



On Aesthetic Disinterestedness

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Abstract

The concept of aesthetic disinterestedness is a brainchild of Kant. The word disinterested should not be perceived to mean a lack of interest exhibited by being indifferent. Instead, its focus is on the artwork itself, which speaks to finding satisfaction in the way the work of art appears; for its own sake. When individuals find satisfaction of an aesthetic nature in an object of art using disinterestedness, they are essentially seeing the object in or for itself; the enjoyment is being extracted from the object in its own right as opposed to what the purpose of that project is.

Meanwhile, the judgment of an artwork should not be based on the historical background of an artist's experience. However, it has often seemed impossible for most people, who are not skilled in the art of judging works of art to find satisfaction in an artwork purely on the basis of disinterestedness. People often find themselves interested in the background and experiences of the artist. Spectators often want to associate themselves with the artwork via the kind of elements which are opposed to the concept of disinterestedness. For instance, discussions linked to Van Gogh are often allied to his mental problems and his life of misery.

The focus of my dissertation is aesthetics of disinterestedness and its limitations.

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On Aesthetic Disinterestedness

1. Introduction

Both beauty and ugliness are fundamental aspects of our lives. Recognising this, Immanuel Kant explained the aesthetics of beauty in a bid to reach broader society, which he considered as not acting in accordance with the appreciation of beauty. According to Kant, aesthetic judgment ought to be subjective and speak with a universal voice. From this, he then coined the notion of disinterestedness, in which he openly assumed the role of extrinsic considerations such as political or utilitarian concerns play in the appreciation of beauty. He further contradicted the idea of appreciating beauty based on different inclinations as a step towards the introduction of conflicts in an object that speaks in a single, universal voice.

Thinking about the widely accepted approach to beauty, Kant's ideas seem to contradict and not appreciate what human beings consider to be the correct way of cherishing beauty. This raises a question of legitimacy. Is Kant's viewpoint the correct approach to the appreciation of beauty? This paper will look at Kant's notion of disinterestedness by exploring his arguments as well as the motivation behind its arguments. Additionally, the interpretations of these arguments will be considered in a real-life approach as a way of reconciling Kant's approach to the appreciation of beauty that is congruent with reality.

Since Kant came up with the idea of disinterestedness, many critics have explored their interest in this notion. Apart from simply dismissing it as a little idea, some have openly rebuked Kant as coming up with imaginations that are only applicable to himself. According to Schopenhauer, for example, "the world is an object" (Schopenhauer, 2010). Although he considers Kant's idea as worthy of development, he objects to his idea of subjectiveness. He argues that

everything associated with the world can hardly be separated from the object since what the eyes have already witnessed exists in the mind and cannot be separated from mind as far as beauty is concerned.

Guyer comes out strongly to expose the conflict created by Kant when exploring his notion of disinterestedness. According to Guyer (1996), Kant did not come up with a new approach to beauty but only created a conflict in his approach to it. While Kant argues that an image speaks in a certain voice devoid of external factors, Guyer openly says that it is next to impossible to come up with a judgment that does not consider any external aspects of the image. Thinking of a drawing of a forest, for example, Kant argues that one's judgment or taste for such an image should not be influenced by what someone previously experienced or witnessed in a forest but rather concentrate on what the image tries to communicate. Guyer, on the other hand, considers such an act impossible and not applicable to the people who have already experienced nature and understood its way of operating.

In a bid to answer the question of the legitimacy and applicability of Kant's arguments, this paper will consider three objections to his rather questionable philosophical approach to beauty. Schopenhauer, Guyer and the contemporary approach to beauty will be considered, culminating in a conclusion. By comparing each of these viewpoints, the paper will come up with an informed decision that not only considers the applicability of Kant's arguments but also notes the loopholes in his philosophy that would have made it more applicable to today's world, with its connection to nature that can barely be ignored.

2. The Notion of Disinterestedness

2.1 Background of Study

Although the notion of disinterestedness has recently fallen from favour, it is worth noting that it has played a significant role in philosophical aesthetics (Deligiorgi, 2005, p. 12). It has not only enabled an understanding of what happens when people respond to a work of art; it has also streamlined the understanding of what people should do if they have to behave properly in the face of art. Simply put, Kant's notion tries to overlook unstudied behaviour towards art and comes up with an idea of what he considers correct behaviour towards art. In advancing this philosophical notion, Immanuel Kant proposes an account of beauty that considers aesthetic judgments as both a subjective voice and as speaking with a single universal voice. Although the properties he identifies (subjective and universal) appear mutually exclusive, he maintains that they are compatible if the aesthetic judgment is explained as originating in the original structure of the brain, devoid of external influence. To expound the compatibility of these two seemingly exclusive properties, he comes up with two major claims. The first claim considers aesthetic judgments as disinterested. The second claim considers the universality of aesthetic judgments as being derived from the idealist's account of the ordinary spatiotemporal experience; that is, the ordinary cognitive framework is capable of explaining an experience of beauty.

2.2 Aesthetic Judgment

The idea that aesthetic judgment is disinterested implies that a genuine aesthetic judgment does not need to include any extrinsic considerations, such as utilitarian or political concerns, towards the object of judgment. Kant argues that if universality only occurs when our aesthetic judgments are disinterested; failure to be disinterested would mean there would not be any correlation between the two. This means that if pleasure and beauty are derived from the

inclinations with which people encounter an object, then the claims of the beauty of a particular object would be varied and conflicting based on the inclinations people bring to it.

Kant's notion of disinterestedness hinges on the idea that judgments are capable of producing either reflective or determinative powers. A determinative judgment would be described as a judgment that is understood based on an empirical concept such as "this is a cow". In his work *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant establishes the principles under which determinative judgments can be used to legitimise the inter-subjectivity of empirical knowledge. This work also aims to establish the governing principles for reflective judgment of aesthetic knowledge, which is key to the interpretation of art. Considering interaction with aesthetics, the idea that aesthetic experience comes in handy when making judgments about a work of art should be rejected, as the word "knowledge" fits in more with determinative judgment, which makes more reference to previous knowledge of the subject matter. Kant also strives to question such a conflation of knowledge when deriving the notion of disinterestedness (CPJ, §1, 5:204)¹. In his take on the same concept, he argues that the assumption of aesthetic knowledge as determinative is mistaken, as this would elucidate aesthetic judgments as fallaciously objective or merely subjective.

2.3 Disinterestedness

To understand disinterestedness, we should first understand the meaning of interest. The disinterestedness aspect of beauty described by Kant is tied to the first interaction of the person giving judgment with the aesthetic aspect of an object. In this regard, he describes taste as a faculty with which an object or any representation is judged without any interest whatsoever. Kant's

¹ All references to Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement* will be to the translation of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* that Paul Guyer and Eric Matthew did for the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthew (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

reasoning implies that the interesting aspect of disinterestedness refers to the satisfaction that is gained from combining the appearance of an object with prior knowledge of the existence of the object. Simply put, interest, in this case, refers to the judgment that one may come up with not because of the appearance of the object but because one feels that an object is beautiful in comparison to others or because the appearance of the object fits a situation it is directly or indirectly related to. The idea of empirical judgment comes into effect in such a case, as knowledge forms the basis for such judgments. A good example of this description of interest would be when one considers a palace beautiful not because the observer has come across the view of a palace, but because they understand the novelty that is usually associated with such a place (Hammermeister, 2002, p. 65-74).

2.4 Discussion

To maintain the claim of the inter-subjective nature of beauty, Kant insinuates rejection of the claim that beauty is sensuous. This is true, as people's interactions with beauty have proven that people view beauty differently based on personal inclinations. Kant emphasises this by giving examples of how perceiving things differently can describe beauty differently. One person, for example, may consider blue as a colour that is lovely and gentle while to another it is a representation of lifelessness and death. This is the same in the case of music, as different people appreciate different instruments differently. While one may consider string instruments interesting, another may feel that music is incomplete without the sound of wind instruments. According to Kant, however, these are only charms, as they do not cover the aspect of universality, which is essential for a true judgment of art that does not consider self-preferences (Rind, 2002, p. 40).

To develop his understanding of the interpretation of art, Kant begins by questioning how, for example, one is suddenly affected (in a pleasurable way) by an unexpected encounter with a

particularly beautiful appearance when the provocative nature of the effect can neither be cognised nor efficiently understood. As his answer, he proposes a judgment that considers the beauty of art in two major paradoxes. First, he considers fine art as “a way of presenting that is purposive on its own, and that furthers, even though without a purpose, the culture of our mental powers to [facilitate] social communication” (§39, 5: 293). Secondly, Kant argues that art “must have the look of nature, even though we are conscious of it as art” (§40, 5: 294)). Simply put, Kant believes that although art is intentionally produced, it remains purposive without a purpose and must appear natural to its viewers, even though it is fabricated unnaturally (§41, 5: 297).

Based on the discussions above, a very clear distinction emerges: the experience of pleasure cannot always be considered the experience of beauty and that what is pleasurable does not communicate with a universal point. Despite this distinction, however, any move to divorce beauty completely from pleasure would be little informed by the happenings in the real world. The human cognitive ability (although sometimes biased by empirical judgments) assumes that what is beautiful is pleasuring and vice versa. With this understanding, Kant avoids the path of divorcing the two but instead comes up with an explanation of how beauty might be pleasurable based on a disinterested judgment that avoids any empirical knowledge or personal inclinations that may cause bias (Bell, 1992, p. 23).

To make this view of aesthetic interpretation understood, Kant starts by considering his moral philosophy. According to him, a moral philosophy similarly ought to be disinterested; that is, if one only considers acting according to one's inclinations, then one is not acting morally. He further argues that people may choose to uphold the moral law and tend to believe they are doing so in the right spirit, yet in an actual sense they are only being guided by their egoism. In this regard, Kant admits, “We can never even by most strenuous self-examination, get, entirely behind

our covert incentives” (§58, 5:347). This is similar to the aesthetic philosophy that argues that one may voice their views on the experience of an object as being beautiful only to realise later that their account is very different from the universal consensus on the same.

For one to be moral, Kant posits that a person’s actions should be guided by a motive that leads to a sensuous experience rather than be informed by one. Simply put, the subject’s views and actions should be free from any interruptions occurring either in the real world or from one’s conscious reasoning (Rehberg, 2013, p. 155). This implies that the success of Kant’s aesthetic project is highly dependent on a disinterestedness that avoids scepticism at all costs. The experience of beauty in such a case ought to be disinterested to the extent that it is not just bound by phenomenal experience, but that the judgment made is also untraceable to any other non-sensuous grounds. With this, the capacity to which the judgment can exert freedom is extended while it excludes any other internal factors from influencing its interpretation.

The exclusion of scepticism and inclusion of the subject’s freedom brings us to the conclusion that aesthetics is a philosophically rigorous discipline that needs to be guided by freedom of the subject. Considering that the experience of beauty is not to be measured in empirical terms, it ought to be practised in a specific way that is pure in its approach. This brings us to our explanation that an a priori subject forms the basis of the experience of aesthetics.

Thinking of the painting *Starry Night* by Vincent Van Gogh, for example, Kant’s notion of disinterestedness would assume knowledge of the features presented by night, such as the sky, the moon and the stars. According to Kant (§41, 5: 298), a consideration of these features would amount to empirical data, which leads to the subjectivity that would bring in bias when deducing the beauty presented by the piece of art. Based on the notion of disinterestedness, Kant would

argue that the pleasure in viewing such an image is derived from the harmony of the used artistic components and the free play of our intuition and understanding that is caused by the purposiveness of the different forms that make up the painting. From the look of the image, something aesthetically pleasing is represented by the blend of colours as well as the arrangement of shapes; hence, causing pleasure without applying the concepts people hold of how a church should look or how the different bodies of the sky ought to be arranged. When judging from a place of disinterestedness, people do not like *Starry Night* because it contains their favourite colour (blue, yellow or brown), or because it reminds them of real-life experiences such as the safety of a particular locality at night. Such judgments would present matters of agreeableness and taste that do not lead to a universality and hence do not appraise the nature of the true beauty of the image. Additionally, a consideration of such factors would pollute the disinterestedness that ought to accompany the appreciation of such a work of art (Alison, 2001, p. 123).



Figure 1. Starry Night by Van Gogh (Van Gogh, 1889)

As part of appreciating Van Gogh's work of art, Kant would argue that the artist succeeded in fulfilling his paradox of 'purposefully creating something that has no purpose'. This implies that to come up with such a painting, he conceptualised a non-concept, to come up with an idea that is independent of the judgment of real-world happenings. Having been capable of capturing

an aesthetic concept and bringing it to a concrete form, Kant would consider Van Gogh in possession of an innate or genius mental predisposition through which he obtained nature's rules of art (Alison, 2001, p. 125). Additionally, looking at this work, disinterestedness brings in an expression of the artist being guided by visceral forces that enabled him to develop a concept without necessarily committing it to a conceptual purpose.

Still, when observing the *Starry Night* image, it is worth noting that the same exceptional conceptual factors satisfy Kant's second paradox of appearing natural. This can be attributed to the image being naturally pleasing without bringing attention to the purpose behind its creation. According to Kant's second paradox, we feel an aversion towards art that seems contrived or forced. We, therefore, appreciate fine art because it is skillfully crafted to the extent that we interact with it as if it were something that simply existed. Although we appreciate the technique that an artist uses to create their work, beauty is best judged by its form rather than the way in which the artist achieved that particular piece of art.

As earlier stated, Kant defines the role of the mind in experiencing art as the free play of imagination and understanding. His experience of beauty is clear and concise (§48, 5:311). In this regard, it can be concluded that an assumption of satisfaction that correlates with other subjects with similar cognitive faculties is only based on individual judgment and therefore wrong since it does not take into consideration the universality of the subject. Such an experience is unique to one person and dependent on the calibre of their imagination and the architecture of their empirical concepts. This is in line with Kant's arguments that refuse to consider pleasure as the basis for judging universality (Marsden, 2002, p. 65). An aesthetic judgment should, therefore, only be based on the cognitive apparatus involved in an ordinary experience of a piece of art if it does not consider a person's aesthetic education.

3. Objections to the Notion of Disinterestedness

3.1 The Disinterested View is Unmasked (Schopenhauer)

Schopenhauer's approach to Kant's notion of disinterestedness is supportive and oppositional at the same time. While he aims to improve on Kant's point of view, he also recognises the important aspects that Kant lays out in his philosophy. According to Kant's notion of disinterestedness, an experience of appreciating aesthetic beauty involves suspending all affective states and taking a passive attitude towards the object to be contemplated. Schopenhauer improves on this notion by developing a more complex approach that retains some aspects of Kant's notion while disregarding others (Atwell, 1996). He states that the aesthetic experience is involving a passionate and active engagement with the object of contemplation (Atwell, 1996).

Schopenhauer's philosophy is related to his notion of the metaphysical that lies beneath the world of phenomena (Gardener, 1999). To explain this, he takes the controlled digression of a lunatic and a genius to show how different perceptions interplay to create the images in our brain. With this way of reasoning, Schopenhauer aims to make us understand that a lunatic is continuously faced with encounters that amount to the fragmentation of their personal history. This then leads to interruptions that are smoothed over by more acceptable fictions that form the basis of their behavioural reactions (Gardener, 1999).

In contrast, he represents a genius as an individual whose state of aesthetic reflection is affected by his exceptional powers of imagination and perception. He, surprisingly, however, classifies the lunatic and the genius as lying in close conceptual proximity (Jacquette, 2005). They both have encounters with the horrific, leading to serious interruptions in the continuity of their subject. For the lunatic, the perceptions include the formulation and acceptance of fictional

memories while for the genius it is about the temporary cessation of their normal state of being (as empirical characters) as they assume a state of pure subjectivity (Jacquette, 2005).

3.1.1 The World as a Representation

According to Schopenhauer (2010), “Everybody must recognize as true as soon as he understands it, although it is not a proposition that everyone understands as soon as he hears it” (Schopenhauer, 2010). This points to his claim that “the world is an object that is related to a subject” (Schopenhauer, 2010). “In a world full of representation, everything that in any way belongs to the world or can belong to the world is inevitably associated with it” (Deligiorgi, 2005, p. 56). This means that everything that can be associated with the world is being conditioned by the subject and therefore only exists for the subject. Thus, Schopenhauer comes up with the idea of transcendental idealism that is arguably more accessible than Kant’s. In this account, he considers his philosophy as containing the logical results of ideas that were not properly developed by Kant (Deligiorgi, 2005).

The main argument in the transcendental idealism introduced by Kant is the idea that time, space and causality are sensuous phenomena that construct our knowledge of the thing-in-itself. Schopenhauer argues that the three are an a priori condition for experience (Jacquette, 2005, p. 44). He, therefore, concludes that having an experience without them is impossible. To further illustrate this and link it with Kant’s epistemological theory of contemporary scientific inquiry, he applies this understanding of structuring of human exposure and experience to the exploration of optics. He argues, “The understanding is the artist forming the work, whereas the human senses are assistants that hand up the materials” (Schopenhauer, 2010). Without such knowledge, “we should see the object inverted... Intuitive perception is, however, realized due to the fact that the instant understanding points to the impression felt on the retina to its cause which then precisely

in this way presents itself as an object in space that is its accompanying form of intuition” (Schopenhauer, 2010).

Schopenhauer’s illustration is true, based on the fact that no matter which information we have concerning the functioning of optics, we have no access to the impression (unmodified) of an object in its inverted form. Although the process leads to gaining knowledge, it is sealed from the common man’s understanding. Furthermore, despite being an experience of learning, the understanding activity is in the eyes nature of performance. The same applies to time, space and causality, which we experience in a similar way. They form the crucial features of experience and hence it is hardly possible to strip them away or experience what the world would be like unmodified.

To discuss his doctrine of transcendental realism, Schopenhauer acknowledges that space, time and casualty are all essential aspects of the external world and that they appear intuitive owing to the illusionary nature of the experience (Gardener, 1999, p. 89). By connecting the three, he creates a picture that would portray the illusion of space as pervading all experience when one assumes that there is a disconnect between the object and the perceiver. In reality, however, every human being is aware of his or her senses. As Schopenhauer puts it, the sun and the earth are unknown to human beings; the eye, however, sees the sun while the hand feels the earth (Gardener, 1999).

Although the senses bring about illusions, as per Kant’s disinterestedness, Schopenhauer comes out too strongly arguing that such illusions are embedded in us and cannot be removed by any argument of reason (Guyer, 1996, p. 454). Simply put, he tries to dismiss abstract knowledge in the arguments that involve senses that determine how human beings react. He considers Kant’s

arguments as based on a high degree of selflessness and suggests the possibility of something extraordinary about beauty that Kant fails to capture. While trying to develop disinterestedness, Schopenhauer suggests that Kant's idea does not illuminate, explain or speak to the profundity of beauty.

Although Schopenhauer uses Kant's arguments to dispel the illusions of transcendental realism, he accuses him of not taking the argument far enough. When analysing the transcendental aesthetic in the critique of pure reason, for example, he considers its conviction power significant enough to number its propositions among the incontestable truths (the truths that he considers limited). According to Schopenhauer, Kant's arguments do not logically entail transcendental idealism as they ignore the possibility of time and space existing in the world. Although the world might coincide with the perceptions of human beings, the act cannot be verified.

According to the assumptions of transcendental realism, the world is something that cannot be determinately intelligible. When assuming that space, time and causality are a reality but rather limited, we have to face the issue of what lies on the other sides of their boundaries. Furthermore, if they were assumed unlimited, we have to face the problem of the identity of the universe as well as infinite regress (Gardener, 1999, p. 93). Disinterestedness, however, assumes the possible existence of boundaries and considers the possibility of ignoring them completely.

3.1.2 Idealism and Evolution

Does Schopenhauer do the exact opposite to Kant, who tries to eliminate the world from the picture when analysing a perception? According to Schopenhauer, "The world exists extended in space and time continues to move regularly according to the strict rules of causality that are only a physiological phenomenon of the brain" (Tauber, 2006, p. 24). This implies that the world

exposes the brain to certain categories that can then be drawn up by an understanding. He, therefore, comes with a conclusion that the brain is hard-wired to propagate the illusions of transcendental realism. This is coupled with a suggestion that the brain is a product of human adaptation to a highly competitive and demanding environment. This leads to an anticipation of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Just like Darwin theory of survival of the fittest, Schopenhauer concludes that continuous use leads to an increased functionality while a lack of use alludes to possible extinction. This implies that the images that we continuously see are embedded in our brains. When disinterestedness is being applied, it is hardly possible to assume what has been embedded in our brains, as it becomes part of our reference as far as beauty appreciation is concerned.

Just like Darwin, Schopenhauer believes that all plants adapt to their soil and climate, and so do animals. The prey that becomes food has to be protected from its natural hunter to a certain extent (Gardener, 1999, p. 95). To enable a safe and healthy thriving of organic life, nature has provided an environment that allows the thriving of life. Similarly, nature has an impact on the brain (specifically the intellect) of the higher animals as it is the most important organ directed outwards. For such animals, a wider and more accurate range of vision and comprehension is needed for the distinction of objects.

With the provision of intellect by nature, the human brain has become so sophisticated that it has achieved the ability to experience abstract reflections and enjoy the nature of reality. This implies that human beings live according to a transcendental realism, while we ought to philosophise according to transcendental idealism. This explains why we often come to counterintuitive conclusions. Although Kant argues that subjectivity can be done away with in the appreciation of art, Schopenhauer argues that nature's provision is part of us and cannot be done

away with. With brains guided by idealism, we can hardly switch off our feelings, understandings, and perceptions towards a particular object.

3.1.3 The Insufficiency of Natural Science

Schopenhauer explores the existence of different forces of science, such as magnetism, gravity and electricity. He goes on to explain that science is only able to classify their existence but has never bothered to inform us of why such forces exist. With this, he aims to identify the natural science as incapable of explaining natural forces, and only capable of describing and classifying them. According to Schopenhauer, sciences only engage in reductive materialism by trying to explain all phenomena based on their physical cause and effect. The phenomena it tries to explain are referred to by their causes but remain inexplicable themselves. As such, he insinuates that scientific explanations betray the causes of nature and hence no one can determine whether the explanations given are the real ones. Based on the fact that they cannot be proved by science or any other field of study, the forces to which scientists attribute the governance of natural phenomena remain a tragic enterprise. In conclusion, he argues that the forces manifested in nature will remain an eternal secret; something “entirely strange and unknown” (Schopenhauer, 2010).

In the above critique of science, Schopenhauer comes out strongly against the idea that all phenomena can be explained from an underlying physical structure (Gardener, 1999, p. 99). He feels compelled to adopt a view of natural forces that consider pure potentiality since he sees the fundamental forces of nature as entities that have powers devoid of structural ground; a view that he suggests is supported by the modern-day field theory. Having adopted this view from Kant, Schopenhauer advances it to add relevance to transcendental idealism by arguing that matter exists through pure causality and hence any action towards it is general and unmodified.

3.1.4 The Will

Having displayed the inability of science to probe the fundamental nature of the forces that govern reality, Schopenhauer goes on to describe the path of objective knowledge as not going beyond the representation of any phenomenon. He uses the human body to explain this point by arguing that a vision of the human body only gives a representation like it would for any other object (Tauber, 2006). By considering its movements and actions, however, it becomes slightly strange to consider the body a stagnant object.

He goes on to explain that a perception of the human body is a perfect example of a project from which one can gain both objective and subjective knowledge. Although science views phenomena from a third person perspective, the human body gives the first-person perspective of an object among many objects. With the body being two-sided (with both an inside perspective and an outside physical appearance), Schopenhauer concludes that the body is the only object he knows of that is not merely a one-sided representation. With this, he introduces another aspect of the body, which he refers to as 'the will'. The word will be used to convey that the body has the will to do whatever it pleases as well as being included in certain decisions, such as wishing, striving, loving, fearing, hating and all other decisions that directly constitute human weal and woe, disinclination and desire.

With his introduction of objective phenomena into his two-sided body, Schopenhauer means to convey that the act of the will and the action of the body are two different states, which do not stand in a relation of cause and effect. In his attempt to define the relationship between the two, he considers the action of the body as an act of the will that is objectified (a perception). With this, he considers desire not as leading to action but rather that desire is an objective phenomenon. Additionally, he argues that the acts of a will do not grow into an action.

Schopenhauer's idea of the will is a major source of confusion, especially when it is used to explain perceptions and as the reason for why different people perceive things differently. Although he uses this reasoning to object to Kant's approach to objects and subjects, he further extends the will to inorganic matter. His argument is motivated by his quest to attain a higher genus under which he can subsume all natural species, in a bid to find the knowledge of which perceptions are identical. However, this contradicts his arguments on the Darwinian theory, as it is practically impossible to find what is identical in all of nature's species without introducing science.

3.2 Disinterested Seeing Avoids the Realisation of Meanings of an Object (Schiller)

In a series of letters (known as the *Kallias-Briefen*) that contain sketches of Schiller's theory of beauty, he proposes a theory that challenges some of the assumptions made by Kant in his notion of disinterestedness. Generally, Kant's judgment of taste is based on the conclusion that even though aesthetic judgments are made universal, there are no possible objective principles that could be used to assess the judgments. Schiller, however, criticises this conclusion by arguing that if no objective principle of the judgment of beauty exists, then it would not be possible to secure assent to a universal judgment of taste (Maftei, 2013). Schiller's judgment is based mainly on the subject's feelings. He tries to show that it would not be possible to secure assent for a universally accepted way of judging tastes and perceptions. In this, he considers the qualities of the objects that interplay in asserting our agreements with regard to a particular object (Roehr, 2003). To conclude his arguments, Schiller argues that even if people are incapable of demonstrating aesthetic judgments, it does not mean that there is an objective principle for judging what is beauty.

To start with, Schiller ascribes the principle of beauty in practical rather than theoretical reasons. To him, the principle of beauty ought not to presuppose an object's concept since it is not

cognitive or constitutive. According to Kant's senses, this principle is only regulative. Owing to its practicability, Schiller considers the possibility of treating objects like "appearances of freedom". This implies that the beautiful may be analogous to freedom, although it is not an instantiation of freedom. This is similar to Kant's definition of beauty, which is given as the freedom to understand both morality and aesthetics. According to Schiller, beauty is defined as the "freedom in appearance" (Maftai, 2013, p. 67).

While explaining perceptions and the judgment of taste, Schiller acknowledges that a reason could be explained from either a practical perspective or a theoretical one. To him, practical reasoning connects representation with the will for the sake of action. This is also applicable to the forms of beauty that are either free or necessary. He considers that the use of practical reasons free actions as part of moral judgments while the use of practical reasons for necessary actions forms an aesthetic judgment.

Schiller considers aesthetic judgment an example of a practical reason, unlike Kant. This is because it applies its principles to events that occur in the natural world. Schiller's portrayal of beauty, in the same way, evades the norm that describes beauty as a form of moral freedom. He rather considers this as freedom only in its appearance. Considering the regulative principle, beauty is not just a sensible manifestation of an idea but rather a revelation of a freedom. Schiller, however, fails to explain the reason why freedom in appearance is not considered equal to beauty (Maftai, 2013, p. 67).

In Schiller's aesthetic letters, he comes up with the thesis that "it is through beauty that we achieve freedom". This thesis also paves the way for one of his major theses: aesthetic education. In this, he shows that harmony between nature and a person is only restored when one acquires an

experience of beauty. This thesis was specifically aimed at demonstrating a person's right to civil freedom. He argues that the right to civil freedom only becomes practical when one demonstrates people's capacity for moral freedom. Although political, this idea was a major milestone in connecting Schiller's approach to beauty and aesthetics. Simply put, it explains the relationship between existence in the amoral state and moral virtues, which interplay in the appreciation of beauty. Schiller's main point in this thesis is that one cannot exist in a moral state without first educating one's moral virtue. This is a direct rejection of Kant's approach to the same. While Kant argues that all forms of external influences (including education and moral virtues) bring a bias to the recognition of beauty, Schiller goes for the option that they cannot be ignored since they have been taught, instilled in us and become part of us (Roehr, 2003, p. 121).

In his letters, Schiller identifies three notions of freedom, of which two are opposed to Kant's freedom of autonomy (Beiser, 2005, p. 67). The freedom of choice, for example, is considered as resulting from the inability to determine what he refers to as the 'aesthetic condition'. He describes the aesthetic condition as a state of active determinability; a determinability that is not defined by anything in a positive way. He, therefore, argues that a particular aesthetic condition leads to awarding different freedoms to particular aesthetic conditions. This is the freedom by which one is not constrained to act morally. Simply put, an aesthetic condition leads to the generation of a state of indeterminacy based on the moral choice made. This, however, also unfolds to sustain an individual moral choice, which is the basis for every individual choice.

Considering the "indeterminate" nature of beauty, an aesthetic condition restores our freedom to us. This implies that beauty does not produce a moral result but rather gives us the freedom and the capacity to do good actions (Beiser, 2005, p. 76). Simply put, beauty carries no specific intellectual, moral object. Unlike Kant, who considers the value of art as based on its

natural appearance, Schiller comes up with a notion that considers the beauty of art as based on its freedom. He gives the specifics of this freedom as moral freedom rather than freedom of choice in an absolute infinite manner. To complement this, Schiller comfortably concludes that it will be philosophically correct to state that beauty is our second creator.

A close observation of Schiller's approach to beauty reveals the tension between the notions of freedom that he presents throughout his theories (Du Marsais, 2010, p. 149). The freedoms belong to different paradigms and do not match. Although he gives a clear distinction between his two major freedoms (moral freedom and aesthetic freedom), he leaves some gaps, especially in sentiments about the perceptions of beauty described by Kant. After explaining his idea of autonomy, for example, he comes up with the notion of neutral will. This not only presents itself as beyond the laws of nature but also goes beyond Kant's will. Although Schiller comes up with this notion long before coming into contact with Kant's ideas, he modifies it after Kant's release of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. This time, he considers the natural will as "perfectly free between inclination and duty, as no physical necessity ought to enter as a sharer in the magisterial personality" (§32, 5:283). This is not only ambiguous but also confusing, considering that his first approach had considered the freedom of beauty as determining our attitudes towards aesthetics. Although his work is mainly focused on actuality/reality, this approach to the appreciation of nature totals confusion as one has to struggle between maintaining his idea of real nature and adopting a magical view.

Schiller's work gives great significance to realism as well as reconciliation of the dualism of sensibility and intellect (Barnouw, 1980, p. 58). This is evident in his letters, which advocate for freedom that is located in the middle of the realm of 'un-determinedness'. This refers to a possibility of existing between the realism of nature and reason, hence neutralising the absolute

determinedness of the two. From here, he then introduces the notion of a play drive by arguing that aesthetic freedom is placed between acting according to the laws of nature and the forces of the material drive. This is one of the attempts that shows Schiller's efforts to reconcile Kantian dualism.

As earlier highlighted, Schiller's and Kant's concerns regarding the role of duty and freedom in aesthetics cannot be reconciled. A study of Schiller's approach to aesthetics shows that Kant's consideration of the relationship between desire and duty does not support the ideology of needing the motivation of duty to act independently, even when they go against our feelings. This implies that the claims of pure, practical reason brought forth by Kant cannot be reconciled with our feelings about our feelings to both aesthetic and teleological judgments. This can only be achieved by a reasonable portrayal of morality and beauty, as well as for the cultivation of moral feelings.

Although Schiller has continuously endorsed Kant's position on the superiority of moral reason, he departs from Kant on the issue of the theory of duty. For this particular topic, Schiller continuously supports Kant's ideology on the freedom of the superiority held by the moral law and its legislative role of practical reason over the human senses. Schiller, however, brings in a view that accuses the tyranny of duty of being barbaric by arguing that it suppresses human passions, hence creating flaws in human moral understanding despite the almost impossible task of fulfilling one's duty (Deligiorgi, 2005, p. 157).

Finally, Schiller considers the Kantian ontological difference of the regimes of beauty and goodness as misplaced. He argues that moral praxis and aesthetic experience ought to be on the

same ontological level, and then he considers aesthetic education as having a real effect on morality.

3.3 The Mind's Independence: Kant's Arguments as Defying the Freedom of the Mind's Independence

Although Kant's theory of disinterestedness has been widely appreciated, the unit would be correct when arguing that most of the conclusions drawn from the theory are in conflict with some widely held views of nature as well as the significance of the common experience of natural beauty. To start with, Kant considers it a key conclusion that the proper objects of aesthetic appreciation are the temporal and spatial forms of objects, as opposed to their material properties, such as tone or colour, or abstract properties, such as their meaning, conceptual significance or content (Guyer, 1978, p. 455). This conflicts with the natural beliefs that the beauty of the sunset, for example, lies in its magnificent colour display or that of the Pieta in its characteristic deep expression of emotion. In other words, Kant's basic principles conflict with natural intuitions in a way that would merit people's suspicions.

Thinking of Kant's disinterestedness from a theoretical perspective, an argument that Kant's interpretations discourage a serious consideration of his theory would stand. He, for example, asserts that certain objects are beautiful based on experiences that show no particular connection to interest. These connections show no particular consequent or antecedent connection with the judgment and, hence, are only a result of his imagination, which does not in any way consider how the normal world operates. According to Kant, "one must not be in the least pre-posed in favor of the existence of a thing, but must be quite indifferent in order to play part of a judge in matters regarding taste" (Guyer, 1978, p. 457). However, and on the contrary, it is certainly true that one is already disposed in favour of an object for a particular reason (its value,

for example) and, hence, could barely make a fair assessment of aesthetic merits by ignoring any of such dispositions. This would only be the case when the beauty of an object cannot engender a genuine desire or concern. This becomes apparent, for example, in the case of maintenance of art; one would probably decide whether to maintain a piece of art based on aspects such as its worth, contemporary aesthetic reasons or the reason besides its existence in their lives among others. For this reason, one could have two pieces of art and only take good care of one, because one does not judge the pieces of art based on neutrality, as Kant would argue, but rather from specific reasons, which are based on predisposition to the world (Guyer, 1978, p. 459).

Furthermore, Kant's theory of disinterestedness denies that the experience of beauty can have a direct effect on human desires or generate interest in the existence of beautiful objects. In attempting to compensate for his exclusion of direct connection between the judgment of taste and the development of an interest in the existence of beauty, he introduces an indirect attachment between the two. However, this is extremely contrary to the humanist beliefs on the existence of art (Guyer, 1996, p. 460). Kant indirectly connects intellectual interest to beauty in an analogy that combines aesthetic response to moral feelings. He achieves this by using practical reasons of interest in beauty that conform to the conditions of our wholly disinterested delight and then maintains that this foundation justifies interest in the beauty of nature but not that of art. Simply put, he tries to draw the conclusion that the virtuousness of taste is not often achieved but is rather based on vain, selfish and injurious passions. This is also coupled with the argument that the interest in the beauty of art is based on no significant proof that would explain its manner of thinking or attachment to what is considered moral.

Thinking of interpreting the above conclusions, however, Kant asserts that beauty can generate no significant interest and that natural beauty is entirely more significant than artistic

beauty. In the normal world, however, this is unproven and no theoretical or scientific explanation can be used to prove such sentiments. According to Guyer (1996, p. 462), an interpretation of Kant's theories would show that these are not really consequences of it. Kant's formalist preference for design over colour and composition, for example, shows that his opinions are in no way a direct consequence of his theory, whatever he himself may have thought. In the case of his thesis that aesthetic judgment asserts no interest, the actual consequences of his theory appear not to be what he considers them to be (Guyer, 1978, p. 464).

Kant's explanation of aesthetic judgment does not imply that people cannot take a particular form of interest in beautiful objects. It also does not imply that we ought to look beyond the phenomena of aesthetic responses when it comes to explaining our desires with respect to beauty portrayed in works of art. This implies that Kant's theory places no significance on its objects and hence is not comparable with the supposition that the experience of beauty can directly and naturally generate certain desires with respect to the perceived beautiful objects (Guyer, 1978, p. 465). This implies that it is simply not necessary for Kant to resort to the theory of intellectual and indirect interest in beauty to explain humanly desires. His claim that only natural objects, and not artistic ones, generate such desires can also be ignored in this case. It is interesting to note, however, that Kant's theory of aesthetic response can be supplemented by a theory of a further moral and intellectual interest in beauty. More exploration of this case would also prove that his distinction between natural and artistic beauty is unjustified. Kant's own account, for example, explains that paradigmatic cases of artistic beauty have as much claim to our intellectual interest as cases of natural beauty.

Thinking of the objects that Kant uses to support his arguments, he presents an adoption of traditionalism that seems to be influenced by utilitarianism. In appreciating natural beauty, for

example, he uses the example of a palace: “If asked whether a palace before me is beautiful, I might say no on the ground that I do not care for the things made merely to be gripped at, a good restaurant would please me more, or I might dismiss the building by condemning the vanity of the great who exploit the populace to build such things” (Guyer, 1978, p. 467). From a normative point of view, however, all such responses are irrelevant to the question of beauty. They are based on moral or utilitarian concerns rather than a purely aesthetic concern. Such examples are not just misplaced but even irrelevant with regard to the notion of disinterestedness. The examples imply that Kant does manifest concerns that are interested in delight and connected to objects’ real existence as well as their representation. Although he goes beyond the exploration of the natural forms of beauty, he incorporates his feelings towards the external environment, creating a bias based on his assumption that everyone would have a similar perception that intentionally ignores what people have learnt throughout their development process.

Finally, disinterested pleasure is based on two central claims that have brought forward multiple critical debates. First, Kant considers “disinterested pleasure as devoid of all interest” (§32, 5:283) and second, “the judgment of taste does not arouse any specific interests” (§50, 5:320). The latter is problematic as it fails to allow for an external relationship between interests and aesthetic judgment. Guyer considers this as part of an error on Kant’s part. According to Guyer, it is absurd to claim that an object’s beauty cannot bring about any genuine desire since the beauty of an object forms a major reason for why one would be interested in taking an interest in it (Guyer, 1996, p. 54).

4. Conclusion

The objections to disinterestedness brought forward by Guyer and Schopenhauer succeed in opposing Kant’s notion of disinterestedness with regard to disinterested pleasure and the

judgment of taste. Additionally, Schiller and Guyer manage to successfully object to Kant's idea of disinterested pleasure, owing to their ability to separate Kant's arguments from reality. Simply put, all the extensive arguments brought forward by these philosophers revolve around whether pleasure can or cannot produce desire by itself (Hammermeister, 2002, pp. 83-85). Immanuel Kant admits that human beings are concerned with beauty from several angles, hence implying that desire may probably follow from the judgment of beauty. Additionally, Kant also admits that such desires cannot trace their origin only to pleasure from the beautiful. Kant's thesis on the notion of disinterestedness is therefore very controversial, owing to its own components. Kant tries to separate reality from imagination but, unfortunately, has ended up being categorised as someone who uses fantasy to come up with an approach to reality. Although most philosophers respect Kant's work, it is important to argue that this is not the type of work to follow blindly.

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