KANT'S CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT is probably the most important and influential work in Western aesthetic theory, and it is not difficult to understand why. His general theory may be read as a response to the problems raised by Hume concerning the necessity in scientific understanding or morality. Kant's theory may equally be interpreted as a synthetic resolution of the central problems of modern philosophy. He argues at great length that there are fundamental principles in the human mind that constitute its cognitive powers, that enable it to synthesize its manifold experiences into unity. Thus, space and time are forms under which we must experience our surroundings in order to experience them at all.

Kant's first critique, the Critique of Pure Reason, may therefore be read as an analysis of the principles that define the concepts whereby we can experience and understand the world surrounding us. His second critique, the Critique of Practical Reason, is an analysis of the principles that define the concepts of moral obligation and duty. In effect then the first Critique defines understanding under causal necessity, and the second Critique defines reason under the concept of freedom.

Into this general system, Kant brings fundamental questions concerning the nature of art. He denies that art falls under the concepts of necessity or freedom, denies that art is a form of understanding or morality. In other words, he offers a powerful argument for the uniqueness and autonomy of art by denying that aesthetic judgment and taste are objective. Nevertheless, although subjective, judgments of beauty must be universal, shareable by everyone who possesses good taste. In relation to beauty, Kant offers a community of taste ungoverned by concepts. But Kant also offers a theory of the sublime, where the infinite, beyond concepts, appears in art, and of genius, the capacity to produce apart from rules.
The autonomy of art is attained at an enormous price in Kant, since art can offer neither knowledge nor morality, though it may be conjoined with them in impure arts. Kant’s theory of taste has had enormous influence, supporting a view of art for art’s sake, independent of the human or natural world. Yet there is much more to the *Critique of Judgment* than this. His view of genius was deeply influential in Romanticism. His view of the sublime was important for Hegel and Nietzsche, greatly influencing most late Continental writing. We should also note Kant’s view of the beautiful as the symbol of the good, and his conception of the aesthetic as the free play of imagination. Delight in the beautiful and sublime is a delight in the cognitive faculties of imagination and judgment freed from their subservience to reason and the understanding—that is, freed from the constraints of propositional discourse. This notion of freedom in the cognitive faculties had an enormous influence on Kant’s German followers, especially Schelling and Hegel.
§ 46. BEAUTIFUL ART IS THE ART OF GENIUS. *Genius* is the talent (or natural gift) which gives the rule to art. Since talent, as the innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to nature, we may express the matter thus: Genius is the innate mental disposition (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art.

Whatever may be thought of this definition, whether it is merely arbitrary or whether it is adequate to the concept that we are accustomed to combine with the word *genius* (which is to be examined in the following paragraphs), we can prove already beforehand that, according to the signification of the word here adopted, beautiful arts must necessarily be considered as arts of *genius*.

For every art presupposes rules by means of which in the first instance a product, if it is to be called artistic, is represented as possible. But the concept of beautiful art does not permit the judgment upon the beauty of a product to be derived from any rule which has a *concept* as its determining ground, and therefore has at its basis a concept of the way in which the product is possible. Therefore beautiful art cannot itself devise the rule according to which it can bring about its product. But since at the same time a product can never be called art without some precedent rule, nature in the subject must (by the harmony of its faculties) give the rule to art; i.e. beautiful art is only possible as a product of genius.

We thus see (1) that genius is a *talent* for producing that for which no definite rule can be given; it is not a mere aptitude for what can be learned by a rule. Hence *originality* must be its first property. (2) But since it also can produce original nonsense, its products must be models, i.e. *exemplary*, and they consequently ought not to spring from imitation, but must serve as a standard or rule of judgment for others. (3) It cannot describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its products, but it gives the rule just as nature does. Hence the author of a product for which he is indebted to his genius does not know himself how he has come by his ideas; and he has not the power to devise the like at pleasure or in accordance with a plan, and to communicate it to others in precepts that will enable them to produce similar products. (Hence it is probable that the word "genius" is derived from *genius*, that peculiar guiding and guardian spirit given to a man at his birth, from whose suggestion these original ideas proceed.) (4) Nature, by the medium of genius, does not prescribe rules to science but to art, and to it only in so far as it is to be beautiful art.

§ 47. ELUCIDATION AND CONFIRMATION OF THE ABOVE EXPLANATION OF GENIUS. Everyone is agreed that genius is entirely opposed to the *spirit of imitation*. Now since learning is nothing but imitation, it follows that the greatest ability and teachableness (capacity) regarded *qua* teachableness cannot avail for genius. Even if a man thinks or composes for himself and does not merely take in what others have taught, even if he discovers many things in art and science, this is not the right ground for calling such a (perhaps great) head a
genius (as opposed to him who, because he can only learn and imitate, is
called a shallowpate). For even these things could be learned; they lie in the nat-
ural path of him who investigates and reflects according to rules, and they do
not differ specifically from what can be acquired by industry through imita-
tion. Thus we can readily learn all that Newton has set forth in his immortal
work on the Principles of Natural Philosophy, however great a head was required
to discover it, but we cannot learn to write spirited poetry, however express
may be the precepts of the art and however excellent its models. The reason
is that Newton could make all his steps, from the first elements of geometry to
his own great and profound discoveries, intuitively plain and definite as
regards consequence, not only to himself but to everyone else. But a Homer
or a Wieland cannot show how his ideas, so rich in fancy and yet so full of
thought, come together in his head, simply because he does not know and
therefore cannot teach others. In science, then, the greatest discoverer only
differs in degree from his laborious imitator and pupil, but he differs specifi-
cally from him whom nature has gifted for beautiful art. And in this there is
no depreciation of those great men to whom the human race owes so much
gratitude, as compared with nature’s favorites in respect of the talent for
beautiful art. For in the fact that the former talent is directed to the ever
advancing greater perfection of knowledge and every advantage depending on
it, and at the same time to the imparting this same knowledge to others—in
this it has a great superiority over [the talent of] those who deserve the honor
of being called geniuses. For art stands still at a certain point; a boundary is set
to it beyond which it cannot go, which presumably has been reached long ago
and cannot be extended further. Again, artistic skill cannot be communi-
cated; it is imparted to every artist immediately by the hand of nature; and so
it dies with him, until nature endows another in the same way, so that he
only needs an example in order to put in operation in a similar fashion the tal-
ent of which he is conscious.

If now it is a natural gift which must prescribe its rule to art (as beautiful
art), of what kind is this rule? It cannot be reduced to a formula and serve as
a precept, for then the judgment upon the beautiful would be determinable
according to concepts; but the rule must be abstracted from the fact, i.e.
from the product, on which others may try their own talent by using it as a
model, not to be copied but to be imitated. How this is possible is hard to
explain. The ideas of the artist excite like ideas in his pupils if nature had
endowed them with a like proportion of their mental powers. Hence models
of beautiful art are the only means of handing down these ideas to posterity.
This cannot be done by mere descriptions, especially not in the case of the
arts of speech; and in this latter classical models are only to be had in the old
dead languages, now preserved only as “the learned languages.”

Although mechanical and beautiful art are very different, the first being
a mere art of industry and learning and the second of genius, yet there is no
beautiful art in which there is not a mechanical element that can be compre-
hended by rules and followed accordingly, and in which therefore there must
be something *scholastic* as an essential condition. For [in every art] some purpose must be conceived; otherwise we could not ascribe the product to art at all; it would be a mere product of chance. But in order to accomplish a purpose, definite rules from which we cannot dispense ourselves are requisite. Now since the originality of the talent constitutes an essential (though not the only) element in the character of genius, shallow heads believe that they cannot better show themselves to be full-blown geniuses than by throwing off the constraint of all rules; they believe, in effect, that one could make a braver show on the back of a wild horse than on the back of a trained animal. Genius can only furnish rich *material* for products of beautiful art; its execution and its *form* require talent cultivated in the schools, in order to make such a use of this material as will stand examination by the judgment. But it is quite ridiculous for a man to speak and decide like a genius in things which require the most careful investigation by reason. One does not know whether to laugh more at the impostor who spreads such a mist round him that we cannot clearly use our judgment, and so use our imagination the more, or at the public which naively imagines that his inability to recognize clearly and to comprehend the masterpiece before him arises from new truths crowding in on him in such abundance that details (duly weighed definitions and accurate examination of fundamental propositions) seem but clumsy work.

§ 48. OF THE RELATION OF GENIUS TO TASTE. For *judging* of beautiful objects as such, *taste* is requisite; but for beautiful art, i.e. for the *production* of such objects, *genius* is requisite.

If we consider genius as the talent for beautiful art (which the special meaning of the word implies) and in this point of view analyze it into the faculties which must concur to constitute such a talent, it is necessary in the first instance to determine exactly the difference between natural beauty, the judging of which requires only taste, and artificial beauty, the possibility of which (to which reference must be made in judging such an object) requires genius.

A natural beauty is a *beautiful thing*; artificial beauty is a *beautiful representation* of a thing.

In order to judge of a natural beauty as such, I need not have beforehand a concept of what sort of thing the object is to be; i.e. I need not know its material purposiveness (the purpose), but its mere form pleases by itself in the act of judging it without any knowledge of the purpose. But if the object is given as a product of art and as such is to be declared beautiful, then, because art always supposes a purpose in the cause (and its causality), there must be at bottom in the first instance a concept of what the thing is to be. And as the agreement of the manifold in a thing with its inner destination, its purpose, constitutes the perfection of the thing, it follows that in judging of artificial beauty the perfection of the thing must be taken into account; but in judging of natural beauty (as such), there is no question at all about this. It is true that in judging of objects of nature, especially objects endowed with life, e.g.
a man or a horse, their objective purposiveness also is commonly taken into consideration in judging of their beauty; but then the judgment is no longer purely aesthetical, i.e. a mere judgment of taste. Nature is no longer judged inasmuch as it appears like art, but in so far as it is actual (although superhuman) art; and the teleological judgment serves as the basis and condition of the aesthetical, as a condition to which the latter must have respect. In such a case, e.g. if it is said "That is a beautiful woman," we think nothing else than this: nature represents in her figure the purposes in view of the shape of a woman's figure. For we must look beyond the mere form to a concept, if the object is to be thought in such a way by means of a logically conditioned aesthetic judgment.

Beautiful art shows its superiority in this, that it describes as beautiful things which may be in nature ugly or displeasing. The Furies, diseases, the devastations of war, etc., may [even regarded as calamitous] be described as very beautiful, as they are represented in a picture. There is only one kind of ugliness which cannot be represented in accordance with nature without destroying all aesthetical satisfaction, and consequently artificial beauty, viz. that which excites disgust. For in this singular sensation, which rests on mere imagination, the object is represented as it were obtruding itself for our enjoyment, while we strive against it with all our might. And the artistic representation of the object is no longer distinguished from the nature of the object itself in our sensation, and thus it is impossible that it can be regarded as beautiful. The art of sculpture again, because in its products art is almost interchangeable with nature, excludes from its creations the immediate representation of ugly objects; e.g. it represents death by a beautiful genius, the warlike spirit of Mars, and permits [all such things] to be represented only by an allegory or attribute that has a pleasing effect, and thus only indirectly by the aid of the interpretation of reason, and not for the mere aesthetical judgment.

So much for the beautiful representation of an object, which is properly only the form of the presentation of a concept, by means of which this latter is communicated universally. But to give this form to the product of beautiful art, mere taste is requisite. By taste the artist estimates his work after he has exercised and corrected it by manifold examples from art or nature, and after many, often toilsome, attempts to content himself he finds that form which satisfies him. Hence this form is not, as it were, a thing of inspiration or the result of a free swing of the mental powers, but of a slow and even painful process of improvement, by which he seeks to render it adequate to his thought, without detriment to the freedom of the play of his powers.

But taste is merely a judging and not a productive faculty, and what is appropriate to it is therefore not a work of beautiful art. It can only be a product belonging to useful and mechanical art or even to science, produced according to definite rules that can be learned and must be exactly followed. But the pleasing form that is given to it is only the vehicle of communication and a mode, as it were, of presenting it, in respect of which we remain free to
a certain extent, although it is combined with a definite purpose. Thus we desire that table appointments, a moral treatise, even a sermon, should have in themselves this form of beautiful art, without it seeming to be sought; but we do not therefore call these things works of beautiful art. Under the latter class are reckoned a poem, a piece of music, a picture gallery, etc.; and in some works of this kind asserted to be works of beautiful art we find genius without taste, while in others we find taste without genius.

§ 49 OF THE FACULTIES OF THE MIND THAT CONSTITUTE GENIUS. We say of certain products of which we expect that they should at least in part appear as beautiful art, they are without spirit, although we find nothing to blame in them on the score of taste. A poem may be very neat and elegant, but without spirit. A history may be exact and well arranged, but without spirit. A festal discourse may be solid and at the same time elaborate, but without spirit. Conversation is often not devoid of entertainment, but it is without spirit; even of a woman we say that she is pretty, an agreeable talker, and courteous, but without spirit. What then do we mean by spirit?

Spirit, in an aesthetical sense, is the name given to the animating principle of the mind. But that by means of which this principle animates the soul, the material which it applies to that [purpose], is what puts the mental powers purposively into swing, i.e. into such a play as maintains itself and strengthens the mental powers in their exercise.

Now I maintain that this principle is no other than the faculty of presenting aesthetical ideas. And by an aesthetical idea I understand that representation of the imagination which occasions much thought, without however any definite thought, i.e. any concept, being capable of being adequate to it; it consequently cannot be completely compassed and made intelligible by language. We easily see that it is the counterpart (pendant) of a rational idea, which conversely is a concept to which no intuition (or representation of the imagination) can be adequate.

The imagination (as a productive faculty of cognition) is very powerful in creating another nature, as it were, out of the material that actual nature gives it. We entertain ourselves with it when experience becomes too commonplace, and by it we remold experience, always indeed in accordance with analogical laws, but yet also in accordance with principles which occupy a higher place in reason (laws, too, which are just as natural to us as those by which understanding comprehends empirical nature). Thus we feel our freedom from the law of association (which attaches to the empirical employment of imagination), so that the material supplied to us by nature in accordance with this law can be worked up into something different which surpasses nature.

Such representations of the imagination we may call ideas, partly because they at least strive after something which lies beyond the bounds of experience and so seek to approximate to a presentation of concepts of reason (intellectual ideas), thus giving to the latter the appearance of objective reality, but