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Restrictions, Incitements, and Aesthetic Value. The Role of Historical Sciences in Art Production and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Art

Abstract

This paper addresses the role played by historical sciences—their concepts, rules, and examples—in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art. Based on Kant’s notion of ‘adherent beauty,’ and focusing on the case of ‘beautiful art,’ I will propose that historical sciences play a twofold role: not only do they work as restrictions when it comes to art production and appreciation, but they also function as enabling-conditions and incitements for the disclosure of new rules and the ascription of aesthetic value to works of art.

Keywords

Kant, Adherent Beauty, Aesthetic Value, History of Art, Rules

Introduction

In this paper, I will propose, within the framework of Kant’s aesthetic theory, that not only do historical sciences—their concepts, rules, and examples—restrict the imagination, but they also function as enabling conditions of art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art. What is more, they also function as incitements for testing and ultimately breaking old rules and for ascribing aesthetic value to works of art that disclose new rules.

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Taking into account that adherent beauty (conditioned, dependent beauty) and beautiful art (fine art, artistic beauty) are beautiful, and also considering that “[t]here is [no] science of the beautiful” (Kant 2008a, 184), it might be surprising, to say the least, that historical sciences understood as a corpus of knowledge play a role in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art. And yet, this is what I propose in my critical re-reading of Kant’s aesthetic theory.

As for my strategy, I will start by pointing out that art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art both involve taking rules into account. The imagination of both artists and appreciators is restricted in virtue of the consideration of those rules. Insofar as the rules are instantiated by objects which are part of the content of historical sciences, we can say that such sciences play a restrictive role in art production and appreciation.

Although historical sciences restrict imagination, this is just one feature of the role they play, namely a negative one. They also have a positive influence on art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art, insofar as these depend on the consideration of the rules that are instantiated in such sciences. Therefore, we can also say that the historical sciences play a positive role: they provide the enabling conditions of art production and appreciation.

Lastly, considering Kant’s account of genius, we will see that exemplary objects are part of a historical background and that artists create not only within but also against that background. To this extent, we can say that historical sciences function as incitements for testing and breaking rules. It is only if I am acquainted with such a corpus of knowledge that I can know the rules that exemplary objects instantiate. Only then can I recognize whether and how they are being tested and ultimately broken, and accordingly, I can ascribe aesthetic value to the objects that disclose new rules. To this extent, we can say that historical sciences function as incitements for the ascription of aesthetic value to works of art.

Concepts, Mechanisms, and Rules

In §16 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant introduces the distinction between ‘free’ and ‘adherent’ beauty. While the former “presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be,” the latter “does presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it” (ibidem, 114). The scope of adherent beauty can include both artifacts and natural

objects. For instance, not only the beauty of buildings but also the beauty of horses, as well as the beauty of human beings, are counted among adherent beauties.

Kant claims that in our aesthetic appreciation of objects, our concepts of what those objects ought to be (should be, are supposed to be, should represent, are supposed to represent) 'restrict' our imagination.¹ To use Kant's examples, our imagination would move freely if we were looking at a portrait and calmly contemplating a facial structure that had a pleasing, soft outline. However, if we knew that the portrait was meant to represent a warrior or the spirit of war in the person of Mars, we would consider it inappropriate that the artist had imagined the facial structure that way.² This sense of inappropriateness would preclude us from taking pleasure in the appreciation of the work, and therefore we would not call it beautiful—that is, we would not give it our aesthetic approval.

The same applies to the reading of a poem about love, the kingdom of hell, or let us say, the sublimity and majesty of creation, to keep using Kant's examples. Kant holds that poetry is the art in which imagination "can reveal itself in its full measure" (Kant 2008a, 193), and it is precisely "by setting the imagination free," that is, by letting it be original and produce aesthetic ideas, that the art of poetry "expands the mind" (ibidem, 203). Nevertheless, there must always be a tie between the material provided by the imagination (e.g., Jupiter's eagle, with the lightning in its claws, or Juno's peacock) and the concepts at stake (e.g., sublimity and majesty of creation).³ What applies to portraits and poems applies to art in general. In art, aesthetic ideas "must be occasioned by a concept of the object" (ibidem, 197).

Now, the imagination is restricted by more than the necessary consideration of a concept of what the object ought to be or what it is supposed to represent, e.g., a warrior, a child, a horse, a garden-house, love, the kingdom of hell, or the sublimity and majesty of creation. In what follows, I shall elaborate on the further restrictions on (the freedom of) imagination.

¹ Kant says that in the case of free beauty "[n]o concept of any end [...] is presupposed, by which the imagination [...] would merely be restricted" (ibidem, 114). Conversely, in the case of adherent beauty imagination is indeed restricted by the concept of what the object ought to be.

² As Eva Schaper remarks, according to Kant "facial features pleasing in themselves may not be congruent with what a particular kind of person is supposed to be: for example women are allowed to be pretty, warriors not" (Schaper 2003, 113).

³ It must be kept in mind that an aesthetic idea is "a representation of the imagination, associated with a given concept" (ibidem, 193), and that, as such, it belongs to the presentation of such concept. Were imagination left in a "lawless freedom" it would produce "nothing but nonsense" (ibidem, 197).

§17 is devoted to the ideal of the beautiful, that is, the ideal of human beauty. One of the two elements involved in this ideal is the ‘aesthetic normal idea.’ The aesthetic normal idea “represents the standard for judging” something “as a thing belonging to a particular species,” it is “a universal standard for the aesthetic judging of every individual of this species” (ibidem, 118). Such an idea is thus “the *rule*” which constitutes “the *correctness* in the presentation of the species” (ibidem, 119). If a presentation does not contradict this rule, then it is “academically correct” (ibidem, 119).

Academic correctness and the rules governing it are indispensable features in appraisals of human beauty, but they also play a role in art production and appreciation. When elaborating on art in §43, Kant claims that “in all liberal arts,” hence in fine art, “there is [...] required something compulsory, or as it is called, a *mechanism*, without which the *spirit* [...] would have no body and would entirely evaporate” (ibidem, 183).

To be sure, mechanisms apply to any art.⁴ Nevertheless, they change according to the kind, genre, or form of art in play. Kant’s examples of mechanisms in §43 are those which apply to the art of poetry: “correctness and richness of diction as well as prosody and meter” (ibidem, 183). Had he chosen another kind, genre, or form of art; he would have mentioned other mechanisms.

Thus, restrictions are not just a matter of having a concept of what the object ought to be or what it should represent. Our faculty of imagination is also restricted by the mechanisms and rules which works of art are supposed to follow as works of art of a specific kind, e.g., poems, paintings, pieces of sculpture, works of architecture, ready-mades, conceptual art objects, installations, happenings, and so on.⁵ For instance, our imagination

⁴ In §47, Kant describes the mechanical character of artistic beauty as something “which can be grasped and followed according to rules, and thus something *academically correct*”, and adds that it constitutes “the essential condition of the art” (ibidem, 188).

⁵ Kant’s distinction between free and adherent beauty, as Denis Dutton remarks, is after all “not only about the assignment of an object to a category (with its particular perfections), but also about the general background conditions for artistic practice” (Dutton 1994, 235). With respect to this specific issue, Henry E. Allison seems to be in line with Dutton, although Allison brings an additional distinction up—the one between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic constraints. While in the case of the concepts of what the objects ought to represent “it was a matter of some extra-aesthetic constraints on what is appropriate,” in the case of the kind, genre, or form of art “this likewise imposes constraints on what is appropriate, but these are no longer extra-aesthetic, since they stem from the art-form itself and may be seen as involving the academic norms or standards of correctness for that form” (Allison 2001, 296). Allison’s aesthetic/extra-aesthetic constraints distinction constitutes a significant step in his argument in favor of the possibility of ascribing free

would move absolutely freely if we were reading a text about the sublimity and majesty of creation, including some excerpts mentioning Jupiter's eagle and Juno's peacock. But if we became aware that the text was supposed to be a poem, we would consider it inappropriate that the poet had not followed the rules of diction, prosody, and meter. Just as in the case of the portrait of Mars with a pleasing, softly outlined facial structure, our sense of inappropriateness would preclude us from taking pleasure in the appreciation of the text. Therefore, we would not call it beautiful and we would not give it our aesthetic approval.

Naturally, some qualification is needed here. By 'rule' I mean a rule "that has a *concept* for its determining ground" (Kant 2008a, 186), rather than the rule that must be given to beautiful art through a gift of nature, namely, genius, and which "cannot be couched in a formula to serve as a precept, for then the judgment about the beautiful would be determinable in accordance with concepts" (ibidem, 188).⁶ Indeed, art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art cannot be derived from determinate rules, that is, from rules "which can be learned and which must be precisely followed" (ibidem, 191).⁷ Nevertheless, that does not entail that determinate rules cannot play any role in art production and appreciation—they can, and they do.

Restrictions

There is something of a historical nature in the rules I have discussed in the previous section. In the remainder of my paper, I shall be concerned with presenting this historical nature and giving an account of the role it plays in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art.

In §44, Kant holds that "for beautiful art [...] much science is required" (ibidem, 184). By science he means historical sciences—"e.g., acquaintance with ancient languages, wide reading of those authors considered to be clas-

beauty to works of art. In any case, although Allison's view might conflict with Dutton's, both agree that restrictions not only occur at the level of the category of objects, they also stem from the mechanisms and rules that works of art are supposed to follow as works of art of such and such a kind.

⁶ It must be remembered that genius "is a *talent* for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition of skill for that which can be learned in accordance with some rule" (ibidem, 186).

⁷ As Kant reiterates, "[t]here is [no] science of the beautiful" (ibidem, 184), "there cannot be any science of the beautiful" (ibidem, 228).

sical, history, acquaintance with antiquities, etc.” (ibidem, 184). According to Kant, “these historical sciences [...] constitute the necessary preparation and foundation for beautiful art” (ibidem, 184). Why is this so? What does he mean by assigning a necessary status to the historical sciences—that is, claiming that the preparation and foundation they constitute is necessary for artistic beauty? Why does aesthetically worthy art necessarily need, say, the history of art as its preparation and foundation?

Before answering these questions, I shall clarify what I take historical sciences to be.⁸ In my understanding, historical sciences constitute a corpus of knowledge, part of which involves knowledge of objects that instantiate the rules of art, including the rules which works of art are supposed to follow as artworks of such and such a kind. In a way, such a corpus might be called ‘taste,’ if by taste one means that which “will go its way in the future, as in the past” in its “formation and culture,” even without a critique of the aesthetic power of judgment (ibidem, 58). Naturally, this is not “the faculty of taste, as the aesthetic power of judgment” itself (ibidem, 57-58).⁹

In §48, Kant elaborates on how an artist finds the right form for his artwork. Kant claims that the artist does so “after he has practiced and corrected” his taste—that is, his aesthetic power of judgment, his faculty of aesthetic appreciation—“by means of various examples of art or nature” (ibidem, 191). The first thing to observe here is that finding the right form is not “as it were a matter of inspiration or a free swing of the mental powers;” rather, it is something “laborious,” that is, “a slow and indeed painstaking improvement” (ibidem, 191).¹⁰ Nevertheless, what should be stressed is that

⁸ A thorough (and necessarily long) description of what Kant means by that would require another paper, which would have to mention “those prior forms of knowledge that are called *humaniora*” and the relation between them and “the culture of the mental powers” in which “[t]he propaedeutic for all beautiful art [...] seems to lie” (ibidem, 229). In §44, Kant asserts that “[b]eautiful art [...] promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication” (ibidem, 185).

⁹ I mention the former understanding of ‘taste’ in my ‘From Beautiful Art to Taste,’ where I also consider Allison’s view that constraints related to taste are of an aesthetic kind (see Lemos 2017). For some instances in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* where Kant relates taste to mechanisms and rules, see also Zammito 1992, 145 and 381.

¹⁰ In §47, Kant criticized those ‘superficial minds’ that believe “they cannot show that they are blossoming geniuses any better than by pronouncing themselves free of the academic constraints of all rules, and [...] that one parades around better on a horse with the staggers than one that is properly trained” (ibidem, 189). Although we tend to associate the products of genius with the freedom of imagination, there is something in them that “is to be ascribed [...] to possible learning or schooling” (ibidem, 195).

the faculty of aesthetic appreciation is practiced and corrected using examples. That is how the laborious, slow, painstaking process mentioned by Kant develops into an improvement. Artists are first guided by examples.¹¹

What does this have to do with the status and role of historical sciences? In answering this question, I will also uncover the first key to understanding the role of historical sciences in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art. Fortunately, the answer is easily provided, as it lies in the content of historical sciences themselves.

Historical sciences constitute the necessary preparation and foundation for aesthetically worthy art insofar as one finds exemplary art objects within them, that is, the examples that guide artists. Such objects exemplify the rules of art, or indeed, the rules of the arts. These are the rules that students learn and depend on to guide them through the laborious process of practice and correction, as they make slow, painstaking improvement as producers of art objects.

The same rules must be considered when one aesthetically appreciates a work of art. Once these rules are considered, our imagination is restricted. Historical sciences thus play a restrictive role in the aesthetic appreciation of art.

However, two issues arise from this description of the role of historical sciences in art production and appreciation. First, if restricting imagination is the sole role that historical sciences play in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art, then they only play a negative role. Second, if the rules which works of art are supposed to follow as works of art of such and such a kind are exemplified or instantiated by exemplary objects from the history of art, then artists would seem to be condemned to follow the same rules forever and ever. The history of art would be the history of sameness.

First, I will start with the issue of whether the role played by historical sciences is only a negative one. Admittedly, the connotations of 'to restrict' are mostly negative. Restrictions are usually associated with limits or confinements.¹² They suggest a decrease in freedom. They refer to what is prohibited, forbidden, or what one cannot do. So, the claim that historical sciences place restrictions both in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art amounts to saying that they limit something that human beings

¹¹ Indeed, despite setting imagination free, the art of poetry is "guided [...] by precept or example" (ibidem, 203).

¹² It is not lightly that commentators also speak of 'constraints' (see Guyer 1997; Allison 2001) and 'circumscriptions' (see Kalar 2006).

highly praise. Since within Kant's framework aesthetic pleasure takes place only if imagination moves freely, it might be said that historical sciences—their rules and mechanisms—prevent such pleasure from taking place.

Enabling Conditions

And yet, far from preventing aesthetic pleasure, historical sciences have a positive influence both in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art. To fully understand the role that historical sciences play, we need to acknowledge not only the negative aspect discussed in the previous sections but also a positive aspect. This is the second key to understanding the role that such sciences play. I will discuss it in what follows.

Kant uses another name for adherent beauty: 'conditioned beauty.'¹³ The applied judgment of taste, that is, the judgment of adherent beauty, is also called 'logically conditioned aesthetic judgment.'¹⁴ What is more, many interpreters use the phrase 'dependent beauty.'¹⁵ Adherent beauty not only adheres to a concept of what the object ought to be, of what it should represent; it also depends on such a concept in order to be ascribed, recognized, felt. If the object is of an artistic sort, and so adherent beauty is to be ascribed to a work of art, it depends on an additional factor: that the object follows the rules it is supposed to follow as an art object of such and such a kind, genre, or form of art.

Now, we have seen that those rules are instantiated by the exemplary objects that are part of the content of historical sciences. Artistic beauty is therefore dependent on knowledge of the latter. On Kant's account, aesthetic appreciation of art is not possible without considering the content of historical sciences.

Denis Dutton gives an insightful account of the conditions of the production of aesthetically worthy works of art. Rather than stressing the restrictive character of what he describes as "the structures, norms, and conventional expectations" of an art and its history (Dutton 1994, 232), he calls them "*enabling conditions*" of beauty (ibidem, 233). His point is that those conditions make it possible for an art to happen.¹⁶ Without them, artistic

¹³ It is as "conditioned beauty" that adherent beauty is "ascribed to objects that stand under the concept of a particular end" (Kant 2008a, 114).

¹⁴ See ibidem, 190.

¹⁵ That is indeed the way J.C. Meredith translates 'anhängende' (see Kant 2008b, 60).

¹⁶ Dutton also calls them 'the underlying conditions of an art' (see ibidem, 233). Giving the example of music, and referring specifically to Kant's aesthetic theory, he asserts:

creative freedom would not be possible at all, and neither would the free play of the imagination with the understanding—the free play which (or the feeling of which) is the ground of aesthetic approval of an object. As Dutton succinctly comments, “there can be no play without rules” (ibidem, 237).

In line with Dutton, Henry E. Allison claims that knowledge of the rules which artworks are supposed to follow as artworks of a particular kind is what enables one even to recognize what is going on in a given work of art: “without *some* knowledge of this sort, which in many cases might be fairly minimal, one cannot begin to appreciate a work of art because one is not aware of what the artist is trying to do” (Allison 2001, 295).¹⁷

Yet, such knowledge has advantages that go far beyond informing us about the artist’s intentions. It makes a difference when it comes to recognizing features of the objects that would otherwise pass unnoticed. Focusing on the case of music, Christopher Janaway asserts that “[m]any general features such as balances, contrasts and discontinuities [...] can be perceived only by a listener able to identify distinct musical voices, modulation, antiphony, theme and variations, cadences, sonata form, and so on” (Janaway 1997, 476). What is more, the fact that one can perceive those and other features broadens the range of possibilities of experiencing aesthetic pleasure, both

“These very structures make it possible for music to happen; they condition music and are presupposed by it. Music as an intelligible art form depends on them: what they give back in return for their ‘restrictions’ is, as Kant says, that they enable the *art* of music to be ‘possible in the first place’” (ibidem, 234).

¹⁷ In fact, even in the case of the ascription, recognition, or feeling of natural beauty it is apparent that differences in background may result in differences in aesthetic appreciation. As Ruth Lorand states, “[a] tulip is a tulip in every context, and no comparison affects the degree of its ‘tulipness’; but the same tulip may look more beautiful against a given background than another” (Lorand 1992, 252). Lorand states this despite claiming that there is only one kind of beauty, namely, free beauty. On the opposite extreme, Philip Mallaband argues for the possibility that an object may be judged to be adherently beautiful without being judged to be freely beautiful. Nevertheless, Mallaband is in line with Lorand in holding that knowledge may change aesthetic appreciation: “[t]he mayfly is a small insect. It cannot fly far, and is a weak flier; many live only for less than a day, so that often they die before producing any offspring. Without these considerations, one would not be inclined to judge these insects as beautiful: they have dull colorations, are small, and are barely distinguishable by the layman from countless other insects. However, when in possession of these cognitions about the mayfly, one might perceive the insect to possess a rare fragility, and thus judge it to be aesthetically valuable in virtue of this. So the mayfly could be considered to possess a property that is a bad-making property for insects (extremely short lifespan), but which is the ground for the good-making aesthetic property (rare fragility) which grounds a positive aesthetic judgement” (Mallaband 2002, 74-75).

concerning its objects and the intensity of the pleasure. As Janaway concludes, “[s]uperior conceptualization opens vistas of musical form, enables one to listen at greater degrees of accuracy and complexity, enlarges the scope of what can be experienced with pleasure, and deepens the pleasure itself” (ibidem, 476).

To sum up, acquaintance with historical sciences, including knowledge of the historical mechanisms and rules of art, not only restricts (limits, confine, constraints, circumscribes) imagination. It also plays a positive role in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art: in the final analysis, art production and appreciation depend on knowledge of the historical mechanisms and rules of art, the latter are the enabling conditions of the former. Moreover, such knowledge enables one to notice features of the art objects one would not otherwise notice. As a result, the spectrum of the possibilities of pleasure gets wider: the objects of pleasure are, say, multiplied; and the pleasure itself can become more intense. In many cases, such knowledge makes the difference between ascribing, recognizing, or feeling the aesthetic value of an object, and giving it aesthetic approval, or not doing so at all.

Incitements

It has now been made evident that the role played by historical sciences in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art has a twofold nature. I will now show that the negative and the positive characters of the role of such sciences in art production and appreciation are inseparable from each other. In light of this, I will deny that the history of art might be seen as the history of sameness.

The risk is that historical sciences, namely the history of art, may be seen as the history of sameness. This comes from the fact that exemplary objects within it instantiate the rules which artworks of art should follow as works of art of a particular kind. If all that artists do is follow those rules, then the history of art is nothing but the history of what Kant calls ‘blockheads,’ who “can never do more than merely learn and imitate” (Kant 2008a, 187), or, even worse, the history of what he calls ‘aping,’ which is what imitation becomes “if the student *copies* everything” (ibidem, 196).

And yet, from Homer to Wieland, and from Wordsworth to Mickiewicz, we appreciate much more than imitations or copies of what has been done before, to say the least. I shall therefore move to the second issue that arose from the description of the role of historical sciences in art production and appreciation I had provided at the outset of my paper: is the history of art the history of sameness?

Immediately following §49, Kant asserts that the example of genius “for other good minds gives rise to a school, i.e., a methodical instruction in accordance with rules” and that “for these beautiful art is to that extent imitation” (ibidem, 196). This passage might give the impression that there is nothing new in the history of art.¹⁸

However, we should also be reminded that, according to Kant, “genius is entirely opposed to the *spirit of imitation*” (ibidem, 187). The product of genius is not an example “for imitation (for then that which is genius in it and constitutes the spirit of the work would be lost)” (ibidem, 195).¹⁹

To make sense of this, one just needs to regard the negative and the positive characters of the role played by historical sciences as two sides of the same coin. This is the third and last key to understanding the role such sciences play in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art.

Commenting on imaginative productivity, Hans-Georg Gadamer remarks that it “is not the richest where it is merely free [...] but rather in a field of play where the understanding’s desire for unity does not so much confine it as suggests incitements to play” (Gadamer 2006, 41).²⁰ The point here is that restrictions (confinements, limits) cannot be separated from incitements to go beyond them. The rules instantiated by exemplary art objects stand in historical sciences as the historical background not only within but also against which artists create.

To this extent, then, we can say that rules are not only there to be followed, but also to be tested and ultimately broken. This is per Kant’s assertions that “the rule must be abstracted from [...] the product, against which

¹⁸ This impression is strengthened by Kant’s claim that for geniuses “art somewhere comes to a halt, because a limit is set for it beyond which it cannot go, which presumably has also long since been reached and cannot be extended any more” (ibidem, 188), as well as the fondness Kant shows for “unalterable rules” in a footnote to §17, which discusses the models of taste concerning the arts of discourse (ibidem, 116).

¹⁹ In line with this, Kant adds in §60 that “the universal rules under which [the master] ultimately brings his procedure can serve rather to bring its principal elements to mind as occasion requires than to prescribe them to [the student]” (ibidem, 229).

²⁰ In line with Gadamer, Dutton adds that Kant “recognized the ability of rules not just to limit, but to incite the free imagination and provide it with material” (Dutton 1994, 234). Dutton’s examples are worth mentioning: “the freedom of the portrait artist is the freedom to imaginatively recreate a human face, but it will be both incited and limited by the portrait subject; the poet’s imaginative creativity may be relatively unbounded, but even it is played out against the background of the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, conventions, associations, and history of language. A composer’s creativity consists in making a musical work within the forms and genres of a tradition; a musical performer’s creativity consists in imaginatively recreating the notes of the score” (ibidem, 235).

others may test their own talent” (Kant 2008a, 188) and that “the product of genius [...] is an example [...] for emulation by another genius, who is thereby awakened to the feeling of his own originality, to exercise freedom from coercion in his art in such a way that the latter thereby itself acquires a new rule” (ibidem, 195-196).

Now, this entails the consideration of a distinction. As I mentioned above, aesthetically worthy art objects might give rise to what Kant calls ‘a methodical instruction in accordance with rules.’ When it comes to those good minds who, nonetheless, lack genius, beautiful art is imitation. The case of genius is different in kind.²¹ It is rather a matter of emulation, succession.²² What matters in succession is the manner, the way. Accordingly, when discussing the two ways of putting thoughts together in a presentation, Kant asserts that the one which is valid for beautiful art is the “*manner (modus aestheticus)*,” the standard of which is “the *feeling* of unity in the presentation” (ibidem, 196).²³ Even so, “[t]he master must demonstrate what the student is to do and how he should accomplish it,” but also prevent his demonstrations “from being immediately taken by him as prototypes and models for imitation” (ibidem, 229).

I shall now move to the aesthetic appreciation of art. We have seen that taste, that is, the aesthetic power of judgment is practiced and corrected using examples. Although I have focused on geniuses and art production,

²¹ A genius is “someone who is gifted by nature for beautiful art” (ibidem, 188). Geniuses are “those favorites of nature with respect to their talent for beautiful art” (ibidem, 188). Kant also refers to genius as a ‘talent’, a ‘natural gift’, an ‘inborn faculty’, an ‘inborn predisposition of the mind’ (see ibidem, 186), or a ‘skill’ (see ibidem, 188). To be sure, it consists in a “proportion of the mental powers” that is extraordinary (ibidem, 188): only “in a certain relation” does the “union” of imagination and understanding constitute genius (ibidem, 194). It is by means of such a relation that nature in the subject gives the rule to art: “nature in the subject (and by means of the disposition of its faculties) must give the rule to art” (ibidem, 186).

²² How such phenomenon occurs is not something that Kant spells out within the sections of his third *Critique* devoted to art. As he himself acknowledges, “[h]ow this is possible is difficult to explain” (ibidem, 188). In any case, in §32 we can see that “the correct expression for any influence that the products of an exemplary author can have on others” is “[s]uccession, related to a precedent, not imitation” (ibidem, 164). The word at play is ‘Nachfolge’, which here Guyer translates as ‘succession.’ Interestingly, the word that he translates as ‘emulation’, following §49, is also ‘Nachfolge’ (see ibidem, 195). What this means is “to create from the same sources from which the [exemplary author] created, and to learn from one’s predecessor only the manner of conducting oneself in so doing” (ibidem, 164).

²³ What is at play in succession, Kant stresses it, is “a *manner (modus)*”, whereas in the case of those good minds who lack genius there is “a *way of teaching*”, that is, a “*methodus*” (ibidem, 229).

the same applies to the aesthetic appreciation of art.²⁴ Exemplary objects instantiate the rules of art, and there is something of a historical nature in those rules. The objects that instantiate them are part of the content of the corpus of knowledge Kant calls 'historical sciences.'

We have seen that historical sciences play a negative, restrictive role in the aesthetic appreciation of art. The rules of art must be considered, and once they are, our imagination is restricted—we appreciate within limits and confinements. However, we have also seen that restricting is just one aspect, indeed a negative one, of the role played by historical sciences in art appreciation. Awareness of the rules also enables one to recognize some of the features of works of art. Without this recognition, there would be no play between imagination and understanding. This amounts to saying that if rules were not considered, there would be no feeling of pleasure and thus no ascription of aesthetic value. To this extent, historical sciences function as the enabling conditions of the aesthetic appreciation of art.

As for the question of whether historical sciences also function as incitements to test and ultimately break the rules, it might be argued that it only makes sense to ask it for art production. When it comes to the aesthetic appreciation of art, there seems to be no historical background of rules that appreciators would be incited to break. And yet, I can only recognize whether and how rules are being tested and broken if I have an acquaintance with the history of art and am familiar with the rules that exemplary objects instantiate and that artworks are supposed to follow as members of a particular kind. To this extent, then, historical sciences function as incitements for appreciators to see artists testing and breaking the rules of art—and accordingly, to ascribe aesthetic value to works of art through which this is done.

Although rules must be taken into account, they may be broken;²⁵ and yet, although they may be broken, they must be taken into account.²⁶ The positive and the negative characters of the role played by historical sci-

²⁴ It should be remembered that the aesthetic power of judgment is not a rare talent. As Kant remarks, in §39, "the proportion of [the] cognitive faculties that is required for taste is also requisite for the common and healthy understanding that one may presuppose in everyone" (*ibidem*, 173).

²⁵ As Rachel Zuckert stresses "[a]rt production is in part conceptually determined (aimed at making a work of a certain kind), but, unlike technical production, is significantly underdetermined by such conceptual intentions" (Zuckert 2007, 211).

²⁶ As Dutton remarks, not even a performer such as Glenn Gould—who was not interested in joining the Beethovenian performing tradition carried on by Backhaus, Kempff, and Schnabel—could have ignored Beethoven's musical score, for otherwise Gould's performances "would not be performances of Beethoven" (Dutton 1994, 238).

ences in art production and the aesthetic appreciation of art are inseparable from each other. Restrictions, confinements, and limits, on the one hand, and incitements, on the other, are two sides of the same coin. They are the rules that a work of art is supposed to follow as a work of art of such and such a kind and which are instantiated by the exemplary art objects found within historical sciences. Knowledge of such rules also incites artists to break them and appreciators to see them being broken.

To be sure, this historical process of revisiting old rules and disclosing new ones never comes to an end: “art [...] acquires a new rule, by which the talent shows itself as exemplary” (Kant 2008a, 196). Old rules are replaced by new ones that are instantiated by art objects that become exemplary works of art and therefore part of the content of the historical sciences. They will be necessarily considered in future art production and appreciation and will restrict, enable, and incite our imagination.

Let me finish with the example of Krzysztof Wodiczko’s ‘Abraham Lincoln: War Veterans Project.’ In producing this work, Wodiczko presumably had to take into account the rules of art, the rules of historical statuary, memorials, or monumental sculpture (or maybe of a video projection on sculpture), and the rules of the representation of Abraham Lincoln (or maybe of the artistic expression of memories and experiences of war). However, such rules did not conceptually overdetermine Wodiczko’s work. Instead, they incited Wodiczko’s imagination, with some rules being broken, and new ones being disclosed. ‘Abraham Lincoln: War Veterans Project’ may be taken as an exemplary object. The new rules it discloses are now included in the rules of art, the rules of sculpture, and the rules of the artistic expression of memories and experiences of war. They have become part of the content of the history of art. Same story, but not the history of sameness.

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