The Inclusive Interpretation of Kant's Aesthetic Ideas

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In the Critique of the Power of Judgment, Kant offers a theory of artistic expression in which he claims that a work of art is a medium through which an artist expresses an 'aesthetic idea'. While Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas often receives rather restrictive interpretations, according to which aesthetic ideas can either present only moral concepts, or only moral concepts and purely rational concepts, in this article I offer an 'inclusive interpretation' of aesthetic ideas, according to which they can present not only moral and purely rational concepts but also empirical concepts and emotions related to our ordinary experience. Although this latter class of experience-oriented aesthetic ideas has been neglected, I argue that recognizing the role it plays in Kant's account is crucial for understanding his views not only of artistic production and our experience of art but also of the value he takes art to have for our ordinary experience of the world, others, and our own selves. What is more, insofar as the inclusive interpretation brings to light Kant's acknowledgement of the close connection between experience and art, it reveals that his overall view of art is more plausible than is often thought, and recommends it as worthy of further consideration.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*[1] Kant offers a theory of artistic expression in which he claims that a work of art is a medium through which an artist expresses an 'aesthetic idea'.[2]

1 References to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the section number and A and B pagination of the first and second editions (A/B); *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: CUP, 1998). All other references to Kant's works are to the section number, volume, and page of *KGS*, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften (formerly, Königlichen Preussichen Akademie der Wissenschaften) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902): *Anthro* (*KGS* 7), *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Robert Louden (Cambridge: CUP, 2006); *KpV* (*KGS* 5), *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: CUP, 1996); *KU* (*KGS* 5), *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: CUP, 2002); *MS* (*KGS* 6), *Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

2 Kant himself likens artistic production to expression in §51, when he claims that, 'if we wish to divide the beautiful arts, we can, at least as an experiment, choose no easier principle than the analogy of art with the kind of expression that people use in speaking in order to communicate to each other, i.e., not merely their concepts, but also their sensations' (*KU* 5:320). We get a nice description of this in his analysis of the pictorial arts, when he says, 'how pictorial art can be counted (by analogy) as gesture in a language is justified by the fact that the spirit of the artist gives a corporeal expression through these shapes to what and how he has thought, and makes the thing itself speak as it were in mime [*die Sache selbst gleichsam mimisch sprechen macht*]' (*KU* §51, 5:324). For discussions of Kant's theory of expression, see D. W. Gotshalk, 'Form and Expression in Kant's Aesthetics', *BJA* 7 (1967), 250–60; Paul Guyer, 'Formalism and the Theory of Expression in Kant's Aesthetics', *Kant-Studien* 68 (1977), 46–70, and *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, second edition (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), chs 6 and 12; Kenneth Rogerson, *Kant's Aesthetics: The Roles of Form and Expression* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), and *The Problem of Free Harmony in Kant's Aesthetics* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008); and Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 288–90.

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While Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas often receives rather restrictive interpretations, according to which aesthetic ideas can either present only moral concepts, or only moral concepts and purely rational concepts, in this article I offer an 'inclusive interpretation' of aesthetic ideas, according to which aesthetic ideas can present not only moral and purely rational concepts but also concepts and emotions related to our ordinary experience ('cognition') of the world.[3] Although this latter class of experience-oriented aesthetic ideas has been neglected, I argue that recognizing the role it plays in Kant's account is crucial for three reasons. First, it reveals that Kant does not offer the overly restrictive account of both the production and the experience of art that is often attributed to him. Second, with this interpretation we find Kant making the suggestive and rather surprising claim that art has a cognitive function: it can enrich our ordinary experience of the world. And, finally, since the extremely restrictive account is highly implausible if meant to capture the wide range of art we are familiar with, this interpretation restores plausibility to Kant's account, recommending his sensitive reading of artistic expression and its cognitive value as worthy of our consideration. Insofar as the inclusive interpretation brings to light these features of Kant's account, it helps correct our understanding of his views of artistic production, our experience of art, and the relationship between art and cognition.

To develop the inclusive interpretation of aesthetic ideas, I begin with a discussion of the general notion of an aesthetic idea (Section 1). Next, I examine two standard interpretations of what aesthetic ideas can present (the 'moral interpretation' and 'rational interpretation'), which I intend the inclusive interpretation to contrast with (Section 2). I go on to argue that the standard interpretations overlook an important subset of aesthetic ideas that present empirical concepts and everyday emotions (Section 3). I then show that by acknowledging this subset of aesthetic ideas, we can make better sense of Kant's claim that aesthetic ideas have a cognitive function (Section 4). I conclude by laying out the inclusive interpretation and its advantages for understanding Kant's theory of art more broadly (Section 5).[4]

1. The Basic Features of Aesthetic Ideas

In §49 of the third *Critique*, Kant defines an aesthetic idea as follows:

> In a word, the aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination associated with a given concept, which is combined with such a manifold of partial representations in the free use of the imagination that no expression designating a determinate concept can be found for it. (*KU* 5:316)

This passage is surprising for several reasons. First, it is surprising because it links ideas with the *imagination*. More specifically, Kant connects them to the productive imagination

3 In this article, I take experience to be identical to 'empirical cognition', as per Kant's definition at B147 (§22, B Deduction), and when I use the term 'cognition' I intend to refer to this kind of cognition.

4 Although in §52, Kant claims that 'beauty (whether it be beauty of nature or of art) can in general be called the *expression* of aesthetic ideas', in this article I shall restrict my focus to how aesthetic ideas are expressed in art, leaving considerations of how they are expressed in nature for another time (*KU* 5:320).

and its capacity for 'creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material the real one gives it' (*KU* §49, 5:314).[5] This is in contrast to the more familiar characterizations of ideas in the previous *Critiques*, where they are almost uniformly characterized as concepts that spring from *reason*, either those theoretical ideas of God, the soul, and the world-whole from the first *Critique*,[6] or those of the moral law, virtue, and freedom from the second *Critique*. Second, and relatedly, this passage is surprising because insofar as an aesthetic idea is a representation produced by the imagination, it will be a sensible representation, that is, an *intuition* (though, one that does not require the presence of an object).[7] This, again, contrasts with the ideas mentioned above, which are all explicitly characterized as *concepts* of objects that cannot be given in experience.[8]

Kant is not insensitive to the fact that calling an aesthetic idea an 'idea' may seem to conflict with his earlier discussion of ideas and offers a clarification of his position in Remark I after the Antinomy of Taste (*KU* §57, 5:341–4). He claims that an idea 'in the most general meaning' (*in der allgemeinsten Bedeutung*) is a representation of an object that we can never cognize (*KU* §57, 5:342). In this context, Kant is thinking of cognition as requiring both a concept and an intuition, and his suggestion is that an idea is a representation of an object that outstrips one or other of these cognitive poles.[9] In particular, an idea of reason is a representation that outstrips the *intuitive* aspect of cognition: 'An *idea of reason* can never become a cognition, because it contains a *concept* (of the supersensible) for which no suitable intuition can ever be given' (*KU* §57, 5:342). Unlike concepts of the understanding whose objects can be given in intuition, or in Kantian terms can be 'demonstrated', the objects of concepts of reason (ideas) cannot be given in intuition, hence Kant labels them 'indemonstrable' (*KU* §57, 5:342–3). Meanwhile, aesthetic ideas outstrip cognition because they step beyond the bounds of our *concepts*: they involve an intuition that is so rich and complex that no concept could ever adequately capture it: 'An *aesthetic idea* cannot become a cognition, because it is an *intuition* (of the imagination) for which a concept can never be found adequate' (*KU* §57, 5:342).[10] Kant tends to emphasize this point with regard to the limits of language and conceptual description:

> [An aesthetic idea is] a representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., *concept*, to be

5 Though in the first *Critique* and at times in the third, Kant focuses on the imagination's contribution to the composition of the manifold of intuition in experience (through activities like the synthesis of apprehension and reproduction, among others), here Kant is concerned with how the productive imagination operates in artistic production.

6 In 'The Ideal of Pure Reason', Kant does talk about 'ideals of sensibility' that lack 'objective reality' but can act as regulative principles, which may well be a precursor of aesthetic ideas (section I, A569–70/B597–8).

7 Kant calls aesthetic ideas 'intuitions' at *KU* §49, 5:314, and §57 Remark I, 5:342. For Kant's account of the imagination as a 'faculty of intuition', see *Anthro* §28 (7:167).

8 See Book I, section II of the Transcendental Dialectic, A320/B377, and *KpV* Book II, section VII, 5:136.

9 For this description of cognition, see the introduction to Part II of the Transcendental Doctrine of Elements, section I, A50–1/B74–5.

10 See also *KU* §49, 5:314.

> adequate to it, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible. (*KU* §49, 5:314)

On Kant's view, when we conceptually articulate an intuition, we 'expound' the intuition; for example, when I, looking at a champagne flute, say, 'That's a champagne flute', the concept 'champagne flute' serves to 'expound' my intuition. Since, however, our concepts cannot fully capture the intuition involved in aesthetic ideas, Kant calls them 'inexponible' (*KU* §57, 5:343).[11]

Yet, although an aesthetic idea resists exhaustive conceptualization, as we see in the definition above it is nevertheless 'associated with' at least one concept, namely the concept the artist uses the aesthetic idea to present. Indeed, for Kant, an aesthetic idea just is an imaginary 'presentation' (*Darstellung*) of a concept.[12] However, to be clear, by requiring that an aesthetic idea present a concept, Kant does not intend to limit an artist to expressing a concept in the narrow sense (i.e. either a concept of the understanding or a concept of reason), nor does he think an artist must have a thoroughgoing grasp of the concept at stake. Instead, with the conceptual requirement Kant intends only to convey the idea that the artist must be guided by some *end* or *intention*:[13] hence, his claim that artistic production presupposes a 'determinate concept of the product, *as an end*' (*KU* §49, 5:317; my emphasis).[14] So, regardless of whether the artist has in mind a concept in the narrow sense (e.g. the concept

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11 It is unclear whether Kant, if pushed hard enough, would have to say that all intuitions, considered in a certain fashion, would qualify as inexponible. On the one hand, it seems that no concept would be able to exhaust all of the spatio-temporal relations contained in any particular intuition (for these relations, see §8 of the Transcendental Aesthetic, B66–7). On the other hand, in the third *Critique* Kant certainly suggests that some intuitions are much more amenable to conceptual articulation than others (*KU* §§49 and 57). At the very least, we could take Kant to be making a pragmatic point that with some intuitions, a *single* conceptual description will suffice, for example, 'That's a champagne flute'; however, with other intuitions *we feel* as if no single conceptual description would be sufficient. This, perhaps, manifests itself most clearly when we take a work of art to be open to a myriad of possible interpretations, something we do not typically do with objects of ordinary perception.

12 See *KU* §49, 5:317: '[Genius] presupposes a determinate concept of the product, as an end … but also a representation … of the intuition, for the presentation [*zur Darstellung*] of this concept … [genius] displays itself … in the exposition or the expression of *aesthetic ideas* … hence the imagination, in its freedom from all guidance by rules, is nevertheless represented as purposive for the presentation of the given concept.'

13 To be sure, the artist's intention and aesthetic idea for a piece may change as she engages with her material. Consider J. L. Carr's foreword to *A Month in the Country* (1980): 'During any prolonged activity one tends to forget original intentions. But I believe that, when making a start on *A Month in the Country*, my idea was to write an easy-going story, a rural idyll along the lines of Thomas Hardy's *Under the Greenwood Tree* … Then, again, during the months whilst one is writing about the past, a story is colored by what presently is happening to its writer. So, imperceptibly, the tone of voice changes, original intentions slip away. And I found myself looking through another window at a darker landscape inhabited by neither present nor past' (J. L. Carr, *A Month in the Country* (New York: New York Review Books, 1980), xxi–xxii). Though Carr claims that his original intentions 'slipped away', I see no reason Kant's account cannot accommodate this. Carr was never intention free; rather, his original intention transformed and matured in the production process, as did his imaginative grasp of how he wanted the novel to go.

14 I take this point to be an extension of Kant's earlier claim in §43 that in order for an activity to count as 'art' and not just as production through instinct, like bees making a beehive, the agent must have made a choice in which she 'conceives of an end' (*KU* 5:303).

of 'modern love'[15]) or she wants to present a feeling (e.g. joy[16]), Kant claims that her production process will be guided by a concept in the broad sense, that is, an intention, and she will produce an aesthetic idea in an effort to imaginatively present that concept.

Even so, an aesthetic idea is an imaginative representation too rich to ever be exhaustively described. To see why Kant makes this claim, we need to consider the creative process through which an aesthetic idea is produced. On Kant's view, the artist creates an aesthetic idea by connecting a host of representations, such as images, memories, plots, colours, etc., with the concept at stake.[17] He labels these representations 'aesthetic attributes', where 'aesthetic' is meant to signify the subjective status of these representations:[18] unlike logical attributes that lie analytically in a concept, aesthetic attributes are ones the artist, when guided by feeling, freely adds to it.[19] Now, he claims that in adding these aesthetic attributes to the concept at stake, the artist's imagination 'emulates the precedent of reason in attaining to a maximum': just as we form ideas of reason in our efforts to reach a maximal explanation or description of something, so too does the artist form an aesthetic idea in an effort to offer a maximal characterization of a concept through aesthetic attributes (*KU* §49, 5:314). Kant argues the resulting aesthetic idea is a representation that is so rich and thought-provoking that our concepts can never fully do it justice:

> if we add to a concept a representation of the imagination that belongs to its presentation, but which by itself stimulates so much thinking that it can never be grasped in a determinate concept … it gives more to think about than can be grasped and made distinct in it. (*KU* §49, 5:315)

To illustrate Kant's view of aesthetic ideas, let's consider the poem 'Wind' (1957) by Ted Hughes.[20] Hughes begins by using various metaphors to describe listening to the wind howling:

> This house has been far out at sea all night,
> The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills,
> Winds stampeding the fields under the window
> Floundering black astride and blinding wet.

But in the last two stanzas, he writes,

> … Now deep
> In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip

15 See Lawrence Durrell's claim in the author's note at the outset of *Balthazar* (1958): 'The central topic of this book is an investigation of modern love' (Lawrence Durrell, *Balthazar* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958)).

16 This may be at least one thing intended by Beethoven in the Ninth Symphony.

17 See *KU* §49, 5:314–5.

18 See Kant's alignment of 'aesthetic' with 'subjective' and 'feeling' in §1 of the First Moment of Taste.

19 It should be noted that although Kant thinks an artist is free to creatively add these representations, this does not mean the artist can add anything whatsoever: the attributes she adds to the concept must still 'belong to the concept' (*KU* §49, 5:315) and remain 'within the limits of a given concept' (*KU* §53, 5:326). In other words, the artist's creative activities must still be constrained by the concept/end she has set for herself.

20 In Ted Hughes, *The Hawk in the Rain* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957).

> Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,
> Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,
> And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,
> Seeing the window tremble to come in,
> Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.

With these lines, we discover what 'concept' Hughes intends this poem to convey, namely a failing love affair. We also find that he has chosen to present this concept through an aesthetic idea replete with aesthetic attributes involving metaphorical descriptions of listening to the wind, for example feeling like the house is 'out at sea' or that the wind is 'stampeding' under the window. And, although this aesthetic idea and its attributes certainly present the concept of a failing relationship, saying this by no means exhausts the wealth of meaning in the poem. As we pore over the poem, we uncover new aspects of Hughes' aesthetic idea and gain new insight into how the aesthetic idea informs our overall understanding of the piece. In which case, no single, exhaustive description of the poem can be given that does it full justice; rather, its richness opens it to further consideration, exploration, and interpretation by us.

In the end, then, an aesthetic idea is a representation an artist produces through her imagination that, on the one hand, reflects her intention (her 'concept'), and, on the other hand, is so rich our thought cannot exhaust it, hence outstrips the conceptual pole of cognition.

2. Competing Interpretations of the Presentational Content of Aesthetic Ideas

With this general characterization of aesthetic ideas in place, I want to focus in more detail on a pivotal issue: what exactly do aesthetic ideas present? Call this the issue of their 'presentational content'.[21] Among Kant's recent interpreters, the two most common answers to this question have been more restrictive. On the one hand, there is, what I shall call, the 'moral interpretation', suggested by the early work of Paul Guyer, according to which aesthetic ideas *only* present moral concepts.[22] On the other hand, there is the

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21 I have labelled this the issue of 'presentational content' because Kant claims that an aesthetic idea is an imaginative presentation (*Darstellung*) of a concept (*KU* §49, 5:317), and this issue concerns what sort of concepts, in the broad sense, aesthetic ideas can present. This fits into Kant's overall view of the relationship between aesthetic ideas, concepts, and works of art according to which: a work of art *expresses* an aesthetic idea, while an aesthetic idea *presents* a concept.

22 Although Guyer ('Formalism and the Theory of Expression in Kant's Aesthetics') at first appears to make a weaker claim that, 'the concepts involved in aesthetic ideas are primarily moral concepts', in his explanatory footnote he offers the stronger 'moral interpretation' (n. 21): 'Kant does not offer any reason why artistic expression should be confined to the expression of moral concepts, but both his exposition and examples in the sections devoted to the theory of fine art indicate that he does believe it to be so confined. The sensibility of an eighteenth-century moral philosopher might explain this belief (without justifying it)' (63). See also his claim: 'Aesthetic ideas render moral conceptions accessible to sensibility' (*Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), 39). However, he appears to move away from this position in the second edition to *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, where he endorses the less restrictive 'rational interpretation', discussed below (see 358).

more dominant view, what I shall call the 'rational interpretation', put forth by Henry Allison, Andrew Chignell, and Kenneth Rogerson, according to which aesthetic ideas can also present concepts of reason that are not per se moral concepts.[23] Though I take these accounts to be right in highlighting that *some* aesthetic ideas present moral concepts and *some* aesthetic ideas present rational concepts, I aim to show that they go too far in claiming that these are the *only* aesthetic ideas Kant addresses.

Support for the moral interpretation comes from three sources. First, if Kant's examples are any indication of his view, then the two examples he gives of aesthetic ideas in §49 point toward the highly restrictive view. For, in both examples, the 'artist' combines an aesthetic idea with a moral concept: in the first example, Frederick the Great's poem expresses an aesthetic idea combined with the moral concept of a 'cosmopolitan disposition', and in the second example, the poem expresses an aesthetic idea combined with the moral concept of 'tranquility streaming from virtue' (*KU* §49, 5:316). Further support for the moral interpretation comes from Kant's claim in §52 that 'if the beautiful arts are not combined, whether closely or at a distance, with moral ideas, which alone carry with them a self-sufficient satisfaction', then their 'ultimate fate' is to 'make the spirit dull, the object by and by loathsome, and the mind … dissatisfied with itself and moody' (*KU* 5:326). And, finally, in §59 Kant claims that beauty is the 'symbol of morality', and given that he also thinks that beauty is the '*expression* of aesthetic ideas' (*KU* 5:320), it seems that we can infer that aesthetic ideas are a symbol of morality. For these reasons, the moral interpretation holds that the presentational content of all aesthetic ideas is moral.

However, in spite of this prima facie evidence, the moral interpretation is not decisive. To begin, Kant's claims in §52 certainly point toward his view that art that expresses moral ideas will satisfy and nourish us more in the long run; however, this leaves open the possibility that there is another kind of art, the temporarily satisfying kind, which does not express moral ideas. Furthermore, with regard to §59, it does not follow from the fact that beauty is the symbol of morality that the aesthetic ideas expressed in beautiful art necessarily present moral concepts. Allison, for one, has argued that in §59, by calling beauty the symbol of morality, Kant intends to claim, not that the *content* of a work of art is necessarily a symbol of morality, but rather than the *way we reflect* on beautiful art is analogous to the *way we reflect* in morality.[24] This leaves room for a work of art to have content that is not per se moral and to, nevertheless, still count as a symbol of morality on account of the pattern of reflection it elicits in us.[25]

We find an alternative to the moral interpretation in the 'rational interpretation'. On this reading, although aesthetic ideas *can* present moral concepts, Kant's view requires

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23 See Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*; Andrew Chignell, 'Kant on the Normativity of Taste: The Role of Aesthetic Ideas', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 85 (2007), 415–33; and Rogerson, *Kant's Aesthetics*.

24 Allison argues that in our reflection on beauty, we move from reflecting on something sensible to reflecting on something supersensible, which is the same pattern involved in moral reflection (*Kant's Theory of Taste*, 264).

25 This is part of Allison's argument that beautiful art need only be a propaedeutic to morality (*Kant's Theory of Taste*, 254–67). Another possibility that I shall not pursue further is that the existence of beauty *as such* is a symbol of morality *as such* because it points towards a supersensible world; however, this does not necessarily commit Kant to the claim that any *particular* work of art must express a moral concept.

only that aesthetic ideas present some concept (idea) of reason.[26] Recall that Kant defines an idea of reason as a representation that 'contains a *concept* … for which no suitable intuition can be given' (*KU* §57, 5:342).[27] This definition in no way restricts ideas of reason to having moral content, and the rational interpretation can allow for the further possibility that some aesthetic ideas will present non-moral concepts of reason.[28] To see this at work in §49, consider Kant's claim that some aesthetic ideas present the rational idea of 'invisible beings'.[29] Although some invisible beings will have a moral character, say angels or devils, it is possible for artists to present concepts of other non-moral invisible beings, say, ghosts of a certain ilk or figures in a dream.[30] Think of Salvador Dalí's painting *Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second before Awakening* (1944), in which he attempts to capture a dream his wife has had. One could argue that in this painting Dalí is trying to capture a non-moral concept of reason, namely the concept of his wife's dream. It is a concept of reason because it is a concept of an object that Dalí could never intuit, hence cognize; however, supposing it lacks moral content, then it would qualify as a non-moral concept of reason. To be sure, on the rational interpretation these non-moral concepts of reason are not the only ideas expressed through art; however, it makes room for this possibility, a possibility the moral interpretation could not allow for.[31]

Yet, though in this respect the rational interpretation is less restrictive than the moral interpretation, in the end, it too is too restrictive for, as I show in the following section, both interpretations neglect an important subset of aesthetic ideas, namely aesthetic ideas oriented primarily towards experience.

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26 See Allison's claim that, '[aesthetic] ideas constitute a significant subset of possible symbols of rational ideas, namely, those that express or exhibit the corresponding idea independently of a determinate concept. Consequently, this explains how the beautiful (by means of aesthetic ideas) may be said to symbolize ideas of reason' (*Kant's Theory of Taste,* 258; see also 282–3). See also Rogerson's claim that aesthetic ideas 'express ideas of objects or states of affairs beyond our sensible experience by suggesting such things symbolically by way of an analogy' (*Kant's Aesthetics,* 28). For other discussions of aesthetic ideas and symbolism, see Lambert Zuidervaart, '"Aesthetic Ideas" and the Role of Art in Kant's Ethical Hermeneutics', in Paul Guyer (ed.), *Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment: Critical Essays* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 199–208; and Steven Ravett Brown, 'On the Mechanism of the Generation of Aesthetic Ideas in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 12 (2004), 487–99.

27 For their glosses on this definition, see Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 256; Rogerson, *Kant's Aesthetics*, 28; and Chignell, 'Kant on the Normativity of Taste', 419.

28 See Chignell's explicit rejection of the moral interpretation and claim that 'there is no reason that the model [of aesthetic ideas] cannot be extended to almost all of the rational ideas: mathematical, religious, metaphysical, and moral' ('Kant on the Normativity of Taste', 420 n.).

29 *KU* §49, 5:314.

30 See Kant's discussion of dreams and ghosts in *Anthro* §37, 7:189–90

31 Perhaps another example would be when an artist uses a work of art to express an aesthetic idea that presents the concept of a fantasy world, but who does so without having a moral agenda in mind, for example, Lewis Carroll's *Adventures of Alice in Wonderland* (1865).

3. Experience-Oriented Aesthetic Ideas

Kant's commitment to experience-oriented aesthetic ideas emerges implicitly in his fullest treatment of aesthetic ideas in §49. In this section, Kant delineates aesthetic ideas into two categories. First, in what I shall call the 'purely rational ideas category', Kant suggests that some aesthetic ideas 'make sensible' (*versinnlichen*) pure rational ideas, that is, ideas that have no objective correlate in experience (*KU* §49, 5:314).[32] The examples Kant gives include the 'ideas of invisible beings, the kingdom of the blessed, the kingdom of hell, eternity, creation, etc.' (*KU* §49, 5:314). The aesthetic idea expressed through a piece like Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* (1508–12) would fall into this category.

Now, if the rational interpretation were the correct one, then this should be the *only* category Kant identifies; however, he goes on to introduce a second category of aesthetic ideas, namely what I shall call the 'experience category'.[33] These ideas, according to Kant,

> make that of which there are examples in experience, e.g., death, envy, and all sorts of vices, as well as love, fame, etc., sensible beyond the limits of experience, with a completeness [*in einer Vollständigkeit*] that goes beyond anything of which there is an example in nature. (*KU* §49, 5:314)

Unlike aesthetic ideas falling in the purely rational ideas category, these aesthetic ideas are oriented *primarily* towards objects of ordinary experience, not towards objects that we could never, in principle, experience. However, they count as ideas because, Kant claims, they present the example drawn from experience 'with a completeness' that reaches past the limits of ordinary cognition: when the artist presents an example through a rich aesthetic idea and a host of aesthetic attributes, she extends the example beyond its conceptual limits, hence past the bounds of ordinary cognition. Consider, for example, Gustav Klimt's *Life and Death* (1911). On a Kantian analysis, Klimt begins with life and death, two things familiar to us from experience, but as he augments and enhances them with aesthetic ideas and aesthetic attributes, he presses them past the bounds of ordinary experience and what we can encounter 'in nature', thus creating 'another nature'.

Kant's inclusion of the experience category of aesthetic ideas gives us clear evidence that he does not require that all aesthetic ideas present either specifically moral concepts of reason or any other concept of reason at all; rather, he acknowledges that many works of art express aesthetic ideas associated with our ordinary experience of the world. And, in my view, this acknowledgement lends credence to his account. After all, our own

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32 I label this category 'purely rational ideas' because I want to make room for all aesthetic ideas to involve a rational element (e.g. their 'attaining to a maximum') but to then distinguish those ideas which *aim* at presenting a concept of reason from those ideas which may include rational elements but do not necessarily aim at presenting a concept of reason.

33 For a discussion of these experience-oriented ideas, see Rudolf Lüthe, 'Kants Lehre von den ästhetischen Ideen', *Kant-Studien* 75 (1984), 65–74, at 72, and brief mention in Anthony Savile, *Aesthetic Reconstructions: The Seminal Writings of Lessing, Kant and Schiller* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 169.

34 Although I distinguish between aesthetic ideas that present empirical concepts and emotions, I do not take Kant to be committed to the view that a work of art must express only one kind of aesthetic idea. Many works of art will express various aesthetic ideas falling into the moral, rational, and/or experience-oriented categories.

experience of art tells us that many artists do not aim at capturing something we cannot experience, but rather bringing to light the richness of experience we too often overlook in the exigencies of everyday life. Fortunately, Kant leaves room for this, and in the following sections I aim to develop his analysis of this latter category of aesthetic ideas in more detail, by looking at his discussion of aesthetic ideas that present empirical concepts and everyday emotions.

Aesthetic Ideas and the Presentation of Empirical Concepts

Some of the aesthetic ideas falling into the experience category present empirical concepts.[34] Although we will return shortly to how these ideas figure in §49, Kant actually makes room for these aesthetic ideas already in §17, 'The Ideal of Beauty'. Though this section is often overlooked in discussions of aesthetic ideas, Kant's mention of 'aesthetic normal ideas' in it recommends it as a valuable resource in our understanding of aesthetic ideas more generally (*KU* §17, 5:233).[35] An aesthetic normal idea is a representation produced by the imagination, which captures a 'model image' (*Musterbild*) for an animal species (*KU* §17, 5:233).[36] More specifically, this model image reflects a perfect instance of the concept of the species at stake; for example, the model image of a cow will perfectly instantiate the relevant features associated with the species concept 'cow'. But an aesthetic normal idea is an idea because no living animal within a species can actually instantiate it; instead, it is the 'standard' against which every individual is measured (*KU* §17, 5:233).

For our purposes, it is important to see that Kant does not think that aesthetic normal ideas only serve us in our ordinary judging of animals; he thinks they can be expressed through art. Indeed, in §17, he explicitly cites Myron's cow as a sculpture that expresses the aesthetic normal idea associated with the species concept 'cow' (*KU* §17, 5:235).[37] And it is not hard to think of other works of art, like Dürer's *Young Hare* (1502), which also express aesthetic normal ideas. Furthermore, if we wanted to situate these aesthetic ideas in one of the categories from §49, then they would seem to fit in the experience category much better than in the purely rational ideas category. After all, the aesthetic idea reflects the concept of an existing animal species, not a moral concept or a rational concept. Moreover, in Kant's analysis of how we develop aesthetic normal ideas, he suggests that we begin with examples from experience, say fifty cows, and our imagination settles on a model image that presents a perfect version of what is exemplified.[38]

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35 An exception to this is Rudolf Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 114–19; and Jane Kneller, *Kant and the Power of Imagination* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 104–5.

36 This echoes his discussion of what we could call 'natural' ideas in the Dialectic of the first *Critique*: 'A plant, an animal, the regular arrangement of the world's structure … these show clearly that they are possible only according to ideas; although no individual creature, under the individual conditions of its existence, is congruent with the idea of what is most perfect of its species' (Book I, section I, A317–8/B374).

37 Myron's cow is a mid-fifth century BCE Greek bronze sculpture of a cow. It now exists only in the form of Roman copies.

38 See *KU* §17, 5:234, for a description of this imaginative process.

Although §17 reveals that some aesthetic ideas in the experience category present us with empirical species concepts, if we turn our attention to §49, we will find that Kant makes room for, and in fact gives examples of, aesthetic ideas that present other empirical concepts as well. Recall that the experience-oriented aesthetic ideas are directed towards what there are *examples* of in experience. On Kant's view, an example, strictly speaking, is an intuition that demonstrates the reality of an empirical concept (*KU* §59, 5:351). In which case, in order to capture a particular example, the artist could produce an aesthetic idea that reflects the concept instantiated in that example. To be sure, many of the concepts exemplified in Kant's list in §49 have moral overtones, such as fame; however, other concepts, such as life and death, do not necessarily have moral overtones. This is significant because it suggests that, for Kant, as long as it can be augmented through aesthetic attributes, (almost) *any* empirical concept can be presented through an aesthetic idea.[39]

Consider, for example, Hemingway's description of fishing in 'Big Two-Hearted River' (1925).[40] On a Kantian gloss, one of the empirical concepts Hemingway aims at in this piece is 'fishing', a concept that is not an empirical species concept, moral concept, or a purely rational concept. Nevertheless, it is a concept that Hemingway presents and enhances through various aesthetic attributes, such as the character Nick Adams, the river, painstaking attention to detail, etc. Though this is but one example, we find that pieces from every art form express ordinary empirical concepts, for example, the concept of 'the Far East' in Duke Ellington's *Far East Suite* (1967), the concept of a 'kiss' in Constantin Brancusi's sculpture *The Kiss* (1916), the concept of 'the treachery of images' in René Magritte's painting of the same name (1928–9), the concept of 'dancing' in Frank Gehry's so-called *Dancing House* (1996), etc.[41] Indeed, once we see that insofar as Kant acknowledges that aesthetic ideas can present empirical concepts in addition to presenting moral or rational concepts, his theory of aesthetic ideas points toward a rich and varied account of artistic expression that has purchase on many of the works of art we are familiar with.

Aesthetic Ideas and the Presentation of Emotions

The experience category also includes aesthetic ideas that express two types of everyday emotions: 'affects' and emotions connected to thought and reflection. It is in the context

39 I qualify this statement with 'almost' because I here leave it open as to whether Kant would restrict the concepts that can be expressed in an aesthetic idea. At times, Kant aligns aesthetic ideas with the beautiful, claiming in §51 that beauty 'can in general be called the *expression* of aesthetic ideas' (*KU* 5:32). This might suggest a certain restriction on the content of an aesthetic idea such that if a work of art presents a concept that arouses 'loathing' (*KU* §48, 5:312), then it does not involve the expression of an aesthetic idea. That being said, we might think that a loathsome work of art involves the expression of an aesthetic idea by an artist whose genius has not yet had its 'wings clipped' by taste (*KU* §50, 5:319). To decide this issue, an extended analysis of Kant's view of genius is needed, an analysis I cannot pursue further here.

40 In Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925).

41 Of course, I do not hereby mean to suggest that these are the *only* concepts presented through these works, nor that these works *only* present concepts.

of his discussion of music that Kant makes the claim that some aesthetic ideas present 'affects'.[42] An affect, on his account, is an emotion that arises immediately and suddenly as a response to a present situation; it involves 'surprise through sensation' (*Anthro* §74, 7: 252). If we were to, all of a sudden, feel anxious, joyful, or angry, then we would be experiencing an 'affect' in Kant's sense.[43] Furthermore, insofar as these emotions arise immediately and through sensation alone, Kant thinks they are 'unpremeditated', not grounded in thought and reflection (*KU* §29, 5:272 n.).

According to Kant, it is music without words in particular that involves aesthetic ideas that present affects. As he puts it, because

> those aesthetic ideas [involved in music] are not concepts nor determinate thoughts, the form of the composition of these sensations (harmony and melody) serves only… to express … the aesthetic ideas of a coherent whole [*eines zusammenhängenden Ganzen*] of an unutterable fullness of thought [*einer unnennbaren Gedankenfülle*], corresponding to a certain theme, which constitutes [*ausmacht*] the dominant affect of the piece. (*KU* §53, 5:329)

Rather than expressing concepts or thoughts, the aesthetic ideas involved in music express affects and, in Kant's words 'speak through mere sensations without concepts' (*KU* §53, 5:328).[44] He clarifies this claim further by comparing what a musician does to what we do in ordinary conversation. In ordinary conversation, we tend to focus primarily on the conceptual content communicated to us by a speaker. And, though, we are aware of affects and tones at work in the conversation, we treat those affects and tones as a means to understanding the speaker's thought. By contrast, Kant thinks a musician focuses primarily on the 'language of affects' and puts it 'into practice for itself alone, in all its force' (*KU* §53, 5:328). Accordingly, the aesthetic idea a musician creates is one that does not present a concept or determinate thought, but rather a dominant affect.

Let's take as our example Chopin's Étude in E major (op. 10, no. 3). On a Kantian analysis, Chopin uses a plethora of musical devices to express a very rich emotion, evocative at times of sadness, homesickness, tenderness, and so forth. Indeed, the emotional wealth of this piece has earned it the nicknames '*Tristesse*' (sadness) and 'Farewell'. Now, if we were to rely on the standard interpretations of Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas, we would be forced to analyse this piece in terms of moral concepts or rational ideas. But in so doing, it seems we would overlook what lay at the very heart of the piece, namely its evocative emotional 'feel'. Fortunately, as this discussion of music has revealed, Kant does not require all aesthetic ideas to present concepts (in the narrow sense), acknowledging instead that some art will express affects.

Although Kant raises the possibility of affect-presenting aesthetic ideas in the context of music, it seems to me that his view ought to allow for other art forms to do this as

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42 See *KU* §29, 5:272, *Anthro* §§73–8, and *MS* part II, section XV, 6:407–8

43 See *Anthro* §§73–9 for these and other examples.

44 The 'concepts' Kant has in mind here are not concepts qua the artist's intention, that is, concepts in the 'broad sense', but rather concepts qua intellectual representations of the understanding or reason, that is, concepts in the 'narrow sense'.

well. Take, for example, Mark Rothko's color-field paintings and his claim that he is 'interested only in expressing basic human emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom, and so on.'[45] In certain cases, the feelings of ecstasy and doom, at least, would fall into the category of affects. Indeed, Rothko's abstract titles for his pieces (e.g. *No. 3/No. 13* (1949)), or the lack of a title altogether, resist our efforts to find a convenient description for what we see, and, often, instead, throw us back on the feeling aroused by the colours. This would seem to suggest an interpretation of some of his paintings in line with Kant's account of music.

But setting affects aside, we find that Kant allows for aesthetic ideas to present another type of emotion, namely emotion that involves thought and reflection.[46] This possibility is opened up, once again, by Kant's list of aesthetic ideas falling into the experience category in §49 and his inclusion of two emotions that can be connected with thought and reflection: envy and love.[47] To be sure, these particular emotions have moral overtones; however, they point toward the possibility of aesthetic ideas expressing reflective emotions. Moreover, given, as I argued previously, that Kant's considered view is that (almost) anything exemplified in experience can be presented through an aesthetic idea, then his view should be that any reflective emotion that can be exemplified in experience is a viable candidate for being presented in an aesthetic idea. Take, for example, J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951).[48] One of the many things Salinger does in this novel is express several emotions related to coming of age, such as feeling cynical, alienated, and lonely. These are neither emotions that just arise suddenly, nor are they specifically moral; rather, they are the emotions connected with the adolescent period of one's life.

4. The Cognitive Function of Aesthetic Ideas

So far, we have seen that, in addition to Kant allowing for some aesthetic ideas to present moral concepts and concepts of reason, he also allows for the content of some aesthetic ideas to touch on issues that are directly relevant to ordinary experience, namely empirical concepts and everyday emotions, thus managing to do justice to our own sense of what is expressed through many works of art. But appreciating this aspect of his theory of aesthetic ideas will also help us make sense of another aspect of it, namely his commitment to what I shall call the *cognitive function* of aesthetic ideas. This may come as something of a surprise. For one thing, it is not the cognitive but the moral function of aesthetic ideas that commentators have focused on, precisely because this is something Kant himself

45 Mark Rothko, *Writings on Art*, ed. Miguel López-Remiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 119.

46 There are, at least two, species of this kind of reflective emotion: passions (see *KU* §29, 5:272 n., *Anthro* §§74, 80–6, and *MS* part II, section XV, 6:407–8) and moral feelings, like respect and (some forms of) love.

47 In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant calls envy a 'passion', an emotion by his definition that is 'essentially different' from an affect because it involves a 'sensible *desire* that has become a lasting inclination (e.g. *hatred*, as opposed to anger)' (*MS* part II, section XV, 6:408). Likewise, though certain kinds of love can manifest as affects, such as falling in love (*Anthro* §74, 7:253; §80, 7:266), other forms of love, such as love without interest, will involve reflection (*KU* §29, 5:267).

48 J. D. Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1951).

tends to privilege.[49] What is more, it may seem as if Kant's analysis of aesthetic ideas *as aesthetic* in fact rules out the possibility of their having a cognitive function. After all, Kant's opening move in §1 is to contrast the 'aesthetic' with the 'cognitive', claiming that 'the judgment of taste is therefore not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic' (*KU* 5:203). How, then, could Kant accord aesthetic ideas a cognitive function?

In what follows, I show that even if a judgement of taste is not cognitive, this in no way precludes aesthetic ideas from having cognitive *effects* in our lives. Indeed, we shall find that throughout his analysis of aesthetic ideas, Kant emphasizes the cognitive benefits they have for us. To be sure, this cognitive value is another value aesthetic ideas have alongside their moral one; however, if we are to do justice to Kant's doctrine of aesthetic ideas as a whole, we need to take into account the different functions he accords them. Indeed, his recognition of the different ways in which art can be valuable in our lives is one of the more attractive and plausible aspects of his view, one that the inclusive interpretation can restore to it.

That Kant is committed to aesthetic ideas having a cognitive function emerges clearly in §49. There, he claims that when the imagination adds aesthetic attributes to a concept, this brings two cognitive capacities, the imagination and understanding, to life:

> the aesthetic idea …which is combined with such a manifold of partial representations … therefore allows the addition to a concept of much that is unnamable, the feeling of which animates [*belebt*] the cognitive faculties and combines spirit with the mere letter of language. (*KU* §49, 5:316).

He argues that this, in turn, serves cognition:

> the imagination is free to provide, beyond that concord with the concept, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding … which it applies, not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, for the animation [*zur Belebung*] of the cognitive powers, and thus also *indirectly to cognitions*. (*KU* §49, 5:317; my emphasis)

In these passages, we find Kant highlighting two aspects of aesthetic ideas that allow them to contribute to cognition: they (1) animate our cognitive capacities, and (2) expand the concepts of our understanding. Even if this occurs in the context of our making a judgement of taste, as Kant emphasizes at the end of the second passage, it can nevertheless contribute *indirectly* to cognition. That is to say, the cognitive function of aesthetic ideas hinges on what we bring away from our encounter with a work of art.

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49 See the discussion of *KU* §52 in Section 2 above and Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste*, 254–67; Zuidervaart, '"Aesthetic Ideas" and the Role of Art in Kant's Ethical Hermeneutics', and Rogerson, *Kant's Aesthetics*, 93–9. Exceptions to this trend include Lüthe, who argues that aesthetic ideas can help us expand the sensible associations we make with concepts related to objects of experience ('Kants Lehre von den ästhetischen Ideen', 72–4), and Savile, who makes the suggestive, but not fully developed claim that many aesthetic ideas provide us 'with a deeper and more extensive comprehension (intellectual and surely affective too) of the (rational) ideas which [the artist] takes as his theme' (*Aesthetic Reconstructions*, 171).

To see exactly how aesthetic ideas can affect cognition, let's begin by considering the benefits of the animation of our cognitive powers by a work of art. Kant's analysis of this feature of aesthetic ideas comes to the fore most prominently in his discussion of the pictorial arts, which he takes to include sculpture, architecture, painting, and pleasure gardens. On his view, the pictorial arts involve spatial, corporeally extended objects that engage the very same cognitive capacities that are at work in outer sense perception (*KU* §51, 5:321). And he claims that by animating those capacities, the pictorial arts can lead to the development of them, or, as he puts it, to 'the enlargement [*Erweiterung*] of the faculties that must join together in the power of judgment for the sake of cognition' (*KU* §53, 5:329). In so doing, Kant claims, the pictorial arts 'conduct a business':

> while [the pictorial arts] set the imagination into a free play that is nevertheless also suitable for the understanding, *at the same time* they conduct a business [*Geschäft*] by bringing about a product that serves the concepts of the understanding as an enduring and self-recommending vehicle [*einem dauerhaften und für sich selbst sich empfehlenden Vehikel*] for its unification with sensibility. (*KU* §53, 5:329; my emphasis)

So, for Kant, a pictorial work of art does not just stimulate imaginative play, but also serves us by acting as an 'enduring and self-recommending vehicle' for the unification of our cognitive capacities. I take Kant's idea to be that pictorial works of art, unlike most objects we encounter in ordinary perception, intrigue us and we find ourselves lingering over them. This, in turn, affords our cognitive capacities an opportunity to explore and investigate the piece and to spur one another on in this activity. Consider, for example, Vermeer's *Milkmaid* (1658). Though we, perhaps, begin by relying on our sensible capacities to notice various details, such as the lighting, the pleats on her dress, the look on her face, etc., eventually a theme that engages our understanding begins to emerge: that of quiet or contentment in the everyday. With this theme, our gaze returns to the piece, where we find new details and patterns—something that, in turn, enriches our understanding of the piece.

But as we have already seen, although Kant thinks this animation of our cognitive capacities is helpful in our experience of art, he also thinks it 'conducts a business' by leading to an expansion of those capacities, which can, in turn, serve us in cognition. It is perhaps easiest to see why aesthetic ideas lead to an expansion of the imagination. Kant emphasizes that though the imagination is 'constrained' by the understanding in theoretical cognition, in the aesthetic context, it is 'free' (*KU* §49, 5:317). And Kant thinks that this free exercise results in an enlarged, more developed imagination, which can subsequently be useful in cognition. To be sure, this does not mean that the aesthetic use of the imagination can ground any particular theoretical cognition; rather, it means that if we develop our imaginative capacities in aesthetic experience, then they will become more effective in their cognitive use. Kant ascribes various typical roles to the imagination in cognition, such as apprehending the manifold of intuition, making associations, forming images, schematizing concepts, etc., and his suggestion, now, is that the performance of the imagination in these cognitive roles will improve if it is given the chance to develop in

aesthetic experience.[50] Thanks to the expansion of my imagination, I am perhaps able to apprehend more or draw finer distinctions in a single manifold, make more associations, form new or more thorough images, or develop new schemata for new concepts: all of which enhances my theoretical cognition of the world. It is here that we find the cognitive benefit of an enlarged imagination.

However, according to Kant, it is not just the imagination that develops in our engagement with the pictorial arts, but our understanding is likewise enlarged. There are several angles from which we can appreciate this expansion of the understanding. To begin, its disposition to collaborate with sensibility can be heightened thanks to aesthetic experience. As we just saw, Kant claims that a pictorial work of art 'serves the concepts of the understanding' by providing it with an occasion to unify with our sensible capacities. Now, on his view, it is not always easy for the concepts of the understanding to be unified with sensibility. Sensibility and understanding are, in a certain sense, at cross-purposes: while sensibility is oriented towards what is particular (intuitions), the understanding is oriented towards what is general (concepts).[51] As a result, Kant suggests that sensibility and understanding 'to be sure cannot manage without each other but… nevertheless cannot readily be united with each other without constraint and mutual harm' (*KU* §51, 5:321). But, as we saw with the Vermeer, this tendency appears to be overcome in our experience of pictorial works of art, which, in fact, serve our understanding and its concepts by encouraging it to unify and work together with our sensible capacities. Given the fruitfulness of this unification, the understanding should be led to develop a new or, at least, heightened disposition to seek out this kind of interplay, and in this regard, the understanding is enlarged. This disposition, in turn, is something that will serve us in theoretical cognition: as we find more ways in which our intuitions and concepts fit together or come apart, we will gain a more nuanced and deeper understanding of the world around us.

But there is second way in which the understanding can be enlarged, and this brings us to Kant's view that aesthetic ideas can perform a cognitive function by 'expanding' our empirical concepts.[52] In order to appreciate this point, we need to recognize that, for Kant, we can think of the content of an empirical concept in at least two different ways. To be sure, a concept has what we can think of as 'logical content', which grounds our theoretical cognitions. But Kant's analysis of aesthetic ideas points toward a further 'aesthetic content' of a concept, where the aesthetic content includes things like subjective connections and aesthetic 'feels'. It is to this latter kind of content that an artist can contribute, hence Kant's claim that aesthetic ideas can add 'extensive undeveloped material' to a concept of the understanding (*KU* §49, 5:316, 317). For example, though Marcel Proust surely uses the famous passage about a tea-soaked madeleine from *Swann's Way* (1913) to many ends, one of the concepts

50 See the A Deduction for Kant's discussion of the imagination and the syntheses of apprehension and reproduction, as well as his discussion of image formation (esp., A98–102, A112–23). For his discussion of schematism and more on images, see chapter 1 of the Analytic of Principles (A137–47/B176–87).

51 See Kant's classical description of intuition as immediate and singular, and concepts as mediate and general in the so-called '*Stufenleiter*' in the Transcendental Dialectic, Book I, section I, A320/B377.

52 See also Lüthe, 'Kants Lehre von den ästhetischen Ideen', 72–4.

it enriches for me is that of a madeleine.[53] The aesthetic idea and attributes involved in that passage augment my concept of a madeleine with subjective characteristics, like memory, childhood, and nostalgia.[54] To be sure, *Swann's Way* has not therefore broadened the logical content of the concept 'madeleine'; nevertheless, by expanding the aesthetic content of this concept, it has enriched my understanding with respect to that concept.

However, once again, Kant maintains that this feature of an aesthetic idea has value not only in an aesthetic context, but also in a cognitive context. Using language we have already seen, Kant claims that by expanding the aesthetic content of our concepts, aesthetic ideas also conduct a 'business' by nourishing our understanding:

> The poet … accomplishes something that is worthy of business [*Geschäft*], namely providing nourishment to the understanding in play, and giving life to its concepts through the imagination. (*KU* §51, 5:321)

When we grasp only the logical content of a concept, we may not feel any subjective connection to that concept: perhaps it seems dry, boring, unexciting, etc. As a result, we may not enjoy theoretically engaging with or pursuing it. But when we encounter that concept in a work of art, it may suddenly become vivid, arousing our attention. Now, according to Kant, this can give nourishment to our understanding in play: we may find ourselves entertaining new possibilities or looking at the concept in different ways. As a result, our understanding is expanded as new horizons of theoretical cognition can open up to us. Reading Proust, for example, may incite us to pursue the concept of a madeleine, memory, or childhood, further in ordinary or, even, scientific cognition.[55] And though, again, the aesthetic content of a concept does not ground any particular theoretical judgement, nevertheless it can enlarge our understanding both by extending its concepts and by opening it to new horizons to pursue in our theoretical endeavours.

Finally, let's turn to how the aesthetic ideas that present emotions can play a cognitive function: they can contribute to our psychological understanding of others, as well as of our own selves. Though Kant does not dwell on this point, perhaps wishing to distance himself from 'psychological' approaches to aesthetics, like Edmund Burke's,[56] his discussion of music certainly points in this direction. As we saw above, Kant argues that when we converse with other people in ordinary life, their speech will involve both the expression of affect, as well as the thoughts they wish to communicate.[57] Moreover, in order to fully understand those thoughts and what the speaker wishes to communicate, we need to be attuned to the emotional tone, the affect, of their speech.[58] This

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53 Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, trans. Lydia Davis (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 47–8.

54 Indeed, now whenever I eat a madeleine, my thoughts cannot help but circle back to Proust.

55 Take, for example, Jonah Lehrer's use of Proust in *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2007).

56 See *KU* §29, 5:277–8.

57 See *Anthro* §18, 7:155.

58 See *KU* §53, 5:328: 'every expression of language has, in context, a tone that is appropriate to its sense; … this tone more or less designates an affect of the speaker and conversely also produces one in the hearer, which then in turn arouses in the latter the idea that is expressed in the language by means of such tone.'

competence with tone is something that music and its aesthetic ideas may help us with. Exposure to music not only makes us sensitive to affect, but also can help us discriminate the different shades of those affects: we are not just moved by the sadness we hear in Chopin's Étude in E major, we are confronted with the different ways in which sadness can take shape. This training in affect could, in turn, be utilized in our conversation with other people, aiding us in a more thorough understanding of what they are trying to communicate.

But even outside the context of verbal communication, we find that we can gain insight into our selves and others through an engagement with art that expresses emotion. Indeed, when we engage with a work of art whose aesthetic idea puts an emotion on display, we have a chance to investigate it without the 'stakes' involved in our ordinary exchanges with others. Art, as it were, gives us this distance, a distance that is useful for understanding the psychology of emotions. When we, for example, read Hughes' 'Wind', we are free to reflect on and contemplate how Hughes expresses the emotions associated with the end of the love affair, without ourselves being directly involved. This 'education' in emotions is one that we can, in turn, bring to bear on our efforts to understand other people, as well as our own selves. In this way, art whose aesthetic ideas present emotions can distinctively aid in our efforts to understand the nuances and subtlety involved in various human emotions, and, in turn, serve our cognition of human psychology.[59]

Far from it being the case, then, that aesthetic ideas can play no cognitive role in our lives, we find Kant offering a rich account of the various cognitive benefits of art. Yet given that Kant thinks aesthetic ideas engage the very same capacities, concepts, and emotions at work in ordinary cognition, it only makes sense that the aesthetic animation of those capacities, expansion of those concepts, or display of those emotions would enhance our cognitive lives as well.

5. The Inclusive Interpretation

Ultimately, these considerations give us reason to revise the standard interpretations of Kant's account of aesthetic ideas. Though the moral interpretation is surely correct to emphasize that some aesthetic ideas, indeed ones that Kant privileges, present moral concepts, and though the rational interpretation is surely correct to emphasize that the concepts of reason presented by aesthetic ideas need not all be moral, neither reading can accommodate the aesthetic ideas that present empirical concepts and everyday emotions. Though these latter ideas may not have as much 'moral' worth as the former ideas,

59 Without the inclusive interpretation, I think we can get, at best, a rather weak reading of the cognitive function of aesthetic ideas, according to which they could play a regulative role in cognition (see the Antinomy of Pure Reason, section VII, A508/B536–A515/B543). One could argue that the status of aesthetic ideas as maximal representations, which involve the connection of a wide array of intuitions to a concept, might act as a goal for us to pursue in cognition. However, this interpretation is a relatively thin one: the cognitive function of aesthetic ideas would, then, have little to do with the content of those ideas, but rather with their formal status as ideas. But, as I have argued, there is room on Kant's account to give a more robust, content-oriented account of the cognitive function of aesthetic ideas, which I believe does more justice to his views on this issue.

nevertheless Kant does accord them 'cognitive' worth, maintaining that they can aid us in our ordinary cognition of the world, others, and our own selves.

The inclusive interpretation, in turn, reveals that Kant's account of both the production and experience of art is much more plausible, perhaps viable, than is often thought. Rather than offering a one-dimensional account according to which artists can only express moral or purely rational concepts in beautiful art, Kant's account actually attempts to articulate the fact that many artists use their work to express something about our mundane experience of the world. Furthermore, the inclusive interpretation acknowledges that though some works of art morally inspire us or carry us off to a distant world, many pieces return us to it. Considered in this light, we find that, for Kant, art is an expression of our lives, not just as moral or rational agents, but as human beings whose experience of our selves, others, and the world has a rich aesthetic texture.[60]

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