

Kant on Aesthetic Autonomy and Common Sense

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1. Introduction

Although the notion of autonomy is typically associated with Kant's moral philosophy, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* he also ascribes autonomy to judgments of taste. For example, he claims that a judgment of taste is

not to be grounded on collecting votes and asking among other people about the sort of sensations they have, but is as it were to rest on an *autonomy* of the subject judging about the feeling of pleasure in the given representation, i.e., on his own taste (KU §31, 5:281, my emph.).¹

Continuing in this vein, he asserts:

[I]t is required of every judgment that is supposed to prove the taste of the subject that the subject judge for himself, without having to grope about by means of experience among the judgments of others [...] Taste makes claim merely to *autonomy*. To make the judgments of others into the determining ground of one's own would be heteronomy (KU §32, 5:282, my emph.).

Kant thus characterizes judgments of taste as autonomous in virtue of their being grounded not on what others think, but rather, in some sense, on the subject's own feeling in response to the object.²

Kant then offers two examples that appear to illustrate the notion of aesthetic autonomy. The first is that of a young poet:

1. References to Kant are to the volume and page of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, except citations to KrV, which are to the A and B pagination. Anthro: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*; EE: First Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*; Gr: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; JL: *Jäsche Logic*; Prol.: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*; KpV: *Critique of Practical Judgment*; KrV: *Critique of Pure Reason*; KU: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*; WE: "What is Enlightenment."
2. The kind of aesthetic autonomy at issue in these passages should be distinguished from another kind of aesthetic autonomy, which pertains to the independence of our aesthetic evaluations from moral or cognitive considerations. The former kind of aesthetic autonomy rather than the latter shall be my concern in this paper.

Hence a young poet does not let himself be dissuaded from his conviction that his poem is beautiful by the judgment of the public nor that of his friends [...] Only later, when his power of judgment has been made more acute by practice, does he depart from his previous judgment of his own free will, just as he does with those of his judgments that rest entirely on reason (KU §32, 5:282).

Kant's second example is of a beauty denier:

If someone does not find a building, a view, or a poem beautiful, then [...] he does not allow approval to be internally imposed upon himself by a hundred voices who all praise it highly. He may of course behave as if it pleased him as well, in order not to be regarded as lacking in taste; he can even begin to doubt whether he has adequately formed his taste by acquaintance with a sufficient number of objects of a certain kind [...] But what he does see clearly is this: that the approval of others provides no valid proof for the judging of beauty (KU §33, 5:284).

Differences between these two cases notwithstanding, both can be read as examples of aesthetic autonomy: the relevant judge refuses to make his aesthetic judgment on the basis of what others think, but rather bases it, in some way, on his own feeling.

More recently, Kant's account of aesthetic autonomy has received attention from those interested in a range of issues in aesthetics. Hannah Ginsborg, for one, has argued that his view of aesthetic autonomy supports a subjective, rather than an objective theory of aesthetic judgment.³ In a related vein, Robert Hopkins, Cain Todd, and Andrew McGonigal have explored whether Kant's conception of aesthetic autonomy lends itself to some version of aesthetic expressivism or

3. Ginsborg (2015): 19, 28–9 and (forthcoming) makes this case against that more objective readings defended by Ameriks (2003): Ch. 12 and Guyer (1997): 130.

quasi-realism.⁴ Meanwhile Hopkins, Keren Gorodeisky, and Amir Konigsberg have explored the consequences his discussion of aesthetic autonomy has for the value of aesthetic testimony.⁵ And Richard Moran has focused on the connection between Kant's approach to aesthetic autonomy and aesthetic normativity.⁶

Although these discussions have shed much light on the implications of Kant's account of aesthetic autonomy, there is a crucial respect in which the phenomenon of aesthetic autonomy tends to be under-described, viz., why it counts as autonomy in the Kantian sense. Commentators often emphasize the *negative* aspect of this phenomenon, i.e., the sense in which an autonomous aesthetic judgment cannot be grounded on the testimony of others.⁷ However, as those familiar with Kant's moral philosophy are aware, he defines autonomy in *positive* terms. To this end, he distinguishes between freedom in the 'negative'

4. Although Hopkins (2001) argues that the quasi-realist strategy ultimately cannot account for aesthetic autonomy, Todd (2004) claims that if we endorse a quasi-realism inspired not by Kant, but by Scruton, it will fare better. Meanwhile McGonigal (2006) offers a defense of Kantian aesthetic autonomy in light of the status aesthetic judgments have as value judgments, and he claims that this view of aesthetic autonomy is open to quasi-realists and cognitivists.
5. In particular, Hopkins (2000), (2001), (2011); Gorodeisky (2010); and Konigsberg (2012) attribute to Kant a 'pessimistic' view about aesthetic testimony, according to which it cannot count as a reason to make a judgment of taste, even though it may count as a reason to experience the object again, as in the beauty denier case.
6. See Moran (2012): 309–17. In the end, however, Moran argues that Kant misplaces the source of aesthetic normativity: whereas Kant ties it to the universal demand that others agree with us, Moran, following Proust, claims that this normativity has its source in beautiful objects themselves.
7. The emphasis on the negative features of this phenomenon has been prevalent in the discussion of Kant's view of aesthetic testimony. Particularly influential in this regard has been Hopkins's (2001) gloss of Kantian aesthetic autonomy, according to which, "aesthetic judgments are autonomous in a way in which ordinary empirical judgments are not: in the former case, unlike the latter, the fact that others disagree cannot justify a change of mind" (167–8). In this vein, see also Gorodeisky and Marcus's (2018) description of aesthetic autonomy as, "Autonomy: Neither the mere fact that everyone else makes a certain aesthetic judgment nor the testimony of experts can be adequate grounds for making the judgment oneself" (122).

sense, which involves a subject being free from outside influence, and freedom in the ‘positive’ sense, which involves the subject legislating to and determining herself (Gr. 4:446, KpV 5:33). And it is only if we are able to legislate a principle to ourselves and determine ourselves accordingly that Kant thinks we are autonomous.⁸

Extending this line of thinking to the aesthetic case, we should expect that, on Kant’s view, it is not simply because our judgments of taste are free from outside influence that they are autonomous.⁹ Nor, however, is it the case that they are autonomous, as some interpreters have argued, because they are based on our own feeling of pleasure.¹⁰ To be sure, judging on the basis of one’s own feeling of pleasure is part of the positive profile of the phenomenon of aesthetic autonomy; however, this feature is not yet enough to qualify a judgment as autonomous in the Kantian sense. Indeed, Kant discusses other aesthetic judgments, e.g., so-called ‘judgments of the agreeable’, which are based on one’s own feeling of pleasure, but are not free or autonomous.¹¹ He reserves

8. In the *Groundwork*, he says, “Autonomy of the will is the property of the will by which it is a law to itself” (Gr. 4:440). And in the second *Critique*, he asserts, “*lawgiving of its own... is freedom in the positive sense. Thus the moral law expresses nothing other than the autonomy of pure practical reason*” (KpV 5:33).

9. Commentators who have focused on the positive aspects of autonomy include Moran (2012): 309–11 and Guyer (2014): 43–7. Moran distinguishes between two senses of Kantian aesthetic autonomy, one that applies to judgments of the agreeable and beautiful, viz., being grounded in the subject’s ‘*apprehensio*’ of the object, and one that applies only judgments of the beautiful, viz., being free from “*desire or need*” (310–1). Although I think Moran thus highlights important features of aesthetic judgments on Kant’s view, I do not think either form of autonomy amounts to autonomy in the precise Kantian sense because they lack self-legislation. Guyer, meanwhile, does emphasize the role of self-legislation. However, while Guyer identifies the law we give to ourselves as “the claim that everyone ought to experience the same pleasure in the object that one does oneself,” I identify it as the principle of common sense (45). And I argue below that the demand for universal agreement is conditioned by common sense.

10. See, e.g., Guyer (1997): 240, Allison (2001): 167, Hopkins (2001): 167–8, Todd (2004): 278, Hamawaki (2006): 113, Konigsberg (2012): 159, Moran (2012): 309–11, Ginsborg (2015): 19, 28.

11. On this point, I disagree with Moran’s (2012): 310–1 characterization of judgments of the agreeable as autonomous. Since judgments of the agreeable

these descriptors for judgments of taste alone.¹² So, judging on the basis of one’s own feeling of pleasure does not yet account for the autonomy of judgments of taste. Rather, for Kant, in order for our judgments of taste to qualify as autonomous they must involve an aesthetic form of self-determination and self-legislation, or so I shall argue in this paper.¹³

However, in order to develop my interpretation of the positive aspects of aesthetic autonomy, I appeal to another key concept in Kant’s aesthetics, viz., ‘common sense’. And I claim that, on Kant’s view, common sense is what makes aesthetic self-determination and self-legislation possible. This being said, Kant’s treatment of common sense is notoriously complicated. For this reason, I will devote much of what follows to an interpretation of his theory of common sense. Central to my interpretation are the claims that Kant distinguishes between an aesthetic and a cognitive species of common sense and that he understands aesthetic common sense as something that we acquire on the basis of aesthetic education. It is only after defending this interpretation of Kant’s theory of common sense that I present my reading of aesthetic autonomy, as dependent on aesthetic education and aesthetic common sense, and I use the example of the young poet to help make my case.

I, therefore, begin in §§2–3 with my interpretation of Kant’s theory of common sense. In §2 I address questions regarding the nature of common sense and why we have reason to attribute to Kant a distinction between an aesthetic and cognitive species of common sense. In §3 I consider the question of whether common sense is natural or

do not involve self-legislation or self-determination, I do not think they can qualify as autonomous in Kant’s sense. I return to the topic of judgments of the agreeable below.

12. In addition to the passages from §§31–2 cited above in which he ascribes autonomy to judgments of taste, see his claim that only judgments of taste, and not judgments of the agreeable or the good, involve ‘free’ satisfaction (KU §5, 5:210; §6, 5:211).

13. As Guyer (2014) makes this point, aesthetic autonomy must involve “a self-given law” (43).

acquired, and I claim that Kant endorses the latter position. More specifically, I maintain that, for Kant, aesthetic common sense is something we acquire on the basis of an aesthetic education that is sensitive to the demands of the power of judgment. In §4 I tease out the implications my account of common sense has for understanding Kant's view of aesthetic autonomy, arguing that aesthetic self-determination and self-legislation depend on the acquisition of aesthetic common sense. In this section, I address Kant's case of the young poet and I defend a non-standard interpretation of this example, according to which Kant uses it to demonstrate the need for aesthetic education and practice with examples in order to acquire aesthetic autonomy. I conclude in §5.

2. Common Sense: Its Nature and Species

There are two main parts of the third *Critique* in which Kant discusses common sense: the Fourth Moment of Taste (KU §§18–22) and §40, "On taste as a kind of *sensus communis*." And in both contexts, he underscores the centrality of the notion of common sense to his account of taste. In the Fourth Moment, for example, Kant indicates that his task in the *Analytic of the Beautiful* has been "to resolve the faculty of taste into its elements and to unite them in the idea of a common sense" (KU §22, 5:240). The 'elements' Kant has in mind are the disinterestedness, universality, purposiveness without purpose, and necessity of judgments of taste, which he has brought out in each Moment of Taste. And his claim here at the end of the *Analytic* is that construing taste in light of the idea of common sense enables us to see how all these elements fit together. Meanwhile, returning to this thought in §40, Kant chooses to bookend the Deduction (§38) with an analysis of taste as a kind of common sense. In both contexts, then, Kant summarizes his position with the claim that taste is a kind of common sense. Common sense thus serves as a cornerstone of his theory of what taste is and, as such, it plays a pivotal role in his account of what makes judgments of taste possible.

Yet, in spite of the significance of common sense for Kant's overarching theory of taste, his analysis of it is not as straightforward as

one might like. Indeed, as commentators have noted, there are three sets of questions that arise as a result of his treatment of common sense across these sections.

To begin, it is not clear exactly *what* Kant thinks common sense is.¹⁴ In the Fourth Moment of Taste, he characterizes common sense as a 'principle' and 'norm' (KU §20, 5:238; §22, 5:239). However, he also describes it as a feeling, more specifically as "the effect of the free play of our cognitive powers" (KU §20, 5:238–9). Meanwhile, in §40 he describes it as a 'faculty' and, indeed, aligns it with the faculty of taste itself (KU 5:295). What then is the nature of common sense on his view: is it a principle, feeling, or faculty?

There are also questions concerning how many *species* of common sense Kant identifies. While some take Kant to discuss only one kind of common sense throughout,¹⁵ others have argued that Kant distinguishes between the aesthetic form of common sense involved in taste and a cognitive form of common sense, which he addresses in §21 of the Fourth Moment.¹⁶

Finally, the concluding section of the Fourth Moment poses an additional challenge as Kant raises a question regarding the *status* of common sense:

Whether there is in fact such a common sense, as a *constitutive* principle of the possibility of experience, or whether a yet higher principle of reason only makes it into a *regulative* principle for us first to produce a common sense in ourselves for higher ends, thus whether taste is an *original* and *natural* faculty, or only the idea of one that

14. See Crawford (1974): 128–30, Guyer (1997): 249–50, Allison (2001): 156–7, Dobe (2010): 49.

15. See Makkreel (1990): 157–8, 164; Savile (1993): 32–9; and Kemal (1997): 62–8. See also commentators, like Guyer (1997): Ch. 8, Ameriks (2003): 285–93, and Hughes (2007): 169, 177–89 who read §21 as an attempt at a deduction of taste.

16. See Savile (1987): 145–7, (1993): 38–9; Fricke (1990) 168–73; and Allison (2001): Ch. 7.

is yet to be *acquired* and is *artificial*, so that a judgment of taste, with its expectation of a universal assent, is in fact only a demand of reason to produce such a unanimity in the way of sensing [*Sinnesart*]... this we would not and cannot yet investigate here (KU §22, 5:240, transl. modified, my emph.).

Here Kant raises two possibilities regarding the status of common sense. On the one hand, common sense could be a ‘constitutive’ principle of experience — i.e., a necessary condition without which experience would not be possible, in which case it would be an ‘original’ or ‘natural’ faculty. On the other hand, common sense could be a ‘regulative’ principle, i.e., a demand placed on us by reason in light of some ‘higher end’. It would then be an ‘artificial’ and ‘acquired’ faculty we achieve by pursuing this end.¹⁷ Given that Kant refuses to settle this issue in §22, it has been a matter of debate whether he thinks of common sense as constitutive/natural, regulative/acquired, or both.¹⁸

In light of these complexities, before I can be in a position to defend my claim that common sense grounds aesthetic autonomy, I need to work through the details of his account of common sense. To this end, in this section I will analyze his discussion of common sense in the Fourth Moment (2.1) and §40 (2.2), arguing that Kant conceives of common sense as a principle, feeling, and faculty, and that he

17. See Guyer (1997): 294–373 for a discussion of the different notions of ‘regulative’ Kant may be operating with here.

18. While some commentators, like Rogerson (2008): 105, 107–11, advocate for a constitutive reading, others, like Crawford (1974) and Longuenesse (2006), argue for a regulative one. Guyer (1997): 264–73, 288–91 also explores the possibility of common sense being regulative, but he claims that Kant never clearly comes down one way or the other. Meanwhile other commentators argue that common sense is both regulative and constitutive. Savile (1987), for one, argues that although common sense is a natural ‘capacity’, it is nevertheless an ‘ability’ we must acquire through ‘training’ and ‘practice’ ((1987): 190–1). Kemal (1997): 62–8, 87–103, 108 maintains that common sense is constitutive of judgment, whereas the idea of the *sensus communis* is regulative. Dobe (2010): 48, 50, 57–8 argues that common sense is constitutive, as the reflecting power of judgment, and regulative, as something we cultivate in accordance with our moral interests.

distinguishes between an aesthetic and cognitive species of common sense. I will then take up the question regarding the status of common sense in §3 and claim that Kant conceives of it as something we acquire in accordance with a regulative demand. With these pieces in place, I will then return to aesthetic autonomy in §4.

2.1. *Common Sense in the Fourth Moment of Taste*

In the Fourth Moment of Taste, Kant introduces common sense as part of his discussion of the distinctive type of necessity involved in judgments of the beautiful. There he argues that judgments of the beautiful have ‘exemplary’ necessity: when one makes a judgment of the beautiful, she holds up her judgment as an example that she thinks others ‘should’ follow (KU §19, 5:237). And Kant thinks that what puts one in this normative position is that she regards the ground of her judgment as being “common to all” (KU §19, 5:237). That is to say, she takes her judgment to be grounded in the disinterested pleasure that results from free play that anyone in her situation should be able to feel as well.

In §20 Kant identifies common sense as the ‘condition’ of that exemplary necessity: “The condition of the necessity that is alleged by a judgment of taste is the idea of a common sense [*Gemeinsinnes*]” (KU 5:237). Kant then glosses common sense as “a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity” (KU §20, 5:237–8). So defined, common sense is a principle that demands that our judgments of taste be grounded in a universally communicable feeling of pleasure without concepts. Kant, in turn, specifies the relevant feeling as the “effect of free play” (KU §20, 5:238). Thus, the principle of common sense demands that our judgments of taste be grounded in a feeling, viz., the disinterested pleasure that results from free play. And, on his view, it is only insofar as we take our aesthetic judgments to meet this standard that we are licensed to treat them as examples that others should follow.

Although in §20 Kant identifies common sense as the condition of the necessity of judgments of taste, in §21 he raises the issue of “Whether one has good reason to presuppose a common sense” (KU 5:238). He argues in the affirmative; however, he does so in light of considerations not about judgments of taste, but rather about cognitive judgments. This leaves open the question, mentioned above, as to whether the species of common sense Kant discusses in §21 is identical to the common sense he has just detailed in §20, as the standard of taste.

In order to motivate a commitment to some form of common sense in §21, Kant draws on considerations about the communicability of cognition.¹⁹ He opens with the claim that:

Cognitions and judgments must, together with the conviction that accompanies them, be able to be universally communicated, for otherwise they would have no correspondence with the object (KU §21, 5:238).²⁰

On Kant’s view, then, cognitive judgments are universally communicable: they are capable of being shared by other cognizers. However, according to Kant, our cognitive judgments have a “subjective condition,” i.e., there is a “mental state” or “disposition” of our cognitive capacities that gives rise to those judgments (KU §21, 5:238). And he argues that:

[I]f cognitions are to be able to be communicated, then the mental state, i.e., the disposition of the cognitive powers for a cognition in general, and indeed that proportion which is suitable for making cognition out of a representation [...] must also be capable of being universally communicated (KU §21, 5:238).

19. While I cannot consider all the details of Kant’s argument here, see Guyer (1997): 252–64, Allison (2001): 149–55 for a more thorough discussion of §21.

20. Kant, here, appears to be channeling his argument from the *Prolegomena* that the universal validity of a cognitive judgment is ‘interchangeable’ with its objective validity (Prol. 4:298).

In clarifying the communicability of this disposition, Kant notes that this disposition “has a different proportion depending on the difference of the objects that are given” (KU §21, 5:238–9). And he suggests that there is an ‘optimal’ proportion, which involves the “animation of both [imagination and understanding] (the one through the other) with respect to cognition (of given objects) in general” (KU §21, 5:238–9). He, in turn, claims that this optimal disposition is one that we can access only through ‘feeling’: there is no rule that can predict which objects will put us in this state, it is something we sense (KU §21, 5:239). In order for the disposition to be communicable, then, Kant maintains that this feeling that gives us access to it must also be communicable: “since the disposition itself must be capable of being universally communicated, hence also the feeling of it” (KU §21, 5:239). According to Kant, however, “the universal communicability of a feeling presupposes a common sense” (KU §21, 5:239). That is to say, we must have the capacity to sense the universal communicability of a feeling, and that capacity just is common sense. Kant then concludes that common sense can, indeed, “be assumed with good reason” (KU §21, 5:239).

The reason some commentators have argued that the common sense at issue in §21 is the aesthetic kind is because they take the optimal proportion Kant describes to be one that obtains only in free play.²¹ There are, indeed, passages in which Kant appears to describe free play in terms similar to those he uses to describe the optimal proportion in §21, e.g., claiming free play involves the “play of both powers of the mind (imagination and understanding), enlivened through mutual agreement” (KU §9, 5:219). And some have suggested that Kant needs to be committed to this position if he is to avoid the ‘everything is beautiful’ objection.²² According to this objection, if Kant thinks that this optimal proportion is one that is involved in cognitive judgments

21. See Guyer (1997): 254, 262–3, 286; Ameriks (2003): 286, 289–91; Kalar (2006): 141–2; Hughes (2007): 181–4; Dobe (2010): 50, 52.

22. For discussion of this objection, see Meerbote (1982): 81–3; Husdon (1991): 87; Guyer (1997): 262–4, 284–8; Allison (2001): 184–9; Rind (2002).

and that this proportion is what grounds judgments of the beautiful, then we would have to judge every object we cognize to be beautiful. If, however, this optimal proportion obtains only in the aesthetic case, then only some objects, viz., those that occasion free play, would be judged to be beautiful.²³ On this reading, then, insofar as common sense is what gives us the ability to sense the universal, communicable feeling of this optimal proportion, then it must be an aesthetic form of common sense.

By my lights, the problem with this interpretation is that it does not fully fit the text. Beginning with §21, Kant gives us no indication that he is talking about both cognitive and aesthetic judgments. Rather everything Kant says leading up to the remark about the optimal proportion is about cognition. And after this remark, he asserts:

[C]ommon sense [...] must be able to be assumed with good reason [...] as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition, which is assumed in every logic and every principle of cognitions that is not skeptical (KU §21, 5:239).

Furthermore, it seems reasonable to think that cognition can, indeed, involve an optimal proportion, viz., when we encounter objects that bring about a particularly felicitous interaction between our imagination and understanding, as we apply a concept to that object for the sake of cognition. To be sure, this will differ from how those capacities interact without conceptual constraint in free play; nevertheless, this proportion in cognition still seems to be an optimal one.

Moreover, Kant only explicitly returns to the relationship between common sense and judgments of taste in §22. There, he opens with the claim that, “In all judgment by which we declare something to be beautiful [...] we [...] make our ground [...] a common [feeling]” (KU §22, 5:239). And the way he proceeds in this section only makes sense if he distinguishes between the common sense at issue in §§21 and

22. For it is at the end of §22 that Kant poses the question concerning whether the common sense involved in judgments of taste is constitutive of experience or regulative. Given that he has just concluded §21 with the claim that common sense is “the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition,” it seems that the common sense under discussion in §21 is, indeed, constitutive of experience (KU 5:239). This being the case, he has no reason to raise the question regarding the status of common sense in §22 unless he is addressing a different, aesthetic form of common sense.

So although in §21 Kant believes he has shown that there is good reason to presuppose a common sense in cognition, a further task remains, viz., showing that there is good reason to presuppose an aesthetic common sense that conditions the exemplary necessity of judgments of taste. Now, Kant thinks he has, at least, taken a step in this direction in §21 because he takes the fact that there is a cognitive species of common sense to motivate the possibility of there being an aesthetic species of it. As I read him, the reason he regards the existence of the former as relevant to possibility of the latter is connected to his larger argument concerning the symmetry between cognitive judgments and judgments of taste, especially with respect to their communicability.

Kant addresses this symmetry earlier in §9, where he argues that that cognitive judgments and judgments of taste are grounded in the same cognitive faculties, viz., imagination and understanding. Of course, he maintains that each kind of judgment deploys these capacities in a different way: cognitive judgments do so under the constraint of concepts, whereas judgments of taste, free from such constraint, involve the free play of these capacities. Nevertheless, Kant claims that given the shared cognitive basis of both cognitive judgments and judgments of taste, certain features that pertain to the former will pertain to the latter as well. Of particular interest to him in §9 is universal communicability. To this end, he argues that, like our cognitive judgments,

23. See Guyer (1997): 263, Ameriks (2003): 289–91.

our judgments of taste lay claim to being universally communicable because they are grounded in cognitive capacities we all share.²⁴

He then returns to the notion of communicability in §21, where he fleshes out the details of what the communicability of cognitive judgments amounts to. As we saw above, he claims that this communicability extends not just to the shared judgment, but also to the shared mental state that gives rise to that judgment. And he works his way to the conclusion that cognitive common sense is the ability to sense the universally communicable feeling involved in this shared mental state, when optimally proportioned. In §21 Kant has thus augmented his picture of the universal communicability of cognition from §9 in important ways: he makes clear that this communicability encompasses the shared mental state and feeling of that mental state, when optimally proportioned. And he has argued that there is an ability, cognitive common sense, that enables us to sense this universally communicable feeling.

If we pair the claim from §9 that, like cognitive judgments, judgments of taste are universally communicable together with this fuller analysis of communicability in cognition, then it makes sense why Kant would take the analysis of cognitive common sense to bear on the analysis of aesthetic common sense. On his view, cognitive common sense is a key component of the complete account of the universal communicability of cognitive judgments. And if judgments of taste are similarly universally communicable, then the existence of cognitive common sense gives us reason to suspect that there will be something like an aesthetic common sense that plays the same sort of role. This line of thought does not yet amount to a proof that there, in fact, is an aesthetic common sense; that is the task of the Deduction. However, on my reading, Kant uses the Fourth Moment to pave the way for this proof: he draws on considerations about the existence of cognitive common sense and the parallel between the communicability of

24. This being said, Kant claims that whereas cognitive judgments lay claim to 'objective' universality, judgments of taste only lay claim to 'subjective' universality (KU §8, 5:215).

cognitive judgments and judgments of taste, to give us reason to suspect there is, indeed, an aesthetic species of common sense.

2.2. *Common Sense in §40*

Kant returns to the topic of common sense again in §40, just two sections after his official Deduction of Taste in §38. This context is significant because the trajectory of his argument across these sections parallels his argument for the cognitive species of common sense in §21. Recall that in §21 Kant moves from the claim that we can experience a universally communicable feeling to the claim that there must be a capacity of common sense that makes this possible. On my reading, he pursues a similar strategy in §§38 and 40. Although I cannot go into the details of the Deduction here, in §38 he takes himself to prove that we can feel pleasure in a universally communicable way without relying on concepts because this pleasure is grounded in cognitive capacities we all share in common. Applying his strategy from §21 to this claim, if we can experience the universal communicability of a feeling of pleasure without concepts, then we must have a common sense that makes this possible. I take this to be precisely the reason Kant goes on in §40 to analyze "taste as a form of *sensus communis*": he thinks taste or aesthetic common sense is the capacity we must presuppose if judgments of taste are to be possible (KU 5:293). That is to say, it is in virtue of having common sense that we are able to make aesthetic judgments that involve disinterested pleasure, universality, purposiveness without purpose, and necessity. I accordingly understand his goal in §40 to be clarifying just what the faculty of common sense is, such that it enables us to make judgments of taste.

Kant begins describing the faculty of common sense as follows:

By "*sensus communis*," however, must be understood the idea of a **communal** sense [*gemeinschaftlichen Sinnes*], i.e., a faculty for judging [*Beurtheilungsvermögen*] that in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else's way of representing in thought (KU §40, 5:293, Kant's emph.).

Following Alix Cohen's reading of this passage, I think Kant here characterizes common sense as a faculty that enables us to reflect on the grounds of our judgments from a universal point of view.²⁵ So understood, common sense is not just the ability to reflect in general; rather it enables a *specific* kind of reflection, viz., one in which we reflect on whether the grounds of our judgments are universal, i.e., ones that are valid for any other human being, or are private, i.e., ones that are merely subjectively valid.

While this initial description of common sense may make it seem as if it could operate in both cognitive and aesthetic contexts, on my interpretation the faculty of common sense that Kant describes in §40 is a specifically aesthetic one. However, before making my case for this reading of §40, I want to lay out what I take to be involved in the aesthetic form of common sense.

As with any exercise of common sense, aesthetic common sense involves reflecting on the grounds of one's judgments, but Kant describes the grounds of aesthetic judgments in several ways. At the most basic level, he argues that the "determining ground [of an aesthetic judgment] **cannot be other than subjective**" (KU §1, 5:203, Kant's emph.). Yet he goes on to highlight two types of subjective grounds. At times, he identifies feeling as the relevant subjective ground, e.g., claiming that, "every judgment from [taste] is aesthetic, i.e., its determining ground is the feeling of the subject" (KU §17, 5:232).²⁶ However, on his view, not all feelings of pleasure are the same; rather, he claims that there are different types of feelings of pleasure, which themselves are grounded in some further 'condition' or 'state' of the subject. To this

25. Cohen (2014) and (2018) emphasizes this point in her analysis of the sort of epistemic normativity and epistemic autonomy Kant thinks is involved in cognitive judgments. Although I am sympathetic to there being some analogue of this common sense that is operative in cognition, I argue below that in §40 Kant is describing a specifically aesthetic faculty of common sense.

26. He says, e.g., of judgments of the agreeable, "everyone is content that his judgment, which he grounds on a private feeling... be restricted merely to his own person" (KU §7, 5:212), and of the beautiful, "In all judgments by which we declare something to be beautiful, we... ground our judgment... on our feeling" (KU §22, 5:239).

end, he distinguishes between the pleasure we take in the beautiful from the pleasure we take in, what he calls, the 'agreeable' (see KU §§3, 7). According to Kant, the pleasure that we feel in the agreeable is grounded in some "private condition" of the subject (KU §6, 5:211). As he analyzes it, this private condition pertains to what the subject happens to like given her sensible constitution and is reflected in her personal preferences, interests, and desires. By contrast, he claims that the pleasure we feel in the beautiful is grounded in a universally communicable state of free play; hence his claim that this state of free play is the "ground of" and 'precedes' this pleasure (KU §9, 5:217–8). Insofar as this further condition or state serves to ground our feelings of pleasure, it too seems to be a candidate for the subjective ground of aesthetic judgment.

Ultimately, I take Kant's considered position to be that both types of grounds are relevant to aesthetic judgments. As I read him, an aesthetic judgment is grounded in a feeling, but this feeling is not self-standing, but rather has a further ground in the condition or state of the subject. In the case of a judgment of the agreeable, the judgment is grounded in a 'private' and 'interested' feeling, i.e., a feeling that is, in turn, grounded in a private condition connected to our personal preferences, interests, and desires (see KU §§3, 22). Meanwhile, a judgment of taste is grounded in a 'common' and 'disinterested' feeling, i.e., a feeling that has its ground in the universally communicable state of free play, which is free from interest (see KU §§2, 22).

With this picture of the grounds of an aesthetic judgment in place, we can now return to the aesthetic form of common sense. Insofar as aesthetic common sense involves reflecting on the grounds of our aesthetic judgments, and the relevant grounds are feeling that themselves are grounded in a condition or state of the subject, I propose we think of aesthetic common sense as a capacity for *hedonic discrimination*. So understood, aesthetic common sense is a capacity that enables us to detect what kind of pleasure we have. This is valuable because, at least on Kant's view, just because we feel pleasure, we do not automatically know what kind of pleasure we are feeling. However, when we aim

to make a judgment of taste, we need to be aware of what kind of pleasure we are feeling, for we are only licensed in judging something to be beautiful if we are feeling pleasure that is of the ‘common’ and ‘disinterested’ rather than the ‘private’ and ‘interested’ variety. In order to detect what kind of pleasure we have, we need to exercise common sense and reflect on the grounds of that feeling, with an eye to whether it is grounded in private conditions or in the universally communicable state of free play.

On my reading of §40, then, it is aesthetic common sense, defined as this kind of capacity for hedonic discrimination, that is at issue, and not cognitive common sense. I take this to be the case for two reasons.

First, if we take a closer look at his description of the reflective process involved in common sense in §40, we find that this process is one we employ particularly in aesthetic contexts. He characterizes the relevant “operation of reflection” as follows:

[T]his happens by one holding his judgment up not so much to the actual as to the merely possible judgments of others, and putting himself into the position of everyone else, merely by abstracting from the limitations that contingently attach to our own judging [*Beurtheilung*]; which is in turn accomplished by leaving out as far as possible everything in one’s representational state that is matter, i.e., sensation, and attending solely to the formal peculiarities of his representation or his representational state (KU §40, 5:294).

In this passage, Kant clarifies the sense in which he thinks the common sense at issue in §40 enables us to reflect on the grounds of our judgments from a universal point of view: it enables us to abstract from the ‘material’ features of how we represent an object and to focus, instead, on its ‘formal’ features. Now, for Kant, reflecting on the ‘formal’ features of how we represent an object is something we do particularly in judgments of taste. As he has just made this point in the Deduction, a judgment of taste is directed toward “the formal rules

of judging [*Beurtheilung*], without any matter (neither sensation nor concept),” and it “take[s] into consideration solely... the **formal condition** of the power of judgment), and is pure, i.e., mixed with neither concepts of the object nor with sensations as determining grounds” (KU §38, 5:289–90, 290n, Kant’s emph.). On Kant’s view, it is thus a unique feature of judgments of taste that, in them, we abstract from the material features of our representations, i.e., from the sensations or concepts they involve, and focus instead on their formal features. Insofar as the common sense under discussion in §40 attunes us to these formal features, it seems to be aesthetic in orientation.²⁷

Indeed, Kant continues by saying:

[P]erhaps this operation of reflection seems much too artificial to be attributed to the faculty that we call the **common** sense; but it only appears thus is we express it in abstract formulas; in itself, nothing is more natural than to abstract from charm [*Reiz*] and emotion [*Rührung*] if one is seeking a judgment that is to serve as a universal rule (KU §40, 5:294, Kant’s emph.).

In this passage, Kant emphasizes that the ‘material features’ that common sense enables us to abstract from are those related to ‘charm’ and ‘emotion’. For Kant, the notions of ‘charm’ and ‘emotion’ are aesthetic ones. He introduces them in his earlier discussion of judgments of the agreeable (see KU §3). As I noted above, like judgments of taste, Kant claims that judgments of the agreeable are grounded on the subject’s feeling of pleasure; however, unlike judgments of taste, this is an interested and private form of pleasure, which is, in turn, grounded in the private conditions of the subject. Sometimes, he suggests, this pleasure is tied to the sensible qualities that we have a penchant for — e.g., the color green or the sound of the violin — and he labels these qualities ‘charms’ (KU §14, 5:224). Other times, he indicates, this pleasure

27. I thus take the formal grounds that the common sense at issue in §40 orients us toward to be different from the ‘objective’ grounds, which Cohen (2014): 320–1 and (2018) claims common sense enables us to reflect on in cognition.

is tied to an internal sensation we have of “a momentary inhibition followed by a stronger outpouring of the vital force,” and he labels this sensation ‘emotion’ (KU §14, 5:226). And if we return to the previous passage in light of these considerations, we find that the situation in which we need to abstract from charm and emotion is an aesthetic one, for it is when we aim to make a judgment of taste, which can serve as a ‘universal rule’, that we need to set aside these private considerations. This being the case, the sort of reflective skills Kant here attributes to common sense, once again, seem to be ones that pertain to an aesthetic faculty.

The second consideration that favors the aesthetic reading of common sense in §40 is connected to the fact that Kant aligns it with the faculty of taste.²⁸ Taste, he claims, “can be called *sensus communis*,” or, more specifically, “*sensus communis aestheticus*” (KU §40, 5:295, 295n).²⁹ Elaborating on this idea, he says taste is “the faculty for judging [*Beurtheilungsvermögen*] that which makes our feeling in a given representation **universally communicable** without the mediation of a concept” (KU §40, 5:295, Kant’s emph.). On Kant’s view, the faculty of taste thus amounts to the faculty of aesthetic common sense because in order to detect what ‘makes’ our feeling of pleasure universally communicable, we must reflect on that pleasure in order to detect whether it is the common and disinterested sort that is grounded in free play.

Between Kant’s characterization of the reflective process involved in the faculty of common sense and his alignment of this faculty with taste, I believe we have reason to read the common sense under discussion in §40 as a specifically aesthetic capacity. The common sense Kant there describes amounts to a capacity for hedonic discrimination that enables us to reflect on the grounds of our aesthetic judgments

28. As noted above, Kant also aligns taste with common sense at the end of the Fourth Moment, where he claims that in the Analytic, his aim was “to resolve the faculty of taste into its elements and to unite them ultimately in the idea of common sense” (KU §22, 5:240).

29. I return to the contrast he draws at KU §40, 5:295n between common sense as the *sensus communis aestheticus* and common human understanding as the *sensus communis logicus* below.

in a way that involves setting aside considerations about what pleases us privately and, instead, takes into account what pleases universally. And it is this faculty that he thinks we need if we are to make judgments of taste.

Stepping back, if we take the trajectory of §40 together with the Fourth Moment of Taste, the following picture of common sense begins to emerge. On Kant’s view, common sense in general is something that enables us to sense the universal communicability of a feeling. He, in turn, distinguishes between two species of common sense: the cognitive form of common sense he discusses in §21 and the aesthetic form of common sense he discusses in §§20, 22, and 40. Whereas the former involves sensing the universal communicability of a feeling when our cognitive capacities are under conceptual constraint, the latter involves sensing the universal communicability of a feeling of pleasure when that constraint is absent and we are engaged in free play.

Of course, in the third *Critique* Kant’s primary interest is in the aesthetic form of common sense, which he identifies with taste. And we have seen that he has reason to describe it as a principle, feeling, and faculty. As a faculty of common sense, it enables us to reflect on the grounds of our aesthetic judgments from a universal point of view. Insofar as the specific grounds of aesthetic judgments are feelings, which themselves have further grounds in a condition or state of the subject, I have argued that aesthetic common sense can be understood as a faculty for hedonic discrimination. Exercising the reflective capacities involved in common sense thus enables us to detect whether the feeling of pleasure we have is grounded in a private condition or in a universally communicable state of free play. And it is only if the latter is the case that we are justified in issuing a judgment of taste. Moreover, the idea of this faculty serves as a principle or norm we hold ourselves to when we make judgments of taste. As a norm, common sense demands that our judgments of taste be grounded in a universally communicable feeling of pleasure grounded in free play. And it is only in virtue of meeting this standard that Kant thinks we can ascribe exemplary necessity to our judgments of taste.

There is, however, one further question concerning aesthetic common sense that we need to address, viz., whether it is a natural capacity constitutive of experience or an acquired capacity we develop in response to a regulative demand.

3. Common Sense: Its Acquisition

Although I shall defend the regulative/acquired reading of common sense, I want to begin by considering the alternative constitutive/natural reading of it. Commentators who have endorsed this reading have pursued two routes. In one vein, interpreters have argued that common sense is constitutive of experience defined in the narrow Kantian sense as ‘empirical cognition’ (KrV B218, 277). Defenders of this interpretation tend to read the common sense at issue in §21 as aesthetic common sense and they take his remarks there concerning common sense being a “necessary condition of the communicability of cognition” to suggest that aesthetic common sense is constitutive of empirical cognition.³⁰ Since I think the common sense under discussion in §21 is the cognitive rather than aesthetic form of common sense, I do not think this argument proves that aesthetic common sense is constitutive of empirical cognition.

Others have suggested that the common sense under discussion in §22 is constitutive of ‘aesthetic experience’ or the aesthetic use of the ‘reflecting’ power of judgment (see KU Intro IV, VII; EE V, VIII).³¹ However, I do not think that this strategy works either. Instead, I hope to show that, on Kant’s view, aesthetic common sense is a faculty that we acquire through aesthetic education, and that this acquisition is sensitive to the regulative demands placed on us by the power of judgment.

In order to motivate this reading, I want to return to §40 and the parallel Kant draws there between aesthetic common sense or ‘*sensus communis aestheticus*’, on the one hand, and, what he calls ‘common human understanding’ [*gemeine Menschverstand*] or ‘*sensus communis*

logicus’, on the other (KU 5:295n). Although common human understanding is ‘logical’ in its orientation, i.e., it is directed toward cognition and it “judges by concepts,” Kant compares it to aesthetic common sense because he thinks they are both concerned with making judgments in a universally communicable way (KU §40, 5:294). And I believe that if we tease out this parallel, then we will find that common sense, like common human understanding, is a capacity that we acquire in response to a regulative demand.

3.1. Acquiring Common Human Understanding

According to Kant in §40, common human understanding involves a distinctive “way of thinking” [*Denkungsart*] that we rely on in cognition, which is guided by three epistemic maxims (KU 5:294).³²

The first maxim is “to think for oneself” and Kant calls this the “maxim of the **unprejudiced** way of thinking” (KU §40, 5:294, Kant’s emph.). In prejudiced thinking, Kant claims, we passively allow our thinking to be determined by other people. By contrast, when we adhere to this first maxim, we are “legislative for” ourselves in thought (KU §40, 5:294n). And when this happens, Kant says we achieve ‘enlightenment’ (KU §40, 5:294).

The second maxim is “To think in the position of everyone else” and Kant calls this the maxim of the “**broad-minded** [*erweiterter*] way” of thinking (KU §40, 5:294, Kant’s emph.). According to Kant, the opposite of broad-minded thinking is ‘narrow-minded’ [*borniert*] thinking, i.e., thinking in which we focus only on our private way of looking

32. Although in the third *Critique* and the *Jäsche Logic* (9:57) he emphasizes the cognitive orientation of common human understanding, in the *Anthropology* he describes it in ‘practical’ terms as related to the search for ‘wisdom’ (7:200). See Cohen (2014) and (2018) for a discussion of these maxims as norms that govern our epistemic activities and the implications this has for his account of epistemic autonomy and normativity. See Merritt for a discussion of these maxims and their relation to Kant’s account of reflection (2009, 2018: Ch. 2) and his account of moral pedagogy (2011). See O’Neill (1989): 45–8 for a discussion of the connection between these maxims, communication, and the public use of reason. In a related vein, see Deligiorgi (2002): §2 for a discussion of the connection between these maxims, communication, and rational autonomy.

30. See Kemal (1997): 66–7

31. See Savile (1993): 38 and Dobe (2010): 47, respectively.

at things (KU §40, 5:294). However, if one adheres to the second maxim, Kant says,

he sets himself apart from the subjective private conditions of the judgment, within which so many others are as if bracketed [*eingeklammert*], and reflects on his own judgments from a **universal standpoint** (which he can only determine by putting himself into the standpoint of others) (KU §40, 5:295, Kant's emph.).

By thus setting aside the private conditions of one's own judgment and adopting a universal standpoint instead, Kant claims we are able to achieve a broad-minded way of thinking in cognition.

Kant phrases the third maxim as, "Always to think in accord with oneself" and he claims it is the maxim of the 'consistent' [*konsequenten*] way of thinking (KU §40, 5:294). On his view, this requires the "combination of the first two" maxims: we must not only think on the basis of our own reason, but also in a way that is accountable to others (KU §40, 5:295). Doing so, Kant maintains, enable us to think in a consistent way across our cognitive judgments.

Now insofar as each of these ways of thinking are, just that, ways of thinking, they are not constitutive of cognitive judgment as such; rather they are ways of thinking that depend on us having adopted the requisite maxim. Indeed, Kant emphasizes this point in his discussion of the second maxim, where he says that "the issue here is not the faculty of cognition, but the **way of thinking** needed to make purposive use of it" (KU §40, 5:295, Kant's emph.). This tells us that broad-minded thinking is not constitutive of the faculty of cognition; it is a way of making purposive use of that faculty. And I believe that this is a point Kant extends to the other maxims as well: they govern a particularly purposive way of thinking, but are not constitutive of cognition as such.

Moreover, Kant indicates that these ways of thinking are ones that we acquire through effort, as we strive to meet the regulative demands placed on us by these maxims. Regarding the first maxim, for example,

Kant says that enlightenment "is a difficult matter that can only be accomplished slowly" (KU §40, 5:294n). Or, as he makes this point in the "What is Enlightenment" essay:

[I]t is difficult for any single individual to extricate himself from the minority that has become almost nature to him [...] hence there are only a few who have succeeded, by their own cultivation of their spirit, in extricating themselves from minority [*Unmündigkeit*] and yet walking confidently (WE 8:36).

Meanwhile, concerning the second maxim, as we saw above, Kant indicates that people tend to engage in a narrow-minded way of thinking: they are 'as if bracketed' within the subjective private conditions of their judgments (KU §40, 5:295). It thus takes effort to set aside our private standpoint and to think in a broad-minded way. Finally, about the third maxim, Kant says:

[T]he **consistent** way of thinking, is the most difficult to achieve, and can only be achieved through the combination of the first two and after frequent observance of them has made them a skill [*zur Fertigkeit gewordenen*] (KU §40, 5:295, transl. modified, Kant's emph.).

Thus, on Kant's view, learning to think in this consistent way depends on developing the skill of adhering to the first two maxims. As with the other two maxims, then, this way of thinking is not something we automatically do; it is something we acquire on the basis of effort.

Ultimately these considerations give us reason to attribute to Kant the view that common human understanding is not constitutive of cognitive judgment, but rather something we acquire through effort, as we try to meet the demands placed on us by these three epistemic maxims. Drawing out the parallel with aesthetic common sense, then, we should expect, on the one hand, that it too is not constitutive of aesthetic experience, but rather represents one way of making aesthetic judgments among others, and, on the other hand, that it is something

we acquire on the basis of effort in response to a normative demand. And as we turn back now to Kant's account of aesthetic common sense, I believe we will find him characterizing it in just these terms.

3.2. *Acquiring Common Sense*

Let's begin with the question of how ubiquitous a role aesthetic common sense plays in aesthetic experience. If the commentators noted above are right and Kant considers aesthetic common sense to be constitutive of aesthetic experience or the aesthetic use of the reflecting power of judgment, then all aesthetic judgments should be made on its basis. However, this is not what Kant argues. Instead, he draws a distinction between different kinds of aesthetic judgments, and he accords a role to common sense only in judgments of taste.

More specifically, according to Kant, there are two different kinds of taste, which issue in two different kinds of aesthetic judgments. He labels the first kind of taste the "taste of the senses," and he claims it issues in 'private' aesthetic judgments (KU §8, 5:214). Meanwhile he calls the second kind of taste the "taste of reflection," and he says it issues in "generally valid" aesthetic judgments (KU §8, 5:214). Given the reflective nature of the second kind of taste and its orientation toward what is universal, we have reason to identify it with the faculty of taste he describes in §40 and aligns with aesthetic common sense. Kant thus distinguishes between the taste of the sense, on the one hand, and the taste of reflection, i.e., aesthetic common sense, on the other.

Further clarifying the type of aesthetic judgment that issues from each kind of taste, Kant says,

Aesthetic judgments can be divided [...] into empirical and pure. The first are those which assert agreeableness or disagreeableness, the second those which assert beauty of an object [...] the former are judgments of sense (material aesthetic judgments), the latter (as formal) are alone proper judgments of taste (KU §14, 5:223).

On Kant's view, then, whereas the taste of the senses issues in judgments of the agreeable, which are privately valid, the taste of reflection issues in proper judgments of taste, which lay claim to universal validity.

These distinctions are significant for our purposes because they reveal that, for Kant, aesthetic common sense is not constitutive of all aesthetic experience or the aesthetic exercise of the power of judgment. Rather aesthetic common sense is something we exercise when we are making proper judgments of taste, not when we are making judgments of the agreeable. Like common human understanding, then, aesthetic common sense represents one way of making aesthetic judgments among others.

Moreover, as with common human understanding, Kant indicates that aesthetic common sense is something we only acquire through effort:

[A]mong all the faculties and talents, taste is precisely the one which, because its judgment is not determinable by means of concepts and precepts, is most in need of the examples of what in the progress of culture has longest enjoyed approval if it is not quickly to fall back into barbarism and sink back into the crudity of its first attempts (KU §32, 5:283).

In the Third Moment of Taste, Kant aligns this crudity with the tendency to make aesthetic judgments on the basis of the taste of the senses: "Taste is always still barbaric when it needs the addition of **charms** and **emotions** for satisfaction" (KU §13, 5:223, Kant's emph.). And, there, he indicates that this is the state we find ourselves in when we are 'unpracticed' (KU §14, 5:225). Setting aside the questionable language of barbarism, on Kant's view, then, in order to overcome this unpracticed, crude aesthetic state, we need to exert some effort. However, he thinks that concepts and precepts can be of no use because there simply are no concepts or precepts that tell us what is beautiful. Instead he claims

we must rely on examples of what has ‘longest enjoyed approval’ in order to work ourselves out of our crude state.

Kant does not indicate here whether the examples he has in mind are just the classics from art or whether beauties from nature should be included. When he discusses examples elsewhere in the third *Critique*, he leaves it open as to which kind of object is involved.³³ Indeed, Kant himself frequently uses examples from nature (e.g., a rose, a hummingbird)³⁴ and art (e.g., Polykleitos’s Doryphorous, Homer’s poetry),³⁵ which suggests that he thinks examples of both sorts can serve us. I thus take Kant’s position to be that it is practice with examples of, allegedly, classical beauties in nature and art that we need to overcome the crudity of the taste of the senses.

But what does Kant think we stand to gain through this sort of aesthetic education? To be sure, it is not his view that the goal of this education is to learn to ‘imitate’ the judgment of these examples made by others (see KU §32, 5:282; §17, 232). Rather, as I read the above passage, he believes that practice with these examples is something that can help us overcome our crude aesthetic tendencies because they put us in a position to gain the sort of reflective skills involved in the taste of reflection. That is to say, they help us develop the ability to reflect on the grounds of our aesthetic judgments from a universal, rather than a merely private, point of view. Examples can do this because when we treat them *as examples*, we treat them as stand-ins for what, at least allegedly, pleases not in a purely private fashion, but universally. When we engage with them from this perspective, these examples draw us

33. In his discussion of examples in §17, he describes them “certain objects” that there is ‘unanimity’ about, i.e., objects that people, empirically, agree are beautiful (KU 5:232). Meanwhile in §34 he says that the critic is to “lay out in examples the reciprocal subjective purposiveness, about which it has been shown above that its form in a given representation is the beauty of its object” (KU 5: 286). Given that there is empirical unanimity about objects from both nature and art and that both sorts of objects can be subjectively purposive, he seems to allow there to be both natural and artistic examples of what has long been admired.

34. See KU §8, 5:215; §16, 5:229.

35. See KU §17, 5:235; §47, 5:309.

out of ourselves and encourage us to reflect on aesthetic matters from a universal standpoint. They invite us to set aside considerations about what we happen to like and to reflect on whether the pleasure we feel is the sort that anyone in our situation should feel as well.

Of course, there can be cases in which, even though we are exposed to examples, we remain wedded to our private point of view. For example, Kant says that, “Very stingy people usually have no taste; because they order everything according to their private purposes, they will never choose according to what pleases others” (*Menschenkunde Anthropology Lectures 25:1096*, my transl.).³⁶ There can also be cases in which we ultimately disagree with the prevailing opinion regarding the beauty of the object, as is the case with the beauty denier mentioned in the introduction (see KU §33, 5:284). Nevertheless, on Kant’s view, practice with these examples at least provides us with the opportunity to develop the reflective skills of common sense.

Ultimately, I take this line of thinking to reveal something important about Kant’s view of aesthetic education. To be sure, as many commentators have noted, he thinks that the cultivation of taste can contribute to our moral and cultural ends.³⁷ However, on my interpretation, in addition to these further benefits, Kant considers aesthetic education to be a requirement for the very *acquisition* of taste itself: we need this education to develop the capacity to make judgments of taste at all.³⁸ So although aesthetic education is something we can

36. “*Sehr geitzige Leute haben gewöhnlich keinen Geschmack; denn weil sie alles auf ihre Privatabsicht einrichten, so werden sie nie nach Anderer Wohlgefallen wählen.*”

37. For a discussion of Kant’s view of how aesthetic education contributes to morality see Munzel (1995), Loudon (2000): Ch. 4, Allison (2001): Chs. 10–1, Baxley (2005), Guyer (2005): Ch. 9), and to culture vis-à-vis enlightenment, see Watkins (2014).

38. Insofar as I emphasize the role aesthetic education plays in acquiring taste, my view is similar to Watkins’s (2011) view. However, he draws a distinction between ‘general’ education needed to make ‘authentic’ though still ‘crude’ judgments of taste, and ‘special’ aesthetic education needed to make ‘correct’ judgments on the basis of ‘training’ and ‘experience’ (331). Since, on my reading, Kant does not regard crude aesthetic judgments as judgments of taste, I do not think he is committed to this distinction. Rather I take Kant’s view to be that there is a single form of aesthetic education that guides us toward the

engage in for moral and cultural purposes after we have acquired taste, it is also something Kant thinks we need in order to develop taste in the first place.

Taking this altogether, I have argued that, for Kant, aesthetic common sense is not constitutive of the aesthetic power of judgment; rather it represents one way of making aesthetic judgments among others. Moreover, I pointed out that, according to Kant, we do not make aesthetic judgments in this way — i.e., on the basis of common sense — in our unpracticed state. Without practice, we make crude judgments of the agreeable on the basis of the taste of the senses. It is thus only through practice and aesthetic education that we acquire the faculty of common sense and the reflective skills needed to make proper judgments of taste.

3.3. *The Demand to Acquire Common Sense*

There is, however, one final issue regarding the acquisition of common sense that we need to consider: what is the ‘higher end’ or ‘principle’ that demands we acquire it?

Some commentators have identified this end with what Kant calls the ‘interest’ in the beautiful. Kant introduces this notion of interest in §40, where he says:

If one could assume that the mere universal communicability of his feeling must in itself already involve an interest for us (which, however, one is not justified in inferring from the constitution of a merely reflective power of judgment), then one would be able to explain how it is that the feeling in the judgment of taste is expected of everyone as if it were a duty (KU 5:296).³⁹

In §§41 and 42 Kant then articulates two different kinds of interest that can attach to a judgment of taste: the ‘empirical’ interest we have in

acquisition of taste, the aim of which is to teach us to make proper judgments of taste, rather than crude aesthetic judgments.

39. See Crawford (1974), Savile (1987): Ch. 6, Longuenesse (2006): 217–9.

beauty as social creatures, and the ‘intellectual’ interest we have in it as moral agents. And it has been suggested that these interests are what Kant thinks motivate us to acquire common sense.⁴⁰

However, I think there are reasons to resist identifying the interest in the beautiful with the end that demands we acquire aesthetic common sense: the former interest and latter end are oriented towards different things and arrive on the scene at different stages in the development of taste. According to Kant, the interest in beauty follows “*after* [the judgment of taste] has been given” and involves some “*further pleasure in* [the object’s] existence (as that in which all interest consists)” (KU §41, 5:296, my emph.). It is thus only after we have judged an object to be beautiful that we develop an empirical or intellectual interest in it. By contrast, the end that motivates us to acquire common sense is what *first* puts us in position to make judgments of taste. And this end targets not the judgment of a beautiful object, but rather the aesthetic power of judgment itself.

Instead of the interest in the beautiful being what motivates us to acquire aesthetic common sense, I believe that Kant conceives of the relevant end as the one that belongs to the power of judgment. To see this, let’s return to §40. As we saw earlier, Kant’s second maxim of broad-minded thinking is ‘To think in the position of everyone else’ and he labels this the “maxim [...] of the power of judgment” (KU §40, 5:295). Given the connection between this maxim and the power of judgment as such, it stands to reason that this maxim should extend to all uses of the power of judgment, its aesthetic use included. So just as this end demands that we develop a broad-minded way of thinking in cognitive judgments, it also demands we develop a broad-minded ‘way of sensing’ [*Sinnesart*] in aesthetic judgments (KU §22, 5:240).

40. Among those who endorse the regulative reading of common sense, Longuenesse (2006): 217–9 argues that both interests play a role. Crawford (1974) and Dobe (2010): 57–8 emphasize the intellectual interest. Savile (1987): Ch. 6 explores the possibility of either the empirical or intellectual interest serving as our motivation to acquire common sense; however, he argues that both alternatives are unsatisfactory because they cannot account for taste as an ability to take pleasure in ‘particular’ objects (169). He then locates the relevant interest in the one we have in aesthetic ideas (168–73).

Since this broad-minded way of sensing is nothing other than the faculty of aesthetic common sense, the end of the power of judgment is what issues in the demand that we acquire aesthetic common sense.

With this last piece of the regulative reading of aesthetic common sense in place, we can now step back and consider Kant's account of common sense as a whole. In §2 I argued that Kant distinguishes between a cognitive and aesthetic species of common sense and that the latter can be characterized as a principle, a feeling, and a faculty. Meanwhile, in this section I have concentrated on Kant's account of the faculty of aesthetic common sense, or taste, and how we acquire it. On the interpretation I defended, the faculty of aesthetic common sense enables us to reflect on the grounds of our aesthetic judgments from a universal point of view. Then teasing out the parallel between common human understanding and common sense, I claimed that, for Kant, the faculty of aesthetic common sense is not constitutive of the aesthetic power of judgment; rather it is something we acquire through aesthetic education and in response to the demands of the power of judgment.

4. Common Sense and Aesthetic Autonomy

Having defended my interpretation of common sense, I can now finally return to the topic of aesthetic autonomy. Recall that in the Introduction, I noted that recent treatments of Kant's account of aesthetic autonomy have tended to neglect the question of why judgments of taste count as autonomous in the Kantian sense. As I urged earlier, it is neither enough for the judgment of taste to be free from outside influence, nor for it to be grounded in the subject's own feeling of pleasure in order to qualify as autonomous. Rather, in order for a judgment of taste to be autonomous, it must involve some kind of aesthetic self-determination and self-legislation. I am now in a position to make good on my earlier proposal, viz., that this aesthetic self-determination rests on common sense. More specifically, I aim to show that the idea of common sense is the principle that we legislate to ourselves in judgments of taste, and that the faculty of common sense is what gives us

the ability to legislate this principle to ourselves. After presenting this general interpretation of aesthetic autonomy (4.1), I will then argue that the young poet example supports this interpretation (4.2).

4.1. Common Sense as the Key to Aesthetic Autonomy

Let's return to Kant's analysis of common sense in the Fourth Moment of Taste. There, we saw Kant claim that the idea of common sense is the 'principle' or 'norm' that grounds the exemplary necessity of judgments of taste. And I suggested that, for Kant, the principle or norm of common sense demands that our judgments of taste be grounded in the universally communicable form of disinterested pleasure that results from free play. As I see it, on Kant's view, this principle is just what we legislate to ourselves: it is the standard we hold ourselves accountable to when we make a judgment of taste. And it is only in virtue of meeting this standard that we take ourselves to be in a position to treat our judgment as an example that others should follow.

However, as I read Kant's view, in order to be able to legislate this principle to ourselves, we need to have acquired the faculty of aesthetic common sense. I take this to be the case because in order to legislate this principle to ourselves, we must be able to regard our aesthetic judgments as subject to universal standards. Yet if we lack aesthetic common sense, we cannot view our aesthetic judgments in this way; we are, instead, locked in a narrow-minded way of considering aesthetic matters. But if we have common sense, then we are sensitive to the fact that not all feelings are private and that some are, at least potentially, universally communicable. And if we are feeling pleasure in relation to a particular object, common sense enables us to reflect on that feeling with an eye to discriminating whether it is of the universally communicable sort grounded in free play or merely something private. It is in this reflective process that we demand of ourselves that our judgments meet the standard set out by the principle of common sense: we should allow ourselves to make a judgment of taste only if we regard our pleasure as the 'common', 'disinterested' pleasure that is grounded in free play. Thus, on Kant's view, the self-legislation of the

principle of common sense depends on us having acquired the faculty of aesthetic common sense.

Now given that the faculty of aesthetic common sense is something that we must acquire, this means that, for Kant, aesthetic autonomy is likewise something we acquire. So understood, aesthetic autonomy is something that depends on aesthetic education and the sort of practice with examples that I discussed above. It is this practice that teaches us how to reflect on the grounds of our judgments from a universal point of view, and it is only if we have acquired this skill that we can legislate the principle of common sense to ourselves. On my reading of Kant's view, then, aesthetic autonomy is not something guaranteed; it is something we achieve through the acquisition of common sense.

4.2. *The Autonomy of the Young Poet*

One potential objection to my interpretation of Kant's view of aesthetic autonomy is that it seems to conflict with the example of the young poet from above. According to the prevailing reading of this example, the young poet demonstrates autonomy from the outset. Insofar as he "does not let himself be dissuaded from his conviction that his poem is beautiful by the judgment of the public nor that of his friends," he appears to be making an autonomous aesthetic judgment (KU §32, 5:282).⁴¹ Given that the poet makes this judgment in his immature state, it would then seem that practice is not required for aesthetic autonomy.

41. For example, in his discussion of aesthetic autonomy, Guyer (1997) says that in making his initial judgment, the young poet "is not being particularly egocentric or demonstrating any adolescent stubbornness. He is merely complying with the requirement of taste that he base his judgment on his own feelings of pleasure or displeasure" (240). In a similar vein, Allison (2001) says, "This example is interesting because it apparently uses an instance of *bad* (or mistaken) taste to illustrate the principle of the autonomy of taste" (167). Meanwhile, although Savile (1987) argues that in his unpracticed state the young poet has not yet "acquired [...] taste proper," the poet nevertheless makes a "perfectly respectable judgment of taste about his own work" (152–3).

Though the young poet example can be read in this way, I think it is better read as affirming the education-dependent account of aesthetic autonomy I have attributed to Kant. On this non-standard reading, rather than the poet exemplifying aesthetic autonomy in his young and unpracticed state, it is only once he acquires common sense through practice that he learns how to make an autonomous aesthetic judgment. And I believe that this reading is the one that is best supported not only by Kant's treatment of the young poet in §32, but also by his discussion of this example in the *Anthropology*.

Beginning with the latter point, although in the third *Critique* it might seem as if Kant is praising the young poet in his unpracticed state, in the *Anthropology* Kant presents the same example not as an example of aesthetic autonomy, but rather as an example of aesthetic egoism:

The aesthetic egoist is satisfied with his own taste, even if others find his verses, paintings, music, and similar things ever so bad, and criticize or even laugh at them. He deprives himself of progress toward that which is better when he isolates himself with his own judgment; he applauds himself and seeks the touchstone of artistic beauty only in himself (*Anthro* 7:129–30).⁴²

Kant goes on to suggest that the only way to overcome egoism is through "*pluralism*, that is, the way of thinking [*Denkungsart*] in which one is not concerned with oneself as the whole world, but rather regards and conducts oneself as a mere citizen of the world" (*Anthro*. 7:13). If we read the young poet example in this light, then in his initial state the young poet is an aesthetic egoist who has not yet learned how to make aesthetic judgments in a broad-minded way.

42. Here, Kant also discusses the 'logical' egoist who "considers it unnecessary to test his judgment also by the understanding of others; as if he had no need at all for this touchstone" and the 'moral' egoist who "limits all ends to himself" and "sees no use in anything except that which is useful to himself" (*Anthro* 7:128–30).

However, it is not just Kant's discussion of this example in the *Anthropology* that should give us pause over the young poet's initial behavior. For Kant continues the young poet example in the third *Critical* as follows:

Only later, when his power of judgment has been made more acute by practice, does he depart from his previous judgments of his own free will, just as he does with those of his judgments that rest entirely on reason. Taste makes claim merely to autonomy. To make the judgments of others into the determining ground of one's own would be heteronomy (KU §32, 5:282).

There are several things worth noting about this passage. The only time Kant mentions 'free will' in the young poet example is in relation to him in this more practiced state. Moreover, it is only the poet's judgments in this mature state that Kant compares to judgments of reason, the latter being the kind of judgment he usually associates with autonomy. And Kant issues his claim about the autonomy of taste only after he discusses the poet's maturation. On my reading of aesthetic autonomy, however, this makes sense: the poet only becomes aesthetically autonomous once he has engaged in the practice needed to acquire aesthetic common sense and so becomes capable of making proper judgments of taste.

Indeed, I take this to be why Kant bookends the young poet example with the claim discussed above, that

taste is [...] most in need of the examples of what in the progress of culture has longest enjoyed approval if it is not quickly to fall back into barbarism and sink back into the crudity of its first attempts (KU §32, 5:283).

When the young poet is in his unpracticed state, he illustrates just the sort of crudity of one's first attempts at making aesthetic judgments that Kant highlights here. So too when the poet is in his practiced state, he illustrates just the sort of remedy to this crudity that Kant

prescribes: he overcomes the crudity of his initial way of making aesthetic judgments by means of practice.

In contrast with standard interpretations of the young poet, then, on my reading, the poet's initial judgment that his poetry is beautiful is not aesthetically autonomous. Although this judgment masquerades as a judgment of the beautiful, it is, in fact, a judgment of the agreeable that he forms on the basis of the taste of the senses. The poet only becomes aesthetically autonomous when he has gained the practice needed to overcome his aesthetic egoism. For it is through this aesthetic education that he learns to set aside what interests him privately and to reflect on the grounds of his aesthetic judgments from the more universal perspective of aesthetic common sense. Once he has acquired the faculty of aesthetic common sense in this way, he is then able to legislate the principle of common sense to himself, i.e., to demand of himself that his aesthetic judgments be grounded in the disinterested pleasure that results from free play. When he then considers his initial judgment that his poem is beautiful from this more mature state, he is able to part ways with it of his own free will, as he recognizes it falls short of the standard he set for himself. Thus, on my reading, rather than undermining the claim that Kantian aesthetic autonomy requires practice and the acquisition of common sense, the young poet confirms it.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have offered a reading of Kant's theory of aesthetic autonomy, which takes seriously the idea that this counts as a form of Kantian autonomy. In this spirit, I argued that, for Kant, aesthetic autonomy does not just involve negative freedom, i.e., making an aesthetic judgment free from outside influence; it requires the positive freedom of self-determination and self-legislation. In order to make sense of his account of this aesthetic self-determination and self-legislation, I drew on Kant's account of common sense. After clarifying his position on the nature, species, and status of common sense, I claimed that, on his view, in an autonomous aesthetic judgment, we

legislate the principle of common sense to ourselves. Moreover, I suggested that he takes our ability to legislate this principle to ourselves to depend on us first having acquired the faculty of aesthetic common sense through an aesthetic education that is sensitive to the demands of the power of judgment. And I maintained that the young poet example supports this reading of aesthetic autonomy. Far from Kantian aesthetic autonomy then being a matter of simply making an aesthetic judgment on the basis of one's own response, free from outside persuasion, I hope to have shown it is a freedom we earn, through effort and education.⁴³

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