

# A Taste of Moral Concerns: On the Applied Judgment of Taste

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## Abstract

Kant's account of taste is often taken to imply that aesthetic appreciation and moral issues are incompatible – as if one could not consider purposes of a moral sort while passing a judgment of taste.

Taking into account how morally and politically engaged art has proven to be, it is easy to see why interest in Kant's account of taste has waned.

This cannot be the whole story, though. I claim that the applied judgment of taste can include the consideration of moral purposes while remaining an aesthetic judgment: I argue, first, that the beauty of buildings and the beauty of horses may include the consideration of concepts of a moral sort and that human beauty does necessarily include it; in the second part of my paper, I will give an account of why the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

If my views are correct, the applied judgment of taste instantiates aesthetic appreciation of morally and politically engaged art objects without dismissing – and on the contrary, considering – their moral and political engagement. As such, Kant's notion of applied judgment of taste might enrich current discussions in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of art, and art itself.

*Keywords:* Kant; taste; beauty; aesthetic appreciation; moral and political engagement.

It is hard to find a dictionary or encyclopedia of aesthetics that does not mention Kant's aesthetic theory or Kant's account of taste. And yet, the references made to his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* are usually focused only on the pure judgment of taste.

Focusing on this notion makes it easier to situate Kant's account both within his entire philosophical system and within the emergence of aesthetics as a discipline. What is more, such a focus has proven to be of much help when one intends to present Kant as a distinguished precursor of the art for art's sake movement, of aesthetic formalism, or even of the so-called theories of the aesthetic attitude.

As such, Kant has often been described as if his views on aesthetic appreciation had made it to be incompatible with the consideration of moral issues – as if one could not consider purposes of a moral sort while passing a judgment of taste. Now, taking into account how morally and politically engaged art has become since Kant and above all throughout the last century, it is easy to see why interest in Kant's account of taste has waned.

Such a picture of Kant and his aesthetic theory is not the most accurate, though. To be sure, there are two kinds of judgment of taste: the pure judgment of taste (the judgment

of free beauty); and the applied judgment of taste (the judgment of adherent beauty). Descriptions of Kant's theory are usually concerned with the former. My paper will be rather focused on the latter.

I claim that the judgment of adherent beauty can include the consideration of moral purposes while still being an aesthetic judgment.

In the first part of my paper, I will argue that the beauty of buildings and the beauty of horses may include the consideration of concepts of a moral sort and that human beauty does necessarily include it; in the second part, I will give an account of why adherent beauty is a genuine kind of beauty, why the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

If my hypotheses are correct, we have good reasons to believe that Kant's aesthetic theory, and particularly his notion of applied judgment of taste, might enrich current discussions in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of art, and art itself. The judgment of adherent beauty instantiates aesthetic appreciation of morally and politically engaged works of art without dismissing – and on the contrary, considering – their moral and political engagement.

## I

Kant introduces the notion of adherent beauty at the outset of §16 of his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.<sup>1</sup> He describes it as a kind of beauty that presupposes a “concept of what the object ought to be” and “the perfection of the object in accordance with it.”<sup>2</sup> Adherent beauties are thus “ascribed to objects that stand under the concept of a particular end.”<sup>3</sup>

As we can see a couple of paragraphs later, that is the case of the beauty of buildings, horses, and human beings:

the beauty of a human being (and in this species that of a man, a woman, or a child), the beauty of a horse, of a building (such as a church, a palace, an arsenal, or a garden-house) presuppose a concept of the end that determines what the thing should be, hence a concept of its perfection, and is thus merely adherent beauty.<sup>4</sup>

Nothing in this passage can make us sure of what kind of internal objective purposiveness is at work in adherent beauty. In the case of the beauty of a building, it is very likely that criteria of functionality play a role, for, as Kant states in §51, “the appropriateness of the product to a certain use is essential in a *work of architecture*;<sup>5</sup>” but it is not hard to think of architecture as raising moral issues as well. According to Geoffrey Scarre, for instance, when architects fail to see “that buildings should be fitted to human beings”, and not the converse, “[i]n Kantian language” they fail “to treat people as the *ends* of their activity.”<sup>6</sup> To be sure, this does not entail that every building has a moral end in its cause – as Paul Guyer maintains, at least some buildings “have practical but not moral purposes.”<sup>7</sup> But one could hardly argue that purposes of a moral sort are never in the cause of a building or that such purposes are never to be taken into account in judging its beauty.

Something similar happens when one turns to the question of knowing what kind of concept the beauty of a horse adheres to. Nothing in §16, nor even in the entire third *Critique*, functions as evidence that such a concept is of such or such a sort. However, something promising if linked up with the assertion that the beauty of a horse is of an adherent kind can be found in the *Critique of Practical Reason*: Kant asserts that, if compared

with inclination, love or fear, admiration comes nearer to the feeling of respect but, unlike the latter, it "can be directed to things also," such as "the strength and swiftness of many animals."<sup>8</sup> While one cannot conclude from these words that the beauty of a horse is fixed by a concept of perfection of a moral sort, it is plausible to believe Kant's view to be that anything that precludes a horse from displaying its strength and swiftness would also preclude us from judging it beautiful. It is precisely to this excerpt of the second *Critique* that Scarre draws attention when he suggests that Kant's view might have been "that the limits of the legitimate decoration of horses are set by a quasi-ethical requirement of preserving their ability to display their strength and swiftness."<sup>9</sup>

In *The Metaphysics of Morals* there is something challenging as well: Kant says that once "violent and cruel treatment of animals (...) weakens and gradually uproots a natural predisposition that is very serviceable to morality in one's relations with other people," human beings have "a duty to refrain from this."<sup>10</sup> From this passage, too, it is plausible to believe Kant's view in third *Critique's* §16 to be that anything that promotes, functions, or perhaps looks like a violent and cruel treatment of an animal would preclude us from judging it beautiful.

Here, as above, Guyer would claim that a horse "has no moral standing of its own" and, thus, that "any suggestion that it is only moral ends that restrict permissible forms in the case of adherent beauty is incorrect."<sup>11</sup> This does not entail that moral concepts are never to be considered within the judgment of adherent beauty, though; on the contrary, as Guyer himself does add, "an object's failure to satisfy either our moral expectations or some other practical but non-moral expectations will be sufficient to block any pleasure in its beauty."<sup>12</sup> All Guyer seems to hold, then, is that ends of a moral sort are neither always considered nor the only ones to be considered.

As for myself, I wonder what Kant would say about the nature of the ends that the beauty of a horse adheres to in a time when moral and political issues such as animal rights are seen by many as a major concern. Insofar as the right to housing is also often seen as a prior political and moral issue, the same applies to the concepts of what the object ought to be considered in the beauty of a building. Based on the excerpts I have quoted from the second *Critique* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*, I suggest that concepts of a moral sort could be among the ones to be considered: if anything in an object conflicts with duties we have to ourselves, then we cannot judge that object beautiful.

Let me now move to the beauty of a human being. Going back to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, we will see that the concept of perfection that the beauty of human beings is fixed by is of a moral sort.

In §17, Kant says that an ideal signifies "the representation of an individual being as adequate to an idea."<sup>13</sup> As such, the ideal of the beautiful, the ideal of beauty, is the representation of an individual as being adequate to what Kant had just called "the archetype of taste."<sup>14</sup> Next, Kant asserts that "[o]nly that which has the end of its existence in itself, the *human being*, who determines his ends himself through reason (...) is capable of an ideal of *beauty*"<sup>15</sup>. Now, since the human being is a moral being, precisely insofar as (s)he determines her/his ends her/himself through reason, Kant can finally add that "in the *human figure* (...) the ideal consists in the expression of the *moral*,"<sup>16</sup> in other words, that the ideal of (human) beauty is "[t]he visible expression of moral ideas."<sup>17</sup>

That being said, considering that human beauty must be judged according to such an ideal – which, as an ideal, is judged in terms of its adequacy to a concept of reason and which, as the ideal of human beauty, is judged in terms of its adequacy to the archetype

of taste, which after all is a moral idea – we are entitled to conclude that the adherent beauty of a human being is conditioned by a concept of what a human being ought to be, which is an idea of a moral sort.<sup>18</sup>

Human beauty is not at odds with moral concerns, then. On the contrary, the judgment of the beauty of a human being is necessarily applied to the visible expression of the moral.

What is more, even before asserting that only the human being is capable of an ideal of beauty, Kant had said that the archetype of taste was “a mere idea, which everyone must produce in himself, and in accordance with which he must judge everything that is an object of taste.”<sup>19</sup> Not only human beauty, then, but rather everything that is an object of taste<sup>20</sup> must be judged in accordance with the archetype of taste. Now, such an archetype can only be represented as an ideal of the beautiful, as we have seen, and the ideal of the beautiful, as the ideal of human beauty, is the expression of the moral. If things are so, then, it seems plausible to suggest Kant’s view to be that everything that is an object of taste must be judged in terms of its adequacy to a moral idea.<sup>21</sup>

To sum up, even though we cannot be sure what kind of concepts about objects ought to play a role in the beauty of a building or of a horse, we have good reasons to believe moral concepts to be among them. In the specific case of human beauty, I have made it evident that the concept of an end that human beauties adhere to is of a moral sort. If it is so, I am entitled to claim that adherent beauty can include – and in some cases it necessarily includes – the consideration of moral concerns.

The question that now arises is whether adherent beauty is a kind of beauty. One must have in mind that

the beauty for which an idea is to be sought must not be a *vague* beauty, but must be a beauty *fixed* by a concept of objective purposiveness, consequently it must not belong to the object of an entirely pure judgment of taste, but rather to one of a partly intellectualized judgment of taste<sup>22</sup>.

In other words, I must answer the question of knowing whether a partly intellectualized judgment of taste, an applied judgment of taste,<sup>23</sup> is a genuine kind of judgment of taste. In the remainder of my paper I shall turn to that.

## II

We have seen that, according to §16, the beauty of an adherent kind presupposes a “concept of what the object ought to be” and “the perfection of the object in accordance with it.”<sup>24</sup> This is not an uncontroversial statement, for in the title of the third *Critique*’s previous section (§15) Kant had written that “[t]he judgment of taste is entirely independent from the concept of perfection.”<sup>25</sup>

Fortunately, still in §16 we can find a decisive hint about why the applied judgment of taste is a judgment of taste, or, in other words, why adherent beauty is a kind of beauty. After having mentioned the beauty of a building, the beauty of a horse, and the beauty of a human being as adherent beauties, Kant writes:

One would be able to add much to a building that would be pleasing in the intuition of it if only it were not supposed to be a church; a figure could be beautiful with all sorts of curlicues and light but regular lines, as the New Zealanders do with their tattooing, if only it were not a human being<sup>26</sup>.

I take two suggestions from this assertion: that in order to assess the beauty of a church or the beauty of a human being concepts of what those objects ought to be must be considered; and yet, that the consideration of such concepts – in this case, respectively, church and human being – does not prevent the faculty of the imagination from playing freely and, therefore, that it does not preclude one from judging those objects beautiful.<sup>27</sup>

To be sure, the concepts of what the objects ought to be constrain, limit the freedom of the faculty of imagination. However, they do not undermine it. Considering the concept of an end that determines what a human being ought to be, therefore the concept of its perfection, one might claim, for instance, that its figure must not be tattooed with all sorts of curlicues and light but regular lines; considering the concept of an end that determines what a church ought to be, therefore the concept of its perfection, one might claim that its floor plan must be cruciform.<sup>28</sup> Although such concepts do constrain, limit, circumscribe, or even guide, the freedom of the faculty of imagination, it still imagines freely, in a free play with the understanding.<sup>29</sup>

Now, since, in the case of adherent beauty, despite the constraints imposed on the freedom of the faculty of imagination by the consideration of concepts, imagination does imagine in a free play with the understanding, then adherent beauty is *de jure* beautiful, the applied judgment of taste is *de jure* a judgment of taste.

To summarize, even though, in the case of adherent beauty, concepts of what the object ought to be must be considered, such concepts are not to function as the determining ground of the judgment. The determining ground of the judgment of adherent beauty is the pleasure taken in the free play of the imagination with the understanding. Adherent beauty is a genuine kind of beauty, the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

### III

We have just seen why adherent beauty is a genuine kind of beauty, why the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste. As long as imagination imagines freely, in a free play with the understanding, and as long as our pleasure is taken in such play, we can pass a (pure or applied) judgment of taste and judge the object (free or adherently) beautiful.

Previously, in the first part of this paper, we had seen that the applied judgment of taste, the judgment of adherent beauty, can include the consideration of moral concepts. In the case of the beauty of horses and the beauty of buildings we cannot be sure that it does, even though we have good reasons to believe so, namely if we appeal to some of Kant's works other than his third *Critique* or if we imbue Kant's aesthetic theory with current major moral and political issues, such as the right to housing or animal rights. In the case of human beauty, things look crystal-clear – within the framework of Kant's theory, the beauty of human beings must be accordant with the visible expression of the moral.

Now, if my views are correct, that means that the applied judgment of taste can take moral issues into account – as a matter of fact, in some cases it must include the consideration of concerns of a moral sort.

And yet, it does not become a cognitive judgment, for imagination keeps imagining freely, in a free play with the understanding – and it is in such play that we take the pleasure that works as the determining ground of the judgment.<sup>30</sup> The applied judgment

of taste is, in Kant's words, a partly intellectualized judgment of taste, a logically conditioned aesthetic judgment. It is a genuine kind of aesthetic judgment, a genuine kind of judgment of taste.

The fact that the applied judgment of taste is a genuine kind of judgment of taste is pertinent in many respects, namely within the history of aesthetics and Kant's own philosophical system<sup>31</sup>. For present purposes, this fact is of crucial importance because, as a judgment of taste, the judgment of adherent beauty instantiates aesthetic appreciation of morally and politically engaged works of art without dismissing – and on the contrary, considering – their moral and political engagement. As a judgment the determining ground of which is a pleasure taken in the free play of the imagination with the understanding, it has a disinterested nature. However, this does not mean it is of an uninterested sort, for it can include – and at least in some cases it must include – the consideration of moral and political concerns.

If things are so, I suggest that we should avoid taking it at face value that Kant advocates for an aesthetic purism or that he would prefer foliage for borders or on wallpapers to any masterpiece of figurative art or to a cutting-edge, twentieth or twenty-first century art object. To be sure, such a picture of Kant has been used not only to criticize him, but also as an anticipation of the theses grounding the art for art's sake movement in the early nineteenth century, of the ones supporting aesthetic formalism in the twentieth, or even of the statements of the so-called theories of the aesthetic attitude<sup>32</sup>. Unfortunately, a significant part of both criticism and support of Kant's aesthetic theory has stemmed from a misreading of it.

If we read Kant's aesthetic theory the way I propose, that is, as one that includes the consideration of concepts of a moral sort at the core of (adherent) beauty, at the heart of the (applied) judgment of taste, we will be able to enrich current discussions in the fields of aesthetics, philosophy of art, and art itself, with an account of aesthetic appreciation that, although admitting that such appreciation can include the consideration of the moral and political engagement of artistic objects, yet it does not make it anything but aesthetic.

Neither taste nor beauty is at odds with moral and political issues, then. Perhaps the current avoidance of both just reflects our fears about ourselves, as Kathleen Marie Higgins holds, "perhaps we doubt that we really do have enough of a heart to appreciate and transform at the same time. Obsessively aware of what is unbeautiful, we can only find beauty a threatening challenge."<sup>33</sup>

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> English quotations of Kant's works are from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood.
- <sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 114.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.
- <sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Scarre, 'Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 21 (1981), 351-362, at 359.
- <sup>7</sup> Paul Guyer, 'Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002), 357-366, at 364.
- <sup>8</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 202.
- <sup>9</sup> Scarre, 'Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', 359.
- <sup>10</sup> Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 564.
- <sup>11</sup> Paul Guyer, 'Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal', 364. According to Guyer, such a suggestion has been made by Scarre. Indeed, Scarre holds that the concept of what the object ought to be involved in the judgment of adherent beauty "somehow places a restriction of a moral sort on the aesthetic judgement" (Scarre, 'Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', 357) and that one of the necessary conditions of an object's being adherently beautiful is that "it does not offend against decorum (where it belongs to a kind of objects for which questions of decorum arise)" (*ibid.*, 358).
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 364. To some extent, he seems to agree with Henry E. Allison, according to whom "other considerations (...) may, but need not be, moral" (Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 140). Earlier, Martin Gammon had asserted it was "difficult to discern the moral "decorum" which stems from restricting the relations on "summer houses"" (Martin Gammon, 'Parerga and Pulchritudo adhaerens: A Reading of the Third Moment of the "Analytic of the Beautiful"', *Kant-Studien* 90 (1999), 148-167, at 163).
- <sup>13</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 117.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 116. In other words, the ideal of beauty is the representation of the archetype of taste "in an individual presentation" (*ibid.*, 117).
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.
- <sup>18</sup> Addressing some consequences of the introduction of the notion of an ideal of beauty to Kant's entire philosophical system, Allison suggests that "Kant's discussion of this unique ideal points ahead to the connection of taste and the experience of beauty with morality" (Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 143). Here as elsewhere, Allison follows the view of Gammon, according to whom "[t]he crux of the "ideal of beauty" in Kant's account (...) rests on the possibility of accommodating a sensuous estimate to the estimate of moral perfection, which necessarily exceed the bounds of sense" (Gammon, 'Parerga and Pulchritudo adhaerens', 165). However valuable these hypotheses may be, elaborating on them would exceed the purposes of my paper.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-117.
- <sup>20</sup> Let alone "that [which] is an example of judging through taste, even the taste of everyone" (*ibid.*, 116-117).
- <sup>21</sup> This would be a stronger claim than the one I have sustained in this paper. As such, it would require a more extended argument. For present purposes, namely to argue that, within Kant's

aesthetic theory, moral concepts can play a role in judgments of taste, all one needs is to show that in judgments of human beauty they necessarily do so. This is what I have shown.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>23</sup> Or, in §48's words, "a logically conditioned aesthetic judgment" (ibid., 190).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 111. While some authors see just a puzzle here (see: Eva Schaper, 'Free and Dependent Beauty', in Paul Guyer *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment – Critical Essays* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 101-119; Robert Stecker, 'Free Beauty, Dependent Beauty, and Art', *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 21 (1987), 89-99; Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Philip Mallaband, 'Understanding Kant's Distinction between Free and Dependent Beauty', *The Philosophical Quarterly* 52 (2002), 66-81; Paul Guyer, 'Free and Adherent Beauty: A Modest Proposal', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42 (2002), 357-366; or Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology: An Interpretation of the Critique of Judgment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007)), some others cannot help noticing a contradiction (see: Donald W. Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1974); Ruth Lorand, 'Free and Dependent Beauty: A Puzzling Issue', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 29 (1989), 32-40; or Denis Dutton, 'Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 34 (1994), 226-241). In any case, the worries raised by the abovementioned assertions (the judgment of taste is entirely independent from the concept of perfection; and adherent beauty presupposes the perfection of the object in accordance with a concept of what such object ought to be) cannot be allayed just by appealing to the difference between pure and impure judgment of taste. As Schaper does warn, calling the applied judgment of taste impure "makes no difference in this respect as it still is to count as a judgment of taste, an aesthetic appraisal. Any dilution of such a notion by admitting conceptual ties at all is a move away from the necessary conditions of aesthetic appraisals as outlined so far in the first three Moments" (Schaper, 'Free and Dependent Beauty', 104).

<sup>26</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 115.

<sup>27</sup> Here it must be reminded that the determining ground of the judgment of beauty is a pleasure in the free play of the imagination with the understanding.

<sup>28</sup> I have taken the former example from *Critique of the Power of Judgment's* §16 itself; the latter, from Guyer: "while the general purpose of worship and such more specific requirements as that of a cruciform floor plan may place limits on what can please us in a church, these hardly provide rules which are sufficient for producing a beautiful church or judging one. The concept of its purpose leaves room for a genuine aesthetic response to the beauty of a church, although it places some limits on the forms which might constitute that beauty" (Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 219). Hans-Georg Gadamer had already sketched a similar explanation out by associating adherent beauty with those cases "where "looking to a concept" does not abrogate the freedom of the imagination" (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup>, revised edn (New York, Continuum: 2006), 41). More recently, Brent Kalar has spoken of the freedom of the imagination as being "somehow circumscribed" (Brent Kalar, *The Demands of Taste in Kant's Aesthetics* (New York, Continuum: 2006), 85) while Robert Stecker placed emphasis on the suggestion that "[t]he imagination is guided by a concept but not determined by it" (Stecker, 'Free Beauty, Dependent Beauty, and Art', 92).

<sup>29</sup> Denis Dutton goes further and stresses it is only by means of rules that such a play is possible. According to Dutton, "complete, structureless freedom would make play impossible; there can be no play without rules" (Dutton, 'Kant and the Conditions of Artistic Beauty', 237). It is precisely because of this necessary link between play and rules that he has rather spoken of the latter as the "enabling conditions" of beauty (ibid., 233) and asserted that Kant "recognized the ability of rules not just to limit, but to incite the free imagination and provide it with material" (ibid., 234). Once again, Gadamer had already advanced something similar when he stated that "this

imaginative productivity is not the richest where it is merely free (...) but rather in a field of play where the understanding's desire for unity does not so much confine it as suggests incitements to play" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 41). One of the main reasons why there is no unanimity among scholars may be the fact that Kant has never established the conditions of the freedom of the faculty of imagination. Guyer, for instance, admits as "a fundamental problem about Kant's explanation of aesthetic response (...) the question of the real conditions of the freedom of the imagination" (Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 219), that is, "the indeterminacy of his conception of the freedom of the imagination, linked to his uncertainty about the scope of the power of abstraction" (ibid., 222). Nevertheless, as Guyer himself does add, "anything less than a very broad power of abstraction will make aesthetic response a rare occurrence. (...) The nature of sensation and empirical knowledge, were the imagination constrained by everything these present, would preclude our finding many objects beautiful. Clearly, Kant did not mean to imply such a conclusion" (ibid., 224).

<sup>30</sup> With regards to the specific case of human beauty, I therefore agree with Stecker, according to whom "Kant's point (...) is that the perception of the expression of moral character is *not* an instance of subsuming an object under a concept according to a rule. It is not a judgement *determined* by a concept. There is no rule for seeing moral character; rather it requires the play of the imagination as it scans face and figure. However, unless concepts (moral ideas) are being used in some sense, there would be no basis for seeing face and figure *as* having any character at all" (Robert Stecker, 'Lorand and Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 30 (1990), 71-74, at 72).

<sup>31</sup> Kant's judgment of taste plays a crucial role in the emergence of aesthetics as a discipline, in the eighteenth-century – contra Burke and the empiricists, Kant argues that it is a universally valid judgment; contra Baumgarten and the rationalists, he maintains it is an aesthetic one. Such a judgment is also of great relevance within the framework of Kant's philosophical system: in short, it represents the possibility of throwing a bridge from the domain of the concepts of nature to the domain of the concept of freedom. In both contexts, that is, in the ambit of the history of aesthetics and in the ambit of Kant's philosophical system – the applied judgment of taste has the merit of including within the scope of aesthetics anything the aesthetic value of which presupposes concepts (concepts of what the objects ought to be, as well as the perfection of the latter in accordance with the former), such as artistic beauty, the so-called fine arts, or, more generally, the arts.

<sup>32</sup> Understanding Kant as a precursor of the theories of the aesthetic attitude can be itself controversial enough. As Nick Zangwill remarks, "[t]he notions of an interested attitude or of interested contemplation (...) are all quite different senses of 'interest' from the one that Kant has in mind" (Nick Zangwill, 'UnKantian Notions of Disinterest', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 32 (1992), 149-152, at 151). In any case, I guess that not even such theories have been accurately described by their critics – with George Dickie at head. To be sure, as Jerome Stolnitz asserts: "aesthetic perception is frequently thought to be a "blank, cow-like stare." It is easy to fall into this mistake when we find aesthetic perception described as "just looking," without any activity or practical interest. (...) But this is surely a distortion of the facts of experience" (Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art Criticism: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1960), 37). For some insightful accounts of the aesthetic attitude, see: Sushil Kumar Saxena, 'The Aesthetic Attitude', *Philosophy East and West* 8 (1978), 81-90; David E. W. Fenner, *The Aesthetic Attitude* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996); and Gary Kemp, 'The Aesthetic Attitude', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 39 (1999), 392-399).

<sup>33</sup> Kathleen Marie Higgins, 'Whatever Happened to Beauty? A Response to Danto', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54 (1996), 281-284, at 283.