Chapter 11

“Æsthetic Judgements are Necessary” by Immanuel Kant

About the author...

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) studied in Königsberg, East Prussia. Before he fully developed an interest in philosophy, he was fascinated with physics and astronomy—in fact, he anticipated William Herschel’s discovery of Uranus by a few years. Kant’s critical philosophy, one of the truly profound philosophies in the history of Western Civilization, was constructed to forge empiricism and rationalism into a “critical” philosophy which sought to overcome the many pressing shortcomings of each. What we call objective reality, Kant argues, is subject to whatever conforms to the structures of our perception and thinking. Virtually every
epistemological theory since Kant, directly or indirectly, can be oriented in reference to his *The Critique of Pure Reason*. In his *The Critique of Judgment*, from which our reading is excerpted, Kant argues that æsthetic judgments are prior to pleasure and are both universal and necessary. They have the appearance of being purposive even though they are not conceptually final.

From the reading . . .

The judgement of taste, therefore, is not a cognitive judgement . . .

About the work . . .

In his “Analytic of the Beautiful” in *The Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant integrates æsthetics into his critical philosophy. How are judgements about beauty or taste possible, if those judgements are said to be both subjective and necessarily universal? Kant’s account of judgements of taste relies on ideas he developed in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. For, in sections in this reading, æsthetic judgements or judgements of taste are analyzed in accordance with the table of categories from the first *Critique*; more precisely, he argues judgements of taste are analyzed as follows: moment one—relation (subjective), moment two—quantity (universal), moment three—quality (independence from morality), and moment four—modality (necessity). Accordingly, Kant concludes in this reading (1) æsthetic judgments are not conceptual but show the relation between a representation and a disinterested satisfaction. (2) æsthetic judgments are singular statements but are tied to an obligation of common agreement. (3) æsthetic objects appear to be exemplary forms without being understood as functionally purposive. (4) Individual æsthetic judgments imply a principle that other persons ought to feel a similar satisfaction. Later in the *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant goes on to show that æsthetic judgments are synthetic à priori since all persons have the capacity of “the free play” of the imagination to provide a nonconceptual semblance of unity of form to the understanding of the object. Thus, all persons feel the same thing intersubjectively. Kant considers æsthetic judgements as universally true.

Ideas of Interest from “Analytic of the Beautiful”

1. What two senses of sensation does Kant distinguish? How does this distinction point to the difference between delight and the agreeable? In this regard, how does he define “feeling”?

2. How does Kant define “taste” under the moment corresponding to the category of quality?

3. Why does Kant think that there can be no universal objective rule concerning tastes or, what amounts to the same thing, why does he think that there can be no objective rule as to what is beautiful? On Kant’s theory, how would such an objective rule self-contradictory?

4. Explain Kant’s distinction between free or self-subsisting beauty and dependent or conditioned beauty. What kinds of disputes about beauty does Kant think this distinction settles?

5. On Kant’s theory, how is the archetype of beauty, an ideal of the imagination, related to the subjective universal criterion concerning beauty? Explain why Kant believes this ideal does not apply to free or self-subsisting beauty and therefore cannot be a pure judgement of taste.

6. Distinguish between what Kant terms “the normal idea” of beauty which constitutes the indispensable condition of beauty and the complete archetype of beauty which is an ideal of the imagination.

7. According to Kant, why are judgements of taste concerning beauty only conditional, even though all persons “ought” to give approval of them?

8. What is Kant’s distinction between common sense and common understanding. Why is this distinction important with respect to judgements of taste? Why is common sense a necessary condition for the communication of knowledge?
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9. Explain how, according to Kant, the beautiful is related to necessary delight?

The Reading Selection from “Analytic of the Beautiful”

First Moment. Of the Judgment of Taste:²

1. The judgment of taste is æsthetic. If we wish to discern whether anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer the representation of it to the object by means of understanding with a view to cognition, but by means of the imagination (acting perhaps in conjunction with understanding) we refer the representation to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgement of taste, therefore, is not a cognitive judgement, and so not logical, but is æsthetic— which means that it is one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective. Every reference of representations is capable of being objective, even that of sensations (in which case it signifies the real in an empirical representation). The one exception to this is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. This denotes nothing in the object, but is a feeling which the subject has of itself and of the manner in which it is affected by the representation….

2. The delight which determines the judgement of taste is independent of all interest. The delight which we connect with the representation of the real existence of an object is called interest. Such a delight, therefore, always involves a reference to the faculty of desire, either as its determining ground, or else as necessarily implicated with its determining ground. Now, where the question is whether something is beautiful, we do not want to know, whether we, or any one else, are, or even could be, concerned in the real existence of the thing, but rather what estimate we form of it on mere contemplation (intuition or reflection)….

All one wants to know is whether the mere representation of the object is to my liking, no matter how indifferent I may be to the real existence of

². The definition of taste here relied upon is that it is the faculty of estimating the beautiful.
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the object of this representation. It is quite plain that in order to say that
the object is beautiful, and to show that I have taste, everything turns on
the meaning which I can give to this representation, and not on any factor
which makes me dependent on the real existence of the object. Every one
must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the
slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste...

¶ 3. Delight in the agreeable is coupled with interest. That is agreeable
which the senses find pleasing in sensation. This at once affords a con-
venient opportunity for condemning and directing particular attention to
a prevalent confusion of the double meaning of which the word sensa-
tion is capable. All delight (as is said or thought) is itself sensation (of a
pleasure). Consequently everything that pleases, and for the very reason
that it pleases, is agreeable—and according to its different degrees, or its
relations to other agreeable sensations, is attractive, charming, delicious,
enjoyable, etc. But if this is conceded, then impressions of sense, which
determine inclination, or principles of reason, which determine the will,
or mere contemplated forms of intuition, which determine judgement,
are all on a par in everything relevant to their effect upon the feeling of
pleasure . . .

From the reading . . .

Every one must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is
tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure
judgement of taste.

When a modification of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is termed
sensation, this expression is given quite a different meaning to that which
it bears when I call the representation of a thing (through sense as a re-
ceptivity pertaining to the faculty of knowledge) sensation. For in the
latter case the representation is referred to the object, but in the former it
is referred solely to the subject and is not available for any cognition, not
even for that by which the subject cognizes itself.

Now in the above definition the word “sensation” is used to denote an
objective representation of sense; and, to avoid continually running the
risk of misinterpretation, we shall call that which must always remain
purely subjective, and is absolutely incapable of forming a representation
of an object, by the familiar name of feeling. The green colour of the
meadows belongs to objective sensation, as the perception of an object of

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sense; but its agreeableness to subjective sensation, by which no object is represented; i.e., to feeling, through which the object is regarded as an object of delight (which involves no cognition of the object).

¶ 4. Delight in the good is coupled with interest. That is good which by means of reason commends itself by its mere concept. We call that good for something which only pleases as a means; but that which pleases on its own account we call good in itself. In both cases the concept of an end is implied . . .

To deem something good, I must always know what sort of a thing the object is intended to be, i. e., I must have a concept of it. That is not necessary to enable me to see beauty in a thing. Flowers, free patterns, lines aimlessly intertwining—technically termed foliage—have no signification, depend upon no definite concept, and yet please. Delight in the beautiful must depend upon the reflection on an object precursory to some (not definitely determined) concept. It is thus also differentiated from the agreeable, which rests entirely upon sensation.

In many cases, no doubt, the agreeable and the good seem convertible terms. Thus it is commonly said that all (especially lasting) gratification is of itself good; which is almost equivalent to saying that to be permanently agreeable and to be good are identical. But it is readily apparent that this is merely a vicious confusion of words, for the concepts appropriate to these expressions are far from interchangeable. The agreeable, which, as such, represents the object solely in relation to sense, must in the first instance be brought under principles of reason through the concept of an end, to be, as an object of will, called good. But that the reference to delight is wholly different where what gratifies is at the same time called good, is evident from the fact that with the good the question always is whether it is mediately or immediately good, i. e., useful or good in itself; whereas with the agreeable this point can never arise, since the word always means what pleases immediately—and it is just the same with what I call beautiful.

¶ 5. Comparison of the three specifically different kinds of delight.
Both the agreeable and the good involve a reference to the faculty of desire, and are thus attended, the former with a delight pathologically conditioned (by stimuli), the latter with a pure practical delight. Such delight is determined not merely by the representation of the object, but also by the represented bond of connection between the subject and the real existence of the object. It is not merely the object, but also its real existence, that pleases. On the other hand, the judgement of taste is sim-
From the reading...

[The judgement of taste] is a judgement which is indifferent as to the existence of an object...

The agreeable, the beautiful, and the good thus denote three different relations of representations to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, as a feeling in respect of which we distinguish different objects or modes of representation. Also, the corresponding expressions which indicate our satisfaction in them are different. The agreeable is what gratifies a man; the beautiful what simply pleases him; the good what is esteemed (approved), i.e., that on which he sets an objective worth.... Of all these three kinds of delight, that of taste in the beautiful may be said to be the one and only disinterested and free delight; for, with it, no interest, whether of sense or reason, extorts approval....

Definition of the Beautiful derived from the First Moment.

Taste is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest. The object of such a delight is called beautiful.


§ 6. The beautiful is that which, apart from concepts, is represented as the Object of a universal delight. This definition of the beautiful is deducible from the foregoing definition of it as an object of delight apart from any interest. For where any one is conscious that his delight in an object is with him independent of interest, it is inevitable that he should look on the object as one containing a ground of delight for all men. For, since the delight is not based on any inclination of the subject (or on any

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other deliberate interest), but the subject feels himself completely free in respect of the liking which he accords to the object, he can find as reason for his delight no personal conditions to which his own subjective self might alone be party...

But this universality cannot spring from concepts. For from concepts there is no transition to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure ... The result is that the judgement of taste, with its attendant consciousness of detachment from all interest, must involve a claim to validity for all men, and must do so apart from universality attached to objects, \( i.e., \) there must be coupled with it a claim to subjective universality.

\[7. \textbf{Comparison of the beautiful with the agreeable and the good by means of the above characteristic.} \]

As regards the agreeable, every one concedes that his judgement, which he bases on a private feeling, and in which he declares that an object pleases him, is restricted merely to himself personally. Thus he does not take it amiss if, when he says that Canary-wine is agreeable, another corrects the expression and reminds him that he ought to say: “It is agreeable to me.” ... With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: Every one has his own taste (that of sense).

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\textbf{From the reading ...}

With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: Every one has his own taste (that of sense).

The beautiful stands on quite a different footing. It would, on the contrary, be ridiculous if any one who plumed himself on his taste were to think of justifying himself by saying: “This object (the building we see, the dress that person has on, the concert we hear, the poem submitted to our criticism) is beautiful for me.” For if it merely pleases him, he must not call it beautiful. Many things may for him possess charm and agreeableness — no one cares about that; but when he puts a thing on a pedestal and calls it beautiful, he demands the same delight from others. He judges not merely for himself, but for all men, and then speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. Thus he says the thing is beautiful; ... he demands this agreement of them. He blames them if they judge differently, and denies them taste, which he still requires of them as something they ought to have; and to this extent it is not open to men to say: “Every one has his own taste.” This would be equivalent to saying that there is no
such thing at all as taste, i.e., no aesthetic judgement capable of making a rightful claim upon the assent of all men... So of one who knows how to entertain his guests with pleasures (of enjoyment through all the senses) in such a way that one and all are pleased, we say that he has taste. But the universality here is only understood in a comparative sense; and the rules that apply are, like all empirical rules, general only, not universal, the latter being what the judgement of taste upon the beautiful deals or claims to deal in... In respect of the good, it is true that judgements also rightly assert a claim to validity for every one; but the good is only represented as an object of universal delight by means of a concept, which is the case neither with the agreeable nor the beautiful.

§ 8. In a judgement of taste the universality of delight is only represented as subjective. This particular form of the universality of an aesthetic judgement, which is to be met in a judgement of taste, is a significant feature... for the transcendental philosopher... First, one must get firmly into one’s mind that by the judgement of taste (upon the beautiful) the delight in an object is imputed to every one, yet without being founded on a concept (for then it would be the good)...

First of all we have here to note that a universality which does not rest upon concepts of the object (even though these are only empirical) is in no way logical, but aesthetic, i.e., does not involve any objective quantity of the judgement, but only one that is subjective. For this universality I use the expression general validity, which denotes the validity of the reference of a representation, not to the cognitive faculties, but to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure for every subject...

Now a judgement that has objective universal validity has always got the subjective also, i.e., if the judgement is valid for everything which is contained under a given concept, it is valid also for all who represent an object by means of this concept. But from a subjective universal validity, i.e., the aesthetic, that does not rest on any concept, no conclusion can be drawn to the logical; because judgements of that kind have no bearing upon the object. But for this very reason aesthetic universality attributed to a judgement must also be of a special kind, seeing that it does not join the predicate of beauty to the concept of the object taken in its entire logical sphere, and yet does extend this predicate over the whole sphere of judging subjects.

In their logical quantity, all judgements of taste are singular judgements. For, since I must present the object immediately to my feeling of pleasure...
or displeasure, and that, too, without the aid of concepts, such judgements cannot have the quantity of judgements with objective general validity. Yet by taking the singular representation of the object of the judgement of taste, and by comparison converting it into a concept according to the conditions determining that judgement, we can arrive at a logically universal judgement. For instance, by a judgement of the taste I describe the rose at which I am looking as beautiful. The judgement, on the other hand, resulting from the comparison of a number of singular representations: “Roses in general are beautiful,” is no longer pronounced as a purely æsthetic judgement, but as a logical judgement founded on one that is æsthetic. Now the judgement, “The rose is agreeable” (to smell) is also, no doubt, an æsthetic and singular judgement, but then it is not one of taste but of sense. For it has this point of difference from a judgement of taste, that the latter imports an æsthetic quantity of universality, i.e., of validity for everyone which is not to be met with in a judgement upon the agreeable. . . .

In forming an estimate of objects merely from concepts, all representation of beauty goes by the board. There can, therefore, be no rule according to which any one is to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful. Whether a dress, a house, or a flower is beautiful is a matter upon which one declines to allow one’s judgement to be swayed by any reasons or principles...
Here, now, we may perceive that nothing is postulated in the judgement of taste but such a universal voice in respect of delight that it is not mediated by concepts; consequently, only the possibility of an æsthetic judgement capable of being at the same time deemed valid for everyone.

¶ 9. Investigation of the question of the relative priority in a judgement of taste of the feeling of pleasure and the estimating of the object. The solution of this problem is the key to the Critique of taste, and so is worthy of all attention.

Were the pleasure in a given object to be the antecedent, and were the universal communicability of this pleasure to be all that the judgement of taste is meant to allow to the representation of the object, such a sequence would be self-contradictory. For a pleasure of that kind would be nothing but the feeling of mere agreeableness to the senses, and so, from its very nature, would possess no more than private validity, seeing that it would be immediately dependent on the representation through which the object is given.

Hence it is the universal capacity for being communicated incident to the mental state in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgement of taste, must be, fundamental, with the pleasure in the object as its consequent. Nothing, however, is capable of being universally communicated but cognition and representation so far as appurtenant to cognition. For it is only as thus appurtenant that the representation is objective, and it is this alone that gives it a universal point of reference with which the power of representation of every one is obliged to harmonize.

The cognitive powers brought into play by this representation are here engaged in a free play, since no definite concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition. Hence the mental state in this representation must be one of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general.

As the subjective universal communicability of the mode of representation in a judgement of taste is to subsist apart from the presupposition of any definite concept, it can be nothing else than the mental state present in the free play of imagination and understanding (so far as these are in mutual accord, as is requisite for cognition in general); for we are conscious that this subjective relation suitable for a cognition in general must be just as valid for every one, and consequently as universally communicable, as is any indeterminate cognition, which always rests upon that
relation as its subjective condition.

Now this purely subjective (æsthetic) estimating of the object, or of the representation through which it is given, is antecedent to the pleasure in it, and is the basis of this pleasure in the harmony of the cognitive faculties. Again, the above-described universality of the subjective conditions of estimating objects forms the sole foundation of this universal subjective validity of the delight which we connect with the representation of the object that we call beautiful.

That an ability to communicate one’s mental state, even though it be only in respect of our cognitive faculties, is attended with a pleasure, is a fact which might easily be demonstrated from the natural propensity of mankind to social life, i.e., empirically and psychologically. But what we have here in view calls for something more than this. In a judgement of taste, the pleasure felt by us is exacted from every one else as necessary, just as if, when we call something beautiful, beauty was to be regarded as a quality of the object forming part of its inherent determination according to concepts; although beauty is for itself, apart from any reference to the feeling of the subject, nothing.

Definition of the Beautiful drawn from the Second Moment.

The beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, pleases universally.

Third Moment. Of Judgements of Taste: Moment of the Relation of the Ends brought under Review in such Judgements.

For the judgement of taste is an æsthetic and not a cognitive judgement, and so does not deal with any concept of the nature or of the internal or external possibility, by this or that cause, of the object, but simply with the relative bearing of the representative powers so far as determined by a representation.
From the reading...

The agreeable, the beautiful, and the good thus denote three different relations of representations to the feeling pleasure and displeasure...

Now this relation, present when an object is characterized as beautiful, is coupled with the feeling of pleasure. This pleasure is by the judgement of taste pronounced valid for every one; hence an agreeableness attending the representation is just as incapable of containing the determining ground of the judgement as the representation of the perfection of the object or the concept of the good. We are thus left with the subjective finality in the representation of an object, exclusive of any end (objective or subjective)—consequently the bare form of finality in the representation whereby an object is given to us, so far as we are conscious of it as that which is alone capable of constituting the delight which, apart from any concept, we estimate as universally communicable, and so of forming the determining ground of the judgement of taste.

¶ 12. The judgement of taste rests upon *á priori* grounds. To determine *á priori* the connection of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure as an effect, with some representation or other (sensation or concept) as its cause, is utterly impossible; for that would be a causal relation which (with objects of experience) is always one that can only be cognized *á posteriori* and with the help of experience. . . . The consciousness of mere formal finality in the play of the cognitive faculties of the subject attending a representation whereby an object is given, is the pleasure itself, because it involves a determining ground of the subject’s activity in respect of the quickening of its cognitive powers, and thus an internal causality (which is final) in respect of cognition generally, but without being limited to a definite cognition, and consequently a mere form of the subjective finality of a representation in an æsthetic judgement. This pleasure . . . involves an inherent causality, that, namely, of preserving a continuance of the state of the representation itself and the active engagement of the cognitive powers without ulterior aim. We dwell on the contemplation of the beautiful because this contemplation strengthens and reproduces itself.

... 

¶ 14 Exemplification. Æsthetic, just like theoretical (logical) judgements, are divisible into empirical and pure. The first are those by which
agreeableness or disagreeableness, the second those by which beauty is predicated of an object or its mode of representation. The former are judgements of sense (material aesthetic judgements), the latter (as formal) alone judgements of taste proper.

A judgement of taste, therefore, is only pure so far as its determining ground is tainted with no merely empirical delight. But such a taint is always present where charm or emotion have a share in the judgement by which something is to be described as beautiful. . . .

From the reading . . .

There can, therefore, be no rule according to which any one is to be compelled to recognize anything as beautiful.

In painting, sculpture, and in fact in all the formative arts, in architecture and horticulture, so far as fine arts, the design is what is essential. Here it is not what gratifies in sensation but merely what pleases by its form, that is the fundamental prerequisite for taste. . . . All form of objects of sense (both of external and also, medially, of internal sense) is either figure or play. In the latter case it is either play of figures (in space: mimic andance), or mere play of sensations (in time). The charm of colours, or of the agreeable tones of instruments, may be added: but the design in the former and the composition in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgement of taste. To say that the purity alike of colours and of tones, or their variety and contrast, seem to contribute to beauty, is by no means to imply that, because in themselves agreeable, they therefore yield an addition to the delight in the form and one on a par with it. The real meaning rather is that they make this form more clearly, definitely, and completely intuitable, and besides stimulate the representation by their charm, as they excite and sustain the attention directed to the object itself.

. . . Emotion—a sensation where an agreeable feeling is produced merely by means of a momentary check followed by a more powerful outpouring of the vital force—is quite foreign to beauty. Sublimity (with which the feeling of emotion is connected) requires, however, a different standard of estimation from that relied upon by taste. A pure judgement of taste has, then, for its determining ground neither charm nor emotion, in a word, no sensation as matter of the aesthetic judgement.
¶ 15. The judgement of taste is entirely independent of the concept of perfection. Objective finality can only be cognized by means of a reference of the manifold to a definite end, and hence only through a concept. This alone makes it clear that the beautiful, which is estimated on the ground of a mere formal finality, i.e., a finality apart from an end, is wholly independent of the representation of the good. For the latter presupposes an objective finality, i.e., the reference of the object to a definite end. . . .

Now the judgement of taste is an aesthetic judgement, one resting on subjective grounds. No concept can be its determining ground, and hence not one of a definite end. Beauty, therefore, as a formal subjective finality, involves no thought whatsoever of a perfection of the object, as a would-be formal finality which yet, for all that, is objective: . . . an aesthetic judgement is quite unique, and affords absolutely no (not even a confused) knowledge of the object. It is only through a logical judgement that we get knowledge. . . . The judgement is called aesthetic for the very reason that its determining ground cannot be a concept, but is rather the feeling (of the internal sense) of the concert in the play of the mental powers as a thing only capable of being felt.

¶ 16. A judgement of taste by which an object is described as beautiful, under the condition of a definite concept, is not pure. There are two kinds of beauty: free beauty (pulchritudo vaga), or beauty which is merely dependent (pulchritudo adhaerens). The first presupposes no concept of what the object should be; the second does presuppose such a concept and, with it, an answering perfection of the object. Those of the first kind are said to be (self-subsisting) beauties of this thing or that thing; the other kind of beauty, being attached to a concept (conditioned beauty), is ascribed to objects which come under the concept of a particular end.

Flowers are free beauties of nature. Hardly anyone but a botanist knows the true nature of a flower, and even he, while recognizing in the flower the reproductive organ of the plant, pays no attention to this natural end when using his taste to judge of its beauty. Hence no perfection of any kind—no internal finality, as something to which the arrangement of the manifold is related—underlies this judgement. . . . We may also rank in the same class what in music are called fantasias (without a theme), and, indeed, all music that is not set to words.

In the estimate of a free beauty (according to mere form) we have the pure judgement of taste. . . .
But the beauty of man (including under this head that of a man, woman, or child), the beauty of a horse, or of a building (such as a church, palace, arsenal, or summer-house), presupposes a concept of the end that defines what the thing has to be, and consequently a concept of its perfection; and is therefore merely appendant beauty. Now, just as it is a clog on the purity of the judgement of taste to have the agreeable (of sensation) joined with beauty to which properly only the form is relevant, so to combine the good with beauty (the good, namely, of the manifold to the thing itself according to its end) mars its purity.

Taste, it is true, stands to gain by this combination of intellectual delight with the æsthetic. For it becomes fixed, and, while not universal . . . is self-sustaining and of subjective universal validity . . . But, strictly speaking, perfection neither gains by beauty, nor beauty by perfection.

In respect of an object with a definite internal end, a judgement of taste would only be pure where the person judging either has no concept of this end, or else makes abstraction from it in his judgement. . . . This distinction enables us to settle many disputes about beauty on the part of critics; for we may show them how one side is dealing with free beauty, and the other with that which is dependent: the former passing a pure judgement of taste, the latter one that is applied intentionally.

From the reading . . .

. . . it is not open to men to say: “Every one has his own taste.” This would be equivalent to saying that there is no such thing at all as taste.

¶ 17. Ideal of beauty. There can be no objective rule of taste by which what is beautiful may be defined by means of concepts. For every judgement from that source is æsthetic, i.e., its determining ground is the feeling of the subject, and not any concept of an object. It is only throwing away labour to look for a principle of taste that affords a universal criterion of the beautiful by definite concepts; because what is sought is a thing impossible and inherently contradictory. But in the universal communicability of the sensation (of delight or aversion)—a communicability, too, that exists apart from any concept—in the accord, so far as possible, of all ages and nations as to this feeling in the representation of certain objects, we have the empirical criterion, weak indeed and
scarce sufficient to raise a presumption, of the derivation of a taste, thus confirmed by examples, from grounds deep seated and shared alike by all men, underlying their agreement in estimating the forms under which objects are given to them.

For this reason some products of taste are looked on as exemplary—Hence . . . it follows that the highest model, the archetype of taste, is a mere idea, which each person must beget in his own consciousness, and according to which he must form his estimate of everything that is an object of taste, or that is an example of critical taste, and even of universal taste itself . . . While not having this ideal in our possession, we still strive to beget it within us. But it is bound to be merely an ideal of the imagination, seeing that it rests, not upon concepts, but upon the presentation—the faculty of presentation being the imagination. Now, how do we arrive at such an ideal of beauty? Is it \( \text{\textit{\`a priori}} \) or empirically? Further, what species of the beautiful admits of an ideal?

First of all, we do well to observe that the beauty for which an ideal has to be sought cannot be a beauty that is free and at large, but must be one fixed by a concept of objective finality. Hence it cannot belong to the object of an altogether pure judgement of taste, but must attach to one that is partly intellectual. In other words, where an ideal is to have place among the grounds upon which any estimate is formed, then beneath grounds of that kind there must lie some idea of reason according to determinate concepts, by which the end underlying the internal possibility of the object is determined \( \text{\textit{\`a priori}} \). An ideal of beautiful flowers, of a beautiful suite of furniture, or of a beautiful view, is unthinkable. But, it may also be impossible to represent an ideal of a beauty dependent on definite ends, \textit{e.g.,} a beautiful residence, a beautiful tree, a beautiful garden, etc., presumably because their ends are not sufficiently defined and fixed by their concept, with the result that their finality is nearly as free as with beauty that is quite at large. Only what has in itself the end of its real existence—only man that is able himself to determine his ends by reason, or, where he has to derive them from external perception, can still compare them with essential and universal ends, and then further pronounce aesthetically upon their accord with such ends, only he, among all objects in the world, admits, therefore, of an ideal of beauty, just as humanity in his person, as intelligence, alone admits of the ideal of perfection.
From the reading . . .

Emotion . . . is quite foreign to beauty.

Two factors are here involved. First, there is the æsthetic normal idea, which is an individual intuition (of the imagination). This represents the norm by which we judge of a man as a member of a particular animal species. Secondly, there is the rational idea. This deals with the ends of humanity so far as capable of sensuous representation, and converts them into a principle for estimating his outward form, through which these ends are revealed in their phenomenal effect. The normal idea must draw from experience . . .

. . . [I]f the mind is engaged upon comparisons, we may well suppose that it can in actual fact, though the process is unconscious, superimpose as it were one image upon another, and from the coincidence of a number of the same kind arrive at a mean contour which serves as a common standard for all. Say, for instance, a person has seen a thousand full-grown men: . . . one gets a perception of the average size, which alike in height and breadth is equally removed from the extreme limits of the greatest and smallest statures; and this is the stature of a beautiful man . . . This normal idea is not derived from proportions taken from experience as definite rules: rather is it according to this idea that rules forming estimates first become possible. It is . . . a floating image for the whole genus, which nature has set as an archetype underlying those of her products that belong to the same species, but which in no single case she seems to have completely attained. But the normal idea is far from giving the complete archetype of beauty in the genus. It only gives the form that constitutes the indispensable condition of all beauty, and, consequently, only correctness in the presentation of the genus . . .

But the ideal of the beautiful is still something different from its normal idea. For reasons already stated it is only to be sought in the human figure. Here the ideal consists in the expression of the moral, apart from which the object would not please at once universally and positively (not merely negatively in a presentation academically correct). The visible expression of moral ideas that govern men inwardly can, of course, only be drawn from experience; but their combination with all that our reason connects with the morally good in the idea of the highest finality—benevolence, purity, strength, or equanimity, etc.—may be made, as it were, visible in
bodily manifestation (as effect of what is internal), and this embodiment involves a union of pure ideas of reason and great imaginative power . . . an estimate formed according to such a standard can never be purely æsthetic, and that one formed according to an ideal of beauty cannot be a simple judgement of taste.

Definition of the Beautiful Derived from this Third Moment.

Beauty is the form of finality in an object, so far as perceived in it apart from the representation of an end.


¶ 18. Nature of the modality in a judgement of taste. I may assert in the case of every representation that the synthesis of a pleasure with the representation (as a cognition) is at least possible. Of what I call agreeable I assert that it actually causes pleasure in me. But what we have in mind in the case of the beautiful is a necessary reference on its part to delight . . . [T]his delight . . . simply means that one ought absolutely (without ulterior object) to act in a certain way. Rather, being such a necessity as is thought in an æsthetic judgement, it can only be termed exemplary. In other words it is a necessity of the assent of all to a judgement regarded as exemplifying a universal rule incapable of formulation . . . [E]mpirical judgements do not afford any foundation for a concept of the necessity of these judgements.

From the reading . . .

But, strictly speaking, perfection neither gains by beauty, nor beauty by perfection.

¶ 19. The subjective necessity attributed to a judgement of taste is conditioned. The judgement of taste exacts agreement from every one; and a person who describes something as beautiful insists that every one ought to give the object in question his approval and follow suit in describing it as beautiful. The ought in æsthetic judgements, therefore, de-
spite an accordance with all the requisite data for passing judgement, is still only pronounced conditionally...

¶ 20. **The condition of the necessity advanced by a judgement of taste is the idea of a common sense.** Judgments of taste . . . must have a subjective principle, and one which determines what pleases or displeases, by means of feeling only and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity. Such a principle, however, could only be regarded as a common sense. This differs essentially from common understanding, which is also sometimes called common sense (sensus communis): for the judgement of the latter is not one by feeling, but always one by concepts, though usually only in the shape of obscurely represented principles.

The judgement of taste, therefore, depends on our presupposing the existence of a common sense . . . the effect arising from the free play of our powers of cognition...

¶ 21. **Have we reason for presupposing a common sense?** Cognitions and judgements must, together with their attendant conviction, admit of being universally communicated . . . We do not have to take our stand on psychological observations, but we assume a common sense as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our knowledge, which is presupposed in every logic and every principle of knowledge that is not one of scepticism.

From the reading . . .

Beauty is the form of finality in an object, so far as perceived in it apart from the representation of an end.

¶ 22. **The necessity of the universal assent that is thought in a judgement of taste, is a subjective necessity which, under the presupposition of a common sense, is represented as objective.** In all judgements by which we describe anything as beautiful, we tolerate no one else being of a different opinion, and in taking up this position we do not rest our judgement upon concepts, but only on our feeling. Accordingly we introduce this fundamental feeling not as a private feeling, but as a public sense. Now, for this purpose, experience cannot be made the ground of this common sense, for the latter is invoked to justify judgements containing an “ought.” The assertion is not that every one will fall in with our judgement, but rather that every one ought to agree with it. Here I put
forward my judgement of taste as an example of the judgement of com-
mon sense, and attribute to it on that account exemplary validity. Hence
common sense is a mere ideal norm. With this as presupposition, a judge-
ment that accords with it, as well as the delight in an object expressed
in that judgement, is rightly converted into a rule for everyone. For the
principle, while it is only subjective, being yet assumed as subjectively
universal (a necessary idea for everyone), could, in what concerns the
consensus of different judging subjects, demand universal assent like an
objective principle, provided we were assured of our subsumption under
it being correct.

This indeterminate norm of a common sense is, as a matter of fact, pre-
supposed by us; as is shown by our presuming to lay down judgements of
taste. But does such a common sense in fact exist as a constitutive prin-
iple of the possibility of experience, or is it formed for us as a regulative
principle by a still higher principle of reason, that for higher ends first
seeks to beget in us a common sense? Is taste, in other words, a natural
and original faculty, or is it only the idea of one that is artificial[?] . . .

**Definition of the Beautiful drawn from the Fourth Moment.** The beau-
tiful is that which, apart from a concept, is cognized as object of a neces-
sary delight.

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**Related Ideas**

*Immanuel Kant Theory of Æsthetics and Teleology.* The Internet En-
cyclopedia of Philosophy. Douglas Burnham of Staffordshire University
clearly written and skillful summary of Kant’s æsthetics from *The Cri-
tique of Judgment.*

Guyer’s entry on Kant’s philosophy of æsthetics, teleology, and scientific
concepts from the third *Critique.*

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Æsthetics)
DB047SECT12)
Chapter 11. “Æsthetic Judgements are Necessary” by Immanuel Kant


From the reading ...

The judgement of taste, therefore, depends on our presupposing the existence of a common sense ... the effect arising from the free play of our powers of cognition....

Topics Worth Investigating

1. Clearly Kant rules out æsthetic relativism:

   ...to this extent it is not open to men to say: “Every one has his own taste.” This would be equivalent to saying that there is no such thing at all as taste ...  

5. Kant’s Ästhetics... (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-aesthetics/)  
6. Kant, Sec. 1, Bk. 1, § 7.
Yet, Kant freely admits in the same reference:

With the agreeable, therefore, the axiom holds good: Every one has his own taste (that of sense).

Explain the meaning of these two quotations, and explain their compatibility.

2. Compare Kant’s empirical criterion of taste with David Hume’s criteria of judgment of taste as described in Hume’s “Of the Standard of Taste.” Be sure to keep in mind Kant’s distinction between the imagination and the understanding:

First, there is the aesthetic normal idea, which is an individual intuition (of the imagination). This represents the norm by which we judge of a man as a member of a particular animal species. Secondly, there is the rational idea. This deals with the ends of humanity so far as capable of sensuous representation, and converts them into a principle for estimating his outward form, through which these ends are revealed in their phenomenal effect. The normal idea must draw from experience…

Does either philosopher hold that the standard is objective and can resolve disagreements about what is beautiful? Is either philosopher committed to the existence of an ideal of beauty?

3. Evaluate Kant’s distinctions among (1) the agreeable: general empirical rules of taste—not universal but commonly shared among men, (2) the beautiful: subjective universality: a universality which does not rest upon concepts—valid for all men because of its independent from interest, (3) the good: objective universal validity—valid for everything which is contained under a given concept, an objective finality conceptually definable.

4. Kant writes, “The judgement of taste, therefore, and beauty depends on our presupposing the existence of a common sense … the effect arising from the free play of our powers of cognition and imagination.” How does Kant use of the term “free play”? Compare with Schiller’s use of the term “play instinct” or “play impulse”—the syn-

7. Kant, Sec. 1, Bk. 1, ¶ 17.
8. Kant, Sec. 1, Bk. 1, ¶ 20.
thesis of the sensuous and the formal impulse whose object is the beautiful.9

5. Explain Kant’s definition of beauty as defined in his four moments
drawn from the categories: (1) quality, (2) quantity, (3) relation, and
(4) modality. How effective are his arguments for each moment?

6. Kant writes, “Every one must allow that a judgement on the beautiful
which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a
pure judgement of taste...” Vernon Lee argues that Kant’s theory is
a misleading metaphysical æsthetics:

[This theory] defines æsthetic appreciation as disinterested interest,
gratuitously identifying self-interest with the practical pursuit of ad-
vantages we have not yet got; and overlooking the fact that such ap-
preciation implies enjoyment and is so for the very reverse of disinter-
ested.10

Kant seems to agree with Schopenhauer that the passions are si-
enced in the impartial contemplation of beauty. How does Kant’s
sense of “disinterested enjoyment” exclude an associated desire for
an æsthetic object?

by Tapio Riikonen and David Widger. In Literary and Philosophical Essays: French,
German and Italian. New York: Collier. 1910. Letter XV.
10. Vernon Lee. The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Æsthetics. Cam-
bridge: Cambridge University Press. 1913. 6.