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Kant's Ideal of Beauty as the Symbol of the Morally Good and as a Source of Aesthetic Normativity

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ABSTRACT[2]. Kant claims in §59 of his *Critique of Judgement* that beauty is the symbol of the morally good because the mode of reflection in judgements of beauty is analogous to the mode of reflection in moral judgements. Contrary to common interpretations that often neglect differentiations between kinds of purposiveness, I interpret §59 in light of §17 and argue that the beauty Kant has in mind when talking of the symbol of the morally good is the ideal of beauty rather than merely free beauty. My attempt to make sense of both of the notoriously complex paragraphs (§17 and §59) not only solves the problem of integrating §17 into Kant's aesthetic theory but also reveals that while Kant's aesthetic and moral theories are not as dissociated from one another as is often suggested, they are still sufficiently independent from one another so as not to jeopardise their respective autonomies. I show this by relating kinds of freedom with kinds of purposiveness and by interpreting the freedom involved in the judgement of the ideal of beauty as the perfection of the freedom involved in the judgement of free beauty. By showing that the internal objective purposiveness of the ideal of beauty has a moral analogue, whereas the formal subjective purposiveness of free beauty does not, it is possible to show how the morally good can be expressed aesthetically through the ideal of beauty – i.e., through the 'human figure'. Moreover, this interpretation shows that the normative validity of moral judgements and of judgements of beauty can be grounded on internal objective purposiveness employed as a constitutive and as a mere regulative principle of reflection, respectively, without compromising the role of free play of the cognitive faculties in grounding judgements of beauty in general.

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[2] More details on my argument presented here can be found in my 2014 University of Leeds PhD thesis, where I analyse the 18th-century notion of moral beauty and from which this paper evolved; see Plato (2017) *The Aesthetic Expression of Moral Character: Moral Beauty in the Eighteenth Century*, Münster: mentis Verlag.

1. Introduction

Kant claims in §59 of his *Critique of Judgement* that beauty is the symbol of the morally good.[3] He grounds this claim on the thought that the mode of reflection in judgements of beauty is analogous to the mode of reflection in moral judgements. One of the analogies that Kant draws attention to is the freedom of the cognitive faculties and of the will involved in judgements of beauty and moral judgements, respectively. By looking into the details of this analogy and its role in Kant's notion of symbolization, I argue that, contrary to standard interpretation (e.g., Guyer 1993, Allison 2001, or Recki 2001), the beauty Kant refers to in this claim is a kind of adherent beauty rather than free beauty. I argue that we must interpret §59 in light of Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty that he mentions in §17. This is because Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty is defined by using the same kind of freedom – internal objective purposiveness[4] – that is used to define the moral agent. Judgements of free beauty, on the other hand, require the free play of the cognitive faculties, which involves formal subjective purposiveness that has no role to play in moral judgements. Consequently, the mode of reflection involved in judgements of the ideal of beauty, rather than the mode of reflection involved in judgements of free beauty, is analogous to the mode of reflection involved in moral judgements. Therefore, the ideal of beauty, rather than simply free beauty is the symbol of the morally good.

This conclusion is important because it reveals that Kant's aesthetics and morality have a common source of normativity, namely, internal objective purposiveness. The crucial qualification, however, is that while internal objective purposiveness is employed as a mere regulative principle of cognition in judgements of beauty, it is employed as a constitutive principle of cognition in moral judgements. This, I argue, distinguishes the source of aesthetic normativity from that of moral normativity. This is why

[3] All references to Kant's works are to the pagination of the Akademie edition (Kant 1902ff) included in the following translations: *KU,* for: *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Kant 1790/2000), *CPR* for: *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kant 1781/1998), and *GMM* for: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant 1785/1996).

[4] For details on 'purposiveness', see part 4 below.

the ideal of beauty is merely a symbol of the morally good rather than identical with it.

As I will discuss in detail in this paper, Kant's distinction between regulative and constitutive principles of cognition enables him to explain how the morally good can, despite not being identical with the ideal of beauty, still have an aesthetic expression (i.e., a symbol) *through* the ideal of beauty. The perfect moral agent – who is surely as much an ideal as the ideal of beauty – acts according to the self-imposed laws of practical rationality, i.e. according to internal objective purposiveness.[5] The phenomenal appearance, i.e. the effect, of moral action is what Kant calls the 'visible expression of moral ideas, which inwardly govern human beings' (*KU,* 5: 235-236). In its idealized perfection, this 'visible expression' of the moral agent is the empirically perceivable 'human figure' (*KU*, 5: 235). The actual empirical perception of this 'human figure' is, as its idealized status already suggests, surely only achieved in approximation. Yet, the concept of the empirically perceivable 'human figure', even if never, or only rarely achieved, is necessary to secure the possibility of perfection. As I will further explain in detail below, the judgement of the ideal of beauty is (similarly rarely) achieved when the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties is *regulated* by the principle of internal objective purposiveness – the very same principle that *constitutively* determines the moral law that becomes available for a judgement of beauty though the performance of moral action.

Besides discussing why Kant's thesis that beauty is the symbol of the morally good is best interpreted by including the ideal of beauty as presented in §17, I will also highlight and solve a major problem that this interpretation creates. The inclusion of §17 in interpreting Kant's account of judgements of beauty faces an almost insurmountable challenge: how is it possible to ground judgements of beauty on both the formal subjective purposiveness that is characteristic of the *undetermined* free play of the

[5] The fact that moral perfection is a mere ideal is an important qualification that should not be ignored when trying to make sense of the aesthetic (i.e., phenomenal) yet ideal (i.e., intelligible) nature of an ideal of beauty (I say more on this in the conclusion of this paper).

cognitive faculties and on the internal objective purposiveness that is characteristic of the *determined* ideal of beauty? This problem is best avoided by dismissing Kant's thoughts of §17 and by suggesting that free beauty symbolizes the morally good. As I will show and criticize below, this is the route that authoritative Kant commentators have taken in order to safeguard free play as the essence of Kant's account of judgements of beauty.

I will argue that this common move obscures the most interesting connection Kant makes between aesthetics and morality, namely that both, judgements of beauty and moral judgements, rest on internal objective purposiveness as a shared source of normativity and that the moral agent thereby has an aesthetic expression through the 'human figure'. I will then explain how it is possible to maintain formal subjective purposiveness, i.e. the free play of the cognitive faculties, as the fundamental requirement for judgements of beauty and, at the same time, include Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty into his aesthetic theory.

The benefits of including §17 into Kant's aesthetic theory should be obvious: first, it contributes to the internal coherence of the *Critique of Judgement*, second, it gives a more holistic account of the interaction between the aesthetic and the moral values that we, as humans, have, and third, it is the only possible way to make sense of §17 and §59. These two paragraphs are only intelligible if we interpret them conjunctively, since each contains incomplete arguments concerning the aesthetic presentation of moral ideas and since each is completed when combined with the other. Interpreting §59 in light of free beauty rather than in light of the ideal of beauty, as most commentators do, either questions the coherence of Kant's aesthetic theory or requires us to ignore §17 altogether, both of which I would like to avoid by combining §17 with §59.

2. Hypotyposis and the Analogy between Modes of Reflection (§59)

Let me begin by outlining Kant's symbol thesis as presented in §59. Kant starts by referring to what he calls hypotyposis, by which he means the

presentation of concepts in the sensible world so as to demonstrate the objective reality and validity (i.e. empirical meaningfulness) of the concepts in question.

Hypotyposis is a cognitive process that works either through what Kant calls schematization or through what he calls symbolization in order to link concepts with intuitions (i.e. sense-impressions) and thereby yield cognitive judgements through which either the objective reality of concepts is demonstrated or through which intuitions are 'exponed', i.e. given their conceptual form. Concepts that cannot be linked to intuitions are, according to Kant, indemonstrable (or simply 'blind'), whereas intuitions that cannot be linked to concepts are inexponible (or simply 'empty') (*KU,* 5: 342-343). Hypotyposis, i.e. linking concepts with intuitions in a rule-governed manner is, therefore, an essential element of any meaningful cognition according to Kant's epistemology.[6]

This view of cognition is a result of Kant's dichotomy between the intelligible and the phenomenal worlds, i.e. the opposition between the world of pure concepts that our faculty of understanding (*Verstand*) can grasp and the world of sensation that is grasped by our faculty of sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*). The intelligible and the phenomenal worlds are linked together in cognition by way of hypotyposis through the faculties of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) and reason (*Vernunft*). These faculties provide the principles for synthesizing sensations or intuitions and concepts that are then brought to the conscious mind of the reflecting person by the faculty of apperception. Without going into great details of Kant's epistemic framework, let me just mention a few essential differentiations in order to contextualize the relevant aspects of hypotyposis.

Concepts of the understanding, i.e. most concepts that we use, or 'tree' to take a particular example, are processed by schematization rather than symbolization. This is because schematization of empirical concepts is demonstrative, i.e. it uses empirical sense intuition to directly represent the concept in question. The objective reality of the empirical concept 'tree', for instance, is demonstrated by examples, i.e. by the corresponding empirical

[6] On these basic epistemic principles also see (*CPR* A51/B75, A239-240/B298-299, and A240-242/B299-300).

sense intuition of a tree that we perceive when looking at a tree. In other words, when cognizing a tree the sensory intuition of a tree is assigned to the concept of 'tree', thereby combining the intelligible world of concepts with the sensible world and thus allowing us to have an apperception of a tree.

In contrast to those concepts that can be demonstrated by way of examples, there are concepts that do not have a corresponding sensory intuition, such as immortality, God, or, most importantly for the present purposes, freedom. These are not concepts of the understanding but rather pure concepts of reason, as Kant calls them. There is no corresponding intuition that could be assigned to them in order to demonstrate their objective reality. For these concepts, schematization, i.e. direct presentation, does therefore not work. Hence, Kant argues that pure concepts of reason must be presented indirectly, i.e. by symbolization rather than by schematization.[7]

The cognitive process of symbolization does not work by demonstration since there is no corresponding intuition. Symbolization, according to Kant, works by analogy rather than by demonstration. Analogy here involves a 'double task' of the power of judgement: first, the application of a concept to an object of sense intuition and, second, the rule of reflection of this intuition is applied to another object (*KU,* 5: 352). As an example of presentation by symbolization, i.e. by analogy, Kant suggests that the concept of a despotic state (which, of course, has no corresponding sensory intuition) can be symbolized by a hand-mill. The way one reflects on the workings of a despotic state and the way one reflects on the workings

[7] Controversies regarding the precise distinction between symbolization and schematization should not automatically damage the argument of this paper as long as a distinction between direct and indirect presentation is maintained. A more serious problem arises when hypotyposis is interpreted in a pragmatist way, as Jennifer McMahon (2014) does. She attributes the normative justification of the objective validity of concepts to a version of Habermasian community communicability. While McMahon's extremely valuable thoughts might be appealing to modern ears, I would like to resist applying her interpretation to an historical analysis of Kant's theory of taste because a pragmatist interpretation distorts the kind of realism that I think Kant intended to convey through his moral and aesthetic theories. I will discuss McMahon's pragmatist interpretation of Kant's aesthetic reflective judgement and its link to morality in more detail elsewhere.

of a hand-mill are, so Kant says, analogous.

The hand-mill example and the 'double task' of judgement point to the most important difference between hypotyposis by schematization (i.e. by demonstration) and hypotyposis by symbolization (i.e. by analogy). It is the difference between constitutive principles and regulative principles of cognition. Hypotyposis by schematization uses concepts as constitutive principles, i.e. the concepts determine the constitutive content of sensory intuition. The sensory intuition of a tree only gets its 'tree' content, its form, that is, because the concept 'tree' is applied constitutively to the respective sensory intuition.

Hypotyposis by symbolization, on the other hand, uses concepts merely as regulative principles. Regulative principles of cognition are heuristic rather than ostensive, i.e. they do not tell us anything about the constitutive conceptual content of an object, but rather determine the way we are to reflect about an object so as to achieve cognition of it.[8] Regulative principles thereby determine the manner in which the understanding and the imagination relate to each other in order to give meaning to (i.e. demonstrate the objective reality and validity of) either an intuition that has no corresponding concept (i.e. an inexponible intuition) or a concept that has no corresponding sensible intuition (i.e. an indemonstrable concept).

This regulative use of concepts is an implication of the way in which analogous rules of reflection are put to use in the symbolization process: the analogy is meant to hold between the rules of reflection of the symbolized and the symbolizing objects rather than between the conceptual or sensory content of these objects. The constitutive content of the symbolized object is not what connects the symbol with the symbolized object. It is the 'isomorphism' between the modes of reflection – as Henry Allison (2001: 255) calls this particular Kantian analogy – that legitimizes, according to §59, the link between the symbol and the symbolized object.

Let me now apply these general building blocks to beauty and the morally good. To explain his claim that beauty is the symbol of the morally

[8] For Kant on regulative principles, see (*CPR* A516/B544 and A563-4/B591-2). For a discussion of the regulative principle in relation to aesthetic experience see Recki (2008: 204) and Chignell (2007: 419).

good, Kant highlights in §59 four analogies between the modes of reflection in judgements of beauty and moral judgements that are supposed to serve as the basis of the morally good being 'made sensible', i.e. presented by way of symbolization. I will focus on what I think is the deepest and most fundamental of those four analogies – the one regarding freedom:

> The freedom of the imagination (thus of the sensibility of our faculty) is represented in the judging of the beautiful as in accord with the lawfulness of the understanding (in the moral judgment the freedom of the will is conceived as the agreement of the latter with itself in accordance with universal laws of reason). (*KU,* 5: 354)

Here Kant highlights the analogy between the freedom in judgements of beauty and the freedom in moral judgements. A differentiation between various kinds of freedom involved in judgements of beauty and in the moral law, respectively, will not only show what exactly is analogous and what is not, but it will also reveal why Kant claims in §17 that beauty expresses moral ideas.

Before going into the deeper details of freedom, it should be reiterated that the purpose of drawing attention to the four analogies, and thus to freedom, is that they serve as the basis of hypotyposis by symbolization. And hypotyposis by symbolization, as just explained, is supposed to 'make sensible' a pure concept of reason, which is why Kant says in §60 that 'taste is at bottom a faculty for the sensible rendering of moral ideas' (*KU,* 5: 356). Considering the difference between constitutive and regulative principles in hypotyposis, 'making sensible' here, of course, does not mean pairing sensible intuition with a concept of the understanding (as in direct presentation of schematization). It rather means regulating our cognitive faculties in such a manner that what we perceive through sensible intuition is perceived in a way that implies an agreement with the regulative principle that is given by the pure concept of reason that is to be symbolized by that sensible intuition.

The thought in Kant's symbol thesis is that the pure concept of reason of 'the morally good' is the one that beauty is supposed to 'make

sensible'. In other words, whatever concept of reason the morally good is, this is supposed to structure, i.e. regulate, the way we are to perceive sensible intuition. It is well known that the morally good, according to Kant is freedom of the will, i.e. the will in accordance with the laws of practical rationality (*GMM,* 4:385-4:463). It would follow, then, that the laws of practical rationality, determine as regulative principles, or, to put it less deterministically, *agree* with the rules of reflection that are used in judgements of beauty.[9]

Yet, Kant uses the notion of purposiveness, rather than a direct reference to the laws of practical rationality, in order to describe what the regulative principle is that regulates our mode of reflection in judgements of beauty. Despite saying that beauty is the symbol of the morally good in virtue of analogies between modes of reflection, the reason why Kant does not refer directly to the laws of practical rationality in order to describe what the regulative principle in judgements of beauty is, is that he aims at the laws of practical rationality in general, rather than at any particular law of practical rationality. Were Kant to take a particular law of practical rationality that is constitutive of a particular moral good, this would unduly restrict the mode of reflection for judgements of beauty to that particular law of practical rationality. Aiming at the moral law in general (i.e., at self-imposed autonomy) requires a concept like purposiveness that captures this in general terms.

So, the reference to freedom in Kant's symbol thesis of §59 involves two key thoughts that need to be further analysed: first, in what way are our cognitive faculties regulated, and second, at what point in that regulation process does the law of practical rationality (or a reformulation of these laws in terms of purposiveness) function as regulatory instance? Analysing these thoughts will provide the distinctions required to understand how the symbolization makes use of the concept of freedom or purposiveness as an

[9] Here, of course, the conceptual space between determination and agreement highlights the challenge of spelling out what 'regulation' in the Kantian regulative principle of cognition really means and implies and to what extent, if at all, the rules of reflection are determined by concepts, intuitions, or the synthesis thereof and vice versa; I am working on this in my current research on the aesthetics of law that is inspired by the normative and self-legislative nature of the Kantian free play of the cognitive faculties.

analogous feature between the two modes of reflection. This will show how different kinds of beauty involve slightly different notions of freedom or purposiveness that are not all analogous to freedom of the will. Kant thereby gives room for beauties that are not morally expressive and thus allows for beauties that are independent of morality.

The complexity and prima-facie unintelligibility of Kant's symbol thesis is primarily due to Kant's many differentiations of kinds of beauty that all involve different notions of freedom or purposiveness so that they cannot all be fed into his symbol thesis. Let me therefore briefly characterize these kinds of beauty.

3. Differentiations between Kinds of Beauty

The two major kinds of beauty that Kant distinguishes are free or pure beauty on the one hand and adherent beauty on the other. Much confusion results from not keeping these two kinds of beauty apart.[10] We must therefore distinguish the kinds of freedom that each of these two kinds of judgement of beauty involves. This will show why I think §17 is indispensable for a proper understanding of Kant's symbol thesis of §59. The ideal of beauty referred to in §17 is, as Kant says, a *fixed* kind of beauty – i.e. an adherent beauty rather than a free beauty. Besides a brief comment by Henry Allison (2001: 143 and 236-276), highlighting that the ideal of beauty is a kind of adherent beauty adhering to the rational idea of morality, this detail has not received appropriate attention in the literature.[11]

The fact that Kant does not specify which kind of beauty is symbolizing the morally good requires one to assess potential candidates. My interpretation that it is the ideal of beauty contrasts with the standard interpretation suggesting that free beauty symbolizes the morally good.

[10] Even more confusion arises when conflating Kant's other aesthetic judgements, the agreeable and the sublime, with the beautiful. For brevity, I will leave Kant's link between the sublime and the moral aside and discuss this in a separate paper.

[11] For some discussion that is very informative but fails to do justice to the benefits of combining §17 with §59 see, e.g. Guyer (1993, 1997, 2005, and 2006), Wenzel (2006) Kemal (1998), Makkreel (1998) Zammito (1992) Zuckert (2005) Kuhlenkampff (1994: 234), Menke (2008), and Rueger and Evren (2005).

Among those, Birgit Recki's analysis of the symbol thesis is the most thorough analysis of the issue as it goes into the details of what kind of freedom and what kind of beauty Kant might have intended to use for his symbol thesis (Recki 1998, 2001:170-171, and 2008). As the following passages show, Paul Guyer and Henry Allison, respectively, have equally been explicit in using free or pure beauty as the candidate for the symbol thesis:

> The experience of beauty is a symbol of morality precisely because it is an experience of the freedom of the imagination from any constraint by concepts, including the concept of the morally right and good themselves. (Guyer 2005: 239; also see 2005: 186)

> The pure judgment of taste does not make a valid demand on others because it symbolizes morality, but rather it is because of the "purity" underlying the validity of its demand that it symbolizes morality. (Allison 2001: 267; also see 2001: 255 and 263)

Stefan Bird-Pollan (2013: 141-149), on the other hand, takes Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty more seriously by considering that its necessary link to the morally good might help us avoid the morally problematic objectifying aestheticization of human beings when we apply judgements of free beauty to persons.[12] Yet, like most commentators analysing §17, Bird-Pollan also prefers to eventually dismiss the ideal of beauty for the sake of the popularized view that Kantian judgements of beauty contain the free play of the cognitive faculties and can therefore supposedly not be as tightly linked to morality as §17 and the ideal of beauty would suggest.

Jane Kneller also tries to accommodate Kant's ideal of beauty into Kant's moral theory rather than dismissing it. Yet, she explicitly denies that

[12] For an argument suggesting that there are moral reasons not to apply judgements of free beauty to human beings, see Schmalzried (2014). I agree with Schmalzried that judgements of human beauty must always be judgements of dependent beauty. Yet, as I will discuss elsewhere, Schmalzried's combination of moral and aesthetic judgements in this argument unnecessarily compromises the autonomy of aesthetic judgement. I think that Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty contains a more direct reason that is internal to aesthetic judgement and precludes judging human beauty as free beauty.

the ideal of beauty can function as a symbol of morality. She says that the ideal of beauty is a mere artistic 'model' of the human being and 'it is not the re-application of a rule appropriate to one object to an entirely different object, as in the case of the hand-mill that symbolizes the state' (Kneller 1991: 673; also see 2007: 53-55). Kneller's reasoning ignores that, as I will show below, the ideal of beauty does contain – as its second element – a re-application of the moral law, i.e. of the 'ends of humanity' as a regulative principle of cognition (*KU,* 5: 235-236). Kneller might be right that the object of application – the human being – is not an 'entirely different' one. Yet, the distinction between the human being as a moral agent (i.e. the moral will) and the human being as the aesthetic appearance of moral agency (i.e. the ideal of beauty) secures sufficient differentiating criteria (namely, intelligible vs. phenomenal) so as to satisfy the rules of hypotyposis by symbolization – this holds despite the fact that ideals are seldom phenomenally perceivable. It is important to note that the mode of reflection is re-applied as a mere regulative principle of cognition rather than as a constitutive one, which, indeed, differs from the hand-mill example, but which secures the aesthetic nature of the symbolizing object.

In order to show why the notion of the ideal of beauty should not be dismissed and that it is the only candidate for Kant's symbol thesis of §59 let me highlight which kinds of freedom are involved in the various kinds of beauty. This will lead me to the required distinctions between various kinds of purposiveness that inseparably go hand in hand with the kinds of freedom.

The freedom involved in judgements of free beauty is the one that is paradigmatic and famous for Kant's theory of beauty: the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties. The pleasure that we feel when the faculty of imagination and the faculty of understanding are in harmonious free play with each other is what makes us judge the perceived sensory intuition to be beautiful. Kant famously centres his theory of beauty – free beauty, that is – on four moments, as he calls them, which constitute such a judgement. Judgements of free beauty are subjective, universally valid, purposive, and necessary. These four moments are all implied by what it is for our cognitive faculties to be in harmonious free play. It is not my primary aim

here to explain the nature and role of each of these four moments or what it means for the cognitive faculties to be in free play with each other.[13] My aim here is to shed light on the issue by focusing on Kant's differentiations between kinds of purposiveness that are another way to conceptualise the kinds of freedom that Kant connects to different kinds of beauty.[14]

Adherent beauty is the beauty of particular objects considered as instances of a specified object, e.g. gardens, houses, horses, or, most importantly for the present purposes, of human beings. Adherent beauty is also the beauty of artworks *as* artworks; and Kant discusses the value of various art forms in great detail. Particular objects may well be judged to have free (i.e. pure) beauty. Yet, such a judgement must not take into account the categorization of that object under a particular concept (*KU,* 5: 231). The important aspect that needs to be highlighted is that judgements of adherent beauty are not pure judgements of taste since they involve considering the object of perception in relation to the perfection of the kind of object it is. The better an object fulfils its purpose, i.e. the closer to perfection it is, the more beautiful it is, adherently beautiful, that is. This obviously calls for a thorough analysis of the precise nature and role of purposiveness in Kant's theory of beauty.

In contrast to his theory of free beauty, Kant's theory of adherent beauty is much closer to other theories of taste of his time as it adopts the reference to perfection of the object as a standard that is to be approximated. The free play of the cognitive faculties is thereby restricted since the perceived object has been determined by the application of a concept. What kind of freedom Kant thought would still prevail between the cognitive faculties, despite this initial determination to a particular object, is even more difficult to interpret than how the free play itself is supposed to bring the cognitive faculties into harmony with each other – suffice to say that free play must be present to some extent in any kind of judgement of beauty.

[13] For Kant on free play, see e.g., *KU,* 5: 217, and *KU,* 5: 240-244. The probably most extensive analysis of free play is Wachter (2006); but also see Guyer (1997 and 2008), Allison (2001: 288 and 386), Rogerson (2008: 162), or Fricke (1990: 134).

[14] Surely, there is much more to the relation between freedom and purposiveness that would need to be spelled out in order to make my argument more complete. I devote some research to this relation in a forthcoming paper.

Kant's theory of genius and how art is created by geniuses and therefore still open to free play would probably need to be addressed in detail in order to adequately describe the extent to which free play is involved in judgements of adherent beauty (*KU,* 5: 313-318). Without going into these details, however, I wish to continue looking at the kinds of purposiveness involved in differing kinds of beauty.

4. Differentiations between Kinds of Purposiveness

In general, purposiveness means that an object has an end or final cause – i.e. it denotes in general terms that there is a reason in virtue of which something exists or is done. To mention only the most basic distinctions, this reason for being can be subjectively grounded or objectively grounded; it can be internally grounded or externally grounded. Most objects have *objective* purposiveness due to their determination by concepts of the faculty of the understanding. Moreover, most objects have *external* objective purposiveness. The purpose of a pen, for example, is objective since the reason for being of a pen is grounded in the concept that determines a pen to be a pen. The pen's purpose is external since pens are objects of use; they serve a function external to their being. Objects that have internal objective purposiveness have their reason of being in their own perfection; they are self-grounded. Humans have such internal objective purposiveness, Kant suggests. For any objective purposiveness the concepts contain the end or purpose of the object, since concepts determine the 'ground of the possibility of the object' (*KU,* 5: 227). Subjective purposiveness involves no conceptualization and is based on, e.g. pleasure that can be internal (within the subject) or external (for other people's pleasure).

The free play of the cognitive faculties in judgements of free beauty involves what Kant calls 'subjective purposiveness without an end'. Purposiveness without an end is merely the form of purposiveness rather than some particular or *material* purposiveness, as Kant also calls it. Hence the kind of purposiveness that free play contains is '*formal* subjective purposiveness' (*KU,* 5: 220-221, 5: 228, and 5: 361). The understanding

does not determine the law or the end of the free activity of the imagination, i.e. no concepts (which would bring in objectivity) have determined the end of free play. The pleasure that arises from that harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties is not the end or purpose of free play but rather a concomitant occurrence of it, through which we judge the perceived manifold to be an object of beauty (*KU,* 5: 221). Nevertheless the imagination is not without a law; it has a lawfulness that still corresponds to the laws of the understanding without actually being determined to a particular law by the understanding (*KU,* 5: 228, also see Ginsborg 1997). Were the understanding to restrict the imagination to a particular law of association by applying a particular concept to an intuition, this would determine the purpose of what is being perceived to a particular end – and hence create 'objective purposiveness'. In other words, no cognition or hypotyposis takes place during free play, which accounts for the aesthetic purity of judgements of free beauty.

The notion of purposiveness without an end therefore directly points to transcendental freedom, i.e. the self-given rules that determine the mode of reflection (free play, that is) during judgements of free beauty.[15] This is what motivates Recki (2001: 155-177) to locate the analogy between beauty and the morally good in transcendental freedom, since the morally good equally involves such self-given law. In contrast to free beauty, adherent beauty involves purposiveness with an end, namely the end that is determined by what the concept that is applied to the intuition during cognition presents the object as being. Adherent beauty therefore has objective purposiveness, which is internal or external depending on whether the end is grounded in the object itself or in its utility. Such beauty is therefore closely dependent on the extent to which an object attains the end, i.e. to the degree of how perfect it is in relation to its end. This brings us to Kant's notion of the ideal of beauty, which has as its end an internal objective purposiveness.

[15] Again, as with the relation between purposiveness and freedom, the notion of transcendental freedom is complex; and I devote more space to it in my current research on the aesthetics of law.

5. The Ideal of Beauty (§17)

The ideal of beauty is the 'highest model, the archetype of taste […] in accordance with which [one] must judge everything that is an object of taste or that is an example of judging through taste' (*KU,* 5: 232). This suggests that any judgement of beauty assumes an archetype of beauty that serves as an exemplar that needs to be approximated; and the aesthetic value will be scaled according to the degree of approximation towards such an ideal of beauty.

An ideal, according to Kant, is 'the representation of an individual as being adequate to an idea' (*KU,* 5: 232). An idea, in turn, is a concept of reason and points to the maximum or the perfection of the kind of object it denotes. In this vein, the idea of beauty, Kant suggests, points to the maximum, to perfection of beauty. The maximum in matters of taste, however, cannot be based on concepts since judgements of beauty are, within Kant's theory of taste, only experienced subjectively and result from the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties, rather than being based on an objective principle of reason. Thus, a representation of the idea of beauty while being based on 'reason's indeterminate idea of a maximum' is an 'ideal of the imagination' rather than of reason (*KU,* 5: 232). Thus, the ideal of beauty is, strictly speaking, not the representation of a rational idea or concept of reason. It rather is the representation of an aesthetic idea that, while being based on the indeterminate idea of a maximum and thus anchored in reason, still depends on the imagination rather than merely on reason. The idea of beauty is the aesthetic counterpart of an idea (a concept) of reason – it thereby is something that regulates our reflective judgement so as to be able to achieve, not theoretical cognition, but rather a judgement of beauty – that, admittedly, contains elements of theoretical cognition to the extent that it is or contains a judgement of adherent beauty.

Kant might seem to aim at what appears to be impossible within his own theory of beauty: the perfection of beauty that serves as a standard or exemplar in relation to which other beauties will be scaled. And in fact Kant proposes that various art forms contain varying degrees of aesthetic value depending on the extent to which the art forms approach this ideal (*KU,* 5:

320-325). It is difficult to say whether the scale really is orientated towards the approximation of perfection or towards the highest level of freedom in free play.

The reference to such perfection of beauty creates a tension with the purity of free beauty. What criterion counts more: purity or perfection? Or, to frame the same question differently, is the purity of beauty as a result of the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties higher in aesthetic value than the perfection of beauty according to this ideal of beauty? It is probably due to his own doubts about the issue that Kant chooses to put more emphasis on free play as the essential criterion for the universal validity of judgements of beauty rather than on perfection. Although very reluctant to provide an objective rule of taste, Kant suggests in §17 that the ideal of beauty is 'the empirical criterion of the derivation of taste' (*KU,* 5: 232). Yet, he admits that this criterion is 'weak and hardly sufficient for conjecture' (*KU,* 5: 232), making his discussion of the ideal of beauty look almost futile. This explains why most commentators chose to sideline the ideal of beauty.

Rather than dismissing the ideal of beauty, I would like to highlight that the tension between perfection (i.e. the ideal of beauty) and purity (i.e. free play) arises due to the seeming incompatibility between the indeterminateness of free play and the determinateness of perfection. I would further like to propose that the tension between perfection and purity could be resolved by suggesting that the perfection of free play is its maximum freedom, which directly leads us to the maximum freedom that we find in the moral law, namely, self-determination, i.e. heautonomy. I would suggest that the judgement of the ideal of beauty requires the kind of transcendental freedom that is not only present *as an ideal* (a regulative principle) in moral autonomy but also in the free play of the cognitive faculties.

The reference to heautonomy approaches Recki's interpretation of transcendental freedom. Yet, Recki resists interpreting transcendental freedom in terms of the ideal of beauty when it comes to Kant's symbol thesis. She prefers to keep free beauty as the candidate for symbolization since the ideal of beauty would threaten the purely sensible nature of the

aesthetic side of the symbol analogy.[16] I think this threat can be neglected when the freedom that leads to judgements of the ideal of beauty is conceived of as the perfection of free play and when highlighting that a merely regulative principle of cognition does not determine the *content* of the perception but merely the mode of reflection.

It is a defining feature of free play that it is not determined by any particular end, nor is it without any law whatsoever. The law that it follows is supposed to be in accordance with the laws of the understanding, which follows from what it is for free play to be purposive rather than without any purposiveness whatsoever. Saying that free play contains formal subjective purposiveness is perfectly compatible with saying that the perfection of free play contains internal objective purposiveness since the perfection of free play is a particular determination that has been determined by the free, self-active, internally determined spontaneous stimulation of the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties. As long as this internal objective purposiveness is merely a regulative principle of cognition rather than a constitutive one, the understanding has not determined the cognitive content of the reflective process but has rather enabled the imagination to be in harmony with the understanding without having destroyed the indeterminateness that is essential to free play.[17]

Keeping in mind this solution to the seeming incompatibility between purity (i.e. free play) and perfection (i.e. the ideal of beauty), let me say more about the most complex details of the ideal of beauty and why I think this makes it the only candidate that can be used in Kant's symbol thesis of §59. The ideal of beauty requires two ingredients in order to be presented as an ideal: first, a sensible intuition and second, an idea of reason (*KU,* 5: 233). The sensible intuition in question is called the aesthetic normal idea; and the idea of reason here, I would say, is what Kant means by internal objective purposiveness. The relevant passage regarding these two ingredients reads as follows:

[16] As Recki suggested to me in conversation (Hamburg, 25th January 2013); also see Recki (2001).

[17] For an alternative interpretation highlighting the differences rather than the interconnectedness between free and adherent beauties, see Feger (1995: 177).

> There are two elements involved here [i.e. in the human being as the ideal of beauty]: first, the aesthetic normal idea, which is an individual intuition (of the imagination) that represents the standard for judging it as a thing belonging to a particular species of animal; second, the idea of reason, which makes the ends of humanity insofar as they cannot be sensibly represented into the principle for the judging of its figure, through which, as their effect in appearance, the former are revealed. (*KU,* 5: 233)

The first ingredient, the aesthetic normal idea, is an empirical intuition that results from aggregating all perceptions of particular instances of what is judged beautiful. Kant likens this to averaging the sizes of a thousand men in order to get the normal size of men. While Kant admits that this aesthetic normal idea can be culturally relative, as it depends on empirical intuition, the important function of that empirical intuition is that it makes the actuality of the second ingredient, the idea of reason as regulative principle, possible. This is comparable to the sensible intuition of a tree giving objective validity to the concept of a tree. The crucial difference here, however, is that the concept 'tree' functions as a constitutive rather than as a merely regulative principle of cognition.

Without a sensible intuition, our modes of reflection need not be regulated and the second ingredient would be 'blind'. Without the concept of reason, the sensible intuition cannot be processed and would remain 'empty'. Hence, the second ingredient, internal objective purposiveness, is a concept of reason that regulates the way we are to process the sensible intuition. Internal objective purposiveness is the only concept of reason that is able to maintain the indeterminate free play of the cognitive faculties as it contains the end of its existence within itself rather than being determined by or for a particular end. Any other concept – Kant mentions, among other concepts, the concept of a beautiful garden – does not contain its purpose within itself and is therefore inadequate for regulating the rules of reflection that the ideal of beauty requires. We must not forget that although internal objective purposiveness is a concept of reason, it is only employed

regulatively in this instance and does thereby not lead to theoretical cognition but rather remains an element of aesthetic reflection – and secures the autonomy of aesthetic judgements.

We can now understand that the ideal of beauty is, as mentioned above, 'the representation of an individual as being adequate to an idea' (*KU,* 5: 232), to the idea of beauty, in this case. Whatever this individual is, it must have objective purposiveness. Moreover, this objective purposiveness must be internal rather than external since the purposiveness of the idea of beauty is contained within itself. It is part of the definition of free play that it is self-determined, i.e. autonomous, rather than heteronomous, i.e. determined by external reasons. Kant tells us in §17 that only the human being as moral agent is self-determined in this way and that therefore the sensible appearance of the human being, the 'human figure' as Kant calls it, is the only candidate for an ideal of beauty. Regarding the human figure Kant says:

> In the latter [the human figure] the ideal consists in the expression of the moral, without which the object would not please universally and moreover positively (not merely negatively in an academically correct presentation). The visible expression of moral ideas, which inwardly govern human beings, can of course be drawn only from experience; but as it were to make visible in bodily manifestation (as the effect of what is inward) their combination with everything that our understanding connects with the morally good in the idea of the highest purposiveness – goodness of soul, or purity, or strength, or repose, etc. – this requires pure ideas of reason and great force of imagination united in anyone who would merely judge them, let alone anyone who would present them. (*KU,* 5: 235-236)

The thought that the human figure is the aesthetic expression of the moral law that governs the human agent goes beyond the mere analogy between beauty and the morally good that §59 interpreted on its own would suggest. Interpreted on its own, §59 would lack the resources to analyse what really is analogous to each other, since the terms 'beauty' and 'freedom' that are central for the argument are insufficiently specified. Only by looking at

what kind of specification is needed in order to make sense of the analogy claim of §59 does the necessity to include §17 and the reference to the human figure become obvious. Conversely, the reason why the expression claim contained in §17 can hold in this way is only intelligible by taking into account what Kant says about hypotyposis in §59 since hypotyposis unpacks in precise details what the vague term 'expression' means.

6. Conclusion: Symbolization (§59) as Expression (§17)

It follows from the combination of §17 and §59 that internal objective purposiveness, i.e. the freedom that this notion implies is the locus of the analogy that Kant's symbol thesis refers to. The perfection of the human being is the moral agent who acts according to internal objective purposiveness, i.e. according to the self-imposed laws of practical rationality. The perfection of beauty, i.e. of the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties, is achieved when the imagination is regulated by the principle of internal objective purposiveness. The phenomenally perceivable effect of the moral action that is determined by principles of morality is what Kant calls the 'visible expression of moral ideas, which inwardly govern human beings' (*KU,* 5: 235-236). This 'visible expression' is a sensible appearance of the moral agent – i.e. it is the ideal of beauty represented by the empirically perceivable 'human figure' (*KU,* 5: 235).[18]

[18] Objections to my argument that the ideal of beauty cannot be the symbol of the morally good since the ideal of beauty is a mere ideal rather than something sensible neglect two things. First, they neglect the fact that moral perfection is a mere ideal and nothing that Kant expected humans to fully achieve; and second, they neglect the fact that it is an ideal, i.e. that this is nothing that we should expect to actually encounter in the phenomenal world except in approximations. Thus, I see no problem if the symbol of the morally good is a mere ideal as well – and we should remember that the internal objective purposiveness in the ideal of beauty is a mere regulative principle of cognition rather than a constitutive one, which maintains the purely phenomenal character of beauty. Only when moral perfection is achieved through action, does the ideal of beauty become phenomenal. Yet, were Kant to make the symbol of moral perfection something phenomenal, he would commit himself to the view that we can perceive the holy will (i.e., God) that is the only entity that achieves moral perfection. What this tells us about the divine nature of the Kantian notion of the human figure as the ideal of beauty (or, indeed, about the divine nature of human moral agents) is a matter that I will discuss elsewhere.

'Expression' is here to be understood as 'presentation' in the context of hypotyposis by symbolization as discussed above. The law of morality itself remains within the intelligible world in a similar way as the free play of the cognitive faculties remains merely aesthetic and 'empty' from the point of view of theoretical cognition.[19] Only once the moral agent acts, do the effects of the law of practical rationality enter the realm of sensation and thereby become not only subject to the judgement of beauty but simultaneously allow the law of practical rationality to become the regulative principle according to which the sensory impression is to be synthesized for that judgement of beauty – a judgement of the ideal of beauty, that is.

It is important to note that the law of practical rationality is not a constitutive principle of cognition in the judgement of the ideal of beauty, as this would indeed threaten the aesthetic nature of the ideal of beauty. The ideal of beauty is an adherent beauty because it contains the moral law as an idea of reason that acts as a regulative principle in that judgement. Yet, since this specific idea of reason is an internal objective purposiveness, the free play of the cognitive faculties is not restricted in the same way as other concepts, involved in judgements of adherent beauty, would restrict the free play of the cognitive faculties. It is rather brought to its own perfection, namely to self-determination.

Interpreting the ideal of beauty in this way as compatible with free play allows us to find the kind of freedom that is analogous to moral freedom and that is suitable as a basis for hypotyposis by symbolization. Moral freedom is the self-given law of practical rationality, i.e. internal objective purposiveness. The only analogue to this that is to be found in aesthetics is the internal objective purposiveness that defines the ideal of beauty. Taking the freedom that the free play of the cognitive faculties as analogous to moral freedom, as most commentators do, neglects that free play as such contains the wrong kind of purposiveness, namely formal subjective purposiveness. There is no moral analogue to formal subjective

[19] For an interpretation of why the moral law itself (*Moralität)* can remain purely intelligible and at the same time be made sensible (as *Sittlichkeit)* through symbolization, see Munzel (1995).

purposiveness, which is why free beauty (without further qualification as its own perfection) cannot be the symbol of the morally good according to §59.

The rather unexpected concomitant implication of the combination of §17 and §59 is that both, judgements of beauty and moral judgements, rest on internal objective purposiveness as a shared source of normativity. Far from being a threat to the autonomy of aesthetics, the fact that the internal objective purposiveness is a mere regulative principle of reflection in judgements of the ideal of beauty and a constitutive one in moral judgements highlights the distinctness between the two. The autonomy of each is thereby not only strengthened; but their interrelations are being made explicit. It is now possible to explain how the morally good is symbolized (i.e. expressed) through the ideal of beauty without questioning either the ideal of beauty or the free play of the cognitive faculties (i.e. of formal subjective purposiveness) as equally valid and compatible sources of aesthetic normativity.[20]

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