harmonious. This is a relation in which cognitive powers mutually support and help each other, that is "in the given representation the faculty of the apprehension of the one and the faculty of presentation of the other are reciprocally expeditious" (FI 20:224, p. 26). Such a play results in the feeling of pleasure. With this formulation, Kant captures nicely the phenomenology of one's pleasing experience. That is, that one's pleasing perception of an object has as its effect the motivation to continue one's experience, to maintain one's attention on the pleasing object. According to Kant's formulation of pleasure, this is caused by the relation of cognitive powers, which is self-supportive through their mutual agreement and animation. Such animation prolongs the process of play between cognitive powers, and accordingly it prolongs aesthetic attention. When we are delighted by a certain object, we want to remain in this state of mind: "We linger over the consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself" (KU 5:222, p. 107).

On the other hand, an object can induce a play between cognitive powers that is freely disharmonious. This is the case where the imagination and understanding conflict with each other. Such a play produces the experience of displeasure. If the mutual correspondence of imagination and understanding prolongs the process of their play, then the mutual hindrance or frustration between them obstructs their play. Such activity between cognitive powers explains why we react to ugliness by withdrawing attention or turning away from an ugly object. We do not like to look (seeing a picture of a *naked mole rat* makes me cover my eyes) or hear (discomforting sounds makes me cover my ears) displeasing objects: "displeasure is that representation that contains the ground for determining the state of the representations to their own opposite (hindering or getting rid of them)" (KU 5:220, p. 105).

Furthermore, Kant also distinguishes a third aesthetic category, that of aesthetic neutrality or 'dryness', characterized by neither pleasure nor displeasure. He appears to identify aesthetic neutrality with objects that have regular forms and which "cannot be represented except by being regarded as mere presentations of a determinate concept, which prescribes the rule for that shape" (KU 5:241, p. 125). Aesthetically indifferent objects do not occasion the free play between cognitive powers. Kant writes something similar in his other texts. He opposes beauty to logical perfection (cognition through concepts) and he claims that beauty and logical perfection are potentially in conflict:

For if one goes only slightly too far with beauty, one immediately does damage to logical perfection. If, on the other hand, one really wants to further logical perfection, then one becomes dry and loses the beautiful. (BL 24:54, p. 39)

It is suggested that logical perfection (lack of free play) is connected with dryness or aesthetic neutrality.

2.3 Setting the Problem: David Shier's Challenge and the Argument of the Impossibility of Judgments of Ugliness

I argued thus far that there is a good reason to believe that Kant's theory of taste encompasses not merely judgments of the beautiful, but judgments of the ugly as well, depending on the disharmonious free play between imagination and understanding.

Yet, when one tries to accommodate such a disharmonious state of mind within Kant's argument of the universal validity of judgments of taste, then one is confronted with a serious problem. Kant argues that judgments of taste must depend on the state of mind that is universally communicable. And that nothing is universally communicable but cognition or the state of mind that refers to cognition (a certain relation between our cognitive powers that brings about cognition). Since a judgment of taste is not cognition, it can only depend on the state of mind that refers to cognition. But the state of mind that refers to cognition can only be the state of mind of free harmony of cognitive powers. Recall, Kant claims that in order for cognition to occur there always must be a harmony between imagination and understanding. A state of mind that refers to cognition, but without the application of the concept, can then only be the state of mind of free harmony. But free harmony produces pleasure and this means that the universal state of mind of judgments of taste can only be the state of mind that produces pleasure. Consequently, judgments of taste are judgments of the beautiful alone. In other words, Kant seems to leave no theoretical space for a connection between disharmony and universally communicable state of mind. And if displeasure fails to have connection to universal validity, then, since it is essential characteristic of a pure judgment of taste its subjective universality, displeasure of the ugly cannot be a pure judgment of taste.

This indeed is the conclusion of the well-known paper *Why Kant finds nothing ugly* written by David Shier (1998). If the mental state that refers to cognition must be a mental state in which cognitive powers are in free harmony, then there is no possibility to accommodate a freely disharmonious play into the overall Kantian aesthetic picture.¹ This premise appears to be correct, because Kant seems to identify the state of mind that refers to cognition with the state of mind that is a necessary subjective condition of cognition. He writes:

The subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a cognition in general): for we are conscious that this subjective relation suited to cognition in general must be valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable, just as any determinate cognition is, which still always rests on that relation as its subjective condition. (KU 5:218, p. 103)

¹Similar argument against the possibility of accommodating judgments of ugliness into Kant's theory of taste has also been given by Brandt (1998).

Since it is necessary for cognition to occur that cognitive powers harmonize, then the state of mind that refers to cognition, and which is not yet determined by the concept, can be nothing else but the state of mind of free harmony. Judgments of taste depend on free harmony, because this is a subjective condition of cognition, and for that matter universally communicable state of mind. Because free harmony necessitates pleasure, there is no possibility for displeasurable experience of the same kind. Hence, there are no pure judgments of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics.² Shier concludes that this does not need to imply that all objects are beautiful. It implies only that objects cannot be judged as ugly by the means of taste, but that they can be judged as non-beautiful.

However, based on Shier's interpretation of Kant's argument in §9, the idea that some objects are not beautiful, does not seem to be possible. Namely, if it is true that Kant grounds judgments of taste on the subjective condition of cognition, which is free harmony, and if free harmony produces pleasure, then it follows that the feeling of pleasure is a necessary subjective condition of cognition. The argument is the following: (i) the state of mind necessary for cognition (the subjective condition of cognition) is free harmony; (ii) free harmony produces pleasure; (iii) hence, state of mind that is necessary for cognition is a pleasurable state of mind. It follows that in order to carry out cognition one must experience pleasure. In other words, all objects of cognition must be beautiful. Among Kant's contemporaries, this problem is referred to as the 'everything is beautiful' problem.³

In sum, Shier's interpretation of free harmony as a necessary subjective condition of cognition precludes the possibility to accommodate negative judgments of taste within Kantian aesthetics. Even more, it implies that pleasure accompanies all cognition. But this is a consequence that hardly anyone would agree with. There have been attempts to save Kant from this problem. In the following, I will critically review three major proposals, given by Christian Wenzel, Hud Hudson and Sean McConnell.

2.3.1 Ugliness as the Negative Subjective Purposiveness

In response to Shier's paper, numerous different solutions to Kant's problem have been proposed. One solution, proposed by Christian Wenzel (1999), is to distinguish between the harmony of cognitive powers that underlies cognitive judgments (when intuition is subsumed under concepts) and harmony of cognitive powers that underlies judgments of taste (in free play). He claims that free harmony is not

²The claim that there are no pure judgments of ugliness does not mean that one cannot find anything ugly. It means only that finding something ugly cannot be a pure judgment of taste (i.e. a judgment that exacts agreement from everyone).

³This problem has been pointed out by Meerbote (1982, p. 81); Fricke (1990b, pp. 166–168) and Guyer (1997, pp. 262–264).

a subjective condition of cognition, because aesthetic reflection does not have as its aim to make cognition, but only to “reflect (with pleasure) about the form of the object regarding the possibility of cognition (without having a specific concept in mind) and find it suitable for cognition in general” (Wenzel 1999, p. 422). If, however, aesthetic reflection does not have as its aim to cognize the object, then it is not necessary that cognitive powers are in a relation that leads to cognition. In other words, it is not necessary that cognitive powers harmonize. Accordingly, Wenzel's solution to Shier's problem is to reject the claim that the state of mind that refers to cognition must be free harmony.⁴ This is because it is based on a false assumption that the state of mind that refers to cognition, and which underlies judgments of taste, is the state of mind that is a necessary condition of cognition. As Wenzel (1999, p. 422) writes:

why should a given representation not be ‘referred’ to cognition in general when we find the representation not suitable for cognition in general, and we find it resisting a possible subsumption of intuition under a concept?

If this is the case, then it does not follow that the state of mind that refers to cognition must necessarily be harmonious. It can also be disharmonious. Even though cognitive powers are in conflict, they can still “strengthen each other in a relationship that can be regarded as being in this sense purposeful for each of the faculties involved and hence as purposeful for cognition in general” (Wenzel 1999, p. 421). Disharmonious play is negatively purposive, that is, it is a relation which is still purposeful for the cognition in general, even though it is not suitable for cognition. Since, based on Kant's argument in §9, it is not only cognition that is universally communicable, but also the state of mind that refers to cognition, this means that, harmonious as well disharmonious state of mind are universally communicable. Accordingly, judgments of ugliness can be accommodated within Kant's theory of taste.

On the face of it, Wenzel's interpretation of free harmony seems to give a reasonable solution to the problem of disharmony and ugliness. However, it fails to meet other requirements of the Kantian aesthetic view. In particular, it cannot meet Kant's argument of the universal validity of judgments of taste. In order to accommodate judgments of ugliness, Wenzel claims that the state of mind underlying judgments of taste is not the subjective condition of cognition. However, this distinction conflicts with Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste. Kant derives the universal validity of judgments of taste from the state of mind that underlies cognition, because only this state of mind can be shared by all of us. For example, he claims:

A representation which, though singular and without comparison to others, nevertheless is in agreement with the conditions of universality, an agreement that constitutes the business of the understanding in general, brings the faculties of cognition into the well-proportioned

⁴A similar solution is proposed by Baum (1991).

disposition that we require for all cognition and hence also regard as valid for everyone (for every human being) who is determined to judge by means of understanding and sense in combination. (KU 5:219, p. 104)

But if we now propose that the state of mind of judgments of taste is not the state of mind underlying cognition, as Wenzel seems to claim, then it does not follow, strictly speaking, that the aesthetic state of mind is universally communicable. The state of mind that is universally communicable is that relation between cognitive powers that underlies cognition. If the aesthetic state of mind (harmonious or disharmonious) does not underlie cognition, then it does not necessarily follow that such a state of mind is also universally valid.⁵

But beyond the inconsistency with Kant's argument, Wenzel's interpretation of displeasure as negative subjective purposiveness conflicts with the idea of displeasure as constituting an independent and autonomous aesthetic category contrary to pleasure, as Kant seems to hold. Kant identifies subjective purposiveness (free harmony) with pleasure. But if displeasure is constituted by the *negative* subjective purposiveness, then it seems that displeasure is not a particularly different aesthetic category than pleasure, but merely a species of it. This idea is suggested by Wenzel's claim that the displeasure of the ugly is constituted by freely disharmonious play in which cognitive powers are in a mutually supportive relation, and therefore purposeful. But this is hardly Kant's view. Kant explains displeasure as a representation which entails a determining ground to change the representational state into its opposite, that is, the representational state is removed. As I argued before, this is the natural state of experiencing ugliness; one immediately withdraws one's attention away from it. If, however, one explains disharmony as a state of mind in which cognitive powers strengthen each other, then this means that we keep being attentive to ugliness, just as we do in the state of mind that produces pleasure. Yet, this fails to explain the phenomenology of displeasure, that when we experience something irritating and discomforting, we try to get rid of. Ugliness is truly offensive and we typically react to it by removing our attention from it. We do not like to be in a displeasing state of mind. Wenzel's interpretation, however, puts forth the paradoxical view that displeasure in the ugly is a feeling that we like and in which we strive to remain. Ultimately, Wenzel's solution to Shier's problem fails.

2.3.2 *Ugliness as the Subjective Contrapurposiveness*

A more sensible solution to Kant's problem is given by Hud Hudson (1991). He proposes a distinction between different proportions in the relation between imagination and understanding that is required for cognition. He claims that it is false to identify the state of mind that refers to cognition with free harmony. Instead, he argues that the condition of cognition is identified with the concept

⁵This is also pointed out by Guyer (1997, p. 287).

of *general attunement* or accordance, which can have different proportions. His reasoning relies on Kant's statement in section §21 where he writes that attunement has different proportions depending on different objects that are given. Hudson states that "unique relations between the imagination and understanding are simply particular degrees of attunement between two cognitive faculties" (1991, p. 99). In cognitive judgments, this attunement is constituted by the proportions which are determined by the concept of the object and which can vary depending on the different objects. In judgments of taste, however, which are not determined by concepts, the attunement is constituted either by proportions between cognitive powers that are harmonious or subjectively purposive (judgment of the beautiful) or by proportions between cognitive powers that are disharmonious or subjectively contra-purposive (judgments of the ugly):

It is this subjective contra purposiveness in the presentation of the mere form of an object, that is, to say, "as if the object were designed in order to frustrate the power of imagination in its working with the understanding," that is connected with a universal disliking, and that prompts a judgment of taste (of reflection), when it is a judgment of ugliness. (Hudson 1991, p. 93)

By drawing a distinction between attunement and harmony, with harmony being only one of the degrees (the best one) of attunement, Hudson believes that the disharmonious relation of cognitive powers can be accommodated. Disharmony is in this case one of the degrees of attunement. If it is the general relation of attunement that is identified with the state of mind required for cognition, and if the state of mind required for cognition is universally communicable, then any degree or a proportionate relation of this attunement is universally communicable as well. Harmony and disharmony are each degrees of a general attunement, hence they are universally communicable.

Hudson's strategy of differentiating between different degrees of attunement allows the accommodation of the tripartite aesthetic structure. The best degree of attunement (harmony) necessitates pleasure, the worst degree of attunement, displeasure and some (middle) degree of attunement necessitating an indifferent aesthetic reaction. Furthermore, since it is not free harmony that is identified with the necessary condition of cognition, it does not follow that all objects of cognition must be beautiful. Hudson's strategy appears to give the solution to Kant's problem. However, there is much to be said about the difficulties accompanying such an argumentative strategy.

First, Hudson's strategy seems to put forward two contrary claims. On one hand, he claims that, for cognition, the relation of attunement is constituted by "some definite proportion which is a function of the subsumption of a given intuition under a determinate concept of the understanding" (1991, p. 99). This means that for cognition some particular degree of the general relation of attunement is required, a degree that is determined by the concept. And this suggests that it is only this degree of attunement that is the necessary condition of cognition. On the other hand, he claims that the subjective condition of cognition is not some particular degree of attunement (a definite degree determined by concept), but some general

relation of attunement. Aesthetic harmony and disharmony are different degrees of this attunement. Each of the claims, however, has troublesome implications.

If he holds the first claim, that is, that it is only one particular degree of attunement that is in fact required for cognition, and that this degree is determined by the concept, then strictly speaking it is only this degree that is universally communicable. Recall that according to Kant's argument, it is only that relation of cognitive powers that is required for cognition that is universally communicable. If Hudson identifies this relation with some particular degree of attunement, and if harmony (pleasure) and disharmony (displeasure) refer to some other degree of attunement, then it does not follow that harmony and disharmony are also universally communicable.⁶ Hence, on this account, Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste fails.

If, on the other hand, Hudson holds the second idea, that is, the idea that it is the general attunement that is a subjective condition of cognition, then it follows that harmony and disharmony, as different degrees of this attunement, are universally communicable. But it also follows that harmony and disharmony are subjective conditions of cognition. The argument is as follows:

1. The general relation of attunement is a necessary condition of cognition. (Hudson)
2. The general relation of attunement has different degrees. (Hudson)
3. If general relation of attunement is a necessary condition of cognition, then some degree of this general relation of attunement determined by the object is a necessary condition of cognition. (1 + 2)
4. Harmonious or disharmonious relations are different degrees of general attunement. (Hudson)
5. Thus, harmonious or disharmonious relations are necessary conditions of cognition with respect to the object which gives rise to them. (3 + 4)

But if this is true, then it follows that pleasure (effect of harmony) or displeasure (effect of disharmony) is a necessary accompaniment of cognition of certain objects. It is true that on this account it is not all objects of cognition that are beautiful (since objects can occasion different kinds of proportionate attunement) and that some of them will be ugly, depending on the objects given. However, on this account it is impossible to cognize a beautiful or ugly object, without at the same time experiencing pleasure or displeasure, respectively, and this is at least a questionable claim, and argued against by Miles Rind (2002, p. 40). For example, it seems at least possible for a beautiful object to be identified without occasioning pleasure each time, but a consequence of Hudson's account is the denial of this possibility.

Second, Hudson grounds his argument on the premise that there is a distinction between Kant's use of terms 'attunement' and specific degrees of this attunement, harmony and disharmony, and this distinction in fact is not textually supported. Rather, Kant uses terms such as 'attunement', 'agreement' and 'harmony' inter-

⁶Similar objection is raised by Rind (2002, p. 32).

changeably; signifying one and the same relation of cognitive powers. There is therefore no textual support to view harmony and disharmony as one of the degrees of some general attunement. Kant does not support the idea of difference in the degrees of attunement; that is, one degree required for cognition and some other degree for judgments of taste. On the contrary, he makes explicit that it is the same proportion of cognitive powers that is required for cognition that is also required for judgments of taste. For example, he writes:

This pleasure must necessarily depend for everyone on the same conditions, for they are subjective conditions of the possibility of a cognition in general; and the proportion between these cognitive faculties requisite for taste is also requisite for that ordinary sound understanding which we have to presuppose in everyone. (KU 5:292, p. 172)

It is thus implied that the same proportion between cognitive powers (call it harmony, attunement, agreement) which is necessary for cognitive judgments that is also necessary for judgments of taste (of the beautiful). And if it is not justified to distinguish between the proportions constitutive for cognition and proportion constitutive for judgments of taste, then Hudson's argumentative strategy fails.

2.3.3 *Ugliness as the Minimal Subjective Purposiveness*

There is yet another alternative solution to Kant's problem worth mentioning. Sean McConnell's (2008) proposal is to argue not against the identification of the state of mind that refers to cognition with free harmony, but rather against the claim that free harmony necessarily produces pleasure. McConnell rejects the identification of displeasure with the concept of disharmonious relation because he believes that such relation is inconsistent with the concept of free play. He argues that imagination and understanding must be in a mutually supportive relation in order for them to produce a play of any sort.⁷ Accordingly, if there were a disharmony between cognitive powers, no such play or interaction between cognitive powers would begin. Disharmony precludes the activity of play of any kind.

McConnell interprets the feeling produced by the free harmony not as a simple pleasure, but rather a 'pleasure continuum.' The 'pleasure continuum' is comprised of simple pleasure as the maximal point of the 'pleasure continuum' scale, displeasure as the minimal point on the scale and the sense of indifference in the middle of the scale. The three aesthetic categories (pleasure, indifference, displeasure) or degrees of the 'pleasure continuum' scale are determined by the different proportions or degree of the free harmonious play. Different objects exhibit different degree of harmony (degree to which the object is unified) which in turn produces different degrees of 'continuum pleasure' feeling. The maximum degree of harmony means that an object expresses a unifying rule wholly. In such case

⁷A similar argument against the possibility of a disharmonious play has also been given by Brandt (1994, p. 40).

pleasure is produced. On the other hand, if an object exhibits minimal degree of unity, then the cognitive powers will be in a low degree of free harmonious relation and the consequence will be displeasure:

If an object does not realize its indeterminate unifying rule wholly, that is, it exhibits unity to a lesser degree, then the faculties will be quickened or animated to a lesser degree – one is not confident to a greater or lesser extent. This is the feeling of ‘lesser pleasure’ or ‘displeasure’ that prompts a judgment of ugliness. (McConnell 2008, p. 221)

Based on McConnell's strategy, displeasure of the ugly can be accommodated within Kant's aesthetics. On his account, displeasure is produced by the minimal harmonious relation between cognitive powers. Furthermore, because free harmony does not necessary produces pleasure (but also other feelings on the ‘pleasure continuum’), it does not follow that all objects are beautiful.

Even though McConnell's interpretation appears to meet Shier's problem, it suffers from a serious lack of a textual support, as well as intuitiveness. Namely, Kant makes clear in many occasions that free harmony is identified with the feeling of pleasure and with the judgment of the beautiful alone. He clearly holds this view when he characterizes free harmony as a relation in which imagination and understanding mutually support and help each other and therefore pleasure, as its effect “has a causality in itself, namely that of maintaining the state of the representation of the mind” (KU 5:222, p. 107). In other words, when the object elicits pleasure in us, this pleasure has inherent causality to maintain our attention and this is due to the mutually animating function of the cognitive powers. This means that if displeasure of the ugly was a product of such mutually supportive activity of cognitive powers, even though in a low or minimal degree, than displeasure as well shares this essential characteristic. But, I argued before, that this is counterintuitive. When we find an object ugly, there is a tendency to turn away and remove one's attention to the object in question. The process of the activity of cognitive powers behind the ugliness is therefore opposite to the process involved in pleasure.

Furthermore, it is unconvincing why a lesser degree of harmony should lead to the feeling of displeasure, rather than to the feeling of a low degree of pleasure (less degree of unity in the object), and so leaving the space for the comparative levels of beauty. Kant clearly uses the notion of displeasure as feeling contrary to the pleasure, containing an actual presence of a positive displeasure. He has this in mind when he writes in section §48 that there are naturally ugly objects with displeasing value so high that they arouse an emotion of disgust. This implies that displeasure itself has a ‘continuum scale’; minimal displeasure and disgust as the maximal point on the scale. And this suggests that displeasure cannot be simply identified with the low degree of harmony.

But beyond the charge of textual consistency, McConnell's thesis that a disharmonious relation between cognitive powers precludes the possibility of their play is unconvincing. In music, for example, we can have a combination of sounds that is discordant, and yet this does not necessarily lead to a breakdown of the activity of music making (as for example in free style jazz). Or, consider for example

fighting sports, such as boxing. The two players are hurting each other, that is, they are in conflict, yet they are continuing their match. This suggests that disharmony need not break down the activity.⁸ What is distinctive for disharmonious play is only that it is unstable and unbalanced, and that it therefore strives to end itself (the conflict between two boxers results in ending the fight), or it strives to find the resolution (in music, discordant singing can eventually find its way back to harmonious singing).

2.4 The Final Attack: Paul Guyer on the Epistemological Impossibility of Ugliness

Paul Guyer (2005a) offers the most challenging argument against the view that judgments of ugliness are pure judgments of taste. He argues that the notion of disharmonious play between cognitive powers is not merely incompatible with Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste, but it is incompatible with his own epistemological theory. While previously outlined approaches have been concerned only with finding a space for ugliness within Kantian aesthetic theory, Guyer on the other hand is concerned with the overall cognitive and aesthetic framework, and the relation between the two areas. I will first outline Guyer's objection against pure judgments of ugliness and proceed to his interpretation of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics.

Guyer claims that judgments of ugliness can only be possible if there is a representation which sets cognitive powers into disharmonious play. However, he writes that the possibility of the existence of such representation is precluded by Kant's epistemological theory. According to Kant's account of cognition in the *Critique of Pure Reason* there is needed a harmony between imagination and understanding for cognition. That is, to make a judgment of the sort 'X is a chair', the imagination must synthesize the manifold of intuition and understanding must apply the empirical concept (chair) to this manifold. Alongside empirical concepts, which are responsible for forming empirical cognitive judgments, there are pure a priori concepts (categories) that are responsible for the possibility of experiencing objects in the first place (concept of a substance, causality etc.). In order to experience any objects, the *application* of pure concepts to the representation is necessary. Kant emphasizes this point in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as well:

we first find in the grounds of the possibility of an experience something necessary, namely the universal laws without which nature in general (as object of the senses) could not be conceived; and these rest on the categories, applied to the formal conditions of all intuition that is possible for us, insofar as it is likewise given to us a priori. (KU 5:183, p. 70)

⁸This idea has also been argued for by Dieter Lohmar (1998).

Yet, the application of pure concepts, as Guyer points out, is not temporarily prior to the application of empirical concepts. Rather, pure concepts are applied to the representation only through empirical concepts.⁹ But, if the application of pure concepts to the representation is necessary to be conscious of the object, and if the application of pure concepts to the representation depend on the application of empirical concepts, then this means that in order to be conscious of the representation, we must apply empirical concepts. This means that empirical concept application is a necessary condition, not merely for cognition of the object, but to have an experience of the object in the first place. The application of empirical concepts to the manifold of intuition is, in other words, setting the imagination and understanding into a harmonious play. And this means that there always must be a harmony between the imagination and understanding in order to be conscious of a representation. Thus, it is impossible to think or to be conscious of a representation in which cognitive powers were in disharmony. Disharmonious representational state of mind is epistemologically impossible.

Furthermore, Guyer's argument also shows that there cannot be a harmony between cognitive powers devoid of any conceptual applicability. It is impossible to have a state of mind in which cognitive powers were in free harmony, that is, without the application of empirical concepts, as Kant seems to claim that takes place in judgments of taste. In order to find an object beautiful and experience free harmony, we must in the first place have conceptual harmony which necessitates the experience of an object. Guyer accordingly develops a conception of free harmony based on conceptual harmony. That is, according to his metacognitive approach, that I will explain more in detail in the next chapter, free harmony is defined as an excess of conceptual harmony (Guyer 2006).

Based on Guyer's account, there are no pure judgments of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics. However, he writes that the impossibility of pure displeasure does not imply the view that all objects of experience are beautiful and that no negative judgments of taste can be given. He claims that negative judgments of the non-beautiful may suffice. It is not needed an actual displeasure in order to make negative judgments of taste. If, however, we do have an experience of positive displeasure of ugliness, Guyer proposes, that this experience must depend on some other source. He suggests three such sources: an object is ugly because, either (i) its sensory elements are displeasing (such as taste, touch, simple sound or color), (ii) it is displeasurable because it is in disagreement with our moral standards, or (iii) an object's form is displeasurable, however not in itself, but rather because it is in disagreement with the concept of a purpose, that is, with the idea of how an object's form should look. As a main example of ugliness of types (i) and (ii), Guyer puts

⁹This view has been pointed out by the majority of Kant's scholars. I will come back to this argument and discuss on it more explicitly in the next chapter. In short, the argument is that categories cannot differentiate between various images, because they are abstract concepts, and hence in order to have any particular image my sense impressions must be governed by empirical concepts as well.

forward Kant's example of the devastations of war. Devastations of war are ugly because they cause physical pain and are therefore disagreeable to our senses, and because they violate our moral standards (2005, p. 151). If ugliness is not of type (i) or (ii), then Guyer suggests it must be of type (iii). An object's formal qualities can be ugly if they are in disagreement with our idea of how it should look (category-dependent ugliness). For example, he writes: "an asymmetry that we might find beautiful in an Art Nouveau home could strike us as hideous in a Renaissance church" (2005a, p. 155). In this case it is not formal qualities by themselves that cause displeasure, but displeasure is caused because the object's form fails to fulfill our preconceived expectations of how an object should look.

In sum, on Guyer's account judgments of taste are comprised of judgments of the beautiful (presence of free harmony) and judgments of aesthetic indifference (lack of free harmony), but there is no pure judgments of ugliness (presence of free disharmony). Objects are ugly because of their sensory or moral elements that we do not like or agree with, or because the object's form is not adequate to our standards as to how they should look.¹⁰

Even though Guyer's account of ugliness is at least plausible for some cases of displeasure (and it is true that we do sometimes find objects ugly because they deviate from our established standards), it cannot however account for all of them. In order for there to be category-dependent ugliness of an object's form, there must in the first place be a standard for how an object should look. It is true that, for example, regarding the human face we have a standard of how a face should look, based on which we can judge, say, a severe disfigurement of a face to be displeasing, because it is in disagreement with our preconceived idea of how the face of a normal person should look. But this does not mean that for every object's form that we find ugly, we also have an idea of how it should look.

Even if we have a concept with which we can categorize an object, this does not necessarily mean that a dependent aesthetic standard can be derived from the concept, because the concept may simply be too general. For example, in the case of dance, a dependent aesthetic judgment can be made according to some standard only if the concept with which we are judging the bodily movements is sufficiently contentful. More specifically, we can judge whether a specific sequence of bodily movements is a beautiful or ugly ballet on one hand, and also whether the same sequence of movements is a beautiful or ugly Polynesian war dance, because the standards are sufficiently contentful in each case. That the aesthetic evaluations made on the basis of the respective standards is likely to be different even given the same sequence of movements, shows that these are indeed aesthetic evaluations

¹⁰For a similar interpretation of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics see Hannah Ginsborg (2003). Frank Sibley (2006) also argues for such an interpretation of ugliness, independently of Kant's theory. He claims that beauty and ugliness are asymmetrical. Beauty is an ambifunctional adjective, meaning that it can work either as a predicate (without knowledge of a standard) or as an attribute, meaning that it is ideal-related. Ugliness, on the other hand, is essentially attributive. That is, an object is ugly only if it deviates from the normal idea of what it is supposed to be. He does not allow that an object's form could be ugly by itself.

dependent on a standard. However, it is not the case that simply because we can categorize an object under a concept that this necessarily supplies us with a standard against which a dependent aesthetic judgment can be made. The concept of dance, for instance, is not on its own adequately contentful to supply us with such a standard. If all that it is known about the sequence of bodily movements is that it is a dance, we have no standard with which to make a dependent aesthetic evaluation, but we can still judge it to be ugly. The case is similar for paintings, because the objects belonging to this category are so fundamentally various that the categorization of an object as a painting on its own is again insufficient to supply us with a standard despite our being able to find a painting ugly, even though we categorize it no more specifically than that it is a painting. The case with paintings is especially clear in the case of abstract art where the freedom of form within the medium is so broad that no prior determinate idea of what such a painting should look like can be given. An abstract painting is just lines and colors, and it is not credible to say that we have some idea of what lines and colors *should* look like. However, we can find some composition of lines and colors ugly even though we have no standard for it (for example Karel Appel's *Man in the Wind*, 1961).

Moreover, dependent ugliness, according to Guyer, comes from an object not satisfying criteria specified by its concept, that is, how it should look. However, there can be cases where an object is still ugly even if it does satisfy our expectations as to how it should look. For example, a turkey can satisfy completely the criteria belonging to the concept of a turkey while nevertheless being ugly, because even the most perfect specimen of a turkey is an ugly animal. Such cases of ugliness do not fit into Guyer's definition of displeasure. Furthermore, it is also not true that we find all displeasure of the senses ugly. For example, if a violinist plays a tone wrongly, I do not necessarily find such a tone ugly, but merely discomforting or uneasy to my ear. Also, painful sensory stimuli are all displeasurable, but few if any of these could really be called ugly. Therefore, not all displeasures of the senses are ugly. Accordingly, Guyer fails to give an adequate explanation of ugliness in Kant's aesthetics and is, therefore, ultimately unsuccessful.

To conclude, even though there is textual support for claiming that Kant identified judgments of ugliness as pure judgments of taste, his explanation of judgments of taste, which is focused solely on judgments of the beautiful, seems to preclude any possibility to accommodate judgments of ugliness within it. Moreover, the analysis of Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste has shown that the concept of free harmony itself is deeply problematic. Kant claims that free harmony is a universally communicable state of mind because it is a subjective condition of cognition. But such an explanation is accompanied by undesirable implications, which Kant himself denies, namely, that pleasure is a necessary concomitant of cognition. Furthermore, this account suggests that free harmony precedes cognition, that is, it precedes the application of a concept. But, as Guyer (2005a) has argued, this is epistemologically impossible. We cannot be conscious of a representation without prior application of concepts, that is, without some conceptual harmony between cognitive powers.

Indeed, if we turn to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, we see that the conception of free harmony as a subjective condition of cognition does not make much sense. Namely, we learn that concepts are not merely applied to the synthesis of imagination, but they *determine* the process of synthesis. A concept, Kant says, is a rule for the synthesis of the manifold (A106). The synthesis of sensible manifold performed by the imagination is not an independent activity. Rather, the imagination combines sensible manifold and produces a perceptual image according to the concept. This is, in a nutshell, Kant's view on the nature of the relation between cognitive powers in cognitive judgments: imagination and understanding must be in harmony in order to present an object of perceptual experience, and this harmony is governed by concepts. As Kenneth Rogerson (2008, p. 60) points out, "A concept does not merely recognize orderliness, but constitutes the order." But if this is so, then the concept of free harmony that underlies judgments of taste and in which, allegedly, the synthesis of imagination is free (not determined by a concept), cannot be identified with the subjective condition of cognition. That is, there is a substantial difference between the constitution of harmony in cognitive judgments and harmony in judgments of taste. But if the concept of free harmony amounts to a state of mind significantly different to the state of mind required for cognition, then the problem is how it can attain universal validity.

Ultimately, the investigation of judgments of ugliness depends on the notion of free harmony as the fundamental concept underlying judgments of taste (of the beautiful). But, as the foregoing discussion has shown, Kant's own formulation of the concept of free harmony is deeply unsatisfying. Hence, in order to give a positive solution to the concept of ugliness, it is necessary to gain a more thorough understanding of the concept of free harmony. We need to understand what Kant means by claiming that in judgments of taste the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding are exercised in their freedom, which can either be such that it results in judgments of the beautiful (free harmony) or in judgments of the ugly (free disharmony). Therefore, in order to find a way to approach ugliness positively, a reevaluation of Kant's concept of free harmony is needed.

Chapter 3

The Concept of Freedom in the Play of Imagination and Understanding

In the previous chapter I discussed the problem of ugliness and different solutions that were proposed in order to solve it. This discussion showed that none of the proposed solutions were successful, mainly due to Kant's unsatisfactory formulation of the concept of free harmony constitutive of judgments of taste (of the beautiful). Given this, a positive explanation of ugliness and of the notion of *free disharmony* cannot proceed without first settling on a proper understanding of the notion of free play between cognitive powers. This is a difficult task to begin with, particularly as Kant provides merely a negative definition of free harmony as a harmony between imagination and understanding that is not restricted by the concept of the object. Furthermore, he views the notion of free harmony as intimately connected with the activity of imagination and understanding in ordinary cognition. It is a central tenet of his theory of taste that free harmony depends on the relation between cognitive powers that is universally communicable, and that nothing can be universally communicable but the relation between cognitive powers that is required for cognition.

However, when one turns to Kant's explanation of cognition in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in order to clarify what this state of mind amounts to, one is left with a rather puzzling explanation. We learn from Kant's epistemological theory that: first, a judgment is made universally valid by the application of concepts. Concepts serve as the universal standard upon which agreement is achieved. Cognitive judgments can be correct or incorrect depending on the concept, serving as a rule against which the content can be judged. But in judgments of taste the play between cognitive powers is not determined by concepts, which means that there is no standard against which the content can be judged. The justification for the universal validity of judgments of taste does not depend on concepts, Kant writes, and if there is no rule against which the action can be judged, then how can we claim that such judgments can be correct or incorrect. Second, we also learn from his theory that concepts are rules for the synthesis of the manifold (A106). Accordingly, in the case of cognition, the imagination is not

free, but governed by concepts provided by the understanding. In judgments of taste, however, Kant claims that the imagination synthesizes the intuition freely; since no concept determines how it ought to be (there is no rule to which it ought to conform). Free harmony is, as Kant writes, 'lawful but without a law' (KU 5:241, p. 125). That is, an object is beautiful if the combination of its elements is in harmony with the understanding (it is lawful), but without this harmony being determined by any particular concepts of the understanding (it is without a law). This idea, however, seems to be problematic. Namely, if understanding is the faculty of concepts or rules, and no such rules are present in the synthesis of the imagination, then how can imagination be in harmony (or disharmony) with the faculty of concepts or rules, without any particular rule prescribed to it?

The reconciliation of Kant's account of the role of imagination and understanding in ordinary cognition with their role in judgments of taste is the main subject of the contemporary debate on Kant's aesthetics. It is not surprising that it has resulted in a variety of different interpretations. My aim in the present chapter is to examine and reevaluate these interpretative suggestions. Because Kant's aesthetics has become a subject of great interest over the past 40 years, the number of these interpretations is not insignificant. Paul Guyer (2006) classified them as precognitive, multicognitive and metacognitive approaches, and thereby provided a coherent and unified picture of the field. I will follow his classification, but in addition consider two more recent interpretations, that is, abstractive and symbolic interpretations. I will focus on the main representatives of each group, and raise a number of questions about the adequacy of their interpretations, in particular, whether they can accommodate all three beliefs that Kant seems to hold. First, that understanding is the faculty of concepts, providing rules for the synthesis of imagination. Hence, free harmony, as a play between imagination and understanding cannot be a play independent of all rules. Second, that free play is similar enough to the play of cognitive powers in cognition so that it can attain universal validity, and it is dissimilar enough that it does not necessarily accompany every object of cognition. Some objects of cognition do not have free play. That is, they produce no aesthetic feelings. Third, that there are judgments of ugliness as depending on a disharmonious free play between cognitive powers. This is the part of Kant's aesthetic theory that I particularly emphasize, and argue that any interpretation which cannot successfully explain the possibility of ugliness within Kant's aesthetics is unsuccessful.

I will argue that while none of the approaches provide a full solution to the problems of the concept of free play, the partial solutions that they do offer can indicate ways in which the whole problem can be addressed. Before proceeding, I want to turn to Kant's theory of cognition in order to clarify his epistemological views on the nature of the relation between the imagination and understanding, and to indicate the problematic implications surrounding Kant's notion of free harmony.

3.1 Kant's View on the Role of the Imagination and Understanding in Cognitive Judgments

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant explains what he means by the subjective conditions of cognition. This explanation is known as the doctrine of the three-fold synthesis (synthesis of apprehension, synthesis of reproduction, synthesis of recognition). I will now provide a short explanation of these syntheses.

The first synthesis is '*synthesis of the apprehension in intuition*', whose function is to have "gone through and gathered together" the manifold of intuition (A99). Every intuition contains a manifold in it, but this manifold is indiscriminate when received through senses, and becomes understandable only through the synthesis of apprehension. Kant holds a view, contrary to the empiricist's idea, that in order to perceive an image, the mere receptivity of sense impressions will not do, and that what is needed is the synthesis of sense impressions: "although intuition offers a manifold, yet intuition can never bring this manifold about as a manifold, and as contained moreover *in one presentation*, unless a synthesis occurs in this process" (A99). This synthesis is performed by the faculty of imagination and it is called apprehension: "For the imagination is to bring the manifold of intuition to an *image*; hence it must beforehand take the impressions up into its activity, i.e., apprehend them" (A120). Because every intuition occurs in time, the mind must distinguish the time in the apprehension of these elements: "This manifold would not be presented as such if the mind did not in the sequence of impressions following one another distinguish the time" (A99). Only when the apprehension occurs, can we have a perception of a spatial and temporal object: "by *synthesis of apprehension* I mean that assembly of the manifold in an empirical intuition whereby perception, i.e., empirical consciousness of the intuition (as appearance), becomes possible" (B160). The synthesis of apprehension is empirical (synthesis of empirical intuition or sense impressions), as well pure or a priori, that is, synthesis of apprehension of pure representation of space and time. The empirical synthesis of apprehension is ultimately conditioned by a pure apprehension: "Empirical intuition is possible only through pure intuition (of space and time)" (A166/B207).

The synthesis of apprehension is conditioned by the second synthesis, that is, *synthesis of reproduction*. Kant argues that it is not enough to combine the intuitions, but since they occur in time, we must be aware of how each intuition occurs before or after the other. That is, one must remember or keep in mind how each intuition proceeds:

If I want to draw a line in thought, or to think the time from one noon to the next, or even just to present a certain number, then I must, first of all, necessarily apprehend in thought one of these manifold presentations after the other. But if I always lost from my thoughts the preceding presentations (the first part of the line, the preceding parts of the time, or the sequentially presented units) and did not reproduce them as I proceeded to the following ones, then there could never arise a whole presentation. (A102)

If I would not be able to keep in mind the succession of intuitions that I have apprehended, then the apprehension would be useless, since I would forget

how each representation follows the other. Accordingly, the reproductive power of imagination is necessary for the successful act of apprehension:

even this apprehension of the manifold would, by itself, produce as yet no image and no coherence of impressions, if there did not also exist a subjective basis for summoning up a perception from which the mind has passed to another (and bringing it) over to the subsequent ones – and for thus exhibiting entire series of perceptions. i.e., in addition to apprehension we need a reproductive power of imagination. (A121)

In order to have a complete representation of an object I must remember (reproduce) how each representation that I previously apprehended occurs before the other, together with the occurrence of the present apprehension. As there is empirical synthesis of reproduction, there is also a priori or pure synthesis of reproduction, performed by the pure or transcendental imagination.

The synthesis of reproduction is furthermore presupposed by the third synthesis, that is, *synthesis of recognition in the concept*, because, as Kant says:

Without the consciousness that what we are thinking is the same as what we thought an instant before, all reproduction in the series of presentations would be futile. For what we are thinking would in the current state be a new presentation, which would not belong at all to the act by which it was to be produced little by little. Hence the manifold of the presentation would never make up a whole, because it would lack the unity that only consciousness can impart to it. (A103)

This consciousness is characterized by the ‘synthesis of recognition in the concept’. The unity of the manifold is conveyed by the consciousness which Kant identifies with the concept, and with the understanding, as the faculty of producing such concepts. Kant has a twofold definition of concepts. On one hand, concept is “this one consciousness [that] unites in one presentation what is manifold, intuited little by little, and then also reproduced” (A103). On other hand, a concept is also a rule: “A concept, in terms of its form, is always something that is universal and that serves as a rule” (A106).¹ That is, a concept serves as a rule for the synthetic unity of a manifold of intuition:

This unity is impossible, however, unless the intuition can be produced according to a rule through a certain function of synthesis, viz., a function of synthesis that makes the reproduction of the manifold necessary a priori and makes possible a concept in which the manifold is united. (A105)

It follows from these passages that concepts are not merely applied to the synthesized manifold, but since Kant formulates them as rules and as a single consciousness, they themselves guide the synthesis of imagination into one unified

¹Kant understands concepts in two ways. First, a concept is a set of marks common to different things (A320/B377). For example, the concept of a dog is a set of marks such as animal, four legs, fur, barking, etc. Second, a concept is also a rule for the organization of the sense data. First and the second definition of a concept correspond to the matter (content) and the form of the concept respectively: “With every concept we are to distinguish *matter and form*. The matter of concepts is the *object*, their form *universality*” (JL 9:91, p. 589). For a fine discussion on Kant’s theory of concepts as marks and rules see Bayne (2010).

(organized) representation. And through this mental process it also presents this unity in my consciousness of the representation: "Without being related to consciousness (. . .) appearances could never become an object to us, hence it would be nothing to us" (A119). For example, Kant writes, that the concept of the body serves as "a rule for intuitions" by representing "the necessary reproduction of the manifold of appearances" and therefore "to represent the synthetic unity in the consciousness of the appearances" (A105). Through this procedure we come to have a perceptual experience of a body: "Thus the concept of a body makes necessary, when we perceive something outside us, the representation of extension, impenetrability, shape, etc." (A105). The idea is that concepts are rules for the reproduction of sense impressions (keeping in mind how each representation occurs before the other) and since reproduction necessitates apprehension, by which perception is possible, it follows that concepts are in fact necessary for perception: "The concepts not only serve to make appearances reproducible, they also, by doing so, serve to determine an object for their intuition" (A107). The procedure of recognition in the concept is not only empirical (recognition in the empirical concept), but also transcendental (recognition in the pure concept). But while empirical concepts, such as the concept of a body, serve as a necessary condition for experience of some objects, transcendental concepts serve as the necessary condition for all experience: "pure understanding, by means of the categories, is a formal and synthetic principle of all experiences" (A119).

The theory of the threefold synthesis represents the activity of cognitive powers required for cognition. This activity is carried out by the faculty of imagination, mediating between the intuition (receptivity of sense impressions) and concepts, and by the understanding as the faculty of concepts, responsible for providing the necessary unity of the synthesized manifold. The power of imagination performs two kinds of acts. First, the apprehension of the manifold, which Kant identifies with perception and second the reproduction or recollection of sense impressions necessary for the cohesion of apprehended sense impressions. The synthesis of imagination, however, is guided by the concept. Kant claims that concepts are rules for the synthesis of intuition, specifically, for the reproduction of manifold of intuition. Yet, if concepts determine the synthesis of reproduction, and if the synthesis of reproduction conditions the synthesis of apprehension, then it follows that concepts determine the perception itself. Hence, concepts are not only applied to the perceptual image, rather, they are applied to the intuition itself. That is, they determine how we will come to perceive the object.²

Such an interpretation of perceptual experience can be found in many places of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. First, in his emphasis, that each of the syntheses, in order to function properly, must presuppose the other, and ultimately, all the syntheses depend on the concepts and the faculty of understanding (A125). The possibility of perceptual experience begins with categories and ends with the empirical application of the categories in recognition, down to reproduction and

²See also Pippin (1992) for a detailed explanation of this idea.

apprehension. Thus, it is concepts that take place prior to the synthesis of imagination and make possible perceptual experience. Second, in the B Deduction of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant identifies the act of synthesis with the understanding: “Hence all combination is an act of understanding. (...) I would assign to this act of understanding the general name synthesis” (B130). But if the synthesis of apprehension is in fact performed by the understanding, then, as Kant claims: “all synthesis, the synthesis through which even perception becomes possible, is subject to the categories” (B161). Even though Kant describes imagination as an “indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no cognition” (A78), he also adds that this function is ‘blind’, suggesting that it needs to be directed by the understanding which provides the rules as to how or in what manner the synthesis must proceed. Without this rule, the imagination would not be able to pick up and hold together the intuitions in a way that the concept could apply and cognition to arise.

An explanation of perceptual experience, as rule governed, represents the dominant view among Kant’s scholars. Hannah Ginsborg (1997, p. 51) in particular emphasizes the normative character of concepts and offers a fine illustration of how the normativity-rule is imposed on the synthesis:

Recognizing this as a dog implies recognizing that I ought to synthesize my representations in one way rather than other, for example, that I ought to see the tail as belonging with the head and legs rather than with the tree in the background, or that I ought to reproduce prior perceptions of barking, rather than, say, meowing or neighing. Recognizing the applicability of a concept, then, is recognizing a normative rule which governs the activity of my imagination in its reproduction of the manifold. It is because concepts serve in the first instance to specify ways, in which the manifold ought to be synthesized, not just ways in which the manifold is synthesized, that they can be identified with rules for the synthesis of the manifold.

Accordingly, the concept prescribes how the synthesis *should* be carried out and how the discrimination among the sense impressions *should* proceed. The concept serves as a plan for the synthesis of sensible manifold. Based on this discussion, the following can be concluded: first, that if the synthesis (combination of sensible manifold) proceeds according to a plan (rule), then this implies that the rule, the concept, must precede the synthesis. Perception does not begin with some image on which we apply the concept. Rather, this procedure begins with the concept, determining the way we come to construct the image. One will come to perceive the image in a certain way, that is, one will perceive a particular combination of sensible manifold as a dog for instance. Thus, perception is already an interpretation of sensible manifold. Second, there is a distinction between the two ways that understanding operates in the activity of judging. Understanding not merely provides the rule according to which the synthesis is performed, but it also recognizes this rule in the specified concept. The latter act of understanding refers to the explicit judgment of cognition and it is dependent on the former activity.³ For

³This distinction is also defended by Longuenesse (2001, pp. 50–63).

example, when one makes the judgment ‘X is a house’, one is explicating the rule inherent in his perception of the house. To judge that X is a house, as Paton (1965, p. 272) states: “we are conceiving the general plan or rule which is manifested in the synthesis of imagination.” Such an interpretation explains why Kant defines the final act of the synthesis as recognition in the concept. The term *recognition* suggests that we must already have some acquaintance with the thing which is being subsumed under or recognized. Hence, to recognize the manifold in the concept (i.e. to make a cognitive judgment) means to recognize the rule inherent in the perceptual synthesis.

To conclude, the harmony between cognitive powers in cognition is guided by concepts. Imagination is not free in synthesizing the manifold of intuition; rather, it is constrained or subordinated by the rules of understanding. Furthermore, conceptual harmony between cognitive powers is required not only for making explicit cognitive judgments, rather, concepts are applied to the manifold at the more fundamental level, that is, to make possible our perceptual experience of the object in the first place. Conceptual harmony is necessary in order to perceive the object.

3.2 Productive Imagination and the Role of Schema in Cognition

The product of the synthesis of imagination is an experience of a particular image (say, an image of a dog). This synthesis is made possible by what is given in empirical intuition and apprehended by the imagination, and by the concept, serving as a rule for the synthesis. Recognition of the rule in the manifold results in cognition (identification of the object). Kant explains the procedure of applying a concept to the sensible manifold with his notion of *schema*. Kant’s explanation of schema appears under the heading: *Transcendental doctrine of the Power of Judgment*. Power of judgment is “the ability to *subsume* under rules, i.e., to distinguish whether something does or does not fall under a given rule” (A132/B171). Our mind is equipped with many concepts, but how we apply them to each set of sense data is a matter of the power of judgment, which Kant identifies with a special talent or capacity. The power of judgment is represented by a schema, which Kant understands as a procedure by which we link a given sensible manifold with its appropriate concept. It is a result of the productive imagination, representing both sensibility and understanding, that is, the combination of sensible manifold and a concept. Schema, as Weldon (1947, p. 143) suitably describes it, is “a quasi-concept and a quasi-picture.”

Kant begins his exposition of the schematism by emphasizing the importance of schema in the case of applying pure concepts to the intuition. Because pure concepts are forms of thoughts and have no images, transcendental schema is needed in order to make homogenous pure concepts and sensible intuition. However, Kant extends the necessity of schema in the case of empirical concept application as well: “Even less is an object of experience or an image thereof ever adequate to the empirical

concept; rather, that concept always refers directly to the schema of imagination” (A141/B180). Empirical schema is required because one’s perceptual experience is always an experience of objects with its particular distinctive properties, each differing from one another even though belonging to the same kind. Even though one has the concept, this does not immediately guarantee that one knows how to use such concept in each particular case. As Walsh (1967, p. 76) says, “to use a word with meaning it is not enough to have in mind what it applies to.” Kant gives an example of a judge who knows all the rules, but lacks the ability to apply them in each particular case (A134/B173). Analogously, I may have a concept, say of a tree, by which I come to know that a tree is a plant with branches, leaves, and trunk. What I need in order to apply correctly the concept of a tree to the relevant sensible manifold is a schema of a tree. A schema represents a concept. That is, a schema of a tree contains the essential features of a tree and the relations that obtain among them, irrelevant of other distinctive properties they have. Empirical concepts do not contain the data of all the individual instances; rather, they contain a schema, that is, a record of their common properties. Robert Pippin (1982, p. 144) also emphasizes the importance of an empirical schema and writes that if empirical concepts would not have their own schema, then “empirical concepts would have to be nothing but strung-along memories of numerous similar individual and individual properties.”

Kant offers different characterizations of a schema. It is (i) “a presentation of a universal procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image” (A141/B180); (ii) a ‘whole’s outline’ (A834/B862) or a ‘shadowy image’ (A570/B598); (iii) a “rule for determining our intuition in accordance with such and such a general concept” (A141/B180). A schema is a sort of an image and a rule at the same time, that is, a rule for linking a set of sense data with its appropriate concept.⁴ Kant illustrates the function of a schema in the following way:

The concept dog signifies a rule whereby my imagination can trace the shape of such a four-footed animal in a general way, i.e., without being limited to any single and particular shape offered to me by experience. (A141)

A concept of a dog specifies the essential characteristics of a dog, such as a four-footed animal. A schema on the other hand represents an abstract image of the essential properties and the relations that obtain between them. For example, a schema of a dog contains physical properties such as head, body, four legs, tail, fur in their typical size and shape, and the arrangement of these properties, such as, that the head is attached to the body, the tail to the back side of the body, the legs to the bottom part of the body etc. Even though there are different kinds of dogs, they all entail this rule in virtue of which they are recognized as dogs. Kant writes that it is through a schema that “images become possible in the first place” (A142). A concept must always be schematized in order to produce a particular image: “the images must always be connected with the concept only by means

⁴Eva Schaper (1992, p. 307) describes schema as a diagram or a blueprint, which prescribes how a certain activity must proceed.

of the schema that they designate; in themselves the images are never completely congruent with the concept” (A142/B181). Schema makes possible the perception of an image by determining the apprehension of sensible manifold. Based on the given sensible manifold, a schema selects which properties are to be picked up and combined together. For example, perceiving features such as a tail and four feet will activate the schema ‘animal’ or more specific schema ‘dog’ and organize sensible manifold in accordance with this schema (that the features such as head, body, fur ought to follow, and arrange them in their specific relations). A schema organizes our perceptual experiences. Even though Kant formulates both concept and schema in the same way, that is, as being a rule for the determination of intuition, it is in fact the schema that is the rule at work. The concept is a set of marks common to different instances of the same kind; a schema on the other hand is a rule that organizes the combination of sensible manifold in accordance with its concept. Robert Pippin (1992, p. 298) nicely describes the relationship between the schema and a concept in the following way: “the imagination gives the concept a figure, a shape, (. . .) a form, a recognizable character by virtue of which correct or incorrect inclusion can be discussed.” We come to recognize a particular image when we recognize the universal (schema) in the manifold of intuition.

3.3 The Role of Imagination and Understanding in Judgments of Taste

Kant claims that judgments of taste depend on the same subjective conditions that are required for cognition. The connection between judgments of taste and cognition is essential, since Kant wants to claim that judgments of taste are universally communicable, because they depend on state of mind that is required for cognition. Yet, Kant claims there is a difference. Namely, the relation between imagination and understanding in judgments of taste is not determined by concepts, and so cognitive powers are in free play. Having in mind Kant’s characterization of concepts as rules, this means that judgments of taste depend on the relation between imagination and understanding that is not rule governed. There is no concept guiding the imagination as to how it ought to combine sensible manifold, as is the case in determinate cognition, where the sensible manifold is organized according to the rule.

Kant claims that the subject of taste is the *mere* form of the object, without the consideration of what the object represents. In other words, the subject of taste is the *mere* combination of sensible manifold (apprehension), that is not restricted to a particular rule and it is therefore free as to how it ought to synthesize the manifold. For example, he writes that pleasure in a judgment of taste “is connected with the mere apprehension (*apprehensio*) of the form of an object of intuition without a relation of this to a concept for a determinate cognition” (KU 5:189, p. 76). Kant seems to have a view that what we perceive in judgments of taste is the combination of sensible manifold (i.e. form) without this form being conceptually determined.

Before proceeding, let me summarize what Kant actually claims here. Judgments of taste are constituted by the free play of cognitive powers, that is, by operation of cognitive powers without the concept of the object. Kant claims that when we judge aesthetically, say a flower, the concept of the flower should not impinge upon our reflection (it is irrelevant what the object under consideration is). This could mean that in the case of a flower, we judge merely its form without considering whether this form satisfies all the features thought in the concept of the flower (whether this flower is the perfect instance of the kind it belongs to). This in fact is a common occurrence. For example, I can find a certain form of the flower pleasing, even though it is flawed example of a flower. Or, I can find certain other flowers displeasing, even though they represent a perfect example of the flower.

However, Kant seems to be holding a more restrictive notion of free play than merely the irrelevance of attributes entailed by the concept. Free play is constituted not only by disregarding the concept of the object in judging the beauty of the form of the object, rather, the concept is not present in the apprehension of the form. Thus, not only the concept of the object is absent in aesthetic judgments, but the concept is absent in perceiving the form of the object. The concept of free play, presumably, is formulated as the play between cognitive powers in which apprehension is not guided by the concept.

However, such conception of free play opposes Kant's explanation of the subjective conditions required for cognition. The discussion on the theory of the threefold synthesis showed that the apprehension is guided by concepts and they are necessary in order to have a representation of a certain image. Kant claims that perception is the empirical consciousness, and since the consciousness is provided by connecting the sensible manifold with the concept (through schema), the latter is necessary in order to have a perceptual experience. Hence, it is impossible to have a representation of a *mere* form of the object. But this means that free play cannot be a play between apprehension (imagination) and understanding without the presence of the concept, because the concept is already present in the apprehension. In other words, it is impossible to perceive the *mere form* of the object independently as to how this form is conceptualized. But then, the question is what does the free play amount to, if it cannot be a play without a concept.

Some have argued that free play amounts to a play between cognitive powers that is free of empirical concepts, but not of categories (Gregor 1985, p. 195; Makkreel 1990, p. 47). The apprehension in judgments of taste is guided by the categories, but not by the empirical concepts. They argue that synthetic unity of apperception, by which Kant means the consciousness of the representation (the manifold must be necessarily brought to the self-consciousness) is a necessary condition of any perceptual experience: "The I think must be capable of accompanying all my representations, for otherwise something would be represented in me which could not be thought" (B131). The synthetic unity of apperception "takes place by means of the category" (B143). Hence, categories are necessary for perceptual experience and therefore for aesthetic perception as well. But what is not necessary is the application of empirical concepts. Free

play involves the application of categories to the manifold of intuition, but not the application of empirical concepts (such as the concept of a flower, house, dog etc.).

However, this strategy appears to be incompatible with Kant's epistemological theory. It has been pointed out by numerous Kant's scholars, that Kant's conception of categories precludes the possibility that they can be applied to the sensible manifold, without the assistance of empirical concepts (Guyer 2006, pp. 180–181; Ginsborg 1997, p. 56; Pippin 1982, p. 137; Schrader 1967, p. 138). The reasoning is the following:

1. Categories (such as substance, cause and effect etc.) are rules of the synthetic unity of all appearances, that is, for the possibility of all experience (A128).
2. Categories do not have their own images. Kant writes: "A schema of a pure concept of understanding, on the other hand, is something that one cannot bring to any image whatsoever" (A142/B181). He also says: "Pure concepts of understanding (indeed, from sensible intuitions generally) and can never be encountered in any intuition" (A137/B176). That is, there is no image of a category of a substance or an image of the category of cause and effect. All the images and laws we encounter in the empirical world are merely particular determinations of the categories: "all empirical laws are only particular determinations of the pure laws of understanding" (A128). For example, an image of a house, or an image of a dog is only a particular determination of the category of a substance, and the law that 'the sun is the cause of the warmth of the stone' is a particular determination of the category of cause and effect.
3. But if categories must be applied to the sensible manifold (in order to have perceptual experience), and if categories do not distinguish between particular images and laws (the category of a substance does not distinguish between the image of a house, or an image of a dog), then this means that in order to have an experience of a particular image, my sense impressions must be guided, not only by the categories, but by the particular empirical concepts as well. That is, in order to have an image, say of a dog, the manifold of sense impressions must be guided not only by the category of a substance, but by the empirical concept of a dog as well.

It follows from this that in order for categories to function as rules for the synthesis of any manifold of sensible impressions, they can do so only through the assistance of empirical concepts. But this in turn means that it is not only pure concepts that precede the synthesis of sensible manifold, but empirical concepts as well. Empirical concepts are necessary for the experience of objects, because only through them, the categories, required for the unity of consciousness, can be applied to the sensible manifold. Hannah Ginsborg (1997, p. 56) nicely puts the argument in the following way:

we cannot perceive or imagine something as, say, a substance *tout court* (...) We can perceive or imagine something as a substance only by perceiving or imagining it as, say, a dog, or an armadillo, or some other particular kind of substance. But this implies that, to the

extent that I am governed by the concept of substance in my synthesis of the given empirical intuitions, I must at the same time be governed by the concept of dog or of armadillo or whatever the relevant empirical concept is. I cannot, as it were, first synthesize my intuitions according to the concept of substance and then, on the basis of that synthesis, perceive the object as a dog. Rather, the pure and the empirical concept go together: my synthesis can be governed by pure concepts only insofar as it is governed by some empirical concept or other.

But this in turn means that the apprehension of the form in aesthetic perception cannot be guided only by the categories, but must also be guided by the application of empirical concepts.

Given this, we are presented with a difficulty as to how to understand the concept of free play, constitutive of judgments of taste, if such a play cannot be constituted by the complete absence of empirical concepts. A variety of interpretations of the concept of free play emerged in order to reconcile the following contradictory theses that Kant seems to hold:

- (i) Judgments of taste do not depend on the (empirical) concept of the object, but on the *mere* form of the object, or the presentation through the free play of imagination and understanding.
- (ii) Judgments of taste have the perception of the form of the object as their subject.
- (iii) The perception of the form of the object depends on an (empirical) concept.

In the following I will reexamine these interpretations, following Guyer's helpful classification of these interpretations into three main classes, that is, precognitive, multicognitive and metacognitive interpretation, the last one argued for by Guyer (2006). In addition to these, I consider two more approaches, that is, an abstractive and symbolic approach. In a nutshell, the main strategy of the precognitive approach is to hold premise (i) and (ii) but deny premise (iii). They claim that perception can occur without application of empirical concepts. Multicognitive approach holds premise (ii) and (iii) with a revision of (i). Metacognitive approach holds premise (ii) and (iii), yet denies (i). It holds that aesthetic perception is dependent on empirical concepts. Symbolic interpretation holds a similar strategy. It claims that free harmony depends on empirical concepts, yet in addition it symbolically presents ideas of reason. The abstractive approach holds all three premises, yet it fails because of its specific interpretation of premise (i). While some of the difficulties with the first two approaches have been already tackled by Guyer (2006, pp. 172–182), I will in addition to those, point out some more.

3.3.1 Precognitive Interpretation of the Concept of Free Play: Ginsborg and Allison

According to this interpretation, free play is a play between imagination and understanding taking place prior to the actual conceptualization of the empirical

intuition. The most advanced and established version of this approach has been suggested by Hannah Ginsborg and Henry Allison.⁵

Hannah Ginsborg develops an account according to which free harmony is achieved by the satisfaction of the first two syntheses (apprehension and reproduction), without conceptualization. She claims that we must be able to experience such non-conceptual synthesis in order to explain the possibility of empirical concept acquisition. Namely, there is a problem within Kant's account of perceptual experience, which on one hand, claims that empirical concepts are rules for the synthesis, while on the other hand, he claims that empirical concepts are derived from experience. But this account is circular. If (1) empirical concepts are derived from perceptual experience, and (2) categories are rules for the synthesis of sense impressions which makes possible perceptual experience, but (3) categories cannot be applied to sense impressions without empirical concepts, this means that (4) perceptual experience presupposes prior application of empirical concepts, whose origin is supposed to be derived from perceptual experience itself. The question then is how we come to arrive at empirical concepts, if they cannot be derived from the synthesis of sense impressions, since the synthesis presupposes the assistance of such empirical concepts in the first place, nor from non-synthesized sense impressions, since, as Kant famously claims, "intuitions without concepts are blind" (A51/B75).⁶

Ginsborg offers a solution to this problem with her unique interpretation of the concept of free harmony. She writes that the synthesis of sense impressions, by which we come to form a perceptual image is not guided by empirical concepts, but is rather a natural process of combining sense impressions into forms and patterns:

it is as though one moves the pencil automatically, carried along by sequence of blind impulses, and can recognize only afterwards, by examining the result, what it is that one has come to depict. (2006a, p. 73)

This activity, however, is not arbitrary. The process of synthesizing has an inherent awareness of the appropriateness of the synthesis. Ginsborg calls such awareness a *perceptual normativity*. In illustrating the case of perceptual normativity, Ginsborg offers an analogous example of the activity of speaking one's native language (1997, pp. 59–61). Even though, speaking English, she writes, is an activity that is guided by the rules of grammar, we do not learn to speak English by learning these rules first; rather, we learn it through actual speech behavior, that is, through the activity itself of speaking English. The act of speaking English is exemplary of

⁵The origins of this interpretation can also be found in Donald Crawford (1974). Something similar is suggested by Henrich Dieter (1992). Paul Guyer defended this approach in his earlier work *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (1997).

⁶One of the solutions, proposed by Schrader (1967, p. 153) is that empirical concepts are not acquired from experience, but that they are product of the faculty of understanding, just as categories are. He regards empirical concepts as a priori concepts. For a more detailed discussion on the problem of empirical concept acquisition and criticism of different proposals, see Ginsborg (2006b).

rules. Speaking English carries its own normativity as to how it ought to be spoken. This activity is tantamount to 'primitive judging' by which no prior rule or standard as to how an activity (speaking English) ought to be is set down, rather, it is the case that the way the activity is performed set its own standards, based on which we derive rules (rules of grammar or how English ought to be spoken). Derivative judgment is an articulation and specification of a rule (such as the rules of grammar) derived from the primitive judging (from the activity of speaking English). It is an explicit recognition of rules of which the activity is an exemplar and based on which we can judge determinately whether the activity is performed correctly or not.

Analogously empirical concept acquisition proceeds. The synthesis of imagination is an activity which is an exemplary of rules, that is, an activity that sets its own standard. The way the synthesis of the empirical intuition proceeds, is the way it ought to be. It is not determined by concepts beforehand, rather, concepts are grasped in the activity itself. Based on Ginsborg's account I come to arrive at the concept, say of a dog, not by a prior rule-guided activity of synthesizing sense impressions. Rather, the reproduction of sense impressions (recalling in the mind previous intuitions I had when seeing a dog) proceeds naturally, with a sense of appropriateness. I am reproducing my sense impressions in one way rather than other, that is, forming an image of a dog rather than, say of a cat, because it is a naturally determined process with an inherent awareness, that the way I reproduce is the way it ought to be reproduced. The process of imaginative synthesis is embedded with my primitive 'knowledge' that the way I am reproducing is the right way and that everyone else ought to be reproducing similarly. By perceiving one way rather than another (perceiving sense impressions in accordance to the dog-pattern rather than a cat-pattern), I am not making an explicit statement, in the sense of ascribing a determinate feature to the object (such as a feature of being a dog). This kind of primitive judging does not have a reference to the veridicality. It merely amounts to having awareness that the way I reproduce and perceive the object is appropriate. Based on this primitive knowledge I come to make an explicit knowledge claim, that what I perceive is in fact a dog. The grasp of the concept is derived from my awareness that the way I synthesize is appropriate.

Ginsborg offers an ingenious account of the imaginative synthesis that can accommodate empirical concept acquisition, as well judgments of taste (of the beautiful). Common to both is that they depend on the synthesis of sense impressions that is not guided by the concept, and it is therefore a free synthesis. At the same time the synthesis is lawful, that is, harmonious with the understanding. But this is the conception of free harmony that Kant connects with judgments of the beautiful and pleasure. Free harmony is universally communicable, because it carries its own normativity, that is, there is an implicit awareness that one way of perceiving of an object is appropriate, and that everyone else ought to perceive that object in the same way. But this means that pleasure in judgments of the beautiful, resulting from the free harmony, is universally communicable.

However, Ginsborg's explanation of free harmony, as it stands, is not without difficulties. In particular, her formulation of free harmony does not avoid one aspect of the dilemma, namely, that the identification of the subjective conditions required

for empirical concept acquisition with the conditions sufficient for pleasure, has the consequence that every case of non-conceptual perception must necessarily be accompanied with pleasure. If the process of empirical concept acquisition depends on the free harmony, and if Kant identifies the consciousness of the free harmony with pleasure, then it follows that each time one acquires the concept, one must also experience pleasure. On this account, it is not strictly speaking every perception that is accompanied with pleasure. For example, I do not need to experience the appropriateness of my perception in the case of perceiving the object for which I already have the empirical concept. In this case the rule is already acquired; hence, my perception is governed by the concept. For example, my judging of the object as a chair is automatic, since I already have the concept of a chair, which determines how I will come to perceive the object. I do not need to question the appropriateness of my perception. However, it is still the case, that my *first* perceptual experience of an object, by which I come to arrive at the concept, is necessarily pleasing.⁷

Ginsborg is aware of this problem and tries to challenge it, by suggesting the following distinction: even though the free harmony is constitutive for both empirical concept acquisition and judgments of the beautiful, this free harmony is not explicitly recognized as such in the case of empirical concept formation. She writes that in the act of concept formation I do *not*

... consciously take my imagination, in the particular act of perceptual synthesis through which I arrive at an empirical concept, to conform indeterminately to rules, or to be, in the primitive sense, as it ought to be. (Ginsborg 1997, p. 69)

Free harmony in empirical concept formation is accompanied by an epistemic intention to make a cognitive judgment (to find the rule), and hence, it results in recognizing this harmony in the concept, that is, ascribing the objective property to the object. The sense of appropriateness that our way of perceiving an object is as it ought to be is 'hidden' by the recognition in the concept. The experience of free harmony in empirical concept acquisition simply is an experience of cognitive judgment (explicit awareness of the rule). Because in empirical concept acquisition one does not have a pure experience of free harmony, pleasure is not produced. Experience of free harmony in the primitive sense takes place only in the case when one is not concerned with cognition and with ascribing an objective feature to the object.

However, if the distinction between the empirical concept formation and judgments of taste is merely in the explicit recognition or awareness of free harmony, then this is not much of a distinction. Namely, if my first perceptual experience of an object is constituted by the free harmony, yet without having an explicit awareness of it, then one could still argue that in principle every object must be beautiful, even though we do not always experience it as such. There is always a free harmony in the

⁷Kant suggests something similar in the *Introduction* (KU 5:187, p. 74). He claims that the experience of acquiring empirical concepts produces the feeling of pleasure, yet that this pleasure eventually subsides in the course of becoming familiar with the object and so we do not notice it anymore. Such an explanation of pleasure was particularly emphasized by Bernstein (1992, p. 60), who argues that judgments of taste (of the beautiful) are a reminiscence of the lost common sense.

first act of perceiving the object, but we are not always aware of it through pleasure. Such an explanation does not allow for the possibility that some objects necessitate a relation between imagination and understanding that is not freely harmonious, and that therefore can be experienced with a feeling of displeasure.

On the other hand, the way Ginsborg proposes the distinction between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic case of free harmony, seems to imply a more substantial difference. She seems to suggest that the distinction is not merely in the *awareness* of free harmony, but *in* the nature of free harmony itself. This is implied in the following statement:

It is true that I do not grasp this concept antecedently to my act of synthesis, since it is precisely this act of synthesis which is required if I am to acquire the concept in the first place. But I come to grasp it in the act of synthesis, which means that I take my act of synthesis itself – the very act through which I come to grasp it – to be governed by the concept. (1997, p. 69)

It is implied that free harmony does not precede the act of grasping the rule; rather, the rule is grasped within the act of the free harmony. Hence, the free harmony itself is governed by concepts. But if free harmony in the empirical concept acquisition is also at the same time governed by concepts then it is not *as free*, as it is harmony in judgments of the beautiful, where it is not governed by concepts. But this means that free harmony required for judgments of taste is fundamentally different from free harmony required for empirical concept acquisition. Indeed, this idea seems to be suggested in the following:

The free play of the faculties does not take place in every or, indeed, in any act of cognition. It is only when I take my imaginative activity in the perception of some particular object to exemplify how it ought to be with respect to that object that my faculties may be said to be in free play. And that does not happen in perceptual cognition, but only in the special case of aesthetic experience: for it is only in aesthetic experience that I take my imaginative activity to be as it ought to be without having in mind any determinate rule to which it conforms. (1997, p. 74)

But if free harmony in judgments of taste is not required for cognition (for empirical concept acquisition), then it does not follow that judgments of taste are universally valid. If what is universally communicable is the experience of free harmony in empirical concept acquisition and if this free harmony is of a different nature than the free harmony in judgments of taste, then it does not follow that judgments of taste are universally valid. Accordingly, Ginsborg's interpretation of free harmony does not avoid the dilemma, but merely heightens it: either free harmony required for empirical concept acquisition is sufficient for the occurrence of pleasure or it is not. If it is, then it follows that every object is beautiful, even though we do not always experience it as such. And if it is not, then the universal validity of free harmony required for pleasure cannot be derived from the universal validity of free harmony required for empirical concept acquisition.⁸ Ginsborg's account therefore fails to offer a full and satisfactory account of free play.

⁸See also Rogerson (2008, pp. 18–19) and his version of the objection against Ginsborg's account.

There is yet another similar interpretation of free harmony, proposed by Henry Allison (2001). He claims that empirical concept acquisition and judgments of taste are similar activities in that they both exercise nonconceptual reflective judging.⁹ In brief, the idea is that the imagination has the ability to synthesize the manifold and produce schemata (rules for apprehension) without being guided by concepts. In empirical concept acquisition we reflect on the schemata, which are not acquired prior to the act of such comparison, but are the subject as well as product of it. A schema is acquired when one is confronted with similar representations, comparing them with each other in order to find what they have in common. By grasping a schema, the concept, that is, the full recognition of the rule in the set of marks is acquired.

In judgments of taste, however, we are not comparing different representations with each other in order to find the rule. Rather, as Kant writes, we are comparing a single representation with one's own cognitive ability of judging (FI 20:211, p. 15). This is the case of *mere* reflective judgment. Allison identifies *mere* reflection as "an act of aesthetic appraisal, which involves a suspension of our ordinary cognitive concern with classification and explanation" (2001, p. 187). In mere reflection, the activity between imagination and understanding is not only nonconceptual (not governed by concepts), but also *free*, since it is not restricted by the epistemic intention to find a determinate rule. The distinction between nonconceptual reflective judgment (in empirical concept formation) and nonconceptual *mere* reflective judgment (in judgments of taste) avoids the 'everything is beautiful' problem. Harmony that produces pleasure is attained between cognitive powers in their free play, while harmony attained in empirical concept formation is not free, but determined by cognitive objective to find the rule under which to subsume the manifold and to identify the object. Thus, not every case of recognizing nonconceptual harmony results in pleasure.

Allison claims that what is produced in mere reflection is a type of schema, but not a schema of some particular concept (as in empirical concept formation), rather schema of an indeterminate concept. Such an aesthetic schema is constituted not by some common properties but by "a pattern or order (form) which suggests and indeterminate number of possible schematizations (or conceptualizations), none of which is fully adequate, thereby occasioning further reflection or engagement with the object" (2001, p. 51). Allison identifies the production of aesthetic schema with maximal or ideal harmony. Pleasure occurs as the result of the agreement in the comparison between a single representation with the aesthetic schema.

⁹Kant distinguishes between two kinds of judgments. When the concept is given, then the power of judgment is determinative; it merely subsumes the particular under the universal (concept). This takes place in everyday processes of identifying objects for which we already have concepts. If, however, I am presented with a particular for which I have no concept yet, then I must first find the concept in question in order to identify the particular. The power of judgment that looks for the concept is a reflective power of judgment. A more detailed explanation of a reflective judgment will be given in the next chapter.

The positive outcome of Allison's approach is the possibility to accommodate comparative judgments of beauty, as well as negative judgments of taste. The degree of pleasure is determined by the degree of the accord with the maximal harmony. An object A may be more beautiful than the object B, depending on the degree to which it approximates the indeterminate norm. The indeterminate norm serves as a criterion of comparison. Similarly, lack of agreement with the indeterminate norm results in displeasure. Because the indeterminate norm is universally communicable, the lack of agreement with this norm is experienced by the universally communicable feeling of displeasure (Allison 1998, p. 480).

There are however difficulties with Allison's approach. His distinction between nonconceptual reflective harmony and nonconceptual *mere* reflective (free) harmony does not meet Kant's argument of the universality of judgments of taste. Namely, the following can be argued: if empirical concept acquisition is universally communicable, then it is also universally communicable the state of mind required for empirical concept acquisition. This state of mind, according to Allison's proposal is nonconceptual reflective harmony. But judgments of taste depend on a different state of mind, that is, on a nonconceptual *mere* reflective (*free*) harmony. Recall, Allison identifies it not with a specific schema, but with a schema suggesting multiple conceptualizations none of which is adequate. But this is not an experience of nonconceptual harmony that is required for empirical concept acquisition. If so, then it does not necessarily follow that nonconceptual *mere* reflective harmony is universally communicable. Just because we have to presuppose, for the sake of empirical concept acquisition, that everyone will be able to experience nonconceptual reflective harmony in the same way, it does not follow that everyone will also be able to experience nonconceptual *free* harmony in the same way.

Furthermore, Allison's explanation of negative judgments of taste is not fully successful. He distinguishes two kinds of negative judgments of taste, that is, judgments of the non-beautiful indicating lack of aesthetic value and judgments of ugliness indicating an actual positive displeasure. Both result from the lack of the accord with the indeterminate norm, but in the case of ugliness this lack of accord takes the form of an actual disharmony. However, this explanation does not avoid Guyer's argument of the epistemological impossibility of disharmony, that is, that there always must be some harmony between cognitive powers in order to have an experience of the object. Even though Allison claims that this harmony does not need to be guided by the empirical concept, the idea is that there still must be some harmony in order to have perceptual experience. But this means that it is impossible to have an experience of an actual nonconceptual disharmony, even though attained in mere reflection. The only kind of negative judgment of taste that Allison's account can allow is the judgment of the non-beautiful depending on the lack of free harmony.

In addition to these problems, also Allison's conception of free play as necessitated by the state of mind of mere reflection is not supported by Kant. If a certain activity of cognitive powers becomes free just by the act of mere reflection in which we ignore what the object has in common with others in order to classify it, then this implies that each object has a free play of cognitive powers, as long as we *merely*

reflect on it. However, this is not what Kant seems to have in mind. Namely, he writes in §22 that there are objects that, when we consider them aesthetically or in mere reflection, have no free play (such as geometrical forms, regular face etc.). But this means that free play is not necessitated by the act of mere reflection. Overall, Allison's account is not fully successful.

3.3.2 *An Abstractive Interpretation*

Another interpretation that deserves close attention is abstractive interpretation proposed by Malcolm Budd (2008). He argues, contrary to the precognitive approach, that empirical concepts are necessary for perceptual synthesis and therefore for judgments of taste. The imagination must synthesize sensible manifold in accordance with some empirical concept and hence present a structure, that is, a perceptual image in a particular way. However, Budd claims that conceptual harmony does not preclude the possibility of having free harmonious experience. What is required is merely abstracting the concept from our reflection on the object and focusing on the *mere* form of the object.

Yet, this possibility seems to oppose Kant's explanation of the threefold synthesis. Namely, if the synthesis of sensible manifold is governed by empirical concepts, then it is impossible to have a perception of the form itself, independently as to how this form is conceptualized. If concepts determine how sensible manifold will be combined together, that is, how we will come to perceive the form, then it seems impossible to abstract the concept from the form of the object.

Budd meets this objection by arguing the following: in order to have perceptual experience it is necessary to subsume the manifold under general empirical concepts, such as a concept of the body, or a color. These general empirical concepts are sufficient in order to individuate objects (being rules for the synthesis) and therefore the subsumption of the manifold under more particular empirical concepts (such as concept of the flower, or a table, etc.) is not required. Particular empirical concepts are applied additionally, after we acquire them, and they do not strictly determine the perception of the object's form. Hence, there may be independence between the form of the object and its conceptualization under specific empirical concepts after all. As Budd argues:

when the object is brought under a concept it was not formerly brought under there will be no change at all in the perception itself, and so no change in the object's perceived form, but only a change in the interpretation of the object (what kind of object it is) (...) if at one time I see a tree but without the ability to identify its kind, and at a later time, when I have acquired the ability, see it as aspen, its form is not thereby represented to me differently. (2008, p. 113)

This seems to be a reasonable suggestion. I may mistakenly identify a particular form of the flower as a rose and find out later that this flower is in fact an orchid. But recognizing this flower as an orchid, instead of a rose, does not result in perceiving its form differently. Accordingly, there is a possibility that one can abstract the particular empirical concept (orchid), and have the perception of the *mere* form.

It is by this act of abstraction that imagination and understanding are set into a free play. The understanding is free because it is not concerned with the identification of the object and imagination is free because it is not determined by the particular empirical concept.

The free play of cognitive powers, however, does not need to be harmonious. Budd is very careful to avoid the ‘everything is beautiful’ problem related to the abstractive interpretation. Namely, if free harmony is constituted solely by virtue of the abstraction of the concept from the form of the object, then all objects are beautiful, since all objects, in order to be objects of experience, must pose some kind of harmony.¹⁰ He therefore claims that pleasure occurs only if there is a harmony of a special kind, in which cognitive powers mutually enliven each other, and this can be attained only by some forms, exhibiting the multiplicity in unity. There must be a special composition of the elements constituting the form, which is diverse, yet still easy for the understanding to grasp it. Accordingly, even though all objects of perception have cognitive harmony, it is not every object that has the special free harmony. Beauty is the property that only some objects may induce, objects, which structure has an extra layer of diversity in unity.

Even though Budd’s interpretation avoids the ‘everything is beautiful’ problem, it fails to meet other challenges. In particular, it is difficult to see how Budd’s interpretation of free harmony can accommodate judgments of ugliness. Namely, if beautiful objects are those which attain the special free harmony and non-beautiful objects (aesthetically indifferent objects) those who lack this special harmony, then the only possibility left for judgments of ugliness is no harmony. But this is not possible according to Guyer’s explanation. There always must be some harmony between cognitive powers in order to have a perceptual experience. Hence, disharmony is epistemologically precluded. Furthermore, by distinguishing between the (cognitive) harmony required for perceptual experience and special free harmony required for judgments of the beautiful, Budd’s interpretation cannot meet Kant’s argument for the universality of judgments of taste. If the special free harmony is not required for ordinary perception (this can be attained without having special free harmony), then we have no rationale to claim that it can also attain universality.

There is yet another problem with abstractive interpretation, namely that it does not seem to be consistent with Kant’s text. According to Budd’s suggestion imagination and understanding are in free play only if we abstract the concept from the form of the object. This implies that if no such abstraction takes place, there is no possibility to experience free play of the faculties. On the other hand, however, Kant claims that artworks and artifacts cannot be perceived independently of the concept:

... 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, p. 120)

¹⁰For a version of this objection see Carl J. Posy (1991).

Based on Budd's proposal this would mean that in the case of artworks and artifacts we cannot experience free play. But this is not what Kant says. Namely, he claims that even though judgments of taste regarding artworks and artifacts are adherent judgments of taste (dependent on the concept of purpose), they can still occasion free play of imagination and understanding. But if there can be a free play of cognitive powers even in the case of objects where no abstraction of the concept is possible, then Budd's formulation of the free play seems to be wrong. The abstraction of the concept is not a condition of a free play. But if so, Budd's account is insufficient to explain the notion of free play in judgments of taste.

3.3.3 *Multicognitive Interpretation*

According to the multicognitive approach, the free play of cognitive powers is attained not by the absence of concepts, but by the application of the multiplicity of concepts. The employment of a multitude of concept in aesthetic perception precludes the synthesis of sensible manifold to be determined (by one concept) and go one way, rather than another. A judgment of taste is similar to an ordinary cognitive judgment, because it employs concepts, but while cognitive judgments end up with the subsumption of the manifold under one concept, judgments of taste, on the other hand, do not apply a definite concept, but rather plays with the multitude of them, offering therefore a variety of different perceptions of a form. What is constitutive for ordinary perception is that among many possible ways the manifold could be synthesized it ends up with just one synthesis, which is determined by a particular concept. On the other hand, aesthetic reflection, which does not aim to cognize the object and resulting in a determinate judgment, is free to entertain the possible ways that the manifold could be synthesized, not settling down or actualizing any of them.

Fred Rush (2001, p. 58), one of the proponents of such an approach, describes free play as:

... a potentially endless ranging over the manifold of intuition by the imagination, engaged in the activity of modeling it as unifiable in any of the multifarious ways that the spatial and temporal properties of that manifold permit.

An object's form which offers a display of perceptual alteration or conceptualizations will be apprehended with a feeling of pleasure. A similar explanation is proposed by Paul Crowther (2010, p. 82) who argues that an object is beautiful, if its form offers "rich possibilities of different 'trial runs', thus opening out multiple possibilities of interaction between imagination and understanding." Free harmony is experienced if the form of the object has a combination of elements that affords apprehension from different perceptual viewpoints, that is, under indefinite number of possible empirical conceptualizations. As an example, Crowther gives the case of clouds, claiming that they are beautiful because their structure allows perceptual shifting (2010, p. 80). Presumably, the formal configuration of clouds

has enough diversity that stimulates the imagination to rearrange, reconstruct the shape, color, lines etc. of the manifold and therefore allows to be perceived under different concepts (different perceptual images). Crowther explains that this conceptualization is not a definite or an actual one, but merely apparent. Concepts do not actually apply to the manifold; the manifold merely suggests possible conceptualizations.

The multicognitive interpretation raises many difficulties, in addition to being the least supported by Kant's text. Some of its difficulties have already been pointed out by Guyer (2006, p. 177), particularly important among which is his criticism of the connection between perceptual shifting and pleasure. That is, this interpretation does not explain why a play between the manifold and the multitudes of concepts (shifting back and forth from one concept to another and not settling down to any of them) should be pleasurable, rather than confusing and irritating. Beside this objection I want to point out several more.

First, multicognitive interpretation does not appear to meet the universality problem. Based on this approach, there is a distinction between the state of mind required for cognition (when then manifold is subsumed under a concept) and the state of mind required for judgments of taste (multiple conceptualizations). Yet, according to Kant's argument, what is universally communicable is the state of mind required for cognition. But if the state of mind required for judgments of taste (perceiving the object under different kinds of concepts, none of which are determinately applied to the manifold) is not required for cognition, then there is no justification to claim that it must be universally communicable.

Second, it cannot accommodate judgments of ugliness. If a beautiful form is such that it forces us to perceive it under different conceptual possibilities, and an indifferent form does not do that (we perceive it under one perceptual aspect necessitated by the empirical concept), then the only possibility left for an ugly object would be that we do not perceive it under any concept at all. But this again is not epistemologically possible according to Guyer's argument.

Third, the idea of beauty as identified with perceptual explorations is denied by Kant himself. In §22 he proposes a distinction between the beautiful objects and beautiful *views* on the object, and he claims that the latter case is not beauty proper, since it does not depend on the play between the imagination and the understanding as required for judgments of taste. He writes:

beautiful objects are to be distinguished from beautiful views of objects (which on account of the distance can often no longer be distinctly cognized). In the latter, taste seems to fasten not so much on what the imagination apprehends in this field as on what gives it occasion to invent, i.e., on what are strictly speaking the fantasies with which the mind entertains itself while it is being continuously aroused by the manifold which strikes the eye, as for instance in looking at the changing shapes of a fire in a hearth or of a rippling brook, neither of which are beauties, but both of which carry with them a charm for the imagination, because they sustain its free play. (KU 5:243, p. 126)

Accordingly, the pleasure invoked by the object that suggests different perceptual images (such as different shapes produced by the flickering fire) is not a pleasure of the beautiful. This is because the pleasure in this case is not a product of a play

between the apprehension (imagination) and understanding, but of the fantasies that are being prompted by the object and its various shapes. These fantasies, Kant claims, are involuntary products of the imagination, similar to the ones we experience in dreams (Anthro 7:167, p. 60). These images do not amount to perception proper, since they are not connected to the rules of experience. And since aesthetic perception is a reflection regarding the perception of the object (apprehension responsible for producing perceptual images), such fantasies do not count as a proper subject of judgments of taste.

3.3.4 *Metacognitive Interpretation (Paul Guyer)*

A more recent and promising interpretation of free harmony is given by Paul Guyer. According to his metacognitive approach, free harmony is constituted by the conceptual synthesis exercised in a high degree. In order to experience free harmony we must first experience cognitive harmony, which is responsible for ordinary perceptual experience of an object. This cognitive harmony refers to the operation of imagination and understanding by which we come to identify or recognize an object according to a conceptual rule. While all objects have this kind of harmony in order to be represented by us, not all of them have free harmony. Free harmony is a cognitive harmony exercised to a high degree, that is, which exhibits order or unity that extends beyond the unity necessary for the recognition of an object “as it were, an excess of felt unity or harmony,” or as a “further degree of unity” (2005a, p. 149). Guyer describes free harmony in the following way:

free and harmonious play of imagination and understanding should be understood as a state of mind in which the manifold of intuition induced by the perception of an object and presented by the imagination to the understanding is recognized to satisfy the rules for the organization of that manifold dictated by the determinate concept or concepts, on which our recognition and identification of the object of this experience depends, yet as one in which it is also felt that – or as if – the understanding’s underlying objective or interest in unity is being satisfied in a way that *goes beyond* anything required for or dictated by satisfaction of the determinate concept or concepts on which mere identification of the object depends. (2006, p. 183)

In order for an object to induce aesthetic pleasure, the necessary conditions of cognition must be satisfied in the first place. That is, we must recognize the object under some specific concept. Free harmony is produced only if this cognitive harmony by which identification of an object takes place, exhibits an extra amount of unity, exceeding the basic unity that is required for ordinary cognition. Guyer’s approach reconciles Kant’s theory of concepts as rules necessary for perceptual experience, and his theory of free harmony characteristic for judgments of the beautiful. Even though perception is governed by concepts and to this extent it has no freedom, it can still attain freedom by exhibiting unity to a high degree. Accordingly, it is not all objects that are beautiful, but only those that have this high degree of unity. This explains why only some objects belonging to a given kind

(determined by a given concept) are beautiful, while others are not. For example, this chair is beautiful, but not the other, even though they apply the same concept. To experience perceptual harmony and to identify the object under the concept is not a sufficient condition to find the object beautiful. An additional degree of this harmony is needed and this can be obtained only by some objects.

Nonetheless, Guyer's approach is not fully satisfactory. In particular, his explanation of free harmony as a further degree of cognitive harmony does not appear to be convincing if we consider it in light of Kant's views about perfection. My reasoning is the following: according to Kant's theory of perception, cognitive agreement between imagination and understanding is necessary for the recognition of an object to take place. For example, my recognition of an object as a tree depends on recognizing the common properties that all trees have in common (they all have properties such as leaves, branches, trunk as specified by the concept of a tree). Kant writes that this agreement between cognitive powers can be exercised in different degrees or proportions (§21). Henry Allison (2001, pp. 48–50) gives a fine explanation as to what these degrees of cognitive powers in perceptual experience amount to. He claims that, because imagination and understanding are characterized by different objectives, one by particularity and the other by universality, respectively, they pull in different directions, and therefore it is often the case that friction between them occurs. This happens when the apprehension of the manifold is atypical and therefore the subsumption under the concept more difficult to obtain. For example, it is more difficult to recognize an image of a three legged dog as a dog, than an image of a dog that satisfies all the prototypical features of a dog. This is an example of perceptual experience with a low or minimal degree of agreement between cognitive powers. On the other hand, an image of a dog that satisfies all of the prototypical properties of a dog is an experience of cognitive powers being in a higher degree of agreement. The object is immediately recognized as a dog. Accordingly, a low or high degree of cognitive harmony amounts to the level of difficulty of perceptual recognition of an object. An image of a three legged dog is more difficult to recognize than the image of a four legged dog.

Guyer claims that a high degree of cognitive harmony is the experience of free harmony that produces pleasure. If this is true, then it follows that every object which represents a perfect instance of the kind it belongs to must be experienced with pleasure. But this seems wrong. Namely, I may recognize with ease the image that exemplifies all the essential conditions of, say a turkey, or an equally perfect instance of a dog, but it is not true that I find them necessarily beautiful. On the contrary, even the perfect instance of a turkey is displeasing. Hence, despite the fact that there is a high cognitive harmony between the imagination and understanding in these cases, there is no pleasure. The opposite is also the case. There are objects that are more difficult to recognize under the concept, and therefore have a low degree of cognitive harmony, yet they are pleasing. For example, identifying a flower called *Rafflesia* as a flower is more difficult, since it does not have stems or leaves and therefore it does not satisfy all of the prototypical conditions of the concept of a flower. Yet it still has a pleasing appearance.

This idea is in fact explicitly acknowledged by Kant in §15, where he distinguishes between two different kinds of judgments: judgments of taste and judgments of qualitative perfection. Kant claims that even though judgments of qualitative perfection may be accompanied by a feeling of pleasure, as when we see an object that exemplifies all the essential features of the kind to which it belongs, this is not, however, the pleasure of the beautiful. Judgments of qualitative perfection are kinds of cognitive judgments, because they depend on the concept of the object; while judgments of taste are aesthetic judgments, depending on the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) alone. Kant tells us that “by beauty, as a formal subjective purposiveness, there is not conceived any perfection of the object” (KU 5:228, p. 113). This means that perceiving an object as a perfect instance of the kind to which it belongs does not mean that we find it beautiful, and finding an object beautiful does not suggest that this object is a perfect instance of its kind. One can find certain forms of flower beautiful, even if they are flawed examples of flowers. Or, one can find certain flowers displeasing, even though they represent a perfect example of the flower. Therefore, high degree of cognitive harmony cannot simply be identified with free harmony and with beauty, as Guyer seems to claim.

Furthermore, Guyer’s explanation of free harmony cannot explain the possibility that there are multiple objects belonging to the same kind and that each example of this kind could be pleasing. That is, Guyer’s account requires that beautiful objects have certain properties that distinguish them from aesthetically indifferent members of their kind. Guyer claims that an object is beautiful if it exceeds the minimal unity required for the recognition of the object as a member of its kind. Accordingly, a rose is beautiful if it has more unity than is needed for an ordinary experience of a rose, while a rose that does not have this additional harmony is an indifferent rose (Guyer 2008, pp. 232–233). But there is at least a possibility that there are kinds whose members are all beautiful. For example, one could make a strong case for the claim that all roses are beautiful. Hence, nothing further is required to find a rose beautiful than what is minimally required to recognize that it is a member of its kind. An ordinary experience of a rose is an experience of a beautiful rose. But if this is even a possibility, then Guyer’s account is not fully successful.

Also, Guyer’s reading does not fully meet Kant’s argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste. Kant derives the universal validity of judgments of taste from the state of mind that underlies cognition, because only this state of mind can be shared by all of us. But Guyer identifies free harmony with cognitive harmony exercised to a high degree. And this means that he distinguishes between different degrees of cognitive harmony. If what is required for cognition is some basic degree of harmony, then it does not strictly speaking follow that a degree of harmony, which exceeds the basic organization of the manifold, will also attain universal validity. Guyer claims that free harmony is a harmony that exceeds the normal requirement for cognition, and this implies that free harmony is not a requirement for cognition. And if this is so, then it does not necessarily follow that free harmony is universally communicable.

There is another problem with Guyer’s metacognitive approach, namely, that it cannot accommodate pure judgments about ugliness into the overall Kantian

aesthetic picture. If aesthetic harmony is a high degree of cognitive harmony and if the lack of this high degree of cognitive harmony is sufficient (given the basic degree of harmony required for cognition) for the occurrence of aesthetically indifferent objects, then the only possibility left for ugliness is to depend on the lack of cognitive harmony. But, this is not possible according to Kant's epistemological theory; an object without cognitive harmony would be an object of which we could not be conscious. Hence, judgments of ugliness are impossible.

3.3.5 *Symbolic Interpretation*

In recent years there have been few attempts to explain the notion of free harmony in connection with Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas (Rogerson 2008; Chignell 2007; Rueger 2008b). According to this interpretation, free harmony is attained by a symbolic or metaphorical presentation of rational ideas (i.e. the idea of God, freedom and immortality). That is, it is rational ideas that govern the imaginative synthesis of the sensible manifold. Imagination is in this case free because rational ideas, in comparison to determinate concepts, are indeterminate (that is, they cannot be encountered in empirical intuition), yet at the same time harmonious with the understanding (it is in accordance with the rule, that is, with the rational idea). Since Kant calls such a concrete symbolic presentation of rational ideas *an aesthetic idea*, symbolic interpretations claim that free harmony is an expression of an aesthetic idea. Kenneth Rogerson (2008, p. 66), one of the proponents of such an interpretation, explains his view in the following way:

Notions like hell, eternity, and creation so exceed the capacity of mere empirical concepts that they can be portrayed only in a symbolic fashion by imaginatively bringing to mind a host of associations that suggest the larger idea. (...) An object that expresses an aesthetic idea is purposive for judgment in the sense that we are able to interpret the object as organized in a rule-like fashion – specifically, as organized to express an aesthetic idea.

Because rational ideas are universally communicable, the experience of a concrete symbolic presentation of rational ideas (i.e. an aesthetic idea) will be the same for all of us:

... different aesthetic ideas evoked by an object will be striving to present a rational idea which is presumably the same for all of us. Thus, although the sets of associations which yield an aesthetic idea may be different for different readers and beholders, they must be sufficiently similar to be unified by the same rational idea. (Chignell 2007, p. 429)

Symbolic interpretation can explain not only the possibility of free harmony (imagination is governed by ideas), but also why we experience free harmony specifically by a feeling of pleasure, rather than any other feeling. We appreciate free harmony between imagination and understanding constituted by ideas, because it is the only way we can apprehend (symbolically) those things that cannot ever be encountered empirically. Furthermore, such an interpretation can avoid the 'everything is beautiful' problem. Not all objects are beautiful, but only those that

express an aesthetic idea. As Alexander Rueger (2008b, p. 311), one of the advocates of the symbolic interpretation, writes:

In judgments of taste, something “beyond”, over and above, the harmony of the faculties required for cognition is being present, in addition to the cognition itself. That’s why not every object appears beautiful (. . .) Rather it is only (. . .) when the given form serves not only as a presentation of the (determinate) concept of the object but also happens to present symbolically, as an aesthetic idea, a different, indeterminate concept.

Nonetheless, symbolic interpretation is not fully successful and raises many difficulties. In particular, it fails to agree with Kant’s explanation of the relation between aesthetic ideas and taste (free harmony). For example, Kant writes that an aesthetic idea is a product of *mere imagination*, rather than a product of *free harmony* between imagination and understanding: “This faculty [of aesthetic ideas], however, considered by itself alone, is really only a talent (of the imagination)” (KU 5:314, p. 192). But if aesthetic ideas are mere product of the imagination, then one is not justified to claim that every expression of aesthetic ideas is necessarily beautiful (that is, occasioning the mental state of free harmony). The distinction between aesthetic ideas, which are product of a genius, and free harmony (or taste) is explicitly acknowledged in §50. He writes:

If the question is whether in matters of beautiful art it is more important whether genius or taste is displayed, that is the same as asking whether imagination or the power of judgment counts for more in them. Now since it is in regard to the first of these that an art deserves to be called inspired, but only in regard to the second that it deserves to be called a beautiful art, the latter, at least as an indispensable condition (*conditio sine qua non*), is thus the primary thing to which one must look in the judging of art as beautiful art. (KU 5:319, p. 197)

It is suggested that an art work does not need to express aesthetic ideas in order to be beautiful. This idea is additionally supported by Kant’s claim in §49 where he writes that there are objects, which lack the spirit required for the production of aesthetic ideas, “even though one finds nothing in them to criticize as far as taste is concerned” (KU 5:313, p. 191). Accordingly, aesthetic ideas are not required for an object’s beauty (conformity with taste). Indeed, one can notice that certain art works, in particular works of abstract art, do not represent or express anything, yet are considered to be beautiful in virtue of their perceptual form alone. Kant seems to believe that such is the case of pure music. The art of tones (pure music) does not entertain the faculty of reason for “it speaks through mere sensations without concepts, and hence does not, like poetry, leave behind something for reflection” (KU 5:328, p. 205).

One might object to this kind of reasoning by arguing that the fact that some art works are non-representational and appreciated in virtue of their perceptual form alone does not preclude the possibility that they express aesthetic ideas. That is, aesthetic ideas can be expressed through perceptual form alone (Rogerson 2008, p. 34). Thus, aesthetic ideas may after all be relevant for finding an object beautiful.¹¹

¹¹This is also the view argued for by Brent Kalar (2006, pp. 91–119).

It is true that art works do not need to represent something in order to be able to communicate ideas. However, not every expression of an idea is an expression of an *aesthetic idea*. For example, Kant writes that even though pure music can suggest some ideas, he adds that these ideas are not the result of free play, but rather an automatic byproduct of associations produced by the feeling that we connect with a certain tone:

every expression of language has, in context, a tone that is appropriate to its sense; that this tone more or less designates an affect of the speaker and conversely also produces one in the hearer, which then in turn arouses in the latter the idea that is expressed in the language by means of such a tone. (5:328, p. 205)

That is, ideas suggested by pure music are very vague and general ideas that we naturally connect with certain sensations (such as sadness, happiness etc.). They are “merely personal associations or reveries,” as Francis Coleman (1974, p. 175) points out, and do not leave much behind for reflection. The case is similar with some art of colors (abstract paintings). Even though perceptual form can suggest certain ideas, these ideas are merely the result of a certain effect that a color produces, and therefore they do not communicate anything specific or interesting about the idea. Their aesthetic value depends solely on their perceptual form. For example, while Wu Guanzhong’s abstract painting entitled *Alienation* (1992) can evoke a certain feeling of alienation, it does not express anything substantial about the idea of alienation itself, as for example Edvard Munch’s painting *Evening on Karl Johan Street* (1892) does. Through the depiction of a crowd of people, with indistinct faces, detached and isolated from one another, Munch represented the idea of social alienation itself, that is, its manifestation, and therein lies the aesthetic value of the painting. Accordingly, even though perceptual form alone can express some ideas, these ideas are not the product of free harmony, that is, of the collection of associations and thoughts unified by a rational idea. But if such ideas are not the product of free harmony, then it cannot be said that they constitute an aesthetic idea.

Furthermore, symbolic interpretations of free harmony rely heavily on the premise that it is rational ideas that govern the organization of the sensible manifold. Because rational ideas are universally communicable, the sensible expression of such ideas (i.e. aesthetic ideas) will be experienced in the same way by all of us. However, Kant claims that it is not merely the presentation of rational ideas that aesthetic ideas approximate. For example, he writes that aesthetic ideas can also be a sensible representation of ideas, which can be empirically encountered, such as “death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc.” (KU 5:314, p. 192). But if aesthetic ideas do not necessarily represent ideas of reason, but also ideas that can be empirically encountered and not necessarily the same for all of us, then the symbolic interpretation is insufficient to explain the notion of free harmony.

There is yet another problem with the symbolic interpretation, namely, that it does not appear to meet the universality problem. The symbolic interpretation distinguishes between conceptual or cognitive harmony required for ordinary cognition, and free harmony necessitated by the aesthetic idea. But if the experience of an aesthetic idea is not required for ordinary cognition (namely, this can be

attained without expressing an aesthetic idea), then it does not necessarily follow that free harmony is also universally communicable. That is, there is no guarantee that everyone will experience the expression of an aesthetic idea, that is, a set of associations that produces an aesthetic idea, in the same way. Also the symbolic interpretation cannot accommodate judgments of ugliness into the Kantian aesthetic picture. If beautiful objects are those that express an aesthetic idea, and non-beautiful objects those which lack reference to an aesthetic idea, and thus do not throw us into an experience of associative thinking (that is, the sensible manifold is organized according to the determinate concept), then the only possibility left for an ugly object is that it depends on the lack of any harmony between the imagination and the understanding. But this again is not possible according to Guyer's argument. Overall, the symbolic interpretation fails to give a satisfactory interpretation of free harmony.

3.4 Towards a Positive Interpretation of the Notion of Free Play

The foregoing discussion showed that none of the interpretations given so far are fully successful. Namely, none of them presented a formulation of the concept of free play such that it can accommodate all three beliefs that Kant holds (universality of judgments of taste, theory of the threefold synthesis, judgments of ugliness). However, each of the interpretations, even though not offering a full solution, offer a partial solution to one of the many problems that the concept of free play is faced with, and these partial solutions can indicate the way to proceed in formulating a positive interpretation of free play.

First, in order for judgments of taste to be universally communicable, they must depend on the state of mind that is required for cognition. Since Kant is clear on the fact that the state of mind of judgments of taste (of the beautiful) is free harmony, this implies that in order for free harmony to be universally communicable, free harmony must be in some sense required for cognition. Ginsborg's account satisfies this requirement by proposing that free harmony is required for empirical concept acquisition. Second, Kant's theory of the three-fold synthesis showed that the application of concepts to the manifold of intuition is necessary in order to have perceptual experience. This means that there must be in the first place a conceptual (cognitive) harmony that makes possible the representation of an object. Furthermore, that what is necessary is not only the application of categories, but application of empirical concepts as well. The accommodation of free harmony with this requirement of conceptual harmony can proceed by claiming that the former comes up subsequently to the latter. Budd's proposal is that free harmony is made possible by abstraction, Guyer's and symbolic proposal is that free harmony is either a further degree of conceptual harmony or symbolic presentation of rational ideas, respectively, and the multicognitive proposal is that

free harmony allows not only one, but multiple conceptualizations. However, none of these approaches are successful. Beside specific problems, their conception of free harmony does not seem to be required for cognition, and therefore it cannot satisfy the requirement of universality. Free harmony that comes up subsequently to conceptual harmony must in some sense also be required for empirical concept acquisition. Third, negative judgments of taste must be accommodated, that is, the 'everything is beautiful' problem must be precluded. All of the approaches that have been able to accommodate negative judgments of the non-beautiful (Allison, Budd, multicognitive, symbolic and metacognitive approach), have done so by arguing for a distinction between the harmony required for cognition and harmony required for judgments of taste. Not all objects can attain the latter; hence not all objects are beautiful. However, their distinction precludes the possibility of universality. Fourth, judgments of ugliness must be accommodated, that is, there must be a possibility of a disharmonious state of mind. So far, none of the existing approaches have been successful in satisfying this requirement, because none of them have met Guyer's challenge. Namely, that there must always be a (conceptual) harmony between cognitive powers in order to be conscious of a representation. The only way to accommodate judgments of ugliness within a Kantian theory is to propose that the states of mind in which cognitive powers are in free play occurs once we already have a representation of an object. Since the requirements of conceptual harmony are satisfied, this additional free play does not need to be harmonious, and it may well be disharmonious.

I believe that there is a way to formulate a positive approach. Budd's interpretation can indicate how to proceed. Even though his abstractive interpretation of free play is unsuccessful, his idea that it is the general empirical concepts, rather than particular empirical concepts, that guide the synthesis of perception, is promising. I believe this idea can be further developed in a way that can explain the possibility of empirical concept acquisition, as well as judgments of taste.

According to Kant, there always must be a harmony between cognitive powers in order to have perceptual experience. Furthermore, this harmony is established by the empirical concepts serving as rules for the synthesis of the manifold. The problem, stressed by Ginsborg and Allison, was how empirical concepts can precede the synthesis, while at the same time they are supposed to be acquired from the experience. Budd's idea seems to fit the bill. Namely, perceptual experience is necessitated by the application of general empirical concepts that are already acquired. With the help of these concepts, one may begin the acquisition of more particular or specific empirical concepts. Perceptual experience is never concept-free. Even though I come across of an object that I am unable to identify, that is, I have no concept ready for the present sensible manifold; my perception is always guided or oriented by the previously acquired empirical concepts. For example, Umberto Eco (2000, p. 128) writes that when the Aztecs first came across a horse, they thought it was a deer. The perception of this unknown animal was guided by the schema of a deer, the animal they had been acquainted with. Their perception of the unknown animal was guided by the best fitting schema they had, since the new animal exhibited similar features to a deer. But they also noticed dissimilarities, and

after seeing many examples of this ‘riding deer,’ as they called the unknown animal, they come to acquire a new schema for it.

The acquisition of an empirical concept is guided by the previously acquired empirical schemas, and by the present manifold of sense impressions for which no previously acquired schema is fully appropriate or sufficient. Similarly, I can come across a flower that I have never seen before. My perception is guided by the schema of a flower (this unknown species has petals, leaves, stem), but I am unable to identify what kind of flower this is. Many schemas can be activated in my attempt to identify this unknown flower (such as a schema of a rose, a schema of a tulip etc.), but none of these schemas are fully appropriate. Namely this flower has a combination of features not contained in any of the previously acquired schemas I have in my mind. Accordingly, we can say that my perceptual experience of this unknown flower is conceptually guided (it is guided by the concept of a flower). But none of the schemas I have is adequate to the sensible manifold presented to me. The combination of sensible manifold does not fit with any of the concepts. But this is to say, that there is no rule for the apprehension of sense impressions. But this is the meaning of Kant’s concept of free play: “The powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition” (KU 5:217, p. 102).

This idea reconciles, on one hand, Kant’s claim that perception is conceptually guided activity, and, on the other hand, that there is a freedom of the imaginative synthesis constitutive for judgments of taste. Furthermore, this freedom can result in harmony (pleasure) or in disharmony (displeasure). Free disharmony is in this case epistemologically possible (avoids Guyer’s argument), because it is a disharmony between the *free* imaginative manifold and the understanding, and *not* a disharmony between the imagination and understanding that necessitates perceptual experience. I will explain this interpretative proposal in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

A Positive Account of the Concept of Free Play

In the previous chapter I examined the main contemporary interpretations of the notion of free harmony and pointed out their inadequacies. My aim in the present chapter is to propose a different interpretation of the concept of free harmony; an interpretation that allows the possibility of free disharmony, without violating Kant's thesis of the necessity of a harmonious relation between imagination and understanding for cognition. Furthermore, the account I propose is consistent with universal validity, not merely for judgments of beauty, but also for judgments of ugliness. The proposal is that free harmony should be understood as a harmony between *free imagination* and understanding in reflection upon cognition. I will argue that the distinction between the harmony necessary for determinate judgments, and harmony required for judgments of taste is derived from the distinction between the two different activities performed by the imagination (and which refers to Kant's distinction between determining and reflective judgments). In determining judgments, the imagination is rule-governed (organizes sensible manifold in order to fit with the existing concept) and therefore not free. However, in judgments of taste it is free imagination that is in harmony with the understanding. Free imagination is constitutive for the kind of judgments that Kant describes as reflective judgments, among which the judgment of taste is a species, but which is also present in empirical concept acquisition.

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

Consider the following scenario of a perceptual experience: if, for example, I do not yet have the concept of a dog, then by encountering a dog, my imagination can of course present some other concept that I already possess (and must do so) and which is the most adequate concept available to me for the present sensible manifold. For example, when seeing a dog, since I do not yet have a concept of a dog, but I have a concept of a four footed animal, then my imagination will activate the schema of a four footed animal, because it is the best matching schema for the particular sensible manifold. I will see the presented object not as a dog, but as some kind of four footed animal. For the recognition of an object, the activation of some existing concepts is necessary (as follows from Kant's theory of the threefold synthesis). The role of imagination in this case is rule-governed; it must structure sensible manifold so that the best matching concept can apply. However, after seeing many instances of a dog, I will come to notice that they have common properties, and so I will arrive at a more specific empirical concept that can be applied to these objects. Hence, I will come to form, by means of reflection, a new concept, which I will activate in future perceptual experiences of this animal.

Reflective judgment, through which I acquire the concept of a dog, affords me with a more refined and distinct cognition (interpretation) of the sensible manifold, but it does not make my perception possible. Determinate judgment, that is, the application of some concept to the sensible manifold, always precedes reflective judgment. Reflection is occasioned subsequently, when the existing concept, say the concept of a four footed animal, does not fully and sufficiently specify the combination of sensible manifold presented by a dog. Therefore, in such cases, perception of an object under a concept is possible even though the concept does not fully specify the combination of sensible manifold presented by the object. Furthermore, even when one has attained the concept of a dog (or even more particular concept such as a *poodle*) this concept still does not fully specify the combination of sensible manifold in any particular perception of an actual dog. But if the existing concept does not fully specify the combination of sensible manifold, this means that there is no rule fully adequate for the present sensible manifold. And if there is no rule for the present sensible manifold, then this is to say that the imagination is not fully governed by the concept. In other words, to the extent that the imagination is not fully governed by the concept in some particular presentation of an object, it is in free play.

Given this, we can have a perception of a form which depends on the empirical concept (imagination is rule-governed), yet at the same time it does not require that the imagination be fully determined by any concept (imagination is free). Imagination in a particular form of the object is free if there is no concept that fully determines the particular combination of sensible manifold. Free imagination stimulates the reflective power of judgment and its need to find the rule for those aspects of the manifold that are not determined by the rule. In other words, imagination and understanding are set into a free play. Such free play is constitutive of reflective judgments, and is present both in empirical concept acquisition and in judgments of taste. Both represent an example of a judgment which looks for a rule

for the non-rule-governed combination of sensible manifold. But while in empirical concept acquisition, free play results in a determinate concept, in judgments of taste it results in a feeling of pleasure or displeasure alone.

My objective in the remainder of this chapter is to explain in more detail the proposal that I sketched above. I will begin with the explanation of the role of free imagination in judgments of taste, compared to its role in determinate cognition. Next, I will focus on the meaning of the notion of free harmony or what Kant calls ‘lawfulness without a law.’ That is, I will offer an explanation as to how a certain combination of sensible manifold can be in accordance with a law, but without any law that can be articulated in a determinate concept. I will argue that the *principle of the purposiveness of nature*, which Kant identifies as the principle of reflective judgments in the Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, fits the role of the indeterminate law underlying judgments of taste. During this discussion other segments of Kant’s aesthetics will also be clarified, namely, the universal validity of judgments of taste and the explanation of the pleasure (or displeasure) we take in a beautiful (or ugly) object. Furthermore, the discussion will indicate a resolution of the problem of disharmony in judgments of ugliness, which will finally be addressed in the next chapter.

4.1 The Conception of Free Imagination in Judgments of Taste

So far we know from the *Critique of Pure Reason* that a certain harmonious relation between imagination and understanding is necessary in order to have a perceptual experience, and that concepts serve as rules for the combination of sensible manifold. Imagination must synthesize the sensible manifold according to the specification of the concept. Accordingly, imagination in determining cognition is not a free and autonomous activity, but it is subordinated to the understanding and its rules.

But in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant puts forward a different role for imagination in judgments of taste, such that it plays freely in the given form of the object, and is not governed by determinate rules of understanding. Rather, the imagination involved in judgments of taste is free, that is, “not as reproductive, as subjected to the laws of association, but as productive and self-active (as the authoress of voluntary forms of possible intuitions)” (KU 5:240, p. 124). But if we operate with two different roles for imagination in judgments of taste and determinative judgments (one rule governed and one not rule governed), then this allows that the harmonious activity in judgments of taste, and the harmonious activity in determining judgments is different. Because the role of imagination in judgments of taste is different to its role in determinative judgments, then its interaction with the understanding in these kinds of judgments is different. Hence, what it means for this interaction to be harmonious can also differ in these different kinds of judgments. Indeed, the nature of the harmony in each of these cases

must be different, since in the case of determinative judgments, harmony consists in imagination being determined by the concept, and this is precisely what Kant excludes from judgments of taste.

Indeed, Kant offers numerous passages supporting the idea of free harmony (that takes place in judgments of taste), not as an instance of cognitive harmony (in determining judgments) in which the imagination is rule-governed, but as a special kind of harmony that takes place between *free imagination* and understanding. For example, he writes that “in the judgment of taste the imagination must be considered in its *freedom*” (KU 5:240, p. 124).¹ Or: “the aesthetic power of judgment in judging the beautiful relates the *imagination in its free play* to the understanding, in order to *agree* with its concepts in general (without determination of them)” (KU 5:256, p. 139). Later he says: “the judgment of taste must rest on a mere sensation of the reciprocally animating *imagination in its freedom* and the understanding with its lawfulness” (KU 5:287, p. 167). In §40 he writes: “Only where the *imagination in its freedom* arouses the understanding, and the latter, without concepts, sets the imagination into a regular play is the representation communicated, not as a thought, but as the inner feeling of a purposive state of mind” (KU 5:296, p. 175). And in §59: “*The freedom of the imagination* (thus of the sensibility of our faculty) is represented in the judging of the beautiful as in *accord* with the lawfulness of the understanding” (KU 5:354, p. 228).

Based on the quoted passages, we can see that Kant makes a clear distinction between the *free play* of imagination and the *harmony* of the *free play of imagination* with the understanding. In order to have free harmony which is necessary for the occurrence of pleasure, we must in the first instance have free imagination. The harmony required for judgments of the beautiful is harmony between *free imagination* and understanding. The concept of free harmony between cognitive powers is primarily dependent on the notion of free play of imagination. For example, Kant writes that in judgments of taste “the understanding is in the service of the imagination” (KU 5:242, p. 126), which indicates that the faculty of understanding is not free, but only imagination. In fact, Kant’s conception of understanding prevents the possibility of thinking of it as free. That is, understanding is a faculty that continues to attempt to apply concepts to the manifold in order to produce the unity: “discovery [of the order of nature] is a task for the understanding, which is aimed at an end that is necessary for it, namely, to introduce into it unity of principles” (KU 5:187, p. 73). Understanding never ceases to attempt to establish order over the heterogeneity of the manifold, even though the existing concepts might not be sufficient to fully determine the particular sensible manifold. So, since this task is necessary for the understanding, this is the task it will continue to perform whether in judgments of taste or determinative judgments. Thus what explains the difference in harmony between judgments of taste and determinative judgments is the role of the imagination. In particular, that it is free in the case of judgments of taste.

¹In this and the following quotations in this paragraph the emphases are mine.

Before proceeding to the explanation of the notion of free imagination, let me summarize the two ideas that I am arguing for. First, I argue that Kant ascribes to the imagination different roles in judgments of taste and determinative judgments. In determinative judgments the imagination is governed by the concept, while in judgments of taste it is free and autonomous. Second, I argue that a determinative judgment is necessary in order to have perceptual experience of an object in the first place. The form of the object (combination of sensible manifold) is determined by the concept to some degree. In order to recognize a particular object, say a dog, the imagination must follow the dog-rule, that is, it combines specific features such as a tail, four legs, a head, etc., as the dog-rule prescribes. Without this cooperation between the imagination and understanding there would be no perceptual experience of an object. Kant claims that the subject of aesthetic reflection is the form of the object. Therefore, in order to have a perception of the object, the cognitive (conceptual) harmony must take place prior to aesthetic reflection. On the face of it, the two ideas that I argue for seem to be incompatible. If the subject of judgments of taste is the form of the object, and if the form of the object is conceptually determined, then how can there be after all a free play of imagination, as is required for a judgment of taste?

In order to have a perceptual image, conceptual harmony between imagination and understanding is necessary. We must perceive a certain combination of sensible manifold under some empirical concepts. However, even though recognition of objects proceeds by the means of a schema, an abstract form shared by all members of a certain kind, each particular image also differs from others of its kind. That is, they differ in the additional features which are not determined (entailed) by the concept. For instance, I recognize the flower by the application of the flower-rule to the sensible manifold. The flower-rule is an abstract representation of numerous instances of the same kind. Yet, a particular image of a flower may have a distinct shape of petals in a particular combination of colors. But these distinctive features of this particular flower are not entailed by the concept of a flower. In other words, even though my perception of the flower is governed by the concept of a flower, the concept of the flower is not sufficient to fully determine the combination of sensible manifold in this particular presentation of a flower. The presence of these additional features which are not entailed by the concept shows that the activity of imagination is not fully determined by the concept, and therefore it is in free play. A form of the object in which imagination is free occurs, if the sensible manifold apprehended by the imagination exhibits such features that exceed the general conditions (schema), which are necessary requirements for the concept to be applied. The schema is provided so that the concept can be applied (cognitive harmony), but the manifold affords more than what is required by the application of the concept. However, these additional features can nevertheless be either in harmony or disharmony with the understanding. It is the accord or discord of the free imaginative manifold with the understanding that results in a positive or a negative aesthetic reaction, respectively. Such an account of free imagination is suggested by Kant in the following passage:

in the use of the imagination for cognition, the imagination is under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the limitation of being adequate to its concept; in an aesthetic respect, however, the imagination is free to provide, beyond that concord with the concept, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept, but which it applies, not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, for the animation of the cognitive powers. (KU 5:317, p. 194)

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

A more revealing passage as to what the free play of imagination amounts to can be found in §22, where Kant writes:

But where only a free play of the powers of representation (although under the condition that the understanding does not thereby suffer any offense) is to be maintained, in pleasure gardens, in the decoration of rooms, in all sorts of tasteful utensils and the like, regularity that comes across as constraint is to be avoided as far as possible; hence the English taste in gardens or the baroque taste in furniture pushes the freedom of the imagination almost to the point of the grotesque, and makes this abstraction from all constraint by rules the very case in which the taste can demonstrate its greatest perfection in projects of the imagination. (KU 5:242, p. 126)

In this passage Kant talks about regularity and the free imagination and he seems to regard them as inversely proportional. The more regular the form, the less free the imagination is, and conversely, the less constrained by the regularity is the imagination, the more it is in free play. Kant explains later on in the same section that the forms of objects are regular (and he refers particularly to the geometrical shapes such as circles, squares, cubes), if “they cannot be represented except by being regarded as mere presentations of a determinate concept, which prescribes the rule for that shape (in accordance with which it is alone possible)” (KU 5:241, p. 125). The notion of *mere presentation* refers to a schema (rule), that is, a presentation that exhibits conditions necessary for cognition. Accordingly, it is suggested that an object’s form is regular if it exhibits merely that combination of sensible manifold which is determined by the concept. So the regular form exhibits features that represent the mere idea of some class of objects, rather than anything specific and distinctive to an individual instance of that class. For example, Kant claims:

One will find that a perfectly regular face, which a painter might ask to sit for him as a model, usually says nothing: because it contains nothing characteristic, and thus expresses more the idea of the species than anything specific to a person. (KU 5:235, p. 119)

Kant appears to identify regular forms with aesthetic neutrality (lack of pleasure and displeasure). On my account this can be explained because such forms do not allow for the freedom of the imagination since they do not afford any additional material beyond that fixed by the concept. Consequently, they lack an aesthetic dimension, and hence do not occasion any aesthetic reaction. Hence, a judgment of aesthetic neutrality is not a proper judgment of taste, since it lacks the essential

element constitutive for taste, that is, free imagination. Even though Kant claims that regularity induces boredom, which is in some sense a reaction, he also adds that this feeling is prompted only when we consider the object aesthetically and when there is no other source of interest in the object:

All stiff regularity (whatever approaches mathematical regularity) is of itself contrary to taste: the consideration of it affords no lasting entertainment, but rather, insofar as it does not expressly have cognition or a determinate practical end as its aim, it induces boredom. (KU 5:243, p. 126)

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

To return to the passage in §22, Kant claims that in order for a certain form to have free play of imagination it must be devoid as much as possible of the constraints of regularity, which means that the form of the object ought not be a mere presentation of a concept. In other words, the free play of imagination is due to the distinctive qualities of a specific representation, in contrast to those aspects of the object that are shared by all members of a class and in virtue of which the concept applies. This implies that imagination in the given object is free, not when there is no concept determining the form, but when the form exhibits such a combination of sensible manifold that goes beyond the schematic presentation. The representation, in which the manifold expresses more than the concept requires for the fulfillment of the minimal conditions for objective harmony (schema), is the representation in which the imagination is free. Within this framework we can make sense of the idea that the freedom of the imagination admits of degrees.² For example, a simple chair is in greater conformity with the abstract representation (or schema) of a chair, and therefore allows a lower degree of free imagination, than, for example, a modern design of a chair, with its smooth, light and unexpected forms (see for example designs of chairs by *Jolyon Yates*). The imagination becomes even more exuberant in the Baroque style of chairs with its excessive decoration, rich carvings, dramatic lines and curves. Such perceptual forms, which have free imagination, provoke aesthetic reflection, resulting in the feeling of pleasure or displeasure.

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

²The degree of imagination, however, does not correlate with the degree of beauty. The degree of beauty correlates with the degree of harmony.

Concepts can serve as a rule only for the features of the object common to members of a certain kind, but they cannot be a rule for the individual features and their combinations which are distinct and unique for the particular object itself. As Sarah Gibbons (1994, p. 44) in her analysis of Kant's imagination puts it: "Concepts can only provide a discursive unity of diverse representations possessing some common feature; they do not represent those diverse representations as parts of a single encompassing whole."³

Aesthetic pleasure is produced, not when the cognitive activity of imagination (responsible for producing a schema) is in harmony with the understanding (this relation is always restricted by the concept and necessary), but when free imagination, that is, imagination whose activity goes beyond that required by a concept, is in harmony with the understanding.⁴ Furthermore, because this relation does not take place between the cognitive function of imagination and understanding as necessary for objective (cognitive) harmony, but between the free imaginative manifold and understanding, it allows for the epistemological (and phenomenological) possibility of disharmony.

4.2 Distinction Between a Schema and a Particular Image

In the previous section I put forward my interpretation of the free play of imagination and its relation to the schematic presentation of an object. In this section I want to describe this relation in more detail.

We know so far, that according to Kant's epistemological theory, the conceptual harmony between imagination and understanding is needed in order to have perceptual experience. We recognize a particular combination of sensible manifold say as a flower, because we recognize the rule (schema) inherent in the combination of the manifold. This implies that when we make a judgment of taste about a form of the object, this form has already been subjected to conceptual determination, and so our judgment of taste occurs subsequently, after cognitive judgments has been made. In judgments of taste we reflect on the perception that was the result of the conceptual determination. Jennifer McMahon (2007, p. 44) who also defends a version of the metacognitive approach in Kantian aesthetics, nicely expresses this idea by claiming that a judgment of taste is a second-order perception: "a concept of the object is processed prior to the formation of an aesthetic characterization."

The concept of the object is applied to the sensible manifold by the means of a schema, that is, a universal form that all objects of its kind share with each other and in virtue of which they are recognized. A schema is the product of a restricted

³For this point see also Keren Gorodeisky (2010, p. 182).

⁴So far, I am focusing solely on the explanation of the concept of free imagination as a necessary aesthetic element in judgments of taste, which can either be harmonious or disharmonious with the understanding. I will discuss the possibility of this harmony or disharmony later on in this chapter.

activity of imagination, because its purpose is cognition and it is determined by a concept of the understanding. However, even though it is through a schema that images are first encountered as objects of possible experience, they also differ from the schema, even though they are both products of the synthesis of imagination. An image is always a particular representation, and therefore it embodies universal form in its own unique way. The general features by which the object is recognized can be instantiated or realized in numerous different ways. The synthesis of these specific and individual aspects of the general features is not determined by the concept, and so it is the work of imagination in its freedom.

The relation between a schema and a particular image is best explained by the analogy of the relation that exists between an artist's sketch, say of a human face, and the final product of such a sketch, a drawing of the particular face itself. The drawing is not a direct outcome of the artist's idea. Rather, the idea is first translated into a basic design or a sketch.⁵ An artist's sketch of a human face is a basic representation of essential features that make up a face. It represents a model or a plan of a human face in general, and which an artist will gradually start to modify by filling it with distinctive features and characteristics, and which alone are a product of the artist's creativity and originality.

A similar procedure is at work between a schema and a particular image. An image becomes possible, not by the direct application of the concept to the sensible manifold, but by translating the concept into the schema or a model first. As Kant writes, "For its execution the idea requires a schema" (A833/B861). At the same time, however, the schema differs from the image, just as the artist's sketch differs from his final drawing. A schema represents only the general features of a particular object, hence it is incomplete comparing to the image of an actual object. For example, a schema of a flower as a basic figurative mental representation of an object with petals, leaves and stems in a specific relation is different from the particular instantiation of the flower. A particular instantiation represents the individuation or specification of the common features. Such a specification of the abstract (general) form can be referred to as an object's individual form. Accordingly, a form of the object can be thought to exist at two levels. A particular flower, for instance, has a general (abstract) form which it shares with other objects of its kind. Yet, this particular flower also has an individual form, that is, the distinctive combination of the general features. The individual form exists within the constraints of the abstract form (schema), and represents a unique employment of the properties that constitute the general form specified by the concept.

Consider, for example, the painting *Weeping Woman* (1937) by Pablo Picasso. One can immediately recognize that this is a painting of a human face. By making a determining judgment that this is a human face, that the painting represents, the imagination is not free, since it combines the sensible manifold in accordance with the concept. One perceives the head, eyes, nose, and lips, as presented by the schema of a human face. But one also perceives a specific and distinctive configuration

⁵This example is mentioned by Gombrich (1972, p. 183).

of these features. The face is painted in different geometrical shapes, split into fragments; the shapes of the mouth, teeth, tears and the handkerchief used to dry the tears are almost fused into each other; the sides of the face are juxtaposed in such a way that they offer simultaneously a frontal and profile perspective of the face. These distinctive features are not specified by the schema of a human face. Hence, they are product of imagination in its freedom. Art in general represents the kind of activity which intentionally stimulates the free play of imagination and it is therefore an example of an essentially aesthetic activity.

A judgment of taste is a judgment about the beauty (or ugliness) regarding the individual form of the object, and in order to have an experience of a form at the most general level (schema), concepts must be applied to the manifold (determinate judgment must be made).⁶ This implies that in making a judgment of taste one is using some empirical concepts, namely those, by which we experience the object. Kant clearly must have such an idea in mind when he claims: “By the designation ‘an aesthetic judgment about an object’ it is therefore immediately indicated that a given representation is certainly related to an object” (FI 20:223, p. 25). And in §22 he writes that the apprehension of the imagination in judgment of taste “is of course bound to a determinate form of this object” (KU 5:240, p. 124). This means that the form that we judge aesthetically is not some undetermined set of sense impressions, but is the combination of sensible manifold as determined by the concept. After all, when Kant talks about beautiful *flowers*, beautiful *birds*, beautiful *seashells* he is using determinate empirical concepts by which he differentiates these objects, and thus one’s judgment that a bird is beautiful is dependent on recognizing that it is a bird.⁷

This proposal that judgments of taste depend on the concept of the object can still be compatible with Kant’s essential claim that judgments of taste are not determined by the concept of the object. Kant claims that the pleasure (or displeasure) cannot be grounded on the concept of the object. On my account these two ideas can be reconciled. Pleasure in a judgment of taste depends on the combination of features that is not determined by the concept of the object (individual form), and therefore it is true that pleasure is not grounded on the concept of the object. That is, even when the cognitive judgment or the recognition of the object is the same, a judgment of taste can vary. For example, a colorful Danxia landform greatly differs in its aesthetic character from the landscape of Cappadocia, even though they both satisfy the same concept, that is, being a rocky landscape. This shows that an object’s aesthetic character does not depend on the properties in virtue of which it is recognized as a particular kind of object. In other words, the pleasure or displeasure is not derived from the concept of the object, but must depend on some

⁶That it is the individual aspects of the object that are taken into consideration in aesthetic judgments is also suggested by Ted Cohen (2002). Similar view is put forward by Rachel Zuckert (2006, p. 610).

⁷This idea has also been stressed by Christopher Janaway (1997, p. 472) and Karl Ameriks (2003, pp. 296–297).

other features that not all objects of the same kind share with each other, and which are distinctive for a particular object itself. Hence, Kant's idea that in judgments of taste the concept of the object is irrelevant in judging the beauty of the object is after all true. The subject of taste is a "singular representation of the object" (KU 5:215, p. 100), that is, a particular image of an object (this particular bird, this particular flower etc.). A judgment of taste takes into consideration those individuated and specific features of an object, and which alone constitute aesthetic form.

To conclude based on my interpretation of the concept of free play both of the premises that Kant seems to hold can be true. The occurrence of a judgment of taste depends on a concept without which no perceptual experience of the form of the object would be possible. But it is also true that the outcome of judgments of taste do not depend on the concept of the object, because in different perceptual experiences the same cognitive judgments may be made, while judgments of taste differ. The determinate concept of the object cannot be the criterion of whether an object is beautiful, because that concept does not determine the distinctive combination of sensible manifold that we take into consideration in judgments of taste. While the concept of the object is necessary for the representation of an object in the first place, it is not sufficient for a judgment of taste, because the properties responsible for the beauty (or ugliness) of the object are not those properties that are required for recognizing the object as a member of its kind. Hence, knowing for instance that a turkey is a bird, is irrelevant for making the judgment of taste regarding its form, even though on the basic level its form is conditioned by the concept of the object (such as concept of a bird).

Kant classifies judgments of taste as aesthetic reflective judgments. And he explains reflective judgments *in general* as an example of judgments that look for a rule (universal) for the particular. But this does not imply that this particular is not dependent on some concept, rather what it means is that the concept does not fully determine the particular. A reflective judgment depends on some determinate concept, but which is insufficient for the combination of sensible manifold that we perceive. Therefore, a new concept must be found. But what is unique about judgments of taste, comparing to other types of judgments which also employ reflection (such as logical reflective judgments), is that judgments of taste do not result in producing a determinative concept, but only in a feeling of pleasure or displeasure.

4.3 The Notion of Free Harmony and the Indeterminate Principle of Purposiveness

In the previous sections I discussed the notion of free imagination as an essential element in judgments of taste (of the beautiful and ugly). I argued that for some objects the combination of sensible manifold is not fully determined by the concept of the object and that this indeterminacy allows the free play of imagination.

Kant writes that the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is produced when the free play of imagination is in harmony or disharmony with the understanding. Aesthetic reflection is occasioned by the free play of imagination, that is, by the aspects of the manifold that are not fully determined by the concept of the object. If in such reflection the free play of imagination harmonizes (or disharmonizes) with the understanding, then pleasure (or displeasure) is produced. Accordingly, an additional explanation of the possibility of such free harmony (or disharmony) is needed. That is, how is it possible that a certain combination of elements, which is not produced in accordance with any of the rules of the understanding, is after all in harmony with it? If there is no concept governing the organization of some material, then how can we claim that the organization of this material exhibits rule-like order, as required in the Kantian understanding of a judgment of the beautiful? Kant claims that a beautiful object expresses *lawfulness without a law*. He writes:

only a lawfulness without law and a subjective correspondence of the imagination to the understanding without an objective one – where the representation is related to a determinate concept of an object – are consistent with the free lawfulness of the understanding (which is also called purposiveness without an end) and with the peculiarity of a judgment of taste. (KU 5:241, p. 125)

That is, an object is beautiful if the combination of its elements is in harmony with the understanding (it is lawful), but without this harmony being determined by any particular concepts of the understanding (it is without a law). The experience we have of *lawfulness without a law*, when we feel that a certain combination of elements in the object is just the right one, in which elements suit and complement each other, without however having any determinate rule that would serve as a basis for the justification of the appropriateness of the specific combination. It is the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) alone that expresses the appropriateness (or inappropriateness) of a certain composition. Kant says that the feeling of pleasure is the confirmation of a certain a priori principle, which we cannot state.

In fact, when in the Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant discusses the difference between determining and reflective judgments, he writes that the latter is governed by the a priori principle of the purposiveness or systematicity of nature.⁸ He claims that this principle is a necessary presupposition

⁸Even though Kant often speaks of the principle of purposiveness and systematicity as if it is a single principle, some commentators have argued against their identification, in particular since the principle grounds such different kinds of judging activities. One suggestion, given by Henry Allison (2001, pp. 62–64) is that the principle of systematicity and the principle of aesthetic judgments are merely different specific forms of a more general principle of purposiveness of nature for our cognitive abilities. On the other hand, Fiona Hughes (2007, pp. 255–269) distinguishes between the general principle of the purposiveness of nature, which refers to a general presupposition of a fit between empirical nature and our cognitive abilities, and its specific expression, that is, the notion of systematicity of nature. Judgments of taste, she claims, are grounded on the general principle of purposiveness of nature. Rachel Zuckert (2007, pp. 65–82) also argues for a distinction between three kinds of non-determinative judgments, that is, reflective judgments (empirical concept acquisition), judgments of taste and teleological judgments. All three judgments depend on a general principle, namely the *principle of purposiveness without a purpose*,

that guides us in our reflection on nature. The presupposition is that nature in its empirical diversity and heterogeneity is after all arranged coherently and systematically, and that it is therefore compatible with our faculty of understanding and our ability to cognize nature. Even though Kant introduces this principle as necessary for our cognitive investigation of nature, there is reason to believe that the same principle is also responsible for our ability to make judgments of taste. This is the thesis that I will argue for in the rest of this chapter.

Before proceeding to a full explanation, I briefly want to point out some of the reasons in favor of my position. First, the principle of the purposiveness of nature (PPN) represents nature as being amenable to our cognitive abilities, that is, as allowing for harmony between the imagination and understanding. But this is the meaning of the pleasure in a beautiful object: “the pleasure can express nothing but its suitability to the cognitive faculties that are in play in the reflecting power of judgment” (KU 5:190, p. 76). Hence, it is justified to assume that PPN is the principle underlying judgments of taste (PJT) as well. Second, Kant formulates PPN as the subjective a priori principle of the power of judgment. That is, the principle determines the subject alone, and not objects. It is a principle that is necessary for all subjects in their reflection on nature; hence it is an inter-subjectively valid principle, rather than objective. But judgments of taste also depend on: “a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity” (KU 5:238, p. 122). Hence, PPN and PJT are both exclusively concerned with the subject and so cannot be distinguished on this basis. Third, PPN is a necessary principle for empirical cognition. More particularly, Kant describes it as the indeterminate rule that guides our reflection on nature and our ability to acquire empirical concepts. But Kant also characterizes PJT as the principle that is necessary for cognition in general. For example, Kant identifies common sense, that is, the PJT, as “the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition, which is assumed in every logic and every principle of cognitions that is not skeptical” (KU 5:239, p. 123). He also writes that: “pleasure must necessarily rest on the same conditions in everyone, since they are subjective conditions of the possibility of cognition in general” (KU 5:293, p. 173). Accordingly, PJT is the principle which grounds the possibility of having cognition, but to have empirical cognition depends on PPN. Fourth, Kant claims that PPN is inherently connected to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. He writes that “if the power of judgment is to determine anything for itself alone, it could not be anything other than the feeling of pleasure” (FI 20:208, p. 12). Therefore, both PPN and PJT determine the subject through the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. Taking all of these points together we are justified in concluding that PPN and PJT are one and the same principle.

concerned with nature being purposive for our cognitive faculties. According to my interpretation, judgments of taste depend on the same principle that underlies empirical concept acquisition and which Kant identifies with the principle of systematicity of nature.

While *prima facie*, it seems controversial to claim that a single principle is responsible for cognitive inquiry and for experiencing beauty, this connection can be legitimized by pointing out what, at the basic level, the principle of purposiveness of nature amounts to. And that is a certain way of seeing the world, that is, for preferring one way of organizing sensible manifold, to another. This preference for organizing sensible manifold in a certain way, more particularly, in a way that represents nature as a system, is reflected in our cognition, but also occasionally in the feeling of pleasure in finding an object beautiful. For example, in preferring certain combinations (such as the spiral structure of petals in a rose) and disliking others (such as the disorganized aftermath of a storm or tornado). Let me explain in more detail the role that the principle of purposiveness has in our experience of nature.

4.3.1 Reflective Judgments and the Principle of the Purposiveness of Nature

Judgments of taste are *aesthetic* reflective judgments, that is, we judge the object according to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Kant discusses the reflective power of judgment *in general* in the Introduction to the third *Critique*. Reflective judgments, together with determining judgments, belong to one of the three faculties of thought, that is, to the faculty of judgment (understanding and reason being the other two). Kant defines the power of judgment as the “faculty for the subsumption of the particular under the general” (FI 20:201, p. 8). The function of the power of judgment is to connect empirical intuition with the appropriate concept, and to attain harmony between the imagination and understanding. It is the power of judgment that organizes sensible manifold in a way that the concept can apply. We know so far, that this procedure is attained by the means of a schema. Each set of sense data activates an appropriate schema, which connects intuition with its concept. Kant describes such activity of judging as a determining power of judgment: “If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) is given, then the power of judgment, which subsumes the particular under it (. . .) is determining” (KU 5:179, p. 67). If one already has the schema (rule) of a flower, the power of judgment recognizes this rule in the sensible manifold, that is, it brings the sensible intuition to concepts. In the determining power of judgment, the concept of the object is the principle under which we subsume the particular intuition: “the underlying concept of the object prescribes the rule to the power of judgment and thus plays the role of the principle” (FI 20:211, p. 15). The determining power of judgment is under the control of the understanding and its concepts, governing the imaginative synthesis of intuition. Accordingly, the imagination in determining judgments is not a free activity.

The reflective power of judgment, on the other hand, is activated when we are presented with a manifold for which we do not yet have a concept. As I argued before, this is the case in which the imagination is in free play. The aim of the power

of judgment is to attain harmony between imagination and understanding, but since in this case we have no rule under which to subsume the manifold, this rule must first be found. Ascending from the particular to the universal is the task of the reflective power of judgment: “If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is merely reflecting” (KU 5:179, p. 67). The role of the reflective power of judgment is to find a new concept under which the particular can be subsumed, so that the determining judgment can be made. The reflective power of judgment is necessary to make more specific determining cognitive judgments, when one does not already have the concept.

To find the universal for a particular, that is, to make a reflective judgment, is however not an arbitrary procedure. Kant claims that there is in fact a principle that governs our reflection and search for universals. This principle is found in the power of judgment itself: “The reflecting power of judgment, therefore, can only give itself such a transcendental principle as a law, and cannot derive it from anywhere else” (KU 5:180, p. 67). Kant describes this principle as a “principle of purposiveness for our faculty of cognition” (KU 5:184, p. 71). More particularly, it is a principle that represents nature as a system:

the (reflecting) power of judgment, which also seeks concepts for empirical representations, as such, must further assume for this purpose that nature in its boundless multiplicity has hit upon a division of itself into genera and species that makes it possible for our power of judgment to find consensus in the comparison of natural forms and to arrive at empirical concepts, and their interconnection with each other, through ascent to more general but still empirical concepts; i.e., the power of judgment presupposes a system of nature which is also in accordance with empirical laws and does so a priori, consequently by means of a transcendental principle. (FI 20:211, p. 16)

In short, this principle presupposes a certain idea about nature, namely, that it is as though it were organized by an understanding similar to ours, so that agreement is possible between our cognitive abilities and the empirical character of nature itself.⁹ But since empirical nature is not constituted by the understanding, when in fact it does agree with it, such agreement is recognized as contingent. It is suggested by Kant that the principle is necessary for us to have empirical cognition in general.¹⁰ Only so far as we ground our reflection on nature on the principle of purposiveness, Kant writes, “can we make progress in experience and acquire cognition by the use of our understanding” (KU 5:186, p. 73).

Kant’s argument for postulating the principle of purposiveness as necessary for empirical cognition can be reconstructed in the following way:

⁹Christel Fricke (1990a, p. 47) explains the purposiveness that we attribute to nature as ‘hypothetical purposiveness’. We view nature as purposive (a product of intentional activity), but not assuming that it is the product of a *human* intentional activity.

¹⁰The connection between the principle of a reflective judgment and cognition has been emphasized by Hannah Ginsborg (1990, pp. 64–67). See also Paul Guyer’s discussion in his book *Kant’s System of Nature and Freedom: Selected Essays* (2005b, pp. 11–73). A great discussion has also been put forward by Fiona Hughes (2007, pp. 248–269).

1. We are in possession of pure concepts of the understanding, which determine nature in the most general way. However, these concepts do not determine the empirical content of specific natural forms, such as dogs, stones, flower, fish, or of particular events, such as the warmth of the stone being caused by the sun: “the universal laws of nature yield such an interconnection among things with respect to their genera, as things of nature in general, but not specifically, as such and such particular beings in nature” (KU 5:183, p. 70).
2. Since the categories do not determine the empirical content of specific natural forms, then, without any further presupposition, there could be such a diversity of natural forms and events that we could never understand nature as a unified and coherent system. There could be so many ways of organizing these particular experiences that without the presupposition of underlying unity we could never understand nature as a systematically organized whole. Categories alone cannot guarantee for the coherence of our empirical cognition (FI 20:203, p. 9).
3. But this is not true. We do have an experience of purposive forms in nature and of some systematic relations that obtain among forms and laws (for example, a classification of biological forms into the system of genera and species).
4. Hence, this means that in addition to the pure concepts of the understanding, there must be a principle which guides us in making our experience of empirical nature coherent and systematic.

According to Kant’s reasoning, we must assume that reflective judgment, which looks for the universal for a particular, operates under the presupposition that nature in its specificity forms a system in which all phenomena are related to each other and divided into the genera and species. This assumption makes it possible for reflective judgment to look for the commonalities in natural forms, and therefore to bring them under the universals. This assumption of the systematicity of nature is necessary for the rationality and coherency of our reflection, because without it, as Kant says: “all reflection would become arbitrary and blind, and hence would be undertaken without any well-grounded expectation of its agreement with nature” (FI 20:212, p. 16). Only if our reflection on nature is guided by a belief that nature forms a system, in which all natural forms are interrelated, in other words, if we believe that “nature has observed a certain economy suitable to our power of judgment and a uniformity that we can grasp” (FI 20:213, p. 17), only then can the search for empirical concepts proceed by the way of using “the principles for the explanation and the understanding of one for the explanation and comprehension of the other as well, and to make an interconnected experience out of material that is for us so confused” (KU 5:185, p. 72).

This principle does not, however, absolutely guarantee that we will always find regularities among objects and bring them under concepts. That is, the principle does not guarantee that the power of judgment will always attain the harmony between imagination and understanding. The principle is merely a subjective maxim, or “a subjectively necessary transcendental presupposition” (FI 20:209, p. 14), as to how we ought to approach nature in order to attain the systematicity of nature, and this means that it is not necessarily guaranteed that nature will in fact always be in accord

with the principle of systematicity. The principle does not determine anything about nature, but it only represents an orientation we must take in our investigation of nature. It is a merely regulative (not constitutive) principle for our understanding to find the systematicity in nature, but it does not guarantee that this cognitive need of ours will always be fulfilled.¹¹

4.4 The Principle of Purposiveness and Judgments of Taste

Kant discusses the principle of purposiveness mainly in relation to its use in empirical concept acquisition and scientific investigation of nature. But in addition, he suggests that there is a connection between this principle and judgments of taste. This connection is implicit in his formulation of a judgment of taste as a reflective judgment, in which we compare a representation of the object with our own cognitive faculty (ability to bring intuition to concepts). Kant writes that the principle of purposiveness is a necessary presupposition that precedes all reflection and comparison, which implies that it precedes comparison specific for judgments of taste as well. Accordingly, one has a good reason to favor the idea that the principle of purposiveness of nature is also the principle underlying judgments of taste. Indeed, this idea comes out explicitly in the following passages:

In a critique of the power of judgment the part that contains the aesthetic power of judgment is essential, since this alone contains a principle that the power of judgment lays at the basis of its reflection on nature entirely a priori, namely that of a formal purposiveness of nature in accordance with its particular (empirical) laws for our faculty of cognition, without which the understanding could not find itself in it. (KU 5:193, p. 79)

... although aesthetic judgments themselves are not possible a priori, nevertheless a priori principles are given in the necessary idea of an experience, as a system, which contain the concept of a formal purposiveness of nature for our power of judgment, and from which the possibility of aesthetic judgments of reflection, as such, which are grounded on a priori principles, is illuminated a priori (FI 20:233, p. 34).

The main idea that these passages suggest is that judgments of taste depend on an a priori principle and that this principle is the necessary presupposition of the purposiveness of nature. This principle states that nature is a systematic unity, and therefore amenable to our cognitive abilities. It is therefore a principle that is necessary for empirical concept acquisition. Accordingly, finding an object beautiful and finding the concept under which to subsume the particular are made in reference to the same principle, and to the same cognitive need we have, that is, to systematize experience:

The self-sufficient beauty of nature reveals to us a technique of nature, which makes it possible to represent it as a system in accordance with laws the principle of which we do not encounter anywhere in our entire faculty of understanding, namely that of a purposiveness with respect to the use of the power of judgment in regard to appearances (KU 5:246, p. 129).

¹¹This is also pointed out by Fiona Hughes (1998, p. 190).

The claim is that a beautiful object exhibits a technique of nature, that is, a purposiveness that allows us to represent nature as a system. But, as Kant writes, it is not nature itself that is technical, but rather “the power of judgment is properly technical; nature is represented technically only insofar as it conforms to that procedure of the power of judgment and makes it necessary” (FI 20:220, p. 22). This means that a beautiful object is the result of the conformity of the object with the power of judgment. That is, an object is considered beautiful when it satisfies the principle of purposiveness, which guides the procedure of the power of judgment. But the principle is also satisfied in the case of finding the concept under which to subsume a particular:

The reflecting power of judgment thus proceeds with given appearances, in order to bring them under empirical concepts of determinate natural things, not schematically, but technically (. . .) in accordance with the general but at the same time indeterminate principle of a purposive arrangement of nature in a system, as it were for the benefit of our power of judgment, in the suitability of its particular laws (about which understanding has nothing to say) for the possibility of experience as a system. (FI 20:214, p. 17)

Accordingly, both beautiful objects and finding the concept for a particular represent the satisfaction of the same principle of nature’s purposiveness for our cognitive abilities.¹² Moreover, Kant suggests that the principle of purposiveness is properly revealed only in judgments of taste. He writes:

It is therefore properly only in taste, and especially with regard to objects in nature, in which alone the power of judgment reveals itself as a faculty that has its own special principle and thereby makes a well-founded claim to a place in the general critique of the higher faculties of cognition, which one would perhaps not have entrusted to it. (FI 20:244, p. 44)

This implies that the principle is not revealed in cognitive inquiries (empirical concept acquisition), even though it is also necessary for them. On my understanding, Kant’s thought can be explained with reference to the two kinds of reflection employed in the power of judgment. He writes that in empirical concept acquisition, reflecting is comparing one form with other forms in order to find common features (the concept). In judgments of taste, on the other hand, reflecting is comparing a single form with our own faculty of cognition (FI 20:21, p. 15). This means that in the first case the primary result of the comparison made in accordance with the principle is the perception of the commonalities between two objects. However, in judgments of taste the primary result is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, and it is this feeling that reveals the extent to which the principle of purposiveness is satisfied by the object.

One might object at this point to the view that a single principle can underlie two different abilities, that is, an ability to make cognitive judgments and an ability to make judgments of taste. Namely, to find an object beautiful is not to attribute an objective property to the object, as cognitive judgments do. Rather, it is the result of a relation between us and the object, that is, that the object gives us a feeling

¹²This is also the view argued for by Ginsborg (1990, pp. 66–68); Matthews (2010, pp. 63–79); Baz (2005, pp. 1–32) and Horstmann (1989, pp. 157–176).

of pleasure. Kant's characterization of the principle of purposiveness, however, does not preclude the possibility that the principle can ground such different abilities. Even though the principle governs our search for empirical concepts, and is therefore used for cognition, it does not make any determinate claims about the object (this can be done only by the determining judgment). Kant claims that the principle represents only a unique way of reflecting and approaching nature: "For the representation of nature as art is a mere idea, which serves as a principle, merely for the subject, for our investigation of nature" (FI 20:205, p. 10). We have certain ideas about the world and we orient ourselves in the world according to these ideas. The principle is an idea about how the world is supposed to be, so that it allows our understanding to cognize it, and it is an idea that holds only for us, as cognitive beings. The principle does not determine the world; rather, it determines us, and our need to see the world in a specific way:

this transcendental concept of a purposiveness of nature is neither a concept of nature nor a concept of freedom, since it attributes nothing at all to the object (of nature), but rather only represents the unique way in which we must proceed in reflection on the objects of nature with the aim of a thoroughly interconnected experience, consequently it is a subjective principle (maxim) of the power of judgment. (KU 5:184, p. 71)

But if the principle does not determine objects, but only represents a subject's orientation in the world, then it becomes easier to see how it can be the principle for non-cognitive judgments, such as judgments of taste, as well.

Furthermore, since the principle concerns subjects alone and their preference to see the world organized one way rather than another, then one can see the connection between the principle and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. That is, if one has a certain need, and in this case, the need to systematize our experience of nature for the sake of understanding, then the satisfaction of this need, that is, when we come across such a system of nature, can produce a feeling of pleasure. Indeed, Kant writes that if the principle determines the subject, then this awareness of the satisfaction of the principle can be given only through the feeling of pleasure and displeasure:

the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is only the receptivity of a determination of the subject, so that if the power of judgment is to determine anything for itself alone, it could not be anything other than the feeling of pleasure, and, conversely, if the latter is to have an a priori principle at all, it will be found only in the power of judgment. (FI 20:208, p. 12)

If the principle of purposiveness determines the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in the subject, then these feelings will be experienced in each case of finding systematicity and unity in nature, or their converse, respectively. That is, pleasure will be experienced not only in judgments of taste, but also in reflective judgments by which we acquire empirical concepts. In judgments of taste, where the subject's relation to the object is directly compared with the principle, what we experience is the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) alone. But in empirical concept acquisition, where the principle is used to find the common properties among objects, finding the concept will also be accompanied with the feeling of pleasure, since finding the concept indicates that nature is systematically arranged, and in that case the principle must have been satisfied.

Kant explains in more detail the connection between the principle of purposiveness and the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in section VI of *Introduction*. His explanation of this connection refers to the feeling of pleasure that we experience in finding the concept under which to subsume the particular, yet it can be applied to the explanation of the feeling of pleasure in judgments of taste as well. The explanation Kant gives is that pleasure is the result of a contingent accordance between nature and our cognitive abilities. In short, the argument can be reconstructed in the following way:

1. We have a certain need to unify and systematize experience (to find universals for the particulars):

The lawful unity in a combination that we cognize as in accordance with a necessary aim (a need) of the understanding but yet at the same time as contingent in itself is represented as a purposiveness of the objects (in this case, of nature). (KU 5:184, p. 71)

2. The satisfaction of this need is not guaranteed. The principle of purposiveness is a presupposition that holds good for us, but not necessarily for nature. This means that when this presupposition of purposiveness is met with in nature, that is, when the harmony between imagination and understanding is established, then this harmony is considered as contingent (KU 5:187, p. 73). We expect the world to exhibit systematicity, but the satisfaction of this expectation is not guaranteed.
3. Satisfaction of every need, when this satisfaction is not guaranteed, produces the feeling of pleasure: “The attainment of every aim is combined with the feeling of pleasure” (KU 5:187, p. 73).
4. Hence, to find purposiveness in nature (to satisfy our cognitive need), produces the feeling of pleasure:

bringing heterogeneous laws of nature under higher though always still empirical ones, so that if we succeed in this accord of such laws for our faculty of cognition, which we regard as merely contingent, pleasure will be felt (KU 5:188, p. 74).

Pleasure, in other words, is the relief of a need:

we are also delighted (strictly speaking, relieved of a need) when we encounter such a systematic unity among merely empirical laws, just as if it were a happy accident which happened to favor our aim. (KU 5:184, p. 71)

Pleasure designates that our expectations about the world are fulfilled. In other words, we feel pleasure in the experience of the contingent harmony between nature and our cognitive abilities. Furthermore, because all judging subjects share the same cognitive need, it follows that the feeling of pleasure in the satisfaction of the universal cognitive need is universally valid:

The attainment of every aim is combined with the feeling of pleasure; and, if the condition of the former is an a priori representation, as in this case a principle for the reflecting power of judgment in general, then the feeling of pleasure is also determined through a ground that is a priori and valid for everyone. (KU 5:187, p. 73)

In other words, everyone will experience the feeling of pleasure in the free harmony between imagination and understanding, because this harmony is presupposed a priori by the principle of purposiveness, which is shared by everyone.

On the other hand, if our aim to find nature's purposiveness remains unsatisfied, then a feeling of displeasure is produced:

a representation of nature that foretold that even in the most minor investigation of the most common experience we would stumble on a heterogeneity in its laws that would make the unification of its particular laws under universal empirical ones impossible for our understanding would thoroughly displease us; because this would contradict the principle of the subjective-purposive specification of nature in its genera and our reflecting power of judgment with respect to the latter. (KU 5:188, p. 74)

Because we all have the same cognitive need to find purposiveness in nature, the feeling of displeasure, resulting from the dissatisfaction of this need, is also universally valid. The principle of purposiveness is merely a necessary subjective presupposition about nature, hence it does not follow that nature's purposiveness is always guaranteed. It is possible that we come across such heterogeneity and diversity of natural forms that we are unable to unify them (bring them under concepts). The feeling of displeasure in this case results from experiencing a conflict or disharmony between nature and our cognitive abilities.

4.5 Aesthetic Representation of Purposiveness and the Concept of Beauty

In the previous section I argued in favor of the idea that the principle of the purposiveness or systematicity of nature is the principle of taste. We have a need to systematize experience, that is, to attain agreement between nature and our cognitive abilities. The systematization of experience is our mode of approaching and organizing nature, so that we are able to cognize it. Arata Hamawaki (2006, p. 130) nicely puts this idea by saying that: "it is the business of the power of judgment to project ahead of itself the terms under which nature can offer itself to me as knowable." This projection of the power of judgment is embodied in the idea of the principle of purposiveness, which serves as our guide in nature. This principle guides our reflection through the feeling of pleasure (nature conforms to the principle) or displeasure (nature does not conform to the principle).

Even though determinate judgments also represent the conformity of nature with our cognitive abilities, that is, a successful synthesis of intuition and concepts, nevertheless no pleasure occurs in them. This is because the synthesis in determining judgments is governed by the understanding and its concepts, and accordingly the synthesis is assured. If we already have a concept for the particular, then the synthesis proceeds automatically. The feeling of pleasure accompanies a successful synthesis only if this synthesis is not governed by concepts, but only presupposed by the principle of the purposiveness, and therefore its success is not guaranteed. The

feeling of pleasure is the confirmation of the principle of the purposiveness, and it can occur only in judgments where this principle is employed.

Judgments which are governed by the principle of purposiveness are reflective judgments. The aim of the reflective power of judgment is to find the universal for the particular, that is, to conceptualize the experience. This happens either in logical reflective judgments, where the universal found is an empirical concept, or in aesthetic reflective judgments (judgments of taste), where the universal found is grasped through the feeling of pleasure alone.¹³ The idea is that the principle of purposiveness, which makes it possible to cognize nature as a system and to find concepts for particulars, is also responsible for finding certain individual forms beautiful. A beautiful object complements our idea of nature as a system. Finding a concept and making a judgment of taste are determined by the same principle of judgment. And since they both represent a successful application of the principle of purposiveness in nature, the feeling of pleasure occurs in both cases. But while in logical reflection the pleasure occurs when finding a determinate concept, in judgments of taste, where purposiveness is not grasped in a determinate concept, the feeling of pleasure is the sole experience of a successful synthesis. And only this experience is the aesthetic experience of the purposiveness. I will shortly explain the distinction between the aesthetic and logical experience of purposiveness in more detail, but first I want to consider some objections to the view I argue for.

Some of the commentators have argued against the view that the principle of the purposiveness of nature (idea of nature as a system) is the principle of judgments of taste (Allison 2001, pp. 61–62; Rueger and Evren 2005, p. 232; Guyer 1997, pp. 44–47; Caranti 2005, p. 368). Ordinarily, two main objections against this view are raised. First, that the principle of the purposiveness of nature is concerned with finding the empirical determinate concepts for particulars, and therefore with the classification of objects under species and genera. The principle is used for logical or conceptual reflection, to think of nature as a logical system (that nature in its multiplicity can be classified into a hierarchy of concepts). The procedure of logical reflection is characterized by comparing different forms with each other in order to find common properties between them. Accordingly, what is considered as logically purposive is *the relation* between forms. On the other hand, judgments of taste are not cognitive judgments and do not have as their aim to find a concept under which to classify the object. Aesthetic reflection proceeds by comparing an individual form with our cognitive abilities. Accordingly, aesthetic purposiveness is *in the form* of the object, and not in the relation between forms. It results in the feeling of pleasure alone, and not in a concept. But such a difference between logical and aesthetic purposiveness presumably implies a difference in the principles underlying them.

The second objection is that the feeling of pleasure resulting from the satisfaction of the principle of purposiveness is not an aesthetic pleasure. Kant writes that the feeling of pleasure resulting from finding conceptual purposiveness ceases to exist once we have become familiar with the object (KU 5:187, p. 74). But the feeling of

¹³A judgment is logical when “its predicate is a given objective concept” (FI 20:223, p. 26).

pleasure in finding an object beautiful is phenomenologically different. A beautiful rose sustains one's pleasure no matter how familiar one becomes with it. As Kant writes, beautiful object "repeatedly attracts attention" (KU 5:222, p. 107). Aesthetic pleasure, therefore, does not cease to exist. Furthermore, Kant claims that aesthetic pleasure is disinterested pleasure "for no interest, neither that of the senses nor that of reason, extorts approval" (KU 5:210, p. 95). But if we claim that aesthetic pleasure is the result of the satisfaction of our cognitive need, and if having a need presupposes that we have an interest in satisfying this need, then it follows that such pleasure must be interested. But, aesthetic pleasure is not interested. Hence, it cannot be the result of satisfying our cognitive need, as the pleasure in logical reflective judgments is (Caranti 2005, p. 368). Overall, the difference in the phenomenology of the feeling of pleasure in logical and aesthetic purposiveness presumably implies difference of the principles. I will begin considering first objection.

It is true that Kant explains the distinction between logical (conceptual) and aesthetic purposiveness as a distinction between purposiveness *in the relation between forms* and purposiveness *in the form itself*. Of the former he writes: "these forms themselves are not thereby thought of as purposive, but only their relation to one another and their fitness, even in their great multiplicity, for a logical system of empirical concepts" (FI 20:216, p. 19). And of the latter he says: "the ground of the pleasure is placed merely in the form of the object" (KU 5:190, p. 76). Purposiveness in the relation between forms leads to the formation of a determinate concept. But the purposiveness of a particular form itself leads to the feeling of pleasure alone.

However, the fact that purposiveness can be thought to exist at two levels (that is, between forms and in the form) does not necessarily imply that there must be two different principles of reflective judgments, that is, a principle of logical purposiveness and a principle of aesthetic purposiveness. I will argue later that these are different manifestations of the same principle. For now, suffice it to say that in each case the principle functions with aim of producing a synthesis between intuition and concepts (attain the agreement between nature and our cognitive abilities). The difference is due to the scope of that on which the principle acts in each case. Kant writes that reflection on the object can proceed in two ways: "To reflect (to consider), however, is to compare and to hold together given representations either with others or with one's faculty of cognition, in relation to a concept thereby made possible" (FI 20:211, p. 15). Comparing forms with each other results in the formation of an empirical concept and in making a cognitive judgment. The comparison of a single form with cognitive abilities results in aesthetic pleasure and in making a judgment of taste. Yet, both kinds of reflection satisfy the same cognitive aim of a judgment, that is, to find the universal for the particular (to conceptualize experience). And this process is governed by the principle of the purposiveness of nature.

The connection between the principle of purposiveness or systematicity of nature and judgments of taste can be legitimized in the following way. Kant claims that judgments of taste are *merely reflective judgments* (FI 20:223, p. 26). And he understands *merely reflective judgments* as judgments concerned with finding the universal. He writes: "If, however, only the particular is given, for which the

universal is to be found, then the power of judgment is *merely reflecting*” (KU 5:179, p. 67). This indicates that a judgment of taste is also one in which universals for a particular form is being sought, just as in logical reflective judgments. Furthermore, it is clear from this and other passages that Kant uses the terms ‘universal’ and ‘concept’ interchangeably. Indeed, if we take a closer look at the passage where Kant describes the two types of reflection (logical and aesthetic), he claims that both are made ‘in relation to a concept thereby made possible.’ Similarly, he states: “The satisfaction in the beautiful must depend upon reflection on an object that leads to some sort of concept (it is indeterminate which)” (KU 5:207, p. 93). Based on this, we can say that Kant understands both types of judgments as leading to a concept, and since the principle of purposiveness is precisely that which allows the power of judgment to find concepts, it must be that each type of judgment is made in reference to this same principle. It remains to be seen, then, in what way the two types of reflective judgment are in fact distinct.

I argue that the difference between logical and aesthetic reflective judgments is that the concept found in the former case is determinate in the sense in which the criteria of its application can be explicitly articulated, whereas in the latter case the concept is indeterminate, with the judgment depending only on the feeling of pleasure. As Kant writes, “the beautiful seems to be taken as the presentation of an indeterminate concept of the understanding” (KU 5:244, p. 128). Kant does not explain what he means by the notion of an indeterminate concept, but I take it to refer to a sort of a concept, which cannot be specified in the set of marks and thus it evades any discursive expression.¹⁴ When we find an object beautiful, we feel there is a tangible account of this, as if beauty were a concept, yet we are unable to put it into words. Even though a judgment of taste does not result in a determinate concept, it does after all satisfy the need of a reflective judgment to conceptualize experience. Anthony Savile (1993, p. 89) expresses a similar idea by saying that a beautiful object “appears to cater for a need that we have to make cognitive sense of the world.” Finding an object beautiful, similarly to finding a determinate concept for the particular, reveals that the object fits with our idea of nature as a system. In the case of logical reflective judgments, the principle of purposiveness is satisfied through finding a determinate concept, this latter being a relation that we recognize as holding between the forms of different objects. In the case of judgments of taste, on the other hand, no determinate concept is found, and so this is not a case of recognizing a relation between objects. However, a feeling of pleasure in a judgment of taste indicates that the principle of purposiveness is satisfied in these cases. Given that the principle of purposiveness is only satisfied in judgments where the systematicity of nature is exhibited, and that judgments of taste do not pertain to relations between objects, this systematicity must be exhibited in the relation between the object and our cognitive faculties.

¹⁴Something similar is suggested by Wolterstorff (1991, pp. 105–127). He interprets an indeterminate concept found in judgments of taste as ‘aptness concept’. It is a concept similar to a determinate concept, but which cannot be specified.

Put another way, there are several levels at which the systematicity of nature can be exhibited, corresponding to the levels of generality with which concepts can be applied. For example, the differing levels of generality exhibited in the following hierarchically ordered concepts: organism, vertebrate, fish, shark and so on. At each level at which a determinate concept can be found, this is the result of the recognition of common properties between different objects. We feel pleasure in such cases because they indicate the contingent conformity between nature and our cognitive faculties, that is, the satisfaction of our assumption of the systematicity of nature. The satisfaction of this assumption without the need for the recognition of common properties between objects (and hence without finding a determinate concept) can then only be the result of the relation between a specific concrete object and our cognitive faculties. The systematicity of nature is thereby exhibited not through a relation between the forms of different objects, but rather through the relation that a particular object alone has to our cognitive faculties.

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

A judgment in general, Kant claims, is the ability to think the particular under a universal. A judgment of taste is not an exception. The difference is only that in a judgment of taste, of the form 'this X is beautiful', the predicate does not refer to a determinate concept, since the criteria for its application cannot be explicitly articulated, but consist only in the feeling of pleasure. Hence, in judgments of taste no determinate cognition can be made.

This is because Kant understands concepts as representing general properties that different objects share with each other. Purposiveness can result in a determinate concept only when we compare different forms with each other in order to find commonalities among them, since only general features can be explicitly communicated. But in judgments of taste, Kant claims, we reflect on a particular form itself, without comparing this form with others. Aesthetic reflection is a reflection on an object's individual and distinctive properties; hence this purposiveness cannot be grasped in a determinate concept. We can explicitly articulate criteria for why we would classify something as a face, or as a flower, but we cannot state such criteria that uniquely identify particular objects in all their detail. For instance, it is impossible to give a description that would apply completely accurately and uniquely to the flower on my windowsill, and yet this particular thing is the object of aesthetic reflection. A direct acquaintance with this object is the only way to make a judgment of taste concerning it. This contrasts with the case of a logical reflective judgment,

since in this case we could know whether a determinate concept applies simply by a sufficient enumeration of its properties, without having to be directly acquainted with the object itself.

The purposiveness in a judgment of taste, on the other hand, cannot depend on whether a determinate concept applies, but is revealed through the feeling of pleasure alone. Kant writes: “An aesthetic judgment in general can therefore be explicated as that judgment whose predicate can never be cognition” (FI 20:224, p. 26). But that the predicate cannot become cognition (a determinate concept) does not mean that no universal has been found. It means only that the universal or the systematic unity of an individual object is grasped through the feeling of pleasure alone. The feeling of pleasure in judgments of taste substitutes for the role of determinate concepts in cognitive judgments. Kant alludes to such an idea when he writes: “as if beauty were a property of the object and the judgment logical (constituting a cognition of the object through concepts of it), although it is only aesthetic” (KU 5:211, p. 97). The feeling of pleasure is the way one recognizes purposiveness in an individual object, just as a determinate concept is the way one recognizes the purposiveness of an object’s general properties.

Both logical and aesthetic purposiveness represent the satisfaction of our cognitive aim to find purposiveness in nature. In logical reflective judgments, finding a determinate concept for the particular is the confirmation of our principle of purposiveness, hence, pleasure is indirectly produced. But in aesthetic reflective judgments, where purposiveness cannot be grasped in a determinate concept, the confirmation of the principle can be experienced directly through the feeling of pleasure alone. In fact, it is precisely because aesthetic purposiveness does not result in a determinate concept that the experience of pleasure does not cease to exist, as happens in logical reflective judgments.

Kant claims that the feeling of pleasure resulting from finding a determinate concept for the particular ceases to exist once we become familiar with the object. He writes:

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 5:187, p. 74)

The explanation is that pleasure resulting from a successful unification of nature (in a concept) ceases to exist once it becomes fused with cognition. What Kant means by this is that once we acquire the concept for the particular, and once our subsumption of the particular under the concept (identification of the object) becomes automatic and spontaneous (procedure of a determining judgment), then the object no longer gives us pleasure. This explanation implies that in a case of the unification of nature which does not result in a determinate concept, then pleasure, produced by the successful unification, cannot become fused with cognition. And if this is so, then, based on Kant’s reasoning, the pleasure does not cease to exist. But the experience of nature that shows itself to be amenable to our cognitive

need of subsuming the particular under the concept, yet which does not result in a determinate concept is an aesthetic experience of purposiveness. Hence, the feeling of pleasure in a judgment of taste does not cease to exist.

Furthermore, the feeling satisfies the condition of being disinterested, even though it is the result of a satisfaction of our cognitive need. Kant claims that a feeling of pleasure is interested if it is “determined not merely through the representation of the object but at the same time through the represented connection of the subject with the existence of the object” (KU 5:209, p. 95). But the feeling of pleasure resulting from satisfaction of our cognitive need is determined “merely through the relation of the object to the faculty of cognition” (KU 5:187, p. 73), hence without the connection to the existence of the object. Accordingly, pleasure as the result of satisfaction of our cognitive need is not interested pleasure. Taken all together, we do not need to assume the existence of a separate principle in order to explain different phenomenological character of aesthetic pleasure, thereby meeting the second of the two objections mentioned previously.

To sum up, judgments of logical and aesthetic purposiveness are made in reference to the same principle of the purposiveness of nature, and they are both accompanied by pleasure. The difference is that in aesthetic reflective judgments the feeling of pleasure does not cease to exist because purposiveness does not result in a determinate concept. The feeling of pleasure in a beautiful object is a perennial reminder of the object’s suitability for us and our cognitive abilities.

According to Kant, an object is aesthetically purposive if its representation is directly connected to the feeling of pleasure, without the mediation of a concept:

The object is therefore called purposive in this case only because its representation is *immediately* connected with the feeling of pleasure; and this representation itself is an aesthetic representation of the purposiveness. (KU 5:189, p. 75)

This immediate experience of the feeling of pleasure is the determining ground of the reflective judgment, which is called aesthetic for this reason. In fact, Kant distinguishes two kinds of aesthetic representation of purposiveness. Namely, formal aesthetic purposiveness, and material aesthetic purposiveness corresponding to the two kinds of aesthetic judgments, judgments of taste and aesthetic judgments of sense respectively. Both kinds of judgments are called aesthetic because they are grounded directly on the feeling of pleasure. But they differ substantially in that in a judgment of taste the representation of the object refers directly to the universally communicable feeling of pleasure, while in an aesthetic judgment of sense, the representation is referred directly to pleasure that has a mere private validity. The feeling of pleasure in an aesthetic judgment of sense is merely subjective, because it depends only on sensations and these are not something that are felt in the same way by all of us (KU 5:224, p. 109). In a judgment of taste, however, the pleasure is universally valid, because it is determined by the a priori principle of purposiveness. Reflective judging of the object precedes pleasure and is its cause. The assumption of the purposiveness of nature is *thought* before the pleasure is *felt* and its satisfaction is the cause of the pleasure: “if the reflection on a given representation precedes the feeling of pleasure (as the determining ground of the

judgment), then the subjective purposiveness is thought before it is felt in its effect” (FI 20:225, p. 27). Because the subjective purposiveness is an assumption that is necessary for all of us, the pleasure as its effect is universally communicable, that is, expected to be experienced in the same way by all of us.

I should point out that it is consistent with this interpretation that the opposite can also be the case. If our apprehension of the object disagrees with our understanding, that is, if our representation of nature contradicts the principle of purposiveness, then this relation will cause a universally communicable feeling of displeasure alone.

4.6 The Solution of the ‘Everything Is Beautiful’ Problem

Judgments of taste (of the beautiful) depend on our ability to experience free harmony between imagination and understanding, in other words, on our ability to judge objects by the means of the a priori subjective principle of the purposiveness of nature. This ability also underlies empirical concept formation. Kant’s idea is that free harmony is the cause of the feeling of pleasure. But this implies not only that I feel pleasure in making a judgment of taste, but I must also experience pleasure each time I acquire the empirical concept for an object. This implies that all objects of cognition (or at least in those cases where we find a concept for the first time) must be experienced as beautiful. The interpretative strategies given so far which argue that free harmony is a necessary subjective condition for empirical concept formation, cannot meet the ‘everything is beautiful’ problem.¹⁵

The interpretation I have developed can meet this problem. The solution depends on distinguishing between two different ways that the principle of purposiveness is employed in aesthetic and logical reflective judgments. It is only in an aesthetic and not logical reflective judgment that the principle is employed in a way that produces the relevant feeling of pleasure, which leads to judgments of the beautiful. My reasoning is the following. Based on Kant, an object is considered aesthetically purposive (i.e. beautiful) when its representation is *immediately* connected to pleasure (KU 5:189, p. 75). But what is immediately connected to pleasure can only be the reflection on an object’s particular combination of properties. Accordingly, only when we reflect on an object as an individual do we in fact make an aesthetic reflective judgment. Kant claims that a judgment of taste concerns a singular representation of the object, that is, a singular form, rather than a relation between forms. The predicate beautiful is ascribed to the individual and not to the set of individuals belonging to the same kind. For example, a judgment ‘this flower is beautiful’ is a singular judgment and cannot automatically be applied to all flowers.

¹⁵Recall that the ‘everything is beautiful’ argument is not problematic for interpretations that do not claim that free harmony is necessary for cognition. But then again, these interpretations have problems with solving the universal validity of judgments of taste.

An object is judged as beautiful in virtue of its distinctive and individual aspects, and these aspects are not entailed by features which an object shares with members of its kind.

To recall, Kant writes that a concept “refers to the object indirectly, by means of a characteristic that may be common to several things” (A320/B377). Yet, a particular image of a flower has a distinct configuration of characteristics that are common to all flowers (specific combination of petals in a particular combination of colors). These distinctive features of this particular flower are not entailed by the concept of a flower, and it is always a specific determination of the sensible manifold which is the object of aesthetic experience. Thus even though we have a concept of a flower in virtue of which we recognize a particular sensible manifold as a flower, this concept does not determine our aesthetic reflection, simply because our reflection takes into account those distinctive properties that are not entailed by the concept of a flower. Now, even if one operates with a more particular determinate concept, such as the concept of a *rose*, this concept is still insufficient to fully determine the particular manifold. The concept of a rose in itself still represents general properties that all roses have in common and which can be explicitly articulated – a rose is a flower distinctive by its spiral structure of petals and thorns on their stems. One recognizes a particular flower as a rose by recognizing these general features in the sensible manifold. But these general features are still inadequate to fully determine all the details of a particular rose, as it is presented to our perception. Thus, one can still make an aesthetic judgment that ‘this rose is beautiful.’ No matter how determinate the concept is (*rose* instead of a *flower*), it always represents an object in virtue of general properties that it shares with others and which can be explicitly articulated, and as such it can never fully determine the sensible manifold in a particular presentation with which we are directly perceptually acquainted. This means that even though it might be contingent whether one person subsumes the object under a less determinate concept (such as a concept of a *flower*), while another person subsumes the object under more determinate concept (such as a concept of a *rose*), they both have an aesthetic response when reflecting on the particular image of a flower (or a rose).

Since these particular features of an object cannot be explicitly articulated, that is, one cannot completely describe all the features of a particular rose (they can only be distinguished by observation), then it also follows that reflection on such particular features cannot lead to a determinate concept, since concepts can only be based on commonalities between distinct particular objects. To put it differently, in aesthetic reflective judgments the principle of purposiveness is applied to the individual form, but purposiveness of an individual form cannot be grasped in a determinate concept, because as said previously, concepts can only provide a unity of different representation possessing some common features and cannot represent individual features. Hence, purposiveness of an individual form can be revealed through the feeling of pleasure alone. And only this is an aesthetic representation of purposiveness that grounds judgments of the beautiful.

In logical reflective judgments, however, the principle of purposiveness is not applied to an individual form; rather it is used to find commonalities between differ-

ent forms and this purposiveness results in a determinate concept. The experience of pleasure we feel in finding the concept for an object is not the pleasure that we feel in finding the systematic unity of an object's individual properties. In aesthetic reflection we are interested in the nature of the particular object and the relation between cognitive powers that this singular representation generates and which can result in the feeling of pleasure alone. The principle of reflection applies to the synthesis of features particular to this form itself and not to the synthesis of common features in virtue of which the object belongs to a certain class. In other words, the subject of aesthetic experience is the *mere* form of the object, say, *this particular* Danxia landform in Zhangye (China) with its dramatic ups and downs mountains and with its unique early morning colors, without the consideration of what the object represents, namely a rocky landscape. It is this particular representation that is subsumed under the conditions of a reflective judgment alone (principle of purposiveness).

In sum, only when we reflect on an object as an individual can the principle of purposiveness give rise to the pleasure of beauty. Pleasure, Kant writes, expresses “merely a subjective formal purposiveness of the object” (KU 5:190, p. 76). That is, aesthetic reflection depends on *mere* subjective purposiveness, while purposiveness in logical reflection results in a determinate concept. Aesthetic purposiveness depends on the sole experience of free harmony, where imagination and understanding continuously support and animate each other, thereby prolonging the process of their play and accordingly prolong the feeling of pleasure. A beautiful object discloses purposiveness of nature at the most concrete and particular level which for this reason cannot be grasped in a determinate concept, but in the feeling of pleasure alone.

Aesthetic purposiveness is different from logical purposiveness, and so we need not conclude that it is necessary for cognition nor that it is a high degree of cognition.¹⁶ This allows for the possibility that an object can have cognitive purposiveness (purposiveness between forms), without having aesthetic purposiveness (purposiveness of the form itself). Hence, we can have an object of cognition, that is, we may be able to recognize the manifold under a concept, without this object being regarded as beautiful. More importantly, we can have an object of cognition (that is, classify the object into the system of genera and species), while at the same time this object (its individual aspects) can be perceived as aesthetically displeasing. That is, reflection on an object's individual form can be in disconformity with the principle of the purposiveness, and we can therefore find such an object ugly. For example, we can recognize that an object belongs to the class of *Angler fish*, hence finding its concept in the hierarchy of species and genera, while nevertheless finding it ugly. A more detailed exposition of the possibility of aesthetic ugliness will be given in the next chapter.

¹⁶First conclusion follows from Ginsborg's account. The idea that aesthetic purposiveness is necessary for cognition has also been suggested by Geiger (2010, p. 87). Second conclusion follows from Paul Guyer's account.

Chapter 5

The Explanation of Ugliness in Kant's Aesthetics

There is a Latin proverb, which states: “we never really know what a thing is unless we are able to give a sufficient account of its opposite” (cited in Lorand 1994, p. 399). This turns out to be particularly true for beauty and its opposite aesthetic concept, ugliness, in Kantian aesthetics. Since Kant's explanation of judgments of taste is based exclusively on the notion of free harmony, constitutive of judgments of the beautiful alone, the explanation of ugliness could not begin without a prior analysis of a positive aesthetic concept, beauty. This analysis was made in the previous chapter, where I proposed an interpretation of the notion of free harmony, based on Kant's general account of a reflective judgment and the subjective *a priori* principle of purposiveness. I argued that aesthetic reflective judgments or judgments of taste, just like logical reflective judgments, operate by the means of the principle of purposiveness which aims to conceptualize the manifold, that is, to find the appropriate concept. On my view, Kant's concept of beauty has inherent cognitive ambitions. It belongs to a general plan of our power of judgment to conceptualize every aspect of experience and make it cognizable for us, that is, to organize it in a way that fits with our cognitive abilities. This analysis of the concept of beauty has also anticipated how ugliness can be included in Kantian aesthetics, which I will explain more deeply in the present chapter.

The discussion will proceed as follows: based on my interpretation of the concept of free harmony I will first propose a solution to the two main problems (Shier's and Guyer's) with accommodating judgments of ugliness within Kantian aesthetics. I will proceed with the analysis of Kant's notion of the sublime in comparison to ugliness. Next, I will examine Kant's notion of artistic beauty, in comparison to natural beauty, and apply my interpretation of free harmony to the explanation of *aesthetic ideas*, a significant component of Kant's conception of art. Based on this discussion, I will propose an explanation of artistic ugliness. My main objective is to give a solution to the recurrent problem of ugliness in art, namely, how artistic ugliness, experienced through the feeling of displeasure, can be valuable after all, as is evident in much contemporary art.

5.1 The Solution to Problems with Judgments of Ugliness in Kant's Aesthetics

In the first chapter I introduced two main objections to the idea that judgments of ugliness are possible in Kantian aesthetics. The first objection was made by David Shier (1998), who claimed that the accommodation of the state of mind required for judgments of ugliness is inconsistent with Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste. The second objection was made by Paul Guyer (2005a) who claimed that the state of mind required for judgments of ugliness is not merely inconsistent with Kant's argument for the universality of judgments of taste, but also with his epistemological theory. Based on my interpretation of the concept of free harmony, I will now propose a solution to these problems, beginning with Shier's argument.

In the third *Critique*, Kant offers three versions of the argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste, in §9, §21 and §38, the last being the official version of the argument, entitled 'Deduction of judgments of taste'. Shier's objection against judgments of ugliness is based on Kant's argument in §9, where it appears that Kant grounds the universality of judgments of taste on the premise that what is universally communicable is only the *state of mind required for cognition*, that is, the state of mind in which cognitive powers are in harmony. But a harmonious state of mind is identified with pleasure alone; hence, there is no possibility to accommodate a universally communicable state of mind required for displeasure and ugliness.

In §38, however, Kant offers an argument that allows for the possibility of the universal validity of judgments of ugliness. The argument appears to be compatible with Kant's doctrine of the principle of reflective judgments that he discusses in the *Introduction*. Accordingly, what is universally communicable is not only determinate cognition or the state of mind required for determinate cognition, but also our ability of reflective judging, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, is necessary for empirical concept acquisition, and therefore for the possibility to have cognitions in the first place. Kant's full argumentation in §38 is 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 5:290, p. 170)

The first premise states that what pleases in judgments of taste is the *mere form* of the object, that is, the combination of sense data not determined by concepts of the understanding. Accordingly, pleasure is the result of the subjective purposiveness

(or free harmony) of the form of the object for the power of judgment. In the second premise, Kant wants to find the rules of aesthetic judging and he claims that they refer to the *subjective conditions of the power of judgment in general*. This is a restatement of Kant's claim in §35 where he writes that: "the judgment of taste (. . .) is grounded only on the subjective formal condition of a judgment in general" (KU 5:287, p. 167). He further identifies these subjective conditions of judgment with the "faculty for judging itself, or the power of judgment" (ibid.). But from the two *Introductions* we know that this faculty for judging is nothing other than the reflective power of judgment: "The reflecting power of judgment is that which is also called the faculty of judging" (FI 20:211, p. 15). Accordingly, the rules of aesthetic judging refer to the reflective power of judgment, which is governed by the principle of the purposiveness of nature for our faculty of cognition. Hence, we can say that the rule of aesthetic judging is the principle of reflective judgment itself. In fact, this is explicitly confirmed by Kant's heading of §35, namely: "The principle of taste is the subjective principle of the power of judgment in general" (KU 5:286, p. 167).

After locating the rule of aesthetic judging in the principle of reflective judgments, Kant proceeds to legitimate the universal communicability of this principle or the subjective condition of the power of judgment, by claiming that it is required for the possibility of having cognitions in general. This claim is compatible with Kant's statement in the *Introduction*, namely that the principle of reflection is required for the possibility to acquire empirical concepts, hence, for the possibility of cognition in general. Finally, the fourth premise states that the agreement of representation with these subjective conditions must also be universally communicable. In other words, if we all judge from the universal standpoint (principle), then the result of such judgments must also be universally communicable. Hence, the conclusion of the argument: since the agreement of the representation with the principle produces pleasure, pleasure must be universally communicable.

Based on this argument, the possibility of a disharmonious state of mind can be accommodated. The argument states that what is universally communicable is not only the pleasurable *agreement* of the representation with the rule of aesthetic judging (free harmony), but the rules themselves. Hence, this allows for the possibility that the representation does not agree with the universally communicable conditions, and that such disagreement, perceived through the feeling of displeasure, is universally communicable. If we judge the object based on the universally communicable conditions, the feeling of displeasure, resulting from the disagreement of the representation with these conditions, is also universally valid. Hence, Kant's argument for the universal validity of judgments of taste can accommodate judgments of ugliness.

The second objection, raised by Paul Guyer (2005a), is that the disharmonious state of mind required for ugliness is epistemologically impossible. His argument is based on the premise that according to Kant's theory a conceptual harmony between imagination and understanding is required not only for cognition, but to have an experience of the object in the first place. But this means that it is impossible to be conscious of a representation in which cognitive faculties are in disharmony.

The possibility of the state of mind of sheer disharmony required for judgments of ugliness is therefore epistemologically precluded.

Guyer's conclusion logically follows if one identifies the harmonious activity between cognitive powers required for judgments of taste with the harmonious activity of determinate cognition (required for the basic awareness of the representation). However, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, this identification is mistaken. The harmony required for judgments of taste is one in which imagination is in free play, while the harmony required for perceptual experience is merely the basic requirement that the manifold can be brought under the concepts of the understanding, but in which the imagination is not necessarily determined by concepts. The interaction between the imagination and understanding, and the nature of the harmony differs in these different cases. Therefore, even though it is true that one cannot be conscious of a representation in which the cognitive powers are in complete disharmony (some conceptual harmony is required), it is not necessarily true that one cannot be conscious of free disharmony. The latter is a disharmony attained in mere reflection, whose very possibility depends on the harmony between the sensible manifold and the categories, applied to the object through general empirical concepts. The reflective judgment comes up additionally to determining judgments. We reflect on the perception, that is, on the object that has already been subsumed under some concepts, and therefore where conceptual harmony has already been attained. Accordingly, the possibility of aesthetic disharmony does not contradict Guyer's thesis of the necessity of conceptual harmony for perceptual experience. The object that is being aesthetically reflected on is already before our consciousness.

I claimed in the previous chapter that a reflective power of judgment is responsible for making new concepts to more completely systematize our experience of nature. In reflective judgments we take into consideration those aspects of the object that are not determined by any known concepts, and search for new concepts under which to subsume it. The acquisition of such yet unknown rules is governed by the principle of purposiveness. Based on Kant's explanation, this principle merely presupposes that we will find the rule for the combination of sensible manifold, and therefore experience harmony between the imagination and understanding. But this presupposition is not necessarily satisfied. It is therefore possible that the particular object has a combination of sensible manifold that resists unification, that is, has a combination for which no appropriate rule can be found. In other words, the particular object resists our idea of how it ought to be, namely, that it ought to fit the structure of our mind.

Kant's view of reflective judgments is consistent with the possibility of reflective disharmony, because in reflective judgments we are concerned with the unification of those individual and particular aspects of nature that are left undetermined by pure concepts. Since these specific empirical aspects of objects are not determined by pure concepts, they do not necessarily find their agreement with our understanding. Even though our reflection on these aspects is not blind, but guided by the transcendental presupposition of the principle of purposiveness, this principle need not be satisfied in all cases. This principle merely claims that we expect to find

unity among objects, that is, to be able to discern some pattern between seemingly disparate particulars, and to derive a rule from their comparison, and not that we will actually find it. There is then a possibility to experience a disharmony between free imagination and understanding.

Kant explains the possibility of such disharmony in his description of logical reflective judgments. To recall, he writes that if we come across a particular that resists systematization, and cannot be unified under a concept, displeasure is produced. In logical reflective judgments, displeasure is felt in our inability to find the appropriate concept for different heterogeneous individuals. It is their relation that resists our idea of purposiveness in its logical employment (to locate the particular in the system of nature). Logical purposiveness (or contra-purposiveness) does not however imply aesthetic purposiveness (or contra-purposiveness). The subject of an aesthetic reflective judgment is a singular representation and the individual aspects of the object that are not entailed in the concept. That is, the subject of taste is, as Kant writes: “unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept” (KU 5:317, p. 195). Accordingly, it is the additional content, distinctive for the particular object alone, that is aesthetically evaluated. Beauty or ugliness is the experience of the individual form itself as compared with the principle of purposiveness, independent of the object’s comparison to others. The aesthetic feeling of displeasure is the result of the disagreement between the particular aspects of the object and the principle of purposiveness.

Since aesthetic purposiveness is independent of logical purposiveness, the beauty or ugliness of an object does not depend on the concept of the natural kind to which it belongs. For this reason, one can have a cognition of an object, that is, one can recognize a particular object, say an animal called *fangtooth* as belonging to the species called *Anoplogaster cornuta*, yet still find the animal utterly displeasing and ugly. This shows that the *fangtooth* is not aesthetically displeasing due to the disagreement with the natural kind to which it belongs. This particular animal may be a perfect specimen of its kind, that is, it can satisfy all the conditions required for an object to belong to this kind, yet still be ugly. The *fangtooth* is judged to be one of the most grotesque sea creatures by virtue of the particular configuration of its general features. It is in virtue of the distinctive combination of the *fangtooth*’s general features shared by all members of this natural kind (black body, disproportionately large head, wide open jaw and long, sharp teeth), that displeasure is occasioned. The aesthetic feeling of displeasure is a perennial reminder that an object’s individual form is not suitable for us and our cognitive abilities.

5.2 The Sublime and the Ugly

In §23 Kant introduces a different kind of aesthetic reflective judgment, that is, a judgment of the sublime. He writes that a judgment of the sublime is similar to a judgment of the beautiful in that it is a disinterested judgment, which *pleases*

independently of determinate concepts and with a universal validity. On the other hand, a judgment of the sublime is also similar to a judgment of ugliness in that it depends on the feeling of *displeasure*, because it “appear[s] in its form to be contrapurposive for our power of judgment, unsuitable for our faculty of presentation, and as it were doing violence to our imagination” (KU 5:245, p. 129).

Yet, in comparison to ugliness, the feeling of displeasure in the sublime is merely of a transitory nature. Namely, Kant claims that the subjective contrapurposiveness of the sublime reveals a subjective purposive relationship between imagination and *reason* which results in the feeling of pleasure (KU 5:257, p. 141). Accordingly, both the sublime and the ugly depend on the feeling of displeasure due to the contrapurposiveness of the form of the object for the power of judgment, yet, while contrapurposiveness of the sublime invokes the faculty of reason, therefore resulting in a positive aesthetic reaction, in the ugly no such appeal to the faculty of reason occurs and a judgment ends in a feeling of displeasure alone. Kant's explanation of the sublime raises the question as to why it is the case that even though both sublime and ugly objects are ill-adapted to our cognitive abilities, producing thereby the feeling of displeasure, yet that we should after all feel pleasure in the former, while not in the latter.

Unfortunately, Kant does not offer an answer to this question. The same can be said about the contemporary discussions, which are primarily concerned with clarifying the distinction between the sublime and beauty, and little attention is given to Kant's notion of the sublime in contrast to ugliness. This is not surprising considering that ugliness in Kant's aesthetics is itself considered a problematic aesthetic notion, if at all epistemologically possible, and therefore no separate discussion on clarifying the distinction between the sublimity and ugliness seems to be required. This indeed is the view of Herman Parret (2011, p. 30) who argues that ugliness is something that comes over and above the sublime “as radically unconceivable and ungraspable by our representational faculties and our imagination.”

An exception to such views is an account given by Theodore Gracyk (1986). According to his position both sublime and ugliness are aesthetic responses to formless objects (i.e. objects that we are unable to perceive as a unified whole), yet that displeasure of formlessness in the sublime, but not in the ugly is eventually resolved by the appeal to the ideas of reason, resulting in the feeling of pleasure: “judgments of sublimity are a method of compensating for formlessness (. . .) cases where no such compensation occurs are simply judged as cases of ugliness” (1986, p. 52). Gracyk's explanation of ugliness as being part of the sublime experience is not satisfactory, since it fails to give a clear explanation as to why in particular the contrapurposiveness of the sublime resorts to reason while no such invocation of reason occurs in judgments of ugliness. Furthermore, it follows from his account that sublimity appears to consist of a temporal sequence of two separate feelings, displeasure of ugliness and pleasure of reason, while Kant presented the feeling of the sublime as a rather single and complex feeling, namely the one of respect.

Even though Kant does not offer a clear distinction between ugliness and sublimity, his analysis of the notion of the sublime in comparison to beauty nevertheless

indicates that he considered sublimity to be a theoretically and phenomenologically different aesthetic notion than ugliness. I will now examine his analysis of the sublime in comparison to beauty, and on the basis of this explain the distinction between sublimity and ugliness.

According to Kant, the sublime is occasioned by objects exhibiting a certain kind of greatness, either in *size* or in *power*. When the object is overwhelming in size, then the experience is called *mathematically sublime*. For example, the enormous structure of the pyramids in Egypt, immense Himalayan mountain massifs and massive glaciers are typical mathematically sublime objects since they are too vast and difficult for us to perceive them all at once. But when the object is overwhelming in physical power, thereby occasioning in us the feeling of danger, then the experience is called *dynamically sublime*. Erupting volcanos, devastating hurricanes, extreme ocean storms are typical dynamically sublime objects because their physical power is too great for us to resist.

One can notice that what both types of sublime objects have in common is the ability to endanger, in one way or another, the phenomenal side of our being. Objects overwhelming in size endanger our sensible cognition (the object is too vast for our imagination to comprehend it) and objects overwhelming in physical power threaten our physical existence. In both case the perceptual and imaginative failure evokes in us the idea of limitlessness of the object (the limitlessness of size in the mathematical sublime and of the destructive and devastating power of nature in the dynamical sublime).

This idea of limitlessness of the object is evoked in us due to the limited capacity of our imagination. According to Kant's theory of the threefold synthesis, the imagination performs two kinds of acts, that is, *apprehension*, or gathering together the manifold of intuition, and *reproduction*, or keeping in mind the apprehended sense impressions. Kant writes in §26 that while apprehension can go on infinitely, the comprehension, or synthesis of reproduction, on the other hand, is limited.¹ Thus, it happens in the perception of a particularly vast object that:

...comprehension becomes ever more difficult the further apprehension advances, and soon reaches its maximum, namely the aesthetically greatest basic measure for the estimation of magnitude. For when apprehension has gone so far that the partial representations of the intuition of the senses that were apprehended first already begin to fade in the imagination as the latter proceeds on to the apprehension of further ones, then it loses on one side as much as it gains on the other, and there is in the comprehension a greatest point beyond which it cannot go. (KU 5:252, p. 135)

In other words, the sheer size (or power) of the object, say of the impressive Himalayan mountains, prevents the imagination from successfully reproducing or keeping in mind the succession of apprehended sense impressions (we cannot comprehend in one intuition all the parts and details of the vast mountain) and

¹I take it that acts of apprehension and comprehension are identical to acts of the synthesis of apprehension and synthesis of reproduction that Kant distinguishes in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This identification has also been suggested by Kirk Pillow (2003, p. 74).

therefore imagination fails to present the sensible manifold as a coherent and unified whole. It is suggested accordingly that it is only certain kinds of objects, that is, objects that exceed the imagination's capacity for comprehension (such as objects of great size and power), that can occasion the experience of the sublime: "the sublime [. . .] is to be found in a formless object insofar as limitlessness is represented in it" (KU 5:244, p. 128).

Kant writes, that perceiving an object as formless or limitless refers to an *aesthetic* estimation of the size (or power) of the object, rather than to a *logical or conceptual* estimation. That is, the object appears to be formless "in mere intuition (measured by eye)" (KU 5:251, p. 134). In other words, the *Himalayan Mountains* appear limitless merely in a direct perception, as its size strikes our eyes, but not in a logical estimation of its size, since we can always measure it by choosing an appropriate unit. The same can be said for objects that are typical examples of formlessness such as the starry sky. Even though it is perceptually impossible to comprehend the size of the starry sky, a logical calculation of its size is nevertheless possible. Similar is the case of the dynamically sublime objects. We can always measure the power of natural objects, say, the magnitude of an earthquake on the Richter scale, or the strength of the hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane scale. Thus nothing, as Kant concludes: "can be given in nature, however great it may be judged to be by us, which could not, considered in another relation, be diminished down to the infinitely small" (KU 5:250, p. 134).

In a logical estimation of the size (or the power) of the object the imagination and understanding stand in a harmonious relation. The imagination successfully synthesizes the sensible manifold as determined by the numerical concepts of the understanding. Logical judgment is a determinate judgment, governed by determinate concepts of the understanding, and thus no feeling of pleasure or displeasure will be occasioned. As I argued in the previous chapter, the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in finding the purposiveness or contrapurposiveness occurs only in an aesthetic reflective judgment that is not governed by determinate concepts. But what is not governed by a determinate concept of a number is an aesthetic estimation of the size (or power) of the object. Hence, only in an aesthetic estimation of the size (or power) of the object can the feeling of the sublime be occasioned. In an aesthetic estimation of the size (or power) of the object, imagination is in free play because it is not determined by concepts of the understanding. In its freedom, the imagination attempts to synthesize the sensible manifold, yet, because imagination can comprehend only a certain degree of apprehended elements, this is a task of the imagination that is doomed to fail. Because imagination in its freedom fails to synthesize the sensible manifold and present it as a unified whole, the object's form appears to be subjectively contrapurposive for the power of judgment, producing thereby the feeling of displeasure.

The task of the free imagination to synthesize the sensible manifold in one intuition is, however, a task given to it by the *faculty of reason*:

the mind hears in itself the voice of reason, which requires totality for all given magnitudes, even for those that can never be entirely apprehended although they are (in the sensible representation) judged as entirely given, hence comprehension in one intuition, and it

demands a presentation for all members of a progressively increasing numerical series, and does not exempt from this requirement even the infinite (space and past time), but rather makes it unavoidable for us to think of it (in the judgment of common reason) as given entirely (in its totality). (KU 5:254, p. 138)

This means that the failure of imagination to comprehend the sensible manifold as a totality is a failure of imagination to satisfy the task given to it by the faculty of reason. It is disharmony between *imagination and reason* that produces the displeasure felt in the sublime.

Yet, the fact that imagination fails to satisfy the task given to it by reason (i.e. to sensibly present the rational idea of the infinite size and power), on the other hand, indicates the existence of the supersensible faculty of the mind (i.e. the faculty of reason): “But even to be able to think the given infinite without contradiction requires a faculty in the human mind that is itself supersensible” (KU 5:254, p. 138). The awareness of the existence of such a supersensible faculty of the mind produces in us the feeling of intense pleasure:

What is excessive for the imagination (to which it is driven in the apprehension of the intuition) is as it were an abyss, in which it fears to lose itself, yet for reason’s idea of the supersensible to produce such an effort of the imagination is not excessive but lawful, hence it is precisely as attractive as it was repulsive for mere sensibility. (KU 5:258, pp. 141–142)

Kant identifies the concurring experience of displeasure and pleasure in the sublime with the feeling of respect: “The feeling of the inadequacy of our capacity for the attainment of an idea that is a law for us is respect” (KU 5:257, p. 140). The sublime is a feeling of inadequacy of our physical and sensible nature, yet at the same time a recognition of the value of reason and our ability to think beyond the sensibly given. In the mathematically sublime, we value the theoretical part of our reason, the idea of the absolute unity “which has that very infinity under itself as a unit against which everything in nature is small” (KU 5:261, p. 145). In the dynamically sublime we value the practical part of our reason, the elevating idea of our moral freedom and the ability “to soar above certain obstacles of sensibility by means of moral principles” (KU 5: 271, p. 153). The sight of an erupting volcano arouses in us the feeling of terror and fear due to our inability to control the physical force of nature. The feeling of fear leads us to the negative feeling value realization that as physical beings we are imperfect, helpless and subjected to merciless forces of nature. But it is this realization that also awakens in us the idea of a moral supremacy over nature, namely, that in spite of our physical vulnerability we stand morally firm against the greatest power of nature. Our ability to think of ourselves as morally independent of nature and thereby able to surpass our fears of mortality, sickness, and other negative aspects tied to our physical nature, produces in us a feeling of respect for ourselves as rational and moral beings.

One can see that in contrast to beauty and ugliness, sublimity is not attributed to the object itself, but rather to the power of our mind. The object is merely used for

the activation of the faculty of reason.² The feeling of the sublime is the feeling of the recognition of the supremacy of our reason over our sensible nature and accordingly it is a feeling of respect

... for our own vocation, which we show to an object in nature through a certain subreption (substitution of a respect for the object instead of for the idea of humanity in our subject), which as it were makes intuitable the superiority of the rational vocation of our cognitive faculty over the greatest faculty of sensibility. (KU 5:257, p. 141)

In other words, while beauty reveals the purposiveness of the *object* for our cognitive abilities (of imagination and understanding), the sublime, on the other hand, reveals the purposiveness of the *subject* for the faculty of theoretical and practical reason and its supersensible ideas of infinity and freedom respectively. As Kant writes,

The susceptibility to a pleasure from reflection on the form of things (of nature as well as art), however, indicates not only a purposiveness of objects in relation to the reflecting power of judgment, in accordance with the concept of nature, in the subject, but also, conversely, one of the subject, due to the concept of freedom, with regard to the objects, concerning their form or even their lack of form. (KU 5:192, p. 78)

However, it is not merely the subjective purposiveness of the judging subject that the sublime reveals. Recall that the awareness of the idea of the supersensible is necessitated by the imagination's inability to satisfy the task of the faculty of reason, that is, to present the rational idea of infinity (infinite size and power). As Kant explains, we feel frustrated in our inability to comprehend the size (or power) of the given object, precisely because we have an idea of a totality for 'all given magnitudes.' Since this idea cannot be empirically encountered (otherwise we would be able to perceptually grasp it), this indicates that we must have a supersensible faculty of the mind from which the idea of infinity arises. Accordingly, it is the disagreement between the imagination and faculty of reason that reveals the presence of reason and which brings with it the feeling of pleasure:

The feeling of the sublime is thus a feeling of displeasure from the inadequacy of the imagination (...) and a pleasure that is thereby aroused at the same time from the correspondence of this very judgment of the inadequacy of the greatest sensible faculty in comparison with ideas of reason. (KU 5:257, p. 141)

The faculty of reason is present in the feeling of displeasure (in fact, it is precisely because of its presence that imagination reveals itself as inadequate); it is merely that this displeasure reveals its existence: "imagination and reason produce subjective purposiveness through their conflict" (KU 5:258, p. 142). The very act

²The fact that sublimity is attributed to subjects rather than objects does not exclude the importance of the object for the sublime, as it has been suggested by some of Kant's commentators. For example Clewis (2010, pp. 167–168) argues that what occasion the experience of the sublime is the rational ideas. However, if it is merely rational ideas that invoke the sublime, then it is difficult to explain the source of the feeling of displeasure in the sublime. The object is required for the experience of perceptual and imaginative failure based on which the ideas of reason are revealed. The essential role of the object for the sublime is also emphasized by Deligiorgi (2014).

of disagreement between imagination and reason is an act of their agreement. Thus, the sublime does not merely reveal the purposiveness of the judging subject, but also his or her contrapurposiveness.

One can see that the feeling of displeasure and pleasure in the sublime are intrinsically connected. They have the same source and one cannot separate them. The feeling of the sublime is not an independent feeling of pain and positive pleasure, but rather pleasure is present in displeasure. That is, the same contrapurposiveness that gives rise to displeasure also gives rise to the feeling of pleasure. Kant explains the feeling of the sublime as a “vibration, i.e., to a rapidly alternating repulsion from and attraction to one and the same object” (KU 5:258, pp. 141–142), that is, as an alternation from the feeling of lost on one hand and the feeling of gain on the other. Experience of the sublime is an experience of a negative pleasure (KU 5:245, p. 129).

On the other hand, displeasure of ugliness is the result of disharmony between the imagination and the faculty of understanding. In this relation, there is no failure of the imagination, rather it is the case that sensible manifold successfully apprehended by the imagination conflicts with the understanding and its need to introduce order and unity in our experience of the world. Thus, in judgments of ugliness it is the form (combination of sensible manifold) of the object that is contrapurposive for the power of judgment. After all, Kant writes that the subject of a judgment of taste is the form of the object. But if it is the form of the object that causes contrapurposiveness, then this implies that imagination must have been able to successfully comprehend the form of an ugly object and it is the form itself, that is, the comprehended sensible manifold that disagrees with the understanding. What we perceive as displeasing is the relationship between the imagination and understanding as generated by the particular form of the object.

But the subject of the sublime reflection is a “formless and nonpurposive object” (KU 5:280, p. 161). Sublime objects are too great in size (or the power) for the imagination to comprehend all the parts of the object into a unified whole. Hence, there is no determinate form to be judged according to the principle of purposiveness of nature, that is, there is no form to be compared with our cognitive abilities. As Derrida (1987, p. 131) nicely puts it, the sublime “cannot inhabit any sensible form.” And if the sublime cannot inhabit any sensible form, then *a fortiori* the sublime cannot be judged according to the principle of taste. In other words, the sublime fails to agree (or disagree) with the principle of purposiveness. That is, the sublime object resists all subsumption under the principle of purposiveness of nature.³

It is true that the fact that imagination fails to successfully comprehend the form of the object does not, however, mean that the object itself must be formless, but rather that it merely *appears* formless and limitless when viewed from a certain perspective. Kant writes that to experience sublimity certain physical distance is required:

... in order to get the full emotional effect of the magnitude (...) one must neither come too close to them nor be too far away. For in the latter case, the parts that are apprehended (the

³Similar suggestion has been made by Gasche (2003, p. 125).

stones piled on top of one another) are represented only obscurely, and their representation has no effect on the aesthetic judgment of the subject. In the former case, however, the eye requires some time to complete its apprehension from the base level to the apex, but during this time the former always partly fades before the imagination has taken in the latter, and the comprehension is never complete. (5:252, p. 136)

For example, the marvelous structure of Taj Mahal occasions the experience of sublime only if we stand too close to it, from which our perceptual comprehension is limited. But if we are too removed from it then, while we can perceptually grasp the object, the perception of particular elements is nevertheless obscured and thus no aesthetic experience can be occasioned. The case is similar with the dynamically sublime objects. We must be close to the physically threatening object so that we feel endangered by it, yet removed enough so that we do not experience danger as real. If we are too close to, say an erupting volcano, then we are afraid of it and one who is afraid “flees from the sight of an object that instills alarm in him, and it is impossible to find satisfaction in a terror that is seriously intended” (KU 5:260, p. 144). But if we are too removed from it, then we do not find the object physically powerful and fearful, and thus no opportunity for sublime reflection can be elicited.

The requirement of physical distance for the occurrence of sublimity allows for the possibility that one and the same object can be judged both as sublime and as beautiful (or ugly). This is in fact a common occurrence. For example, if one enters the southern gate to the Taj Mahal, thereby having a complete and vivid view of this vast marble structure, then one will certainly be struck by its beauty. Yet, as one gets closer to the building the quality of one's aesthetic experience may undergo transition, from the vitalizing and spellbinding feeling of its beauty to the dignity and grandeur of the sublime. Change of a perspective on an object results in a change of one's aesthetic experience.⁴

The fact that one and the same object can give rise to both experience of beauty (or ugliness) and the sublime shows that the subject of a judgment of taste and of the sublime differs in each of these cases, namely, the form and the representation of formlessness respectively. The feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) in beauty (or ugliness) is the result of the agreement (or disagreement) of the object with our cognitive abilities. That displeasure in ugliness is the result of the failure of the object to accord with our cognitive abilities is clearly evident in our experience of ugly objects. When we find an object ugly, we tend to ascribe the cause of the feeling of displeasure not to our inability to comprehend the object, but rather to the object itself and its failure to accord with us and our aesthetic sense. We simply turn away from an ugly object.

But displeasure of the sublime resides in the subject's inadequacy to grasp the sensible manifold and in his realizations that as a phenomenal being he is limited. Such an explanation is hinted by Kant in the following passage:

⁴For an interesting discussion on the aspect changes of the sublime see: Myska (2002), pp. 116–141).

For the beautiful in nature we must seek a ground outside ourselves, but for the sublime merely one in ourselves and in the way of thinking that introduces sublimity into the representation of the former. (KU 5:246, p. 130)

The sublime does not reveal anything about phenomenal nature but rather it forces us to resort to ourselves, to the noumenal side of our nature. The sublime reveals something about the judging subject, namely that as a phenomenal being he is insignificant in comparison to nature, yet that he also possess a faculty of the mind that is independent of nature and according to which the nature itself is considered as embarrassingly small. The sublime compels us to look for the purposiveness in the same place from which its contrapurposiveness is derived, that is, in us, rather than from outside us, as ugliness does. Because ugliness is not experienced as the indicator of our own cognitive limitations, there is also no need to resort to the faculty of reason in order to compensate for feelings of inadequacy by appealing to the idea of our rational and moral supremacy.

To conclude, ugliness and sublime are theoretically and phenomenologically distinct aesthetic categories. The cause of the displeasure in the sublime and ugliness is different. It is the awareness of the inadequacy of our sensible cognition that we experience as displeasing in the sublime, while displeasure of ugliness is the result of the inadequacy of the object to agree with our cognitive faculties. While disharmony in ugliness reveals *contrapurposiveness of the object*, disharmony in the sublime reveals *contrapurposiveness of the subject*, which on the other hand reveals the value of reason and our ability to think beyond the sensibly given.

Furthermore, both ugliness and the sublime have their own phenomenological feeling tonalities. An object can be more or less ugly, depending on the degree of disharmony between the imagination and understanding. For example, the *African Marabou Stork* is less displeasing than the *Angler fish*, since the perceptual features in the latter seem more chaotically invasive and obtrusive than in the former. Likewise, an object can be more or less sublime depending on the object's size or physical power. That is, the feeling of respect for our own supersensible faculty of reason is much greater when encountering the immenseness of *Himalayan Mountains* than the *Taj Mahal*.⁵ Even though Kant does not write about the degrees of sublimity, this idea is implied in the following passage:

⁵ Among contemporary writers there is an ongoing debate regarding the status of the sublime in art and artifacts. On one hand there are those who argue that no sublimity can be encountered in art. Roughly, there are two main arguments for such a view. One argument emphasizes the importance of the perceptual criteria of the sublime, namely that sublime can be occasioned only by objects that are overwhelming in size and power, producing thereby a feeling of our phenomenal insignificance. But since art works do not have such properties – they have defined limits and we do not find them threatening in any way, they do not have the capacity to produce the feeling of sublime (Guyer 1996, p. 264; Brady 2013, pp. 119–146). The second argument depends on Kant's claim that in order to appreciate an art work, one must take into account the purpose of an art work. But pure judgments of sublime are aesthetic judgments (product of the free play of faculties) and this means that they must have no concept of a purpose as its determining ground. Thus, art works cannot give

that which, without any rationalizing, merely in apprehension, excites in us the feeling of the sublime, may to be sure appear in its form to be contrapurposive for our power of judgment, unsuitable for our faculty of presentation, and as it were doing violence to our imagination, but is nevertheless judged all the more sublime for that. (KU 5:245, p. 129)

The greater the object's size or its physical power, the more difficult it is for our imagination to aesthetically comprehend the object and accordingly the more sublime our experience of the object is.

Also both ugliness and the sublime have their own opposites. While opposite of ugliness is the beautiful, the paradigmatic negative aesthetic concept that stands in opposition to the sublime is the *ridiculousness*.⁶ As Kant writes, "Nothing is so opposed to the beautiful as the disgusting, just as nothing sinks more deeply beneath the sublime than the ridiculous" (Beob 2:233, p. 40). Kant does not write about the concept of ridiculousness in the third *Critique*, but I believe that his explanation of sublimity can give us some insight into the nature of the ridiculousness. In short, my view is that the experience of the ridiculous, as well as the sublime, resides in the subject's recognition of its own division between two extremes, that is, between the finite, phenomenal and sensuous side, and the infinite, noumenal and rational side of our being. The difference is that in the experience of the sublime, it is the rational side, that is, the reason, that dominates, the recognition of which is experienced through a feeling of respect and awe. In the experience of the ridiculous, however, it is the finite, the sensuous and the smallness of a human character that dominate and which result in the underwhelming feeling of insignificance and nonsense. In both cases, an appeal to the faculty of reason is made. While the sublime agrees with the faculty of reason, the ridiculous on the other hand rejects and contradicts it. The sublime celebrates the victory of the noumena and of the infinite, while the ridiculous mourns its fall.

The experience of the ridiculousness is nicely exhibited in John Water's movie *Pink Flamingos* (1972). The movie depicts various objects, characters and situations that celebrate the sensuous, the marginal and the violation of moral and social standards to which we respond with a feeling of displeasure. What we find displeasing in such a presentation is the recognition of the abandonment of the noumenal subjectivity that the faculty of reason imposes on us in our reflection on the world. In light of such imposition, the sensuous and the phenomenal necessary look insignificant and disappointing. However, precisely for the same reason that

an experience of pure sublimity. At best, they can leave open the possibility of impure judgments of artistic sublime (Abaci 2008, pp. 246–247). On the other hand, they are those who argue for the possibility of artistic sublimity. The argument for their view depends on Kant's claim that sublimity concerns ideas of reason rather than external objects (KU 5:245, p. 129). This presumably implies that sublimity is primarily a mental activity which does not require the experience of perceptual failure. The ideas of reason, especially moral ideas are sufficient to incite the sublime. But ideas of reason can be expressed through an art work, thus art works can trigger experience of the sublime (Crowther 1989, pp. 152–174; Pillow 2003, pp. 67–116; Wicks 1995, pp. 189–193; Clewis 2009, pp. 117–125; Myska 2002, pp. 253–262).

⁶This has also been noted, but not further developed by Christian Strub (1989, p. 423).

the ridiculous displeases us, it also threatens us, because the abandonment of reason anticipates the end of the purpose and meaning in life. It is this latter moment, the recognition of purposelessness inherent in the abandonment of reason that in the end prevails and evokes laughter. The laughter inherent in the ridiculous is a defense mechanism against the thread of purposelessness that the loss of reason invokes.

5.3 The Application of the Concept of Free Harmony to Fine Art

So far, I have been discussing Kant's general theory of beauty (and ugliness), without discriminating between natural objects and art works, and considering whether this distinction implies a difference in their aesthetic appreciation. At first sight, this seems to be true for many cases, in view of the fact that the same object can be judged naturally ugly, yet artistically beautiful. For example, Modigliani's portraits of female faces are beautiful, even though they have disproportionate features with long necks, thin noses, blank eyes and small lips, which we would ordinarily find displeasing in a real human. This distinction does not, however, imply that Kant holds two different conceptions of beauty.⁷ He writes that natural and artistic beauty both depend on the same standard, that is, on the free harmony between cognitive powers: "whether it is the beauty of nature or of art that is at issue: that is beautiful which pleases in the mere judging (neither in sensation nor through a concept)" (KU 5:306, p. 185). The judgment of artistic beauty, Kant claims, is "a mere consequence of the same principles which ground the judgment of natural beauty" (KU 20:251, p. 50). And that is the principle of the reflective power of judgment: "aesthetic art, as beautiful art, is one that has the reflecting power of judgment [. . .] as its standard" (KU 5:306, p. 185).

The difference in aesthetic appreciation of Modigliani portraits and an actual human being is based on the distinction between the concepts of fine and natural objects. In judging artistic beauty, Kant writes "one must be aware that it is art, and not nature" (KU 5:306, p. 185). In judging artistic beauty we must take into account the purpose of the object (what it ought to be) and hence "the perfection of the thing will also have to be taken into account, which is not even a question in the judging of a natural beauty (as such)" (KU 5:311, p. 190).

The distinction between artistic and natural beauty comes down to Kant's distinction between *adherent beauty* (which presupposes the concept of the purpose) and *free beauty* (which does not presuppose the concept of a purpose), respectively. In judging artistic beauty, it is not only the form itself that is taken into account, but the purpose that governs the creation of the work as well. Prima facie, the

⁷The opposite view has been suggested by Gotshalk (1992). He claims that Kant holds formalist theory of natural beauty and expressionistic theory of artistic beauty.

notion of adherent beauty seems problematic, considering that for Kant beauty is purposiveness without purpose (or free harmony).⁸ That is, harmony in the given object must be attained freely, without being determined by the concept of the purpose with which the object was produced. Kant writes that to judge the object based on the concept of a purpose is to make a judgment of perfection, rather than one of taste (KU 5:241, p. 125).

On my view, however, the dependence of artistic beauty on the concept of a purpose does not preclude the possibility of free harmony. As I claimed in the previous chapter, all judgments of taste depend on the concept of the object, but this is not sufficient to determine the beauty of the object. Similarly, judgments of adherent beauty depend on the concept of the purpose with which the object is created, but this is also not a sufficient criterion for adherent beauty. Even though the concept of the purpose restricts the free play of imagination to some degree, it does not restrict the harmony (or disharmony) between the free imagination and the understanding.⁹ Let me elucidate.

For Kant, objects of adherent beauty are works of art and artifacts, which are made with an aim to perform a function of some sort. For such objects, the concept of the object determines their purpose (what they ought to be). In so far as the concept determines the purpose of the object, it determines the rules for the combination of the manifold (the form of the object). In other words, the concept of the object restrains the free play of imagination. For example, a vase is an object made with the purpose to hold cut flowers. In order to judge the beauty of a vase, we must first take into account what the vase is and this means to take into account its purpose. In order for the object to be a vase, it must fulfill its purpose in the first place. Accordingly, the form of the vase is determined by the purpose it is supposed to fulfill, that is, its form must be in accordance with its purpose. However, the concept of the purpose does not preclude the free play of imagination completely and therefore it does not preclude free harmony (or disharmony). There are numerous different forms that satisfy the purpose of the vase, yet not all of them are beautiful. The beauty (or ugliness) of a vase is not determined by the satisfaction of the purpose, even though it depends on it. Within the constraint of the purpose, the imagination has an ability to play freely and therefore allows for the possibility of free harmony (or disharmony). The satisfaction of the purpose of the vase is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition of its beauty (or ugliness).¹⁰

As opposed to artworks and artifacts, natural objects are objects of free beauty, which "are not attached to a determinate object in accordance with concepts regarding its end" (KU 5:229, p. 114). The concept of the flower does not determine its purpose (we do not know what a flower ought to be, but just what it is, and

⁸For a detailed discussion of this problem see also Schaper (2003, pp. 101–120) and Allison (2001, pp. 139–143).

⁹Similar interpretations of adherent beauty, but with different arguments, have also been suggested by Allison (2001, pp. 138–143); Guyer (2002b); Rueger (2008a); Stecker (1987).

¹⁰This proposal has also been suggested by Guyer (2002a, p. 448).

although we now know that flowers have a biological function as the plant's organs of reproduction, this purpose is not a necessary component of our concept of a flower, since flowers were known and categorized prior to our identification of this function), and therefore it does not determine the rules for the manifold – the imagination is completely free.

In sum, the difference between free and adherent beauty depends on the difference between the kinds of objects that are aesthetically judged. In order to give an appropriate aesthetic judgment regarding a certain object, we must take into account what the object really is. If the object is a vase, then we must take into account what the vase truly is, that is, an object whose purpose is to hold cut flowers. Judging the beauty of the vase therefore presupposes the knowledge of the vase's purpose which determines its existence as a vase. We may judge the beauty of the vase independently of the knowledge of its purpose, but then our aesthetic judgment of the vase is not an appropriate one, since we do not judge the object as it actually is. The consideration of the purpose of the object restricts the range of the appropriate forms, that is, it restricts the freedom of the play of imagination, but it does not preclude it completely. And as long as in the apprehension of a given object the imagination can be free to some extent, the genuine judgment of taste, based on free harmony (or disharmony) can be given.

In fact, as Kant noticed, even though a given object has been created for some purpose, its beauty can be almost as free as in the case of natural objects, because for some objects “the ends are not adequately determined and fixed by their concept” (KU 5:233, p. 117). Kant gives an example of the beauty of a home. The beauty of a home depends on the concept of its purpose (it ought to be a building meant for dwelling), hence it is an adherent beauty. But since its purpose is not sufficiently determined, also the rule for the combination of the manifold is indeterminate. Hence, the concept of a purpose does not restrict the freedom of the imagination, and the latter can play almost as freely as in the case of natural objects. As I will show, this is particularly the case for objects of fine art.

Artistic beauty presupposes the concept of a purpose and it is therefore beauty of the adherent kind: “For something in it must be thought of as an end, otherwise one cannot ascribe its product to any art at all; it would be a mere product of chance” (KU 5:310, p. 188). That is, the organizational structure of an art work is not accidental, but is made in accordance with a certain purpose in the artist's mind. This means that there are certain rules that govern the artist in creating his work: “For 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, p. 186).

The purposes of art works cannot be reduced to a single concept; rather, they are created with numerous purposes in mind. The artist may intend to express a certain emotion, represent certain ideas and concepts, express a political and social commentary, capture a certain event, or merely exercise free imagination in the play of colors and forms (abstract art). One may notice that, in comparison to those artifacts that have a practical function, the purposes of art are such for

which no determinate rules can be given. For example, an artist's purpose may be to represent a certain idea, such as an idea of loneliness and the complexity of human existence (consider Ingmar Bergman's movie *Cries and Whispers*, 1972). Yet, one does not know what the idea of loneliness ought to look like, that is, one does not have an appropriate schema for such an idea (in comparison to the schema of, say, a table). But if one does not have a schema for a certain idea, then one does not have determinate rules in accordance with which to produce a manifold for such idea. Accordingly, what is distinctive for artistic beauty is that in spite of its dependence on the concept of a purpose, the imagination can be almost as free as in the case of natural objects. That is, art works are *unlike* natural objects in that the former depend on the concept of a purpose (what the art work ought to be), yet, they are *like* natural objects in that no determinate rules for the combination of a sensible manifold can be given. This is, in a nutshell, the idea that Kant has in mind when he says that "art can only be called beautiful if we are aware that it is art and yet it looks to us like nature" (KU 5:306, p. 185). In other words, in order to judge the beauty of an art work, one must be aware that the object is an art work and that is created for some purpose, and therefore in accordance with some rules. Yet, these rules cannot be of a determinate kind: "It cannot be couched in a formula to serve as a precept, for then the judgment about the beautiful would be determinable in accordance with concepts" (KU 5:309, p. 188). The purposiveness in an art work must be free of rules, as if a product of a spontaneous and accidental activity.

Kant claims that the rules governing the creation of an art work must be the rules of a genius: "nature in the subject (and by means of the disposition of its faculties) must give the rule to art, i.e., beautiful art is possible only as a product of genius" (KU 5:307, p. 186). The artist's production of the work is not governed by any known rules; rather, he himself creates the rule for the combination of sensible manifold. In creating the new rule, the artist is governed by his nature alone, and this nature is the ability to exercise the free play of his cognitive powers: "genius is the exemplary originality of the natural endowment of a subject for the free use of his cognitive faculties" (KU 5:318, p. 195). Thus, even though artistic beauty depends on the concept of a purpose, its purposiveness is nevertheless the result of the same freedom in the play of cognitive powers, that one can recognize in judging the beauty of nature.

In order to create artistic beauty, two main abilities are required: the ability to exercise *free productive imagination* and the ability to create *harmony between free imagination and understanding* (that is, taste). An art work must have a form, which is not governed by any determinate rules (freely imaginative manifold), yet this form must exhibit free harmony. The artist's use of free imagination must be governed by taste in order not to result in excessiveness and disharmony. Kant implicitly distinguishes between representational and nonrepresentational art, and the object of aesthetic judgment differs in these different types of art works. Nonrepresentational art is mere "play of shapes (in space, mime, and dance), or mere play of sensations (in time)" (Ku 5:225, p. 110), that is, *mere form* of the object. Judging the beauty of

nonrepresentational art depends solely on its perceptual form, and on the immediate feeling of pleasure that this form, restrained by taste, occasions.¹¹

This restriction by taste is particularly well exhibited by Joan Miro's beautiful abstract work, called *The Gold of the Azure*, 1967. The painting gives the appearance of a free and spontaneous combination of irregular forms and colors, but also of a certain control and organization to which these elements seem to be subordinated and which makes the work aesthetically integrated and harmonious. The lack of taste in the use of free imagination, on the other hand, leads to incoherence, disorder and consequently to ugliness. For example, Asger Jorn's painting *The Garden of Eating Flowers* (1963) exhibits an uncontrolled, aggressive and frantic combination of colored brush strokes which do not seem to fit together. The use of colors, the movement of the brush strokes and their composition seem impulsive and accidental, yet without an underlying order. The painting appears chaotic, disintegrated and displeasing. Even though an unrestrained freely imaginative manifold can appear exciting and energetic, it can never be beautiful. Artistic ugliness, as this example illustrates, is an effect of the conflict between the productive (free) imagination and taste (reflective power of judgment).

In representational art, the object of an aesthetic judgment is not perceptual form alone. Representational art always represents or expresses something (an idea or a concept), which must be taken into account in order to judge its beauty appropriately. Nonetheless, the criterion of its beauty is not the subject depicted, but the manner with which the subject is depicted, that is, the artistic representation itself. Beautiful representation, Kant writes, is "the form of the presentation of a concept by means of which the latter is universally communicated" (KU 5:312, p. 191). Representational art is judged as beautiful if the form of the presentation of the concept itself is beautiful. Accordingly, even though one's appreciation (and production) of an art work is restrained by the concept of the object depicted, the depicted object does not determine the beauty of the art work. For the latter to occur, the artistic representation itself must not be governed by concepts, but by the free imagination in conformity with taste.

¹¹ Kant's position on the status of nonrepresentational art seems *prima facie* inconsistent. Namely, in §48 he claims that *all* artistic beauty presupposes the concept of a purpose and therefore is of adherent kind. Since nonrepresentational art is made with a certain purpose in artist's mind, namely to produce free play of cognitive powers and evoke certain aesthetic feelings, its beauty must also be of adherent kind. However, in §16 Kant writes that some nonrepresentational art, such as music without words, are free beauties. He holds similar position in §51 where he writes that "the decoration of rooms by means of wallpaper, moldings, and all kinds of beautiful furnishings, which merely serve to be viewed" are to be judged according to their form alone without the concept of the purpose (KU 5:323, p. 201). I believe there is a way to reconcile Kant's confusing position regarding the status of such kind of art. Namely, it is true that strictly speaking nonrepresentational art has adherent kind of beauty, since it is made with a certain purpose. However, since the purpose of such art is free or purposeless beauty itself, that is, to give satisfaction in virtue of its form alone, judging the beauty of such art is judging it freely. In other words, there is no difference between adherent and free aesthetic judgments in the case of nonrepresentational art.

To conclude, the experience of artistic beauty is not that different from the experience of natural beauty. They both depend on the experience of the free harmony between imagination and understanding, even though, at the most basic level, this experience is restricted by determinate concepts and ideas. The aesthetic appreciation of natural objects, say of a flower, depends on the concept of the flower, but which is insufficient to fully determine the combination of sensible manifold in a particular flower, and accordingly, the sensible manifold allows the imagination to be in free play. Similarly, artistic beauty depends on the concept of the purpose but this is insufficient to determine the particular artistic representation. Accordingly, the artistic representation can be in free play. In both cases, the freely imaginative manifold stimulates the aesthetic reflection and our ability to detect harmony (or disharmony) between free imagination and the understanding, resulting in a feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) respectively.

5.4 The Paradox of Ugliness in Art and Nature

Ugliness depends on the experience of the feeling of displeasure occasioned by an object. Displeasure, Kant writes, is the representational state of mind that is discomforting and to which we react by removing our attention away from it. And this *prima facie* implies that ugliness in art is an indicator of artistic failure. In recent years, however, and particularly with the development of modern art, this definition of artistic ugliness has been widely criticized. Namely, it has been pointed out that many art works are aesthetically displeasing and ugly, yet they may also be greatly appreciated (Kieran 1997). Moreover, an experience of ugliness as aesthetically interesting and fascinating is not distinctive for art works alone, but for natural objects as well, as pointed out by some contemporary writers on the aesthetics of nature (Brady 2010). Accordingly, it is required to give an explanation of ugliness that entails, as its necessary part, the explanation of its possible appeal.

Before I proceed to give a full explanation of ugliness in art, however, it is necessary to refine the distinction between *genuine artistic ugliness* and *artistic presentation of ugliness*. Namely, even though there have been some attempts in contemporary aesthetics to resolve the paradox of ugliness in art, these putative solutions are nevertheless ineffective, because they have been based on examples of art works that are not representative of genuine artistic ugliness in the first place.¹² That is, certain art works can present ugliness, without themselves being ugly.¹³ This distinction is implicit in Kant's statement that: "A beauty of nature is a beautiful thing; the beauty of art is a beautiful representation of a thing" (KU 5:311, p. 189). In other words, an art work can present ugly subject matter, without itself being

¹²An example is Stolnitz (1950) and Garvin (1948).

¹³Within Kantian aesthetics, this has been pointed out by McCloskey (1987, pp. 10–12) and Lorand (2000, pp. 259–264). Independently of Kant, this has been suggested by Cook (1997, pp. 125–141).

ugly (beautiful representation of an ugly thing). Only if the artistic representation of a (beautiful or ugly) thing is itself ugly, can we say that we have genuine artistic ugliness. Based on Kant's distinction and his other writings on this matter, I propose to distinguish the following categories of ugliness in art:

First, *the transformation of an ugly subject matter into a pleasing one*: an art work can present an otherwise ugly object in a beautiful way. As Kant writes: "Beautiful art displays its excellence precisely by describing beautifully things that in nature would be ugly or displeasing" (KU 5:312, p. 190). For example, Fernando Botero depicts obese women and children with congenital abnormalities, which we would ordinarily find ugly, while in his paintings they look pleasing. The transformation of an ugly subject matter into a beautiful one proceeds through stylistic manipulation. Botero uses soft colors and shades, smooth lines and calm form for the representation of his subjects. The women, the subject matter of his paintings, are still obese, but their obesity is no longer displeasing. That is, the ugliness of women lingers in the painting, yet the feeling of displeasure is suspended.

Second, *an ugly subject matter in a beautiful artistic form*: an object that we would ordinarily find ugly remains ugly in the art work. That is, the subject matter is not transformed into something beautiful and it keeps its negative aesthetic value, yet the artistic form itself is aesthetically pleasing. Kant writes:

it is not the sensation directly (the material of the representation of the object), but rather how the free (productive) power of imagination joints it together through invention, that is, the form, which produces the satisfaction in the object. (Anthro 7:240, p. 137)

Artistic beauty is not the result of the beauty of its elements, but of the beauty of their structure and organization (artistic form). Hence, even though the elements of the artistic form are displeasing, this does not necessarily render its combination ugly as well. The artistic form can nonetheless exhibit harmony and be positively aesthetically appreciated. What is distinctive for such art works is that we experience them with mixed sensations – the feeling of displeasure in the perception of the subject matter and the feeling of pleasure derived from the overall structure of the work. Most works that have been described as ugly or grotesque belong to this category of ugliness. For example, Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delight* (1504) features disturbing and grotesque animal figures, yet the work itself, as the combination of these features, exhibits a great aesthetic order. Francis Bacon's *Self-portrait* (1972) is an unsettling depiction of a deformed human face, which overall exhibits a wisely planned composition. And Jenny Saville's photograph *Closed Contact A* (2002) depicts the artist's obese, naked body, squeezed onto glass. The disfiguration and grotesqueness of this image is highly discomforting, yet one cannot stop admiring the beautiful composition, the combination of colors, lines and shades that this distorted image conjures.

I want to point out, however, that not all art works that evoke mixed sensations of displeasure and pleasure belong to this category of ugliness. Some beautiful art works induce painful feelings, without the subject matter actually being aesthetically ugly. Not everything that is displeasing is considered to be

ugly. The experience of ugliness is the result of aesthetic reflection, yet certain art works occasion feelings of displeasure due to non-aesthetic reasons as well. I consider three such reasons (the first two explicitly distinguished by Kant in §5). First, an art work can occasion displeasure because it features morally repugnant ideas or events, such as evil, injustice, or human-induced suffering. In this case, the feeling of displeasure is the result of the violation of our concept of moral goodness. We feel displeasure by something that we find morally objectionable, but which can be represented with beautiful aesthetic attributes. For example, Lars Von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009) depicts a scene of a mother who allows her child to fall from a window while she makes love to a man. One certainly reacts with moral displeasure at the presentation of this scene, but also with the bewilderment at the beautiful presentation of it. Second, an art work can be apprehended with displeasing feelings because it contains material that is sensory displeasing. For example, a vocal tone in the music of Diamanda Galas is utterly disturbing to the point of nausea, yet one less sensitive to the high pitched tones can appreciate her works greatly. Third, for some works of art, the unsettling experience they evoke is due to the portrayal of negative feeling-value ideas, such as mortality, death, despair, poverty, misery, loneliness, etc. For example, Bela Tarr's movie *Karhozat* (1987) is visually stunningly beautiful, yet an excruciating expression of despair and hopelessness.

Third, *the disgusting art*: some art works, distinctive for contemporary art and recognized under the name 'abject art' are considered to be ugly because they represent disgusting objects and evoke strong feelings of revulsion. Such works of art operate with strong realistic visual manifestations of disgusting substances and acts, such as feces, vomit, genital manipulation, body violation etc., which arouse strong visceral reactions (see for example Paul McCarthy's performance entitled *Hot Dog*, 1974). Even though disgusting art is considered to belong within the category of ugly art, I argue against this view and claim that the disgusting is not an instance of ugliness, but a theoretically and phenomenologically distinct category. On my account, art that features disgusting objects can never be judged as aesthetically beautiful or ugly, because disgust occasions a unique phenomenological experience, which prevents the possibility of disinterested aesthetic reflection that is required for aesthetic evaluation in the first place. Accordingly, the disgusting is an anti-aesthetic category. I will explain my account in more detail in the next chapter.

Fourth, *genuine artistic ugliness*: some art works are experienced with aesthetic displeasure not because they depict ugly subject matter, but because the artistic representation is itself displeasing. An art work can present ugliness, but as long as this presentation itself remains pleasing, the art work can be aesthetically appreciated. But if the artistic form, that is, the composition of the elements that constitutes the art work is itself displeasing then we have a case of genuine artistic ugliness. For example, Willem de Kooning's painting *Woman I* (1950–1952) is a representation of a woman's body. We can distinguish certain features of a female's body, such as her invasive breasts, bulging eyes, teeth spreading into a grinning smile, while the rest of the body – her arms and torso – is disintegrated, dismembered and dissolved into the spontaneous and dynamic brush strokes, with

frantic lines and garish colors. The ugliness of this painting is not merely in the subject depicted, but in the composition of its features, that is, in the artistic representation itself.

De Kooning's painting is an exemplary instance of a genuine artistic ugliness, and one illustrating nicely the paradoxical character of ugliness, namely, that we can still find value in looking at an object that we aesthetically dislike. De Kooning's painting holds our attention and it does that precisely because of those features that cause discomfort in the first place. But such an experience of ugliness *prima facie* contradicts the explanation of displeasure as a representational state of mind that is discomforting and to which we react by turning our attention away from it. How can the concurrence of displeasure and continued attention to ugliness be explained?

I argue that this phenomenon can be explained by referring to Kant's notion of the free play of imagination. The idea that objects attract our attention due to the free play of imagination is suggested by Kant in §22. He writes that only when the imagination in the given object plays freely and spontaneously (that is, the sensible manifold is not constrained by determinate rules), then such an object "is always new for us, and we are never tired of looking at it" (KU 5:243, p. 126). This idea is additionally supported by Kant's claim that aesthetically indifferent objects such as regular and symmetrical forms, which are constrained by determinate rules, and therefore do not allow for the freedom of the imagination, do not hold one's attention, that is: "the consideration of it affords no lasting entertainment, but rather (...) induces boredom" (KU 5:243, p. 126). These passages imply that an object holds (or fails to hold) one's attention due to the presence (or lack) of the free play of imagination. Since free play of imagination is constitutive not only for the experience of beauty, but also for ugliness, as discussed in the previous chapter, then one can expect that ugliness as well as beauty will hold one's attention. The argument is the following: Kant claims that ugliness is constituted by the free imagination being unrestrained by the understanding's need for order, which means that ugliness pushes the freedom of the imagination to a high degree: "the English taste in gardens or the baroque taste in furniture pushes the freedom of the imagination almost to the point of the grotesque" (KU 5:242, p. 126). But if it is the free play of imagination that underlies one's attention to the object, and if ugliness in particular generates a rich degree of free imagination, then it is reasonable to conclude that ugliness holds one's attention more than beauty does, where the free imagination is restricted by the demands of taste. However, the degree of the freedom of the imagination is not the sole factor which governs one's attention, since in the case of beauty the pleasure engendered by the harmonious relation between free imagination and the understanding motivates us to hold our attention on the object, while in the case of ugliness, the displeasure arising from the disharmonious relation between the cognitive powers is a factor which reduces our propensity to attend to the object. Therefore it is not a necessary consequence of this position that our attention is held to a greater degree by an ugly object than by a beautiful object. But the free play of imagination that is constitutive of the experience of ugliness is nevertheless a cause of our continued attention to ugly objects. This continued attention is easily noticed in one's phenomenological

experience of ugliness. Namely, one can notice that ugliness not merely captivates our attention, but also paralyses our senses and continues to linger in our minds long after the object ceases to be present to the senses.

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

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

So far I have given an explanation as to how an ugly object can hold one's attention in spite of the feeling of displeasure it occasions. However, as pointed out previously in this section, ugliness is not only considered to be aesthetically interesting, but it can also be captivating, exciting and aesthetically significant. This appears to be the case, considering in particular the proliferation of ugliness in

contemporary artistic production and the positive appreciation of it. For example, De Kooning's painting *Woman I* is in spite of its displeasing appearance considered to be one of the greatest works in modern art. This shows that artistic ugliness is not an indicator of an artistic failure and that works of art can be valuable even though they are not beautiful. The positive aesthetic experience (beauty) of the work of art is not the sole criterion of its aesthetic value.¹⁴ In fact, this idea is implied in Kant's distinction between free imagination, required for the richness and originality of artistic production, and the reflective power of judgment, required for the judgment of beauty. Kant claims in §50 that it is in virtue of the productive (free) imagination that inspiring objects are produced, but it is in virtue of the reflective power of judgment that beautiful objects are produced. This suggests the possibility that an object can be valuable due to its rich formal properties, which is the product of the free imagination, even though it might not be beautiful. I will give now an explanation of the relation between free imagination and the production of valuable works of art.

We know so far that the object's form stimulates the free play of imagination if it exhibits a combination of sense data that is not determined by any rules. But if the form of the object is not determined by any known rules and concepts, then this suggests that such an object affords a novel and unique experience, since any production that is governed by known rules must be to that extent imitative, whereas genuine creativity must go beyond these rules. Kant writes that when the artist exercises his power of free imagination, which means that his creation of the work of art is not governed by any known rules, then creative and original works of art are produced. Kant accordingly ascribes to artists 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 5:308, p. 186)

But this talent to produce original works of art is in fact the power to exercise free imagination:

The proper field for genius is that of the power of imagination, because this is creative and, being less under the constraint of rules than other faculties, it is thus all the more capable of originality. (Anthro 7:225, p. 120)

Kant's describes productive imagination as one that transforms "another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it" (KU 5:314, p. 192). It generates a new combination of existing concepts, ideas and perceptual features. But ugly works of art are also products of the artist's ability to exercise free imagination, since, as mentioned previously, any departure from aesthetic indifference must be the result of free imagination, and this means that ugly works of art can exhibit originality and creativity, and can therefore be valuable in this sense. This indeed is implied in Kant's notes, where he says that "much genius and little taste brings forth crude, yet valuable products" (R 15:297, p. 491). Thus, even unrestrained creative

¹⁴For this view see also Korsmeyer (2006).

imagination can produce valuable works of art. Indeed, many examples of art works that are evaluated as aesthetically displeasing reinforce this point. For example, John Cage's work *Imaginary Landscape No.2* (1942) is composed of various sounds produced by unconventional instruments, such as tin cans, buzzers, water gongs, conch shells etc. The combination of these sounds produces a raucously noisy and chaotic work; it lacks melody, harmony, and organization, and it is therefore difficult to listen to. However, its originality gives rise to an element of admiration, due to the use of unconventional instruments, exhibiting a novel compositional technique based on chance, and introducing new, unusual and radically different combinations of sounds. His work goes against the traditional rules of music and in this sense exhibits great imaginative freedom and novelty, which is itself valuable.

So far I have been discussing the notion of ugliness, particularly in its relation to art, and I suggested a view according to which artistic ugliness is not an indicator of artistic failure. Even though displeasing, artistic ugliness satisfies the criterion of expressiveness, originality and creativity and can therefore be regarded as aesthetically significant and valuable. But if artistic ugliness is not an indicator of artistic failure then it is required to establish what that might be. My answer, consistent with Kant's theory, is that bad works of art are those that are aesthetically insignificant because they do not occasion any aesthetic reaction (pleasure or displeasure). Kant identifies aesthetic neutrality with regularity, that is, with forms that are a mere presentation of a concept. In other words, an object is judged as aesthetically neutral if its form is fully determined by the concept. Accordingly, the essential characteristic of aesthetic neutrality is the lack of the free play of imagination, and consequently the absence of aesthetic experience. For Kant, an art work must be a product of a free use of cognitive powers, and so if a certain object fails to afford the free play of imagination, then the object fails as an art work. If we expect an object to be an art work, and so to occasion free play of imagination, yet the object fails in this respect, then our judgment of the object will be accompanied by the feeling of disappointment. Hence, even though strictly speaking the aesthetically neutral object is characterized by the lack of pleasure or displeasure, in the case where some aesthetic value is expected, judgments of aesthetic neutrality will be accompanied with the feeling of displeasure. Therefore, a judgment of aesthetic neutrality is a proper negative aesthetic judgment in the case of art works. Failure to produce an aesthetic experience is the indicator of artistic failure.¹⁵

¹⁵Not every artistic failure, however, is a failure of producing an aesthetic experience (i.e. free play of cognitive powers). For example, some works of art have the ability to occasion an aesthetic experience and they could be regarded as beautiful, yet because they force this experience of pleasure on us, they fail to occasion a sincere and genuine aesthetic experience. Pretentious and kitschy works of art are of such type.

5.5 Aesthetic Ideas and Cognitive Importance of Beauty and Ugliness

It has been commonly taken that Kant is a proponent of an extreme formalist view; that is a view that beauty can be occasioned by perceptual properties alone and that the meaning of the work is not relevant for aesthetic appreciation. However, in the latter part of the *third Critique*, that is, in the explanation of the beautiful art, Kant puts forward a different view. He suggests that beauty (i.e. free harmony) can be occasioned not merely by perceptual properties, but by ideas and thoughts as well. He calls a sensible representation of such ideas and thoughts an *aesthetic idea*. Kant formulates an aesthetic idea accordingly:

by an aesthetic idea, however, I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., **concept**, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible. (KU 5: 314, p. 192)

Kant also adds later on in §57 that an aesthetic idea is “an intuition (of the imagination) for which a concept can never be found adequate” (KU 5:342, p. 218). Given this, it is suggested that aesthetic ideas are concrete sensible representations of imaginations (that is, images) and that these images are so rich and give rise to so much thinking that cannot be fully described by any determinate concepts. Aesthetic ideas are thus alike to ordinary images (such as image of a flower), but they are dissimilar to ordinary images in that no determinate concepts correspond to them (like image of a flower corresponds the concept of a flower). Since aesthetic ideas lack determinate concepts, they evade the possibility of cognition (they cannot be cognized in an ordinary sense that is by connecting intuition with its determinate concept). They are therefore called ideas.

Kant gives the following example of aesthetic ideas:

The poet ventures to make sensible rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc., as well as to make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g., death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature. (KU 5:314, p. 192)

Accordingly, aesthetic ideas sensibly represent two kinds of concepts. On one hand, concept of invisible beings, hell, eternity, god, freedom, mortality, etc., which are *rational ideas (ideas of reason)*. They are: “concept[s] to which no intuition (representation of imagination) can be adequate” (KU 5:314, p. 192). What is distinctive for them is that they can be thought, but not empirically encountered (one can think of the idea of hell, but have no sensible intuition of it). On the other hand, love, fame, envy, death, etc. are concepts, feelings, emotions, mental states, attitudes which can be experienced (we can experience their concrete instances), yet they cannot be directly represented (as objects denoted by determinate concepts

can be).¹⁶ For example, we can experience the state of loneliness, but one does not know how the idea of loneliness itself looks like, that is, one does not have an appropriate schema for such an idea (in comparison to the schema of, say, a table).

What is distinctive for both kinds of ideas is that their sensible representation i.e. an aesthetic idea cannot be governed by any determinate rules. But this means that an aesthetic idea is a representation of imagination in its free play. Kant writes: “the aesthetic idea can be called an inexponible representation of the imagination (in its free play)” (KU 5:343, p. 219).

Because aesthetic ideas are sensible representation of things that exceed the bounds of sense experience, that is, they express objects that cannot be empirically encountered, this means that they cannot be literal representations, but symbolic or metaphorical representations of objects. Kant calls such symbolic presentations of objects *aesthetic attributes*. Aesthetic attributes are certain mental images, that is: “forms which do not constitute the presentation of a given concept itself, but, as supplementary representations of the imagination, express only the implications connected with it and its affinity with others” (KU 5:315, p. 193). For example, Kant writes that Jupiter's eagle with the lightning in its claws is an aesthetic attribute of the king of heaven. Jupiter's eagle is not a logical attribute of the king of heaven, that is, it is not part of the concept of the king of heaven. When we think of king of heaven, we do not have in mind an image of an eagle. Rather, the image of a Jupiter's eagle merely expresses certain associations connected with the idea we have of the king of heaven (for example in terms of representing power, strength, freedom, being above the material world etc.). As this example shows, aesthetic attributes refer to a set of associations between different concepts (such as the concept of a lightning in the eagle's claws and the concept of power or illumination).

Kant claims that aesthetic attributes constitute an aesthetic idea, as I will illustrate by the means of a Frida Kahlo's painting *Diego on My Mind* (1943).

The painting is a portrayal of Frida in a traditional Mexican wedding dress. On her forehead there is a picture of her husband Diego, and on her head there is a crown made of flowers and leaves. One can see the veins of the leaves growing out of the crown and intertwining with Frida's hair and with the threads of her wedding dress, forming a beautiful image of a net. These images constitute the perceptual form of the painting. Yet there is much more to the painting than its visual form suggests. Namely, these images work as aesthetic attributes, constituting the aesthetic idea. For example, the photograph of Diego on Frida's forehead is not a mere representation of Diego, but an aesthetic attribute standing for the constant preoccupation with the loved one, and the image of Frida's hair intertwined with

¹⁶Samantha Matherne (2013, pp. 21–39) calls such ideas ‘experience-oriented’ aesthetic ideas. She argues, similarly as I do, that aesthetic ideas can represent not only moral and rational ideas, as initially suggested, but also everyday kinds of ideas, concepts and feelings. This idea has also been suggested by Lüthe (1984). See also Rogerson (1986, p. 99), who claims that in a certain respect also such ideas go beyond sensory experience, in particular our attitude towards them.

her dress is not a mere representation of a net, but it may be an aesthetic attribute of one's feeling of being trapped. The collection of these aesthetic attributes constitute the aesthetic idea of the painting, that is, a concrete sensible representation of an idea, such as the idea of captivity and the feeling of hopelessness that for example bad marriage or an addictive relationship can induce.

Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas shows that one can appreciate aesthetically those types of art works, such as works of conceptual art, narrative art or poetry, whose value does not lie in the perceptual properties alone, but in the ideas, concepts and meanings that they evoke.¹⁷ For example, Merret Oppenheim's sculpture *My Nurse* (1936) is made of a pair of shoes, tied together, topped with paper ruffles used to decorate a roasted chicken, and presented on a silver plate. If one would judge the value of this artwork solely by its visual form, then one would miss the point of this work. The visual form of the sculpture is not particularly aesthetically interesting. However, the aesthetic value of the work changes if we take into account the idea behind this form. The free play of imagination is stimulated through the collections of associations that the visual form evokes. The aesthetic attribute of the pair of shoes is the woman's body (the shoes are composed in a way that resembles a woman lying on her back, with legs spread apart), and the aesthetic attribute of the silver plate refers to the idea of consumption. The combination of aesthetic attributes forms the aesthetic idea of the work, a symbolic presentation of the consumption of a female body, through which the idea of the objectification of women is expressed. In this case, our imaginative powers are evoked by the combination of thoughts and associations triggered by the perceptual image.¹⁸

As this example illustrates, an art work can be valuable not merely due to its visual form alone, but because of the aesthetic idea it communicates to the audience. We appreciate the communication or expression of aesthetic ideas, because they give us intimation of the world of ideas and state of affairs that lie beyond sensory experience. For example, while we may experience our own state of hopelessness, there are limits to the degree of understanding the idea of hopelessness itself that is available only from our own states. Through an artistic representation, however, we can gain a different perspective on this idea, for example, what the state of hopelessness and despair itself might look like, which can consequently contribute to a richer understanding of this idea. An aesthetic idea stimulates intellectual interest, by giving us the possibility to go beyond what our personal experience affords. An expression of an aesthetic idea is valuable because it gives us an opportunity to intuit and apprehend that which cannot ever be fully presented by

¹⁷This has also been pointed out by Fricke (1998, pp. 687–689) in her interpretation of Kant's conception of art works as semantic artifacts. Among contemporary writers, Diarmuid Costello (2012) in particular reinforces the importance of Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas for the explanation of contemporary art. An attempt of reconciling Kant's aesthetic theory and conceptual art has also been made by Robert J. Yanal (2002). See also Arthur C. Danto (2007) and his version of integrating Kant's notion of aesthetic ideas with cognitive theory of art.

¹⁸The view that free imagination can be occasioned by ideas in the relation to the perceptual form is also argued for by Paul Guyer (1977).

sensory experience alone. As Paul Bruno (2010, p. 137) nicely puts it, art works that express aesthetic ideas are important because they are “means of occupying the emptiness” that concepts on their own would have without sense intuitions.

The value of the expression of an aesthetic idea is nicely illustrated by Michael Haneke movie *The Seventh Continent* (1989), an agonizing story of a well-situated Austrian family and their attempt to escape the feeling of inevitability of emotional and social isolation in the modern world by choosing to commit a suicide. The mental state of inner emptiness and depersonalization that accompanies everyday life of this family is brilliantly represented through images that are focused on objects, rather than on subjects. We do not see character's faces, but merely fragmented and isolated shots of their hands turning off the alarm clock, opening curtains, putting toothpaste on brush, tying shoes, making coffee, cutting bread, feeding the fish in the aquarium. Through such cinematic technique that emphasizes the state of imprisonment by our daily routines, Haneke managed to give a perceptible form to the feeling of meaninglessness and emptiness of one's existence, and thereby provided us with a rare opportunity of *recognizing* certain mental states, emotions and ideas that cannot be directly represented.

But to be able to recognize our subjective experiences in a perceptible form (in an art work) can furnish us with the opportunity for self-reflection, leading thereby to a better understanding of ourselves. Through the sensible representation of feelings, state of affairs, ideas, values and beliefs (i.e. aesthetic ideas), art opens a dialogue between us, our subjective states and experiences (say, how emptiness is felt by me) and the objective projection of our subjective states and experiences (an image of the feeling of emptiness itself). A dialogue enhances a distance between one's subjective state and the objective vision of that mental state through which one's perspective can be revealed. In other words, in art as an expression of aesthetic ideas, our own emotions, moral ideas, beliefs and mental states are objects of our attention. Art thereby engages us in a cognitive process of identifying our own personal characteristics, challenging our emotional, social and intellectual patterns and recognizing inadequacies in our thoughts we attribute to our lives and experiences of ourselves and others. Accordingly, art enhances one's self-exploration, by giving us the opportunity to reflect on the content of our own subjective experiences. It thereby fosters self-awareness and by giving us an objective vision of ourselves it facilitates self-knowledge and consequently self-change.

This is nicely illustrated by Haneke's movie. Through the depiction of emotionless and depersonalized performances of our daily routines, the film represents the idea of alienation and emotional emptiness, that is, what these emotional states themselves look like. We often experience such emotions and mental states, yet it is difficult to have a clear look at them and therefore to properly understand them. Through the objectification of the idea of emotional isolation itself, we have an extraordinary opportunity to perceive this emotion in a formulated way. By giving us the possibility to recognize the idea of emotional isolation itself, the movie confronts us with our own feeling of emotional isolation and with the reality of our

own everyday lives. But it is the acquisition of self-information that facilitates self-change, just as my awareness and understanding of the idea of emotional isolation purported by this movie facilitated my urge to nurture and revive the forces of my inner life amidst the monotony of the modern world.

So far I argued that art works can be valuable due to the aesthetic ideas they express. An aesthetic idea is a representation of imagination for which no determinate concept is fully adequate, which in other words means that an aesthetic idea is a representation of imagination in its free play. This implies that an aesthetic idea is merely a product of a productive (creative) imagination, which Kant in fact confirms by saying that the ability to express an aesthetic idea is “only a talent (of the imagination)” (KU 5:314, p. 193).

However, what is required to experience beauty (or ugliness) is not only to experience the free play of imagination, but to experience the *harmony* (or *disharmony*) between free imagination and understanding. In other words, to judge an object as beautiful or ugly, the freely imaginative manifold must be subsumed under the principle of reflective judgment (or taste). But if an aesthetic idea is a mere product of imagination in its freedom, then this implies that an aesthetic idea is not necessarily beautiful. That is, there is a possibility that an aesthetic idea can be ugly as well.

The possibility of an ugly aesthetic idea is not explicitly acknowledged by Kant. However, his discussion of the distinction between the ability to express aesthetic ideas and the ability to experience beauty (free harmony) allows the possibility to accommodate an ugly aesthetic idea into the overall aesthetic picture. In §50 Kant analyses the value of an art work in terms of its productive imagination and in terms of its reflective power of judgment (or taste). He appears to regard the two faculties as independent, performing two different kinds of functions.¹⁹ While it is in virtue of a productive imagination that aesthetic ideas are produced, it is in virtue of the reflective power of judgment that art can be judged or appreciated as beautiful. Taste is not a productive faculty, but “merely a faculty for judging” (KU 5:313, p. 191). He writes:

Now since it is in regard to the first of these [imagination] that an art deserves to be called inspired, but only in regard to the second [the power of judgment] that it deserves to be called a beautiful art, the latter, at least as an indispensable condition (*conditio sine qua non*), is thus the primary thing to which one must look in the judging of art as beautiful art. (KU 5:319, p. 197)

Accordingly, an art work can be an expression of aesthetic ideas and for that matter valuable on its own (inspiring), yet in order to be beautiful one must in addition experience free harmony. That is, one must subsume the production of aesthetic ideas – the wealth of ideas for which no concept can be adequate – under the reflective power of judgment:

¹⁹This distinction has also been pointed out by Murray (2007, p. 201).

To be rich and original in ideas is not as necessary for the sake of beauty as is the suitability of the imagination in its freedom to the lawfulness of the understanding. For all the richness of the former produces, in its lawless freedom, nothing but nonsense; the power of judgment, however, is the faculty for bringing it in line with the understanding. (KU 5:319, p. 197)

This means that for an aesthetic idea to be beautiful, the artist must subject his creative process (productive imagination) under the reflective power of judgment, which: “gives genius guidance as to where and how far it should extend itself if it is to remain purposive” (KU 5:319, p. 197).

It follows from the above that the production of aesthetic ideas and the production of *beautiful* aesthetic ideas are logically independent activities. One does not need taste in order to produce aesthetic ideas. The converse is also true; the object does not need to express aesthetic ideas in order to be beautiful (in accordance with taste). The latter is acknowledged by Kant in his *Anthropology* where he writes: “The painter of nature (. . .) is not the beautiful spirit, because he only imitates; the painter of ideas is the master of beautiful art” (Anthro 7:248, p. 145). That is, a work of art that merely imitates nature does not express aesthetic ideas, even though it might be considered as pleasing to the eye (consider for example a painting of a landscape by Thomas Moran entitled, *Shepherdess Watching her Flock*, 1867). In this case the artist merely imitates the beauty of nature, the subject matter of the painting, without exercising his power of free imagination. In other words, the artist paints nature, rather than ideas. Even though the subject matter itself may exhibit certain ideas, these ideas are not product of artist's creativity. The artist merely imitates object's expression of ideas.

Similar idea is suggested by Kant in his *Critique*, where he writes that there are some works of art that are beautiful (i.e. in agreement with taste), yet they lack the spirit, which is required for the production of aesthetic ideas:

One says of certain products, of which it is expected that they ought, at least in part, to reveal themselves as beautiful art, that they are without spirit, even though one finds nothing in them to criticize as far as taste is concerned. A poem can be quite pretty and elegant, but without spirit. A story is accurate and well organized, but without spirit. A solemn oration is thorough and at the same time flowery, but without spirit. Many a conversation is not without entertainment, but is still without spirit; even of a woman one may well say that she is pretty, talkative and charming, but without spirit. (KU 5: 313, pp. 191–192)

But if the production of aesthetic ideas and the production of beauty are independent activities, that is, taste is not required for the production of aesthetic ideas, then it follows that aesthetic ideas are not necessarily beautiful. Consequently, an aesthetic idea can be ugly, that is, exhibit disharmony and produce the feeling of displeasure.

The possibility of existence of an ugly aesthetic idea can additionally indicate a solution to the paradox of ugliness. Namely, even though an aesthetic idea is ugly and experienced with displeasure it can still be valuable, that is, it can communicate ideas and emotions for which we do not have a full empirical counterpart and thus it can be highly valuable in this respect. Such cognitive importance of ugliness is nicely exhibited by De Kooning's painting *Woman I*. Even though the artistic

representation of the painting is itself chaotic and displeasing, it can still be expressive and thoughtful, but this differs from beautiful works in that such conflict produces instability in the expression of ideas, contrary to a unified expression of the beautiful. For example, one can notice that De Kooning's *Woman I* has no straightforward interpretation, but it motivates an interpretative exploration of its meaning. The physical destruction of a female body might symbolically represent the idea of the destruction of the classical notion of a woman as a beautiful, virtuous and sensitive human being.²⁰ This idea is suggested by the violence of the brushstrokes, the chaotic and aggressive combination of colours, the idea of sexual dominance expressed through the accentuation of the women's breasts, and the maliciousness, hostility and pretense conveyed by her grinning smile. The expression of this idea is stimulating, thought-provoking, and for this reason aesthetically significant, even though it is perceived with displeasure. Through his unique representation of a woman, the artist managed to express an idea which cannot be represented otherwise, that is, he succeeded to express an aesthetic idea, and this in itself is a valuable experience, even though the resulting work is ugly. And as long as one considers the value of an art work to be due to the aesthetic experience and exploration of the object it affords, an ugly artwork can have a significant value even though experiencing it is displeasurable and discomforting.

According to Kant, an object is judged as beautiful or ugly if its form occasions the feeling of pleasure (harmonious free play) or displeasure (disharmonious free play). Some art works occasion the free play of imagination not by means of its perceptual features alone, but by the means of aesthetic ideas, constituted by the combination of aesthetic attributes. This means that for such art works, their beauty or ugliness depends on the beauty or ugliness of an aesthetic idea. Both a beautiful and an ugly aesthetic idea represent a concrete sensible presentation of ideas that go beyond sense experience (they are both product of artist's use of free imagination), but *how* these ideas are communicated differs in these two cases, depending on their relation to *taste* (or the reflective power of judgment).

A beautiful aesthetic idea is one which conforms to taste. In other words, free imagination, occasioned by the abundance of thoughts and images (i.e. aesthetic attributes) is brought into the accordance with understanding. Kant explains this accordance in the following way:

Taste, like the power of judgment in general, is the discipline (or corrective) of genius, clipping its wings and making it well behaved or polished; but at the same time it gives genius guidance as to where and how far it should extend itself if it is to remain purposive; and by introducing clarity and order into the abundance of thoughts it makes the ideas tenable, capable of an enduring and universal approval. (KU 5:319, p. 197)

In other words, a beautiful aesthetic idea consists in a purposive and appropriate combination of aesthetic attributes in respect to the idea it aims to express, that is, in the clarity and consistency with which the idea is conveyed and apprehended.

²⁰For a more extensive and insightful analysis of De Kooning's paintings see Fanning (2003).

The artist's use of aesthetic attributes is in this case guided by taste, resulting in a representation that is "purposive for the presentation of the given concept" (KU 5:317, p. 195).

A fine example of a beautiful expression of an aesthetic idea is exhibited in Sigalit Landau's contemporary video art work *Dead Sea* (2005). Her work features hundreds of watermelons, joined together by a string forming a circle, floating on the Dead Sea. Between the watermelons, some of which are open thereby revealing the intense red color of their flesh, lies the artist's naked body. One of her arms is placed by her side, while the other one is stretched out, touching the open flesh of a watermelon. The video shows, in slow motion, how the string is pulled, thereby rotating the artist's body along with it until the circle is completely untied and out of sight. This astonishingly beautiful and powerful piece of work expresses a difficult theme, namely, the course of one's life and the inevitability of pain and death. This idea is presented through the combination of aesthetic attributes that nicely complement each other. One can notice the easiness with which one association is connected with another, lightly building up, until it reaches the concluding idea. For example, it might be said that each watermelon symbolizes a year in one's life, pulled by an unknown source until it ends. The naked body of the artist, pulled along by the string, brings in mind the sense of vulnerability, helplessness and fatalism. Open watermelons are like open wounds, symbolizing the presence of blood and the pain in the artist's life. Even more, since the watermelons are half submerged in the salt-saturated water of the Dead Sea, which may symbolize life itself, the art work beautifully expresses the idea of the inseparability of life and pain.

A fundamentally different experience, however, characterizes the apprehension of an ugly aesthetic idea. An ugly aesthetic idea consists in a conflicting combination of aesthetic attributes, resulting in a displeasing disharmony between the free imagination (abundance of thoughts and images) with the understanding. Since it is through the combination of aesthetic attributes that the general idea is carried out, the incompatibility of aesthetic attributes implies the incongruity and ambiguity of thoughts conveyed. This, however, does not suggest that ugliness is devoid of meaning. Some of Kant's commentators argued that accordance with taste (i.e. free harmony between imagination and understanding) is a necessary condition for an aesthetic idea to be expressed in a way that makes sense to others (Proulx 2011; Debord 2012; Lewis 2005; Sassen 2003; Crawford 2003; Nuzzo 2005). Thus, if ugliness consists in a disharmony between imagination and understanding, then it must essentially be non-communicable and nonsensical. As Crawford (2003, p. 170) writes: "for this imaginative material to take on a *form* that allows it to be communicated and stand the test of judgment, genius must be combined with taste." That is, even though an aesthetic idea itself may be a product of free imagination and for that matter offering a novel and original experience, it cannot however be intelligible if not combined with the understanding. Kant calls such original presentations that are not combined with taste, an 'original nonsense' (KU 5:308, p. 186).

However, the discordance with taste does not necessary leads to the non-communicability of ugliness and the lack of meaning. Namely, even though the use of free imagination in ugliness is not in accordance with taste, it is nevertheless

related to taste. Ugliness is the result of the disharmony between free imagination and understanding. One can imagine such a relation as two players in a fighting sport, such as boxing. Even though the two players are hurting each other, that is, they are in conflict; they are nevertheless in a certain relation to each other. This means that free imagination is related to taste through discordance or disharmony with the understanding.

An ugly aesthetic idea is subsumed under taste, yet it directly defies it. An ugly aesthetic idea is *contra-purposive*, rather than *non-purposive*. A non-purposive representation is one which is *not* subsumed under taste. In this case the abundance of thoughts and images are disconnected and detached from each other, therefore resulting in a relation between aesthetic attributes that does not make sense. Non-purposive representation is an example of a meaningless and nonsensical representation, or what Kant calls an original nonsense. A fine example of such a nonsensical representation is Lewis Carroll poem *Jabberwocky* (1871). The poem is a play of made-up words, which do not have a specific meaning and are artist's original inventions. Even though the words themselves may be said to be a product of artist's use of free imagination and therefore exhibit originality, their combination however carry no meaning.

In a contra-purposive representation of an aesthetic idea (i.e. an ugly aesthetic idea), however, aesthetic attributes do relate to each other, that is, they relate to each other through their disagreement and it is precisely through this disagreement that a meaning is conveyed. This is nicely illustrated by De Kooning's painting. Through the juxtaposition of two conflicting ideas, that is, the classical idea of a woman as a morally and aesthetically ideal human being and the directly opposing idea of a woman as an ugly, harmful and vile human being, the artist managed to express a new idea, namely the idea of a critique of a social, aesthetic and moral idealization of femininity. This shows that an ugly aesthetic idea can be aesthetically significant, meaningful and intellectually stimulating, even though the conflict between aesthetic attributes produce struggle and discomfort in the apprehension of this idea.

The fascination with ugliness and the conflict of ideas that ugliness evokes is especially nicely illustrated by Bruce Chatwin (2003, p. 285) in his description of an ugly human face. He writes in his book *Songlines*:

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

The writer illustrates well the intense and stirring effect of the free play of imagination, and the conflict of ideas that an ugly object evokes. The ugly face of an aboriginal is not merely the face of a man, but it is the face of both a nobleman and a comic at the same time. That is, it is a representation of imagination that suggests more thoughts than can be grasped by the concept of a human face alone – ugliness expands the concept and as such has the ability to evoke aesthetic ideas. There is an appealing side to ugliness, because it allows for the imagination to be

highly effective and expressive of ideas that cannot be represented otherwise. The difference is that in contrast to beauty, where imagination and understanding form a stable unity and therefore the idea is clearly and harmoniously expressed, in the case of ugliness, such ideas are formed from a conflicted ground, and to this extent their expression is not unified, resulting in an ambiguous response to the object. It is for this reason that ugliness is considered a challenging aesthetic notion, one which "is inexhaustible and always provocative, due to the lack of resolution" (Fanning 2003, p. 242). Its constitutive element is disorder and as such it is particularly suggestive for the expression of ideas that celebrate such disorder. It is related to ideas of alienation, estrangement, dehumanization, destruction, degeneration, disconcertion, absurdity, and with emotions evoking terror, horror, anxiety and fear.

The association of ugliness with such ideas and feelings can be explained by referring to Kant's notion of the reflective power of judgment and the *a priori* principle of purposiveness. I argued in the previous chapter that beauty and ugliness depend on the principle of purposiveness, that is, on the indeterminate rule that guides our orientation in the world. We appreciate forms that are in accordance with the principle of purposiveness, and that reassures us that the world is indeed such as we expect it to be, namely, amenable to our cognitive abilities. Accordingly, the experience of pleasure is a sign of the familiarity with the world, of feeling at home in the world. For example, one can notice that beauty is in particular associated with positive feeling value ideas such as innocence, joyfulness, virtue, vitality and optimism.

On the other hand, forms that resist our expectation that the world is amenable to our cognitive abilities produce displeasure. The inability to know the world occasions the state of estrangement between us, our mental structure, and the world. James Phillips (2011, p. 395) nicely puts this idea by saying: "The displeasure of ugliness is the displeasure of the thought that the world might not want us to know it." But when our expectations of order and our need of organizing the world in a specific way are violated, we do not merely experience displeasure, but also a sense of loss of control over the organization of experience, and this can occasion feelings of fear, anxiety, horror and a sense of estrangement, powerlessness, absurdity, mortality, disorientation etc. Ugliness evokes these ideas and emotions because it represents the disruption of order and harmony that we expect to find in the world. Artistic ugliness can be a valuable experience, because it is the unique way through which these ideas and emotions themselves, for which there is no adequate sense intuition, can be sensibly represented.

Furthermore, such an explanation of ugliness can explain the experience of ugliness as being not merely displeasing, but also horrifying, paralyzing and shocking, as pointed out by many writers (Hagman 2005, pp. 108–111; Pickford 1969, pp. 258–270). There is a proverb saying that: "beauty is only skin-deep, but ugly is to the bone" (cited in Adams 1974, p. 55) which nicely captures the intensity of the experience of ugliness, in comparison to our response to beauty. The reason for this is the following: if our responses to beauty and ugliness depend on our expectations as to how the world is supposed to be, namely, to exhibit harmony between the imagination and the understanding, then the violation of this

expectation produces not only the state of mind of displeasure, but also one of unwelcome and unexpected surprise. It is for this reason that ugliness is experienced as a sudden and shocking disturbance of the mind.

But it is not only artistic ugliness that can be edifying in expressing aesthetic ideas, but natural ugliness as well. Kant writes that natural forms “contain a language that nature brings to us and that seems to have a higher meaning” (KU 5:302, p. 181). For example, the white color of the lily evokes the idea of innocence, or the bird’s song evokes the idea of joyfulness. The communication of aesthetic ideas is not intentional in natural objects, rather “this is how we interpret nature, whether anything of the sort is its intention or not” (KU 5:302, p. 181). But if positive aesthetic experience of nature is important due to the ideas its perceptual form suggests and evokes, such as innocence, virtue and joyfulness, then negative aesthetic experience can be valuable as well. Ugliness brings forth negative aesthetic ideas, which are uncomfortable, yet are part of our experience of the world and ourselves and therefore worthwhile attending to. Even though perceived with displeasure, ugliness affords an unfamiliar and unexpected perspective on the phenomenal world and an intimation of the world of ideas. And this in itself makes ugliness a valuable and significant experience.

Chapter 6

The Notion of Disgust in Comparison to Ugliness: A Kantian Perspective

In the contemporary discussion of Kant's aesthetics, little attention has been given to Kant's view of disgust in contrast to ugliness. This is due to the prevalent view that disgust is only an extreme form of ugliness, and therefore does not require separate discussion (Parret 2009, pp. 59–68; Guyer 2005a, pp. 152–153). Such a view is not surprising, considering that Kant himself introduces disgust in this way. He writes: “only one kind of ugliness cannot be represented in a way adequate to nature without destroying all aesthetic satisfaction, hence beauty in art, namely, that which arouses loathing” (KU 5:312, p. 190). Nonetheless, a more detailed analysis of Kant's discussion of disgust and its aesthetic implications, in this and other works, shows that Kant considered disgust to be a phenomenologically and conceptually unique emotion in contrast to ugliness and one consistent with contemporary views of this subject. In what follows I will give a detailed comparison between Kant's treatment of disgust and contemporary studies on this matter and, on this basis, explain Kant's thesis of the anti-aesthetic effect of disgust, particularly in its relation to art works. I will conclude that there is an important theoretical and phenomenological difference between disgust and the concept of ugliness.

6.1 The Concept of Disgust: An Overview of Kant's Treatment of Disgust in Comparison with Contemporary Studies

Whereas Kant did not give any theoretical explanation of the concept of disgust, he nevertheless anticipated conditions that accompany it and that have been adopted in the contemporary analysis as fundamental conditions of disgust. Going beyond linking the phenomenon of disgust with oral consumption, the idea of disgust in Kant's analysis also includes ethical conditions, and thus it is introduced as a rather complex phenomenon. Above all, he expounded the concept of disgust by

examining its aesthetic implications in artistic representation. A brief exposition in §48 reveals a rich insight into the nature of disgust:

For since in this strange sensation, resting on sheer imagination, the object is represented as if it were imposing the enjoyment which we are nevertheless forcibly resisting, the artistic representation of the object is no longer distinguished in our sensation itself from the nature of the object itself, and it then becomes impossible for the former to be taken as beautiful. (KU 5:312, p. 190)

There are two particularly striking features that must be stressed: (i) disgust's intrusive nature and (ii) the anti-aesthetic effect resulting from it. Let me begin with the first one.

The fact that the object of disgust has the ability to be intrusive, especially through its visual representation, indicates its indispensable relationship with sense experience. This is taken in contemporary examinations as a condition *sine qua non* of disgust, particularly its elemental relation with the senses of taste and smell. In the *Anthropology* Kant characterizes disgust as a vital sensation connected particularly with the 'lower' senses of smell and taste. Compared to the 'higher' class of senses (touch, sight and hearing), smell and taste do not contribute to the cognition of objects, but are more related with producing pleasure: "the idea obtained from them is more a representation of enjoyment" (Anthro 7:154, p. 46). That is, smell and taste are less responsible for perceiving the surface of an object than they are pleasure-related senses, linked with the oral intake. Because such intake is less free in the case of smell than in taste, and since we cannot choose entirely what will be taken in, the aversion through smell is particularly forced on our enjoyment: "For taking something in through smell (in the lungs) is even more intimate than taking something in through the absorptive vessels of the mouth or throat" (Anthro 7:158, p. 50). The intimacy of the intake is conditioned by the fact that smell more directly consumes the material feature of the object than taste does and thus provokes disgust more straightforwardly as a defensive physiological reaction manifested through nausea or vomiting: "Thus it happens that nausea, an impulse to free oneself of food through the shortest way out of the esophagus (to vomit), has been allotted to the human being as such a strong vital sensation" (Anthro 7:157, p. 49). Disgust's biological relation to the sense of taste and smell, as well as its dependence on direct sensory information about the object, is well established here.

Haidt et al. (1997, p. 109) refer to such a food-related emotion as 'core disgust' and define it as: "revulsion at the prospect of (oral) incorporation of an offensive object." The offensiveness of an object, contrary to mere bad taste or sensory dislike, intrinsically includes an idea of contamination. It is not necessary that the object of disgust is actually a contaminant, but merely that the idea of it is sufficient to provoke disgust: "Disgust is triggered off not primarily by the sensory properties of an object, but by ideational concerns about *what it is*, or *where it has been*" (ibid.). For disgust to be triggered it is sufficient that the object be associated, by means of other senses, with the contaminant object. For example, it is highly plausible that we will avoid eating or even touching a chocolate in the form of excrement.

Disgust, however, is not triggered merely through the sense of taste and smell, but also through visual perception. Kant, for example, distinguished a type of disgust that concerns violation of ethical, hygienic and sexual appropriateness. He writes: "an old woman is an object of disgust for both sexes except when she is very cleanly and not a *coquette*" (Beob 2:238, p. 172). Unfortunately, he does not offer any explanation of the nature of such disgust. The most thorough attempt to define the nature of visual disgust has been given by contemporary writers, who define such type of disgust as 'animal-reminder' disgust, which threatens particularly through visual perception, by reminding us of our animal origins. This category of disgust includes violations of the body envelope (amputations, injuries), sexual deviations and hygienic concerns, that is, deviations from well-established standards of cleanliness and purity in all three spheres:

We fear recognizing our animality because we fear that, like animals, we are mortal. We thus attempt to hide the animality of our biological processes by defining specifically human ways to perform them. (Haidt et al. 1997, p. 115)

It is suggested that disgust functions as a defense mechanism against the tread of mortality. The phenomenological explanation of disgust given by Aurel Kolnai (2004) refines the 'mortality' theory of disgust by arguing that for disgust to be elicited the object must not merely reminds us of our own mortality, but it must also evoke the idea of the inseparability of life from death. This appears to be true considering that the sight of mere bones does not trigger disgust, even though they remind us of our own mortality.¹ He interprets substances that evoke disgust as embodying the idea of putrefaction, dissolution, decay, rottenness and as being intrinsically related to the idea of transformation from living into dead matter. What is inherent in the nature of disgust is the idea of life and vitality: an object must first exist and live in order to be decomposed into death. McGinn (2011, p. 90), who favors Kolnai's theory of disgust, captures nicely this idea by saying: "Disgust occupies a borderline space, a region of uncertainty and ambivalence, where life and death meet and merge." Only those objects that indicate the presence of life and its decay can elicit disgust. For this reason, inorganic or non-biological items are excluded from the subject of disgust (Kolnai 2004, p. 30).

The idea of an abundance of life and vitality, inherent in disgust, is not an exceptional one. Miller (1997, p. 110) interprets disgust as a reaction mechanism against a surplus of unconscious and conscious pleasures. While the first type functions as a blockade of unconscious desires, the second one punishes the gluttony of it. Disgust originating from the excess of pleasure and vitality was also emphasized by Kant. Furthermore, it does not arise merely from oral consumption, but also from intellectual or mental enjoyment:

there is also a mental pleasure, which consist in the communication of thoughts. But if it is forced on us (. . .) the mind finds it repulsive (as in, e.g., the constant repetition of would-be flashes of wit or humor, whose sameness can be unwholesome to us), and thus the natural instinct to be free of it is also called nausea. (Anthro 7:157, p. 50)

¹This remark has been made by McGinn (2011, p. 87).

Disgust in this case also functions as a defense reaction; it prevents the excess of pleasures in the mind. The excessiveness of mental pleasure, similarly to oral satiation, provokes the defense reaction of disgust, which in this case serves as a protector from drowning in pleasure (Kolnai 2004, p. 63). Here, the object does not simply cease to be pleasant, but rather the accumulation of enjoyment itself presupposes its own failing: “One cannot say that what we have here is simply a pleasure that has ceased to be pleasurable, rather, that the pleasure involved becomes merely shallow, barren” (ibid.). Kolnai favors the explanation of disgust as inherent in the satiation and interprets this excess of pleasure as a surplus of vitality, an exaggeration of an aspect of life such as aggressiveness, brutality and sexuality, all of them “disorderly, unclean, clammy, the unhealthy excess of life” (2004, p. 67). Furthermore, surplus of vitality does not need to derive merely from an unhealthy aspect of life, but from any satiation with well-being which is purposeless, meaningless and does not occupy the faculty of reason. This idea is suggested by Kant’s explanation of self-aversion: “disgust with one’s own existence, which arises when the mind is empty of the sensations towards which it incessantly strives. This is boredom” (Anthro 7:151, p. 43).

Kant’s explanation of disgust is important for the understanding of his theory of art and the role that rational ideas play within it. Namely, rational ideas guard us against the disgust elicited by the excess of bare pleasure:

in all beautiful art what is essential consists in the form, which is purposive for observation and judging, where the pleasure is at the same time culture and disposes the spirit to ideas, hence makes it receptive to several sorts of pleasure and entertainment – not in the matter of the sensation (the charm or the emotion), where it is aimed merely at enjoyment, which leaves behind it nothing in the idea, and makes the spirit dull, the object by and by loathsome, and the mind, because it is aware that its disposition is contrapurposive in the judgment of reason, dissatisfied with itself and moody. (KU 5:326, p. 203)

Accordingly, also the excess of aesthetic pleasure itself can cause disgust: “Beautiful (...) where it goes too far, transforms into weariness, surfeit and disgust” (Beob 20:19, p. 79). In order to avoid such disgust, the object of aesthetic delight must be connected with rational ideas (an example of such an inexhaustible beauty is the movie *The Seventh Seal* by Ingmar Bergman, which as a beautiful allegory of existential, religious, moral ideas and reflections never stops captivating).

Common to all such interpretations is an understanding of disgust as a product of cultural and social determination. Beside ‘animal-reminder’ disgust that has roots in social preferences for distinguishing the rational side from the animal one, psychological studies of ‘core’ or food-related disgust have shown that it is not so much a biological instinct against contaminated objects, but more a result of cultivation: “Like language and sexuality, the adult form of disgust varies by culture, and children must be “trained-up” in the local rules and meaning” (Haidt et al. 1997, p. 111). Kant anticipated the necessity of cultural and social conditions for disgust’s existence long before. In *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie* he writes:

We also find that disgust at filth is only present in cultivated nations; the uncultivated nation has no qualms about filth. Cleanliness demonstrates the greatest human cultivation, since it is the least natural human quality, causing much exertion and hardship. (cited in Menninghaus 2003, p. 108)

The idea that the boundaries of disgust (what offends and what not) are culturally and socially determined demarcated the displeasure of disgust from the mere unpleasantness of sensations (distaste) and thus defines it as a high cognitive emotion. Whether the object has the quality of being disgusting is determined by the culturally developed ideas of physical and moral contamination. Hence, as Miller (1997, p. 8) concludes, a feeling of disgust, even though highly physiologically effective and visceral, is nevertheless an emotion “connected to ideas, perceptions, and cognitions and to the social and cultural context in which it makes sense to have those feelings and ideas.”

An explanation of disgust as originating from the decline of vitality, life and pleasure reveals its captivating and ambivalent nature. In spite of the initial rejection of the object of disgust, we are on the other hand attracted to it (there is a special appeal in watching horror movies, peeking at disgusting events such as car accidents or visiting disgusting art exhibitions). It is not merely curiosity or a peculiar kind of pleasure that we have in the transgression of standards, but the pleasure that is contained in disgust itself that allures us. The phenomenon of fascination with disgust and its celebration in mainstream art can thus be explained by dissecting its very ambivalent character: desire and displeasure. We desire the exuberance of life and overpowering vitality that lingers in the disgusting object. The object of disgust invites us to touch it, to smell it, to embrace it, as if through such intimate communication with the object one would become imbued with life, that is, with a pure, unrestrained, uncontrolled and depersonalized form of life. Yet, precisely for the same reason that disgust allures us, it also threatened us, because the idea of excessiveness of life anticipates death, just as overindulgence of sweetness anticipates sickness and nausea. It is this latter moment, the recognition of death inherent in the surplus of life that in the end prevails and evokes repulsion. Disgust is after all a defense mechanism (in its purest form indicated by nausea) against threatening (contaminated) objects. Although the insinuation of fear does not have a rational validity, it is nevertheless inherently present in disgust. Fear of being contaminated and impregnated with death by the repulsive object guides our rejection of it. What is fearsome and for that matter rejected is not the fullness and vitality of life or pleasure, but its decline. What is rejected is the inevitability of death, the deterioration of our individuality and the realization that we are nothing else but a physical substance, doomed to disintegrate and terminate.

6.2 The Nature of Visual Disgust and Its Anti-aesthetic Effect in Art

The primal origins of disgust are to be found in the senses of smell, taste and touch, because, as pointed out, they grasp the material essence of the object more fully. They are properly regarded as the transmitters of contamination. Nevertheless, seeing a flying cockroach or someone picking their nose in public equally arouses aversion, despite the fact that senses of smell, taste and touch are not involved

in such a situation. Here we have a genuine example of visual disgust, that is, disgust evoked by the mere visual appearance of the object. Even though there is no danger of being contaminated by merely seeing a disgusting object, the fear of being touched by it is still present, sometimes intensified to the point of a physical reaction of nausea. How does the idea of contamination sneak into visual cases?

One of the reasons, as Kolnai (2004, p. 48–52) writes, is that the visual sensation grasps the object more comprehensively and in its more fully constituted way. It represents the object's features more clearly and thus it is capable of bringing up the imaginative powers of other sensations. To be repulsed by the mere sight of an object is to be disgusted by it through the associative thinking of how the object must be felt by tasting, touching or smelling it. Visual cases presuppose that the imaginative working of the other senses is necessary. The idea that the object of visual disgust is contaminated is then brought in by linking it with other senses. It is not even necessary that the object that visually evokes disgust have a bad taste or smell. Even seeing a chocolate in the form of feces, although pleasing to taste, is still highly repulsive (consider for example artist Helga Petraus-Heinzel and her sculptures of animal organs and rotting pig heads made out of marzipan). The reason for this is that the mere visual form, by associative thinking of an object that is contagious (feces or rotten pig heads), brings up the idea that this object is also contagious and thus elicits disgust. Similarly, an object can look good, as for example a delicious looking steak, but if it is made out of dog meat, it will nevertheless arouse disgust (in some cultures). Such cases illustrate that visual disgust need not be aroused by the way things look, but by the mere fact of knowing what the object is or what it represents.

The behavior of visual disgust in non-fictional situations is comparable to its effect in fictional situations, such as in the arts of painting, photography, cinematography, the plastic arts, or performance art. As Plantinga (2006) points out, the difference is merely in the degree of disgusting feeling and not in the type of emotion. In fictional visual representation we still experience disgust as a unique defense reaction manifested as nausea, turning away from the image or even physically distancing oneself from it (such was the most common reaction on the violent sexual scene in the movie *Irreversible*, 2002 by Gaspar Noé).

What I am interested in here is the question of the validity of Kant's thesis about the anti-aesthetic effect of disgust in art, that is, whether an object that excites disgust by its visual representation necessarily fails to be aesthetically appealing. I will reexamine this question by considering three different types of disgust, as distinguished by Haidt et al. (1997), and their behavior in the case of fictional visual representation.

Let me begin with the 'core' disgust, where repulsion is provoked by the senses of smell and taste. In this case there is no necessary connection that an object that excites disgust by the mere sense of smell and taste will also excite disgust by its mere visual appearance. For example, seeing chocolate made with cockroaches, while otherwise orally disgusting, does not excite visual disgust. A similar case can be found in Dieter Roth's work *Shit Hare* (1975) a chocolate Eastern bunny made out of excrement. While taste-disgusting, this fact alone does not alter its

visually pleasing properties. However, such orally disgusting objects can provoke visual aversion in the case of seeing someone eating the object. Such a reaction of visual disgust is suggested by Kant:

The sight of others enjoying loathsome things (e.g., when the Tunguse rhythmically suck out and swallow the mucus from their children's noses) induces the spectator to vomit, just as if such a pleasure were forced on him. (Anthro 7:178, p. 71)

Visual disgust is here evoked not by the object itself that is taste-disgusting, but by the image of someone consuming that object. This illustrates a special power of transmittance between different types of disgust, which Miller (1997, p. 81) also points out: "We see the thing chewed on and swallowed; we have, in other words, muscular actions that can be sympathetically triggered by the sight." Visual disgust is in this case evoked by the suggestive imaginative powers of the sense of taste, but there can be a similar transference between visual and tactile disgust (for example seeing someone touching a rat).²

Cinematography has, in particular, recognized this principle of communication between oral and visual disgust and thus deliberately provokes them in horror and other intentionally repulsive movies. Moreover, it uses this principle to accentuate visual disgust by connecting 'animal reminder' and oral disgust. For example in *Pink Flamingos* (1972) by John Waters, the highlight of disgust is not when Crackers (Danny Mills) and Cotton (Mary Vivian Pierce) slaughter and cut off the ear of Cookie (Cookie Mueller), but when Divine eats it. Similarly, in the movie *Hannibal* (2001) by Ridley Scott, the most repellent scene is not when Hannibal (Anthony Hopkins) opens the Paul Krendler's (Ray Liotta) skull and cuts out part of his brain, but when he fries it in the pan and feeds Paul with it. The violation of the body envelope heightens the emotion of disgust when connected with oral consumption. This demonstrates the intrinsic relation of disgust with the sense of taste and in general with the sense experience of an object.

The second type of disgust is socio-moral disgust, that is, the aversion at the violation of the "spirit envelope" or "human dignity in the social order" (Haidt et al. 1997, p. 121). Socio-moral disgust is elicited by certain kind of behaviors that represent the violation of moral and social standards, such as hypocrisy, lying, brutality, selfishness, sexual deviances etc. For example, a photograph of a crucifix inundated in a glass of artist's urine, called *Piss Christ* (1987), by an American artist Andres Serrano, was proclaimed by many as an offending, abhorrent work of art, for the reason that it violates the purity and holiness of Christian faith. Nevertheless, in spite of the moral disgust that the object elicits, the visual properties of it are not altered; moreover the art work itself remains extremely aesthetically pleasing. Moral disgust in Serrano's art work is not caused by the sight of the object nor solely by the knowledge that it uses the artist's urine, but by the fact that a crucifix is placed in

²However, no such communication between visual and olfactory disgust is to be found. This is because the activation of olfactory disgust does not need a presence of the object. That is, we do not need to see the object in order for it to be smell-disgusting. Consequently, visual representation does not translate well the sense of smell (Miller 1997, p. 81).

the urine: something that is sacred is associated with a bodily excretion. Serrano's art work was not judged as morally repugnant because of its aesthetic properties but because of its meaning, that is, the message it conveys. An art work can be judged by its moral message, but this does not necessarily bring about its aesthetic devaluation.

What seems to be distinctive for moral disgust is that, in comparison to core and animal-reminder disgust, it does not elicit a strong visceral and somatic reaction. For example, it is rarely the case that condemnation of a certain behavior as morally disgusting is accompanied with a real physical reaction such as nausea or vomiting, even though we may verbally express how nauseating and sickening such behavior is. The reason why moral disgust does not elicit a strong visceral reaction is because it is not related to the sensory experience of the object. Korsmeyer (2011, p. 4) writes that socio-moral disgust is essentially metaphorical in its nature and it does not represent a paradigmatic example of disgust. We judge a certain morally disapproving behavior in terms of a strong emotional response such as disgust, because we want to express our strong discontentment and not because we would actually feel the visceral reaction significant for disgust. The loose connection between socio-moral disgust and somatic reaction explains why socio-moral disgust does not elicit visual disgust and accordingly does not destroy the aesthetic value of artistic representation.

The aesthetic value of artistic representation is, however, endangered more by the depiction of animal-reminder disgust, which elicits repulsion most entirely through the sense of sight. For example, depictions of disgust-provoking animals (cockroaches, rats, maggots), decaying or mutilated bodies, or perverse sexuality do not elicit disgust through the senses of smell and taste, but through sight. What is more important, aversion is not provoked by the way they look (by the arrangement of visual properties) but how we look at them – as a violation of body envelope and as a reminder of our mortal nature. The feeling of disgust, as already pointed out, depends on what the object represents, on the meaning hidden behind it.

Nevertheless, visual disgust is highly controversial in the realm of art because it provokes the tension between the nature of the disgusting object and its artistic representation, which can easily collapse. When this happens, it is impossible to aesthetically enjoy the depicted object. It is for this reason that disgust functions anti-aesthetically. If the nature of the represented object interferes with the artistic image, we cannot distinguish artistic representations of that object from the nature of that object itself. Thus disgust precludes the possibility of disinterested reflection, which is necessary for the successful aesthetic representation of an object. We can no longer distinguish between the cognitive effect of the real existence of that object and its mere representation; hence the aesthetic reflection is destroyed.

As already mentioned, even the mere visual representation of the disgusting object is deeply experienced sensibly and it evokes a feeling of nearness that, in the end, is responsible for an aesthetic collapse and, consequently, the inability to find the object aesthetically pleasurable. Anti-aesthetic effect of visual disgust is captured well by art works such as *Sex and Death*, by Jack and Dinos Chapman (2003), depicting the skull of the corpse with a red clown nose covered by snails, maggots, spider, snakes, and flies. The nature of the object as realistically

represented in the work obstructs any possibility of finding this work aesthetically attractive. A similar anti-aesthetic eruption of the portrayal of mutilated bodies, coprophagia, physical violation, sexual degradation, urophilia, and humiliation of moral dignity is evident in the infamous movie, *The 120 of Sodom* (1975), by Pier Paolo Pasolini. While some have judged it a masterpiece because of the idea it embodies and its technical aspects, the movie is visually hard to follow and is enjoyed because of its abhorrent visual attributes.

What exactly is the disruptive factor that determinates the negative aesthetic evaluation of such works? One reason lies in the realistic manner with which the disgusting object is presented: its nature is forced more strongly on the artistic representation. This could explain why, for example, Frida Kahlo's painting, *Las Dos Fridas* (1939), does not disturb, in spite of its use of animal-reminder disgust (violation of the body envelope). It skillfully beautifies the object with colors, lines, and shades, so that while the painting still represents a discomforting subject matter, it is nevertheless a pleasurable one. This explains further why depiction of disgusting objects in photography provokes rejection more directly than in painting. This is because the nature of the object is more sensibly presented and thus more easily provokes our imaginative powers on which disgust depends.

However, such a technique of beautification is not the only method of overcoming disgust for there are many examples of art works of extraordinary beauty in spite of the vivid and cruel depictions of repulsive objects. Slavenka Drakulić, in the novel *The Taste of a Man* (1997), describes an event in which the protagonist murders, slaughters, and eats parts of the body of her beloved man with such an explicit description that would in ordinary cases provoke repulsion, yet in this case renders the enjoyment beautiful. It is not merely the intelligent style with which this episode is written that furthers the suspension of the disgust's anti-aesthetic effect but the context of the depicted object. We are not confronted here with a mere body violation for its own sake because of the protagonist's mere enjoyment in the brutality, but because this act embodies an idea of spiritual sacrifice. Defiance of the body, which would in an ordinary case excite disgust, as an animal reminder reaction, is in this case associated with the idea of love. The context of the disgusting object alters the feeling with which we enter into it.

Many art works illustrate that disgust's anti-aesthetic effect and our receptivity to those works can be suspended either by stylistic control or by connecting the object with ideas. These latter are contrary to the reminder of animality that marks the object and emphasize rationality, love, moral and ethical dignity, and humanity, thus imbuing the object with a more profound meaning. This is one of the reasons, I think, that Kant insists on the importance of rational ideas in art. The influence of rational ideas is not just in prolonging aesthetic pleasure, which has a tendency to exhaust itself if not connected to rational ideas, but also to convert the displeasure of disgust into an aesthetic enjoyment. As Kant writes:

If the beautiful arts are not combined, whether closely or at a distance, with moral ideas, which alone carry with them a self-sufficient satisfaction, then the latter [disgust] is their ultimate fate. (KU 5:326, p. 203)

An experience of disgust is a strong emotional reaction. Even though the object is perceived only by sight, its strong sensuous nature gives an impression of its nearness, increasing the feeling of being threatened by it and making us reject it. In general, the feeling of disgust is described as the most visceral emotion of all, being essentially tied to sensory experience. A disgusting object, even though perceived merely visually, affects all our senses. Because of this feeling of sensory nearness, disgust acts anti-aesthetically. Since it prevents the possibility of distinguishing between the nature of the object and its artistic representation, it makes it impossible to perceive it in the mode of disinterested reflection. This means that such an object does not satisfy the condition of falling under reflective evaluation at all, and thus cannot be possibly regarded as beautiful (or ugly).

What I am interested in here is how disgust functions aesthetically in art works. I distinguish two different types of artistic disgust: (i) art that manipulates the depiction of the disgusting for its own sake, and (ii) art works in which the disgusting subject material is extrinsic to the purpose of art.

6.2.1 Disgust for Disgust's Sake

The first type of artistic disgust is widely present in contemporary art and recognized by the name *abject art*. Such art operates with disgusting objects, such as feces (Mike Kelley & Paul McCarthy, *Secession*, 1998); vomit and blood (Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #175*, 1978); mutilated and slaughtered bodies (Chapman Brothers, *Great Deeds Against The Dead*, 1994). It is the nature of disgust itself that is analyzed here. For this reason, such art intentionally uses those art forms through which the nature of the object can be more explicitly presented, such as photography and plastic art. Its aim is to decode the psychological, social, and cultural components of disgust. In order to do this, it uses its own idiomatic style: the more violent the experience of the subject matter, the more the subject matter presses on artistic presentation, and the more we are forced to deal with it. The collapsing of the difference between reality and art is needed in order to achieve the cognitive function at which such art aims in order to bring art closer to every-day human experience. And disgust, by its strong physiological and sensual nature, can perform such collapsing especially successfully.

Such art works do not aim to be beautiful or aesthetically appealing, and they do not aspire to be so by their own definition. Their artistic aspirations surpass the aesthetic ones, which is to grasp the intellectual and experiential disclosure of disgust. The art of disgust investigates the meaning of disgust and the existential, philosophical, and social issues that are provoked by it. An experience of the disgusting in art, unlike in real life, is much more penetrating and enriching in revealing such issue. One of the reasons for this is that artistic experience is a concrete sensible experience of a state of affairs and can therefore “bring home general truths in a particularly vivid manner, deepening their apprehension more profoundly than straightforward statement can accomplish” (Korsmeyer 2011,

p. 134). That is, even though we know that we are mortal beings, it is particularly through art that we can experience the painful realization of mortality in its full extent, that is, how it makes us feel. Matthew Kieran (1997, p. 387) writes that rendering the disgusting in art enhances experiential knowledge. For example, the Chapman Brothers' sculpture, titled *DNA Zygotic* (2003), which depicts mutated children's bodies, explores the issues of genetic damage and forces us to reflect on its experiential possibility. Such cognitive inquiry and self-reflection provoked by the disgusting in art is also nicely illustrated by Jana Sterbak's work *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic* (1987). The sculpture of a dress, made out of 50 pounds of raw meat sewn together and hung on a hanger, symbolizes the unavoidability of bodily decay and death. It is precisely through a highly discomfoting experience that the work urges the viewer to confront with their own mortality and with the futility of one's own earthly accomplishments and desires.

Another reason why experience of the disgusting in art is so much more effective in facilitating cognitive inquiry is because of the nature of the artistic realm in general. Namely, art represents a safe domain in which we can suspend, not the visceral reaction of disgust, but the emotions of fear and danger that accompanies the disgust reaction in normal conditions and which preclude one's ability to take a reflective stance towards the experience of disgust. One can notice, for example that it is almost impossible to experience the disgust reaction in real life (such as when witnessing someone torturing animals) without at the same time experiencing fear and emotional or physical danger for ourselves and others. We react to such danger either by running away from the threatening situation for the sake of protecting ourselves, or by immobilizing a person. In both cases, fear of danger prevents us from fully engaging in a cognitive and intellectual inquiry into the meaning of disgust. In art, however, where no real danger exists, we can allow ourselves to experience the genuine reaction of disgust, but without the accompanying emotion of fear and therefore with an opportunity to fully experience disgust and the meaning that lies behind it. Aaron Smuts (2007, p. 74), who defends the 'safety' theory of art, expresses this idea nicely in the following:

Art safely provides us the opportunity to have rich emotional experiences that are either impossible or far too risky to have in our daily lives. We can feel fear without risking our lives, pity without seeing our loved ones suffer, thrills without risking going to jail, and a variety of other experiences that usually come with unwelcome pitfalls.

An example of disgust's occasioning such a reflective experience is apparent in the controversial movie, *A Serbian Film* (2010), by Srdjan Spasojevic, which is an outstandingly and constantly disgusting movie. The combination of core (oral), animal reminder, and moral disgust in this movie is intensified to the point where it is almost unbearable to watch it. Yet, in contrast to other movies, especially of the horror genre, where disgust has no other purpose but the visceral experience it produces, in *A Serbian Film* it also works as a powerful metaphor for the post-war Serbian people's political abuse. The experience of disgust serves here as a sort of catharsis that is intended to open up emotional and intellectual awareness, and understanding of the social, political, and existential situation of the post-war

Serbian people. Reflection occasioned by disgust is also apparent in the infamous movie, *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980), by Ruggero Deodato. The repugnance of the realistic depiction of animal slaughter and psychical and sexual violence is supposed to work as a critical commentary on Western brutality towards indigenous tribes and their traditions. A real-life confrontation with such animal brutality would result in moral condemnation rather than in cognitive and intellectual inquiry into the meaning of the visual representation of such cruelty.

The more the representation of disgust permeates our sense experience, the more imperative becomes the cognitive inquiry into its essence. This makes the rendering of the disgusting in art valuable and, to some extent, enjoyable, although the enjoyment may have merely cognitive rather than aesthetic value. Because such art lacks positive aesthetic aspirations in the first place, the representation of disgust does not destroy its artistic function but completes it, and for this reason it can be a successful artistic representation. Since such art does not aim to be aesthetically pleasurable, it does not contradict Kant's fundamental principle of excluding disgusting objects from the aesthetic realm. Hence, it does not need to be preoccupied with the preservation of a disinterested attention. This is, however, needed if the purpose of art aims to elicit positive aesthetic reaction. It is therefore challenging to reexamine not whether the art of disgust is possible, since, as I have argued, it is, but whether the aesthetic of disgust is achievable. That is, can there be an aesthetically pleasurable representation of disgusting subject matter?

6.2.2 The Possibility of a Positive Aesthetic of Disgust

There are many examples of art works with positive aesthetic qualities in spite of their disgusting subject matter, such as Frida Kahlo's *Without Hope* (1945), depicting Frida lying ill in the hospital bed and vomiting; Matthias Grünewald's *The Dead Lovers* (1528), depicting the bodies of a couple, riddled with snakes, worms, and leeches; or Francisco Goya's *The Disaster of War* (1810), portraying brutally butchered bodies hanging from a tree. How can the existence of an aesthetically pleasurable representation of a disgusting object be consistent with Kant's thesis on the anti-aesthetic effect of disgust? In order to solve this problem, we must turn to Kant's argument.

What Kant argues in §48 is not that disgusting subject matter ruins the aesthetic representation by itself, but it does so only if the object is depicted in such a way that its repulsive nature forces itself on the aesthetic enjoyment of the object and thus threatens it. This happens when the nature of the object is represented so that it activates our associative sensuous experience of it (by the means of imagination), which results in the rejection of the representation completely. Because disgust is a strong visceral and physiological emotion, we are unable, in such a depiction, to remain indifferent to, or disinterested in, its artistic representation. In Kant's words, this means that we are unable to distinguish the nature of the object from its formal representation and consequently to find it aesthetically appealing. The

depiction of disgusting subject matter is aesthetically unsuccessful only if its nature is represented in such a way that it destroys disinterested reflection; that is, when our attention is not focused on the imaginative representation of disgust but on its existence.

On the other hand, if the representation of the disgusting object does not threaten its artistic image, that is, if we are still able to retain distance to the nature of the object, the aesthetic representation can remain successful. In this case, we have a genuine situation in which the visceral reaction to the disgusting object has been suspended. To remain in the mode of disinterested reflection on the object is partly conditioned by the type of the art form. For example, visual and plastic arts are, in comparison to literary art, more sensitive to such aesthetic collapsing, since they are more inclined to represent an object with regard to its nature. This is particularly true for plastic arts, and it is not without reason that Kant suggested substituting any depiction of disgusting material in the art of sculpture by its symbolic or allegoric representations that look aesthetically pleasing (KU 5:312, p. 191). In the visual arts, photography is again more inclined to provoke aversion than painting is (for example, compare the portrayal of a naked old female body in the painting by Matthias Grunewald *Death and the Age of Man*, 1540 and in the photography by Andres Serrano: *Budapest*, 1994. Or, the depiction of butchered bodies as in the painting of Francisco Goya: *The Disaster of War*, 1810–1820 and as represented by the sculpture made by Chapman Brothers': *Great Deeds Against The Dead*, 1994). On the other hand, literary art has the most power to manipulate the beautification of a disgusting topic. This is because the representation of the disgusting object through words is more distant from the appeal to our senses and hence we are more able to focus our reflection on the stylistic portrayal of the subject matter. The more the artistic representation of the disgusting matter is distant from the nature of the object, the more its aesthetic appreciation can be successful.

Properly speaking, there can be no positive aesthetic of disgust, because by definition disgust contains a rejection of the object before an aesthetic evaluation of it could even begin. Disgust by its own logic contradicts aesthetic beauty, because it contravenes the fundamental condition of entering into aesthetic apprehension: the principle of disinterestedness. Aesthetic properties in general, as well as disgust, are related to sensual experience, yet disgust is an experience which, contrary to pure aesthetic beauty (and ugliness), is essentially connected to the cognitive ideas of contamination and putrefaction. For this reason, disgust is more attached to the material nature of the object and to what it represents, than with the arrangement of its properties, as beauty and ugliness are. This is evident from the phenomenological experience of disgust, which is not a reflective experience, but a visceral one. We feel disgust with the entire body. Even in visual representation, there is a feeling of physical nearness with the aversive object. Thus, when we do find a disgusting object aesthetically attractive, as in the case of some works of art, it is because we do not have a genuine disgust reaction but the displeasure of disgust in which the original disgust reaction is suspended. What we have is a deceptive or 'pseudo-disgust' experience that is still painful, yet without the sensuous impact that would destroy aesthetic reflection.

6.3 The Phenomenological and Theoretical Distinction Between Disgust and Ugliness

In everyday discourse there is a habitual use of the words disgust and ugly when referring to objects of displeasure, frequently interwoven with each other, when describing our dislike towards offending, incongruent and distorted objects. The concept of ugliness has a predisposition, like disgust, to pervade moral evaluations and disagreements, much more than its opposite, beauty, has.³ Leaving aside the semantic oddity of the concept of ugliness, what I am interested in, in the context of this topic, is merely its aesthetic function. That is, the use of the word *ugly* as we insistently employ it in purely aesthetic evaluations, reserved for the features of an object that do not fit together (as, for example, hearing discordant musical tones or seeing an arrhythmic dance performance). The evaluative word *ugly*, as used in these cases, refers to the judgment of formal discord or disharmony among features of an object.

Disgust and ugliness have in common a dependence on a negative feeling value, a feeling of displeasure. Furthermore, this feeling can be in both cases intentional. In the case of ugliness it is a conscious response to the arrangement of qualities, that is, to its disharmonious display. In the case of disgust it is a response to the idea of putrefaction or contagiousness of the offending objects and hence the feeling of displeasure in repulsive objects necessarily alludes to the emotion of fear. There is then a strict and apparent phenomenological difference between the feelings of ugliness and disgust. While feelings of danger and fear are essential for the emotion of disgust (which is after all a defense reaction feeling), the displeasure of the ugly is an effect of a mere dissatisfaction with the disagreement between properties of an object, independently of the ideas that the object occasions. In order to find an object's features discordant, there is no need to know what the object is about (leaving aside Kant's category of adherent aesthetic properties). What matters is merely its formal appearance as it affects our aesthetical common sense.

Furthermore, both disgust and ugliness have their own phenomenological feeling tonalities of displeasure. An object can be more or less aesthetically ugly, depending on the level of discord or disharmony in the arrangement of properties. Likewise, an object can more or less evoke disgust, depending on how strongly the idea of putrefaction pervades it. We are usually less disgusted at the sight of filth, than at an injured body, although it also depends on the individual sensitivity for the disgusting.⁴ For example, in the movie *Repulsion* (1965), by Roman Polanski, the main character Carol (Catherine Deneuve) vomits from being disgusted by the smell of men's clothes, which in general is rarely an elicitor of disgust.

³For a more detailed discussion of the multifaceted nature of the concept of ugly see Henderson (1966) and Carmichael (1972).

⁴Kolnai (2004, p. 56) explains the minimal feeling of disgust at dirt as the consequence of the fact that dirt is less related to the idea of life in decay, but it is merely a sign that there was life.

That the concepts of disgust and ugliness have different sources is evident more clearly from the fact that we can find some objects strongly repulsive, without a trace of any pure aesthetic ugliness (for example, snakes can be quite repulsive animals for many of us, though in some cases they can exhibit high aesthetic beauty in the arrangement of their colors; such as coral and corn snakes). Also, the opposite is the case. There can be aesthetic ugliness for example in listening to a concert, where players consistently play the wrong notes, yet without any kind of trace of disgust. As a matter of fact, dance and music (such as instrumental music) are the only art forms in which disgust does not feature. The reason why the arts of dance and of pure music cannot be disgusting is because they are merely a perception of pure formal qualities; the play of bodily movement in space in the first place, and play of sound in time in the latter.⁵ Disgust can be found only in the art forms that are not merely expressions of pure formal qualities but where content is explicitly involved.

This observation reinforces the argument for the dissimilarity of disgust and ugliness. While ugliness refers exclusively to the composition of properties of the object, disgust refers to the meaning of the depicted, the idea that the object represents or embodies. Moreover, the fact that disgust can be found merely in organic and biological items (or in items associated with them), while ugliness is not limited in this way, supports the view of their different natures. Disgust is inherent in the idea of putrefaction (because only living things are destined to die), while ugliness is in the formal configuration of an object.

The distinction between disgust and ugliness can be reinforced by Kant's appeal to the different cognitive faculties that disgust and ugliness employ. As he writes in §48, disgust depends on nothing else but the imagination of the senses, while aesthetic feelings of beauty and ugliness are partly intellectualized feelings. The aesthetic perception of ugliness and beauty is a reflective perception. It employs a mental state of free harmony (or disharmony) between the faculty of imagination and the faculty of understanding. After all, according to Kant, aesthetic pleasure (or displeasure) demands necessary universal validity, and it could not do that if not linked with the understanding, which is thus indispensable for aesthetic perception. Aesthetic feeling is the feeling of a free harmonious (or disharmonious) play between imagination and understanding; this is the fundamental structure of its aesthetic purity and universal validity, which is lacking in disgust. In light of these considerations, it is legitimate to argue that disgust and ugliness, although both negative evaluative judgments, are dissimilar in the most fundamental phenomenological and theoretical aspects. The feeling of ugliness is an effect of a reflective mental state in which the faculty of understanding is necessarily employed, whereas disgust belongs to the special domain of sensory experience. Experience of disgust is therefore much more alike to the experience of sensory dissatisfaction, which,

⁵I am referring here to the art of dance in the strict sense, that is, merely as an expression of formal qualities, such as composition of bodily movements of one or more dancers and all art of bodily movements that do not involve any other activities or performances. Similarly, in the art of music, I refer to music in the narrow sense, without any verbal communication.

contrary to the non-sensory and disinterested dissatisfaction of the ugly, is connected with the interest in the existence of the object. The similarity between disgust and sensory dissatisfaction is in fact pointed out by Kant in his notes where he describes disgust as the negative form of gratification: "One says: Satisfaction, indifference, dissatisfaction. Gratification, indifference, abhorrence. Beautiful, ordinary, ugly" (R 15:296, p. 490). Given this, the notion of disgust and ugliness refer to fundamentally different negative experiences.

Nevertheless, Kant writes, the disgusting prevents the possibility to find the object beautiful and hence its power reaches aesthetic territory also. In this context, both disgust and ugliness preclude the possibility to find an object beautiful or aesthetically pleasing, though their approach differs significantly. An object that is disgusting simply influences aesthetic appreciation from a non-aesthetic realm. The content prevents the possibility that an aesthetic reflection even enters into our perception of the object. It does that by hindering the possibility of a disinterested attention to the object in the first place. To disinterestedly regard the object means in other words to subsume it under the aesthetic reflection which determines whether the object is beautiful or not (depending on the harmony or disharmony of cognitive powers through the feeling of pleasure or displeasure). And if disgust prevents the possibility of an object to be evaluated aesthetically in the first place, that is, if the object cannot be aesthetically evaluated at all, then a fortiori it cannot be evaluated positively, that is, as beautiful (or as ugly for that matter). It is for this reason that disgust functions anti-aesthetically.

The feeling of ugliness, on the other hand, does not interfere with aesthetic reflection, as disgust does, but on the contrary, it is an outcome of it. To evaluate objects as ugly is to acknowledge that the reflective operation took place and that its outcome was a feeling of displeasure, which therefore must be regarded as a counter-part to beauty, more than disgust is. An object that is aesthetically evaluated as ugly can by definition never be regarded as beautiful, while an object of disgust can exhibit, on certain occasions (when the aesthetic illusion between the nature of the object and its representation does not collapse) aesthetic beauty.

Both ugliness and disgust are aesthetic counterparts to beauty. While ugliness as a negative aesthetic partner of beauty is its proper opponent, disgust, on the other hand, is much more resistant to beauty than ugliness is: "Nothing is so opposed to the beautiful as the disgusting," Kant writes (Beob 2:233, p. 40). Disgust is the most hostile opposition to beauty, not because disgust would be the most extreme form of ugliness, but precisely because of its different nature. Disgust is a sign of an immediate failure. In contrast to ugliness, disgust fails without aesthetic examination. It is a symptom of failure before even entering into aesthetic reflection, just as a feces-like chocolate fails to be appreciated before even tasted and sensibly evaluated. Disgust is the enemy of beauty precisely because it prevents any aesthetic evaluation. It is a turn-off without even being aesthetically inspected.

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