

Kantian Aesthetics: Free Beauty in Fine Arts

Qirui Jiang

Guangdong Shunde Desheng School, Shunde 528300, China

jqr.612@gmail.com

Abstract. A rose is beautiful. The Mona Lisa is beautiful. What is the difference between these two objects in being beautiful? In *Critique of Judgment*, Kant famously answers this question with a demarcation between two kinds of beauty: free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*) and adherent beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*). Natural objects, e.g., a rose, fall into the realm of free beauty while works of fine arts, e.g., the Mona Lisa, adherent beauty. Objects of free beauty do not presuppose conceptual understanding while that of adherent beauty do. We do not regard some objective rules, if any, for the beauty of a rose while some rules seem necessary for properly judging fine arts. However, Kant's free-adherent beauty distinction is much more nuanced than what he makes explicit in *Critique*. The theoretical distinction is not as clear-cut as it appears, and this paper shows that a work of fine art as an object of adherent beauty is no more than a special form of free beauty. While taste - the faculty necessary for aesthetic judgments - may be restricted by, be a parergon to, or interact with our conceptual understanding, it necessarily remains free and uncontaminated. Genius - the naturally endowed ability to create fine arts - makes the corporeal existence of a work of fine art possible but is necessarily guided by taste. Furthermore, taste can be conditioned by our understanding but it necessarily guides and makes our understanding possible, i.e., any concepts presupposed for fine arts are aesthetic in origin. This paper concludes that the possibility of free beauty entailed by taste, therefore, is necessarily compatible with the adherent beauty of fine arts.

Keywords: Kant; Free Beauty; Adherent Beauty; Fine Arts; Aesthetic Judgment; Critique of Judgment.

1. Introduction

A rose is beautiful. The *Mona Lisa* is beautiful. What is the difference between these two objects in being beautiful? In *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant famously answers this question with a demarcation between two kinds of beauty: free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*) and adherent beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*) [1]. Natural objects, e.g., a rose, fall into the realm of free beauty while works of fine arts, e.g., the Mona Lisa, adherent beauty.

Objects of free beauty, as Kant defines it, “presupposes no concept of what the object should be” [1]. Our prior understanding of a concept imposes a purpose that establishes rules for objectively determining whether or not the object subsumed under the concept is *good* rather than beautiful. A rose is beautiful not because it is a perfect rose under some objective criteria. One may even doubt if there are rules that rationally determine that a rose is beautiful. In other words, our understanding of a rose--the concept of a rose--is irrelevant to our judgment that a rose is beautiful. This interpretation may be counter-intuitive because we seem to inevitably consider the concept of a rose when appreciating it. As long as we recognize an object as a rose, our judgment for it fails to be aesthetic.

A resolution to this difficulty is to understand the source of beauty in Kant's account. What makes a rose beautiful, according to Kant, is our judging faculty of taste that gives rise to a feeling of “disinterested” pleasure [1]. A feeling of pleasure is disinterested when our judgment of beauty solely considers the *form* of an object without being contaminated by other considerations including conceptual deliberations. We may recognize a rose--the concept of a rose is at play--but that does not contribute positively to the disinterested pleasure we feel when we judge that a rose is beautiful. A rose is beautiful in its own *form*. Therefore, our conceptual understanding of a rose is irrelevant to our judgment that a rose is beautiful because Kant distinguishes the judgment of taste from a cognitive judgment [1].

However, the *Mona Lisa*, as a work of fine art, is not simply beautiful in its own *form* but a beautiful *portrait painting*. We not only inevitably but necessarily regard our understanding of

portrait painting when ascribing beauty to the *Mona Lisa*. When we view that a portrait painting perfectly fulfills some objective rules such as principles of facial proportions, we find it beautiful. In other words, the concept of portrait painting becomes relevant to our judgment that a work of fine art, e.g., the *Mona Lisa*, is beautiful. The same cannot be said of a rose. Although we do regard our understanding of a ‘perfect’ rose when viewing a rose, that understanding is of cognitive rather than aesthetic use. Works of fine arts, therefore, are objects of adherent beauty because they need to presuppose a concept for aesthetically judging them.

Kant’s free–adherent beauty distinction seems problematic. One theoretical concern is how judgments of beauty for fine arts--objects of adherent beauty--can be viewed to exercise our faculty of taste at all since conceptual considerations do seem to positively contribute to the pleasure we feel. Another apparent problem is that Kant appears to logically reduce all works of fine arts to mere objects of adherent beauty to which we do not ascribe beauty in any genuine sense, which runs the risk of undermining the aesthetic character of fine arts [2].

This essay aims to examine the compatibility of free beauty with adherent beauty in fine arts, namely the necessary requirement to presuppose a concept. The thesis of this essay holds that conceptual understanding does not preclude the possibility of free beauty in fine arts and argues that this conclusion is necessary not only in order to retain the aesthetic character of fine arts but for making sense of the theoretical tensions in *Critique*. Section 1 examines whether or not Kant’s account on fine arts precludes the possibility of free beauty. Section 2 shows how judgments of adherent beauty for fine arts leave room for free beauty. Section 3 responds to the objection that free beauty in fine arts is incompatible with the ‘free play’ in aesthetic judgments.

2. Against the Preclusion of Free Beauty in Fine Arts

Kant defines fine arts to “always presupposes an end in the cause (and its causality), a concept of what the thing is intended to be” [1], which necessarily renders all judgments of beauty for fine arts to be judgments of adherent rather than of free beauty, giving rise to contaminated rather than disinterested pleasure. The theoretical distinction between free beauty and adherent beauty seems to draw a determinate boundary that completely detaches free beauty from fine arts. If Kant himself is explicit that fine arts require prior conceptual understanding for proper judgments of beauty, there seems to be no theoretical possibility that free beauty can be ascribed to fine arts under his distinction.

It is imperative to note that the free–adherent beauty distinction Kant makes is more appropriately understood as the theoretical distinction between judgments of free beauty and that of adherent beauty. In distinguishing the beauty of fine arts from that of nature, Kant explicitly states that “in judging beauty of art the perfection of the thing must be also taken into account—a matter which in judging a beauty of nature, as beautiful, is quite irrelevant” [1]. Similar wording is deployed when Kant first outlines the demarcation between free beauty and adherent beauty as whether or not in a judgment of beauty there is conceptual understanding that “underlies this judgment” [1]. A possible inference of this theoretical clarification is that works of fine arts are objects of adherent beauty because of our prior conceptual understanding--the nature of our judgment rather than the work of fine arts itself makes it an object of adherent beauty. This interpretation further offers the solution to ascribe free beauty in fine arts by simply abstracting ourselves from any conceptual deliberations in judging fine arts.

However, this solution is problematic because it logically suggests that a kid who does not know about art practice makes a more genuine judgment of beauty for an artwork than an expert in fine arts. This implication is in direct contradiction with Kant’s verdict that our prior conceptual understanding is necessary for *properly* judging fine arts. This solution, therefore, distorts the problem to Kant’s theoretical inconsistencies by allowing judgments of free beauty improper for fine arts to be made. Another implication of this solution is that we can make a judgment that a work of fine art is beautiful completely independent of the judgment that it is good. Kant seems to agree with this implication when he claims that for objects like works of fine arts “with a determinate internal end, a judgment

of taste would only be pure where the person judging either has no concept of this end, or else makes abstraction from it in his judgment... since he would be judging the object as a free beauty, he would still be censured by another who saw nothing in its beauty but a dependent quality (i.e. who looked to the end of the object)... the one according to what he had present to his senses, the other according to what was present in his thoughts” [1]. Kant, in short, believes that we can make a pure judgment that a work of fine art is beautiful and another judgment that it is good simultaneously and independently of each other. However, this implication directly runs against Kant’s definition of fine arts to ‘presuppose’ conceptual understanding that is *relevant* in aesthetically judging it. That is to say, simply making two independent judgments that an object is respectively beautiful and good does not constitute a proper judgment of adherent beauty for fine arts [3], let alone the possibility of free beauty. The present essay will proceed to ascribe free beauty to proper judgments of adherent beauty for fine arts.

A more plausible interpretation I conceive Kant to theorize is a mutually reinforcing relationship between our conceptual understanding and adherent beauty, in which our understanding of a concept necessitates adherent beauty at the same time as adherent beauty requires that understanding.

Kant implies this relationship when he presents examples of a man and a horse as objects of nature that are judged not “as it appears like art, but rather in so far as it actually is art” because they require prior conceptual understanding [1]. Our concept of a man necessitates judgments of adherent beauty while aesthetically judging a man requires understanding that concept. Two important inferences can be made from these examples. First, Kant allows objects that are objectively defined as natural to be subject to judgments of adherent beauty for fine arts as long as conceptual considerations are relevant to whether or not they are beautiful. A woman is beautiful when she is dressed up to present a form that gives rise to a feeling of pleasure, we take in judging her *as a woman*. Zebra stripes are beautiful on a zebra but we may be more reluctant to say a woman with a full-body tattoo of zebra stripes is beautiful. The same case holds in the example of architecture, in which we may find it absurd to say a government building with its exterior decorated in the zebra pattern is a beautiful building. Both a woman and a building are judged as if they are works of fine arts although they do not objectively fall under the same kind of beauty by the free–adherent beauty distinction.

Second, the free-adherent beauty distinction does not bound objects of nature under free beauty, which raises the question of whether or not the distinction bound works of fine arts under adherent beauty--whether the distinction precludes free beauty in fine arts. Kant offers his implicit answer to this question when he distinguishes the beauty of sculpture from that of architecture. While he categorizes both sculpture and architecture as genres of “plastic art” that presuppose an understanding of determinate rules, he conceives sculpture to be characteristically different from architecture because the conceptual understanding of the former does not limit its *form* whereas that of the latter does [1]. The concept of a sculpture does not influence what a sculpture looks like--the concept of a sculpture is not relevant to whether a sculpture is a sculpture of a woman or horse and, to a large extent, whether it is beautiful. We do not necessarily consider whether the form of a sculpture meets its functionality or other immediate purposes, if there are, in aesthetically judging it but we do make these conceptual deliberations in the case of a building. The reason Kant gives for this distinction is that a sculpture imitates the nature, which serves as the basis on which the form of a sculpture is determined, while understanding of functionality--an arbitrary purpose--determines what form a building takes and whether or not it is beautiful [1]. The beauty of a sculpture, therefore, can be properly judged as if it is an object of nature whereas the beauty of a building cannot.

Kant, therefore, implicitly suggests that the free-adherent beauty distinction does not preclude free beauty in fine arts. This resolution to free beauty in fine arts, however, is a merely local one because only some works of fine arts are suitable to be judged as if they are objects of nature. Even in the case of a sculpture, we may still doubt whether it imitates the nature to the extent that it no longer appears as a work of fine art. Our conceptual understanding may be less relevant for a sculpture than for a building but Kant explicitly takes that understanding--how irrelevant it may be--to be necessary for

aesthetically judging a work of fine art, including a sculpture. Therefore, the present essay proceeds to offer a more comprehensive resolution that ascribes free beauty to fine arts.

In a general sense, Kant seems to intentionally allow the presence of conceptual impurities in judgments of beauty for fine arts because he does not conceive these impurities to render all judgments for fine arts to be assimilated into mere judgments of “the good” [1]. To judge that an object is *good*, Kant defines that we must know what the object ought to be--we must have a prior conceptual understanding of the object. More specifically, Kant takes judgments of the good to be mediated by our conceptual understanding to please while judgments of taste to immediately please [1]. In aesthetically judging a work of fine art, however, it seems Kant suggests that the pleasure one takes is necessarily mediated by our conceptual understanding as well. Even in the case of judging a sculpture, we still think of it as a sculpture although that conceptual thinking may not be as relevant as in the case of a building.

On the other hand, judgments of adherent beauty for fine arts, like that of free beauty, are intrinsically aesthetic. It is, therefore, plausible that Kant implicitly suggests that judgments of beauty for a work of fine art, although presupposing conceptual understanding, do not preclude the possibility of free beauty, the absolute absence of which renders all judgments for fine arts to fall short of being aesthetic. There is, in short, a strong *prima facie* tension between proper judgments of adherent beauty for fine arts that necessarily presuppose conceptual understanding and the possibility of free beauty that retains the aesthetic character of fine arts but cannot be contaminated by understanding.

The entry point to resolve the tension is to acknowledge that an *impure* judgment of taste does not sufficiently retain the aesthetic character of fine arts and to ask if something else is required. Before Kant even requires us to presuppose any concepts in judging fine arts, he states that we need to consider “its possibility” [1] --what makes its existence possible? Since Kant outlines that we must take into account how fine arts--and its aesthetic form--is created to aesthetically judge it, the notion of *genius*--the creative agent for fine arts--becomes relevant. Kant theorizes genius not as simply some know-how in producing fine arts that can be learned, so it ought not to be confused with the prior conceptual understanding we presuppose but something else that retains the aesthetic character of fine arts.

Genius is defined by Kant as a mental ability “endowed” by nature to give rules to fine arts [1]. A reasonable interpretation of this definition is that, while fine arts are artificially made, the creative process is ultimately guided by the rules of nature. Kant goes on to make a key claim that artists with genius do not have any adequate conceptual understanding when producing fine arts--they are not aware of the rules of nature [1]. In other words, these artists unknowingly presuppose some conceptual understanding given by the nature in producing fine arts. Genius as the creative faculty for fine arts is not contaminated by conceptual awareness and, therefore, free. In aesthetically judging fine arts, on the other hand, prior conceptual awareness is imposed on fine arts.

However, we may reasonably ask what relevance does creating fine arts bear to judging it, i.e., what is the relationship between genius and taste? Kant considers this relationship a central one in retaining the aesthetic character--and the possibility of free beauty--in fine arts. Indeed, an artist with genius seems to always use taste when creating fine arts. It is common, if not necessary, that an artist constantly evaluates his or her work while making it, making changes and adjustments according to his or her taste and resolving the work that he or she finds beautiful. A plausible interpretation of this relationship is that the faculty of taste guides the creative faculty of genius. Kant seems to agree with this interpretation when he states that “taste, like judgment in general, is the discipline (or corrective) of genius” [1]. Genius is the sole productive faculty of an artist but it does no more than to “furnish rich material for products of fine art” [1]. An object produced by genius only becomes a work of fine art when we presuppose a conceptual understanding in aesthetically judging it. We must, however, also find the object beautiful if taste is to guide genius. The constantly made, although unconscious, aesthetic judgments reasonably constitute the rules given by nature to genius, in which the term

“rules” ought not to be understood in a conventionalist sense as some rationally determinate criteria but principles of taste as a judging faculty.

Therefore, it logically follows that both fine arts and the beauty of fine arts are possible only with taste, which necessarily implies a degree of free beauty. This inference does not render genius futile because taste is simply a judging faculty that cannot create or account for the corporeal possibility of fine arts. Instead, both genius and taste are necessary for an object to be properly identified as a work of fine art. Kant implies this conclusion when he presents the example of tableware that bears a beautiful form as if it is a work of fine art but is not properly identified so if it is mass-manufactured--not created by genius. If genius as a necessary condition for the possibility of fine arts is also necessarily guided by taste, the preclusion of free beauty in fine arts would be absurd. Even if taste is contaminated by conceptual awareness, taste must retain an extent of free beauty for it to properly constitute the rules of nature because our understanding of some arbitrary ends certainly is not sufficient for these ‘rules’.

3. Free Beauty in Judgments of Adherent Beauty for Fine Arts

Having shown negatively that the free--adherent beauty distinction Kant makes does not preclude free beauty in fine arts because fine arts retain its aesthetic character by taste, this section attempts to positively demonstrate how judgments of adherent beauty for fine arts make room for free beauty.

Kant seems to offer more than one accounts of how we judge objects of adherent beauty, which correspond to different secondary readings. Since fine arts as adherent beauty both require judgments of taste to be aesthetic and conceptual awareness for proper judgments overall, it logically follows that the next step is to examine the relationship between taste and conceptual awareness.

One possible reading takes adherent beauty to be “logically conditioned” in which our conceptual understanding restricts our faculty of taste [1]. More specifically, our prior conceptual awareness of an object necessarily determines in what forms we find it beautiful. An example of fine arts that conforms to conditioned beauty is architecture. Our understanding of the functionality of a building reasonably limits what forms the building can take to be judged as beautiful. A building intended for government administration is unlikely to be beautiful if its exterior is painted in the zebra pattern, although we may find it beautiful if it is in an amusement park. This account is favored by Paul Guyer [4]. This negative account, using Guyer’s own words, outlines that our conceptual understanding sets a determinate boundary within which our faculty of taste can successfully proceed to give us disinterested pleasure. Taste, therefore, remains free--uncontaminated by any concepts--as long as it works within the restrictions imposed by our conceptual understanding. This interpretation may, however, sound self-defeating intuitively because restrictions necessarily block the possibility of freedom in taste and, thus, free beauty. Further clarification to this negative account, therefore, must offer a resolution that achieves compatibility between conceptual restrictions and free beauty. I conceive the resolution to this tension to emphasize the contaminated, or ‘interested’, displeasure given rise by failing to fulfill the restrictions. Guyer refines the negative account to hold that the failure of a work of fine art to fulfill our conceptual understanding--not good for what it is intended to be--gives rise to interested displeasure that necessarily overrides any disinterested pleasure taken by taste [5]. In other words, our faculty of taste can still work outside the boundary set by conceptual restrictions but is necessarily overridden by these restrictions. The key point, however, is that our taste does not necessarily interact with our conceptual understanding--our taste is restricted but not contaminated by presupposing a concept--as long as it works within the boundary. A building used for government administration is unlikely to be beautiful if its exterior is painted in zebra stripes, but our understanding of the functionality of the building does not contribute to whether or not the building is beautiful when it does meet its functionality. In other words, the negative account suggests that we can properly ascribe beauty to fine arts only within the boundary imposed by our understanding since otherwise, we cannot feel any disinterested pleasure. Adherent beauty in fine arts, therefore, is free because our conceptual understanding does not positively contribute, i.e.,

contaminate, the disinterested pleasure we take. Our understanding of the functionality of a building limit what forms it can take to be judged as beautiful but does not positively contribute to its beauty. Failures to meet conceptual understanding give rise to interested displeasure but successes do not give rise to interested pleasure--the presupposed concept serves as and only as a restriction.

The negative account, however, constitutes a rather overly dependent relationship between the form of an object and our conceptual awareness of it, which fails to account for some works of fine arts. Indeed, even in the case of architecture, we may be attempting to take pleasure in a building's fulfillment of its functionality. Even outside the boundary imposed by our conceptual awareness, it is still possible for us to distinguish disinterested pleasure taken in the form by taste from interested pleasure taken in fulfilling our presupposed understanding because the form pleases immediately while fulfilling the presupposed concept displeases by reflection--mediately. We may, for example, find a painting beautiful at first glance but, upon reflection, no longer see it as a beautiful *painting* if it does not strictly follow principles of painting, although we may still think it beautiful because of the disinterested pleasure we have taken in its form. Henry Allison gives a similar example of a picture frame that can be beautiful by itself but entirely inappropriate as a frame if it detracts from the appreciation of the painting which it frames [6]. On the other hand, we may find a painting depicting a gross rotting fruit disgusting in its form but find it a good painting. In other words, there are works of fine arts that we can ascribe beauty to even if they fail to meet our conceptual understanding of them, vice versa. The judgment of taste that we use to ascribe beauty to a work, therefore, is independent of the judgment of good that we use to see if the work is *good*.

A reading that has been pioneered by Martin Gammon and later affirmed by Henry Allison that favors this independence is the parergonal account [7]. The parergonal account suggests that we make judgments of taste for a work of fine art independently but also as a necessary part of the overall aesthetic assessment that presupposes some conceptual understanding for the work. In other words, the disinterested pleasure we take in the form of a work must be *combined* with the interested pleasure taken in the work's fulfillment of our conceptual understanding to form a complete assessment although each of them remains independent. The parergonal account is different from the negative account in that the former proposes an overall contaminated aesthetic judgment while the latter is an entirely pure aesthetic judgment uncontaminated by conceptual restrictions. The aesthetic judgment in the parergonal account is contaminated overall because the disinterested pleasure taken in the form is combined with the interested pleasure taken in fulfilling the presupposed conceptual understanding. Kant seems to agree with this account when he claims that "[t]aste, it is true, stands to gain by this combination of intellectual delight with the aesthetic" in which taste becomes an "instrument" --or part--of the overall aesthetic judgment that presupposes conceptual awareness. The point is, using Allison's own words, that the overall impurity does not undermine "the purity of the taste component itself. As is the case with "free beauties"..... the underlying norm for taste as such remains purposiveness of form, rather than perfection" [6]. Similar to the negative account, the interested pleasure simply combines but does not interfere--or contaminates--the disinterested pleasure taken in the form.

Guyer, however, seems to make another interpretation of Allison's account as the additive account that does not render the combination of disinterested pleasure with interested pleasure necessary. He states that in judging a work of fine art, we may be aware of and take pleasure in its form without seeing any connection with the conceptual understanding presupposed [8]. We may, however, *actively* combine disinterested pleasure taken in the form with interested pleasure taken in the conceptual awareness. The difference between the additive account and the parergonal account is a fine but key one. Put simply, the latter proposes that taste, although its faculty works independently, is part of a complete aesthetic assessment but the former proposes taste itself gives a complete assessment that is to be combined with another complete assessment by reason. The term 'independent' in these two accounts, therefore, must be interpreted differently. The additive account, based on this distinction, is in direct contradiction with Kant's explanation of adherent beauty presupposing conceptual awareness that "when we compare the representation through which an

object is given to us with the object (in respect of what it is meant to be) by means of a concept, we cannot help reviewing it also in respect of the sensation in the subject” [1]. What is problematic with Guyer’s interpretation is that the additive account perfectly allows us to finish judging a painting without thinking of it as a painting. If this is a reasonable inference, the additive account itself does not capture the theory of adherent beauty Kant proposes, which requires a closer relationship between our taste and reason for our conceptual understanding to be presupposed. Indeed, one may even doubt if there is a relationship under the additive account. It is, therefore, imperative for us to reject the additive account for the very initial task we set out to do is to seek the relationship between free beauty, which is only possibly ascribed by taste, and our conceptual deliberations in a way that the later are presupposed but do not contaminate the former.

The final account suggests the closest relationship between the form of an object and our conceptual understanding of it. I conceive this account, also known as the internal account, to best represent Kant’s account that a work of fine art “always presupposes an end” for what it intends to be, which seems to require an intimate connection between its form and our understanding for it [9]. More specifically, our conceptual understanding no longer serves as an extra-aesthetic condition as in the case of negative and parergonal accounts but as a necessary part of the form of a work of fine art. This explains the case where the form of a work of fine art is not simply beautiful by itself but beautifully *exemplifies* its presupposed understanding in a way that we include our understanding of the work as part of our judgments of taste. Similar wording has been deployed by Allison [6] when he outlines the exemplative account of Kant’s definition of the beauty of fine art as a “beautiful representation of a thing” [1]. A sculpture, for example, is judged to be not only beautiful in its form but a beautiful exemplification of our understanding of a sculpture, in which we see no difference between its form and the presupposed end of what it intends to be. In Kant’s words, the form and our conceptual understanding are perfectly unified. This account is in agreement with both Kant’s explanation of adherent beauty in which our conceptual understanding establishes rules for “union of taste with reason..... for the purpose of bringing that temper of the mind which is self-sustaining and of subjective universal validity to the support and maintenance of that mode of thought which, while possessing objective universal validity, can only be preserved by a resolute effort” [1]. Kant suggests a state of mind for aesthetic judgments of adherent beauty where our taste harmonizes with reason in a way taste sustains rather than being conditioned by our understanding. The internal account is also consistent with Kant’s characterization of aesthetic judgments for fine arts as “teleological” [1] in which the aesthetic is only possible upon meeting its end presupposed while our taste sustains our understanding of that end. In other words, without either taste or reason, aesthetic judgments are impossible--at least improper. The internal account perfectly allows free beauty in fine arts because our conceptual understanding--the exercise of reason--is no longer extra-aesthetic but part of the art-form of a work. The internal account, therefore, is suggesting adherent beauty as a special kind of free beauty that must presuppose conceptual awareness but that awareness is a necessary part of the aesthetic--adherently conditioned free beauty.

It is imperative to note that the three accounts above are not competing. While Kant’s account on fine arts seems to align most closely with the internal account, there are nevertheless some works of fine arts that are better judged using the negative and parergonal accounts instead because we do see cases where our conceptual understanding is somewhat distant from the forms of these works. In the example of architecture, it is less apparent how the form of a building exemplifies its functionality, for functionality is understood primarily in a pragmatic sense rather than teleologically. Upon this demonstration, I agree with Guyer’s modest thesis that different accounts simply are different ways to understand the relationship between the form of an object and our understanding of it, especially for fine arts because different works presuppose purposes in different natures. I would, however, further argue that the negative and parergonal accounts can both be assimilated to the internal account.

The negative account is assimilated when our understanding becomes so dominant that any failure to *exemplify* it precludes beauty for a work of fine art. It is imperative to note that the internal account is only proposing our conceptual understanding as part of the art-form of a work of fine art when the

work exemplifies our understanding. We still deploy taste in judging the form only but our understanding becomes an aesthetic part of the form in a way that it does not contaminate our taste. The negative account suggests the same thing as long as our taste works within the boundary imposed by our conceptual understanding, with the additional restriction of that boundary only.

The parergonal account is assimilated when the nature of purpose presupposed by our understanding for a work of fine art is teleological so that the overall aesthetic assessment accounts for the art form only--as in the case of a sculpture. Allison gives two interpretations of Kant's definition of a work of fine art as a 'representation'--depiction and exemplification. Paintings, for example, depict rather than exemplify--they are about what they portray on canvases--while sculptures exemplify rather than depict because they are meant to imitate the nature--they signify no more than their existence. I would add another interpretation of 'representation' as *design* in a pragmatic sense. Architecture as a fine art fall under this interpretation because we presuppose a function for aesthetically judging a building. These three interpretations further imply purposes of different natures for different works of fine arts to fulfill.

However, purposes of different natures are often problematic for aesthetically judging fine arts. Indeed, different artistic objects may have different ends that define what they ought to be. One artistic object may have multiple ends. While judging a historical painting, one may have to take into account both what it intends to depict—the theme of painting—and exemplify—the genre of painting. If one can say a painting is good and not good at the same time, it is not clear how one can easily manage such an aesthetic judgment. A way to escape this difficulty is to shift the focus to the presupposition of an end in general. I further argue that this end in general is teleological. A work of fine art may intend to depict a certain theme--to *exemplify* the depiction of that certain theme. Paintings can be classified based on the themes of portrayal, media used, functions they design for, etc., which are all variations of our understanding of an end. Fulfilling an end is teleological no matter which variation of the end our conceptual awareness entails. Since Kant himself only explicitly states that aesthetic judgment for fine arts based on our conceptual understanding is a "teleological judgment", we may reasonably infer that he believes judgments presupposing different ends are all teleological. This inference further assimilates all aesthetic judgments for fine arts under the parergonal and negative accounts to that under the internal account.

4. Compatibility of Free Beauty in Fine Arts with the 'Free Play'

An intuitively strong objection to the possibility of free beauty in fine arts appeals to the mechanism of 'free play of imagination and understanding' that Kant proposes as the mental state that the judgment of taste demands [1]. Imagination as a faculty in the 'free play', according to Kant, depends "upon the reflection on an object leading towards some concept or other (whatever it may be)" [1]. Since Kant is explicit that the judgment of taste is not subsumed under any determinate concepts, a reasonable inference is that Kant takes 'free play' to conform to the conditions of our conceptual understanding without the constraint of any particular concepts presupposed by understanding. This inference, however, invites a challenge to the possibility of free beauty in works of fine arts, which require particular conceptual considerations for proper aesthetic judgments.

I argue that our conceptual awareness as a necessary requirement for aesthetically judging fine arts implies that the 'free play' involved in taste when judging fine arts is also necessarily *conditioned* by our conceptual understanding. This resolution is implied in the three accounts presented in the previous section, which suggests that judgments of adherent beauty for fine arts are made by taste in a way that the 'free play' involved in taste is conditioned but not contaminated by our conceptual awareness.

In the negative account, the 'free play' operates to aesthetically judge a work of fine art within the limits imposed by presupposed conceptual understanding. The 'free play' remains free--uncontaminated--as long as the form being judged falls within the conceptual limits. The displeasure taken in the failure to fulfill the understanding overrides the disinterested pleasure taken by the 'free

play 'outside the limits but does not preclude the mechanism itself. In the parergonal account, the 'free play 'operates as part of an overall aesthetic assessment but it is itself an independent, uncontaminated mechanism. The 'free play 'can operate without conceptual understanding but that operation is not proper because combining our taste with understanding is a necessary condition for Kant. In the internal account where a work of fine art exemplifies our conceptual understanding for it, the 'free play 'necessarily interacts with the understanding in a way that they are perfectly unified, i.e., the form judged by the 'free play 'is enhanced and our understanding presupposed clarified. In other words, the concept presupposed for a work of fine art is no longer an extra-aesthetic, logical condition imposed on the work but seen as part of its art form.

This resolution, however, may sound unsatisfactory since it seems to take the 'free play 'to be equivalent with the faculty of taste. While the faculty of taste necessarily demands the 'free play 'as the mental mechanism at work in aesthetic judgments, Kant takes the mechanism to not only operate in aesthetic but cognitive judgments--judgments of the good. He describes the 'free play 'in cognition as a mental state that demands a "mutual relation" between imagination and understanding, "imagination for bringing together the manifold of intuition, and understanding for the unity of the concept uniting the representations" [1]. When we recognize that an object is a rose, our imagination brings together a range of objective and often empirical features of a rose in mind--red, thorns on the stem, flat petals, etc.--while our conceptual understanding of a rose unifies all these features to give a universally valid cognition that the object is a rose. A cognitive judgment deploys the 'free play ' because the mechanism itself is not governed by any determinate conceptual understanding. No determinate rules are governing the 'free play '--there is no determinate concept that restricts how cognitive faculties work to give "a particular rule of cognition" --although understanding in the 'free play 'does bring imagination under a particular concept that enables "universal communication" in cognition [1].

Similarly, there is not a particular rule of taste but the faculty of understanding in the 'free play ' for judgments of taste is different from that for cognitive judgments in that it does not bring imagination under any particular concepts. Kant further claims that, without a particular concept, we still find our taste universally communicable because of the non-conceptual, disinterested pleasure it gives rise to. When we judge that a rose is beautiful, we take that everyone else viewing the rose *ought to* judge it to be beautiful and take the disinterested pleasure we feel in it. Kant, in his own words, is suggesting that taste has a feature of "subjective universal communicability" in which we necessarily expect others to take the same disinterested pleasure as we do in viewing a beautiful object [1]. This clarification is important for reading the relationship between taste and 'free play 'in aesthetically judging an object. The 'free play 'is a mental mechanism that is necessary for the subjective universal communication of taste but it itself cannot be conditioned by any rules established by our conceptual understanding. The 'free play ', in short, is not sufficient for aesthetically judging fine arts as objects of adherent beauty which requires that conceptual condition. The faculty of taste, however, can be conditioned by conceptual understanding without being contaminated when judging fine arts as shown in the above three accounts. Since aesthetically judging fine arts requires that conceptual condition, our taste deployed in properly judging fine arts should be seen as a more complex mechanism than the 'free play 'that not only gives rise to disinterested pleasure but somehow requires a conceptual condition.

I further argue that the conceptual condition required by our taste for judging fine arts is rooted in the taste itself and, therefore, inherently aesthetic and self-supporting. Kant seems to agree with this argument when he states that:

"[T]he artist, having practiced and corrected his taste by a variety of examples from nature or art, guides his work and, after many, and often laborious, attempts to satisfy taste, finds the form which commends itself to him. Hence this form is not, as it were, a matter of inspiration, or of a free swinging of the powers of the mind, but rather of a slow and even painful process of improvement, directed to making the form adequate to his thought without prejudice to the freedom in the play of those powers." [1]

Kant implicitly suggests that our conceptual understanding stems from the aesthetic through a “laborious” process of creation guided by taste that eventually produces a form adequate to our understanding. When a genius unknowingly presupposes some understanding in creating a work of fine art, our taste necessarily guides that presupposition and, therefore, makes that unknown understanding possible. This understanding is made known and conceptual only when we aesthetically judge the work although we have already unknowingly acquired that understanding in the form, the possibility of which is necessarily guided by the principles of our taste.

This reading, however, raises the question of why we need to make that understanding known. If we can always be unaware of our presupposed understanding, free beauty is perfectly compatible with not only fine arts but adherent beauty in general.

However, Kant believes that the conceptualization of our unknown understanding is important for aesthetically judging fine arts. First, Kant does not take everyone to be endowed with a genius but does take taste to be universally communicable, which implies that conceptual understanding is needed for non-geniuses to make proper aesthetic judgments for fine arts [1]. Second, the conceptual understanding serves to preserve or make the beauty of the form created under our taste “becomes fixed” over time [1]. This interpretation presents a mutually reinforcing relationship between our conceptual understanding and taste in judging fine arts, in which our understanding serves as a condition for taste at the same time as taste informs understanding. This interpretation also seems to conform to the internal account where the form judged by the ‘free play’ is enhanced and the concept presupposed clarified. Most importantly, this clarification both retains the ‘free play’ in our faculty of taste--the possibility of free beauty--and enables us to judge the *Mona Lisa*--a painting from the Renaissance--as a beautiful painting.

5. Conclusion

Kant’s free–adherent beauty distinction is much more nuanced than what he makes explicit in *Critique*. The theoretical distinction is not as clear-cut as it appears, and I have shown that a work of fine art as an object of adherent beauty is no more than a special form of free beauty. *Genius* makes the corporeal existence of a work of fine art possible but is necessarily guided by taste because adherent beauty can only be ascribed by the faculty of taste, although the faculty is conditioned by some conceptual understanding. Since principles of taste constitute the rules of nature a genius is endowed with, taste must remain free from arbitrary, conceptual awareness. While taste may be restricted by, be a paragon to, or interact with our conceptual understanding, it necessarily remains free and uncontaminated. Furthermore, taste can be conditioned by our understanding but it necessarily guides and makes our understanding possible, i.e., any concepts presupposed for works of fine arts are aesthetic in origin. The possibility of free beauty entailed by taste, therefore, is necessarily compatible with the adherent beauty of fine arts.

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