

## *Book Review*

*Mojca Kuplen, Kant's Aesthetic Cognitivism:  
On the Value of Art, London: Bloomsbury Publishing,  
2023, 200 pp.*

In her latest book, *Kant's Aesthetic Cognitivism: On the Value of Art*, Mojca Kuplen sets out to “reconcile the disagreement between aesthetic cognitivism, the view that works of art serve as an important source of knowledge about the world and that knowledge thus obtained contributes to the aesthetic value of an artwork, and aesthetic anti-cognitivism, which claims that artworks cannot serve as a source of non-trivial, unique and aesthetically relevant source of knowledge” (Kuplen 2023: 165). In a quite original way, Kuplen approaches the question of art's cognitive value via reinterpretation of Kant's account of art, which is based on contemporary research in cognitive sciences and theories on self-knowledge. Arguing that Kant defends an extreme form of aesthetic cognitivism, Kuplen offers an interesting account of art's cognitive value to show that “the cognitive value of artworks lies in promoting objectual understanding of abstract phenomena as they are determined by our own subjective experience” (Kuplen 2023: 47). Her book thus brings together two highly influential debates within philosophy of art – the one on the cognitive value of art and the one on Kant's theory of art – and makes interesting and thought-provoking contributions to both.

The book is divided into eight chapters (including Introduction and Conclusion), most of which are dedicated to a detailed and comprehensive analysis of Kant's theory. Having announced her goals and the structure of the book in the Introduction, Kuplen turns her attention to aesthetic cognitivism in the first chapter, claiming that none of the positions commonly defended with respect to art's cognitive value can successfully address the most common anti-cognitivist complaints. Theories which focus on an artwork's providing propositional, experiential or conceptual knowledge struggle to explain how such knowledge is justified and why it is not trivial, and neither of these theories can explain how the knowledge allegedly available to the audience is actually contained within the work (what Kuplen, following John Gibson, calls the textual requirement). In her view, Gibson's account – accord-

ing to which art provides axiological understanding – fares slightly better with these issues, but it fails to account for the cognitive value of non-narrative artworks because it does not offer an epistemologically grounded account of understanding. Kuplen therefore proposes that the cognitive value of artworks is evident in their capacity to provide objectual understanding (primarily of abstract concepts). Inspired by research in cognitive sciences, Kuplen explains that objectual understanding is a form of cognitive state that can be expressed non-propositionally, since its object is non-propositional structure of reality. In other words, objectual understanding refers to the internal seeing or awareness of the relationships between different aspects of the phenomena. To explain how artworks provide such understanding, Kuplen turns, in the second chapter, to cognitive sciences and the research on the semantic content of abstract phenomena, which she unites with her account of Kant's aesthetic ideas, claiming that “aesthetic ideas make abstract concepts more cognitively accessible to us, by creating particular imaginative representations (that is, aesthetic attributes) that allow us to think about these concepts in a way linked to sensory experience” (Kuplen 2023: 47).

Relying on research in cognitive sciences, Kuplen provides an account of how our understanding of abstract concepts is sensitive to our subjective experiences: experiential knowledge, emotional aspects and other introspective properties such as beliefs, memories, intentions and the like. Such ‘indeterminate material’ has no sensible intuition, which is what aesthetic ideas aim to exhibit: they are indirect, sensible presentations of this subjectively determined material that we associate with rational ideas and abstract concepts. Since aesthetic ideas lack sensible intuition, they are generated by aesthetic attributes which bring to mind various connections or mental associations between different concepts that together generate the idea. Aesthetic attributes are partly culturally determined, which is why they can be publically shared, but they refer to features of ideas that go beyond their general features (those that Kant calls logical attributes) and are not required for determinate cognition – it is in this aspect, argues Kuplen, taking Kant's CPJ 5:317 as a support for her claim, that the freedom of imagination is evident, in coming up with such features. Their content also includes “personally idiosyncratic associations that one brings to mind when recollecting their own experience” (Kuplen 2023: 54). Signaling her closeness to Andrew Chignell and Jennifer McMahon's views, Kuplen characterizes aesthetic idea as a coherent whole of an unutterable fullness of thought, as “a certain kind of inner picturing of thoughts and associations that occur in our mind as we reflect on a particular object or an artwork and which gives rise to ideas that go beyond sensory experience” (Kuplen 2023: 54). There is thus an analogy between aesthetic ideas, aesthetic attributes and ideas that go beyond sensory experience and empirical intuitions, logical attributes and determinate

concepts, and both are the product of the synthesis of imagination. Because aesthetic ideas expressed in an artwork can capture and bring together various introspective, emotional and affective properties which express our subjective experiences of abstract phenomena, they help us overcome cognitive limitations we have in trying to articulate the meaning of abstract concepts.

In the third chapter, Kuplen presents her account of how art promotes “therapeutic self-knowledge” – an aspect of art’s cognitive value often neglected in contemporary aesthetics, which is more focused on art’s capacity to help us understand others. But, as Kuplen argues, understanding oneself is important for having an authentic, meaningful life and it is also important for ownership and control over one’s life. Building on Jenefer Robinson’s view on the similarities of our emotional reactions to real-world people and situation and fictional ones, and on theories of simulation, according to which we understand fictional characters because we simulate their experiences, Kuplen argues that our experiences with art enable us to take two distinctive but equally important perspectives on ourselves: the one which enables us to grasp our inner, psychological life and a more distant one, which allows us to acknowledge the meaning of our experiences in the larger context of our life. Given the nature of our emotional responses – which in turn depend on the kind of concerns we have – we can, through our artistic engagements, reflect on our own experiences and personal traits, and gain a deeper sense of our own emotions.

In chapter four Kuplen is primarily concerned with exploring cognitive value of different forms of art, given Kant’s hierarchical categorization of art. A discussion of Kant’s treatment of various forms of art, primarily music, reveals issues with the way in which Kant explains the cognitive potential of aesthetic ideas, which is related to the inconsistency in his treatment of the manner in which sensations express aesthetic ideas. To solve this inconsistency, Kuplen distinguishes productive and reproductive aesthetic ideas, a distinction corresponding to the one Kant makes between productive and reproductive imagination. Productive aesthetic ideas, most commonly related to literary works, contribute to the expansion of our cognitive faculties by providing a sensible counterpart to ideas that go beyond our sensory experience, or they connect the introspective, emotional and affective properties associated with our abstract concepts with concrete and imaginative representations, giving additional information needed for a more complete understanding of abstract phenomena. On the other hand, reproductive aesthetic ideas, commonly inspired by musical tones or colors, are more primitive and non-reflective, in bringing to mind variety of ideas that go beyond sensory experience only by means of associations we are already familiar with, which is why they do not produce objectual understanding. Reproductive aesthetic ideas are similar to symbolic exhibition, but whereas symbolic exhibition depends on a pre-existent

but non-obvious similarity between two things (such as a windmill and despot state), reproductive aesthetic ideas depend on an apparent similarity, which is why they invite an automatic association between sensations and ideas, as when loud tones trigger the idea of cheerfulness. Kuplen concludes this chapter with a discussion on the cognitive value of abstract art, suggesting that “non-representation art merely reveals the presence of ideas that go beyond sensory experience, but it fails to communicate the meaning of such ideas as it is determined by the various causal and explanatory relationships between different introspective, emotional and affective properties that lie at the background of such ideas” (Kuplen 2023: 119).

In chapter five Kuplen discusses another discrepancy she identifies in Kant’s account, the one related to the view that all works of art must possess cognitive value and the view that works of art can have aesthetic value independently of possessing cognitive value. The source of this inconsistency lies in Kant’s ambiguous treatment of spirit, which leaves it unclear whether “the spirit, as the faculty of producing cognitively valuable aesthetic ideas, determine artworks’ aesthetic value or not” (Kuplen 2023: 123). This question is further related to the one concerning the inconsistency between the expressive and formalist criteria of beauty. Kuplen solves this by claiming that “aesthetic form of an object (natural or artistic) can be thought to exist at two levels – on the perceptual level referring to the combination of object’s perceptual features and on the level of aesthetic ideas whereby it is constituted by the combination of aesthetic attributes or associational thoughts” (Kuplen 2023: 125). This distinction becomes relevant for Kuplen’s central concern here, that of bringing together Kant’s insistence on the form of an artwork, and its expression of aesthetic ideas. We should, Kuplen claims, expand Kant’s formalism so as to include both perceptual and representational and semantic properties, which allows us to see how the form becomes the carrier of a work’s aesthetic value. Since this value is generated by work’s cognitive value, Kuplen confirms her original view that Kant in fact defends “an extreme form of aesthetic cognitivism”, namely the view that “all works of art have aesthetic value (partly) in virtue of their cognitive value” (Kuplen 2023: 122). This is not to suggest that cognitive value of a work is always relevant for work’s aesthetic status, only when “it is furthered by work’s aesthetic properties, formal and stylistic properties, narrative details, sensory and representational properties” (Kuplen 2023: 121). Another important aspect of Kuplen’s argument here is a distinction she makes between what she calls perceptual beauty and spirited beauty, i.e. “the beauty of an aesthetic idea”, both of which depend on formalistic criteria of beauty alone. If the form of an object is restrained by the concept of purpose, as is the case in adherent beauty, then that purpose restrains the free play of imagination to a certain degree, but it does not restrain the free harmony between imagination and understanding. A beauty of an art-

work, i.e. its aesthetic value, “resides not in particular idea or thought communicated by the object, but rather in the particular way these ideas and thoughts are arranged together to form a coherent unity, since it is this unity that produces aesthetic pleasure” (Kuplen 2023: 131). This makes formalism compatible with the view that beauty is the expression of aesthetic ideas and it explains why an artwork can only be beautiful if it exhibits spirited beauty, i.e. if it expresses cognitively valuable aesthetic ideas. In such cases, artworks also inspire pleasure, which, as Kuplen argues in conclusion to this chapter, has a dual function: “it functions not merely as a means by which we come to recognize a relationship between imagination and understanding as freely harmonious, but also as a felt sense that guides us in ordering the sensible manifold and making free harmony possible” (Kuplen 2023: 142).

Given such a dual function of pleasure, Kuplen argues, in chapter six that “pleasure appears to play a role similar to that of a determinate concept; it functions as a rule for brining meaning and sense to the sensible manifold and for making cognition possible” (Kuplen 2023: 143), i.e. “it functions as a rule of structure governing the imaginative organization of aesthetic material in a specific way, namely in a way that brings sense and coherence to it” (Kupen 2023: 144). Such understanding of the role of aesthetic pleasure enables her to further argue that “in spite of Kant’s claim that judgment of taste cannot yield cognition because they do not employ determinate concepts, they must nevertheless be considered as an exercise of some form of cognition, in particular of what Kant calls cognition in general” (Kuplen 2023: 144), when the manifold of intuition is subsumed not under a concept but under the idea of a world as a systematic whole, that is, the principle of the purposiveness. Much of this chapter is dedicated to explicating how aesthetic judgments feature in our overall cognition, and Kuplen does a great job in uniting this to the role that Kant gives to reflective and determinate judgment and to taste. On her view, “the feeling of pleasure is an essential part of the productive practice of art as it directs and guides the artistic activity towards achieving beauty” (Kuplen 2023: 158). The role of taste, on such a reading, is in being a “manifestation of the principle of purposiveness that guides our organization of the empirical world through the feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) and thus must be seen as a form of cognition” (Kuplen 2023: 160). Such understanding of the relation between taste and pleasure allows Kuplen to argue that “the aesthetic feeling of pleasure in the beautiful can carry forward some form of cognitive insight” (Kuplen 2023: 160), where this insight is not verbal or propositional, but manifests itself in objectual understanding.

My summary of Kuplen’s analysis can hardly do justice to her detailed, insightful and mind-opening analysis of Kant’s theory of art, and of the way we tend to think of art’s cognitive value. She offers

an inspiring interpretation of Kant's theory, engaging only marginally with the existing scholarship on Kant, and manages to unite numerous distinct elements of his theory into a coherent account which successfully explains away numerous inconsistencies traditionally identified in Kant's third *Critique*. She also does a great job in demonstrating her main claim regarding the relation between aesthetic and cognitive dimension of our artistic experience, that is, in showing how our artistic and aesthetic experiences enable and support our cognitive processes and learning. Arguably, it is her demonstration of how aesthetic pleasure is imbued with cognitive insights that carries the weight of her analysis, and this is something that aesthetic cognitivists will gladly incorporate into their theories. Her reliance on contemporary epistemology and cognitive sciences is a refreshing venue to Kant's aesthetics. For all these reasons, I deeply recommend her book to everyone interested in questions of art's cognitive value and in Kant's philosophy. While Kuplen's primary concern is cognitive value of art, scholars more concerned with Kant's philosophy have plenty of reasons to turn to her book and look for points of contact or disagreement.

Regardless of my admiration for Kuplen's account, let me conclude by pointing to some of the worries I have with respect to it. While her account of art's contribution to our understanding of abstract concepts and to self-knowledge is praiseworthy, there is a sense in which it is just as liable to some of the anti-cognitivist challenges as the cognitivists theories she rejects. For example, in discussing the view that art gives us knowledge of what it is like, Kuplen claims: "Presumably, the problem is that experiential knowledge what it is like to be another person in the real world is not actually displayed within the artwork itself; rather, it is the audience that must exercise their own imaginative abilities of mentalizing what the fictional character is feeling, thinking, believing, desiring, and then apply this knowledge to the real world in order to perceive the human nature more clearly. But if it is the audience, rather than the content of the artwork itself that does the cognitive inquiry of knowing what it is like to be a real person, then it is not the artwork qua artwork that promotes experiential knowledge" (Kuplen 2023: 23–24). While I do not think this is as detrimental to cognitivist project as Kuplen (or Gibson, who originally formulated the issue) does, it seems to me that her account of self-understanding obtained in the process of reading is in the same way a result of the reader's activities, rather than being contained within the work. Kuplen claims: "If aesthetic ideas are products of the imaginative synthesis of various thoughts and associations (that is, aesthetic attributes); this implies that they are able to capture and bring together various introspective, emotional and affective information involved in the content of abstract concepts and can thereby express the meaning of our concepts *as it is determined by our own experiences*" (Kuplen 2023: 66, my emphasis). While she is right that, in light of this subjective contribution of the agent herself, these insights are neither trivial nor lack justifi-

cation, there is a problem: if our experiences determine the meaning that these concepts have for us, then, even if such experiences are inherently bound with the aesthetic pleasure resulting from the work's formal arrangement, at least part of what we are gaining from a work of art is not bound to artwork itself but depends on the existing cognitive economy of the readers themselves. Kuplen's account is therefore just as vulnerable to Gibson's worry that "there does seem to be a bit too much 'me' in all of this, and cognitivism is, again, about what goes on in artworks and not in the mind of the consumer" (in Kuplen 2023: 24). Again, I do not think this is a problem for cognitivism, but it may be for Kuplen, given her criticism of the available cognitivist theories.

On the other hand, Kuplen is primarily concerned with the way art provides (or supports the acquisition of) self-knowledge, and even her account of objectual understanding ultimately comes down to one's gaining insights into how one understands the abstract concepts in question. Therefore, it is not surprising that the underlying cognitive economy of the individual reader will be the crucial factor in obtaining cognitive benefits from a work. She is certainly right to insist on the value of such insights as they tend to be underdeveloped in theories falling under aesthetic cognitivism, but I wonder whether her theory leaves us with too little to hold on to. In other words, cognitivists are committed to the claim that art provides valuable venues to learning various sorts of things, only some of which relate to self-knowledge, or to deepened understanding of one's conception of abstract notions. The challenges issued at these views are not groundless, and Kuplen rightly emphasizes difficulties involved in solving them, but I am not sure we should give up on these theories just yet. As several scholars showed, either by invoking the analogy between fiction and thought-experiments or by invoking the analogy with testimony, there is a more direct link between a given text and one's cognitive gains, where the fictional dimension is not necessarily an obstacle to obtaining them.<sup>1</sup> Kuplen's account of the contribution of one's experience and emotions in processing an artwork's content – i.e. the aesthetic attributes – is quite similar in spirit, if not in details, to those accounts that see fiction as analogous to thought experiment. If that is the case, then perhaps Kuplen should expand the domain of knowledge available from art beyond insights related to how one conceptualizes certain issues.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Green (2010); Vidmar Jovanović (2019).

<sup>2</sup> As far as I can tell, Kuplen acknowledges these additional cognitive benefits in Conclusion (p. 169), attributing them to the union between cognitive and aesthetic pleasure. She does not however explain how an agent obtains these insights nor their relation to abstract notions and self-understanding. Such extension of her account is problematic in that, for example, it is not obvious how one's acquisition of factual truths from the work results from or is justified by, one's pleasure in the work. Within Kantian framework, it is not clear how Kuplen can deduce factual truths from aesthetic ideas given her claim that aesthetic ideas relate to "various introspective, emotional and affective aspects that appear to be central to the semantic content of such phenomena" (Kuplen 2023: 170).

A similar claim can be made with respect to Kuplen's interpretation of Kant's account of cognitive insights available from art. I fully endorse her claim that Kant defends extreme aesthetic cognitivism, in the sense that epistemic and aesthetic dimensions of artistic experience come united – in that sense, Kuplen does a great job in demonstrating the shortcomings of those interpretations that focus solely on formalism or that fail to properly explain Kant's claim that beautiful art is art of reflection. To the extent that Kuplen's primary concern is reinterpreting Kant's theory so as to strengthen contemporary cognitivists account of art, her interpretation seems more than promising. However, there is more to Kant's cognitivism than Kuplen's account acknowledges, focused as it is on self-knowledge. For one thing, Kant is explicit in linking poetry to "the business of understanding"<sup>3</sup> (§51) and the business of understanding ultimately concerns coming up with empirical theories about the external world and scientific understanding, where such understanding should have objective interpersonal validity. Therefore, her interpretation of Kant's extreme aesthetic cognitivism should incorporate such knowledge or point to how it is developed.

Another way in which I find her theory incomplete concerns her neglect of the relation between art and moral knowledge, i.e. of the relation between aesthetics and ethics. I wonder whether such neglect can be justified, not only with respect to a discussion of Kant's theory of art, but also with respect to the general cognitivists' accounts of art, which commonly include moral knowledge within the relevant insights art provides. While it could be claimed that Kuplen does not need to make more precise claims about moral knowledge since abstract concepts often include moral concerns, I nevertheless worry that she should have paid more attention to how art provides moral knowledge. I base this not only on the important links that Kant establishes between ethics and aesthetics throughout the third *Critique*, but also in light of Kant's claim in CJP §52, according to which art by necessity has to be combined with our moral ideas. Given everything that he says about the process of aesthetic enlargement of a concept – a process that Kuplen insightfully describes when she discusses one's becoming aware of the relations between distinctive bits of thoughts about a certain abstract idea – my conclusion is that our engagements with art need to lead to a more substantial advancement of moral knowledge which goes beyond the kind of self-knowledge and self-understanding Kuplen underlies. While art certainly can make us aware of how we feel about a certain ethical issue, just as Kuplen suggests, there is, on my view, more that art does in making us reorient our understanding, expand our perspective or change our commitments. This is all the more important, given the overall goal of Kant's philosophy, namely the attainment of the

<sup>3</sup> See CPJ §51, where Kant argues that „A poet announces merely an entertaining play with ideas, and yet as much results for the understanding as if he had merely had the intention of carrying on its business.” Below I relate this to Kant's account of poet's epistemic reliability.



kingdom of ends. Again, given that the scope of Kuplen's account is solely art's cognitive value, her dismissal of the relation between art and morality in Kant's account may not be an issue, but her interpretation seems unfinished and impoverished with respect to Kant's overall account of art and his ambition behind the third *Critique*.

This is perhaps most obvious when we think of how important it is for Kant to establish the way in which art contributes to development of the skills relevant for sociability, which is yet another aspect of Kant's project that falls outside of Kuplen's interest. The importance of communicability is stressed repeatedly throughout the third *Critique*, and Kant insists on art's capacity to inspire our communicability with the purpose of sharing judgments,<sup>4</sup> where such sharing is inherent for our ethical growth which can only take place in society. Kuplen remains focused solely on an individual aesthetic agent and the manner in which an encounter with a work of art brings that agent self-knowledge (see for example pp. 66–67). However, on Kant's view, an aesthetic agent is, through aesthetic pleasure, inspired to share her views on a given work. As several scholars pointed out, therewithal lies another cognitive potential of art, i.e. its capacity to contribute to knowledge production, the one concerned with social rather than individual epistemic experiences.<sup>5</sup> This is because in sharing our aesthetic judgments, we get to see how other members of our community conceptualized particular aesthetic ideas captured in a work of art and how they understand the meaning of abstract concepts. Kuplen's narrow focus on an individual aesthetic agent hardly leaves room for this kind of insights, all the more so given her highly subjectivist approach to the epistemic potential of aesthetic ideas. But what she fails to comment is that, in our engagements with works of art we not only get to reflect on how we understand abstract ideas and what they mean to us, we also recognize what they mean to the artist who expressed them (in a particular way) and through our engagements with other aesthetic agents, we get to see how they understand them. This is an important factor in art's capacity to not only inspire knowledge (including moral knowledge), but to bring people together, by enabling them to overcome their individual subjective perspectives and understand perspectives of others.

One final worry I have relates to a couple of details of Kuplen's account of aesthetic ideas and their relation to aesthetic attributes. Namely, Kuplen seems to provide an account of aesthetic ideas primarily from the perspective of the spectator, rather than from a genius – nothing surprising, given her commitment to how spectators gain self-knowledge in an act of art-engagement. Such a perspective motivates her claim regarding the similarity between the generation of concepts

<sup>4</sup> See CPJ §44, where Kant defines beautiful art as one which “promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication”.

<sup>5</sup> Bradfield (2014); Kneller (2011); McMahon (2017); Matherne (2019); Vidmar Jovanović (2025).

and of aesthetic ideas. As she argues, “in the case of an empirical intuition the synthesis is comprised of perceptual features (such as leaves, stem and petals forming the flower-intuition), in the case of an aesthetic idea the synthesis is comprised of aesthetic attributes, that is, thoughts, associations and other mental representations evoked by the distinctive features of an object or an artwork. (...) it is fair to say that aesthetic ideas, as expressed in works of art, can capture and bring together various introspective, emotional and affective properties (that is, properties expressing our subjective experiences) that appear to be central to the content of abstract phenomena” (Kuplen 2023: 59). However, her focus on the perspective of the spectator makes her oblivious to another important element in Kant’s cognitivism, namely the epistemic reliability of poetry which seems to be inherent in his view. In his discussion of poetry in CPJ §53, he stresses that poetry is not deceitful and that it can be “purposively employed by the understanding for its own business”. Obviously however, it is questionable whether we can accept such an inherent link between a poet’s epistemic reliability and her artistic creations, in the light of ethically challenging or epistemically problematic artworks. Kuplen remains silent of these issues, and such a neglect could be the result of her primary interest, which is to modify our contemporary understanding of art’s cognitive value. But I wonder whether her account can avoid similar issues with respect to art which provides aesthetic pleasure but is ethically or epistemically misleading.

Relying on Kant’s claims that aesthetic ideas and attributes occasion much thinking, inspire reflection, and generate a process of aesthetic enlargement, Kuplen identifies aesthetic ideas as “concrete representations holding together various introspective, emotional and affective information involved in our experience of abstract concepts.” (Kuplen 2023: 64), where in light of such holding together, aesthetic ideas contribute to one’s understanding of abstract concepts that aesthetic ideas stand for. While there is much attraction and plausibility in this claim, I worry that it conflates aesthetic attributes with the result of the process of aesthetic enlargement – the very cognitive gain that Kuplen identifies as the end-result of our artistic engagements. In other words, the kind of ‘holding together’ that Kuplen identifies with the aesthetic idea is, on my view, associated with the way in which aesthetic ideas give rise to reflection and inspire thinking in the process of aesthetic enlargement. As Kant argues, the result of such a process is ineffable, as there is always more that is involved in aesthetic ideas (i.e. in our understanding of them than can be properly expressed). Therefore, it is confusing to claim that aesthetic ideas are concrete representations; at best, aesthetic attributes are concrete representations, i.e. motives in a work, and mental and emotional states inspired in a spectator – provided of course these states can be concrete.

Kuplen is of course aware of that, as she claims that “the expansion of a concept proceeds aesthetically, that is, by means of aesthetic attri-

butes that bring to mind a multitude of thoughts, feelings, moods and sensations connected with the given concept” (Kuplen 2023: 64). I agree with this, but if that is the case, why then argue that aesthetic idea is formulated as the end result of the process of aesthetic enlargement? Perhaps what Kuplen suggests is that, from the reader’s perspective, the end result of the process of aesthetic enlargement is formation of the particular aesthetic idea, with all the relevant cognitive insights it brings. But that seems to get the process of engagement with the work wrong: in order to initiate the process of aesthetic enlargement, a reader needs to pay attention to the particular motives in a work (namely, aesthetic attributes), so it is unclear how the attributes can at the same time be those features of a work that give rise to the ideas *and* the introspective, emotional and affective properties that constitute one’s grasping of abstract concepts captured by aesthetic idea that come as a result of our engagement with the work.

Arguably, my worry is rendered mute by Kuplen’s claim that the grasping of aesthetic ideas is simultaneous with the cognitive insights obtained in artistic experiences, which is why she defends the dual function account of aesthetic pleasure (echoing (but not referencing) in the process Angela Breitenbach’s (2013) view on the pleasures of understanding and the cognitive function of aesthetic judgment. Kuplen concludes that “aesthetic appreciation itself is a unique type of cognitive appreciation of the formal relationships between different elements of the phenomena” (Kuplen 2023: 169), arguing that such account helps her evade Lamarque and Olsen-inspired criticism of aesthetic cognitivism, according to which “cognitive vocabulary cannot be employed as a standard to evaluate artwork’s aesthetic success” (Kuplen 2023: 169). If that indeed is the case, she successfully addresses Lamarque’s concerns, but, in the absence of an account of the epistemic reliability of an artist, her account indeed only accommodates self-knowledge. Regardless of my worries here, I am happy to accept that as a great achievement on her part!<sup>6</sup>

## References

- Breitenbach, A. 2013. “Aesthetics in Science: A Kantian Proposal.” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 113: 83–100.
- Bradfield, E. 2014. “Productive Excess: Aesthetic Ideas, Silence, and the Community.” *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 48 (2): 1–15.
- Green M. 2010. “How and What We Can Learn from Fiction.” In G. Hagberg and W. Jost (eds.), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature*, London: Wiley Blackwell, 350–366.
- Kant, I. 2000. *Critique of the Power of Judgment, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>6</sup> This work has been supported by the Croatian Science Foundation under the project UIP-2020-02-1309.

- Kneller, J. 2011. "Aesthetic Reflection and Community." In Ch. Payne and L. Thorpe (eds.), *Kant and the Concept of Community*. University of Rochester Press
- Kuplen, M. 2023. *Kant's Aesthetic Cognitivism: On the Value of Art*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Matherne, S. 2019. "Kant on Aesthetic Autonomy and Common Sense", *Philosophers' Imprint* 19: 1–22.
- McMahon, J. 2017. "Immediate Judgment and Non-Cognitive Ideas: The Pervasive and Persistent in the Misreading of Kant's Aesthetic Formalism." In M. C. Altman (ed.), *The Palgrave Kant Handbook*. London: Palgrave, 425–446.
- Vidmar Jovanović, I. 2019, "Cognitive and Ethical Values and dimensions of Narrative Art." In I. Vidmar Jovanović (ed.), *Narrative Art, Knowledge and Ethics*. Rijeka: Filozofski fakultet, 17–85.
- Vidmar Jovanović, I. 2025. "Expressing the Unnamable: Poetic Language, Humanity and Sociability in Kant's third Critique." In L. Filieri and K. Pollok (eds.), *Kant on Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 102–119.

IRIS VIDMAR JOVANOVIĆ  
University of Rijeka, Rijeka, Croatia