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Abstract	<p>According to Burke in his <i>Philosophical Enquiry</i>, aesthetic pleasure and taste are grounded in our ntial sociability. On the one hand, the experience of the beautiful is based on our profound ties with our w human creatures. The sublime, on the other hand, is rooted in our desire for self-preservation, but it also fortifies our sociable instinct. Indeed, for Burke, the delight aroused by the sublime makes us interested in the tragic fate of others, and lies at the root of morality. Like Burke, Kant emphasises the social nature of aesthetic experience. Kant is not interested in concrete sociability with the suffering other, however. For n, the social nature of aesthetics is transcendental and is exemplified in the universal communicability of hetic judgements. Although Kant does not reject the levance of the senses and the body in aesthetic judging, he rebuts Burke's empiricist and physio-psy ological arguments, because these cannot justify the universal validity claim that for Kant are inherent in judgements of taste.</p>	

Chapter 9

Burke and Kant on the Social Nature of Aesthetic Experience

Bart Vandenabeele

Introduction

Edmund Burke is famous for his empiricist and physiological account of aesthetic pleasure in the beautiful and delight in the sublime. Burke argues that aesthetic pleasure or taste cannot be explained without taking into account our most fundamental human interests: the feeling of the beautiful is grounded in our social nature and, more specifically, in our passions that are concerned with ‘the society of the sexes’,¹ and our delight in the sublime is rooted in our desire for self-preservation.

His empiricist and physiological theory of aesthetic pleasure was heavily contested by his contemporaries and was only revived through the later Nietzsche’s ‘physiology of aesthetics’ and his fierce attack on Kant’s and Schopenhauer’s account of aesthetic disinterestedness. Kant’s account of aesthetic disinterestedness can be understood (I shall argue) as a critical response to Burke’s empiricist account,² but – *pace* Nietzsche’s harsh mockery of Kant’s view – aesthetic disinterestedness, as Kant analyses it, does not imply any rejection of the relevance of the senses and

¹References to Burke’s *Enquiry* are to E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, edited with an introduction and notes by James T. Boulton (London: Routledge, 2008), abbreviated PE. As with the rest of the references in this book, Roman numbers refer to the part and section, followed by the page number in Arabic. Here, PE, I.ix.41–42.

²I do not claim that Kant’s aesthetic theory in the *Critique of Judgment* is a response *only* to Burke’s views on the beautiful and the sublime. It is not only impossible to discuss the historical context of Kant’s third *Critique* in a single essay, but it would also be absurd to reduce Kant’s treatment of aesthetics to a response to only one author. Kant not only criticises Edmund Burke, but also Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Lord Kames, Alexander Gerard, Alexander Baumgarten and several others.

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the body in aesthetic judging. On the contrary, Kant's transcendental critique of aesthetic judgement is – at least to a certain extent – reconcilable with Burke's somatic theory, but repudiates the latter's empiricist identification of the agreeable and the beautiful. Furthermore, like Burke, Kant emphasises the social nature of the aesthetic experience, but argues (rightly) that Burke cannot justify the universal validity claim inherent in judgements of taste.

I devote the first part of this paper to a discussion of Burke's and Kant's views of aesthetic pleasure, especially in the beautiful, in order to show that Kant's view of the disinterestedness of aesthetic pleasure or liking (*Wohlgefallen*) can be interpreted as a critical response to Burke's failure to distinguish properly between the beautiful and the agreeable. The second part of my paper is concerned with the social value of aesthetic judgement and experience. Although Kant – perhaps wrongly³ – holds that the universal communicability of aesthetic judgements logically follows from the disinterested character of the pleasure on which they are based, Kant's emphasis on the *a priori* validity of judgements of beauty can be viewed, or so I argue, as a rebuttal of the kind of empiricist and physio-psychological arguments that Burke offers to justify the social nature of the experience of beauty.

Burke and Kant on Pleasure and Disinterestedness

On a Burkean view, aesthetic pleasure can occur in at least two distinct ways. Something can be positively pleasurable and negatively pleasurable. Pleasure and pain are, Burke contends, no mere relations, which could only exist in contrast to some previous state of mind: there are pleasures and pains 'of a positive and independent nature' (PE, I.iv.35) and the diminution or cessation of pain does not result in positive pleasure, but in, what Burke calls, *delight*. Delight is related to privation, i.e., it is a pleasure 'which cannot exist without a relation ... to pain' (PE, I.iv.36). The beautiful is the aesthetic variant of positive pleasure, whereas our feeling of the sublime is based on relative pleasure, i.e. so-called delight. Our delight in the sublime – 'the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling' (PE, I.vii.39) – belongs

³At least according to some commentators. See Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 117: 'From the fact that a delight is not caused by any interest or desire, it does not follow that it is valid for everyone. It might be entirely accidental, or based on some other kind of merely private condition. Universality cannot be deduced from disinterestedness alone, nor does it follow that in requiring disinterestedness of a pleasure one is requiring that it be universal; one may simply be requiring a source other than interest, quite apart from any consideration of intersubjective validity at all. Indeed, one might maintain that unless the requirement of disinterestedness is already a normative requirement for intersubjective acceptability, trying to deduce such a requirement from disinterestedness confuses a factual matter with a normative requirement.' For discussion, see Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste. A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99–103.

to the passions of self-preservation. The sublime delight can arise only when there is danger and terror is felt: 'A mode of terror, or of pain, is always the cause of the sublime' (PE, IV.viii.134). The emotion of terror is closely related to *privation* of some sort: solitude as the privation of society, silence as the privation of sound, darkness as the privation of light. The feeling of the sublime occurs when this privation is suspended: the fear or terror is postponed. We are threatened by loss: language, light, sound, life, everything threatens to disappear, and then, this terror of nothingness, this feeling of losing everything is suspended, and we experience delight. We experience the delight of being deprived of those privations. No moral *catharsis* occurs, as Aristotle thought. The delight in the sublime offers no moral purification or elevation, but *intensifies* our affective capacities, and heightens our sensitivity.

Whereas the sublime is bound up with our sense for self-preservation and our fear of losing our capacities to live our own lives, the beautiful is a positive pleasure that is grounded in our social capacities and our desire to live with others. Not surprisingly, Burke connects the beautiful with *love*, which is 'that satisfaction which arises to the mind upon contemplating anything beautiful' and which needs to be distinguished from desire or lust, 'which is an energy of the mind, that hurries us on to the possession of certain objects, that do not affect us as they are beautiful, but by means altogether different.' (PE, III.i.91) Beauty is a social quality, 'for where women and men, and not only they, but when animals give us a sense of joy and pleasure **is** beholding them, (and there are many that do so) they inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons; we like to have them near us, and we enter willingly into a kind of relation with them, unless we should have strong reasons to the contrary.' (PE, I.x.42–43)

Kant not only reacts against the rationalists who wrongly 'intellectualize' aesthetic experience by assimilating the beautiful to the good, but also attacks the advocates of an empirical and physiological approach, and especially Burke, since Kant says that he 'deserves to be named as the foremost author in this sort of approach' (CJ, 5: 77).⁴ The first, most obvious, reason for this repudiation of Burke's 'physiological exposition' (*ibid.*) is that it cannot properly distinguish between the feelings of the agreeable and the beautiful. On the physiological view, the difference is merely a difference in degree and not in quality. The second is that this approach cannot account for, what Kant calls, the 'pluralistic' nature of aesthetic judgements (CJ, 5: 278), i.e. the idea – which Kant shares with rationalist predecessors such as Mendelssohn and Baumgarten – that in matters of aesthetic taste, there is a genuine 'reason *to* have controversy about taste, not merely to shrug one's shoulders and say

⁴The abbreviation CJ refers to Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. Citations to the *Critique of Judgment* are to volume 5 and the section and page numbers of the *Akademie-Ausgabe* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1902–). The English translations are based on I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, translated, with an introduction, by Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987). I have modified this translation where it seemed appropriate.

84 “to each his own”: because judgments of taste rest upon some sort of judgment of
85 the object, specifically of the object’s form’.⁵ Thus, contra Hume, Burke and other
86 empiricists, Kant argues that aesthetic judgements justifiably make claims to uni-
87 versal validity. We value beauty not just because of our own private or ‘egoistic’
88 (*CJ*, 5: 278) interests – and nor, as Burke holds, because beauty stimulates our social
89 passions, such as love – but as *a priori* shareable with others who possess the same
90 discriminatory and judgemental capacities. I shall return to this second issue in the
91 second part of my paper, and now concentrate on the first one: the distinction
92 between the agreeable and the beautiful, and why Kant believes that disinterested-
93 ness is a suitable criterion to distinguish qualitatively between both feelings.

94 Kant agrees with Burke that, ‘as Epicurus maintained, *gratification* and *pain* are
95 always ultimately corporeal ... because life without the feeling of the corporeal organ is
96 merely consciousness of one’s own existence, but not a feeling of well- or ill-being’.
97 He even praises Burke’s analyses of (aesthetic) pleasure and displeasure as ‘extremely
98 fine’ and admits that his ‘psychological remarks ... provide rich materials for the
99 favorite researches of empirical anthropology’ (*CJ*, 5: 277), but rejects his empiricist
100 assimilation of pleasure in the beautiful to merely agreeable sensation.

101 How does Kant distinguish the feeling of the beautiful from the agreeable?
102 Pleasure in the agreeable is, Kant argues, ‘interested’. There is much debate in the
103 literature about the exact meaning of this phrase. As Nick Zangwill rightly remarks,
104 ‘many commentators have found Kant’s account problematic if not completely
105 unintelligible.’⁶ Whereas I do not pretend to be able to completely clarify this complex
106 notion here, we do need to linger on it for a while and try to make the most of it,
107 since the question of interest and disinterest is crucial to a better understanding of
108 Kant’s qualms about Burke’s physiological approach, which (according to Kant)
109 unjustifiably identifies the pleasure in the beautiful with the pleasure in the agree-
110 able. Kant argues that pleasure in the beautiful is disinterested, unlike our pleasure
111 in the agreeable. In Sect. 2 of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant writes that ‘the satis-
112 faction that we combine with the representation of the existence of an object is
113 called interest. Hence such a satisfaction always has at the same time a relation to
114 the faculty of desire, either as its determining ground or else as necessarily intercon-
115 nected with its determining ground.’ (*CJ*, 5: 204) In his insightful essay on ‘Kant
116 on Pleasure in the Agreeable’, Zangwill clarifies this as follows: ‘if a pleasure is
117 an “interest”, in Kant’s sense, it means that it bears an intimate relation to a desire
118 (that is, a concern with real existence). An “interest” is a pleasure that has some kind
119 of necessary connection with desire. A pleasure is “disinterested” if it has no such
120 necessary connection with desire’.⁷ It is worth noting that Kant’s conception of

⁵Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology. An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 176.

⁶Nick Zangwill, “Kant on Pleasure in the Agreeable,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53, no. 2 (1995): 167.

⁷Zangwill, “Kant on Pleasure in the Agreeable,” 167.

interest is broader than the idea of self-interest that Kant's reference to the capacity of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*) seems to suggest; thus, pleasures in the good – moral pleasures – are as 'interested' as pleasures in the agreeable. By contrast, Kant claims that our pleasure in the beautiful cannot originate from any interest, but also, and more importantly, insists that our pleasure in the beautiful does not *create* any interest in the object either.

What can this mean? As Kant asserts at the beginning of Sect. 5, 'a judgment of taste is merely contemplative, i.e., it is a judgment that is indifferent with regard to the existence of the object: it considers the character of the object only by holding it up to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure (*nur seine Beschaffenheit mit dem Gefühl der Lust und Unlust zusammenhält*).' (*CJ*, §5, 5: 209) This specific requirement that a judgement of beauty be devoid of all interest not merely grounds Kant's distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful but also between aesthetic and moral pleasure.⁸ Since we are here really concerned with Kant's criticism of Burke's empiricist theory of taste, we shall not go into the latter distinction.

How does Kant distinguish exactly between beauty and agreeableness? Agreeable objects, say Belgian chocolates, which cause pleasure merely because of their sensuous nature or their sensible properties, are said to 'gratify (*vergnügen*)' someone. More specifically, when I enjoy eating a Belgian chocolate, 'I am not granting mere approval: the agreeable produces an inclination' and 'arouses a desire for objects of the same kind' (*CJ*, §3, 5: 207). Thus, Kant holds that 'all interest presupposes a need or gives rise to one; and, because interest is the basis that determines approval, it makes the judgment about the object unfree' (*CJ*, §5, 5: 210).⁹ Thus, the basic difference between the agreeable and the beautiful must be that the agreeable, unlike the beautiful, gives rise to a desire for similar objects. Kant thus plausibly argues that pleasure in the agreeable is connected with the *existence* of the object that caused the agreeable sensation in the first place, whereas pleasure in the beautiful is not. If the satisfaction caused by the object leads to a desire for more similar objects, e.g. similar Belgian chocolates, then this implies that the initial satisfaction was connected with the existence of the first object.¹⁰ How else could it produce this desire (or inclination) for more objects that are thought to be similar?

⁸See Anne-Marie Roviello, "Du beau comme symbole du bien," in ed. Herman Parret, *Kants Ästhetik, Kant's Aesthetics, L'esthétique de Kant* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 374–85. See also Birgit Recki, "Das Schöne als Symbol der Freiheit" in the same volume, pp. 386–402.

⁹In 'Kant on Pleasure in the Agreeable', Nick Zangwill rightly emphasises that this unfreedom of the pleasure in the agreeable is 'a matter of the *causes* of the pleasure. It does not detract from what Kant is saying about the way that pleasure then provokes desire, via a representation. If a pleasure is unfree, it is unfree because of the way it is caused, not because of what it causes.' (170)

¹⁰This does not necessarily imply that Kant is offering a purely causal account of the interestedness of pleasure in the agreeable. I here agree with Zangwill, 'Kant on Pleasure in the Agreeable', 169: 'Once we see that Kant is not offering a purely causal account of the interestedness of pleasure in the agreeable, we will be less prone to think that he thinks that pleasure in the beautiful is disinterested because the pleasure bears no causal relation to the objects that we find pleasurable and thus call beautiful. If Kant did think this, it would make his claim that pleasure in the beautiful is disinterested very implausible. But fortunately Kant holds no such view.'

Paul Guyer suggests that ‘Kant is not making a phenomenological distinction between different kinds of feelings of pleasure, but a distinction between the ways in which different instances of pleasure may be occasioned’.¹¹ Thus, Kant maintains ‘that the presence or absence of a connection to interest may serve as a criterion for the reflective classification of given pleasures’.¹² Section 3 of the *CJ* aims to show that ‘the satisfaction *in the agreeable* is combined with interest’ (*CJ*, §3, 5: 205). By contrast, our pleasure in the beautiful cannot be based on an interest or inclination, or else the beautiful would be identical with the agreeable,¹³ which is exactly the Burkean view that Kant wants to dismiss: ‘the agreeable is that which pleases the senses in sensation’, whereas the beautiful is based on what I make of a representation ‘in myself, not how I depend on the existence of the object.’ (*ibid.*) In this context, Kant makes a crucial (but often overlooked) distinction between two distinct meanings of the term ‘sensation’ (*Empfindung*).¹⁴ In the *Critique of Pure Reason* this term denotes ‘an objective representation of the senses’, or a representation available for empirical knowledge of objects. The sensation of the colour green in a green meadow, for instance, is an *objective* sensation, because it can become a component in empirical concepts, such as that of grass. When the term is used in connection with aesthetic pleasure and displeasure, though, ‘it is related solely to the subject and does not serve for any cognition at all, not even that by which the subject *cognizes* itself.’ (*CJ*, §3, 5: 206) This kind of ‘subjective sensation’ must always remain purely subjective, and Kant refers to it using the term ‘feeling’ (*Gefühl*) (*CJ*, 5: 189; §3, 5: 206).

This distinction does not, however, establish a sound basis for discriminating between the beautiful and the agreeable. First, how plausible is Kant’s claim that pleasures in the agreeable are necessarily productive of desire for more similar objects? Not *all* pleasures in the agreeable provoke the desire for more of the same kind of objects that occasioned the pleasure in the first place. Put more concretely, as Zangwill asks, ‘what about the last piece of chocolate that we enjoy before we have had enough? ... The sight of yet more chocolate can soon come to disgust one. It seems that the last pleasurable piece of chocolate does not provoke a desire for more of the same’.¹⁵ Thus, although Kant may be right that many kinds of agreeable sensations are ‘more-ish’ or productively interested, not *all* pleasures in the agreeable are. There is a second possible objection to Kant’s distinction, viz. that Kant, as Guyer notes, instead of distinguishing between kinds of pleasure, merely supplies ‘a distinction between feelings of pleasure and all other kinds of sensation’.¹⁶

¹¹ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, p. 152.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ J.-F. Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 161.

¹⁴ See J.-F. Lyotard, *The Differend. Phrases in Dispute*, trans. G. Van Den Abbeele (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 132.

¹⁵ Zangwill, ‘Kant on Pleasure in the Agreeable’, 172.

¹⁶ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 153.

At first glance, Guyer seems right, but Kant's view of pleasure is more complicated than Guyer¹⁷ allows. By defining pleasure as *feeling* instead of sensation, Kant is not merely saying that pleasure is some peculiar kind of sensation, i.e., a subjective sensation 'which cannot become an element of cognition at all' (*CJ*, 5: 189), since it does not refer to objects. The subjective nature of Kant's notion of feeling is much more profound than Guyer recognises. Rachel Zuckert¹⁸ suggests (rightly) that 'pleasure is, on Kant's definition, a representation with intentional content, which comprises other representations understood to be modifications of the subject (that is, are themselves not [solely] referred to objects)'.¹⁹ Kant characterises pleasure in the *Critique of Judgment* as the 'consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, **for maintaining** it in that state' (*CJ*, §10, 5: 220; bold in the original), and in the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, he claims that 'what directly (through sense) urges me to *leave* my state (to go out of it) is *disagreeable* to me – it causes me pain; just as what drives me to *maintain* my state (to remain in it) is *agreeable* to me, I enjoy it' (*Anth.*, 7: 231; italics in the original).²⁰

Thus, Kant does not agree with Burke (and other empiricists) that pleasure is a kind of primitive or raw sensation, but holds that pleasure is a representation with intentional content, i.e., a mental state that is about another mental state, a feeling *about* something, or put more accurately, about the continuation in time of the feeling or the mental state.²¹ Pleasure in eating Belgian chocolates would then be the awareness or 'the feeling that the representation of chocolate is "causing" one to stay in the state of having that representation (of the taste of chocolate).'²² Pleasure is thus intimately connected with the feeling of life (*Lebensgefühl*) (*CJ*, 5: 204; 277), i.e., with enjoying the state one finds oneself in when (for instance) experiencing the sensible properties of an object. Thus, on a Kantian view, pleasure is no mere 'raw feel', as Guyer, along with numerous other commentators, claims. It does not need to be referred to objects via empirical concepts or judgements, but is necessarily characterised by intentionality, i.e., 'aboutness': it 'is about' a subject's mental state. Therefore, it is aptly called subjective by Kant, although it is not a sensation, but 'a second-order, reflexive state with respect both to other mental states and to the position of those states in time, the form of inner sense.'²³ We do not experience pleasure

¹⁷P. Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 280–1, and *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 104–5.

¹⁸Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology*, 233. I here follow Zuckert's excellent account (233ff.) of the intentional nature of pleasure, but I do not agree with her identification of the intentionality of pleasure with purposiveness without a purpose.

¹⁹Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology*, 233.

²⁰I here refer to I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Mary Gregor (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974).

²¹Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology*, 233.

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*, 236.

primarily as the separate effect of something, but we take pleasure *in* something (*ibid.*), e.g., in drinking a glass of Chablis, in eating spinach, in sinking into a hot bath, etc.

Contra Burke, Kant argues that – although bodily pleasures such as a sexual orgasm or tasting a fine wine may seem to suggest otherwise – pleasures are not free floating sensations but reflexive, second-order *feelings*. Contrary also to his earlier view defended in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, in the *Critique of Judgment* he now claims that not all pleasures are sensations or, more accurately, sensory pleasures are, *pace* Burke, not the only kind of pleasure – although he does retain the view that when pleasures are ‘sensations’ (pleasures in the agreeable or ‘enjoyments’), they are ‘the same in kind, differing only in degree’.²⁴ Of course, he agrees with Burke that sensory pleasure is a kind of pleasure, but repudiates Burke’s privileging of sensory (or bodily) pleasure – the sensuous pleasure we take in enjoying a cognac or a hot shower – as a model for *all* other kinds of pleasure. Hence, Kant claims that pleasure in the agreeable is only a sub-class of pleasure; this is the kind of sensory pleasures that we share with animals (*CJ*, 5: 210). There is no reason to privilege agreeable sensations over other kinds of pleasure, such as intellectual or moral pleasures.

As previously noted, Kant rashly claims that *all* pleasures in the agreeable are productively interested, i.e. arouse the desire for more objects of the same kind. ‘Sated’ pleasures, such as orgasms, do not – at least not immediately – provoke the desire for more orgasms.²⁵ Yet what about Kant’s insistence that pleasure in the beautiful is devoid of interest, i.e., is only related to the subject’s feeling of life (*Lebensgefühl*), and is completely independent of the existence of the object? Kant argues that pure aesthetic pleasure is directed to the representation of the object, as opposed to the connection between the subject and the existence of the object.

For aesthetic judgement, a representation of the object is all that is required, whereas in an ‘interested’ response to an object, its actual existence will be involved. In a rather amusing note, taken from his *Reflexionen* from the mid-1770s, Kant furnishes examples of the sorts of interest in existence that must be excluded from the pure aesthetic appreciation:

Taste shows itself if one does not choose merely *on account of usefulness*. Therefore, a porcelain button is more beautiful than a silver one. The beauty of lace consists in the fact that it does not last long. Clothes are therefore chosen of delicate colors, because they are perishable. Flowers have their beauty in their perishability. (Nature has given the least beauty to that which is enjoyable because it nourishes: cows, bees, swine, sheep; to that which refreshes in enjoyment, somewhat more: fruit; that which smells nice, more: and that which can merely please the eye, the

According to Guyer, ‘this passage misinterprets the requirements of disinterestedness’, as it not merely separates taste from practical dependence, but in fact

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 240.

²⁵ Zangwill, ‘Kant on Pleasure in the Agreeable’, 174.

²⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Reflexion* 868 XV, 1, 382.

'proposes an actual conflict between beauty and practicality'.²⁷ Technically speaking, Guyer is right. Disinterested contemplation does not necessarily imply an asymmetry of beauty and practicality: a kind of syncretism of both remains possible. Thus, Kant only points out that there is quite often a real conflict between taste and usefulness, or beauty and practicality, which can serve as a corroborating fact about the disinterestedness of the pure judgement of taste. The inverse relationship between beauty and usefulness is not a necessary consequence of the judgement's disinterestedness, although this logical fact does not subsequently rule out the possibility of an actual conflict between both.

Kant's basic idea is that of the contrast between the mere representation of an object and the full nexus of its causal relations. Only in the case of the latter can we have empirical knowledge of its causal basis. A physiological response can be the subject of empirical investigation and empirical causal laws. The agreeableness of the object may be included in the causal nexus that constitutes the real existence of the object, whereas the feeling of the beautiful cannot – again *pace* Burke, who claims that 'the appearance of beauty as effectually causes some degree of love in us, as the application of ice or fire produces the ideas of heat or cold' (PE, III.ii.92).

From a Burkean perspective, the beautiful causes the passion of love. Although Burke distinguishes love from desire, and (only) in this sense anticipates Kant's analysis of the judgement of beauty as disinterested, he offers no solid basis to explain the qualitative distinction between the beautiful and the agreeable. As an empiricist, he can only account for a difference in degree. Kant holds not only that Burke's distinction between desire and love is flawed, but also that his physiological explanation of the beautiful (and the sublime) cannot account for the 'pluralistic' nature of judgements of beauty. It is to this issue that we now turn.

The 'Pluralistic' Nature of Beauty

Although Burke emphasises the social nature of beauty and love, he remains silent on the question of the universality claim of judgements of beauty. He merely connects it with our 'passions for society', but this has more to do with the passion *caused by* the experience of beauty, viz. love, than with the appreciation of beauty as such.

Kant severely condemns any attempt to dispense with the objectivity claim of pure aesthetic judgements and rejects Burke's contention that beauty is derived solely from sensations that depend merely on our physiological constitution. When we judge something to be agreeable, Kant says, we can accept that others disagree: 'this dish is agreeable to me' is an acceptable expression (CJ, §7, 5: 212). But when I judge something as beautiful, I cannot claim that it is merely beautiful *to me* (*ibid.*):

²⁷Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 174.

although our judgement is based on a personal feeling of pleasure (*Wohlgefallen*), we require or demand others to agree with us: a judgement on the beauty of an object is always *pluralistic*.

In some ways, Kant's view is more similar to Burke's than to other empiricist views such as Hume's, for Burke holds that the principles of taste are uniform, whereas Hume's famous essay 'Of the Standard of Taste' emphasises the great variety between people's judgements of taste and argues that the only real standard of taste to be found has to be based on an historical canon and the joint verdict of an elite of trained critics, which is the most reliable standard we can possibly have.²⁸ Burke, however, urges that: 'as the senses are the great originals of all our ideas, and consequently of all our pleasures, if they are not uncertain and arbitrary, the whole ground-work of Taste is common to all, and therefore there is a sufficient foundation for a conclusive reasoning on these matters' (PE, 24). Unfortunately, he does not substantiate this rather bold claim.

Although Kant concurs with Burke's (typically empiricist) emphasis on the role of the senses in matters of taste and stresses the importance of a *personal* encounter with the aesthetic object, he **reprehends** his conclusion that our common physiology sufficiently grounds the universality claim of pure judgements of beauty. Kant attempts to provide *a priori* foundations for what Burke thought were matters of natural principles, imagination, custom and physiological disposition. Contra Burke, who holds that 'beauty is, for the greater part, some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind, by the intervention of the senses' (PE, III. xii. 112), Kant argues that even when, 'as experience teaches', a judgement of beauty is 'often enough rejected' by others, we should not be deterred from demanding that others assent to it (CJ, §7, 5: 213; §8, 5: 214).

However, Burke would never deny what Kant is claiming here, namely that the validity of a judgement of taste depends on the circumstances in which it is made: we can often be mistaken that our own judgement of taste is not based on any personal interest (CJ, §8, 5: 216; §19, 5: 237), and we can only claim that others will judge the object in the same way, if the circumstances are ideal. Yet Kant goes one (big) step further than Burke (and other empiricists), when he claims that a judgement of beauty is not merely 'an empirical judgment that I perceive and judge an object is beautiful', but we also claim our judgement to be valid for everyone, and make a claim 'to *everyone's* assent, as if it were an objective judgment' (CJ, §32, 2: 281). Thus, 'That I am perceiving and judging an object with pleasure is an empirical judgement. But that I find the object beautiful, i.e., that I am entitled to require that liking from everyone as necessary, is an *a priori* judgment' (CJ, §37, 5: 289). Here Kant clearly breaks with Burke, as he maintains that judgements of beauty are *a priori* rather than merely empirical.

When we are judging something as beautiful, it is as if we speak with a 'universal voice', Kant says (CJ, §8, 5: 216). This universal voice is however not empirical, but

²⁸ See the end of the introductory essay above (Chap. 1) and Dario Perinetti's contribution (Chap. 14) below.

'only an Idea' in the Kantian sense of the term, i.e., a transcendental Idea to which no empirical representation conforms. This is especially clear in paragraph 8 of the *CJ*, where Kant states that:

The judgment of taste itself does not *postulate* everyone's agreement (since only a logically universal judgment can do that, because it can adduce reasons); it merely *requires* this agreement from everyone, as an instance of the rule, an instance regarding which it expects confirmation not from concepts but from the agreement of others. Hence the universal voice is only an idea. (...) Whether someone who believes he is making a judgment of taste is in fact judging in conformity with that idea may be uncertain; but by using the term beauty he indicates that he is at least referring his judging to that idea, and hence that he intends it to be a judgment of taste. For himself, however, he can attain certainty on this point, by merely being conscious that he is separating whatever belongs to the agreeable and the good from the liking that remains to him after that. It is only for this that he counts on everyone's assent, and he would also be justified in making this claim under these conditions, if only he were not often to offend against these conditions and thereby make an erroneous judgment of taste. (*CJ*, §8, 5: 216)

An imputation of general assent in pleasure is 'only' a transcendental idea, in the Kantian sense of the term, viz. a concept of objective but indeterminate validity. Against any rationalist view, Kant insists that the required universal agreement in aesthetic judgements is always uncertain. One can reasonably claim that everyone should give his approval, but this claim is not based on (confused) concepts, as rationalist philosophers argue to hold open the possibility for an ideal agreement.²⁹ The evidence for (or against) my making a pure judgement of taste is uncertain, and it is not necessarily defeated by disagreement either, because I might have been wrong about the source of my own pleasure or because another may have not obtained the requisite abstraction. It is founded on the idea of the harmony of the higher cognitive powers – which is what Kant argues in §9.

This is an important point: the claim to universal validity can neither be falsified inductively, but nor – and here again Kant disagrees with Burke – can it be verified empirically by basing one's own judgement on the occurrence of (a consensus of) other judgements of taste. Kant thus concurs with Burke's claim that judgements of beauty cannot be based on the subsumption of an object under a determinate concept (such as perfection, as the rationalists hold). Therefore, *if* Kant is right that there is a claim to universal validity in pure judgements of taste, the universality that is at stake is subjective or aesthetic: 'for this quantity', Kant writes in Sect. 8, 'I use the expression *general validity* [*Allgemeingültigkeit*], by which I mean the validity that a presentation's reference to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure [may] have for every subject, rather than the validity of a presentation's reference to the cognitive power. (We may, alternatively, use the same expression, universal validity, for both the aesthetic and the logical quantity of a judgment, provided we add *objective*

²⁹This does not rule out the possibility that the *content* of aesthetic judgements involves concepts. What Kant claims is merely that concepts cannot form a basis for rationally imputing our aesthetic appraisal to others. Aesthetic judgements are independent of the subsumption of the object under concepts – no more, no less.

for the logical universal validity to distinguish it from the merely subjective one, which is always aesthetic.)' (*CJ*, §8, 5: 214–215). The subjective universality of judgements of taste has to do neither with any moral interest, nor with the content of the judgement but clearly with the epistemic status of the judgement³⁰: its extension is not (as in a logical judgement) a class of objects but 'a class of possible human judges'.³¹ This universal validity cannot be based on the classification of the object under a concept: the step from 'This rose is beautiful' to 'All roses are beautiful' is not guaranteed by the universal validity of the first judgement. One could say that singularity and universality are tied together in a pure judgement of taste: in and through a singular judgement, that is in confrontation with a particular object, the universal shareability of the feeling of pleasure is immediately claimed, without any reference to determinate concepts.

The problem of founding the aesthetic judgement's universal validity claim can only be tackled by introducing an important term that Kant uses for the first time in the notorious §9 (on the question whether in a judgement of taste the feeling of pleasure precedes the judging of the object or the judging precedes the pleasure), viz. universal *communicability* (*allgemeine Mittheilbarkeit*). This is what needs to be accounted for if we want to find the justification for the universality claim in the judgement of taste. Unfortunately, Kant has written one of the most confusing passages on this very issue. He states:

If the pleasure in the given object came first, and our judgment of taste were to attribute only the pleasure's universal communicability to the presentation of the object, then this procedure would be self-contradictory. For that kind of pleasure would be none other than mere agreeableness in the sensation, so that by its very nature it could have only private validity, because it would depend directly on the presentation by which the object is given. Hence it must be the capacity for being universally communicated of the mental state [*allgemeine Mittheilungsfähigkeit des Gemüthsstandes*], in the given representation, which underlies the judgment of taste as its subjective condition, and the pleasure in the object must be its consequence. (*CJ*, §9, 5: 217)

Kant makes two rather puzzling statements. First, the pleasure is said to be the result of the aesthetic judgement; but how is this possible if the pleasure is also supposed to be the judgement's condition or ground? Secondly, aesthetic pleasure is argued to be the consequence of the universal communicability of the mental state in the judgement. How can the pleasure of taste be the consequence of the universal communicability of the mental state, when the latter is supposed to be pleasurable itself (at least in positive judgements of taste)? This looks circular.³² We can deal with the first problem fairly easily by making an essential distinction between the act of judging or contemplating the object (*Beurtheilung des Gegenstandes*) and the

³⁰ Although the aesthetic judgement is not cognitive, the subject's cognitive capacities (viz. understanding and imagination) are clearly involved.

³¹ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 132.

³² See also D. Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 70, and Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 111ff., on which the following is partly based.

judgement of taste (*Geschmacksurtheil*) as such. Judging the object obviously precedes the pleasure, but the latter precedes the actual judgement of taste. It not only precedes it, it also forms the determining ground of the judgement of taste proper. According to Guyer, §9 contains the basic elements for a theory of aesthetic appraisal that consists of two logically – but not necessarily phenomenologically – distinct acts of reflection. First, an act of mere reflection in which pleasure is felt, and secondly, an act of aesthetic judgement proper, in which the cause of the pleasure is attributed to the harmonious play of the faculties. On this reading too, however, Kant's apparent implication that the universal communicability of the mental state in judging the object is itself the source of the sensed pleasure is, as Guyer puts it, 'obviously absurd',³³ since it suggests that universal communicability is constitutive of aesthetic pleasure instead of merely playing a part in evaluating it.³⁴

Yet in the same section Kant explicitly denies that pleasure in the ability to communicate one's mental state could account for the aesthetic pleasure in the beautiful. There is, Kant says, pleasure in the ability to communicate, but one cannot appeal to it to explain the transcendental necessity connected with the pure judgement of taste, since this is merely an empirical or natural propensity (*Hang*) to sociability (*CJ*, §9, 5: 218). This is clearly a reference to Burke's view of beauty as 'a social quality', belonging to the social passions that are comparable to 'good company, lively conversations, and the endearments of friendship', and because of their social nature all 'fill the mind with great pleasure' (*PE*, I.xi.43) But what is exactly Kant's idea here? Perhaps the only way to explain Kant's remarkable implication that aesthetic pleasure is grounded in the universal communicability itself would be to qualify the aesthetic judgement, as Hannah Ginsborg does, as 'a formal and self-referential judgment that claims, not the universal validity of an antecedently given feeling of pleasure, but rather its own universal validity with respect to the object'.³⁵ Thus, a judgement of taste would be a judgement *about* the normativity of one's own mental state (*Gemütszustand*). The demand for assent is merely the demand that others recognise this normativity, i.e., that I judge the object as it ought be judged, namely as beautiful. However, one might wonder how self-referential judgements could avoid making use of concepts, and hence, whether Ginsborg's account does not illegitimately turn aesthetic judgements into intellectual judgements,

³³P. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 137.

³⁴See *ibid.* As Guyer contends, this would imply that in a solipsistic situation no one could take pleasure in a beautiful object. Only if there were the possibility of communication, would aesthetic pleasure be possible. This was actually Kant's anthropological view before he wrote the *Critique of Judgment*. See *Logik Blomberg*, 24: 45–46: 'taste can therefore impossibly be separately solitary [*abgesondert eigenthümlich*]'; *Logik Philippi*, 24: 353–5; *Anthropologie Collins* 15: 179–80. This also occurs, however, in texts written after the *Critique of Judgment*, as in, for instance, his *Anthropology for a Pragmatic Point of View* 7: 244 and the *Metaphysics of Morals* 6: 212. See also *Metaphysik L1* 28: 249–51, where he argues that the universal sense (*allgemeine Sinn*) underlying judgements of taste has to be identified with a communal sense (*gemeinschaftliche Sinn*), and also emphasises that 'whoever does not come into a community has no communal sense' (28: 249).

³⁵H. Ginsborg, "Reflective Judgment and Taste," *Noûs* 24, no. 1 (1990): 70.

i.e., judgments of cognition requiring concepts to determine the correctness of ascribing one's mental state to others, or – at least – into what Kant calls in his *Logik Dohna-Wundlacken* 'beautiful cognition' ('*schönes Erkenntnis*'), which is no longer based on the free play of the cognitive faculties, and hence is altogether different from a pure judgement of taste.³⁶ Secondly, it is hard to see how Ginsborg's view could allow for negative judgements of taste: if Kant meant the judgement of taste to be self-referential, i.e., referring to the normativity or appropriateness of my mental state with regard to the object deemed beautiful, and if the pleasure of taste is really in the universal communicability of my pleasure, then there is no room for a universally communicable *displeasure*, since universal communicability is itself a source of pleasure.³⁷

I do not believe Ginsborg's view is what Kant had in mind. It is hard to see how one can account for the intricacies of Kant's theory of aesthetic response without logically distinguishing between two acts of reflection. On the other hand, it is equally difficult how Guyer's logical distinction can be translated into more phenomenological or 'psychological' terms. Although it forms no legitimate basis for the universal validity or communicability of the judgement of taste proper, the disinterestedness is actually the affective 'symptom' of the fact that the pleasure (or displeasure) must be attributed to the reciprocal quickening of the mental faculties that are operative in aesthetic judgements of taste – the 'feeling of life'³⁸ of the subject – and not to some idiosyncratic inclination or quirk: displeasure signals the disharmony, whereas pleasure signals the harmony of the two cognitive powers involved in aesthetic judging. It is in this sense Kant's statement, quoted above, can be readily understood: 'it must be the capacity for being universally communicated of the mental state [*allgemeine Mittheilungsfähigkeit des Gemüthszustandes*], in the given representation, which underlies the judgment of taste *as its subjective condition*, and the pleasure in the object must be its consequence' (italics added).

Instead of qualifying this idea as hopelessly absurd, as Paul Guyer does, or (like Hannah Ginsborg) defining aesthetic judgements as self-referential which deprives them of their disinterested nature – since pleasure in the universal communicability of the mental state cannot be disinterested but is (as Kant holds) a natural inclination, one might interpret Kant's claim in §9 – no matter how clumsy Kant's formulation is – as follows. Phenomenologically speaking, the purity of taste – the disinterestedness of the experienced pleasure – is subjectively determined (*as its subjective condition*,

³⁶See *Logik Dohna-Wundlacken*, 24: 710: 'Wenn Anschauung und Begriff zusammenstimmen zur Belebung der Erkenntnis selbst, so machen sie in uns ein Wohlgefallen und dann nennt man es schönes Erkenntnis. Man muss sich bemühen, dass Verstand und Einbildungskraft zu einem Geschäft zusammenstimmen. *Dies ist aber nicht mehr Spiel*' (italics added).

³⁷Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 115.

³⁸For an interesting treatment of the parallels and differences between beauty's 'feeling of life' (*Lebensgefühl*) and morality's 'feeling of spirit' (*Geistesgefühl*), which is not a feeling of sense – although it is in some way palpable, see John H. Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 292–305. Interestingly, Kant also uses the term *Geistesgefühl* and not *Lebensgefühl* in connection with the feeling of the sublime.

Kant says) by the necessity of being universally communicable or shareable, i.e., by the 'signal' in the mind (*Gemüth*) that the felt pleasure (or displeasure) is universally communicable. This implies that, on the one hand, the disinterestedness of the pleasure is the essential, *a priori* condition for the universal communicability of aesthetic judgements – without disinterestedness aesthetic judgements could not be universally shared, for disinterestedness, or so Kant argues, implies the purposeful 'play' of the cognitive powers.³⁹ But, on the other hand, the capacity for universal communicability is itself the ideal gauge to estimate whether the experienced pleasure is really disinterested or not. Hence, Kant writes: 'the pleasure in the object must be its consequence'. Only through its possibility of universal communication can it be estimated, Kant holds, whether or not the felt pleasure is actually disinterested or not. So in this sense, and in this sense only, can the pleasure in an object be the consequence of 'the capacity for being universally communicated of the mental state [*allgemeine Mittheilungsfähigkeit des Gemüthszustandes*]'. Whether or not the pleasure is really pure pleasure, i.e., the disinterested pleasure that grounds a pure judgement of taste, depends on the very universal communicability of the aesthetic judgement, which is the *ratio cognoscendi* of the disinterestedness of the pleasure.⁴⁰ That one can actually be fairly certain (though one will never be able to prove it by means of arguments) that the pleasure one experiences here and now is disinterested is grounded in – though not caused by – the universal communicability of the mental state – or more precisely still, in the *affect* that 'signals' whether or not the activity of the mental powers is universally communicable. And this affect, or rather this universally communicable mental state, of course, presupposes 'a capacity for being universally communicated'.

Conclusion

A number of different traits run through Kant's responses to the Burkean form of physiological and empiricist analysis of aesthetic pleasure that he diagnoses. One key feature of his approach is to argue that the empiricist method cannot account for the qualitative difference between the agreeable and the beautiful, since it does not acknowledge his controversial criterion of the disinterestedness of the pleasure on which a judgement of beauty is based. Another characteristic of his approach is essentially to argue that Burke's empirical psycho-physiological analysis of beauty should ultimately be refuted, since it cannot account for the aesthetic judgement's claim to universal assent, and hence fails to adequately describe the extremely significant 'pluralistic' or social nature of the feeling and judgement of beauty.

³⁹In the anthropology lectures as early as 1781, he still held that aesthetic pleasures are 'public', generally shared pleasures. Before the *CJ*, he denied that they ground universality and necessity claims.

⁴⁰For a more extended discussion of this, see B. Vandenabeele, "The Subjective Universality of Aesthetic Judgements Revisited," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 48, no. 4 (2008): 410–425.

516 These few reflections are hardly meant to constitute an adequate assessment of
517 Burke's aesthetics of the beautiful. My purposes in this essay have only been to
518 show that Kant is profoundly concerned with Burke's empiricism, and that recogn-
519 ising that his transcendental critique of the judgement of beauty is, to a certain
520 extent, structured around the task of responding to this Burkean form of empiricism
521 may be a useful way to illuminate the significance of both their contributions to
522 philosophical aesthetics.

Uncorrected Proof

Author Queries

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AU1	Kindly confirm the inserted affiliation for correctness and provide email address for author “Bart Vandenabeele”.	
AU2	Please provide appropriate closing parenthesis in “Nature has given the...”.	

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