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A New Look at Kant's Genius: a Proposal of a Multi-componential Account

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Abstract As numerous scholars pointed out, Kant's account of genius suffers from internal inconsistency, primarily due to the contradictory way in which Kant talks about the relation between imagination and taste in artistic production. What remains unclear is whether taste and genius work in concord in order to produce beautiful art, or whether one or the other takes charge. In this paper I look at this challenge, and I offer an interpretation of how Kant conceives of genius. I argue that the gift of genius is multi-componential, including the capacity to maximize imagination's productivity as well as the capacity to develop taste to the point where one can extract the rules for art production, internalize them and implement them in one's own original and exemplary artistic production. By analyzing specific claims Kant makes in relation to beautiful art, primarily his account of poetry, I extrapolate further aspects of artistic genius, which relate to his capacity to create artworks imbued with moral and cognitive significance, and which enable the awakening of genius in other artists.

Key words

Kant, genius, beautiful art, imagination, aesthetic ideas, taste

1. Challenging Aspects of Kant's Genius

Kant defines beautiful arts as "necessarily (...) arts of genius" (§46).¹ In doing so, he wants to separate art from other domains of human actions, primarily science and crafts, and he

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wants to keep a close bond between art and nature without reducing art to instinctive effects. Most importantly, he wants to show that creation of beautiful art is not a matter of mechanical production, while also maintaining that art has to be made in compliance with some rules, though not to the point where these rules are consciously followed and implemented by the artist. His solution is to claim that nature endows certain of its 'favorites' with a natural talent, a gift of genius, which he defines as "the inborn predisposition of the mind (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art" (§46). On his view, one cannot learn how to be an artist, will it, or in any other way induce a talent for artistic creation. Unless one is given the gift of genius, one cannot create beautiful art.

Given such a relevance of genius, it is confusing that throughout the few paragraphs dedicated to fine art in the third *Critique* (§§43-54) Kant develops two mutually incompatible accounts of it. According to the 5:310 account, "genius can only provide rich *material* for products of art; its elaboration and *form* require a talent that has been academically trained, in order to make a use of it that can stand up to the power of judgment". On this account, genius, as productive capacity, is capable of providing the material for the work, but its elaboration, i.e. the skill needed to formally arrange this material and present it in an actual product, is a matter of hard work, practice and training that remains outside of a domain of genius and falls under the jurisdiction of taste. However, on the 5:317 account, "genius really consists in ... finding ideas for a given concept on the one hand and on the other *hitting upon the expression* for these" (§49, 5:317, my emphasis). On this conception, genius incorporates the capacity to come up with the material, as well as to create formally appropriate works of art, and it does so without being taught or instructed on how to achieve this.

The crucial difference in the two accounts of genius arises from the confused and contradictory way in which Kant talks about the role of taste in artistic creation.² If taste is external to genius, as stated in 5:310, then it is unclear how genius can give the rule to art, given that "to be rich and original in ideas is not as necessary for the sake of beauty" as it is conformity to the power of judgment, i.e. to taste (5:319). But if taste is internal to genius, as stated in 5:317, it is unclear how to understand Kant's repeated claims regarding the need to practice and develop one's taste, given that one cannot influence on the gift itself but is born with it. More importantly, if taste is internal to genius, how should we understand Kant's claim that taste is "the discipline (or corrective) of genius" and that genius "must be sacrificed" if there is a conflict between taste and genius in the product of

¹ All references to Kant are from his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, (KU), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, edited by Paul Guyer and translated by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (2000). Following Kant, I will refer to an artist via the male pronoun he. Unless stated otherwise, the term artist refers to the nature's favorites, i.e. one given the gift of genius, who is solely capable of producing beautiful works of art or fine art (rather than mechanical art). The term genius refers to the gift of nature.

² Allison refers to this as a matter of 'internal consistency' in Kant's account; see his 2001. See also Wicks 2007, Ostaric 2006, Rogerson 2008, Zammito 1992. I tackle this inconsistency by wondering whether taste is internal to genius (Allison's thick conception) or external to it (thin conception).

beautiful art (§50)? This ambiguity raises a challenge: which of the two conceptions is the one that Kant wants to present as his account? More to the point, the challenge is to explicate what precisely the gift of genius is.

In what follows, I approach this challenge by analyzing both conceptions of genius. I argue that, given Kant's overall theory of art, we should prefer the 5:317 account, and I give an interpretation of it that is less vulnerable to Kant's explicit rejection of it in §50. My main point is that the gift of genius is a multi-componential one, including a capacity to develop imagination's productivity to the point at which it becomes creative and produces aesthetic ideas, and the capacity to develop taste to the point where it enables one to create original and exemplary works of art. Furthermore, such works are endowed with cognitive and moral value and contain the capacity to awaken the talent of other gifted artists. On this view, art has an important cultural and educational value, and the artist (endowed with genius), as the one who is solely capable of creating art, has extremely important role in humanity's overall development.

2. The 5:310 Account

Kant develops his account of genius against two paradigms dominant in his days: the one which saw an artist as entirely 'possessed' by nature, oblivious to his own powers; and the one according to which an artist is the 'possessor' of his talent, capable of taking charge of his own artistic impulses.³ The midway that Kant ends up developing sees artist as 'possessed' in the sense that he is given the talent (rather than being capable of developing or learning it), but also as the 'possessor', in the sense that he becomes a master of this talent and takes charge in the process of creation. The challenge for us is to understand, given Kant's ambiguous and contradictory writing, how these two aspects interact in artistic creation. Clarifying that will help us understand what the gift of genius consists of.

According to Kant's first elaboration, "Genius can only provide rich *material* for products of art; its elaboration and *form* require a talent that has been academically trained..." (5:310, original emphasis). In subsequent parts, Kant elaborates on 'academically trained talent' and ultimately relates it to the capacity to make judgments regarding the work grounded in taste.⁴ The emerging picture of a genius is one in which genius and taste come

³ I rely here on the multiple secondary sources on Kant's third *Critique* in order to situate a debate about genius into the context that was relevant to Kant. I take notions of 'possessor' and 'possessed' from Oštarić (2006), but see also Kivy 2001, 2003 and Bruno 2010. Some interpreters claim that Kant develops his account with the intention of refuting the *Sturm und Drang* conception of genius, according to which it consists of an unconstrained, instinctive creative power of imagination (see primarily Zammito 1992 for this interpretation). Allison (2001) suggests that, in order to properly interpret Kant's view, we should take into account historical accounts of genius dominant in Kant's days. Unfortunately, here I cannot extend my research thus far and I will limit myself to Kant's third *Critique*. Unfortunately, for reasons of space, I also have to neglect some of the claim Kant makes in his *Anthropology* regarding the genius.

⁴ See in particular 5:312, where Kant writes: „To give this form to the product of beautiful art, however, requires merely taste, to which the artist, after he has practiced and corrected it by means of various examples of art or nature, holds up his work, and after many, often laborious attempts to satisfy it, finds the form that

apart: genius is only capable of providing rich material for artistic creation, and the actual arrangement of that material is designated to taste, which is outside of genius' control and thus external to him.

On this account, the gift of genius consists in its capacity to come up with 'rich material' and to induce an artist to begin with his creation. I will refer to this process as genius' capacity to generate an artistic vision, which manifests itself in a spontaneous and indeterminate awareness of the artist that there is something in his mind that he wants to express, which he did not initiate consciously and voluntarily. Coming up with this vision is beyond the reach of an artist, which is why he cannot explain where his ideas come from or will them or call upon them by his own volition. However, once he becomes aware of it, he forms an intention to express it – after all, as Kant states, “art always has a determinate intention of producing something” (5:306). My suggestion is that this intention develops as a consequence of artistic vision. The intention however is not an intention to produce something determinate, as that would be a mechanical kind of creation, one that is in accordance with a determinate concept, whose product would not count as beautiful art.⁵ Rather, on this reading, genius is the talent for coming up with 'rich material', that, as artistic vision formed spontaneously and involuntarily in the mind of an artist, induces him to initiate the process of artistic creation whereby this vision gets expressed in a concrete work of art.

Once such intention is produced and the artistic creation is initiated, an artist becomes more and more in control of what he is doing, since he needs to *find* the best form to the product of beautiful art. I emphasize the need to *find* the best form, as it implies that this particular aspect of artistic production is under voluntary control of an artist, unlike the generation of artistic vision. Kant therefore describes artistic process as “production through freedom, i.e. through a capacity for choice that grounds its actions in reason” (§43). I suggest that 'a capacity for choice' relates to the actual process of creation, within which an artist has to make a series of judgments regarding his work, ranging from the techniques he wants to use to concrete details of his work such as motives, their formal arrangement, composition etc. All these choices are ultimately related to the exercise of taste, which is why Kant sees taste as another necessary component of artistic creation, though a component which has to be practiced and academically trained. Such training takes place against examples (models) of the older generations: works of art are exemplars from which young artists learn and against which they develop their own talent. As Kant explains, one can only develop one's talent if one has been touched by a work of another

contents him...“ (§48). For the claim that taste is the capacity to judge, see §40, where Kant claims that “One could even define taste as the faculty for judging...” and §48, where he states that “Taste, however, is merely a faculty for judging, not a productive faculty...”.

⁵ Note however that Kant occasionally departs from his claim that beauty (including beautiful art) does not presuppose a concept, for example in §48, 5:311 and in §49, 5:318. This is one of the several ambiguities related to his account of beautiful art, but sorting it out is beyond the scope of this paper.

genius; when ideas embedded in a work arouses his own spirit.⁶ On the 5:310 account, once one's talent has been aroused, he has to engage in laborious and time-consuming process of practice, so that he can develop this talent. In this process, one develops a taste so that it becomes "the discipline (or corrective) of genius" by "introducing clarity and order into abundance of thoughts" (5:319).

Given all the hard work that an artist needs to put into his creation after the vision has been developed, he is not passive in the process of art creation. Kant ultimately claims that artistic creation is "not a matter of inspiration or a free swing of the mental powers, but a slow and painstaking improvement" (5:312). In other words, spontaneously developed artistic vision over which an artist has no control induces him to express it and at this point, as the creation of a work begins, artist takes charge over his mastery: he becomes an active maker. That is the core of artistic creation – yet, as Kant himself laments, "how this is possible is hard to explain" (5:309). Before we tackle this 'hardship', let us take a deeper look at what Kant means by 'rich material'. This is relevant, in that on both conceptions of genius its capacity to provide this material is undisputed.

3. Genius' Rich Material: Aesthetic Ideas and Aesthetic Attributes

The backbone to Kant's critical project in epistemology, ethics and aesthetics is the supposition that the same cognitive faculties function in everyone in roughly the same way. However, when it comes to artists, they are somehow different: as nature's favorites, they can come up with beautiful works of art, which is something that cannot be accomplished sans the gift of nature. So what is it that differentiates an artist from the rest of us? How is he different?

One obvious candidate here is imagination: given the relevance of imagination in experience of beauty generally, it seems that those who are solely capable of creating beautiful art will be different with respect to their imagination. And given the relevance of aesthetic ideas (hereafter AIs) in Kant's account, it is just as plausible to try to account for the artistic creation by linking imagination, in its productive capacity, to the generation of AIs.⁷ However, explicating the nature of artistic creation via an artist's capacity to generate AIs is not precise enough. Given the textual evidence in 5:314, where the notion of AIs is first introduced, it is not obvious that Kant relates AIs *exclusively* to the imagination of an artist. Throughout 5:314 he gives a rather detailed account of productive imagination *in all of us* when he states that imagination is powerful in creating another nature, "out of the

⁶ See 5:309: "Such a skill cannot be communicated, but is apportioned to each immediately from the hand of nature, who needs nothing more than an example in order to let the talent of which he is aware operate in a similar way." This idea is further developed in 5:318: "the product of genius... is an example, not for imitation ... but for emulation by another genius, who is thereby awakened to the feeling of his own originality..."

⁷ Donald Crawford does so when he states that "genius manifests itself in the creation and presentation of aesthetic ideas, which result from the exercise of productive imagination" (Crawford, 2003, 161). See also Matherne 2016.

material which the real one gives it". As he claims, "*we* entertain ourselves" in this way "when experience seems too mundane to *us*", and we do so "in accordance with principles that lie higher in reason" (my emphasis). Thus, we can all transform the material that nature gives us "into something entirely different". Kant further states that "such representations of imagination" are called "ideas". Whether or not here he means ideas *generally* or *aesthetic* ideas is unclear, but given his overall terminology, and the relevance of AIs for art (which I discuss below), I take him here to be referring to AIs. Thus, I am skeptical over the claim that only an artist can generate AIs.⁸

There is another reason, a practical one, for us to suppose that everyone, not only artists, can generate AIs. Recall that on Kant's view, the cognitive capacities operate roughly the same in all of us, which explains why we can share judgments and understand one another.⁹ This presupposition does not exclude differences among the individuals, but if generation of AIs were *solely* the capacity of an artist, it would be unclear how the rest of us can engage with his creations – particularly, if, as I discuss below, art is a manner of communication whereby artist's ideas get communicated to the audience. Thus, what differentiates an artist from the rest of the community is not his capacity to generate AIs but, rather, the particular manner in which he does so. To anticipate my account of genius, what is distinctive about an artist's generation and expression of AI is the precise form that AIs obtain when expressed by an artist and the impact these ideas have once they are expressed in a work of art and experienced by other artists and the audience. Before I elaborate on each of this in particular, let us look more closely at AIs.

Kant first relates AIs to what he calls spirit. The notion of spirit is introduced in §43 where Kant refers to it as that which "alone animates" the work. Here he criticizes those who think that creation of art is a mere play free of all compulsion: sans this compulsory element, the spirit "would have no body and would entirely evaporate" (5:304). In §49 Kant reintroduces the notion of spirit, in the context within which he sets up to explain 'faculties of the mind that constitute genius'. Though he first talks about spirit being in the work of art ("A story is accurate and well organized, but without spirit"), he later defines it as "the animating principle in the mind", thus shifting the perspective from the work to the mind (though without explicating whose mind he is referring to). The animation itself is described as something that "purposively sets the mental powers into motion, i.e. into a play that is self-maintaining and even strengthens the powers to that end". In order to achieve this animation, Kant explains, the animating principle uses a 'certain kind of material'. He defines this principle as "nothing other than the faculty for the presentation of AI", adding immediately that by an AI he means "that representation of imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thoughts, i.e., concept, to be adequate to it" (5:314).

⁸ Allison gives us another reason to doubt the claim that only an artist can generate AIs by drawing our attention to the fact that beauty in nature is also defined as an expression of AIs (see Allison 2001, p. 286).

⁹ See Kemal, in particular his analysis of deduction of judgments of taste (pp. 83-85).

This explanation helps us understand what Kant means by spirited works: these are works that move us and incite us to engage in ‘much thinking’, though without providing us with any ‘determinate thoughts’, i.e. concepts under which to subsume these thoughts. The contemplative process initiated by the experience of a work is an ongoing process of reflection “that no language fully attains or can make intelligible.” This is in accordance with his definition of fine art as art whose satisfaction is one of reflection: the satisfaction that artistic experience provides is related to the cognitive processes that we engage in as a result of how spirited work affects us. Spirited works are works which manage to move us reflectively because of the manner in which they incite us to contemplation. Later we will see why Kant claims that the outcome of such reflections are ‘kinds of cognition’.

“One readily sees”, Kant further claims, “that [an AI] is the counterpart (pendant) of an idea of reason, which is, conversely, a concept to which no intuition (representation of the imagination) can be adequate”. (5:314). While it is easy to read this as Kant shifting from describing the impact of AI (‘occasion much thinking’) to accounting for what they are (‘counterpart of an idea of reason’), there is another way to read this statement. First, Kant here emphasizes the operative similarity between aesthetic ideas and rational ideas. He brings AIs in connection to intellectual *ideas* not because of their ‘content’ (what they stand for or represent) or manner of presentation, but because of the similarity in how they ‘animate the mind’, i.e. how they induce and organize the reflective processes. Like rational ideas, which, as heuristic principles, guide our understanding and determine our empirical cognition, so too operate aesthetic ideas: they organize our thought processes in experiences of beauty.¹⁰ In doing so, they, like, ideas generally, tend to go beyond the given nature and to seek for a sort of unity (we will see Kant’s precise wording in 5:314 below).

Second, the claim that AIs are counterpart to rational ideas gives us a way in which to envision them: unlike rational ideas, which lack representational properties, aesthetic ideas are imbued with them. That is why Kant explains that AI consists of a bunch of representations that cannot be subsumed under one definite concept, or captured via linguistic expression. The freedom of imagination, its productive power, is evident in its capacity to generate ‘manifold of representations’ and to thus animate the powers of mind, sans providing a ‘nameable’ concept for these representations. In subsequent paragraphs, Kant refers to these representations as aesthetic attributes and describes that aspect of how AIs manifest themselves by using the phrase ‘wealth of thought’. First however he exemplifies his claims by stating that

The poet ventures to make sensible rational ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc., as well as to make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g. death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame,

¹⁰ It is important to keep in mind that for Kant, experiences of beauty have direct relation to our epistemic endeavours of understanding the natural world, and moral endeavours, of exercising our moral duties. See Kemal 1992; Murray 2015; Ostarić 2006, 2010; Rogerson 2008, Wicks 2007.

etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature, by means of an imagination that emulates the precedent of reason in attaining to a maximum;... (5:314).

This description of what a poet presents ('makes sensible') via his poems is, I suggest, the most elaborate account of AIs, in terms of their *representational content*. Representational content of AIs reveals two relevant features of them: first, as I explain in more details in the sixth section, they relate to the particular subject/theme nexus that is expressed in a work of art, i.e. to what artworks are about.¹¹ Second, notice that the examples Kant adduces here are parallel to all of the constituents of human cognitive faculties. Rational ideas are embedded in reason, and provide normative and practical directions on how our understanding is to pursue its empirical investigations. Categories of understanding are necessary elements in empirical cognition and 'all sorts of vices' are at the centre of our moral life. Thus, the examples of AIs enlisted here show us that we cannot think of AIs as linked solely to moral or solely to rational ideas; they are inclusive of all that we have at our disposal for cognitively and morally making our way around the world.¹² More importantly, they are parallel to those concerns that humans have in virtue of being humans, with particular set of cognitive faculties: rational ideas organize our manner of thinking about ourselves and our world, and categories of understanding dictate our conceptual repertoire which we apply to the empirical world, as we go about in our everyday experience. This reinforces my practical reason for doubting the claim that only an artist can express AIs: if that were so, the audience could not understand artworks or recognize what it is that they are about, because they could not recognize the thematic concerns put forward by the work, and would lack the cognitive capacities to relate to them.

Kant's analysis of AIs in this part gives us reasons to conclude that a difference between productive functioning of human imagination generally and of an artist's imagination is one of a degree, not of a kind. Notice how Kant states that the poet makes AIs sensible 'beyond the limits of experience, with a *completeness that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature*, by means of an imagination that emulates the precedent of reason in attaining to a maximum'. The artist, it seems, presents ideas and concepts (namely, rational ideas and categories of understanding) in a very particular manner: by making these ideas so rich, that they go beyond the experience. Artistic presentation of AIs, in other words, is different than that of a non-gifted individual because it is only in the artistic presentation that they are presented with such richness.

¹¹ I develop this notion in Vidmar Jovanović 2020.

¹² It is important to stress this, given that traditionally, AIs were interpreted either as analogue to moral ideas, or to rational ideas. The dispute was finally settled by Samantha Matherne's "inclusive interpretation" (see Matherne 2013). In addition, see Kuplen (2019) and Vidmar Jovanović (2020) who recognize the inclusiveness of AIs and incorporate this inclusiveness into their accounts of Kant's view on fine art. On my part, the inclusive interpretation has a further consequence, in that art is no longer relevant solely for its moral content (as for example Wicks seems to suggest; see his 2007, 124) but for the overall contribution it makes to our conceptual and knowledge repertoire.

Kant gives us another reason to claim that the distinction between artist's imagination and that of ordinary man is one of a degree, not of a kind. After explaining what a poet 'ventures to make sensible', Kant states: "it is really the art of poetry in which the faculty of AIs can reveal itself in its full measure. This faculty, however, considered by itself alone, is really only a talent (of the imagination)." (5:314). The claim that 'in the art of poetry the faculty reveals itself *in its full measure*' suggests that productivity of imagination is gradational, and reaches its maximum in poetry. This implies that people differ with respect to how productive their imagination can be, with the artists, and particularly poets, being those whose imagination has the greatest capacity for productivity. In other words, the gift of nature, the genius, consists in enabling the imagination to reach maximum in its productivity. Thus, what separates an artist from the rest of us is the degree to which his imagination is productive: unlike those lacking the talent, artist's imagination reaches 'its full measure'. Only a genius can make certain things 'sensible beyond the limits of experience' and with a 'completeness that goes beyond anything experienced'.

Having thus exemplified what the poet does, Kant refers to the imagination as *creative*, and explains that creative imagination "sets the faculty of intellectual ideas (reason) into motion, that is, at the instigation of a representation it gives more to think about than can be grasped and made distinct in it" (5:315). Here we see another aspect of the genius' talent, as the maximum of imagination's productivity, its creative moment, is evident in how it moves reason into contemplative mode: those who lack geniality cannot 'set the faculty of intellectual ideas into motion', i.e. they cannot induce a wealth of thoughts via their way of presenting AIs. This is why those who lack the talent cannot generate works endowed with spirit.

In 5:315 Kant offers a further explanation of imagination's creativity, in explaining how precisely it represents its ideas: in the form of what he calls aesthetic attributes (hereafter AAs). As he states, AAs are "forms which do not constitute the presentation of a given concept itself, but, as supplementary representations of the imagination, express only the implications connected with it and its affinity with others" (5:315). In this sense, AAs are contrasted to logical attributes, which are contained by the concept itself and adhere to the logical rules. The first example Kant gives is that of "Jupiter's eagle with the lightning in its claws" which stands as an attribute of the 'powerful king of heaven', and of a peacock, which stands for "the splendid queen of heaven". Neither the Jupiter's eagle nor the peacock "represent what lies in our concepts of the sublimity and majesty of creation", explains Kant, but "something else". This 'something else' is as far as Kant goes in explaining AAs, but such an ambiguity is to be expected, given that AIs express something unnamable, something beyond the limits of experience. Therefore, Kant shifts to explaining their *modus operandi*, which should also be read as a description of the process of the animation of the cognitive powers in the audience. On my interpretation, this

particular impact that artistic portrayal of AIs has on the audience is yet another relevant aspect of the genius: those without the gift cannot thus influence the spectators.

As Kant says, what AAs represent “gives the imagination cause to spread itself over a multitude of related representations, which let one think more than one can express in a concept determined by words; and they yield an aesthetic idea, which serves that idea of reason instead of logical presentation” (5:315).¹³ To illustrate the process in which attributes yield an idea, Kant again relies on examples from poetry. He cites “the great king” who represents the “rational idea of cosmopolitan disposition at the end of life” via the image of a sun which “has completed its daily course” but nevertheless “still spread[s] a gentle light across the heaven”. As Kant explains, a description of a sun’s gentle ray representing “good deeds” we should leave behind as we die is the outcome of imagination’s recollection of everything agreeable in a beautiful summer day. He thus illustrates artistic creation as a process in which imagination manages to combine and arrange various motives from experience (i.e. from the given) and transfer them into something lying beyond the experience. Arguably, those lacking the talent cannot do so; they either do not chose the proper motives or they fail to transform them ‘into something new’, thus failing to inspire the pleasure of reflection in the audience. This is why unspirited works of art seem dull, trivial and familiar: the motives chosen and the manner in which they are presented do not invite the audience to reflect on what the work presents.

Kant’s account of AAs and their giving rise to AIs sheds further light on genius and artistic creation. On my reading, genius’ rich material relates to its capacity to generate AAs, which, combined in certain way, animate the mind and give rise to AIs. On this account (5:310 – 5:316), the talent consists in genius’ capacity to come up with the proper kinds of AAs, but their actual arrangement does not fall under genius’ control – it is only in 5:317 that Kant in fact unites genius and taste, only to open himself to further contradictions down the line. Thus, the 5:310 account sees genius as only providing powerful material for the creation of art and it excludes taste from the domain of genius. And while the way in which the genius provides this material, and the kind of material that it provides, is helpful in explaining the difference between artists and the rest of us, the account is problematic for several reasons.

First, if genius is explicated only in terms of the rich material, it is not clear how it provides the rule to art. The rule relates to how something is to be done, rather than to the expressive or representational features that the product has. So on this account, genius cannot provide the rule to art. A further problem for this account is the fact that Kant himself diminishes the relevance of genius’ rich material, i.e. AIs, when he asserts that “works which are rich in material are inspired, but not beautiful” (§50); only those works

¹³ Kant reinforces this by adding that AAs “give imagination cause to spread itself over a multitude of related representations” and they generate the spirit of a work, a spirit which gives imagination “an impetus to think more, although in an undeveloped way, than can be comprehended in a concept, and hence in a determinate linguistic expression.” (5:315).

which are in line with the taste are beautiful. This is inconsistent with his overall view of “beauty as expression of AIs” (§51), not to mention with his claim that art is only possible if one possesses the genius. Therefore, the 5:310 account does not fit well within Kant’s theory. Let us then move to the 5:317 account.

4. The 5:317 Account

Having exemplified AAs and their yielding of AI, in the second part of the §49 Kant recapitulates his claims regarding genius. However, the account he offers here is a significant expansion of genius’ talent in comparison to the one he developed throughout 5:310 – 5:316. In 5:317 Kant states that genius “really consists in the happy relation, which no science can teach and no diligence learn, of finding ideas for a given concept on the one hand and on the other hitting upon the *expression* for these”. It is at this point, notice, that Kant explicitly states that genius consists in finding ideas *and* in ‘hitting upon the expression’ of these ideas. Thus, genius and taste come united, and this union does not depend upon academic training: in line with his previous statement about art being the product of genius, Kant now argues that ‘no science can teach and no diligence learn’ a genius how to create his works.

While this account nicely incorporates Kant’s crucial claims regarding genius (genius is an inborn predisposition of the mind which gives the rule to art) by making activities of taste part of the gift itself, the account is inconsistent with Kant’s repeated claims regarding the condition of academic training, which, as explained above, enables one to develop one’s taste and to create art by making a series of judgments regarding one’s creation. Such inconsistency leaves us with a problem: how are we to accommodate the academic training requirement with the gifted artist who generates his art out of his own nature, yet without making conscious judgments in the process? Furthermore, how are we to accommodate this account with Kant’s statements in §50, where he explicitly dismisses the relevance of genius and gives supremacy to taste in artistic creation, calling it “the discipline (or corrective) of genius”?¹⁴

In order to answer this, we first need to look more closely at 5:317 account, particularly at the notion of expression that Kant here emphasizes. Expression itself is relevant for Kant because it is connected to his account of communication. On his view, communication, as expression of one’s judgments and sentiments, is central to our humanity and has an important role in development of community. As he sees it, art itself is a form of expression: notice that his ‘division of beautiful arts (presented in §51) is built upon the analogy with forms of expression.’¹⁵ Furthermore, in discussing the form of a work of art –

¹⁴ It is here in particular that Kant emphasizes the importance of taste, “like the power of judgment in general”, when he describes it as “clipping [genius] wings and making it well behaved or polished”, giving “genius guidance as to where and how far it should extend itself”. Taste is here awarded as the factor which makes “the ideas tenable, capable of an enduring and universal approval”.

¹⁵ See Wicks 2007 for elaboration of this analogy.

which, recall, falls under the prominence of taste – Kant states that it is a means by which beautiful representation “is universally communicated” (§48). On this view, the form of a work of art matters not only because it is a sole object of aesthetic judgment but because it enables an artist to communicate his ideas. For this reason, Kant often describes the experience of art as one in which an artist *communicates* his ideas. This aspect is emphasized in 5:317, when Kant explains that the happy relation of understanding and imagination is secured when the union between the ideas and their expression is such that, through it,

the subjective disposition of the mind that is thereby produced, as an accompaniment of a concept, can be communicated to others. The latter talent is really that which is called spirit, for to express what is unnamable in the mental state in the case of certain representation and to make it universally communicable ... that requires a faculty for apprehending the rapidly passing play of the imagination and unifying it into a concept ... which can be communicated without the constraint of rules. (5:317)

These several lines hold a key to Kant's explanation of the ‘hardship’ involved in artistic creation, understood as a form of communication. ‘The subjective disposition of the mind’, I argue, is the artistic vision produced once that imagination's creative endeavors result in generating a bunch of AAs, thus invoking a specific image standing for an AI. That is why Kant refers to AAs as ‘an accompaniment of a concept’ – recall that attributes are forms which do not constitute the presentation of a given concept that understanding demands, but are nevertheless related to it because the imagination provides them to the understanding, in order to give rise to the thought about the concepts which, due to their indeterminacy, cannot be verbalized. Here it is explicated that the aim of the artist – what he referred to previously as the intention to produce something – is to communicate his particular way of conceptualizing specific AIs. Although the artist doesn't know why or how such particular ‘wealth of thought’ is generated by his imagination, as Kant now explains, his talent, the spirit, relates to his capacity to ‘apprehend’ such a play of thought, to unify it into a concept and to communicate it to others, without adhering to some pre-existing rules. Notice that Kant here refers to the ‘talent’ which enables one to communicate the ‘subjective disposition of the mind’ as an ‘accompaniment of a concept’, i.e. as an idea of reason or category of the understanding. Since the communication is related to the form of ‘subjective disposition’, Kant here states that taste, which enables such communication, is itself a talent, namely nature's gift of genius. On this account, the gift of genius includes a capacity to organize the material, i.e. ‘the unnamable’ so that it can be communicated. As I will now show, it is with respect to that communication that the 5:317 account allows itself to include the academic training requirement, and to properly balance imagination and taste in a product of art.

First however, a word regarding the spirit. Namely, it may be questionable why artistic creation in its entirety cannot be explained by this quote alone, i.e. by relating geniality to

the spirit itself.¹⁶ This proposal is particularly plausible when we look at the entire explanation given here by Kant, who clearly understand spirit, at least in 5:317, as a talent which incorporates expressing

what is unnameable in the mental state and communicating it further, i.e. as faculty for apprehending the rapidly passing play of the imagination and unifying it into a concept (*which for that very reason is original and at the same time discloses a new rule, which could not have been deduced from any antecedent principles or examples*), which can be communicated without the constraint of rules. (5:317, my emphasis)

My reasons for focusing on the relation between genius and taste, to the exclusion of spirit, relate to the fact that spirit, even in this most elaborate explanation as presented here, does not tell us much about the actual process of art-creation, only about the process I referred to as the generation of artistic vision. In other words, description of spirit does not say much about the very faculties that Kant sees as relevant for art-creation in addition to the creative imagination, most notably taste and understanding. Furthermore, the description of spirit presented here eliminates the condition of academic training, relating artistic creation almost entirely to the operation of a spirit.¹⁷ Yet, this is not in line with Kant's overall view of art – recall that Kant explicitly rejects such art as beautiful, calling it inspired. Kant repeatedly warns against freedom of spirit as described here; in §43 he argues that without “something compulsory” the spirit “would evaporate”, and in §47, he ridicules those who only rely on spirit (rather than on training) by referring to them as those who are ‘parading around on a horse without staggers’. Academic training relates to one's capacity to extrapolate and adduce the rules for art, and it is not clear that the spirit in 5:317 does that. Rather, it seems that the spirit can generate the rules ‘out of the blue’ without deducing them from any antecedent principles or examples. But Kant has already demonstrated that “the rule must be abstracted from the deed, i.e. from the product, against which [an artist] may test [his] own talent, letting it serve [...] as model not for copying but for imitation” (§47. 5:309) – this capacity, after all, is part of the hardship of artistic creation he sets out to explain! Most importantly however, if 5:317 account of spirit was sufficient to explain the genius, it would remain unclear why Kant insists on the role of taste in §50. In other words, even if genius can be equated with spirit, we still need to provide an explanation for the role of taste in artistic production. Thus, it is more plausible to understand spirit in 5:317 as related to the imagination's creative capacity, which as we know, can generate new rules when it comes to concepts, such which ‘could not have been deduced from any antecedent principles or examples’ because they are not logical. These rules relate to the imagination's productivity, to the kind of material it generates in order to represent a given concept, not to the form eventually given to the work of art once that an artist takes charge over his creation and begins expressing his vision.

¹⁶ I am thankful to my reviewer for pressing me on this point.

¹⁷ Arguably, as Zammito (1992) argues, that is precisely what Kant wanted to refute in his criticism of *Sturm und Drang* conception of genius.

5. Genius and Communication through Art

Remember that for Kant, the talent for art “cannot be communicated” verbally, and it cannot be instructed. Rather, the skill for art, the talent, is “apportioned to each immediately from the hand of nature” and to make it operative, one “needs nothing more than an example” (5:309). As Kant explains, “the ideas of the artist arouse similar ideas in his apprentice if nature has equipped him with similar proportion of mental powers. The models of beautiful art are thus the only means for transmitting these to posterity...” (5:309). By ‘ideas of the artist’ Kant must mean AIs as captured and expressed in a work of art. This means that *a work of art* has the capacity to inspire the talent of another gifted artist, rather than any verbal instruction that an artist could produce. The genius thus “gives rise to a school” (5:318), i.e. establishes a particular artistic practice, a manner of creation which becomes a role model to other artists. As Kant sees it, at the bottom of such practice is a “methodological instruction in accordance with rules, insofar as it has been possible to extract them from those products of spirit and their individuality” (5:318).

I take this to imply that genius includes the capacity to extract the rules for art from original and exemplary works and, through artist's nature, modify them into something new, original and exemplary in its own right, that he incorporates into his creations. It is important to emphasize originality and exemplarity, since, for Kant, these are important features of genius' creations: what he brings into existence is original, since he produces it from his own nature. However, since there is “original nonsense” which cannot count as beautiful art (5:308), Kant is quick to add another condition that a work of genius must satisfy: it must be exemplary, meaning that others must recognize it as worthy of artistic attention, and that it must inspire others to use it as a model against which to develop taste. This is the crucial aspect of artistic creation, because, recall, it is through the genius that nature gives the rule to art. Extracting such rules *in the process of developing one's talent, and in light of that talent*, is, again, something that only one with the genius can do – or so I claim. Thus, a solution to the ‘hardship’, as defined above, is to recognize that the gift of genius includes the talent to extract the rules of art from exemplars and to incorporate them into one's capacity to give form to what is otherwise inexpressible, sans copying others. In Kant's words, the rule must be abstracted from the deed, i.e. from the product, against which [an artist] may test [his] own talent, letting it serve [...] as model not for copying but for imitation” (§47). Because the artist himself doesn't know where his capacity to do so comes from, he cannot explicate it, but in light of his talent, he can act upon it. Awakening the talent awakens the capacity to extract the rules, internalize them and turn them into something original and exemplary, channeled through individual nature of each genius, which thus finds expression in his work. Under this interpretation, it is easy to see why Kant insists that “the gift of nature must give the rule to art” (5:309) even though an artist cannot explain where such rule comes from.

The implication of my interpretation of 5:317 is that taste (in artistically relevant sense) becomes an inherent aspect of genius and works with it, rather than being external to it.

While everyone can imitate works of genius and thus try to extract rules for art, only those with the talent can do this successfully. In other words, taste can only develop in artistically relevant manner if one is given the gift of nature and if one engages in practice and improvement, having been touched by the relevant exemplars. Just as imagination's productivity comes in degrees and reaches its maximum in those with genius, so too does the capacity to develop taste in artistically relevant manner.

My interpretation implies that we should not read the 5:317 account to mean that the genius 'hits the expression' out of blue – recall that artistic creation is not a matter of "free swing" of mental powers. That would surely be too naïve and greatly oversimplified, and would dismiss Kant's repeated insistence on training and on the relevance of exemplars, not to mention what he calls "preparation and foundation for beautiful art" (5:305).¹⁸ What I am suggesting is that part of what genius includes is a capacity to develop taste via training, so that the products of such creation are works of beautiful art. In other words, while everyone can practice and train, only nature's favorites can eventually reach the excellence needed for creation of art. In that sense, the natural gift is the necessary and sufficient condition for art-creation, one that 'no science can teach and no diligence learn'. Thus, the 5:317 account is not in tension with the academic training requirement, nor with the claim that one cannot learn how to be an artist.

Under the interpretation I offer here, on which genius includes the capacity to develop taste in artistically relevant manner, the inconsistency between 5:317 and §50 can also be mitigated. Kant's claim that taste acts as "corrective" of genius does not necessarily imply that taste overpowers imagination, rendering it entirely irrelevant. Rather, it is the responsibility of taste to arrange ideas in manner which makes them "tenable, capable of an enduring and universal approval" (5:319). As I argue, taste can only do this, provided one has the talent, i.e. one is a genius. Only then will one develop a capacity to organize ideas so that one creates beautiful art rather than original nonsense, mechanical art or art which lacks spirit. Sans that capacity, one's work might be 'rich and original in ideas' and thus inspired, but, as Kant sees it, such work will not animate the mind. If ideas are presented in a random, haphazard, formless way, they fail to provide the pleasure of reflection because they fail to accompany representations as kinds of cognition. In other words, works which are rich in ideas but lack formal arrangement are not works in which ideas are rendered sensible. Such works are examples of miscommunication between an artist and his audience. This is why I argued above that genius is evident not in generation of AIs but in particular manner in which they are expressed, and in the impact these ideas have once they are expressed. We already saw that one such impact relates to their capacity to generate talent in gifted artists; in the next part we will see the impact of genius' work on the audience.

¹⁸ Kant states: "... for the beautiful art in its full perfection much science is required, such as, e.g., acquaintance with ancient languages, wide reading of those authors considered to be classical, history, acquaintance with antiquities, etc..." (5:305).

6. Genius's Art and the Satisfaction of Reflection

Kant defines successful artistic communication as one in which an artist manages to express his ideas (i.e. to formally arrange his work) so that this expression, embedded in a work, is “adequate to the thought and yet not detrimental to the freedom in the play of mental powers” (5:313). The latter condition is a condition of beauty generally: beauty is only possible in the course of a free play of mental powers, when imagination is liberated from the strict rules of reason. The implication here is that a work of art has to mobilize mental powers into free harmony. But what is meant by the first condition, that a work be “adequate to the thought”? From the perspective of an artist, this implies that he successfully ‘apprehended the rapidly passing play of the imagination’, and has ‘unified it into a concept’. From the perspective of the audience, I suggest, the claim that successful works of art are ‘adequate to the thought’ should be brought in connection with Kant’s overall claim that beautiful art has a “reflective power” of judgment as its standard and that its pleasure is one of reflection. In other words, beautiful art is adequate to the thought, rather than to the senses, when it incites the audience to reflect on what it expresses, i.e. on the concept that the artist communicated via his work. However, this only happens when a work has a proper form, since, recall, a beautiful representation of an object is “really only the form of the presentation of a concept by means of which the latter is universally communicated” (5:312). Unless the work has this form, it will fail to be ‘adequate to the thought’, i.e. it will fail to animate the mental powers and provide pleasure of reflection. This is why Kant sees taste as “clipping the wings” of imagination’s productivity.

Just how strong this demand is for Kant is most evident in §52, where Kant argues that “in all beautiful art, what is essential consists in the form... where the pleasure ... *disposes the spirit to ideas*” (5:326, my emphasis). Here Kant adds that “if the beautiful arts are not combined ... with moral ideas... they serve only for diversion” leaving the mind “dissatisfied” with itself and making one feel “useless and dissatisfied” (5:326). I take this to imply that the form of a work of art is not, as generally interpreted by the formalists, relevant per se, but for the future purpose it serves, namely, ‘disposing the spirit to ideas’ and ‘animating the mind’. This is relevant because in the absence of the proper formal arrangement, the ideas themselves will lack the power to bring forward a pleasure of reflection. For this reason, less successful works of art are considered trivial or dull: they do not animate the mind and do not invoke AIs in the audience. We tend to pass such judgments on such works not because they deal with subject/theme nexus that is not considered reflection-worthy, but because they do so in a manner which does not move us or invite us to grapple with its complexity: to put it in Kantian terms, such works do not provide pleasure of reflection.

In addition, the way Kant characterizes the role of form in successful works of art in §52 helps us settle the longstanding controversy regarding Kant’s apparent embracement of

formalism, at the expense of art's cognitive or moral relevance.¹⁹ Traditionally, Kant was interpreted as a formalist, namely as someone who attaches the value of art to its form. This isn't surprising, given how often Kant stresses the centrality of form in judgments of beauty. However, what §52 helps us see is that, in art, form is relevant because of the way in which it animates the mind, i.e. because of the way in which art touches us cognitively.²⁰ The precise nature of such cognitive impact is described in §53, where Kant details the impact of poetry – that art form, recall, where the productivity of imagination reaches its maximum. Kant states that poetry “owes its origin almost entirely to the genius” and in the least to examples, and he goes on to provide a rather extensive account of how poetry affects the mind. As he says, poetry “expands the mind” and it

strengthens the mind by letting it feel its capacity to consider and judge of nature, as appearance, freely, self-actively, and independently of determination by nature, in accordance with points of view that nature does not present by itself in experience either for sense or for the understanding, and thus to use it for the sake of and as it were as the schema of the supersensible (5:326).

What Kant establishes here is a direct link between poetry and metaphysics. Kant states that in experience of poetry, our minds are induced to consider those ideas which are usually hidden from our direct experience, although, as rational ideas, they structure that experience and make it possible. He thus reinforces his claims, regarding the creativity of imagination, according to which it transforms the given nature “in accordance with principles that lie higher in reason” (5:315).

Uniting poetry and metaphysics in this manner should not surprise us, given Kant's repeated descriptions of the impact of AAs in cognitivist's terms.²¹ Notice also that the examples he provides of what a poet makes sensible in his poetry (i.e. what I previously referred to as representational aspect of AIs) corresponds to what, in philosophical theories on the value of art, is discussed as subject/theme nexus of a work: that aspect of our experience of the world that an artwork is about. In great works of art such subject/themes nexuses are of “relatively deep significance to human life” (John 2016, p. 295). As Lamarque and Oslen state in discussing the value of literature, literature (and art generally) deals with *humanly important topics*, those which matter for our human experience, such as identity, determinism, faith, love, etc. (Lamarque and Oslen 1994, p. 265). These are precisely the examples that Kant uses in elaboration on poetic enterprise. What poets aim to present in their work is identical to the issues that our minds are constituted to pursue,

¹⁹ See Carroll 2008 for an analysis of Kant's formalism. For cognitivist's interpretations of Kant's theory, see Crawford, 1974; Guyer, 1994; Kuplen 2019; Matherne, 2013; Pillow, 2006; Vidmar Jovanović 2020.

²⁰ See my 2020 for examples.

²¹ By ‘cognitivist's term’ I primarily want to emphasize Kant's repeated insistence on art having the capacity to inspire reflection; animate the mind, occasion much thinking and invite moral ideas. I use the notion of cognitivism as it is currently being used in discussions on the cognitive value of art. While it does not follow, on Kant's view, that art delivers concrete propositional truths about the world, it does follow that it can aid us in our cognitive pursuits. In claiming this, I join the company of the authors listed in fn 19. I am grateful to my reviewer for pressing me on this point.

and to the questions we necessarily pose, given the concepts in our understanding. This implies that art is in alliance with our cognitive pursuits, i.e. that it is a powerful and resourceful instrument for conducting such pursuits.

This statement finds a double support in Kant's account of fine art, when we join AIs' representational content (i.e. their relation to rational and moral ideas and categories of understanding) and their *modus operandi* (the way they animate the mind and inspire much thinking). First, what the poet represents in his work corresponds to those 'humanly important topics' that are at the backbone of our cultural, social life and individual experience within which we search for meaning and value. It is a natural predisposition of our minds to ponder about these topics, as the categories of understanding organize our experience into a unified whole according to the dictates of reason. Furthermore, the way in which spirited works move us – by animating the cognitive powers according to the principles which lie higher up in reason and by thus expanding the concepts – explains art's capacity to intellectually touch us, and to leave us with a sense of having gained new, profound awareness of whatever it is that art brings to view via its thematic concerns. That is why Kant defines beautiful art as one which provides the pleasure of reflection and accompanies representations as kinds of cognition.

There is however another important aspect of artistic creation that can be extracted from Kant's §53. Having provided us with a link between poetry and metaphysics, Kant claims that poetry "plays with the illusion which it produces at will, yet without thereby being deceitful; for it itself declares its occupation to be mere play, which can nevertheless be purposively employed by the understanding for its own business" (5:327). Notice that Kant here explicitly grounds the epistemic reliability of poetry; precisely that of its features that Plato so famously denied, when he argued that poetry is thrice removed from the truth, deceptive, and composed by inspired poets who only pose as knowledgeable ones. On Kant's view, it is quite the opposite: while it might seem that poetry is no more than a mere play, it is in fact serious and helpful to the understanding, whose task is, recall, empirical cognition. Thus, poetry is linked to our metaphysical endeavors initiated by reason, it serves understanding in its empirical pursuits, it invites moral ideas, and it does so in an epistemically reliable manner. That is what the gift of genius enables at its best.

7. Concluding Remarks

Tracing Kant's clues as to what a genius can do either from his explicit statements about genius or from his writings on fine art, I argued that as a gift of nature, genius, includes the following components:

- (i) a capacity to develop imagination's productivity to its 'full measure' (5:314), which enables it to become creative and to summon AAs (5:315) so as to give substance to otherwise ineffable AIs (5:315), that is, rational and moral ideas and concepts derived from experience (5:314),

(ii) a capacity to extrapolate rules of art from another genius' product (5:309, 5:312), and thus develop one's taste to the point where it establishes new ways of creation and thus gives the rule to art by creating original and exemplary works of art (5:308, 5:312).

I argued that, given Kant's claim regarding the shared cognitive faculties, all humans have the capacity for productive imagination and for development of taste, but that only those who are nature's favorites and have been given the gift of genius, can in fact develop these capacities to the point where they can create beautiful art. In other words, while people generally can express AIs in some form, only an artist endowed with genius can give such expression, i.e. form, to these ideas, so that his work

(iii) inspires the pleasure of reflection (5:305) by animating the cognitive powers of the mind (5:313), thus enabling cognitive engagements with the world in epistemically reliable manner (5:327)

(iv) invites moral ideas (5:326)

(v) touches other artists by awakening their genius, thus giving rise to schools (5:318).

On the interpretation I am offering, genius incorporates (i) – (v) of the capacities listed above. It is a gift that 'keeps giving' in the course of a time; it does not enable one to produce one's products 'out of the blue', without any preparation, hard work, practice and conscious deliberation. As inborn predisposition of the mind, the gift of genius enables one to constantly grow and develop as one keeps creating art. To put it bluntly, the gift of nature does not imply that one automatically produces beautiful art. Rather, it is a potential to develop cognitive functions to the point when one is capable of creating beautiful art, provided one dedicates oneself to that. As with other talents, without training, hard work, trial and errors and constant investment of time and energy, that talent too will fade and become unproductive.

As I argued, the apparent contradiction in the two accounts of genius disappears once we recognize that part of the gift includes the capacity to master taste so that it enables one to create beautiful art which can inspire other artists while also delivering cognitive and moral benefits to the audience. Such interpretation is responsive to the fact that taste, as a capacity to judge, is shared by everyone and thus is not unique to the genius, but it also respects the fact that not everyone's taste is equal, and that not everyone can create beautiful art. Such interpretation is also sensitive to the fact that genius doesn't know where the rule of art comes from, even though he can give the rule to art via his artistic products. In the process of artistic creation, genius acts upon the artistic vision developed in his mind, as he searches for the best form in which to express such vision. As the vision is generated, so too is artist's intention to express it. Once he becomes aware of such subjective disposition of his mind, he takes charge over what he is doing, and makes the choices he feels fit to express his ideas, i.e., he makes judgments of taste. And although he cannot explain why some particular choice (of color, of motives, shapes, rhyme etc) is a

good one, he can sense it as good, as 'hitting' the expression'. As his taste develops, he becomes better and better at it, which is evident in his works. Kant's sensibility to such improvement is evident in his example of the young poet: though originally he doesn't see why others dislike his poems, as he develops his talent via practice and masters his taste, his creations become better.

Given that my interest here is narrowly defined to genius, I did not consider the wider context of the third *Critique*, such as Kant's overall concerns for beauty and exploration of reflective judgment. Although not all of my claims regarding the genius are explicitly supported by what Kant says in the third *Critique*, my account fits coherently not only with Kant's overall view of art, but with our artistic and critical practices as well. According to my interpretation, geniality comes in degrees, as does an artist's capacity to create truly successful works of art. Kant's awareness of such 'degrees of success' that different works exhibit is evident in his hierarchical ordering of art, as well as in his use of the phrase "beautiful art in its full perfection" (5:305). An obvious implication of this phrase is that the expression of beauty can be less than fully perfect. We recognize such degrees when, to give but few example, we recognize a development of an artist's excellence throughout his lifetime, from one work to another, or when we recognize that certain artists are by far more accomplished and original than some others.

Throughout the third *Critique*, Kant keeps going back and forth between uniting and disuniting taste and genius. While such inconsistency is perplexing, perhaps we should not dismiss it as a slip of pen of a philosopher hurling towards completion of his work, but should rather look at it as indicative of our artistic practices. Recognizing that genius includes the capacity to maximally develop one's taste as well as one's productive imagination is consistent with variations in artworks related to form and content. We can recognize works of art where an artist experiments with the form more so than with the subject/theme nexus, but we also appreciate the value of introducing certain themes into otherwise stable formats. Kant was sensitive to that fact, even though he gave slight preference to the mastery of form. On the whole however, just like in our artistic practices so in the third *Critique*, we value the most, as does Kant, those artists who can introduce exemplary novelties along both of these axes.

As nature's favorite, genius stands out in Kant's overall view of humanity. The analysis of poetry reveals manners in which beautiful art provides pleasure of reflection, and it explains why Kant claims that beautiful art accompanies representations as kinds of cognition. Due to the inherent link between subject/theme nexus of art and the inborn predispositions of our minds to ask certain question and wonder about specific concepts, art is, on Kant's view, revealed as a natural tool which enables us to probe such questions in a pleasing way. This is what grounds its cultural and educational value. Genius, as the

one who is solely predetermined, by nature, to create such products, is thus of great relevance for humanity's development and progress.²²

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