

## “THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE”: INTERPRETING §9 OF KANT’S *CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT*<sup>1</sup>

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*Investigation of the question: whether in the judgment of taste the feeling of pleasure precedes the judging of the object or the latter precedes the former.*

*The solution of this problem is the key to critique of taste, and hence worthy of full attention.<sup>2</sup>*

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

In this paper I aim to defend a consistent interpretation of §9 of Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In this section, Kant describes the relation between pleasure in the beautiful and the judgment of taste. I present my case in three parts. In the first section, I provide some background to Kant’s aesthetic theory and introduce the interpretative issue that is central to this paper. In part two, I defend the “sensation-precedes-pleasure” interpretation of §9 that explicates Kant’s claim that the judging of the object precedes the pleasure proper in a judgment of taste. In the third part, I show how the interpretation I proffer can be employed in justifying Kant’s further claim that pleasure in the judgment of taste is experienced as an ennobled and elevated pleasure.

### THE PROBLEM OF PLEASURE IN THE JUDGMENT OF TASTE

A reflective judgment, according to Kant, is the process of trying to locate a given particular object under some universal that is not given.<sup>3</sup> According to Kant, aesthetic reflective judgments, in contrast to reflective judgments grounded on concepts, are determined by reference only to subjective grounds, for example, by reference to feelings in the subject. As aesthetic judgments in general are based on subjective feeling, they do not typically involve the further requirement that others should assent to that judgment.<sup>4</sup> Judgments of the pleasure of sense sensation (i.e., taste, touch, sight, smell, hearing), which Kant calls pleasure in the agreeable, are aesthetic judgments that do not demand the assent of other judges. But Kant argues in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that one species of aesthetic judgments, named judgments of pure beauty or judgments of taste, qualify as aesthetic by having a subjective determining ground, but also have a universal validity that requires the assent

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of everyone.<sup>5</sup> When we assert that something is beautiful, we claim that everyone else, if judging correctly, ought to judge that object to be beautiful.

The subjective basis for judgments of taste is the conscious recognition of feeling a certain mental state caused as an effect of the beautiful object on the cognitive faculties. Kant describes the relevant mental state as the free play of the imagination and the understanding. As everyone's cognitive faculties are constituted according to the same principles, Kant argues that he is justified in claiming the universal validity of judgments based on sensation of this effect, just so long as we have excluded all sources of preference particular to the individual judge. He describes the free play of the cognitive faculties as follows:

The powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation [of a beautiful object] are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular cognition. Thus the state of mind in this representation [that is, the mental representation of the beautiful object] must be that of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general. Now there belongs to a representation by which an object is given, in order for there to be a cognition of it in general, imagination for the composition of the manifold of intuition and understanding for the unity of the concept that unifies the representations.<sup>6</sup>

Kant describes the relation between judgments of beauty and the pleasure involved with them in §9 of the third *Critique*. This section is important enough for Kant to label it as "the key to the critique of taste."<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, there is a current lack of consensus regarding the correct way to interpret Kant's following statement from §9.3.1: "Thus it is the universal capacity for the communication of the state of mind in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgment of taste, must serve as its ground and have the pleasure in the object as a consequence."<sup>8</sup>

Kant's claim generates the following interpretative issue that must be resolved: If the determining ground of a judgment of pure beauty is a feeling of pleasure then there is apparent circularity in the claim that the same pleasure is a consequence of such a ground.<sup>9</sup>

Before presenting my interpretation, I will briefly review a number of interpretations of §9 in order to highlight concerns regarding these accounts.

Paul Guyer claims that in Kant's theory the pleasure in a judgment of taste is caused by the harmonious free play of the faculties of the imagination and the understanding. He says "simple reflection or estimation of an object produces the harmony of imagination and understanding, thereby producing pleasure."<sup>10</sup> Guyer acknowledges Kant's explicit claim that it is the universal communicability of the mental state that is fundamental and that the pleasure of the judgment of taste is a consequence<sup>11</sup> but he insists that references to the theory of pleasure due to the universal communicability of a mental state "must be rejected, for they imply a theory of aesthetic response which is different from that to which everything else in the third *Critique* points."<sup>12</sup>

Guyer offers two hypotheses to explain what he takes to be a confused passage. First, that Kant was not clear about his own theory.<sup>13</sup> This first hypothesis, which Guyer calls the historical explanation, is that the theory of pleasure derived from the universal communicability of the mental state may be a hangover from one of Kant's earlier anthropological views on the beautiful. In earlier writings, Kant developed a theory of the beautiful that "took the fact of the communicability of a 'perfection' to be the cause of pleasure."<sup>14</sup> Guyer argues that, since Kant held this theory for so long, it may have still influenced his thoughts on the beautiful and so became manifest in the problematic passage §9.3.1. Guyer notes that this view is supported by Kant's continued insistence in the third *Critique* that judgments of beauty are not compatible with social isolation. But Guyer's first hypothesis seems quite unlikely. The suggestion that such oversights by Kant survived multiple editions of the text in a section that he considers important enough to describe as "the key to the critique of taste, and hence worthy of full attention" seems implausible.<sup>15</sup>

Guyer's second hypothesis is that Kant conflates two different acts of reflection: one usage of reflection being "the source of pleasure" and the second usage of reflection being "the condition of the judgment of taste."<sup>16</sup> Guyer conjectures that in order to interpret §9 a distinction should be made between "simple reflection" (which, he says, relates to the "estimation of an object" in §9) and "reflective judgment" (which is responsible for the "judgment of taste"). He suggests that this distinction is indicated by Kant in the first Introduction to the third *Critique*. Guyer argues that when Kant asks whether the pleasure in a judgment of taste comes before or after the judging he is referring to simple reflection. As the act of simple reflection causes the pleasure, this pleasure must come afterwards. There is then the act of reflective judgment on that pleasure which results in the judgment of its being universally communicable. Kant's theory of judgments of taste therefore only looks contradictory because he shifts between two different kinds of reflection in the same section:

Kant does not use these distinctions consistently. Perhaps this fact reflects an inadequate understanding of the difference between the two aspects of reflection which his theory entails. If this is so, then the confusions of §9 might be explained as due to Kant's failure to differentiate clearly between reflection as leading to pleasure, to which the fact of communicability is irrelevant, and reflection on pleasure as leading to the judgment of taste, to which the communicability of the first form of reflection is relevant indeed.<sup>17</sup>

The plausibility of this second hypothesis depends on the likelihood that Kant was not aware that he was confusing two distinct kinds of reflection. The claim that Kant had an inadequate understanding of the difference between two different sorts of reflection seems to me to be unlikely, in part for the same reason for doubting Guyer's first hypothesis. Further, Guyer introduces distinctions that are not explicitly recognised within Kant's theoretical framework. And, given that Kant viewed his three critiques as forming a coherent philosophical system, a consistent reading of the text that employs distinctions that are justified by explicit references in the text should be preferred. Hannah Ginsborg also objects that Guyer's theory of pleasure relies on Kant's statements that pleasure accompanies the achievement of every aim but that Kant states repeatedly that the harmonious play of the cognitive faculties has no aim. Ginsborg also notes that the second act of reflection, on Guyer's account, requires reflection on the causal origin of the first act.<sup>18</sup> If this causal reflection requires concepts then this goes against Kant's explicit claims that judgments of taste are in no way grounded on concepts.<sup>19</sup>

Henry Allison offers an alternative interpretation of §9.3.1. He claims that the passage is unclear because Kant has attempted to express the following two distinct claims in one sentence:

1. that the (subjective) universality of the liking affirmed in a judgment of beauty must be based on the universal communicability of the mental state; and
2. that the latter derives its universal communicability from its connection with a universally communicable act of judging or reflection, which, in turn, explains why this judging must (logically) precede the pleasure.<sup>20</sup>

In order to resolve the problem, Allison proposes to resolve the interpretative issue by rewording the problem sentence from "it must be the universal communicability of the mental state, in the given representation, which underlies the judgment of taste as its subjective condition, and the pleasure in the object must be its consequence" to "it must be *a universally communicable* mental state, in the given representation, which underlies the judgment of taste as its subjective condition, and the pleasure in the object must be its consequence."<sup>21</sup> This interpretation, says Allison, both allows for the possibility of negative judgments of taste and provides a smooth fit with the rest of the section.

I agree that Allison's revised sentence does not conflict with what Kant says in the remainder of the paragraph because there is certainly a universally communicable mental state that is a constituent part of a judgment of taste. But it does raise a question regarding the unity of §9. Allison's textual revision leaves unexplained

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Kant's motivation for considering in §9.7 the adequacy of empirical demonstration of pleasure in the ability to communicate one's state of mind. Kant clearly takes this sort of pleasure to be empirically and psychologically demonstrable, but argues that this is not enough to justify the pleasure as a necessary satisfaction. In order to achieve this, such a pleasure needs to be demonstrated as being possible *a priori*. It is not the pleasure of universal communicability that is being denied by Kant in §9.7, but the use of empirical and psychological demonstrations in justifying a necessary satisfaction. And again, Allison's reworking of the text commits Kant to having made a careless communicative error in this important section. If it is possible to interpret the third paragraph without having to revise Kant's text then this should surely be the preferred option.

Hannah Ginsborg argues that a single act of judgment is responsible for both the pleasure and the claim that the pleasure is universally valid. She defends Kant's claim in §9.3.1 that pleasure in the judgment of taste is the result of the universal communicability of the mental state. Ginsborg also claims to interpret Kant in a way that is not viciously circular. She argues that a judgment of taste is self-referential and "claims nothing but its own universal validity."<sup>22</sup> This is described as follows:

I take my mental state in perceiving an object to be universally communicable, where my mental state is nothing other than the mental state of performing that very act of judgment, that is, of taking my mental state in the object to be universally communicable. And in addition, let us suppose that, in performing this act of judgment, I am not explicitly aware of its self-referential structure, but that my act of judgment is instead manifest to consciousness through a certain experience of pleasure. In other words, the act of self-referentially taking my mental state to be universally communicable with respect to a given object consists, phenomenologically, in a feeling of pleasure in that object.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, I suggest, this self-referential act of judging is the same activity which Kant describes as the free and harmonious play of imagination and understanding.<sup>24</sup>

Ginsborg notes that one consequence of her interpretation is that "any object is equally suitable as a candidate for such a judgment [of taste], since the judgment does not say anything about the object which might turn out to be false."<sup>25</sup> But if we can provide an interpretation consistent with Kant's text that explains what is distinctive about an object judged as beautiful then this would provide an explanatory advantage over Ginsborg's account. In the next section I will offer an interpretation that has this advantage. It differs from Ginsborg by maintaining Kant's distinction between the feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties and the judgment of the universal validity of a mental state in a judgment of taste. I argue that a *sensation* brings the mental state in the given representation to our conscious awareness and that Kant identifies this sensation as distinct from the feeling of *pleasure* in a judgment of taste.

## THE "SENSATION-PRECEDES-PLEASURE" INTERPRETATION

In this section I suggest that we can make sense of §9.3.1 if we see §9 in its totality as a description of how we can proceed to judge that an object is beautiful in the course of successive stages of subjective experience. In this section of the paper I describe a single act of judging through a series of stages each of which indicate consciousness of different relations and states of affairs, up to the instant where we are conscious that an object is beautiful. At that instant we have all of the components necessary for consciousness of pleasure in the beautiful, on Kant's definition of pleasure, and this distinctive pleasure temporally follows that instant.

I divide exposition of the judgment of taste into four temporal stages. The first stage is that of the *disinterested reflective perception* of an object. Kant distinguishes a judgment of taste from other aesthetic judgments as being disinterested, by which he means that such judgments are not in any way connected with desire for the existence of the object. In judgments of taste, "one only wants to know whether the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me."<sup>26</sup> Desiring the object for the pleasure it brings to the senses needs to be excluded from consideration in a judgment of taste because such desire causes a satisfaction that is

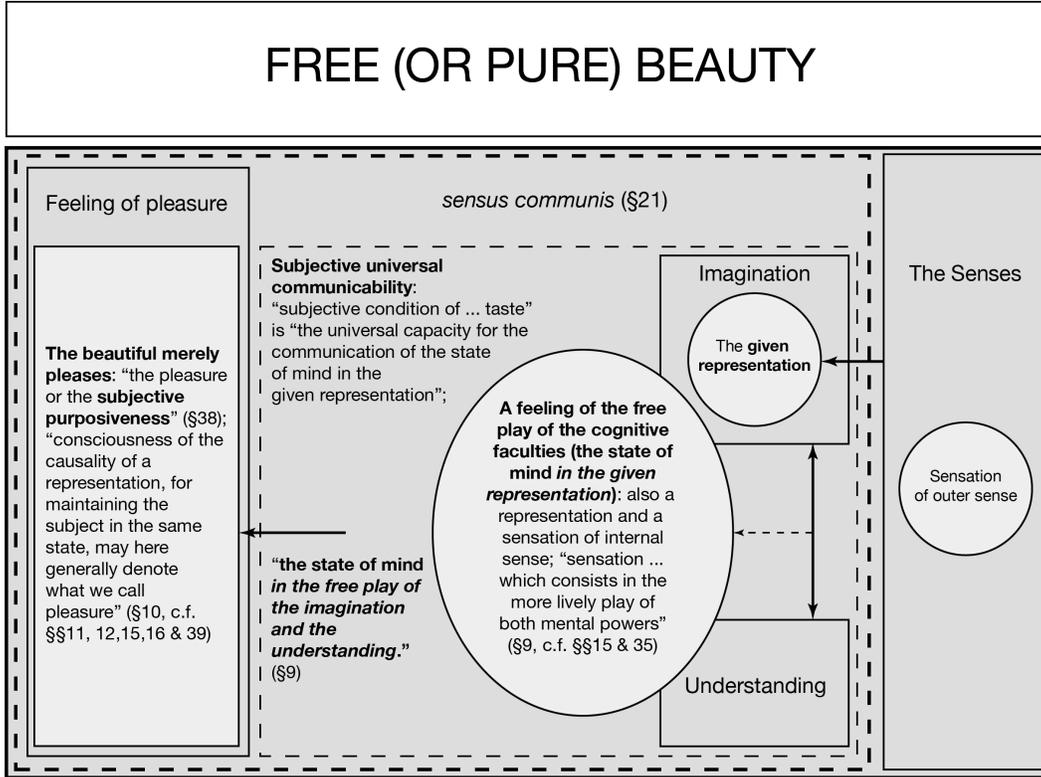


Diagram 1

not guaranteed to apply to all judges. Disinterestedness brackets out all desires related to our personal circumstances that could affect the way we feel toward the object we are judging.

In apprehending the beautiful object, desire for its goodness should be excluded from consideration as judgments of the good are based on concepts, with reference to some determinate end or purpose, and so are not aesthetic.<sup>27</sup> External sense perceptions, such as the sensing of colour, may vary from person to person and so they too are not suitable data for a universally valid judgment.

The points to note at this stage are, first, that we form a mental representation of the object in a disinterested manner in order to remove any conditions that are specific to an individual. Additionally, we also bracket out any concept of the purpose of the object to retain the subjective basis required for an aesthetic judgment.

The second stage in a judgment of taste is that of “a mutual subjective correspondence of the powers of cognition with each other.”<sup>28</sup> Kant also refers to this in §9.3.1 as the “state of mind in the given representation.” If the given representation is of a beautiful object then it will excite the faculties of the imagination and the understanding in the act of a disinterested reflective judgment to a mutual correspondence with each other. This activity, which was described in the introductory section of this paper, Kant calls the free play of the faculties of cognition.<sup>29</sup> Kant explains that we become conscious of the free play through sensation of that activity. In §9.9 he explains that “no other consciousness of it [that is, of the free play of the cognitive faculties] is possible except through sensation of the effect that consists in the facilitated play of both powers of the mind (imagination and understanding), enlivened through mutual agreement.”<sup>30</sup> This sensation is constituted by awareness of

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the animation of the imagination and the understanding,<sup>31</sup> a feeling of inner sense,<sup>32</sup> which Kant also describes as the subject’s “feeling of life.”<sup>33</sup>

The third stage of the judgment of taste is awareness of the “subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste” which Kant calls the “state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding.”<sup>34</sup> This stage is important because it is the point at which the judge becomes consciously aware that they are in a state of mind that can be thought as the basis for a universally valid judgment.

Let us take stock of what we are currently conscious of. First, we are aware that we have the given representation of an object in our imagination. Second, we have intentionally excluded all sources of individual variation from our judgment through an act of disinterestedness. And third, we are aware that when we reflect on the object under these conditions we can sense an associated effect on our cognitive faculties. But consciousness of this free play of the cognitive powers, given the background presupposition that the cognitive faculties of humankind in general are each constituted according to the same principles, means that we are further justified in claiming that these conditions of judging the object ought to result in the same response in everyone.<sup>35</sup> So, in sensing the free play of the cognitive faculties, we are consequently conscious of “the universal capacity for the communication of the state of mind in the given representation.”<sup>36</sup> We are conscious of the universal communicability of the sensation of the free play of the cognitive faculties as caused by a mental representation of the form of a beautiful object because, Kant says, “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.”<sup>37</sup> If this is true then we have found a ground for claiming universal validity in judgments of taste.<sup>38</sup>

The universal validity of the free play of the cognitive faculties explains Kant’s usage of certain terms throughout §9. We should note that Kant refers to the *feeling* of the free play of the cognitive faculties, as well as the *sensation* of it. The significance of Kant’s use of the term “sensation” (*Empfindung*) of the free play indicates that it is a state that is an *objective* representation of the senses.<sup>39</sup> This is contrasted with his use of the term “feeling” (*Gefühl*) which, he says, at least for representations of external sense sensation, must always remain merely subjective. Sensation of the free play is not a sensation of the outer senses, however, but is instead a sensation of inner sense.<sup>40</sup> (Another example of inner sense sensation is the experience of time passing.) Sensation of the free play can be regarded as objective because it is a representation that belongs to cognition.<sup>41</sup> Regarding the sensation of the free play, Kant says “Of course, an objective relation can only be thought, but insofar as it is subjective as far as its conditions are concerned it can still be sensed in its effect on the mind.”<sup>42</sup> So, the free play of the cognitive faculties is brought to our awareness by a subjective feeling of the kind that has grounds for universal communicability.

The fourth stage is the pleasure proper in a judgment of taste, or *subjective purposiveness*.<sup>43</sup> In §9.7, Kant states that we need to explain how aesthetic judgments *a priori* are possible, before we can explain the demand made by a judgment of taste that everyone ought to feel pleasure in a beautiful object. This is explained in passages after §9, but I will provide an overview here for completeness and in order to distinguish differences between the “sensation-precedes-pleasure” interpretation and other putative interpretations.

Some interpretative strategies that advocate for a consistent reading of §9 identify pleasure in the beautiful either with the free play of the cognitive faculties or with consciousness thereof.<sup>44</sup> Robert Wicks, for example, claims that the sensation of a high degree of harmony in the free play of the cognitive powers is the same as pleasure, or satisfaction, in the beautiful. He says “one could say that the satisfaction related to pure beauty is the manifestation of the harmony of the cognitive faculties at a certain level of intensity, rather than the effect of it.”<sup>45</sup> In a similar vein, Donald Crawford construes the feeling of pleasure in the beautiful as consciousness of the harmony of the cognitive faculties.<sup>46</sup> I will argue against these positions by showing that, given Kant’s definition of pleasure, Kant identifies the feeling of pleasure in the beautiful as distinct both from the sensation of the free play of the cognitive powers and from mere consciousness of this sensation.

In the sections that directly follow §9, Kant introduces the principle of purposiveness. According to Kant, concepts of things also have ends or purposes associated with them. Kant claims that the very possibility of an object can only be explained and conceived of by reference to some end, even when no such end exists.<sup>47</sup> Further, Kant defines a principle of purposiveness as “the causality of a concept with regard to its object.”<sup>48</sup> We view objects as purposive, as being designed for some end, and the purposiveness of an object, the designedness of an object, is posited even in the absence of a determinate end. The principle of purposiveness is the special principle of reflective judgment that guides us to expect a purpose for an object in order for us to form a sound understanding of whatever object we are judging.<sup>49</sup>

Kant uses the term “pleasure” in an idiosyncratic and technical sense. He defines pleasure as follows: “The consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, *for maintaining* the subject in the same state, may here generally denote what we call pleasure.”<sup>50</sup> We should note that this is quite similar in form to Kant’s definition of purposiveness with the modification that pleasure in the beautiful involves purposiveness without a definite purpose (i.e., no concept of an end is employed in a judgment of taste). In the context of beauty, the representation referred to in Kant’s definition of pleasure is that of the beautiful object. The state of the subject is that of the state of mind in the free play of cognitive faculties. By substitution into Kant’s definition of pleasure, pleasure in the beautiful is consciousness that the representation of the beautiful object is responsible for maintaining the subject in the state of mind in the free play of the cognitive faculties. (This latter state of mind needs only to be consciously sensed and not explicitly conceptualised.) The object that we call beautiful is suited to engaging our cognitive faculties in a state of free play, a state that causes a conscious sensation in us, even though we know that this is not the purpose of such an object. In the case of a judgment of taste, Kant also calls the consciousness of this causality “subjective purposiveness” and describes this as synonymous with pleasure in the object.<sup>51</sup> Subjective purposiveness is consciousness of what Kant calls the form of purposiveness in the given representation.<sup>52</sup> Further, Kant says that we linger on the beautiful object because “this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself.”<sup>53</sup>

Now, if we consider Kant’s definition of pleasure again, it can be seen that conscious experience of a universally valid pleasure requires recognition of the universal communicability of the sensed state of mind (i.e., the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding). This is because the subject needs to be conscious of sensing the relevant state of mind *before* she can be conscious that a representation of a given object is the cause of maintaining her in that state. This is consistent with and explains why Kant says in §9.3.1 that experience of the pleasure in a judgment of taste is a consequence of subjective universal communicability of the free play of the cognitive faculties.<sup>54</sup>

The principle of purposiveness makes us aware that the form of the beautiful object is suited to maintaining the sensed state of mind that Kant explains by reference to the free play of our cognitive faculties. And this cognitive activity constitutes the feeling of curiosity and exploration of the object, of lingering for its own sake.

The interpretation of pleasure that I am advocating differs from that of Beatrice Longuenesse, who identifies two sources of pleasure. She says

The agreement of imagination and understanding, unbound by a determinate concept, is a free play where each enhances the activity of the other. The consciousness of that agreement is a source of pleasure, and the consciousness of the universal communicability of the free play and of the pleasure derived from it is *itself* a source of pleasure.<sup>55</sup>

Longuenesse justifies her claim that the free play of the cognitive faculties is a pleasure by identifying the sensation of satisfaction in a judgment of taste with a “feeling of life” in the subject.<sup>56</sup> She presents the following quote by Kant in support of her claim:

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To grasp a regular, purposive structure with one's faculty of cognition (whether the manner of representation be distinct or confused) is something entirely different from being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state.<sup>57</sup>

*Contra* Longuenesse's interpretation of this passage, if we consider Kant's definition of pleasure as "consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, *for maintaining* the subject in the same state" then it seems quite clear that the "name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure" in the quotation above applies to consciousness of the *relation* between the given representation of a beautiful object and its effect on the subject (their "feeling of life"). This interpretation is still consistent with Kant's description of aesthetic judgments as "being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction." Moreover, Kant does not mention a plurality of pleasures involved in a judgment of taste and so this interpretation is also consistent with a natural reading of Kant's text. Finally, in discussing the difference between *the* pleasure in the beautiful and that of the sublime, Kant says that pleasure in the beautiful "directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life."<sup>58</sup> This quote supports the idea that the "feeling of life" is a constituent part of feeling pleasure in the beautiful instead of being identical with it.

The "sensation-precedes-pleasure" interpretation is also distinct from future-directed interpretations of pleasure as proposed and endorsed by Rachel Zuckert and Ian P. D. Morrisson. Zuckert argues that a consequence of Kant's definition of pleasure is that "all pleasures... have 'motivational' power" and so "are (in some sense) future-directed."<sup>59</sup> Consequently, her gloss on Kant's definition is that pleasure is "the desire to maintain the same state."<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Morrisson considers desire to be a constitutive part of pleasure when he states that "desires are the vehicle for a causality that tends to maintain a particular state of mind."<sup>61</sup> The faculty of desire, according to Kant, is "the faculty for being through one's representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations."<sup>62</sup> But Kant distinguishes pleasure in judgments of taste from satisfactions that are combined with representations of the existence of an object (which Kant calls interest). The title of §2 is "the satisfaction that determines the judgment of taste is without any interest"<sup>63</sup> and the definition derived from the first moment is quite explicit when it states that "Taste is the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest."<sup>64</sup> It may be responded that Kant is only considering an interest in the existence or non-existence of the beautiful object in these quotes, while the interpretations under consideration are instead concerned with a necessarily connected desire in the continued existence of a mental state. Such an objection would have difficulty being squared with Kant's comments on beauty as the symbol of the morally good, however. Here Kant says that the beautiful "pleases without any interest (the morally good is of course necessarily connected with an interest, but not one that precedes the judgment on the satisfaction, but rather with one that is thereby first produced)."<sup>65</sup> While Kant provides the clarification that moral judgments are necessarily connected with an interest, he offers no similar statement regarding pleasure in the beautiful. My account, by comparison, involves conscious awareness of the suitability of a representation for maintaining a mental state that does not involve the faculty of desire. Thus pleasure in the beautiful, on my account, is present-oriented and not future-directed.

I have broken this exposition into four temporal stages (see Diagram 1 above): (1) disinterested reflective perception, (2) a feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties, (3) subjective universal communicability and (4) pleasure proper (or subjective purposiveness). But it should be recognised that the transition from stage one to stage four would be quite swift in practice. Consider a similar example of driving along a road and then experiencing the road dip sharply. We start to feel something like the pit of our stomachs rising up inside of us. Consciousness of the cause of this feeling is more or less instantaneous. And, I claim, the same is true of recognising the connection between the representation of a beautiful object and the universally communicable feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties, once we have consciously excluded all other sources of plea-

surable feeling.

I will finish this section with two points of clarification regarding the apparent paradox that we started with in §9.3.1. First, I should note here that it is entirely possible that the judge was already experiencing some sensation of the free play of the cognitive faculties prior to her attempt at disinterestedness. In such a case, the feeling of the free play would have been conflated with any applicable pleasures due to sense sensations and desire for the object's existence that would make such a fused pleasure useless as the basis of a judgment of taste. Through the act of disinterested reflection, the feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties is isolated from other merely subjective factors.

Second, recognition of a pure feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties is required for a universally valid judgment of taste. The judgement of taste is the determination that "the mere representation of the object is accompanied with satisfaction in me."<sup>66</sup> The experience of pleasure in pure beauty thus requires the conscious filtering of the felt subjective experience to eliminate any reference to any pleasurable influences that are particular only to the individual. Consequently, when we experience the pleasure of pure beauty we will be consciously aware that attending to the mere form of the object is the cause of maintaining us in a universally communicable mental state. Pleasure in the beautiful arises in the course of a judgment of taste, and is a consequence of that judging process.

The "sensation-precedes-pleasure" interpretation is consistent with Kant's description of taste as "the faculty for judging a priori the communicability of the feelings that are combined with a given representation (without the mediation of a concept)."<sup>67</sup>

## BEAUTY: AN ENNOBLED AND ELEVATED EXPERIENCE

In this final section I consider another important feature of the pleasure in a judgment of taste: an accompanying awareness of "a certain ennoblement and elevation."<sup>68</sup> If the previous section is correct, then pleasure in the judgment of taste is correctly regarded as a universally valid pleasure. I will explain how Kant then uses consciousness of this to explain the experience of a connection between pleasure in the beautiful and morality. These final addenda to the interpretation will show that this account is consistent with Kant's characterisation of the pleasure in a judgment of taste as that of both a *universally valid* and *ennobled* pleasure in the apprehension of a beautiful object.

Kant claims that in experiencing the beautiful in a judgment of taste we attempt to make our current state of mind intelligible. This process is accompanied by awareness of a connection of beauty to the supersensible. Kant explains it thus:

In this faculty the power of judgment ... sees itself, both on account of this inner possibility in the subject as well as on account of the outer possibility of a nature that corresponds to it, as related to something in the subject itself and outside of it, which is neither nature nor freedom, but which is connected with the ground of the latter, namely the supersensible, in which the theoretical faculty is combined with the practical, in a mutual and unknown way, to form a unity.<sup>69</sup>

An experience of a connection to the supersensible coupled with awareness of certain similarities between judgments of taste and moral judgments makes the experience of a beautiful object amenable to consideration as, what Kant calls, a symbol of morality. A symbol is a kind of representation that indirectly presents a concept by means of analogy. Kant lists four relevant analogous aspects of judgments of pure beauty to moral judgments. These are, first, that it pleases *immediately*; second, that it pleases the subject without any personal *interest* in the existence of the object; third, that the judgment involves the *freedom* of the imagination in its determination; and fourth, that the subjective principle for judging of the beautiful is *universal*.<sup>70</sup> Of the analogy of the beautiful as a symbol of morality, Kant says that

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only in this respect (that of a relation that is natural to everyone, and that is also expected of everyone else as a duty) does it please with a claim to the assent of everyone else, in which the mind is at the same time aware of a certain ennoblement and elevation above the mere receptivity for a pleasure from sensible impressions, and also esteems the value of others in accordance with a similar maxim of their power of judgment.<sup>71</sup>

Kant is not saying that the analogy is a requirement for experiencing pleasure in the judgment of taste, but instead that such an analogy provides an explanation for the experience of the pleasure in objects of pure beauty as ennobled and elevated. In §42 Kant makes the claim that someone who has a habitual interest in the beautiful form of natural objects would exhibit “a disposition of the mind that is favourable to the moral feeling.”<sup>72</sup> This, presumably, is because the characteristics that make pleasure in the beautiful significant to this sort of person above other pleasures are those features that make it such a suitable symbol of morality. Kant also suggests that this analogy is supported by the common use of certain predicates of beautiful objects, examples of which include majestic, magnificent, smiling, joyful, innocent, modest, and tender.<sup>73</sup> Kant’s explanation by analogy justifies the value of pleasure in the beautiful as higher than pleasures of sense sensation.

In the previous section I argued that consciousness of the sensation of the state of free play of the cognitive faculties when reflecting on the form of a beautiful object is necessary in order to feel the pleasure in a judgment of taste. The explanation by analogy of the ennobled experience of pleasure in the beautiful also counts against interpretations of Kant that claim the feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties constitutes the pleasure itself. The mere feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties could not constitute the *ennobled* pleasure felt in a judgment of taste. It is only when we recognise what we take to be a universally communicable sensation that we can make the analogy with morality that justifies the nobleness of that pleasure. Without this, the subjective feeling of that activity could only have a value on a par with pleasure in the agreeable.

I will finish by considering one final issue. Judgments of taste involve pleasure, but seeking pleasure is not something that Kant sees as morally valuable. Indeed, in Kant’s description of a valuable life, he says “only through that which he does without regard to enjoyment, in full freedom and independently of that which nature could passively provide for him, does he give his being as the existence of a person an absolute value.”<sup>74</sup> The free play of the imagination and understanding can account for the condition of the subject acting freely. The act of disinterested perception and the activity of the free play of the cognitive powers are also far from passive. But Kant claims that the aesthetic judging of an object is for “the sake of perceiving the suitability of the representation for the harmonious (subjectively purposive) occupation of both cognitive faculties in their freedom, i.e., to sense the representational state with pleasure.”<sup>75</sup> How can we reconcile pleasure in the beautiful with a valuable existence?

We may observe that the pleasure taken in consciousness of the purposiveness of the beautiful object will depend on the extent to which one has cultivated one’s judgment to take pleasure in that which is communicable to all rational beings. Judgments of taste require the bracketing out of all personal interest while contemplating the form of the object and in doing so the judge sacrifices pleasure in any agreeable or desirable aspects of the object. The agreeable characteristics of an object might have been potential sources of intense pleasure. Kant asserts that pleasure in the beautiful is a pleasure of mere reflection that is distinct from a pleasure of enjoyment.<sup>76</sup> An ennobled pleasure in the beautiful is the payoff for having cultivated something analogous to a moral feeling, which is not motivated by pleasure. Indeed, Kant himself says that the true propaedeutic for taste is the cultivation of moral feeling through the development of moral ideas.<sup>77</sup>

In conclusion, I have argued that a consistent and plausible reading of section nine of Kant’s third *Critique* is possible if we note the distinction, on the one hand, between the subjective universal communicability of the sensation of the free play of the imagination and the understanding, and, on the other hand, the subjective purposiveness that is consciousness of the suitability of an object for maintaining a subject in the state of mind of the free play of the cognitive faculties. The former, which is described in stage three of my exposition, involves

the conscious recognition of the universal communicability of a mental state, the latter, described in stage four, is the pleasure in the beautiful object itself. Consciousness of the universal communicability of a sensation (of the free play) when reflecting on the form of a beautiful object is necessary for two reasons: first, it provides us with universally valid grounds for a judgment of taste, and second, it puts us in a position to feel an elevated and ennobled pleasure in the judgment of taste through recognising it as a symbol of morality.

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## 'THE KEY TO THE CRITIQUE OF TASTE'

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### NOTES

1. I would like to thank Robert Wicks for his comments on earlier drafts of this paper.
2. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, §9, 102.
3. *Ibid.*, Introduction IV.1, 66-67.
4. *Ibid.*, §1.1, 89.
5. *Ibid.*, Introduction VII.3, 76. Also §8.2, 99.
6. *Ibid.*, §9.4, 102.
7. *Ibid.*, §9.1, 102.
8. *Ibid.*, §9.3, 102. Kant's exact words are "Also ist es die allgemeine Mittheilungsfähigkeit des Gemüthszustandes in der gegebenen Vorstellung, welche, als subjective Bedingung des Geschmacksurtheils, demselben zum Grunde liegen und die Lust an dem Gegenstande zur Folge haben muss." (Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*. Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1867, 221.) J. H. Bernard translates this sentence as "Hence, it is the universal capability of communication of the mental state in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgment of taste, must be fundamental and must have the pleasure in the object as its consequent." (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. J. H. Bernard. New York, Hafner Publishing Company, 1951, 51.) James Creed Meredith says "Hence it is the universal capacity for being communicated incident to the state of mind in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgement of taste, must underlie the latter, with the pleasure in the object as its consequence." (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 48.) And Werner S. Pluhar translates this section as "Hence it must be the universal communicability of the mental state, in the given presentation, which underlies the judgment of taste as its subjective condition, and the pleasure in the object must be its consequence." (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, 61.)
9. Donald Crawford notes that Walter Cerf takes Kant to hold the paradoxical view that the judgment of taste has pleasure as a consequence. Donald W. Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 70. See translator's Introduction and Translator's Comments to Immanuel Kant, *Analytic of the Beautiful*. Trans. Walter Cerf. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963, 84, 95, 105.
10. Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd. Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 136.
11. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Note 20, 368.
12. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 139.
13. *Ibid.*, 140: "Kant may never have become completely clear about the difference between the theory on which communicability is a necessary condition of aesthetic judgment, and that on which it is a necessary condition not only for aesthetic judgment but for the occurrence of aesthetic response pleasure in the beautiful itself."
14. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd. Ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. p. 139.
15. Henry Allison argues against Guyer's first hypothesis by stating that Kant has not simply amalgamated the two differing theories of pleasure because later, in section §9.7, Kant explicitly denies that the pleasure as the result of the ability to communicate a state of mind could account for the judgment of taste because the judgment of taste must be based on a *a priori* and not a *posteriori* grounds. See Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 112. But, *pace* Allison, what Kant actually says in the passage referred to is that an empirical *demonstration* of pleasure accompanying the fact of being able to communicate a state of mind is not satisfactory because his goal is to demonstrate that judgments of taste are possible *a priori*. I suggest that what Kant means in §9.7 is that a further *a priori* principle is required to justify the claim of subjective universal communicability, namely the heretofore undescribed principle of purposiveness, which is introduced by Kant in the subsequent §10. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. §12, 106-107. Kant issues a caveat in a similar form to this in the Introduction section V.2-3 (p. 69). Here he claims that a transcendental principle, namely the principle of purposiveness, is required for the logical necessity of a judgment of taste.
16. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 140-141.
17. *Ibid.*, 140.
18. Hannah Ginsborg, "On the Key to Kant's Critique of Taste" *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1991): 293-294.
19. *Ibid.*, 295.
20. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 115.
21. *Ibid.*, 115.
22. Ginsborg, "On the Key to Kant's Critique of Taste," 300.
23. *Ibid.*, 299.
24. *Ibid.*, 300.
25. *Ibid.*, 309.
26. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §2, 90-91.
27. *Ibid.*, §4, 92-94.

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28. *Ibid.*, §9.8, 103.
29. Exact description of the activity of the free play of the cognitive faculties is the subject of contentious debate. Fortunately, for the purposes of our undertaking, we can bracket out this question. All that needs to be accepted for the interpretation of §9 that I defend is that, according to Kant, the conditions for such activity, presuming it is possible, are universal.
30. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §9.9, 104.
31. *Ibid.*, §9.9.5, 104.
32. *Ibid.*, §15.4.4, 113.
33. *Ibid.*, §1.2.2, 90.
34. *Ibid.*, §9.5, 103.
35. Kant notes the requirement of the presupposition of a common sense in the judgment of taste. See *ibid.*, §22, 123-124.
36. *Ibid.*, §9.3.1, 102.
37. *Ibid.*, §9.5, 103.
38. Note that in practice a judgment of taste involves the claim that everyone *should* agree with it, not that everyone will. See *ibid.*, §22.1, 123-124.
39. *Ibid.*, §3.3, 92.
40. *Ibid.*, §9.8, 103.
41. *Ibid.*, §9.3.2-3, 102.
42. *Ibid.*, §9.9, 103.
43. Cf. *Ibid.*, §39, 173: “one who judges with taste (as long as he does not err in this consciousness, and does not take the matter for the form, the charm for beauty) may also require the subjective purposiveness, i.e., his satisfaction in the object, of everyone else, and may assume his feeling to be universally communicable, even without the mediation of concepts.”
44. Note that other interpreters also hold this view. Of theorists already mentioned, Paul Guyer argues that the feeling of pleasure in a judgment of taste is the sensation of the free play of the cognitive faculties (Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 141. c.f. 74-75.). Similarly, Henry Allison argues specifically for pleasure as sensation of the “harmonious” free play. (See Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Taste*, 115-118, 54).
45. Wicks, Robert, *Kant on Judgment*. Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2007, 44-45.
46. Crawford, Donald W. *Kant’s Aesthetic Theory*, 73-74.
47. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §10, 105.
48. *Ibid.*
49. *Ibid.*, First Introduction, V, 19.
50. *Ibid.*, §10, 105. C.f. §11, 106: “nothing other than the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object without any end (objective or subjective), consequently the mere form of purposiveness in the representation through which an object is given to us, insofar as we are conscious of it, can constitute the satisfaction that we judge, without a concept, to be universally communicable, and hence the determining ground of the judgment of taste.”
51. *Ibid.*, §39: “subjective purposiveness, i.e. his pleasure in the object”; also §38: “the pleasure or the subjective purposiveness.”
52. *Ibid.*, §11.2, 106: “...it is the mere form of purposiveness in the representation by which an object is given to us, so far as we are conscious of it, which constitutes the satisfaction that we without a concept judge to be universally communicable; and, consequently, this is the determining ground of the judgment of taste.”; see also §12.2, 107: “The consciousness of the merely formal purposiveness in the play of the cognitive powers of the subject in the case of a representation through which an object is given is the pleasure itself.”
53. *Ibid.*, §12, 107.
54. Accordingly, *pace* Wicks and Crawford, sensation of the free play of the cognitive faculties must occur prior to the pleasure in the beautiful.
55. Beatrice Longuenesse, “Kant’s Leading Thread in the Analytic of the Beautiful” *Aesthetics and Cognition in Kant’s Critical Philosophy*. Ed. Rebecca Kukla. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 208.
56. *Ibid.*, 197-198.
57. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §1, 89-90.
58. *Ibid.*, §23, 128-129.
59. Rachel Zuckert, “A New Look at Kant’s Theory of Pleasure” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60:3 (Summer, 2002): 242.
60. *Ibid.*, 246.
61. Ian P. D. Morrisson, *Kant and the Role of Pleasure in Moral Action*. Athens, OH.: Ohio University Press, 2008, 76.
62. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Introduction, III, 65.
63. *Ibid.*, §2, 90.
64. *Ibid.*, §5, 96.
65. *Ibid.*, §59, 227-228.

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- 66. Ibid., §2, 90-91.
- 67. Ibid., §40, 176.
- 68. Ibid., §59, 227.
- 69. Ibid., §59, 227.
- 70. Ibid., §59, 227-228.
- 71. Ibid., §59, 227.
- 72. Ibid., §42, 178-179.
- 73. Ibid., §59, 228.
- 74. Ibid., §4, 94.
- 75. Ibid., §39, 172.
- 76. Ibid., §39, 172.
- 77. Ibid., §60, 230.