

Can everything be beautiful? Pan-aestheticism and the Kantian puzzle of the free play of the faculties

ELENA ROMANO*

Università degli Studi di Padova, Italia

Abstract

My contribution deals directly with the problem of Kant's apparent commitment to pan-aestheticism, which is in particular attached to the task of explaining the possibility of the free play of the faculties. The aim is to provide an overview of the ways in which this problem can be confronted and eventually solved. In this regard, one way to deal with this problem consists in revisiting the assumption that the free play of the faculties is to be understood as simply occurring without presupposing any concept. By contrast, one can fully endorse Kant's commitment to pan-aestheticism and hence focus on how Kant's account explains the fact that one does not actually experience everything as beautiful. Both of these alternatives, I firmly reject. By remarking upon the merely reflecting status of judgments of taste, I explain why Kant's account of taste does not lend itself to pan-aestheticism.

Key words (TNR 11)

Kant; pan-aestheticism; judgments of taste; the free play of the faculties; reflecting judgment.

Introduction¹

Within the Kantian studies on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*² the problem of pan-aestheticism³ is well-known. Contributions regarding especially the relation drawn by Kant

* Università degli Studi di Padova, elenaromano2708@gmail.com

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between taste and cognition cannot avoid facing this problem, which is in particular attached to the explanation of the notion of the free play of imagination and understanding. According to Kant, the latter implies the capacity of the imagination to schematize without concepts, though in agreement with the conditions of cognition in general. In this regard, the free play of the faculties is commonly explained as a state of mind which fulfills all of the conditions of cognition except that of the application of a concept for the determination of the object. Moreover, Kant declares that the free play of the faculties is a relation of the representative faculties which is required by cognition in general, so as to justify the claim to universal validity of judgments of taste. If the free play of the faculties is to be understood as requisite for cognition in general, then why does not every cognizable thing elicit the very feeling of the free play of the faculties and hence not be found beautiful?

Kant's eventual commitment to the view that everything can be beautiful is often rejected as counter-intuitive or at least as inconsistent with the assumption of taste as a faculty which discriminates what is beautiful from what is not. For this reasons, such a conclusion is often found to be absurd. As a result, it is rejected by assuming that Kant cannot have submitted it, not even by implication. This line of argument is, however, not satisfying. First of all, if one considers that on Kant's account the predicate beautiful refers by definition to a feeling, which is the very peculiar feeling of the free play of faculties, and hence that it is referred to the subject rather than to the object, then it seems at least legitimate to ask whether, given this fundamental statement, every object cannot be seen as being potentially beautiful. This may or may not be true for Kant's account of the beautiful, but I assume that it is certainly not an absurd conclusion from which Kant must be divorced at any cost.⁴

On the basis of this assumption, my contribution directly confronts the problem of Kant's apparent commitment to pan-aestheticism and aims first of all to provide an overview of its source within Kant's critique of taste and of the main attempts to deal with it. In what follows I will consider two of these attempts. The first solves the problem of pan-aestheticism upstream, by revisiting the claim that the free play of the faculties is to be understood as simply occurring without presupposing any concept. In this account, the free play of the faculties is explained as a state of mind satisfying all of the conditions of cognition in a way which, instead of excluding the application of a concept, is regarded as additional to what is required for the ordinary cognition of the object by means of concepts. By contrast, the second fully endorses the conclusion according to which

² All references to Kant's works are to Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Kant 1900 et seqq.), commonly referred to as the *Akademieausgabe* (AA). In the present contribution, citations refer mainly to Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (KU, Volume 05 of the *Akademie* edition) and to the unpublished Introduction to the third *Critique* (EEKU, Volume 20). The standard citations from the *Akademieausgabe* are followed by the number of the relative page of the consulted English translation: Kant, I. (2000), *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, translated by P. Guyer and E. Matthews, edited by P. Guyer, Cambridge University Press, New York.

³ The term "pan-aestheticism" is used by Rebecca Kukla (2006, p. 28)

⁴ Ted Cohen defends the plausibility of pan-aestheticism and of Kant's eventual commitment to it in similar terms (Cohen 2002, p. 4).

everything can be beautiful. By individuating special circumstances under which exclusively the free play of the faculties can be explicitly felt, this approach explains why one does not actually experience everything as beautiful. However, I reject both of these attempts. With regard to the first, I argue that according to Kant's descriptions, the free harmony of the faculties is to be understood as occurring independently of any application of concepts, and hence it cannot be taken as fulfilling any cognitive aim, not even in an additional way. With regard to the second proposal, I argue that the free harmony of imagination and understanding is to be distinguished from the ordinary agreement of the faculties required by cognition.

In the last section, I propose a third way, which while accepting the explanation of the free play of the faculties as fulfilling the subjective condition of cognition without the presupposition of concepts, nonetheless explains why Kant's account of taste does not lend itself to pan-aestheticism. In fact, the free play of the faculties entails an aesthetic specificity and it is the result of a specific act of judging. The latter is merely reflecting, that is, it is not meant to satisfy any cognitive aim, and it is ultimately dependent on peculiar forms apprehended by the imagination.

I.

The importance of the notion of the free play of the faculties within Kant's critique of taste can hardly be overestimated. An object, Kant states, is judged to be beautiful in virtue of its capacity to elicit the feeling of the free play of the faculties in the subject, rather than in virtue of certain features. Even though the free harmony of the faculties can actually be defined as the "key" notion of the critique of taste, Kant's explanations remain obscure: for instance, Kant explicitly describes it as implying the capacity of the imagination to schematize without concepts (KU, AA 05:287 / 167); a statement, among others, which leaves the reader with the task of explaining how this is possible, especially on the basis of Kant's exposition of the ordinary operations of the imagination within his theory of cognition exposed in the first *Critique*.

As it is known, Kant's very first concern in the *Analytic of the Beautiful* is to distinguish judgments of taste from cognitive judgments. Judgments of taste are aesthetic judgments, hence their determining ground is a feeling rather than a concept of the object. However, judgments of taste are to be differentiated from merely aesthetic judgments, which are grounded on the sole feeling of affection for the object. In fact, judgments of taste share with cognitive judgments the claim to universality and necessity (KU, AA 05:191 / 77). Clearly, if judgments of taste were grounded on the mere feeling of pleasure, then these claims would remain unexplained. Thus, in order for this pleasure to legitimately claim to universality, it must rest not on merely subjective conditions, as it is the case of the pleasure of the senses, but on a state of mind which can be universally communicable. Since according to Kant only cognition can be universally communicable, then:

The subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind of the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a *cognition in general*). (KU, AA 05:218 / 103)

A similar argument can be found with regard to the explanation of the claim to necessary validity exposed by Kant in the fourth moment of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*. The claim to necessary validity sheds light on the idea of common sense as the subjective principle of judgments of taste, which is defined as “the effect of the free play of the cognitive faculties” (KU, AA 05:238 / 122). By assuming this definition, it is possible to see the involvement of the free play of the faculties within the argument regarding whether or not one has good reason for presupposing a common sense.⁵ Kant’s argument is that common sense is to be taken as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of cognition. As Kant argues, this is the case because the subjective condition of cognition can be universally communicable only under the presupposition of a common sense. Within this framework, “subjective condition of cognition” refers to the optimal agreement of imagination and understanding with regard to cognition. As Kant specifies, this disposition of the faculties can exclusively be felt, a specification which supports the identification of the very subjective condition of cognition with the free harmonious agreement of the faculties grounding judgments of taste.

The strategy carried out by Kant in order to justify the claims of taste is to explain them as due to the fact that the feeling of pleasure is the expression of a state of mind which is required by cognition in general as its subjective condition.⁶ Despite the initial apparent neat distinction between judgments of taste as aesthetic judgments and logical judgments, the comparison between judgments of taste and cognitive empirical judgments is thus revealed to be crucial for the understanding of the possibility of judgments of taste. Within Kant’s theory of the reflecting power of judgment, it seems in particular that the claim to universality and necessity of judgments of taste has the same ground as the one of cognitive judgments, namely an act of judging resulting from the shared operations of apprehension and reflection on a given object which put the imagination and the understanding in agreement independently of any particular concept.⁷ In this regard, Kant holds that since

⁵ See Henry Allison (2001) and Linda Palmer (2011) for a different consideration of the involvement within this argument of the common sense considered as the effect of the free play of the faculties.

⁶ “A subjective condition of cognition [...] would be one that is somehow necessarily involved in representation, but does not determine the objects represented, not even these objects considered as phenomena.” (Allison 2001, p. 116). Allison contrasts the subjective condition of cognition with the objective ones (pure intuitions and categories) exposed in the first *Critique*. However, this issue is highly controversial. For the purposes of this paper, the question of whether the free play of the faculties presupposes pure conditions of cognition is left aside.

⁷ Beatrice Longuenesse (2006) clearly demonstrates why a comparison between judgments of taste and empirical cognitive judgments is particularly helpful.

the judgment of taste is not determinable by means of concepts, it is grounded only on the subjective formal condition of a judgment in general. The subjective condition of all judgments is the faculty for judging itself, or the power of judgment. This, employed with regard to a representation by means of which an object is given, requires the agreement of two powers of representation: namely, the imagination (for the intuition and the composition of the manifold of intuition), and the understanding (for the concept as representation of the unity of this composition). (KU, AA 05:287/167)

The free play of the faculties appears to be conceived by Kant as the formal condition of all judgments and hence of the faculty itself of judgment. In this respect, the free play of the faculties can be more precisely described as the very explanatory notion of the merely reflecting status of judgments of taste. The reflecting power of judgment does not subsume the beautiful form under a concept but rather reflects on it and this very act of reflection elicits the pleasure grounding a judgment of taste. Within this framework, the reflecting power of judgment, whose task is to find an universal for the given particular, requires an agreement between the imagination and the understanding which, however, cannot be conceived as guided by concepts, as would be required by the determining power of judgment. Kant describes this agreement as “a subjective correspondence of the imagination to the understanding without an objective one”, which is characterized by “a lawfulness without law” (KU, AA 05:241 / 125). In turn, this implies that on the one hand the imagination in its freedom schematizes independently from concepts, while on the other that this act of the imagination occurs in a way which is found by the reflecting power of judgments to be in agreement with the requirement for unity and lawfulness of the understanding.⁸ In a very famous passage from the first Introduction Kant clearly summarizes this idea:

A merely *reflecting* judgment about a given individual object, [...], *can be aesthetic* if (before its comparison with others is seen), the power of judgment, which has no concept ready for the given intuition, holds the imagination (merely in the apprehension of the object) together with the understanding (in the presentation of a concept in general) and perceives a relation of the two faculties of cognition which constitutes the subjective, merely sensitive condition of the objective use of the power of judgment in general (namely the agreement of those two faculties with each other). (EEKU, AA 20:223-4 / 26)

While the “objective use of the power of judgment” presupposes the application of a concept to the manifold of intuition synthesized by the imagination, the free play of the faculties as the ground of judgments of taste as merely reflecting judgments does not require any concept to occur. Thus, it is often considered as that very relation between the

⁸ For a detailed articulation of the notion of “lawfulness without a law”, see Hannah Ginsborg (1997).

faculties as required by the power of judgment in general *minus* that which would otherwise make it objective, namely the fulfillment of the purpose of cognition by means of the application of a concept. As a result, Kant remarks that the state of mind underlying judgments of taste is that of the perception, by means of a feeling, of the fulfillment of the subjective conditions of the power of judgment. In turn, this is decisive for his explanation of the claims of taste:

Someone who feels pleasure in mere reflection on the form of an object, without regard to a concept, rightly makes claim to the assent of everyone else, even though this judgment is empirical and is an individual judgment, since the ground for this pleasure is to be found in the universal though subjective condition of reflecting judgments, namely the purposive correspondence of an object (be it a product of nature or of art) with the relationship of the cognitive faculties among themselves (of the imagination and the understanding) that is required for every empirical cognition. (KU, AA 05:190 / 77)

Meaningfully, this last passage highlights that the pleasure felt in the mere reflection, that is, the feeling of the free play of the faculties, is grounded on the very subjective condition of the reflecting power of judgment. The latter, Kant concludes, requires the purposive suitability of objects for our cognitive faculties and hence seems to be needed not only as condition of judgments of taste, but also in order for empirical cognition to be possible in the first place.

II.

On the basis of Kant's descriptions of the free play of the faculties a common interpretation has established. Paul Guyer has denominated the traditional explanation given of the free harmony of the faculties as the "precognitive account" (Guyer 2006).⁹ According to such an account, the free play of the faculties is a state of mind which fulfills all of the conditions of cognition except that of the application of a concept. According to this reading, the free play of the faculties can be conceived as being requisite for cognition in general, for it satisfies the subjective condition of cognition without producing any cognition at all, hence without determining the object by means of concepts. The free play of the faculties is then understood as a requisite not only for judgments of taste to justify their claims, but also as a very requisite of the reflecting power of judgment in general and hence of empirical cognition.

This result is intriguing, but highly problematic. The acknowledgment that the free play of the faculties is requisite for empirical cognition as well as for judgments of taste sets the stage for the problem of pan-aestheticism. If one fully endorses the idea that the free play

⁹ For instance, under this category of precognitive accounts fall the interpretations provided by Meerbote (1982), Henrich (1992), Ginsborg (1990, 1997), and Guyer (1997).

For the purposes of the present paper, I am leaving aside the so-called "multicognitive" account which is however discussed by Guyer (2006) together with the precognitive account.

of the faculties is the very subjective condition of cognition, then it seems that every cognizable thing should presuppose this state of mind and hence elicit the very feeling of the free play of the faculties, for every cognizable object seems to satisfy the conditions required in order to make a judgment of taste. In this regard, Guyer writes:

The obvious —and often recognized —problem with the precognitive approach is that on this approach it may seem as if *everything* ought to be beautiful, or at least capable of being found beautiful. That is, if our feeling of beauty in a given manifold is a response to the fact that it satisfies a condition that must be satisfied in every case of cognition, even if it does not satisfy *all* of the conditions that must be satisfied for actual cognition, then why don't we experience beauty in every case of cognition? (Guyer 2006, p. 172)

Here Guyer seems to distinguish two possible claims of pan-aestheticism deriving from precognitive accounts:

1) “Everything ought to be beautiful”. According to precognitive accounts, the condition of judgments of taste is a condition that must be satisfied in order to have any cognition whatsoever, that is, every case of cognition always satisfies the condition of judgments of taste; it follows that every cognizable object should elicit the very feeling of the free play of the faculties and hence be beautiful; but since there are objects—in fact, the majority of them —that we perceive as ordinary, then it is pretty counter-intuitive to claim that everything is beautiful. In fact, this formulation of pan-aestheticism claims more exactly that all objects *ought* to be found beautiful, as to make manifest that we do not actually perceive all objects as beautiful, which is however precisely what seems apparently inexplicable within a precognitive approach to the free play of the faculties.

2) “Everything [is] at least capable of being found beautiful”. Guyer does not specify how such a formulation of pan-aestheticism derives from precognitive accounts, but from a precognitive point of view one could argue, that the reason why we don't experience beauty in every case of cognition is for instance that the actual application of a concept to the manifold synthesized by the imagination modifies the perception of the object, which otherwise would have elicited pleasure and been considered beautiful; this does not however prevent one from claiming that Kant's account implies that all objects are *potentially* beautiful, that is, they can all be found beautiful.

This slightly different formulation of the problem accounts more effectively for the fact that one does not *actually* find all objects beautiful. In this regard, precognitive accounts should “explain why we are pleased, indeed especially pleased, with a state of mind that falls short of satisfying all of the conditions for ordinary cognition” (Guyer 2006, p. 165), which is precisely what according to Guyer they fail to do. In other words, if one accepts the precognitive account then one has to clarify why some objects *actually* elicit the feeling of the free play of the faculties while other objects fail to satisfy this potentiality. Rather than exposing Kant to a counter-intuitive conclusion, this second formulation of pan-aestheticism represents a genuine challenge to his account of taste.

III.

A first way to confront Kant's eventual commitment to pan-aestheticism is to solve this problem upstream, by rejecting the main premise of the precognitive account, that is the very "precognitive" idea that the aesthetic response depends on a cognitive state of mind which occurs prior to and independently from the application of determinate empirical concepts. In so doing it revisits the role of concepts within the aesthetic judging and hence the relation between the free play of the faculties and cognition. This is a central issue within Kant's account of taste since the reader of the third *Critique* cannot but notice Kant's insistence on the supposed non-conceptuality of judgments of taste. In this regard, it has been noted that there are philosophical difficulties attached to it, namely judgments of taste, like any kind of judgments about objects, should involve the identification of the object by means of determinate empirical concepts. If it were so, then Kant's non-conceptuality claim regarding judgments of taste should be revisited together with the precognitive assumption regarding the free play of the faculties.

This line of argument is clearly exposed by Guyer (2006). After Guyer's initial rejection of the precognitive approach as subjected to pan-aestheticism, he goes on to criticize it more seriously as contrasting with the main premises of Kant's account of cognition, according to which there cannot be any conscious representation of an object without the application of some determinate empirical concept to the manifold of intuition presented by the imagination to the understanding.¹⁰ Thus, according to Guyer, judgments of taste cannot but presuppose ordinary empirical concepts. Accordingly, the harmony of the faculties cannot be understood as simply involving the absence of ordinary determinate concepts of objects, as the precognitive approach suggests. As a result, Guyer proposes a new approach to the free play of the faculties, namely the so-called "metacognitive" account. (Guyer, 2006)

On Guyer's metacognitive account, the harmonious play of the faculties required as a condition of judgments of taste and the aesthetic experience of beauty is understood *in primis* as a state of mind in which the manifold of intuition, synthesized by the imagination and thus presented to the understanding, is recognized as satisfying the rule dictated by the corresponding concept on which both the synthesis of the imagination and the identification of the object depend; this is to say that the beautiful object is first of all a cognized object and this, according to Guyer, cannot be otherwise. In addition to this fundamental requirement, the metacognitive account explains the free play of the faculties as a state of mind in which it is felt that the requirement for unity demanded by the

¹⁰ In so claiming, Guyer excludes the possibility of a manifold unified by the sole pure concepts, for he denies that the categories alone are able to be applied to the sensible manifold independently from the mutual application of an empirical concept, since according to him, categories are to be understood as merely the forms of determinate concepts and hence can be applied to intuition only through determinate empirical concept. It is not possible to discuss this issue within the bounds of this article, as it would require a direct consideration of Kant's theory of cognition, as well as the debate on non-conceptualism. For the purposes of this contribution I refer in particular to Vanzo (2012) and Heidemann (2017).

understanding is not only fulfilled, but satisfied in a way that goes *beyond* what is normally required for the ordinary cognition of the object.¹¹ Guyer then concludes :

A beautiful object can always be recognized as an object of some determinate kind, but our experience of it always has even more unity and coherence than is required for it to be a member of that kind, or has a kind of unity and coherence that is not merely a necessary condition for our classification of it. (Guyer 2006, p. 183)

As to how his metacognitive account provides a solution to the question of pan-aestheticism, Guyer seems at least to presuppose that it does so successfully:

We could not make such judgments, although we surely do, unless our aesthetic judgments were compatible with our ordinary classificatory judgments, and gave expression to the way in which some objects but not others occasion a free play of imagination and understanding that goes beyond the relation between them that is required for ordinary cognition. (Guyer 2006, p. 183)

By means of the explanation of the free play of the faculties as an extra-ordinary fulfillment of the very same conditions of cognition, thus included the application of empirical concepts, Guyer seems to argue that the harmony of the faculties cannot then to be regarded as a state of mind required by any act of cognition. Rather, it occurs in determinate cases, when, according to Guyer, the kind of unity of the object goes beyond the very requirement for unity demanded by the understanding and fulfilled by means of concepts. In other words, from the contingent occurrence of the free play as an extra-ordinary state of mind, it does not derive that everything can be found beautiful.

It is right to remark upon Kant's no-concept requirement not being taken as claiming that judgments of taste do not involve concepts at all. However, such a remark need to be further articulated. First of all, it must be noted that Guyer considers as paradigmatic examples of judgments of taste exclusively those employing concepts of the subjects of predication, as for instance the famous example: "This rose is beautiful". This assumption is meaningful because Guyer does not seem to recognize the judgment "*This* is beautiful" as a good example of judgment of taste; however, Kant does not provide any example of a judgment of taste having this form, any more than he provides reasons for excluding this kind of formulation. This sheds light on the fact that with regard to the subjects of judgments of taste, one can always recognize the object as, for instance, a flower and hence to apply to the object at issue a determinate empirical concept. However, by definition, the

¹¹ Rachel Zuckert seems to provide a similar account of the beautiful object by claiming that "the representation of the object as an individualized, unified whole transcends discursive conceptual cognition." (Zuckert 2007, p. 230) For her part, Stephanie Adair claims that the "activity of pure aesthetic judgment [...] is stimulated by the intuitional excess that was apprehended in the givens of the object, but not recognized in its concept." (Adair 2019, p. 288)

beautiful does not really require to be recognized as an instantiation of a certain kind, that is to be subsumed under a concept, in order to be found beautiful. In this regard, Kant clearly claims that judgments of taste are not *grounded* on concepts and hence that pleasure in the beautiful is not *determined* by concepts; this means that the ascription of beauty to an object on the basis of the feeling of pleasure which it occasions, is not due to the concept of the object. It must be then emphasized that this eventual recognition of the beautiful object under a determinate empirical concept is possible as long as the concept is not intended as determining ground of the pleasure. In turn, this is possible because in judgments of taste concepts that are actually applied to the object do not function “as” concepts, as Zuckert suggests. In other words, concepts are not employed so as to determine and classify the object, but rather in an “indicating” way which makes any eventual application irrelevant: in aesthetic experience concepts could be well taken as being used for the indication of the individual beautiful object without being responsible for its unification as a *beautiful* object. (Zuckert 2007, pp. 199-201)¹² The way in which concepts are employed matters: Kant’s account of judgments of taste rules out the ordinary use of concepts either as rules for the imaginative synthesis, hence for the unification of the manifold of intuition in the representation of a unified object, or as marks grounding the ascription of a concept to the subject of predication.

If it is necessary to account for “some use” of concepts within the aesthetic judging, then the questions at stake are how the free play of the faculties must be understood and whether the precognitive account must be rejected, as Guyer suggests. With regard to the metacognitive account, the claim that the free play of the faculties takes place beyond ordinary cognition of the object does not fully explain how it is supposed to be possible in the first place and how it can justify the claims of taste.¹³ But more seriously, it does not seem to provide a strikingly consistent explanation of Kant’s descriptions of the free play of faculties. This seems to be the case *in primis* with regard to Kant’s statement on the harmonious relation of the faculties as satisfying the conditions for a “cognition in general”. How is the free play of the faculties to be understood with regard to the satisfaction of the conditions of a cognition in general, as opposed to determinate cognition if, again, the conditions for the cognition of the beautiful object are actually fulfilled, as Guyer seems to claim? According to Guyer, the subject feels that the form of the object

¹² Guyer holds a similar view in his *Kant and the Claims of Taste*: “The use of the referring expression ‘this rose’ may serve to pick out the object of attention but does not provide the basis for calling it beautiful.” (Guyer 1997, pp. 132) For her part, Dorit Barchana-Lorand claims: “Yet even Kant’s famous example of a flower as an object of beauty falls short from complying with the conditions he himself sets for beauty. Once we regard an object as a “rose” we evaluate it in relation to an end.” (Barchana-Lorand 2002, p. 323)

¹³ When addressing the problem of reconciliation in his *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, Guyer is skeptical with regard to the explicative force of an metacognitive reading of the free play of the faculties: “it might be suggested that what Kant’s account of aesthetic response describes is actually a sense of coherence in an object which goes beyond the unities imposed by whatever concepts apply to it, rather than one which occurs without the application of any concepts at all. But this proposal too would represent a break with the first *Critique*’s strict association of unity of consciousness with the application of concepts to objects.” (Guyer 1997, p. 87)

fulfills the conditions of cognition more than it is required for that ordinary cognition itself. But Kant's descriptions of what the fulfillment of the conditions of cognition in general by means of the state of mind of the free play of the faculties could mean does not seem to presuppose any *actual* fulfillment of cognition whatsoever, not even in an additional way. Kant seems rather to suggest the indeterminacy of the fulfillment of such conditions, which prevents the object from being actually determined.

Moreover, it is unclear to what extent the metacognitive account would be able to explain the very freedom of the imagination: "since the freedom of the imagination consists precisely in the fact that it schematizes without a concept" (KU, AA 05:287/167), then if a concept is needed to be applied to the manifold of intuition constituting the form of the object, the imagination cannot but be taken as schematizing *according to* concepts rather than independently of them. Here again, the problem is that of grasping how this "without concepts" is to be taken. In this regard, Guyer would argue that the imagination can still be consistently conceived as free from concepts since the form apprehended is not adequately unifiable by the concepts of the understanding and rather goes "beyond" what would be required for this mere conceptual unification. However, my suggestion is that this can be intended as implying either the absence of empirical determinate concepts or the irrelevance of an eventual application of empirical concepts with regard to the imaginative synthesis in a basically precognitive sense. Both the approaches support the idea that no concept at all can guide, at least totally, the imaginative activity and hence concur to the unification of the form of the object, for which the imagination alone is to be considered responsible.

Ultimately, the precognitive idea seems though to be more adequate, if one considers the explicative role played by the free play of the faculties within Kant's theory of the reflecting power of judgment and in particular of judgments of taste as merely reflecting judgments. In a nutshell, as explicated in the first section, the free play of the faculties cannot be considered as meta- or extra-cognitive, because such understanding would not be able to account for the merely reflecting status of judgments of taste. The reflecting power of judgment, "which has no concept ready for the given intuition" (EEKU, AA 20:223-4 / 26), in order to form empirical cognition requires an agreement between the faculties such as to satisfy independently of concepts the conditions for a cognition in general. In the aesthetic case, such agreement is explicitly felt by means of a feeling of pleasure because the form presented by the imagination it is found by the reflecting power of judgment as fitting the requirements for unity and lawfulness of the understanding for the possibility of cognition. In the Deduction, Kant has, moreover, explicitly regarded the state of mind of the free play of the faculties as the very subjective condition of the power of judgment in general which implies the idea that all judgments presuppose such an agreement; it is precisely in virtue of this presupposition that judgments of taste, albeit aesthetic, claim to be valid for everyone. As a result of these considerations, it seems more appropriate to understand the free play of the faculties in a "pre-cognitive" sense rather than in the metacognitive way suggested in this section. Thus, the metacognitive solution of pan-

aestheticism is excluded and the question of whether in Kant's account everything can be beautiful is still at stake.

IV.

An alternative way to deal with pan-aestheticism consists in taking seriously Kant's description of the free play of the faculties provided by precognitive accounts and hence in claiming that indeed every cognizable object elicits the very pleasure determining judgments of taste. In this way, such an approach fully accepts the challenge of explaining why every object does not actually satisfy the potentiality to be found beautiful. A famous and controversial passage from the published Introduction is often cited in support of this approach:

To be sure, we no longer detect any noticeable pleasure in the comprehensibility of nature and the unity of its division into genera and species, by means of which alone empirical concepts are possible through which we cognize it in its particular laws; but it must certainly have been there in its time, and only because the most common experience would not be possible without it has it gradually become mixed up with mere cognition and is no longer specially noticed. (KU, AA 05:187 / 74)

According to this view, having got used to this feeling, we no longer perceive it, but we can become aware of it, that is, we can explicitly feel it only under the special circumstance of a pure aesthetic experience: the pleasure of the free play of the faculties makes us attentive to a fundamental feeling of pleasure which accompanies every act of reflective judgment.¹⁴ Indeed, Kant defines the pleasure of the free play of the faculties as a pleasure "of mere reflection" (KU, AA 05:292 / 172) which is as such "inevitably shared by all of our reflections (i.e., we feel it whenever we perform reflective judgments)." (Barchana-Lorand 2002, p. 317) By referring to the pleasure of the beautiful as a pleasure of reflection Kant appears to support the precognitive reading of the free play of the faculties together with the implication of pan-aestheticism:

Without having any purpose or fundamental principle for a guide, this pleasure accompanies the common apprehension of an object by the imagination, as a faculty of intuition, in relation to the understanding, as a faculty of concepts, by means of a procedure of the power of judgment, which it must also exercise for the sake of the most common experience: only in the latter case it is compelled to do so for the sake of an empirical objective concept, while in the former case (in the aesthetic judging) it is merely for the sake of perceiving the suitability of the representation for the harmonious (subjectively purposive) occupation of

¹⁴ Guyer points out that in this passage Kant may not be referring to the characteristic pleasure of judgments of taste but rather to a different kind of pleasure probably involved in the cognitive application of the reflecting power of judgment, see Guyer 2006, p. 173.

both cognitive faculties in their freedom, i.e., to sense the representational state with pleasure. (KU, AA 05:292 / 172)

Thus, such fundamental pleasure is to be regarded as an essential, non-cognitive component of reflecting judging, which, as precognitive accounts state, “precedes any cognition of the object and merely lays out the conditions for cognition”. (Barchana-Lorand, 2002, p. 316) Within this framework, an object is found beautiful, that is, the free play of the faculties is explicitly felt and hence grounds a judgment of taste exclusively under particular conditions rather than in every case of empirical cognition, namely if one contemplates an object with disinterested pleasure.¹⁵

Another way to articulate this point is to appeal to the capacity of abstraction and to argue that, in Kant’s account, the aesthetic appreciation is possible as distinct from the actual production of empirical cognition by means of the mere operation of reflection as long as it would be possible to abstract from the actual application of a determinate concept, so as to contemplate the mere form of the object. (Budd 2001) According to this view it seems then that the very characteristic mark of the free play of the faculties with regard to the relation of the faculties required for empirical cognition consists in the different role played by concepts within the two acts of judging. If the difference between cognitive judgments and judgments of taste depends exclusively on the guiding role played by concepts with regard to the imaginative synthesis (Longuenesse 2006, p. 205), and if one could any time abstract from cognition of the object, then everything cannot but be considered as potentially beautiful.

Kant’s text seems to support the idea according to which it is always possible to abstract from the conceptual determination of the object and hence to actually feel the pleasure it elicits. Kant seems to address the issue when, with respect to the distinction between free and adherent beauty, he makes the famous example of the botanist and claims:

A judgment of taste in regard to an object with a determinate internal end would thus be pure only if the person making the judgment either had no concept of this end or abstracted from it in his judgment. (KU, AA 05:230-1 / 114-5)

Even though Kant seems to be supportive of the idea that everything can be beautiful and that we may actually find something beautiful as long as we abstract from the conceptual determination of the object, Kant’s account is not clear as to what extent it is possible to abstract from a cognitive point of view in order to judge the object aesthetically according to the requirements of taste. For instance, Kant clearly denies such a possibility with regard to some cases of adherent beauty, i.e., churches, horses, human beings. According to Kant, such things cannot but be judged according to the concept of their end and hence no

¹⁵ “Why is it that we do not consider every object of sense to be beautiful, is fully resolved in the first moment of the “Analytic of Taste”. [...] Regarding the first moment’s claim for disinterestedness, this should be taken not as merely a quality of the aesthetic judgment but as the reason for it. *When we judge something to be beautiful we do so because we are disinterested with it.*” (Barchana-Lorand 2002, p. 322)

abstraction from this concept would be permitted. Ultimately, it seems that Kant's unclarity with regard to this issue cannot be avoided:

His invocation of a lawful faculty (the productive imagination), which however is not governed by laws, inherently precludes an explanation of the circumstances and manner of performance of that faculty. [...] no way is forthcoming of specifying in some detail the reasons for which conformity triggering disinterested pleasure arises (when it does). (Meerbote 1982, p. 85)

Such explanations of why we do not actually perceive the feeling of the free play of the faculties with regard to every object seems to imply Kant's commitment to a view which explains the possibility of beauty by means of a peculiar aesthetic attitude that the subject must adopt in order to perceive beauty, a view which however Kant does not explicitly submit. (Guyer 2006, p. 172) In this regard, a different kind of objection to the problem of Kant's eventual commitment to pan-aestheticism is the one which appeals to the beautiful object. In fact, it may be that some but not all objects can elicit the free play of the faculties and hence be beautiful, because only some but not all object present a form which is felt to fulfill the intellectual requirements for unity and coherence without the application of any concept. This objection can be seen as being provided by Kant's argument in favour of the right to presuppose a common sense as the subjective principle of taste (§21), where the free play of the faculties receives an explanation in terms of the optimal proportion of the disposition of the representative faculties with regard to cognition in general. According to Kant, the "disposition of the cognitive powers has a different proportion depending on the difference of the objects that are given" (KU, AA05:238 / 123). However, it is not clear how this reference to the optimal proportion is to be taken. In fact, Kant holds, for instance, that the pleasure in the beautiful

must necessarily rest on the same conditions in everyone, since they are subjective conditions of the possibility of a cognition in general, and the proportion of these cognitive faculties that is required for taste is also requisite for the common and healthy understanding that one may presuppose in everyone. (KU, AA 05:292-3 / 172-3)

This passage suggests that ultimately the same proportion seems to be required by both cognition and taste. Hence, the remark upon the optimal proportion, instead of providing an argument against pan-aestheticism, would rather support Kant's implicit commitment to it. Besides, what Kant defines with regard to the beautiful object is only its suitability to elicit the free play of the faculties in the subject, in virtue of which its form is judged as purposive. As to how the form of the object should present itself in order to be found beautiful, it remains unclear. As a result, it is difficult to conceive how the reference to the form of the object can alone imply some constraint on the determination of an object as beautiful. In fact, the mere representation of the form can only consist in the elements of the manifold of intuition apprehended by the imagination and capable of being unified by

the understanding: it will then present the spatial and temporal structure of the object intuited and combined by the imagination, such as to be unifiable by the understanding. This explanation does not provide any determination of the beautiful form which would consist just in those elements — the ones apprehended by the imagination and organized in a way suitable for the requirement for unifiability demanded by the understanding — which all cognizable objects have.¹⁶ It is then hard to determine how the solution could lie in the object itself of taste, since it is not clear to what extent the beautiful object contributes to Kant's critique of taste in the first place.¹⁷

To conclude, this second way of dealing with pan-aestheticism accepts Kant's commitment to the view that everything can be beautiful as a consequence of a precognitive interpretation of the free play of the faculties, thus focusing on the explanation of why one does not perceive everything as beautiful. Despite Kant's lack of clarity with regard to this issue, which would alone represent a good argument to be skeptical towards this conclusion, there is a more fundamental difficulty attached to this reading, namely the very derivation of pan-aestheticism from a precognitive approach to the free play of the faculties. The apparent necessity of such an implication derives, as I will argue, from an unidirectional explanation of the notion of the free play of the faculties. In fact, on the one hand the possibility of the free lawfulness of the imagination should be indeed explained by referring to Kant's theory the reflecting power of judgment in general as involved in the formation of empirical cognition, however, on the other hand, it is essential to consider the free harmony of the faculties as the very determining ground of judgments of taste *qua* aesthetic judgments, hence in its very aesthetic specificity.¹⁸ By

¹⁶ Ultimately, “the concept of proportion only expresses the requirement that, for both knowledge and aesthetic response, a manifold must be seen as a unity.” (Guyer 1997, p. 286)

The first reaction to this result is to conclude that Kant fails to explain “in virtue of what character of a form the imagination and understanding, in engendering a representation of it, engage in the free harmonious play that is indicative of finding something beautiful.” (Budd 2001, p. 256) In this regard, Malcom Budd further comments: “There is a sense in which this question cannot be answered. For it is clear that Kant believes that it is impossible for there to be a formula or principle the application of which to objects would identify all and only beautiful forms. Accordingly, the question cannot be answered by a specification of the intrinsic nature of beautiful forms.” (Budd 2001, p. 256) However, this is not to be considered as a gap within his account of taste, which does not intend to provide a theory of taste, but rather a transcendental critique of it. See for instance KU, AA 05:170 / 57-58 and KU, AA 05:286 / 166.

¹⁷ See Barchana-Lorand's clear articulation of this issue (Barchana-Lorand 2002).

¹⁸ Keren Gorodeisky distinguishes an “extra-aesthetic” approach to the free play of the faculties and an “aesthetic” one. (Gorodeisky 2011) She holds that even though a proper explanation of the free play of the faculties has to give reasons both for its distinctive aesthetic nature and its relation to cognition, a proper account of the free harmony of the faculties should prefer the “aesthetic” explanation, which “explains why aesthetic judgement, but not cognitive judgement, is based on a free agreement of the faculties in terms of what is special about beauty, that is, in distinctively aesthetic terms. In contrast, an extra-aesthetic approach uses primarily non-aesthetic terms to reconstruct the free mental activity that Kant ascribes to judgements of taste. Such an approach does not explain what it is in beautiful objects as beautiful that calls for a free agreement of the faculties.” (Gorodeisky 2011) Even though I consider the author's concern as illuminating, I regard these two approaches as integrable with each other rather than as exclusive; in other words, the free

focusing exclusively on Kant's justification of the claims of taste, which shows the conformity of the free play of the faculties with the conditions of a cognition in general, the aesthetic specificity of the free play of the faculties cannot but take second place to the apparent urgency of explaining why everything is not actually perceived as aesthetically pleasing; an issue which remains highly controversial due to Kant's lack of clarity, as this section tried to make clear. As a result, the precognitive account should be combined with a specific comprehension of what is then aesthetically peculiar about the free play of the faculties. I argue that without raising this point, the problem of pan-aestheticism would remain partially unclarified. Moreover, by means of a direct investigation into the aesthetic specificity of the free play of the faculties, the crucial role played by Kant's reference to the beautiful object will receive a decisive clarification.

V.

The aim of this last section is to show that there is a third way in which the problem of pan-aestheticism can be faced, and ultimately that it is the most appropriate one. On the one hand, this alternative view maintains the precognitive assumption regarding the free play of the faculties and, on the other hand, it claims that the latter does not lend itself to pan-aestheticism. In this regard, it considers the view according to which everything can be beautiful as a conclusion resulting from a sole consideration of the cognitive aspect of the free harmony of the faculties, which has in fact both a cognitive and an aesthetic aspect. (Gorodeisky 2011, p. 417) The source of confusion which leads to the conclusion of Kant's commitment to pan-aestheticism consists in misunderstanding the distinction Kant makes between the *logical* reflecting power of judgment, responsible for the formation of empirical concepts, and the *aesthetic* reflecting power of judgment, that is, taste, on the other hand. (Makkreel 2006, pp. 224-5; Gorodeisky 2011, p. 419) In particular, the latter distinction within Kant's discussion of the reflecting power of judgment should provide a hint on how to grasp the aesthetic peculiarity of the free play of the faculties, just as it had a decisive role in supporting the precognitive approach. In this regard, I argue that the free play of the faculties is a state of mind to be considered as different in kind from the relation of the faculties which is required for cognition, although it satisfies its subjective conditions.

In a nutshell, the very specificity of the free play of the faculties consists in the freedom of the imagination. Neither determining judging nor the logical kind of reflecting judging involves an activity of the imagination, which, despite its lawfulness, can be described as free. Even though the logical reflecting power of judgment does not presuppose any concept of the object so that the synthesizing activity of the imagination cannot be thought of as being directly guided by conceptual rules, it still cannot be considered as involving the free harmonious relation of the faculties. As Ginsborg points out, the formation of a concept always corresponds to its first application (Ginsborg 1997, pp. 69-70), so that

play of the faculties still requires an extra-aesthetic reading in order to grasp its exemplarity with regard to the condition required by the logical reflecting power of judgment for the possibility of empirical cognition.

within the problematic framework of the formation of empirical concepts for which the reflecting power of judgment is responsible 1) the imagination cannot be conceived as genuinely free from concepts; 2) the imagination is not in agreement with the intellectual conditions for the exhibition of a concept in general, but rather its synthesizing activity satisfies the conditions required for the very application of a determinate concept. In this regard, the free harmony of imagination and understanding is not however to be intended exclusively as due to the absence of conceptual determination, or in other words, the absence of conceptual determination must be seen as aesthetically peculiar. In this last section, I try to articulate this claim and to show that there are compelling reasons supporting the distinction of the free play of the faculties from the ordinary agreement of imagination and understanding involved in the formation of empirical cognition.

First of all, it should be considered that despite Kant's insistence on the conformity of the free play of the faculties with the subjective condition of cognition so as to justify the claims of taste, he is not willing to reduce the aesthetic peculiarity of judgments of taste to cognition and its requirements.¹⁹ In fact, not only do judgments of taste fail to produce any cognitive determination of the object, but more fundamentally they are not aimed at cognition at all in the first place.²⁰ Essentially, this remark supports the consideration of the free play of the faculties as an agreement of imagination and understanding which is different in kind from the one required by the reflecting power of judgment for the purpose of cognition. In this regard, Fiona Hughes proposes to distinguish between the "cooperation" of the faculties and their "harmony" as respectively involved in cognitive judgments and in judgments of taste. In particular, she meaningfully holds that: "The harmony such judgments display is a special case of the cooperation of the faculties necessary for any cognition." (Hughes 2007, pp. 263-264) In this way, it seems possible to explain both the familiarity and the specificity of the free play of the faculties with regard to the agreement of imagination and understanding required for the possibility of empirical cognition. Moreover, by distinguishing in this way between the two states of mind it is possible, according to Hughes, to argue that Kant's definition of the free harmony of the faculties as fulfilling the subjective condition of cognition is necessary not only to provide a ground for the claims of taste, but also ultimately to highlight the very requirements of the logical reflecting power of judgment. In other words, the harmony of the faculties could count as exemplary for the initial condition of possibility of cognition, which can be only shown in judgments of taste, since in cognitive judgments the cognition-oriented cooperation of the faculties is masked by the actual fulfillment of the cognitive aim. (Hughes 2007, p. 262)

¹⁹ Kant's concern in preserving the specificity of taste can be traced in the establishing of the very autonomy of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure within the faculties of mind. See for instance EEKU, AA 20:206 / 11 (Gorodeisky 2011 and 2019).

²⁰ This remark not only suggests that there is an aesthetic specificity of judgments of taste which needs to be emphasized, but also eventually avoids a common interpretation of judgments of taste as reflecting judgments which merely fail to produce cognition (*cf.* Longuenesse 1998, p. 164).

The free play of the faculties can be then effectively taken as shedding light on the non-aesthetic agreement of the faculties necessary for the reflecting power of judgment. As an advantage, this reading may provide a further interpretation of Kant's intriguing suggestion of a pleasure which used to be felt in the comprehensibility of nature in its empirical order, which "requires a study to make us attentive to the purposiveness of nature for our understanding in our judging of it." (KU, AA 05:187 / 74) Hence, this could actually explain to what extent the aesthetic experience of the beautiful counts as "an experience in which the basic pleasure of reflection is revealed" (Barchana-Lorand 2002, p. 319), namely on the condition that such a "revelation" depends on the contingent occurrence of a state of mind which merely exemplifies the functioning of the representative faculties within the act of sole reflection as carried out by the logical reflecting power of judgment.

As it is known, unlike the case of the determining power of judgment, the activity of the reflecting power of judgment does not presuppose concepts. In this regard, Kant states that the condition for the comprehension of the form apprehended by the imagination under a concept must be individuated by the reflecting power of judgment by means of reflection "on a rule concerning a perception" (EEKU, AA 20:220 / 23).²¹ The state of mind requisite for such a process is that of a relation between the faculties as required by the power of judgment in general. This involves a comparison between the actual relation of the faculties in the given perception with the one required for the effective exhibition of a concept. Within this framework,

If, then, the form of a given object in empirical intuition is so constituted that the *apprehension* of its manifold in the imagination agrees with the *presentation* of a concept of the understanding (though which concept be undetermined), then in the mere reflection understanding and imagination mutually agree for the advancement of their business, and the object will be perceived as purposive merely for the power of judgment, hence the purposiveness itself will be considered as merely subjective; for which, further, no determinate concept of the object at all is required nor is one thereby generated, and the judgment itself is not a cognitive judgment. –Such a judgment is called an *aesthetic judgment of reflection*. (EEKU, AA 20:220-1 / 23)²²

²¹ According to Ginsborg's account, since the rule for the imaginative synthesis is normally due to concepts, in the case of their formation it could be given by the normative exemplary activity of the imagination itself, which takes its synthesizing operation to be as it ought to be, i.e. as if it were due to a determinate rule. (Ginsborg 1997)

²² Kant makes the same point in the published Introduction, see KU, AA 05:190 / 76. In this framework, I disagree with Barchana-Lorand's interpretation of Kant's line of argument here. She holds that "the 'if' here denotes the logical condition, and not a contingency of this pleasure's occurrence." (Barchana-Lorand 2002, p. 320) Such an argument is meant to prove that "the feeling of pleasure mentioned above is always present in the operation of reflective judgment." (*Ivi.*) By contrast, I argue that Kant here is precisely specifying a peculiar condition for the phenomenon of the free play of the faculties, whose occurrence is essentially contingent. Hence, a thesis such as that of pan-aestheticism cannot be derived from the contingency of the occurrence of the free play of the faculties.

It seems that the key to grasp the very functioning of the reflecting power of judgment with regard to the production of empirical concepts is to consider the case of merely reflecting judgments which, as Hughes points out, makes explicit what the mere state of mind of sole reflection on a given form consists of. The case of aesthetic judgments of reflection is then in this sense paradigmatic. In this regard, Kant holds moreover, that judgments of taste as merely reflecting judgments are “grounded *only* on the subjective formal condition of a judgment in general”, which is “the faculty for judging itself”. (KU, AA 05:287 / 167 my emphasis) Unlike cognitive judgments, only judgments of taste are *solely* grounded on a mere act of judging:

since no concept of the object is here the ground of the judgment, it [the agreement of the faculties] can consist only in the subsumption of the imagination itself (in the case of a representation by means of which an object is given) under the condition that the understanding in general advance from intuitions to concepts. [...] taste, as a subjective power of judgment, contains a principle of subsumption, not of intuitions under *concepts*, but of the *faculty* of intuitions or presentations (i.e., of the imagination) under the *faculty* of concepts (i.e., the understanding), insofar as the former *in its freedom* is in harmony with the latter *in its lawfulness*. (KU, AA 05:287 / 167-8)

While cognitive judgments are the result of a determinate agreement between the faculties as due to a determinate act of subsumption of intuitions under concepts as performed by the power of judgment, the free harmony of the faculties achieves the conformity with the subjective conditions of cognition, hence “the well-proportioned disposition that we require for all cognition” (KU, AA 05:219 / 104) as a result of a general and hence undetermined subsumption of the faculties themselves.

Ultimately, the distinction between the free play of the faculties and the ordinary cooperation required for the possibility of empirical cognition clarifies to what extent Kant’s reference to the beautiful object contributes to the issue of pan-aestheticism. In this regard, the previous section pointed out that 1) the disposition of the faculties depends on the given object; 2) the free play of the faculties sets imagination and understanding in an optimal disposition with regard to cognition in general, which can only be felt; 3) however, the analysis of the notion of the optimal disposition concluded that it is the same proportion which is required by both cognition and taste. On the basis of the previous considerations, it is possible now to see how this may be possible, namely by considering the two agreements of the faculties, hence the proportions of their disposition, as a result of two different acts of judging. In the free play, the representative faculties are set in the very same proportion in which they are supposed to be in order for empirical cognition to be possible, hence for the actual application of an empirical concept, which ultimately provides the manifold of intuition with the kind of unity required for cognizing the object. In the case of the beautiful, however, the act of judging occasioned by the form of the

object is merely reflecting, hence the result is a judgment of taste because reflection on that particular form apprehended by the imagination finds this latter as already accomplishing the intellectual requirements for unity and lawfulness independently of concepts. As a result, it is felt with pleasure and the object judged as purposive with respect to the reflecting power of judgment.²³

It is right then to claim that since the disposition of the faculties depends on the objects given to us in intuition, then exclusively some but not all objects can elicit the feeling of pleasure due to the free play of the faculties. However, as already pointed out, one should not expect from Kant's account of taste more than this sole remark, since it leaves undetermined in virtue of which properties an object is to be judged as beautiful. It can only be presumed that the beautiful form should be such as to make it particularly pleasant for the understanding to subsume the manifold apprehended by the imagination under concepts in general, for it provides by itself some kind of unity which would be normally guaranteed by the application of a concept.²⁴ Thus, the free harmony of the faculties can be finally described as consisting precisely in "the facilitated play of both powers of the mind [...] enlivened through mutual agreement" (KU, AA 05:219 / 104). Thus, again, the fact that the aesthetic unity is performed without concepts does matter, since the very possibility of being perceived without concepts by means of a disinterested pleasure depends finally on the individual form at issue. In other words, the capacity of the imagination to present a form which is contingently found by the power of judgment to be in agreement with the intellectual requirement of unity without producing any cognition cannot but be determined by the aesthetic specificity of the object.

Conclusion

The claim that everything is potentially beautiful seems to follow from Kant's account of judgments of taste as grounded on the feeling of the free play of the faculties, which in turn seems to be a common condition for both taste and cognition. The strategy to determine whether Kant's account is to be committed to the claim that everything can be beautiful has been that of challenging Kant's need to explain the free and yet harmonious play of the faculties in terms of a state of mind satisfying the subjective condition of cognition. In this regard, the metacognitive attempt to revisit Kant's claim on the non-conceptuality of judgments of taste has been rejected in favour of a precognitive explanation of the free play of the faculties. Finally, even though the free play of the faculties does not presuppose

²³ It should be noted, as Guyer does, that the harmony of the faculties as subjective condition of cognition is not met insofar as a given manifold is merely *unifiable*; rather the subjective condition of cognition is obtained insofar as a given manifold synthesized by the imagination is actually perceived as *unified*, for a manifold to be unifiable is a necessary condition for any mental activity, cognitive or aesthetic whatsoever. (Guyer 1997, p. 76)

²⁴ According to Ralf Meerbote, the condition of the beautiful form is a "structure of the manifolds which make manifolds amenable to subsumption under concepts *überhaupt*." Moreover: "What Kant appears to have in mind are at least the general requirements of orderliness or orderability and lawfulness of elements of any manifolds." (Meerbote 1982, p. 79). See also Budd (2001, p. 258).

any conceptual determination of the object in a precognitive sense, it has been argued that it also does not lend itself to pan-aestheticism. In fact, it has emerged that the free play of the faculties has to be kept distinct from the ordinary cooperation of the faculties required by the reflecting power of judgment for the possibility of empirical cognition. In particular, the activity of the imagination cannot be considered as free within any act of the power of judgment, either determining or reflecting, which is aimed at cognition. Moreover, Kant's argument explicitly shows that the beautiful object contributes crucially to the solution of the problem of pan-aestheticism, so that it can be concluded that the only circumstances under which the pleasure of the free play of the faculties can be elicited are those determined by the perceived object, even though the latter cannot be conceptually determined. Thus, pan-aestheticism cannot follow from Kant's account of judgments of taste. Even though it could be accepted that everything is potentially beautiful by explaining why everything is not actually felt as such, this would not represent a consistent conclusion to be drawn from Kant's account of judgments of taste, for the very freedom of the imagination is not involved in cognition and hence does not occur every time an object is cognized.

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