

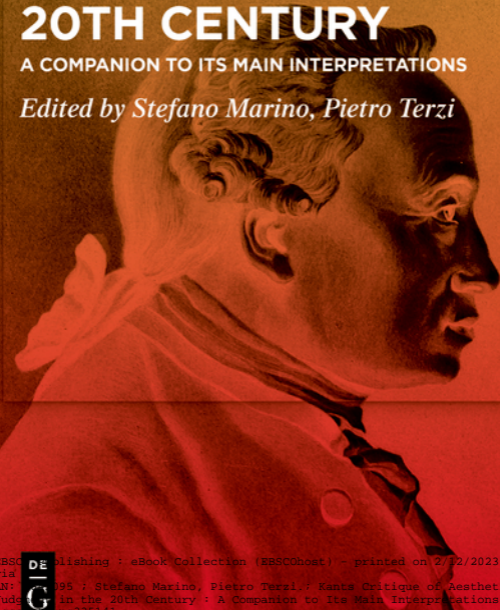
DE GRUYTER

# KANT'S CRITIQUE OF AESTHETIC JUDGMENT IN THE 20TH CENTURY

A COMPANION TO ITS MAIN INTERPRETATIONS

*Edited by Stefano Marino, Pietro Terzi*

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A Companion to Its Main Interpretations

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Stefano Marino and Pietro Terzi

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Stefano Marino would like to dedicate this book to Beatrice Centi and Mariannina Failla, from whom he has learned over the years the most part of what he knows about Kant; and also to Alessandro, Ginestra, Ludovica and Vittoria, former students and now friends: the very first persons with whom he talked about the project of this volume on Kant in a bar in via Zamboni, Bologna, sometime in 2017.

Pietro Terzi would like to dedicate this book to Helena and Linda, as an apology for his intermittent presence over the last years.

Bologna and Modena, June 2020

Stefano Marino and Pietro Terzi



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# List of Abbreviations

Throughout the volume, references to the Kantian corpus are given parenthetically in the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* edited by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992–2012), followed in square brackets by the volume and page numbers of the standard critical edition of Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Ak.), edited by the Königlich Preußische [later Deutsche] Akademie der Wissenschaften and, from volume 24, by the Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen (Berlin: George Reimer/[later] Walter de Gruyter, 1900–). In case of not yet translated texts, the quotations and passages are inserted by referring directly to volume and page numbers in the Akademie edition.

References to the following works of Kant are preceded by these abbreviations:

- AP            *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. In: *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Robert B. Louden/Günter Zöllner (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 227–429.
- CF            *The Conflict of the Faculties*. In: *Religion and Rational Theology*. Allen W. Wood/George di Giovanni (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 233–328.
- Corr.        *Correspondence*. Arnulf Zweig (Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- CPJ         *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Paul Guyer/Allen W. Wood (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- CPR         *Critique of Pure Reason*. Paul Guyer/Allen W. Wood (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- CPrR        *Critique of Practical Reason*. In: *Practical Philosophy*. Mary J. Gregor (Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 133–272.
- IUH         *Ideas for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*. In: *Anthropology, History, and Education*. Robert B. Louden/Günter Zöllner (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 107–120.
- R            *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. In: *Religion and Rational Theology*. Allen W. Wood/George di Giovanni (Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 39–216.
- Refl.        *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie*. In: *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 15, pp. 55–654.
- V-Anth/Busolt    *Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1788–1789 Busolt*. In: *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 25, pp. 1431–1532.

Other abbreviations:

- AE            Dewey, John: *Art as Experience* (1st ed. 1934). In: *The Later Works of John Dewey*. Vol. 10. Jo Ann Boydston (Ed.). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.
- AMC         Horkheimer, Max: “Art and Mass Culture”. In: *Critical Theory. Selected Essays*, transl. Matthew J. O’Connell and others. New York: Continuum, 2002, pp. 273–290.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110596496-002>

- GW 1 Gadamer, Hans-Georg: *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (1st ed. 1960). In: *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 1. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990.
- KBA Cohen, Hermann: *Kants Begründung der Ästhetik* (1st ed. 1889). In: *Werke*. Vol. 3. Helmut Holzhey (Ed.). Hildesheim, Zurich, New York: Olms, 2009.
- KLL Cassirer, Ernst: *Kants Leben und Lehre* (1st ed. 1918). In: *Gesammelte Werke*. Vol. 8. Birgit Recki (Ed.). Hamburg: Meiner, 2001.
- KLT Cassirer, Ernst: *Kant's Life and Thought*, transl. James Haden, intr. Stephan Körner. New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1981.
- KP Eco, Umberto: *Kant and the Platypus: Essays on Language and Cognition*, transl. Alastair McEwen. London: Secker & Warburg, 2000.
- Par Derrida, Jacques: "Parergon". In: *The Truth in Painting*, transl. Geoffrey Bennington and Ian McLeod. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 15–147.
- TCT Horkheimer, Max: "Traditional and Critical Theory". In: *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, transl. Matthew J. O'Connell and others. New York: Continuum, 2002, pp. 188–243.
- TM Gadamer, Hans-Georg: *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., transl. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London, New York: Continuum, 2004.
- UKpU Plessner, Helmuth: "Untersuchungen zu einer Kritik der philosophischen Urteilskraft" (1st ed. 1920)". In: *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 2. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981, pp. 7–321.

Stefano Marino and Pietro Terzi

# Introduction

## The Twentieth-Century Afterlife of Kant's "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment"

### 1 A Forgotten Legacy

It is beyond doubt that Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) represents one of the most important texts of modern philosophy. Following the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781; 21787) and the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), Kant's third *Critique* constitutes the theoretical culmination and completion of the systematic philosophical project Kant had started twenty years before. It began with his 1770 dissertation *On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World*, and his discovery of the possibility of an *a priori* foundation of human knowledge. With this came a consequent aim: to develop this discovery in a full-blown way into an investigation of the bounds of sensibility and of reason, including a doctrine of taste, of metaphysics and of moral philosophy.<sup>1</sup> The third *Critique* is therefore not only an end, i.e. the final part of the three-sided system of transcendental philosophy, but also marks the beginning of new possible paths of thought, exemplified by the development that certain Kantian concepts and doctrines presented in the first, the second and the

---

Sections 1 and 3 of this Introduction were written together by both authors. Stefano Marino authored the introduction to section 2.2. as well as subsections 2.2.1. and 2.2.4. Pietro Terzi wrote the introduction to section 2, section 2.1, and subsections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3. The general structure and contents of this Introduction, however, have been planned, discussed and conceived together by both authors.

<sup>1</sup> See Kant's letter to his former student and friend Markus Herz (1747–1803) from 7 June 1771: "You understand how important it is, for all of philosophy [...] to distinguish with certainty and clarity that which depends on the subjective principles of human mental powers (not only sensibility but also the understanding) and that which pertains directly to the facts. [...] I am therefore now busy on a work which I call 'The Bounds of Sensibility and of Reason'. It will work out in some detail the foundational principles and laws that determine the sensible world together with an outline of what is essential to the Doctrine of Taste, of Metaphysics and of Moral Philosophy. I have this winter surveyed all the relevant materials for it and have considered, weighed, and harmonized everything, but I have only recently come up with the way to organize the whole work" (Corr., p. 127; Ak. X, pp. 122–132).

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third *Critiques* undergo in some of his later writings, including *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793), *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) and the *Opus postumum* (1804).

The *Critique of the Power of Judgment* stands out for its unique importance not only in the context of Kant's own thinking but also, as we have said, in the context of modern philosophy as a whole, and particularly in the context of modern and contemporary aesthetics. As has been noted by Günter Figal, "Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*, to which philosophical aesthetics owes its name, was intended as an elucidation of *aisthété epistémé*, of perceptual knowledge", but even though "Baumgarten's [was] the first systematic attempt in modern philosophy to dignify sensible or sensibly dominated knowledge in its peculiarity [...], Kant's *Critique of Judgment* was more influential in this regard"; "philosophical aesthetics really begins with him", and it was Kant who first "gave philosophical aesthetics a significance pertaining to philosophy as such" (Figal 2015, p. 28).

At the same time, as several important scholars of Kant have observed, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is a complex, multi-layered, heterogeneous, discontinuous and, so to speak, "patchy" work. This, on the one hand, has contributed to the articulated, branching (and therefore fascinating) *Wirkungsgeschichte* that has developed from the nineteenth century until today; but on the other hand, it has also made of it one of the most misinterpreted – or, at least, most *variably* interpreted – works of the last centuries (D'Angelo 1997a, pp. v–vii).

While the importance of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* for the birth of nineteenth-century romanticism and transcendental idealism was widely acknowledged and documented early on, scholars have sometimes overlooked its far-reaching influence on twentieth-century thought, well beyond the limits of German post-Kantian philosophy. The issues that Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* brings to the table have nourished debates in many philosophical disciplines, with equal importance for the continental, the analytic and the pragmatist tradition, and also for other human sciences. The pivotal role played by the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in contemporary philosophy can be better explained if we think about the emergence of judgment as a key issue in various domains. In fact, Kant's notion of reflective judgment has provided a fundamental model for the attempt to rethink the concept itself, to discover the meaning and also the limits of rationality and experience. The latter search began in earnest in the last century and continues even now.

## 2 History and Geography of a Reception

In the third *Critique*, the history of ideas meets the history of a text, one that stands out for its peculiar features and which has therefore to be considered in its very own “performativity”. In a recent contribution to the ongoing debate on contextualism in intellectual history, it has been observed that texts are not “something stable and [...] static, to be retrieved and handled by scholars”, where “events and experiences are presumed to be contained and stabilized for posterity”. On the contrary, “they are permanently on the move: they circulate, have effects on other things, change and transform realities, and are at the same time themselves translated and modified” (Asdal/Jordheim 2018, p. 59). Texts are not passive items that simply lend themselves to close or distant readings, to different interpretations and more or less accurate translations. They seem to be endowed with a sort of intentionality of their own, and as such they contribute to the elaboration of concepts, images, discourses and frameworks. To put it in more conventional hermeneutical terms, texts have the capacity of reinventing the coordinates of their diachronic and synchronic presence, across a potentially infinite number of contexts – the process that Hans-Robert Jauss termed *Horizontswandel* (Jauss 1982).

What the reader will find in this book is thus the history of a reception. We do not want to venture here into a full methodological thematization of a notion – that of reception –, which, over the last century, has acquired a number of partially convergent and partially divergent conceptual shades. This effort would be all the more vain for a collection of essays that, as such, gathers together different approaches and styles. Still, some historical and methodological clarifications are perhaps required, to the extent that they shed light on the conditions of conception, the usefulness and the inherent limitations of this book. In the following sections, we would like to sketch out a brief heuristic map and a timeline of the reception of the third *Critique* that may help to frame the twentieth-century interpretations analyzed in this book. A final section will be devoted to the book’s methodological criteria.

### 2.1 Towards the Twentieth Century

#### 2.1.1 Germany

First released in the spring of 1790 at the Leipzig book fair by the Berlin publisher F. Delagarde, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* soon became a small pub-



lishing sensation. Interest in this last stage in the attainment of Immanuel Kant's critical edifice spread quickly, and by the end of the century the number of editions and reprints on the market rose to three (Vorländer 1922, pp. xxx ff.). The enthusiasm with which the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was received contrasts with Kant's initial struggle, after the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, to see his work welcomed and, most importantly, understood. By the time the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* appeared, Kant's philosophy was gaining substantial momentum in Germany: the doctrines of the "King in Königsberg" were highly influential and a regular source of lively debates. In Karl L. Reinhold (1757–1823), whose *Briefe* on Kantian philosophy appeared precisely in 1790, Kantian criticism found not only an expositor, but also an active follower and a developer. Ludwig H. Jakob (1759–1827), a professor in Halle, was the first to discuss Kant's ideas within the halls of a university; whereas Johann F. Schultz (1739–1805) in Königsberg, Christian G. Schütz (1747–1832) in Halle and Carl C.E. Schmid (1761–1812) in Jena all adhered in different ways to the new philosophy.

But the first reception of a revolutionary doctrine is never smooth, and despite his success Kant spent his last years doing precisely what he had done since 1781: defending himself from the harsh criticisms of the old metaphysical guard – as in the controversy with the Leibnizian Johann A. Eberhard (1739–1809) – and reacting to the independent efforts of young heretic disciples such as Salomon Maimon (1753–1800) and, most notably, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814). As a result of the popularity of Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* and Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Kant's philosophy was already perceived by many as somewhat obsolete during the 1790s. However, this decade is also the soil, so to speak, where the seeds of neo-Kantianism (or what goes under its name) were planted, with the works of Jakob F. Fries (1773–1843), Johann F. Herbart (1776–1841) and Friedrich E. Beneke (1798–1854). Going against easy common-sense periodizations, Beiser has recently observed the archetypal gesture of every subsequent "return to Kant" in Fries' book *Reinhold, Fichte und Schelling* (1803). If "the neo-Kantian battle against Hegelianism [began] only in the 1820s", he has claimed, "it largely [reprised] what had been said decades earlier during the campaign against Reinhold, Fichte and Schelling" (Beiser 2014, p. 4).

The *Critique of the Power of Judgment* therefore came into the world in a tormented environment, where Kant's claims figured as bones of contention pitting one philosophical front, one intellectual generation against the other. The diluted conventional narratives of the history of philosophy usually fail to account for the vertiginous complexity of the actual life of ideas, changes in which are often faster-paced than may be immediately apparent. At the same time they may neglect macroscopic phenomena or long-term processes. The lasting legacy of the

third *Critique* is precisely one of these overlooked long-term processes. As already said before, scholarship has it that this text – the issues it broached and the problems it left open – was crucial for the development of German romanticism and idealism and for the rise of neo-Kantianism. Nonetheless, some scholars have also noticed the lack of a detailed account of the role played by the third *Critique*, not only in the emergence of neo-Kantianism, but also in the further evolution of contemporary philosophy. In a pioneering article, Stefano Poggi (2005) tried to fill this gap by tracing out the main stages of its reception. He showed how, shortly after its publication, the interest in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* per se began to wane due to two parallel factors. On the one hand, the rapid evolution of scientific inquiries into nature overtook the horizon that framed not only the “Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment”, but also texts like the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*; on the other hand, the aesthetic perspectives opened up by the third *Critique* were quickly assimilated by the romantic philosophy of art and processed into something different and autonomous.

So, in the first half of the nineteenth century, authors like Fries, his disciple Ernst F. Apelt (1812–1859) or the biologist Mathias J. Schleiden (1804–1881) turned to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in search not so much for a teleological conception of living beings, and even less for a theory of beauty, as for a confirmation of the key function played by the reflective capacity of judgment in orienting the study of nature. Along this path, the reception of the third *Critique* would intersect that of the inductive logic of John Stuart Mill in philosophers and scientists foreign to the tradition of idealistic *Naturphilosophie*, such as Justus von Liebig (1803–1873), Friedrich Ueberweg (1826–1871) or, most notably, Friedrich-Albert Lange (1828–1875), who was sensitive both to the problem of a justification of induction and to the aesthetical-practical significance of knowledge. In the second half of the century, with the diffusion of psycho-physiological research, the spread of the evolutionary theories of Darwin and Haeckel, and the revolutionary *fin-de-siècle* achievements of physics and mathematics, references to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* became less and less frequent. A relevant exception – also connected to the abovementioned Lange, due to the latter’s influence in guiding his general views on the development of modern philosophy, including Kant – can be perhaps seen in Friedrich W. Nietzsche (1844–1900), whose relationship with the legacy of Kantianism is too complex, unsystematic and thus problematic to be summarized here. Nietzsche’s critical interpretation of Kant’s conception of objective teleology in connection to the problems of anthropomorphism and perspectivism is surely important in the present context and hence deserves to be mentioned, although

it stands out as an oddity due to its original and sometimes all-too-free character (see Gentili 2010, 2017).

The early neo-Kantian season was dominated by the idea that the kernel of Kant's philosophy was its Newtonianism – a stance exemplified by Hermann Cohen's (1842–1918) *Kants Theorie der Erfahrung* (1871) –, with the first two *Critiques* taking axiological preference over the third one, the problem being that of ensuring a coexistence between scientific laws and the defense of individuality and free will. Things began to change with the emergence, within the neo-Kantian framework, of a conceptual galaxy made up of the layered constellations of the *Wert-*, the *Lebens-* and the *Kulturphilosophie*, including thinkers as diverse as Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915), Paul Natorp (1854–1924), Georg Simmel (1858–1918), Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936), Hugo Münsterberg (1863–1916), Max Weber (1864–1920) or Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945). The discussion between the natural and human sciences (the “nomothetic” and “idiographic”, to use Windelband's terms), the renewed centrality of the judgments of value, and the progressive transformation of neo-criticism into a full-fledged thematization of the sphere of culture and meaning, were the factors that cleared the ground for a return to the more general project of philosophical foundation undertaken by Kant in the third *Critique*, beyond the limits of Newtonianism.

### 2.1.2 France

A similar transformation occurred in France, where, however, the assimilation of Kantianism was strongly mediated by local concerns and debates.<sup>2</sup> The *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was the object of scattered attention up until the end of the 1840s, when Jules Barni (1818–1878) – one of the founding fathers of French Republicanism – provided the first systematic and critical translations of the three *Critiques* (Vallois 1924, p. 322). Until Barni, the reception of the third *Critique* suffered from the consequences of mistrust, first by the sensualist “*idéologues*” and then by the “eclectic” school of Victor Cousin (1792–1867), for Kantian philosophy in general, seen as an “abstruse”, “skeptical” or even “nihilist” doctrine. Barni himself, who was a disciple and the secretary of Cousin, adopted the critical stance of his teacher, celebrating the genius of Kant but highlighting the “barbarism” of Kant's writing, the abstract and artificial technicalities of his

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<sup>2</sup> The following remarks on France are an extremely succinct and almost brutal outline based on Fedi 2018 and Terzi 2019.

conceptual edifice, and reproached him his subjectivist and formal treatment of aesthetic experience. One does not find any lengthy discussion of the third *Critique* in the works of the first *passeurs* of Kant in France, namely Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836), Charles de Villers (1765–1815) or Joseph-Marie Degérando (1772–1842). A reader of the time could find a first, purely doxographic exposition in the French editions of the histories of philosophy of Johann G. Buhle (1763–1821) and Wilhelm G. Tenneman (1761–1819) or in Charles-Joseph Tissot's (1828–1884) *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie* (1840), but the overall understanding of the text was qualitatively and quantitatively very poor. A report on German philosophy by Charles de Rémusat (1797–1875) even asserted that the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was not systematically entailed by the prior two *Critiques*, but was on the contrary a perfunctory attempt at filling an embarrassing gap (De Rémusat 1845, p. xxxii).

The first penetration of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* occurred from the side of aesthetic theory, in particular with Madame de Staël (1766–1817), who, in her popular book *De l'Allemagne* (1810), deployed a romantic and almost Platonic reading of Kant's theory of beauty, with an emphasis on the theme of disinterestedness that would wield a certain influence over French romanticism, merging with the Winckelmannian idealism of Quatremère de Quincy (1755–1849) and the theories of *l'art pour l'art* (Cassagne 1997). Within the university system, the interest in the third *Critique* coincided with the first efforts to scientifically found a proper aesthetic discipline. In the entry “Aesthetics” in Adolphe Franck's (1810–1893) *Dictionnaire*, an authentic *summa* of the eclectic philosophy of the time, the author Charles Bénard (1807–1898), also the translator of Hegel's *Vorlesungen*, saw in the bloodline of German idealism, stemming from the third *Critique*, the only way towards a scientific understanding of the beautiful and its forms. But the “scientific” road taken by French aesthetics after Cousin, in particular with the appreciation of the new contributions of psychology and sociology, clashed with Kant's interdiction of a science of the beautiful in §§44 and 60 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. A book like *La Science du beau* (1861), written by Charles Lévêque (1818–1900), chastised Kant for his subjective approach, which prevented him from grasping the objective qualities of beauty, and even pitied him for his overt lack of taste. In this sense, Helmreich (2002) rightly made the point that, around 1850, a proper reception of the third *Critique* was almost impossible in France.

Of course, this did not hinder the circulation of the Kantian concepts. With the spread of Kantianism in France under the Third Republic – as in the pioneering works of the *polytechniciens* Antoine-Augustine Cournot (1801–1877) and Charles Renouvier (1815–1903) and the spiritualist thinkers Jules Lachelier (1832–1918) and Émile Boutroux (1845–1921) – the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

ment became a privileged point of reference for the philosophy of art: philosophical textbooks, such as the popular *Leçons de philosophie* (1884) by Élie Rabier (1846–1932) or Émile Boirac's (1851–1917) *Cours élémentaire de philosophie* (1888), relied heavily on the principles of Kantian aesthetics as mediated by Renouvier, while in the works of *esthéticiens* like Gabriel Séailles (1852–1922) or Paul Souriau (1852–1926) we find a large and autonomous use of Kantian terminologies within different theoretical frameworks, vitalist/spiritualist and rationalist/experimental respectively. It is in the 1890s that the third *Critique* reappears as a key reference for the French philosophical debate. In his monumental *Essai critique sur l'esthétique de Kant* (1897), the first professor of aesthetics at the Sorbonne, Victor Basch (1863–1944), read the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* through the lens of the *Kunstwissenschaft* and the psycho-physiology of Wundt, Fechner, Vischer, Lipps and Volkelt; whereas Émile Chartier, known as Alain (1868–1951), and Léon Brunschvicg (1869–1944) heavily exploited the notion of reflective judgment in their respective projects of a practical rationalism aimed at a free examination of society and power, and of a “critical idealism” sensitive to scientific breakthroughs. Similarly to what happened in Germany over approximately the same years, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* returned to the fore within the context of a deeper assessment of the axiology of theoretical and practical judgments (Alain) or within the framework of a larger thematization of the crisis of foundations in philosophy and the sciences (such as in the case of Brunschvicg, a sort of French homologue of Cassirer).

It would be unfair, however, to reduce the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the third *Critique* to the sole Franco-German philosophical axis. The *fin-de-siècle* years contain the beginnings of that process of internationalization of the philosophical field that is now fully displayed before our eyes. It would seem natural, therefore, to take into account also what happened elsewhere.

### 2.1.3 Italy

The evolution of the nineteenth-century Italian reception of Kant closely followed the trail traced first by the French debates between sensualism and spiritualism – as in the case of Pasquale Galluppi (1770–1846) – and, then, in the second half of the century, by German philosophy. Already in the 1860s, the imperative “back to Kant [*zurück zu Kant*]” found an echo in a context then widely dominated by the school of Bertrando Spaventa (1817–1883) – who, despite his Hegelian idealism, was actually the first to appreciate the revolutionary meaning of Kant's oeuvre. Exemplary of this Italian return to Kant are the works of Francesco Fiorentino (1834–1894), Carlo Cantoni (1840–1906), Filippo Masci (1844–

1922) and Felice Tocco (1845–1911), who in different ways all tried to use Kantianism as the general framework to interpret and ground contemporary scientific advancements (Spencer’s evolutionism, Darwinian biology, Helmholtz’s physics and physiology, Wundt’s psychology, etc.) and to update the former in light of the latter. The third *Critique* plays a minor role in this context, and is generally neglected by most relevant historiographical contributions to the subject (e.g., Bartolone *et al.* 1986; Verra 1986; D’Anna 1990; Di Giovanni 1996; Ferrari 2006). An exception to the silence on this text, which was translated only in 1907,<sup>3</sup> can be found in the third volume of Ottavio Colecchi’s (1773–1848) *Sopra alcune quistioni le più importanti della filosofia. Osservazioni critiche* [Critical Remarks on Some of the Most Important Philosophical Questions] (1843). Colecchi – who was the first to introduce the Kantian philosophy in the Kingdom of Naples, as acknowledged by Spaventa himself – in fact defended the value of Kant’s aesthetics against the objections of the “pantheist” Hegel (Tessitore 1988).

#### 2.1.4 UK/USA

As to the Anglo-Saxon world, Scott Stroud’s essay in the present book shows very clearly how much Dewey’s engagement with the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was marked by the teachings of his Vermont professor Henry A.P. Torrey (1837–1902), who in turn, via his uncle Joseph (1797–1867), was heavily indebted to the teachings of the President of the University of Vermont James Marsch (1794–1842), who came to Kant by studying Coleridge. Curiously, the English poet was not only the great mediator between German and British romanticism, the center of the lively early reception of Kant in Britain, as shown by Monika Class in a remarkably informative study (Class 2012); Coleridge also acted involuntarily as the link between Europe and the New World. Towards the end of the 1830s, the study of Kant was an established organic element of the English philosophical tradition. In 1838 a first translation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared. Around that time, the effect of Coleridge’s and Thomas Carlyle’s (1795–1881) popularization of the Kantian and, more broadly, German aesthetic theories, as well as the impact of the readings of early bizarre enthusiasts as the painter Henry J. Richter (1772–1857) and the jeweler Thomas Wirgman (1771–1840), a disciple of Kant’s pupil Friedrich A. Nitsch (1767–1813), began to be felt. In an old but still interesting account, Wellek (1931) showed how, from the 1830s up to the end of the century, the assimilation of Kantian philosophy

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3 The *Critique of Pure Reason* had been translated in eight volumes between 1820 and 1822.

took place within the framework of English or Scottish tradition, without major turns. In this sense, despite an increasing importance of Kant, the most significant breakthrough occurred indirectly, with the establishment of the anti-empiricist and anti-utilitarian British idealism of, among others, Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882), Francis H. Bradley (1846–1924), Bernard Bosanquet (1848–1923), John M.E. McTaggart (1866–1925) and Robin G. Collingwood (1889–1943), which also renewed interest in the “fountain-head” of German idealism and in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In his *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), the Cambridge-educated critic I.A. Richards (1893–1979) would react precisely against the Kantian annexation of aesthetics to idealism and of beauty to the sphere of feeling, which – as in Bosanquet’s *Three Lectures on Aesthetics* (1915) – hindered objective and rational considerations as to value. Analogously, Richard Wollheim (1923–2003) would later develop his aesthetics in stark opposition to what he perceived as the “Croce-Collingwood” idealist line (Kobayashi 2009).

In the USA, Kant’s philosophy can be found at the roots of Cambridge pragmatism (Murphey 1968), but despite attempts to establish theoretical connections, in particular with Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914) (Kaag 2005), the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* remained largely neglected. Although the influence of Kant upon the Boston transcendentalist movement of Ralph W. Emerson (1803–1882) is somewhat oblique due to the practical and almost prophetic nature of its philosophical enterprise, transcendentalism contributed nonetheless to the creation of the most important theoretical hotbed of Kantian and ideas in America, the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* (1867) of William T. Harris (1835–1909). Here readers could learn, among other things, of the interpretations of Kant, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and German philosophy in general formulated in the Old World by mediators like Carlyle, Cousin, Bosanquet, Bradley or Madame de Staël. If the Saratoga celebration of the centennial of the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* gave impulse to Kant studies, the teachings of Laurens P. Hickok (1798–1888) at Western Reserve University, Julius H. Seeley (1824–1895) at Amherst College, Noah Porter (1811–1892) at Yale, James McCosh (1811–1893) in Princeton, George S. Morris (1840–1889) at the University of Michigan, Josiah Royce (1855–1916) and Clarence I. Lewis (1883–1964) at Harvard and James E. Creighton (1861–1924) at Cornell secured Kantian philosophy a lasting presence within university syllabi (Creighton 1899; Kuklick 2001).



## 2.2 The Twentieth Century

The importance of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* for the birth and development of several important nineteenth-century philosophical traditions and paths of thought has been widely acknowledged and documented; in the preceding section we have attempted to provide the reader with a simple introductory sketch. However, scholars have sometimes overlooked the third *Critique*'s far-reaching influence on twentieth-century philosophy and – besides philosophy in the strictest, most rigorous and also most delimited sense – ideas of beauty, taste, common sense and judgment in the context of sociological, anthropological, psychological or even political investigations. Our book is aimed to address this blind spot, with contributions from experts in various fields of twentieth-century culture (in general) and philosophy (in particular) which will offer reconstructions and interpretations of many of the most relevant moments and steps of the reception of Kant's third *Critique* in contemporary thought. In the last section of our Introduction we will explain in a more explicit and detailed way the criteria and methodologies that have guided us in planning and realizing this volume. For now – in part to provide the reader with a presentation of the general context in which the various particular contributions included in this volume form an ordered whole – we would like to continue the discourse developed in the previous section about some of the main episodes of the nineteenth-century reception of Kant's third *Critique* and to briefly sketch an overview of the same topic by shifting our attention to the twentieth century.

### 2.2.1 Germany

With regard to the German context, in the previous section we reminded the reader of the importance of the emergence, within the framework of neo-Kantianism, of the layered constellation of *Wert-*, *Lebens-* and *Kulturphilosophie*, and of the change that this new way of thinking implied for both twentieth-century philosophy, in general, and for the reception of Kant's work, in particular. These philosophical traditions and trends included such thinkers as Cassirer, Dilthey, Natorp, Rickert, Simmel, Weber and Windelband, whose influence on many further developments in the philosophy of the last century cannot be underestimated, again, both generally and also with regard to the reception of Kant's thinking specifically. Notwithstanding the central role still played by the first and second *Critiques*, neo-Kantianism underwent a gradual transformation from philosophy understood as logic of pure thought and pure will (Cohen), or as logic of the conditions of possibility of experience and scientific knowledge (Natorp), into a



broader and more systematic philosophy of culture (Cassirer). It aimed to investigate the scientific knowledge in all its objectivations and dimensions, on the basis of the discovery of the fundamental symbolizing power of the human mind, which also implied, among other things, a renewed attention paid to both the first and the second parts of the third *Critique*, respectively focused on aesthetics and teleology. It is not by chance, limiting ourselves to a single but revealing example, that precisely Cassirer dedicated an extraordinary degree of attention to the question concerning the role and relevance of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in his still-fundamental monograph *Kant's Life and Thought* from 1918, and also that this question briefly but significantly emerged in the famous 1929 debate in Davos between Cassirer and Heidegger on Kant.

This logically leads us, by the way, from neo-Kantianism as a leading trend in German late nineteenth-century/early twentieth-century philosophy, to another leading German trend of the first decades of the twentieth century, one that was destined to influence many subsequent philosophical developments until today: phenomenology, in all its varieties and ramifications. Confronting the legacy of Kant has obviously been a “must” and a major task for every philosopher belonging to the so-called “phenomenological movement” (Gadamer 1976, pp. 130–181), ever since the very foundation of phenomenology as such with Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). The relationship of phenomenology to Kant and Kantianism(s) is a most delicate and intriguing problem, as testified by the simple fact that, already at the stage of development of phenomenology testified by the *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. Vol. 1* (1913), Husserl defined his own thought as a kind of transcendental philosophy, definition which did not change in his late work, notwithstanding its evolution over time. So, for example, the *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936) was precisely aimed at opposing the crisis of modern and contemporary science by way of a recovery of the meaning and significance of the “life-world [*Lebenswelt*]” (emphatically defined in §28 as “Kant’s unexpressed presupposition”) through transcendental phenomenology. However, it is not the third *Critique* that stands at the core of Husserl’s critical confrontation with Kant as the founder of transcendental philosophy, and thus as an influential figure for phenomenology, since his confrontation is guided instead by strictly epistemological interests and reasons. In Husserl there does not seem to be a specific or profound interest in the aesthetics of Kant’s third *Critique* as a doctrine of taste, beauty, genius and art, although Husserl was surely interested in the aesthetics of the first *Critique* as “a science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility” (CPR, A21/B36, p. 156 [Ak. III, p. 50]), and though he did eventually try to develop a phenomenological version of transcendental aesthetics, for example in his 1927 lecture course *Nature and Spirit* (see Carbone 2017, pp. 75–93).

However, the interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* did play a decisive role in the developments (and sometimes veritable transformations) of phenomenological philosophy by some of Husserl's direct or indirect pupils. In the philosophy of Husserl's most famous pupil, namely Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), the interpretation of Kant's criticism notoriously plays a very important role, but his 1929 groundbreaking book *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* – with its detailed but also thought-provoking reading of the theory of schematism and its connection between Kant's foundation of metaphysics as a critique of pure reason and Heidegger's own conception of the metaphysics of *Dasein* as fundamental ontology – was specifically focused on the first *Critique* rather than on the third *Critique*.<sup>4</sup> Heidegger mostly (and critically) pays attention to aesthetics as the philosophy of art, taste, beauty and genius, and in this context also to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in his famous 1935–36 essay *The Origin of the Work of Art* and in his 1936 lecture on Nietzsche and the will to power as art which, beside other things, offers a sketch of the history of modern aesthetics through the discussion of what he calls “six facts”.<sup>5</sup> As is well-known, Heidegger “dislike[d] the word *Ästhetik*, from the Greek *aisthesis*, ‘perception’, since it focuses on the audience at the expense of the artist and the work, and on the superficial, perceptible beauty of the work: ‘The aesthetic [...] turns the work of art from the start into an object for our feelings and ideas’” (Inwood 1999, pp. 18–19). From Heidegger's point of view, Kant is part of a history of modern aesthetics – influenced, in turn, by what he defines as the history of metaphysics guided by the oblivion of Being – that is, a reduction of the event of art to aesthetic experience and of the latter, in turn, to a mere subject/object relation based on “satisfaction [*Wohlgefallen*]”. According to Heidegger,

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4 This does not exclude the fact that, perhaps also due to the influence of some suggestions and intellectual stimuli deriving from the discussion in Davos with Cassirer, Heidegger paid attention to the role of imagination also in the third *Critique* and in his own copy of his *Kantbuch* added some notes about §59 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (see the “Aufzeichnungen zum Kantbuch”, published in Heidegger 1998, p. 250. On this topic, see Marafioti 2011, pp. 356–359).

5 Beside this, important references to Kant's third *Critique* in Heidegger's works can be found in his 1927–28 lecture course on the phenomenological interpretation of Kant's first *Critique* (Heidegger 1987, pp. 324–326), in the *Gesamtausgabe* volume of his seminars on Kant, Leibniz and Schiller (Heidegger 2013, pp. 104, 281, 330, 357, 661, 696, 702, 851), and in his still unpublished but already announced for publication and hence forthcoming volume 84/2 of the *Gesamtausgabe* with a seminar on “Kant, Kritik der (ästhetischen) Urteilskraft (Die Frage nach der ‘Kunst’)” held by Heidegger in summer 1936 (the contents of this forthcoming volume are announced in the “Nachwort des Herausgebers” in the volume 84/1 of the *Gesamtausgabe* at page 865). I owe all this detailed information on Heidegger and Kant to an email exchange with Rosa Maria Marafioti, whom I would like therefore to thank.

Kant held that the judgment of taste bears on formal features that inhere in works of art as these inspire certain feelings in the subject. [...] In his *Kritik der Urteilskraft* [...] Kant's overall presumption is that the domain of art is to be understood in terms of the two poles of subject and object, experience and thing. [...] In *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* [Heidegger] maintains that the modernist emphasis on experience as the basis for the creation and enjoyment of art is misguided. [...] From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward, recourse to experience has meant the subjectification of the artwork in the abyss of mental representations. Neglected are dimensions of the artwork that surpass the domain of subjectivity and representation, e. g., Being and the Open, Earth and World. Rather than being the contents of any possible subjective experience, these factors transcend such experience (Casey 2010, p. 1).

At the same time, however, it has been recently noted (Torsen 2016) that some aspects of Kant's third *Critique* are also praised by Heidegger and even creatively (i. e. not philologically, but rather speculatively) reinterpreted and "used" for his own philosophical project after the "turn [*Kehre*]" of the 1930s, such as the Kantian notions of disinterestedness and "free favouring [*freie Kunst*]" as characteristic of the aesthetic stance and comparable to what Heidegger understands as "letting be [*Gelassenheit*]". From this different and, as it were, counterbalancing point of view, Heidegger "asserts that Kant's influence on the later development of aesthetics is based only on misinterpretations of Kant", and he reads Kant "against his reception in late nineteenth century. The explicit targets of this accusation of misunderstanding appear to be Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, but Dilthey is also charged with accepting Schopenhauer's misreading" (Torsen 2016, p. 20; see also La Bella 2017).

In this context, it is worthy of notice the fact that a minor pupil of Heidegger ("minor" only in comparison to more famous pupils of his, of course), Hermann Mörchen (1906–1990), was the author in 1927–28 of the dissertation *Die Einbildungskraft bei Kant*, an outstanding presentation and interpretation of Kant's doctrine concerning the imagination that took the first *Critique*, the third *Critique*, the *Anthropology* and still other work systematically into consideration. Also worth mentioning is the fact that Mörchen's monograph was the only work from one of his pupils which Heidegger deigned to cite explicitly in one of his books (Heidegger 1965, p. 135n; see Volpi 1997, pp. 18–19). Two of Heidegger's most important and influential pupils, namely Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) and Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) – who both remained loyal to the origins of their philosophies in phenomenology and struggled to keep the spirit of phenomenological philosophizing alive, respectively, in their philosophical hermeneutics and political philosophy – took seriously their teacher's charge of subjectivism against modern philosophy, including modern aesthetics, and consequently took just as seriously the task of a critical and in-depth confrontation with the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Quite interestingly, howev-

er, in some of their most important works in which the interpretation of Kant's third *Critique* plays an important role, Gadamer and Arendt, almost in the same years and both philosophizing from a Heideggerian background, developed different (if not opposite) readings of the same fundamental Kantian concepts. Kant is praised by Arendt in her 1960–61 essays *The Crisis in Culture and Freedom and Politics*, and then in her seminal *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (held at the New School for Social Research in autumn 1970) for having politicized some basic aesthetic concepts such as taste, imagination, *sensus communis* and especially judgment. But the third *Critique* is criticized by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (1960) and elsewhere for having, vice-versa, depoliticized and aestheticized those same concepts, narrowing the wide and all-encompassing meaning that those concepts previously had in what he calls the “humanist tradition” (on this topic, see Marino 2012).

Beside the twentieth-century philosophical traditions of neo-Kantianism, phenomenology and hermeneutics – which, of course, it is not possible to fully and adequately account for in this Introduction, so that we have limited ourselves to some hints only to a few of their most significant and representative figures – the reception of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* has also played an important role in another leading tradition of contemporary philosophy: the critical theory of society of the so-called Frankfurt School. Immediately revealing, in this context, is the fact that Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), the director of the *Institute for Social Research* in Frankfurt and founder of critical theory with his seminal essays of the early and mid-1930s (most noticeably, his “manifesto” *Traditional and Critical Theory*, published in 1937), obtained both his doctorate and his habilitation with two dissertations focused precisely on the third *Critique*: *On the Antinomy of Teleological Judgment* in 1922 and *Kant's “Critique of Judgment” as Mediation Between Practical and Theoretical Philosophy* in 1925. However, among the Frankfurt critical theorists of society, Horkheimer was not the most specialized scholar in the particular field of aesthetics and philosophy of art which is of specific interest in this book; this subject *does* fit perfectly the particular talents and capacities of his colleagues and friends, Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969). The Kantian legacy of the third *Critique* played a defining and yet critical role in the development of their respective aesthetic theories. The Frankfurt thinkers' account of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* can be defined as somewhat “antinomical”, not unlike their relation to modern philosophy and bourgeois culture in general. On the one hand, Kant's doctrines of taste, aesthetic judgment, genius and especially disinterested pleasure are criticized because of his supposed subjectivist/individualist approach (Adorno 2002, pp. 9–13) and incapacity to do justice to “the more [*das Mehr*]” that is constitutive of the artwork and that plays a decisive role in defin-

ing its being a *promesse du bonheur* and thus in pointing beyond the limitations of the existing reality (Adorno 2002, pp. 12, 82, 311). For Adorno, together with Hegel, “Kant [was] the last who, to put it bluntly, [was] able to write major aesthetics without understanding anything about art” (Adorno 2002, p. 334). On the other hand, however, Frankfurt critical theorists think that an immanent and dialectical critique of a work like the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* can be also revealing of its unexpressed potentialities and, in an Adornian fashion, of its hidden or disguised “truth content [*Wahrheitsgehalt*]” that especially emerges in unreconciled, fractured passages in the text – passages that express the presence of something exceeding the explicit intentions of the philosopher himself (“the fractures of the Kantian system”: Adorno 1990, p. 22). So, for example, for Adorno “the Kantian discontinuities” in the transcendental dialectics of the first *Critique* “register the very moment of nonidentity” that is indispensable for dialectical thinking (Adorno 1993, p. 11), and *mutatis mutandis* the same thing holds true for his aesthetic doctrines, in which for Adorno more is present than is explicitly stated, which needs to be deciphered through an immanent and critical interpretation.

Marcuse, for his, part, understands art from an unorthodox Marxist point of view (see Marcuse 1978) as something that “evokes an unreal world as the counter-institution by which art’s affirmative character in its bourgeois institutions is refused”, as something that “retains its class content” but then “goes beyond it”, as something that “represents historically and culturally specific realities but in doing so it appeals to a humanity beyond those realities”; as has been noted, “*Marcuse does derive part of his theory from the Kantian concept of disinterested judgment* – that is, beauty is accessed without vested interests, as a constant quality the representations of which in ordinary perception are partial and ephemeral” (Miles 2012, p. 130; emphasis added). So, also with regard to the fundamental chapter of *Eros and Civilization* on the aesthetic dimension – in which Marcuse goes so far as to claim that, “although [Kant’s] effort to recapture the unexpressed content” of the aesthetic “exhausts itself within the rigid limits set by his transcendental method, *his conception still furnishes the best guidance for understanding the full scope of the aesthetic dimension*” (Marcuse 1974, p. 174; emphasis added) – it has been correctly observed that, notwithstanding his critiques of some aspects of Kant’s theory and his shift to a sensuous, indeed erotic conception of the aesthetic, the conceptual paradigm assumed by Marcuse as fundamental reference point was Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Casini 1999, pp. 76–78).

### 2.2.2 France

In France, after the generational turn that occurred in the 1930s and the “demise” of the “official philosophy” of the Third Republic under the blows inflicted by the new philosophies of the “concrete”, interest in Kant began to fade. Not that Kant studies waned, but they no longer represented the general framework of the philosophical avant-garde, which was increasingly drawn to other German traditions and currents: Hegelianism, psychoanalysis, Nietzscheism, Kierkegaard’s existentialism, Marxism, Husserl’s phenomenology and Heidegger’s existential analytics. For authors such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) or Mikel Dufrenne (1910–1995), Kantianism was basically identified with the abstract idealism of Brunschvicg. Of course, Kant still remained an object of historical and philological consideration, as well as a crucial reference within specific fields like aesthetics or epistemology, but his thought ceased to steer the renewal of French philosophy.

This remained true at least until the 1950s, an era which marks a decisive change of course. In 1950, the German exile Eric Weil (1904–1977) defended his thesis on the *Logic of Philosophy*, where he attributed a central cognitive and political role to Kant’s *Urteilkraft* as the capacity to bring together singularity and universality. However, the most important event was the publication in 1953 of the French edition of Heidegger’s *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, followed in 1954 by *L’Héritage kantien et la révolution copernicienne* by Jules Vuillemin (1920–2001), which provided a critical reading of the *Kantbuch* and presented Heidegger as the last representative of a transcendental philosophy attempting to get rid of theological conceptual remainders and attain the level of “constitutive finitude”. The Kant-Heidegger nexus and the question of finitude represent the background against which one should place the “return to Kant” that took place, beginning in the 1960s, in authors as diverse as Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), Michel Foucault (1926–1984), Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) and Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) (diverse, despite lazy labels that contemporary philosophy has exploited to gather them under a common and often pejorative banner). These authors, with the sole exception of Foucault, saw in the third *Critique* the true key to the Kantian edifice and the baseline from which to assess his legacy today: for Deleuze, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* unveils the genesis of any determinate accord of the faculties in an unregulated and even violent play beyond juridical hierarchic models. For Derrida, it is a fundamental text for understanding the encyclopedic vocation of philosophy as an institutional discipline. For Lyotard, the third *Critique* provided the tools to think new forms of political rationality and aesthetic experience after the fall and failure of the grand narratives of modernity.



But Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* was also crucial among those who adhered to a more traditional way of doing philosophy. Deleuze himself was at first involved in the debates on the methodology of the history of philosophy going on in the 1950s, between Ferdinand Alquié (1906–1985), who adopted a contextualist and diachronic method, and Martial Gueroult (1891–1976), who on the contrary advocated a structural and synchronic reading of philosophical texts (Bianco 2016). Among the followers of Gueroult was also Louis Guillermit (1919–1982), professor of history of philosophy at the University of Provence (now Aix-Marseille University), where he founded the Institute for the History of Philosophy. From 1966 up until his death, Guillermit edited a number of Kantian texts, including a pedagogical commentary and a posthumous translation of the first part of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

Among his colleagues at the University of Provence was Gérard Lebrun (1930–1999), who was appointed in 1966 and was to succeed him at the head of the Institute. Lebrun was surely one of the most important French Kantian scholars of the late twentieth century. In 1970, he published a long study on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, titled *Kant et la fin de la métaphysique*, which in the following year he defended as a doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne. In that book, Lebrun claimed that the third *Critique* has nothing to teach about aesthetics or the meaning of life or nature; quite to the contrary, it has to be read as a discourse on the end of metaphysics, as a translation into anthropological terms of the old dogmatic conceptuality. As such, the third *Critique* taught that “the themes of modernity [...] were the remains of the slow death of God” (Lebrun 1970, p. 503), i.e., nothing meaningful per se, but the simple rendition in a modern language of ancient theological myths. Alexis Philonenko (1932–2018), a disciple of Alquié and specialist of German philosophy, published a new translation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* for Vrin (Kant 1965), which was also the subject of various university courses delivered at the universities of Caen and Rouen (Ferry 2006, p. 19). In his Introduction to the text, Philonenko stressed the unity of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* against those who, like Schopenhauer, Basch or Stadler, saw in it a simple juxtaposition of two different themes, beauty and life. However, believing that the main theme of the book was the instauration of a “logic of intersubjectivity”, of intersubjective communication – an interpretation he backed with references to Fichte, Eric Weil and Cassirer –, Philonenko concluded that, ultimately, the second part was less important and original than the first one, although they have to be read as a whole.

Meanwhile, at the University of Paris IV, Jacques Rivelaygue (1936–1990), who owed much to the teachings of Philonenko, delivered his famous lecture courses on German philosophy and metaphysics, with a focus on Kant, his “fa-

favorite philosopher” (Osier 1992, p. 140), whose system he presented as an effort coherent in all its parts, thus including the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and the then-neglected *Opus postumum*. His students Alain Renaut (1948) and Luc Ferry (1951), who also edited his lectures on German metaphysics, played a major role in French Kant studies by bringing back to attention the moral and political thought of the philosopher of Königsberg, in dialogue with John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas and against the anti-humanism of the previous generation (Ferry/Renaut 1984, 1985). As Thomas-Fogiel has noted, however, despite the strong differences separating the Sorbonne and the Vincennes approaches to Kant, Ferry and Renaut too “propose[d] nothing less than a promotion of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* to the key position for the entirety of the critical project” (Thomas-Fogiel 2011, p. 97). For Ferry/Renaut as well, the notion of reflective judgment plays a central role and, along the lines of Philonenko, is considered the key to thinking through the relationship between the subject and the community, between aesthetics and law (Lenoble/Berten 1996, pp. 61 ff.; Thomas-Fogiel 2011, pp. 98–104). It is against this background that we have to place Renaut’s edition of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, published in 1995, whose Introduction is a development of Philonenko’s intersubjective interpretation through the centrality of the notion of right (Kant 1995). Thus, it is wrong to assume, as has been done, that interest in the *Urteilstkraft* arose in France only after the 1982 Cérisy decade (Piché 1995, p. 12). Certainly, the book issuing from the proceedings produced a major shift in French philosophy, but the centrality of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in the debates around the legacy of the critical enterprise had been prepared by at least two decades of studies, be they academic or “creative”, on Kant.

### 2.2.3 Italy

In Italy, the nineteenth-century quarrels between “positivist” and “idealist” interpretations of Kant, which attempted to reduce thought to experience and vice-versa, made way for a new assessment of the critical philosophy. Actually, in the early twentieth century the legacy of Kant was the object of many interpretations by the main theoretical fronts of the time: the “heirs” of positivism, such as Cosmo Guastella (1854–1922), Giovanni Vailati (1863–1909) or Giovanni Marchesini (1868–1931), the idealisms of Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) and Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944), and even the materialism of Giuseppe Rensi (1871–1941). However, when Piero Martinetti (1872–1943) tried to reintroduce Kant in Italian debates, he did so by focusing not on the positivity of experience or the irreducibility of the *a priori* synthesis to a naturalistic perspective, but rather



on the possibility of metaphysics, on the limits of rationality and the problem of finitude, with a valorization of the “Transcendental Dialectics”. In this perspective, which valorized the conjunction of theoretical and practical reason along the axis of the “noumenon *par excellence*” – human freedom –, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* acquired a certain prominence qua model of a “religious rationalism”, as it did in an independent but similar stance, i.e., that of Fiorentino’s student Antonio Renda (1875–1959) (Di Giovanni 1996, pp. 135–151). Martinetti’s most important disciple, Antonio Banfi (1886–1957), would prolong the inquiry on the rational foundation and orientation of experience, abandoning a certain neo-Platonic vein that was present in his master, in dialogue with the neo-Kantianism of Natorp, Cohen and Cassirer and in opposition to Croce’s idealism. Banfi’s pupils would develop in different directions his criticism: Giulio Preti (1911–1972) would reassess it in light of neo-positivism, while Enzo Paci (1911–1976) would articulate an existentialist and anthropological reading of it.

In parallel, during the 1950s and 1960s more philological studies were published by Pietro Chiodi (1915–1970), Vittorio Mathieu (1923), Giorgio Tonelli (1928–1979) and Valerio Verra (1928–2001), that rescued Kant from the retrospective idealist light cast by the advent of Croce’s historicism and Gentile’s actualism (Ferrari 2016, p. 105).<sup>6</sup> With the remarkable exception of Luigi Scaravelli’s (1894–1957) philosophy of judgment, which relies heavily on an original reading of the *Urteilkraft*,<sup>7</sup> the third *Critique* was a crucial reference, as might be expected, in particular for Italian aesthetics. We may mention, for example, the first rigorous attempt at a non-idealistic aesthetics, namely that of Adelchi Baratono (1875–1946), which took shape through a thorough analysis of the third *Critique*. However, Baratono remained an isolated figure, although many references to his works, and in particular to his reading of Kant, can be found in noble fathers of Italian aesthetics as Guido Morpurgo-Tagliabue (1907–1997), Luciano Anceschi (1911–1995) and Dino Formaggio (1914–2008), who were all Milanese, close to Banfi and shared an anti-idealist stance (D’Angelo

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth mentioning here Tonelli’s fortunate essay on the textual genesis of the third *Critique*. See Tonelli 1954.

<sup>7</sup> In his *Critica del capire* [Critique of the Understanding] (1942) and in his numerous Kantian writings, in particular in his *Observations on the “Critique of the Power of Judgment”* (1955), Scaravelli proposed an original declination of the “philosophy of judgment” of his master Croce – which, in turn, was not deprived of suggestions drawn from the third *Critique* – in an original attempt to frame the historical and individual character of judgment. For a brief account of the Croce-Scaravelli relationship, see Viti Cavaliere 2009, pp. 109–121. The Crocean legacy was discussed also by other thinkers who centered their philosophies on judgment and who were heavily inspired by the third *Critique*, namely Carlo Antoni (1896–1959) and Raffaello Franchini (1920–1990). See, again, Viti Cavaliere 2009, pp. 122–131.

1997b, chap. 3.6). More fortunate was the aesthetic proposal of Galvano della Volpe (1895–1868), who, having abandoned the original Gentilean position, developed in his *Critica del gusto* [Critique of Taste] (1960) a Marxist aesthetics based on a semiotic reworking of many classical concepts, among which were Kant's notion of symbol.

Following (at least initially) the lead of Della Volpe, Emilio Garroni (1925–2005) worked extensively, still from an anti-Crocean perspective, on the nexus between aesthetics and linguistics/semiotics, trying to attain a legibility of the structural features of the work of art. The study of Kant marked a turning point in Garroni's intellectual career. However, although he turned away from semiotics, he still maintained an interest in the relationship between aesthetics and epistemology, more specifically in aesthetics as a sort of “first philosophy” charged with the grounding of meaning in actual experience. Especially significant in this regard are his book on the third *Critique*, *Estetica ed epistemologia. Riflessioni sulla “Critica del Giudizio”* [Aesthetics and Epistemology. Remarks on the “Critique of Judgment”] (1976), and his masterpiece *Senso e paradosso. L'estetica, una filosofia non speciale* [Sense and Paradox. Aesthetics as a General Philosophy] (1986), both heavily inspired by the perspective of Scaravelli (see Amoroso 2006).<sup>8</sup> Garroni left many disciples who prolonged and still prolong his engagement with the third *Critique*, and he can be considered one of the greatest experts of this work, not only in Italy, but also at an international level.

Equally important, although very different, is the figure of Luigi Pareyson (1918–1991), who studied in depth the aesthetics of German idealism, starting precisely with a volume on the third *Critique* (*L'estetica di Kant* [Kant's Aesthetics], 1968), in the years between his *Teoria della formatività* [Theory of Formativity] (1954) and his hermeneutical masterwork *Truth and Interpretation* (1971). Note that his idea of an artistic activity that defines the rule of the work during and not before the act of creation has many aspects in common with Kant's notion of reflective judgment (Russo 1995; Vercellone/Bertinetto/Garelli 2003, p. 357). Perhaps it is no coincidence that his student Gianni Vattimo (1936), in deploying his notion of “weak thought”, presented hermeneutics as a kind of “*koine*” “analogously to the common sense that Kant speaks about in the *Critique of Judgment*” (Vattimo 2012, p. 50). Another of Pareyson's disciples in Turin, Umberto Eco (1932–2016), represents in a certain sense the link with the Rome school of Garroni. In fact, Eco's first essays, like the groundbreaking *Opera aperta* [The Open Work] (1962; <sup>2</sup>1967), were still inspired by Pareyson's theory of for-

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<sup>8</sup> It is worth mentioning also his translation (with H. Hohenegger) of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, published in 1999, the first in Italy since that of 1906.

mativity, while in his first semiological works, which deepen in a different direction certain issues already broached in his early years, Eco also established a dialogue with Garroni's theses. Independently, Eco himself would later return to Kantian themes, but without abandoning semiotics as Garroni did. A chapter of *Kant and the Platypus* (1997) devoted to the problem of the schematism of unknown perceptual objects contains in fact an extensive and original reading of the third *Critique* in light of Peirce's insights.

#### 2.2.4 UK/USA

As is well-known, the philosophy of the twentieth century has been characterized by the great divide between analytic and continental approaches – a criterion of distinction famously defined by Bernard Williams (2007, p. 300) as “a quite bizarre conflation of the methodological and the topographical, as though one classified cars into front-wheel drive and Japanese”. For many decades it appeared very difficult to even establish a potential conversation and philosophical exchange between analytic philosophy, on the one side, and phenomenology, hermeneutics or critical theory, on the other side.<sup>9</sup>

Without detailing the origins of this division or lingering on its most famous expressions (such as the Heidegger/Carnap controversy of the 1930s, on the significance and indeed the very possibility of metaphysics, or the Derrida/Searle debate of the 1970s on speech acts, or finally the idea shared by many analytic philosophers that “trying to criticize deconstruction is like trying to have a fist-fight with a fog” [Putnam 1992, p. 109]), what matters for the specific purposes of this Introduction is that until relatively recent times the analytic/continental divide was strong and profound. This also affected aesthetics and philosophy of art, along with other philosophical subfields like ontology, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, ethics, political philosophy etc. Although often dealing with the same (or least analogous) problems as have characterized aesthetic debates in twentieth-century continental philosophy, analytic aesthetics has distinguished itself because of its particular approach and methodology of investi-

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<sup>9</sup> Thus, for example, in the early 1980s Richard Rorty (1931–2007) described the situation in the following terms: “Analytic philosophers, because they identify philosophical ability with argumentative skill and notice that there isn't anything they would consider an *argument* in a carload of Heidegger or Foucault, suggest that these must be people who tried to be philosophers and failed, incompetent philosophers. [...] Conversely, I have heard fans of Continental philosophy be obnoxious about the ‘mere logic-chopping’ with which their analytic colleagues waste students’ time and dehydrate their minds” (Rorty 1982, pp. 224–225).

gation, i.e. its particular “style” (D’Agostini 2002, pp. 16–18), and also because of the central role that certain specific questions (like the definition of art in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions or, in a Wittgensteinian fashion, in terms of *family resemblances*) have played in it.

The question of aesthetic judgment has been at the core of many important works also in this twentieth-century philosophical tradition, and with regard to this question the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* has had a great influence also on analytic philosophers working in the field of aesthetics – although quite often in a critical way, as noted for example by Stefano Velotti (2008, pp. 142–144, 152–160, 166–170) writing on the adventures and misadventures of the question of aesthetic judgment in analytic aesthetics. Among the most relevant analytic philosophers who have contributed in original ways to the debate on what is characteristic of aesthetic judgments and on their relevance or, vice-versa, irrelevance for aesthetic investigation, and also in connection with the question of the so-called aesthetic properties, one can mention Nelson Goodman (1906–1998), Monroe C. Beardsley (1915–1985), Richard Wollheim (1923–2003), Frank Sibley (1923–1996), Arthur C. Danto (1924–2013), George Dickie (1926), Peter Kivy (1934–2017), Eddy M. Zemach (1935), Kendall L. Walton (1939), Roger Scruton (1944), Alan H. Goldman (1945), Jerrold Levinson (1948), and many others (for an overview, see Matteucci 2008). As has been noted in discussing the philosophical theses of various leading analytic philosophers, working in aesthetics, on aesthetic judgment, “given the degree to which Kant [...] continue[s] to influence thinking about aesthetic judgment (or critical judgment, more broadly)”, it is not surprising that also according to certain analytical views on aesthetic judgment “isolating the aesthetic requires [...] something like the Kantian notion of disinterest, or at least something to play the role played by that notion in Kant’s theory” (Shelley 2017) – whereas other analytic accounts of aesthetic judgment, of course, have been influenced by other thinkers, most noticeably Hume.

Quite interestingly – but not surprisingly, given the breadth, variety and profoundness of Kant’s doctrines in the third *Critique* –, beyond the strictly aesthetic debates the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* has also provided valuable inspirations and insights for analytic philosophers (aside, once again, from philosophers belonging to the different abovementioned twentieth-century traditions) in their reflections on other topics. Limiting ourselves to just one example, in his essay *The Depths and Shallows of Experience* a major analytic thinker (whose philosophy is also deeply rooted in the pragmatist tradition), Hilary Putnam, has focused on human experience, differentiating a “shallow” notion of experience mostly influenced for him by Hume and a “deep” notion of experience mostly influenced by Kant. In this context, also following suggestions offered by Paul Guyer’s seminal studies on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (as Put-

nam explicitly admits: 2012, p. 574), he has precisely included a discussion of the Kantian aesthetic argument concerning “indeterminate concepts” both involving and extending our creative imagination, eventually shifting the attention from the aesthetic experience of beauty and “the open-ended appreciation and discussion of works of art”, and applying this original reinterpretation of Kant’s treatment of indeterminacy in the third *Critique* to morality and even religious experience (Putnam 2012, p. 576).

In the twentieth-century tradition of pragmatist philosophy a major influence (or perhaps even *the* major influence) on aesthetic debates has been exerted by John Dewey’s (1859–1952) groundbreaking work *Art as Experience*, from 1934. Although Dewey’s book initially aroused great interest, by the 1950s pragmatist aesthetics had been eclipsed in America by analytic aesthetics, many of whose leading proponents dismissed Dewey’s theory of art as experience as confused, undisciplined and lacking the methodical stringency and analytical precision that are required for rigorous philosophical work according to their conception of philosophizing. However, since the 1980s and 1990s there has been a strong and significant revaluation of Dewey’s aesthetic theory, which has been revived, broadened and further developed by recent philosophers. As has been noted, from a Deweyan perspective “art’s aim ‘is to serve the whole creature in his unified vitality’, a ‘live creature’ demanding natural satisfactions”, and “[t]his stands in sharp contrast to the extreme emphasis on disinterestedness which analytic aesthetics inherited from Kant”: from a pragmatist point of view, “[t]he mistake of the Kantian tradition was to assume that since art had no specific, identifiable function which it could perform better than anything else, it could only be defended as being beyond use and function” (Shusterman 2005, pp. 122–123). Of course, this amounts to a particular and sometimes even idiosyncratic way of reading the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, that is characteristic of a certain interpretation of the subjective and disinterested character of the specific kind of satisfaction provided by the beautiful, according to Kant. As is the case for the other twentieth-century philosophical traditions taken into examination so far, a particular interpretation of certain Kantian aesthetic doctrines appears to be influenced, conditioned and guided by the specific interests and aims of the philosophers in question: in this case, those of Dewey and subsequent Deweyan pragmatist aestheticians.

Among the most important pragmatist theorists of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century one must surely mention, in general, thinkers such as Richard J. Bernstein (1932), Robert Brandom (1950), Susan Haak (1945), Joseph Margolis (1924), John McDermott (1932–2018), Hilary Putnam (1926–2016), Nicholas Rescher (1928), Richard Rorty (1931–2007), Richard Shusterman (1949) and Cornel West (1953) (see Calcaterra/Maddalena 2015, pp. 265–346). Within this

group of outstanding philosophers, Margolis and Shusterman, at least, have also been very influential in the field of aesthetics that is at issue here, accentuating the anthropological component already present in Dewey's account of the aesthetic (Matteucci 2010, pp. 127–140; 2015, pp. 13–39), respectively in the direction of a philosophy of the arts and the definition of the human (Margolis 2009) and in the direction of a version of pragmatist aesthetics that eventually develops into “the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one's body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning” known as somaesthetics (Shusterman 2000, p. 267). In this context, the critical discussion of Kant's aesthetic doctrines also acquires an important and renewed significance. So, for example, in his attempt to develop a philosophical anthropology, and with his conviction that Kant only “offers [an] abstract picture of a ‘human agent’”, Margolis arrives to denounce “the contortions of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* in ensuring the linkage between the play of imagination in artworks and the intimate bearing of art on the formation and direction of moral sensibility”, claiming that “Kant was obliged (in the opening passages of the third *Critique*) to disjoin altogether the judgment of aesthetic taste (or beauty) from any contamination of conceptual subsumption (that would have directly associated the aesthetic with the scientific and the moral), and then reversed himself regarding the relation between art and moral sensibility in the second part of the third *Critique*”; whereas Hegel, for example, “saw at once that the aesthetic and the moral were inseparable within the *geistlich* holism of the cultural world” (Margolis 2009, pp. 6, 9). Shusterman, for his part, in introducing and defining his new philosophical discipline, namely somaesthetics, tries to show that the latter “is grounded in aesthetic tradition” and for this reason goes back to “Baumgarten's original aesthetic project” that had “far greater scope and practical import” than Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment and “than what we recognize as aesthetics today, implying an entire program of philosophical self-perfection in the art of living” (Shusterman 2000, p. 263). According to Shusterman, “Kant's formulation of [the] aesthetic/practical contrast and his famous definition of the aesthetic in terms of disinterestedness and purposefulness without purpose have been tremendously influential and in some ways very helpful for establishing art's autonomy and defending its independence from ethical and political dictates and from criteria of crass expediency or mercantile utility”, but at the same time “[what] has become prominent today is the close connection of the aesthetic and the practical, after two centuries of conceiving the aesthetic as essentially opposed to practicality and functionality”; and this is something that, for Shusterman, the pragmatist philosopher will more easily find in Baumgarten than in Kant (Shusterman 2012, p. 113).

### 3 About This Book: Criteria and Methodology

Notwithstanding this long and layered reception history, too briefly sketched out here, careful and in-depth examinations of the literature documenting the fortunes of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in the last century are scarce, on both a theoretical and a historical level. Of course, due to the sheer quantity of themes and authors that it would have to cover, writing a text providing a detailed account of that reception would be enormously difficult for an individual scholar. In conceiving of a volume on the reception of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in contemporary philosophy, we (the book editors) thus immediately realized that a plurality of perspectives and competences was required. In particular, in discussing the main features and contents that the book we had in mind should contain, we soon agreed that realizing a multi-author edited book would not only mean producing a more interesting work than a monograph written by a single author (whose potential systematic character might be obtained at the price of a lack of variety and plurality), but would also mean producing a work that, precisely because of its variety and plurality, would be more coherent with the dynamism and heterogeneity of Kant's philosophical developments in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

Of course, historical reconstructions and interpretations of the reception of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in contemporary philosophy are not entirely missing. As a matter of fact, in more or less recent times some publications concerning the main twentieth-century interpretations of Kant's third *Critique* have appeared. Over the last decades the question of the multifaceted legacy of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* has been discussed in conferences and symposiums. In Summer 1990, two hundred years after the publication of Kant's third *Critique*, Fernando Gil, Jean Petitot and Heinz Wismann organized a *décade* of the International Cultural Center of Cerisy-la-Salle entitled "1790 – 1990: Le destin de la philosophie transcendantale". The conference was specifically aimed at assessing the "actuality" of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* with regard to fundamental themes such as objectivity, the organization of life, signification and historicity.<sup>10</sup> Although the main concerns of the conference were primarily theoretical, a few presentations also adopted a historical perspective, focusing for example on readings of the third *Critique* by Goethe, neo-Kantianism and Heidegger. In April 2006, an international conference was held at the Bordeaux Montaigne University under the auspices of the French Society of Kantian Stud-

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<sup>10</sup> The conference program is available at the following address: <http://www.cccic-cerisy.asso.fr/kantprg90.html>.



ies. Apart from the keynote lectures, the program was articulated on three main issues (aesthetics, teleology and the reception of the text), and this last section was subdivided in turn in three axes corresponding to different geographical areas: Germany, France and the USA. The proceedings of the Bordeaux conference were published under the title *1790. Kant. "Critique de la faculté de juger": beauté, vie, liberté* (see Bouton, Brugère and Lavaude 2008), and in our opinion the part of this volume dedicated to the subsequent readings of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* represents the most significant attempt so far at assessing the influence exerted by the text over the last two centuries, and thus constitutes the most relevant precedent to the present project. Beside these conferences and publications, we might add here some other works on the topic published in the last few decades, such as the special issues of various philosophical journals dedicated to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in 1990, on the occasion of its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, or the parts of the proceedings of various international conferences on Kant on aesthetics and teleology (Bacin/Ferrarin/La Rocca/Ruffing 2013, vol. 4, pp. 3–356), although these works, outstanding as they are under many aspects, never address the question of the twentieth-century reception of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in a systematic way and so, due to their different nature in comparison to the present volume, do not offer an overall and comprehensive account of it.

In this context, it is also worth signaling the last chapter of Fiona Hughes' *Kant's "Critique of Aesthetic Judgement": A Reader's Guide* (2010, pp. 149–173), where the author tries to sketch out, in barely more than twenty pages, a brief survey of the legacy of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* from Schiller to Lyotard. Other relevant books on the third *Critique* that have provided insightful and often excellent explanations of Kant's doctrines but, due to their explanatory approach and interpretive aim, have not included a section explicitly dedicated to the history of its effects on contemporary philosophy, are for example: Dieter Teichert's introduction to the third *Critique* entitled "*Kritik der Urteilskraft*". *Ein einführerender Kommentar* (1992), Francesca Menegoni's monograph *La "Critica del Giudizio" di Kant* (2008), and the multi-author books *Kant's "Critique of the Power of Judgment": Critical Essays* and *Immanuel Kant: "Kritik der Urteilskraft"*, respectively edited by Paul Guyer and Otfried Höffe in 2003 and 2008. As recently shown by two conferences in Madrid and Rijeka,<sup>11</sup> investigating the legacy of

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<sup>11</sup> "La *Critica del Juicio* y la filosofía del siglo XX", Department of Philosophy, Complutense University of Madrid, 3–5 June 2019. The program is available here: <https://filosofia.ucm.es/congreso-la-critica-del-juicio-y-la-filosofia-del-siglo-xx>. "Kant's Third *Critique*: Historical Context and Contemporary Relevance", Department of Philosophy, University of Rijeka, 19 July 2019.



the third *Critique* in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries represents a major goal for research and a worthy subject of inquiry. Although centered on the main contemporary interpretations of a single work of Kant, our volume is part of a trend that is clearly of relevance to many scholars engaged in Kant studies today, as confirmed by the abovementioned volumes and programs of important conferences. In conceiving of this project, what we aimed to produce was the first comprehensive study on this missing piece in the history of contemporary philosophy, capable of cutting in a unique way across different traditions, movements and geographical areas: with our work, and especially thanks to the generous contribution of all the authors included in our volume, we thus hope to offer a significant and also useful piece of scholarship in the field of Kant studies and of aesthetics in general.

On the basis of what has been said until now, it is clear that the present volume aims to differentiate itself from the large part of existing works on the meaning, significance and reception of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, and to offer an original contribution to this debate. The various chapters of the book address different aspects of the complex and fascinating work that is Kant's third *Critique*, and the contributions provided by the authors included in this book (all renowned specialists of the various thinkers taken into examination) aim to offer a comprehensive and coherent, but at the same time variegated and pluralist, treatment of the subject that may map for the first time the various forms and stages of the reception of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in different areas of contemporary thought and culture. From this point of view, it is also possible to understand a task like mapping the main twentieth-century interpretations of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* more broadly as a way of mapping the main traditions and currents of thought of our time.

Another important insight that lies at the heart of the present project is to focus on the twentieth-century reception of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* while at the same time providing the reader in a few chapters with some glimpses into current, strictly contemporary debates. In order to accomplish this task, we have attempted to exploit a twofold level of inquiry: theoretical, on the one hand, and historical, on the other. As clearly shown by the Table of Contents, our book accounts for the various interpretations of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* formulated in the last century in relation to different geographical and cultural contexts (Germany, France, UK/USA, Italy) and in a chronological order. We have attempted to map all the main areas of contemporary philosophy in our vol-

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The program is available here: [https://www.ffri.uniri.hr/files/vijesti/2018-2019/Program-Kants\\_third\\_Critique-7\\_2019.pdf](https://www.ffri.uniri.hr/files/vijesti/2018-2019/Program-Kants_third_Critique-7_2019.pdf).

ume, thus taking adequately into account the influence of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in such different but equally relevant traditions and research fields as neo-Kantianism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, philosophical anthropology, critical theory, post-structuralism, deconstruction, postmodernism, analytic philosophy, pragmatism, sociology of art, semiotics and political philosophy. In doing this, we have tried to pay attention to highlighting how different twentieth-century philosophers have sometimes interpreted the same questions and doctrines in very different ways: for example, sometimes emphasizing the epistemological relevance of certain concepts presented by Kant in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and at other times their potential ethical-political significance, or sometimes interpreting (or misinterpreting, depending from the reader's point of view) a certain doctrine in Kant's third *Critique* as symptomatic of a subjectivist approach and at other times interpreting it as a sign of his capacity to overcome the fundamental subjectivism of most modern philosophy. We are convinced that such interpretive pluralism and heterogeneity represent an added value, i.e. truly testify to the pluralist and heterogeneous nature of contemporary philosophizing in all of its areas, and thus show how twentieth-century philosophy has been so much "resplendent in divergence" (freely adapting here to our purposes a line from Robert Fripp's song "Under Heavy Manners"). Beside this, a few chapters at the end of the volume try to explore in a very "up-to-date" (and, we hope, also interesting) way some of the most recent developments in the field of aesthetics like the aesthetics of jazz music and improvisation, the movement and debate concerning Everyday Aesthetics, and also the role played by the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in the relationship between aesthetics and semiotics.

The contributions collected in the present book will concentrate their attention precisely on aesthetics as a field of philosophy, as clearly indicated by the title. Although we are fully convinced of the importance of reading the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in its entirety and to understand its particular way of developing a "unity in diversity" or "unity in plurality", for both methodological and historical-philosophical reasons in this book we will only investigate the contemporary reception of the "Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment", without also focusing on the contemporary reception of the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment".

Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is deeply rooted in the aesthetics debates going on in the eighteenth century in the philosophical, literary and artistic scenes of Germany, France and England. Thus, it was a text designed to make a major contribution on a European scale regarding issues such as the nature of genius, the critique of taste, the universality of judgment, the differences between the beautiful and the sublime, the teleology of nature and the ultimate

ends of human existence. This surely explains its appeal to a wide philosophical audience and its profound resonance in different countries.

More generally, the reception of Kantian philosophy places us in a strategic position to bridge the gap between the different geographical styles of doing philosophy or the history of philosophy. As Paul Ricoeur once noted (1998, p. 50), and as we have briefly explained before in specific sections of this Introduction, Kant is in fact a philosopher that both the “analytic” and the “continental” traditions have in common, even if their ways of reading him vary significantly. In this book, we hesitate to reiterate the timeworn opposition between these two traditions, which has less to do with different orientations in philosophy than with a clash of academic ideologies, practices and rituals. What interests us is the way in which a text has been welcomed in different cultural contexts during a century that, as the sociologists of knowledge and the intellectual historians have vividly pointed out, has seen a progressive internationalization of the philosophical field, implying the creation of intellectual networks and a stronger circulation of texts and ideas (Bourdieu 1990; Armitage 2014). However, we have restrained ourselves from dictating an overarching methodological framework to our authors. We believe that our goal will be reached if we have managed to gather a collection of texts that help to convey a sense of the various appropriations of a complex but crucial text in contemporary philosophy, with an eye on history and the other on the theoretical stakes raised by the interpreters.

Our aim, then, is descriptive and interpretive rather than merely classificatory. This is why the history that the reader will find in this book is narrated by authors with different research interests, ages, and backgrounds. We believe that only in this way was it possible to map a territory that had previously remained uncharted, and about which we hope to provoke discussions and follow-ups. Although we have followed a roughly chronological order, also grouping the texts by country or macro-areas, the ultimate scope of this book is to provide a *selective* and *synoptic* view, a constellation of major points that may serve as a scheme to be fitted with further, larger and more in-depth analyses.

However, this approach entails a number of difficulties, first of all the risk that our book may appear scattered or extremely partial, lacking this or that great author, or overlooking this or that branch of the reception it seeks to account for. This risk is certainly due to the logistical difficulties inherent to this kind of enterprise, where – due to previous engagements, compromises, accidents and misfortunes – the result winds up differing slightly from the original conception. But there are also more fundamental theoretical problems. How to determine who are the “major” authors and who are instead the “minor” ones? How to establish, and by means of which criteria, if a given interpretation has been more influential than another one? How to evaluate, then, the impact

of a philosophical object (a concept, a paradigm, a single work), without relying on naive teleologies or simply adjusting our historical perspective to preformed pictures of certain historical developments, where what (or who) counts as groundbreaking and what (or who) counts as secondary or derivative is already established and taken for granted? Although they cannot be addressed and resolved here, these questions pertaining the methodology of the history of philosophy should always be borne in mind.

In conclusion, it is worth repeating that by no means do we want to present here a complete account. As we have already stressed, this book is meant to be a first step towards the comprehension of the historical and conceptual elements that have made the third *Critique* such an interesting text for its readers over two centuries in various geographical and cultural milieus. We hope other scholars will dare to follow this promising lead.

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Arno Schubbach

# The Unity and Plurality of Culture

## Seminal Neo-Kantian Readings of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

The afterlife of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in German Neo-Kantianism and especially the so-called Marburg School is inextricably intertwined with the question of systematicity. On the one side, neo-Kantian interpretations of the third *Critique* seldom do without extensively discussing the system of Kant's philosophy. They can, of course, base this discussion on the fact that Kant himself presents his third *Critique* as a supplement to his *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason* necessary for the establishment of a "system of pure philosophy [*System der reinen Philosophie*]" (CPJ, p. 56 [Ak. V, p. 168]). Yet, their emphasis on systematicity seems to indicate a further and independent systematic interest. This conjecture is substantiated by the fact that the neo-Kantian philosophies, on the other side, often devise their own systematic theories by referring to Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In this respect, the emphasis on the systematicity of Kant's endeavor frequently coincides with the emergence of philosophies of culture from theories of knowledge which the Marburg School was often erroneously reduced to (Luft 2015a, pp. 221–239 and 2015b).<sup>1</sup> Thus, the imminent question of how to systematize a philosophy of culture and how to conceptualize the inherent unity and plurality of culture is often linked to the discussion of systematicity in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

In the following contribution, I want to discuss these interdependencies between the interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in the Marburg School and the systematicity of the neo-Kantian philosophies of culture on the basis of Hermann Cohen's (1842–1918) and Ernst Cassirer's (1874–1945) approaches. This choice is not only justified by the fact, that both are, besides Paul Natorp (1854–1924), the most prominent representatives of the Marburg

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**1** Although the theories of knowledge actually stood at the beginning of the philosophical projects, it should not be concluded that they could be reduced to theoretical questions about scientific knowledge. For a reading of the ethical and political undertones of the theories of knowledge of the Marburg school, see Moynahan 2013.

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School of Neo-Kantianism. Moreover, they both devoted substantial texts to the interpretation of Kant's third *Critique* and linked it to their own systematic endeavor to develop a philosophy of culture.<sup>2</sup> The first part of my contribution is devoted to Cohen (sections 1 and 2), the second to Cassirer (sections 3 and 4). Each part begins with a commentary on their respective readings of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (sections 1 and 3) and continues with a discussion of their adaptations of the third *Critique* for their own approaches to philosophy of culture and its systematicity (sections 2 and 4).

## 1 Cohen's Reading of the Third *Critique* as a Philosophy of Art

From beginning to end, Cohen's *Kant's Foundations of Aesthetics (Kants Begründung der Ästhetik, 1889)* is preoccupied with the question of systematicity. From the "Preface" and "Introduction" on, Cohen envisages the "system of critical philosophy [*System der kritischen Philosophie*]" (KBA, p. 3)<sup>3</sup> and places the conception of such a system of Kantian philosophy and its different parts at the center. Yet, Cohen's examination is based on a metaphorical characterization distinguishing between "ground or bedrock [*Grund* or *Boden*]" and "fundament or basis [*Fundament* or *Basis*]", with the ground being the condition for any fundament, which in turn is the condition for the construction of the house. Likewise, each part of a philosophical system, such as aesthetics, presupposes a foundation in specific principles framing its unity and defining its concepts. But at the same time, these principles presuppose the common ground of the whole system in which the respective philosophical subsystem is linked and integrated with the other parts of philosophy (KBA, p. 3). Thus, the "foundation [*Begründung*]" of any part of philosophy and of aesthetics in particular has to be seen from the internal perspective of it being grounded in specific principles, but also from the external perspective focusing on its role and relations within the encompassing system of philosophy. In this way, Cohen's treatment of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* envisages "the foundation of aesthetics within the sys-

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2 To my knowledge, Natorp did not write a comparable text on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* or on aesthetics in general. Thus, it is more demanding to reconstruct his stance on aesthetics, see for such an approach Krebs 1976.

3 Hereafter referred to as KBA. If, in the absence of a translation, I refer only to the original German text, then I have, with the help of Pablo Hubacher, translated the quotations into English. The original citations are given immediately in brackets or in the footnotes.

tem of philosophy [*die Begründung der Ästhetik im Systeme der Philosophie*]” (Cohen [1889] 2009, p. v).

Cohen’s understanding of the role of aesthetics within a system of philosophy is paralleled with his interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as an aesthetics in the narrow sense of a philosophy of art. Obviously, this requires a rather violent reading of the Kantian text. The third *Critique* consists of two main parts, the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment” and the “Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment”. The second part scrutinizes our knowledge of the realm of living nature and thereby expands the concept of nature beyond the first *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, which grasp nature solely on the basis of Newtonian mechanics. Even the first aesthetic part does not primarily deal with art, but with “the beautiful and the sublime in nature or in art [*das Schöne und Erhabne, der Natur oder der Kunst*]” (CPJ, p. 57 [Ak. V, p. 169]). Thus, the beautiful and the sublime are analyzed as two forms of reflecting experience that may take both nature and art as their starting point and therefore cannot be contained within the limits of a philosophy of art. Following Kant’s examples, these experiences furthermore seem to arise first and foremost from the perception of natural forms.<sup>4</sup> To be more precise, because of the systematic approach of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, it is rather doubtful whether artworks as human artifacts are suitable for an experience of the beautiful at all (CPJ, §§42–46, pp. 178–186 [Ak. V, pp. 298–307]). That is why in the few paragraphs, which are devoted to art, the intricate question of how an artwork nevertheless can be experienced as beautiful is crucial.<sup>5</sup> Kant’s answer is simply that an artwork can only be experienced as beautiful if it appears natural, i.e., if it appears as if it had not been produced under the prerequisites of human purposes, concepts and rules (CPJ, §45, pp. 185 f. [Ak. V, pp. 305 f.]). To sum up, the third *Critique* is anything but a philosophy of art. At best, art is one of the many and varied topics of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, and it is a rather peripheral and subordinate one.

Therefore, the interpretative premise of *Kant’s Foundations of Aesthetics* that the third *Critique* unfolds a philosophy of art, is more than doubtful. Yet, this shows that here Cohen is not primarily concerned with the task of historically commenting and systematically clarifying Kant’s text, as for example in his *Kant’s Theory of Experience (Kants Theorie der Erfahrung, 1871, revised 1885)*

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<sup>4</sup> The Kantian text is literally populated by flowers of different kinds. See paradigmatically CPJ, §17, p. 120 fn. [Ak. V, p. 236] and §42, pp. 178 f. [Ak. V, p. 299], but also §4, p. 93 [Ak. V, p. 207], §8, pp. 100 f. [Ak. V, p. 215] and §16, p. 114 [Ak. V, p. 229].

<sup>5</sup> Art is the primary topic of the paragraphs 43 to 53 in CPJ, pp. 182–212 [Ak. V, pp. 303–334].

based on the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Kant's Foundations of Ethics* (*Kants Begründung der Ethik*, 1877) on Kantian ethics. In *Kant's Foundations of Aesthetics* from 1889, the endeavor to come up with a “system of philosophy” takes center stage. By this I do not refer to Kant’s “system of critical philosophy [*System der kritischen Philosophie*]” (KBA, p. 3) discussed in Cohen’s trilogy on Kant’s three *Critiques*, but his own *System of Philosophy*: its first volume *The Logic of Pure Knowledge* (*Logik der reinen Erkenntnis*) was published in 1902, it was continued by *The Ethics of Pure Will* (*Ethik des reinen Willens*) from 1904 and completed by *The Aesthetics of Pure Feeling* (*Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls*) in 1912. Thus, *Kant's Foundations of Aesthetics* preludes Cohen’s own philosophical system by shifting the historical interpretation of Kant’s third *Critique* into independent systematic considerations. Much more than Cohen’s earlier works on Kant’s *Critiques*, this third volume is a systematically geared examination motivated by Cohen’s own philosophical intentions. His aim is to interpret cognitive, moral and aesthetic experience as different forms of consciousness, each of which can be understood as corresponding to a “cultural field [*Kulturgebiet*]” (KBA, p. 96) such as science, morality or art. It is this step to a *System of Philosophy* conceived as a philosophy of culture which is, following Ursula Renz, at least anticipated for the first time in *Kant's Foundations of Aesthetics*.<sup>6</sup>

## 2 Cohen’s Adaptation of the Third *Critique*: Culture, Art, and Humanity

Because of Cohen’s systematic endeavor, *Kant's Foundations of Aesthetics* does not shy away from interpretive violence. A crucial premise concerning the form of aesthetic experience and consciousness constitutive for Cohen’s adaptation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is a good example: According to Cohen, aesthetic experience consists in a specific lawful “mode of production [*Erzeugungsweise*]” of “content [*Inhalt* or *Gehalt*]” of experience under specific conditions. So, each content is constituted by consciousness itself and depends on the condition of a specific *mode* of consciousness, as aesthetic, cognitive or moral experience (KBA, pp. 96 f.). At the same time, these three modes are supposed to form a system of the modes of consciousness or the respective “cultural

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<sup>6</sup> “An investigation into the role of culture in Cohen’s work reveals that the association of culture, or cultural consciousness with systematicity originates in Cohen’s first work on aesthetics, namely in *Kant's Foundations of Aesthetics*. In this third book on Kant Cohen prioritizes a systematic approach over an orientation towards Kant” (Renz 2004, p. 60).

fields”, i. e. art, science and morality.<sup>7</sup> This is the basic idea of the system of philosophy and a philosophy of culture Cohen is aiming at.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, Cohen developed the conception of a correlation of experience and its content based on a specific mode of consciousness, i. e. cognition in Kant’s theory of knowledge. Cohen himself mentions that his understanding of “production [Erzeugung]” and “content [Inhalt]” originates from an analysis of “scientific consciousness [wissenschaftliches Bewusstsein]” (KBA, pp. 130 f.) and is then carried over to moral and aesthetic consciousness. In general, this raises the question of why the correlation between subjective experience and its objective content developed in the theory of knowledge should be of general validity for all modes of consciousness. In particular, it has to be asked whether this correlation is suitable for understanding Kant’s theory of the aesthetic experience. For Kant, aesthetic experience is much less a conscious experience of some objectively deter-

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7 “The system for Kant does not mean a closed connection of cognitions, but the connection between the consciousness’ different modes of production, all of which generate their own specific content. These contents are necessarily related to each other, because the modes of production of all contents are related as modes of production of the consciousness, and thus form a systematic unit [*Das System bedeutet bei Kant nicht einen geschlossenen Zusammenhang von Erkenntnissen, sondern den Zusammenhang von Erzeugungsweisen des Bewusstseins, deren jede für sich einen eigenthümlichen Inhalt hervorbringt. Diese Inhalte müssen einander verwandt sein, weil die Erzeugungsweisen aller Inhalte, als Erzeugungsweisen des Bewusstseins verwandt sind, weil sie somit eine systematische Einheit bilden*]” (KBA, pp. 94 f.). For more detailed explanations of this approach, see KBA, pp. 97–101.

8 “Kant has fathomed aesthetic consciousness as a particular direction of consciousness in which it generates a new, original content. In characterizing it thus he completed the system of the modes of consciousness and the system of philosophy. As art represents a particular part in the whole of culture, the aesthetic consciousness represents an own lawfulness of consciousness. Therefore, aesthetics represents a necessary part in the system of philosophy – given that philosophy aims at the following: founding the contents of culture as products of consciousness, characterizing these contents according to the autonomous directions of consciousness and the principle disparity of these modes of production, while at the same time maintaining their systematic unity; because all of these directions originate from one and the same point, the common principle of consciousness [*Als eine solche eigenthümliche Richtung des Bewusstseins, in welcher dasselbe einen neuen, eigenen Inhalt erzeugt, hat Kant das ästhetische Bewusstsein ergründet, und in der Charakteristik desselben das System der Bewusstseins-Arten, das System der Philosophie vollendet. Wie die Kunst ein eigenthümliches Glied im Ganzen der Kultur, so bedeutet das ästhetische Bewusstsein eine eigene Gesetzlichkeit des Bewusstseins. Und die Aesthetik bedeutet sonach ein nothwendiges Glied im System der Philosophie, – sofern die Philosophie zu ihrer Aufgabe hat: die Inhalte der Kultur als Erzeugnisse des Bewusstseins zu begründen, gemäss den selbständigen Richtungen des Bewusstseins in der Erzeugung dieser Inhalte nach ihrer deshalb und darin principiellen Verschiedenheit zu kennzeichnen, zugleich aber auch in ihrer systematischen Einheit festzuhalten; weil alle dieses Richtungen aus dem Einen Punkte, aus dem gemeinschaftlichen Principe des Bewusstseins hervorgehen*]” (KBA, p. 101). See also KBA, pp. 342 f.

minable content, as in the case of scientific knowledge. Rather, it resembles a reflecting experience based on the free play among our powers of representation on the occasion of some perceived or imagined form.<sup>9</sup> At first sight, there seems to be a fundamental misfit between Cohen's model of correlation of experience and its content based on lawful production and Kant's analysis of aesthetic experience that reduces the importance of its object, stresses its reflective aspects and repeatedly highlights the absence of concepts and rules determining the aesthetic experience and its object.<sup>10</sup>

Cohen is well aware of this challenge and therefore tries to bring Kant's analysis of aesthetic experience into line with his own conception of correlation. For this purpose, he focuses on the concept of "feeling [*Gefühl*]", which links his interpretation of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* to his own systematic *Aesthetic of Pure Feeling*.<sup>11</sup> In his discussion of feeling, Cohen draws on large parts of Kant's analysis of aesthetic judgment of the beautiful and finally attempts to clarify the relationship between the subjective and objective sides of this experience. Initially, he highlights that feeling is linked to the irresolvable subjective aspects of experience. Thus, Cohen introduces it as a basic experience of "awareness [*Bewusstheit*]" which is not resorbed by "sensations [*Empfindungen*]" or "representations [*Vorstellungen*]" linked to objects (KBA, pp. 154–158). Moreover, he relies on Kant's specification of the "feeling of pleasure and displeasure, by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated, but in which the subject feels itself as it is affected by the representation" (CPJ, §1, p. 89 [Ak. V, p. 204]; KBA, pp. 165–167).<sup>12</sup> Yet, how is this feeling supposed to specify the crucial element of aesthetic experience in difference to scientific or moral consciousness? Cohen considers Kant's analysis of the "pleasure [*Lust*]" and "displeasure [*Unlust*]" of aesthetic experience, only to abandon it as an all too sensual and animalistic description of "feeling" (KBA, pp. 158–165, esp. pp. 164f.). Thus, he goes back instead to Kant's conception of the "free play of the powers of representation in a given representation [*freien Spiels der Vorstellungskräfte an einer gegebenen Vorstellung*]" (CPJ, §9, p. 102 [Ak. V, p. 217]) that brings about the "feeling" that is crucial for Kant's understanding

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**9** I tried to carve out the reflective characteristic of the experiences discussed in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* by conceiving them as forms of "presentation [*Darstellung*]" in Kant's sense. See Schubbach 2019.

**10** For an interpretation emphasizing these aspects, see Ginsborg 1990, in particular pp. 83f.

**11** For Cohen's development of his understanding of "feeling" and the way he connects it to Kant's analysis of aesthetic experience, see KBA, pp. 151–182.

**12** "das Gefühl der Lust und Unlust, wodurch gar nichts im Objekte bezeichnet wird, sondern in der das Subjekt, wie es durch die Vorstellung affiziert wird, sich selbst fühlt".

of the experience of beauty: “Feeling consists in ‘feeling the free play among the powers of representation’: through feeling the consciousness realizes its powers’ free play” (KBA, p. 170).<sup>13</sup> This resulting feeling can bring about a specific “mood [*Stimmung*]” or “vivification [*Belebung*]” of the “soul [*Gemüt*]” (KBA, p. 176). Thereby, the subjective character of the “feeling” specifying aesthetic experience is clarified. However, it remains obscure how such a feeling could have an objective aspect, as Cohen claims, i. e., a content that correlates to this experience due to its lawful production.

Cohen’s pivotal twist is to interpret Kant’s “universal communicability [*allgemeine Mitteilbarkeit*]” (CPJ, §9, p. 102 [Ak. V, p. 217]) of the pleasure of beauty as the objectification of the aesthetic feeling he is looking for.<sup>14</sup> Kant introduced his idea of “universal communicability” in the famous paragraph 9 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in order to provide a more precise justification of the aesthetic judgment: Is it the pleasure we experience in beauty which justifies the judgment and its claim to the consent of others? Or is it the prospect of sharing the feeling of aesthetic experience with others that somehow brings about the pleasure we experience? At least in paragraph 9, Kant’s answer seems clear: It is the “universal communicability” of the feeling which is linked to the interplay of our powers that is at the root of the pleasure we experience. Thus, Cohen interprets this “universal communicability” as the pivotal “lawfulness [*Gesetzlichkeit*]” (KBA, pp. 144, 158 and 168f.) which allows that the feeling typical of aesthetic experience can be objectified and correlated to a certain, determinable content:

The subjectivity [of the same feeling of life, A.S.] needed refined objectification; unexpectedly this was discovered in universal communicability. If a state of the soul is universally communicable through an aesthetic judgment, the respective judgment gains secured universality (KBA, p. 178).<sup>15</sup>

Of course, Cohen insists that this lawfulness must not be misunderstood as a rule or a concept that would in contradiction to Kant’s position establish the sin-

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**13** “Gefühl ist ‘Gefühl des freien Spiels der Vorstellungskräfte zu einander’: im Gefühle wird sich das Bewusstsein des freien Spiels seiner Kräfte inne”.

**14** For Cohen’s discussion of the “universal communicability” of feeling, see KBA, pp. 176–180. In contrast, Cohen is rather critical in respect to the “subjective universality [*subjective Allgemeinheit*]” of the aesthetic judgment, see KBA, pp. 167–169.

**15** “Die Subjectivität desselben [Lebensgefühls, A.S.] bedurfte genauerer Objectivierung; sie findet dieselbe unerwartet hier: in der allgemeinen Mittheilbarkeit. Wenn der Gemüthszustand im ästhetischen Urtheile sich allgemein mittheilen lässt, so erlangt dadurch das Urtheil gesicherte Allgemeinheit”.



gular aesthetic judgment (KBA, pp. 181–191). Consequently, according to Cohen, the pivotal element of Kant’s aesthetics is the feeling brought about by the interplay of the powers of the soul. It is this feeling that is universally communicable and therefore is the true object of aesthetic experience – instead of the artworks that occasion it (KBA, pp. 192–196).<sup>16</sup>

We find these basic tenets of Cohen’s view of Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in a very similar fashion in his own *Aesthetics of Pure Feeling*.<sup>17</sup> Again, it is this conception of feeling that specifies aesthetic consciousness in difference to moral or scientific consciousness and adjusts it to the conception of experience as lawful production of a correlating objective content (KBA, pp. 200–207). Moreover, Cohen’s understanding of feeling is exclusively based on his adaptation of Kant’s conception of the beautiful in both texts. Already in *Kant’s Foundations of Aesthetics*, Cohen regards Kant’s distinction of the beautiful and the sublime as inadequate (KBA, pp. 249–251). Cohen particularly criticizes the prima facie coupling of the beautiful with knowledge of nature and the sublime with morality (KBA, pp. 238, 256 and 264). In contrast, he relies very much on Kant’s conception of the beautiful as the content of aesthetic experience and stresses every hint of Kant that the beautiful does not only connect to knowledge of nature, but also to morality (KBA, pp. 222–232 and 251–303). In *Kant’s Foundations of Aesthetics* as well as in *Aesthetics of Pure Feeling*, Cohen finally specifies the beautiful as the main content of the aesthetic experience, while the sublime and humor are only specific, one-sided manifestations of the beautiful (KBA, pp. 280–282 and 295–300).<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the feeling defines and characterizes aesthetic experience and art. Yet, it does not separate the aesthetic consciousness and the cultural field of art from

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**16** For a more nuanced approach to the role of the artwork in relation to feeling, see Cohen 1982a, pp. 210–213. Cohen speaks also of “the self objectifying itself in a work of art, more precisely at a work of art, since objectification remains reflective [*Objektivierung des Selbst im Kunstwerk, genauer am Kunstwerk; denn die Objektivierung bleibt reflexiv*]” (KBA, p. 246).

**17** For the systematicity of philosophy and aesthetics as one of its parts, see Cohen 1982a, pp. 16–19; for a sketch of “feeling” as the characteristic moment of aesthetic consciousness, see Cohen 1982a, pp. 96–98; for a critical examination of “feeling” in Kant’s third *Critique*, see Cohen 1982a, pp. 100–116; for its detachment of pleasure, see Cohen 1982a, pp. 117–123; and for Cohen’s systematic explanation of “feeling”, see Cohen 1982a, pp. 135–201. Thus, the following assessment of Gerd Wolandt in the introduction to the reedition of Cohen’s *Aesthetics of Pure Feeling* can only be confirmed: “Almost every notion crucial for *Aesthetics of Pure Feeling* has already been developed in *Kant’s Foundations of Aesthetics*” (Cohen 1982a, p. x).

**18** See the more encompassing discussion of the primal “idea of the beautiful” in Cohen 1982a, pp. 237–250, and of the sublime and humor as its subordinate manifestations Cohen 1982a, pp. 250–260 and 274–289. A short summary of this is to be found in Cohen 1982b, pp. 417–421.

the scientific or moral forms of consciousness and their correlative fields of science and morality. As the above summary of Cohen's critique of Kant's difference of the beautiful and the sublime already implies, the beauty of art is inherently linked to morality and science, the aesthetic consciousness is necessarily connected to the scientific and the moral consciousness. Here, the unity and plurality of the forms of consciousness or culture as well as the systematicity of this philosophy of culture are addressed by discussing the relation of the beautiful to the true and the good. In this respect, Cohen assumes that aesthetics comes late in two respects. First, Cohen sketches in the "Historical Introduction" to *Kant's Foundations of Aesthetics* how long it took until aesthetics and the beautiful were conceived as a self-sustaining part of philosophy in difference to theoretical philosophy and the truth of knowledge on the one side, and practical philosophy and the moral good on the other.<sup>19</sup> Second, this historical lateness is hinting at a systematic dependence of art in relation to nature and morality. Thus, Cohen repeatedly stresses that aesthetic consciousness is autonomous, but that it nevertheless presupposes science and morality as its matter which it transforms and reshapes as the content of an aesthetic experience: "Science and morality are the material of art, which it has to handle autonomously and transform into new creations, but without which it cannot begin to operate" (KBA, pp. 93f.).<sup>20</sup> Art starts with the objects of science and morality in order to create the new content of an aesthetic experience. That is why the "Systematic Introduction" of *Kant's Foundations of Aesthetics* primarily discusses nature and morality as structural conditions and starting points of aesthetic experience. So, the sections "The Object of Nature [*Das Object der Natur*]" and "The Subject of Morality [*Das Subject der Sittlichkeit*]" make up the "Systematic Introduction" almost entirely.<sup>21</sup> Thus, aesthetics is an own part of philosophy, but it presupposes the other parts, theoretical as well as practical philosophy.

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**19** See the whole "Historical Introduction" in KBA, pp. 6–91. For the differentiation of beauty from nature, Winckelmann's "ideal [*Ideal*]" plays a crucial role in Cohen's account (KBA, pp. 39–62 and 78). At the beginning of his "Systematic Introduction", Cohen again takes up Winckelmann's "ideal" (KBA, pp. 92f.).

**20** "Wissenschaft und Sittlichkeit sind nun einmal der Stoff der Kunst, den diese zwar selbständig zu bearbeiten und zu neuen Schöpfungen umzubilden hat; ohne den sie aber schlechterdings nicht zu operieren anfangen kann". Cohen also claims: "Art nourishes itself through the material of science and morality [*Die Kunst nährt sich [...] im Stoffe von der Wissenschaft und der Sittlichkeit*]" (KBA, p. 5). On the dependence of art on nature and morality, see also KBA, pp. 100f., 150 and 304f.

**21** In the section "The Object of Nature" (KBA, pp. 102–127), Cohen introduces first his view of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, i.e. his theory of scientific knowledge in the form of mechanics (pp. 102–112); then, he deals with the knowledge of living nature and the "telos" of organisms

However, it would be too short-sighted to regard this as a denigration of aesthetics. For aesthetics, seen as part of the system of philosophy, may come late, but it has the important task of mediating between the other parts and thereby opening the view upon the unity of culture (KBA, pp. 3–5). On the one side, Cohen stresses in his discussion of the beautiful that the interplay which produces the feeling defining aesthetic experience does not interrelate or synthesize singular representations of scientific objects or moral decisions. Rather, it puts into relation to each other the “powers of cognition [*Erkenntniskräfte*]” or “the powers of the soul [*Gemüthskräfte*]” as such as well as the whole corresponding “regions of consciousness [*Bewusstseinsgebiete*]” (KBA, p. 173) or cultural fields. On the other side, the aesthetic judgment also seems to promise the unity of the subjects. Based on the “universal communicability” of feeling as well as Kant’s concepts of a “*universal voice [allgemeine Stimme]*” (CPJ, §8, p. 101 [Ak. V, p. 216]) and “*common sense [Gemeinsinn]*” (CPJ, §20, p. 122 [Ak. V, p. 238]), Cohen projects the horizon of humanity to be aesthetically revealed: “In feeling humanity should now be able to purify itself and unite to concord and harmony” (KBA, p. 216).<sup>22</sup> Following Cohen, “humanity [*Menschheit*]” is the ultimate *telos* of an aesthetic experience building up on the matter of nature and morality, in order to reconcile them.<sup>23</sup> Thereby, Cohen does not only found aesthetics through his understanding of “feeling” as a part of philosophy among others. He also as-

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so important for the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and its extension of the concept of nature (pp. 112–127). Yet, Cohen is obviously trying to keep the explosive power of these aspects subsumed under the title of “morphology” to a minimum and to contain their significance as far as possible in the framework of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Moreover, they are not discussed as an integral part of the third *Critique*, but as a part of science and knowledge being a structural condition or material starting point of aesthetic consciousness and the aesthetics the third *Critique* is supposed to develop. Quoting Kant, Cohen (2009, p. 183) explicitly claims that the teleological power of judgment in contrast to the aesthetical one belongs to theoretical philosophy. In his *Aesthetics of Pure Feeling*, therefore, Cohen speaks bluntly of the “mistake and damage in the disposition and realization of the systematic method as, firstly, neglecting to integrate and incorporate teleology into the *Critique of Pure Reason* and, ultimately, not separating aesthetics from teleology and thus, overlooking it as an object worth its own critique [*Fehler und Schaden in der Disposition und Ausführung der systematischen Methodik, erstlich daß die Teleologie nicht grundsätzlich in die Kritik der reinen Vernunft hinübergenommen und hineingearbeitet wurde, und vollends, daß die Ästhetik nicht von ihr abgelöst und als der Gegenstand einer eigenen Kritik ausgezeichnet wurde*]” (Cohen 1982a, p. 8).

**22** “Und im Gefühle soll sich nun die Menschheit zur Eintracht und Harmonie reinigen und einigen können”. See the whole passage in KBA, pp. 207–221.

**23** Cohen substantiates his understanding of humanity in reference to the “supersensible substratum of humanity [*das übersinnliche Substrat der Menschheit*]” (CPJ, §57, p. 216 [Ak. V, p. 340]) introduced in Kant’s “resolution of the antinomy of taste”.

signs its basic concept of “feeling” a special importance within the whole system of critical philosophy and its foundation in general. For Cohen, aesthetics is the keystone of Kant’s critical philosophy and above all of his own *System of Philosophy* as a philosophy of culture. A keystone that comes late, but on which the entire construction of the philosophical system finally depends: “the aesthetic problem is fatally linked with the systematic problem of philosophy [*das ästhetische Problem mit dem systematischen der Philosophie verhängnisvoll verknüpft*]” (KBA, p. iii). Being a specific part of philosophy, aesthetics or philosophy of art thus contributes to the plurality of the cultural fields. But at the same time, it is essential for the integrity of the system of philosophy and the unity of its object, that is culture.

### 3 Cassirer’s Reading of the Third *Critique*: Formal, Aesthetic and Teleological Purposiveness

Following the widespread image of Cassirer as Cohen’s faithful pupil, one might expect Cassirer to choose a similar interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Yet, reading the relevant texts by Cassirer leads to a very different finding. Cassirer does not discuss the third *Critique* in *Freedom and Form* (*Freiheit und Form*, 1916) in whose context it could play an important role in the “emergence of the aesthetic world of form [*Entstehung der ästhetischen Formwelt*]” (Cassirer 2001a, p. 66) in modern philosophy. Rather, he mentions the third *Critique* only occasionally (Cassirer 2001a, pp. 252, 266, 295 and 298) and refers the reader to the extensive discussion of the book in his forthcoming *Kant’s Life and Thought* (*Kants Leben und Lehre*) that finally appeared in 1918 (Cassirer 2001a, p. 179, fn. 38). There, the question of art does not determine the approach to Kant’s third *Critique*, but seems to be only one of its topics at best. Instead of reading the third *Critique* as a blueprint for a philosophy of art as part of a more encompassing philosophy of culture, like Cohen, Cassirer puts into focus the intricate structure of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and aims at clarifying the systematic unity of its parts.<sup>24</sup> By arguing for the systematic connection

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<sup>24</sup> This focus is already alluded to in a short reference to the third *Critique* in Cassirer 2001a, p. 295. If Cassirer had considered the third *Critique* as a blueprint for a philosophy of art, he probably would have developed such a philosophy following Cohen’s adaptation of the third *Critique* and integrated it to his own philosophy of culture. Yet, Cassirer in fact never produced a philosophy of art, although he addressed art as a part of culture, besides language, science,

between the aesthetic and the teleological judgment, he implicitly defies Cohen's attempt to dissect the third *Critique* and extract from it a philosophy of art.<sup>25</sup> This argument about the unity of the third *Critique* is, as I want to show, not only a question of historical interpretation, but also a question of systematic importance for Cassirer's philosophy of culture. Again, the third *Critique* plays an important role for the development of a neo-Kantian philosophy of culture and for the conception of its systematics. Yet, it plays a very different role this time.

The discussion of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in *Kant's Life and Thought* directs the attention from the first page on to the question of systematicity.<sup>26</sup> Yet, Cassirer immediately takes position against the common view of the importance of systematicity for the third *Critique*. Following this view, Kant wrote the third *Critique* only because of his systematic or architectonic mindset that forced him to bridge the divide between the first two *Critiques* and their treatment of nature and freedom. In contrast to Cohen and others, Cassirer claims that

it is the immanent progress of the actual tasks of the critique of reason, and not merely the extension and the elaboration of the Kantian architectonic of concepts, which leads to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as a particular portion of the system (KLT, p. 294 [KLL, p. 314]; translation modified).<sup>27</sup>

To be more precise, it is a deepened and necessary reflection on the possibility of empirical knowledge which helps us to understand the development of the third *Critique* and the systematic connection between the aesthetical and the teleological judgment (KLT, pp. 271–275 [KLL, pp. 261–265]). As a consequence, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* does not start with the endeavor to integrate the arts into the critical system. Rather, it extends the epistemological reflection beyond the limits of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and thus stumbles upon the arts as

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myth and religion, since he started to develop his philosophy of culture, see Schubbach 2016, pp. 104–106.

**25** For sure, Cassirer (1981, p. 274 [2001b, p. 264]), does not explicitly refer to Cohen in this respect, but to Stadler (1874, p. 25), exactly like KBA, p. 183. Note that in referencing *Kant's Life and Thought* the English translation and the standard German edition are both cited and hereafter referred to as KLT and KLL. Again, the German original is given in the footnotes.

**26** In the following, I refer to the sixth chapter of the book on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. See KLT, pp. 271–360 [KLL, pp. 261–346].

**27** “daß es der immanente Fortschritt der sachlichen Aufgaben der Vernunftkritik, nicht die Fortbildung und der Ausbau der Kantischen Begriffsarchitektonik ist, der zur Kritik der Urteilskraft als besonderes Systemglied hinführt”. See also Cassirer 1981, pp. 304f., fn. 18 [2001, pp. 293f., fn. 25].

being linked to knowledge as well as to ethics. Following Cassirer, the gateway to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is “not the direct consideration of the phenomenon of art and artistic creation that leads to it, but a progress in the critique of theoretical knowledge” (KLT, p. 304 [KLL, p. 293]; translation modified).<sup>28</sup> So, we have to examine what kind of “progress” Cassirer has in mind when he formulates this thesis on the systematic background of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

Thus, Cassirer does not immediately turn to the two main parts of the third *Critique* we expect any overview of this work to treat, i.e., the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment” and the “Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment”.<sup>29</sup> In a surprising and innovative way, he instead enters into this “progress in the critique of theoretical knowledge” that should lead to the third *Critique* and clarify its structure. In a short pre-history starting with Socrates, Cassirer sets the frame by introducing the problem of “concept formation [*Begriffsbildung*]” or the relation between the “general [*Allgemeinem*]” and the “particular [*Besonderem*]” (KLT, pp. 275 f. [KLL, p. 265]).<sup>30</sup> This problem is linked to the well-known difference of the “determining” and the “reflecting” power of judgment which Kant introduces in the third *Critique*. The introduction of the reflecting power of judgment reveals that empirical knowledge is not to be reduced to the application of concepts we already have, but very often consists in finding general concepts that apply to the particular phenomena we are trying to grasp.<sup>31</sup> For Cassirer, this is only the starting point for a more in-depth analysis of empirical knowledge. The task of empirical research to relate “the general” and “the particular” implies different challenges which are addressed for the first time in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and can be distinguished in the following way.

A first, rather commonly observed challenge is that the relation between general concepts and particular objects can take on different forms depending on the different types of concepts and fields of knowledge. The forms of judg-

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**28** “nicht die unmittelbare Betrachtung des Phänomens der Kunst und der künstlerischen Gestaltung, sondern ein Fortschritt in der Kritik der theoretischen Erkenntnis”. See the whole passage in KLT, pp. 303–306 [KLL, pp. 292–295].

**29** Section 4 of the sixth chapter discusses the aesthetic judgment (KLT, pp. 306–334 [KLL, pp. 295–321]), i.e., step for step: the beautiful (pp. 306–320 [pp. 295–308]), the role of the genius in art (pp. 320–326 [pp. 308–314]), the sublime (pp. 326–334 [pp. 314–321]). Section 5 discusses the teleological judgment (pp. 334–360 [321–346]).

**30** The pre-history mentioned above is to be found in section 2 of the sixth chapter, i.e., KLT, pp. 275–287 [KLL, pp. 265–276].

**31** The *locus classicus* is to be found in CPJ, §III, pp. 66 f. [Ak. V, pp. 178 f.].

ments examined in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are based on the premise of a general law under which the particular object of knowledge can be subsumed (KLT, pp. 285f. and 306f. [KLL, pp. 275 and 295f.]).<sup>32</sup> This premise is due to the form of knowledge Kant's philosophical considerations are referring to in the first *Critique*, i. e., Newtonian mechanics. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, other forms of knowledge, such as the classification of live forms in biology or the functional structure of organisms, are addressed and it is examined how those forms relate “the general” and “the particular” (KLT, pp. 292–294 [KLL, pp. 281–283], with reference to the descriptive and classificatory sciences). For Cassirer, this different kind of knowledge is linked to new forms of concepts not expressing a general law under which a particular object could be subsumed, but articulating an “inner form [*innere Form*]” (KLT, pp. 278 and 282 [KLL, pp. 268 and 272]) by which the different, but interdependent parts of an organism are conceived and integrated into an organized whole. To assess “some existing thing as purposive, as the coinage of an inner form [*ein Seiendes als zweckmäßig, als Ausprägung einer inneren Form*]” (KLT, p. 284 [KLL, p. 274])<sup>33</sup> is the common form of the judgments discussed in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, i. e., the aesthetic and the teleological judgment. Thus, a first observation concerning the relation between “the general” and “the particular” is that it takes up a new form not based on a general law, but in view of the “inner form” of objects, be they natural living beings or human artifacts as artworks. Against this backdrop, it is clear that Cassirer unlike Cohen sees the systematic connection of the topics of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as well as their essential difference to the account of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as totally justified.

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the relation between “the general” and “the particular” implies, according to Cassirer, a second rarely observed but nevertheless essential challenge. This challenge is not linked to the different forms of knowledge and the corresponding concepts as the first. Rather, it is revealed by a more detailed discussion of the specific character of empirical knowledge. Following Cassirer, the question of *empirical knowledge* is again taken up by the third *Critique* because it is not fully answered by the first as it is often assumed (KLT, pp. 290 ff. [KLL, pp. 280 ff.]). For the *Critique of Pure Reason* may have shown how the laws of appearances in general may be determined

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<sup>32</sup> Following Cassirer, this premise of a universal law is also shared by the practical judgments discussed in the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

<sup>33</sup> It is significant that Cassirer uses here “*beurteilen*” (assess) instead of “*urteilen*” (judge), thereby taking up the Kantian use of this term, see Schubbach 2016, pp. 164–166. Cassirer tends to identify the Kantian “purposiveness” with the “inner form” and the “*individual forming* [*individuellen Formung*]” (KLT, p. 287 [KLL, p. 276]).



by the most general laws of our understanding. But this leaves open the crucial challenge of empirical knowledge:

The lawfulness of appearances *in general* thereby ceases to be a riddle, for it is presented merely as another expression for the lawfulness of the understanding. The concrete structure of empirical science, however, confronts us at the same time with another task, which has not been solved and overcome along with the first one. For here we find not only a lawfulness of events as such, but a connection and interpenetration of particular laws of such a type that the whole of a determinate complex of appearances is progressively combined and dissected for our thought in a fixed sequence, in a progression from the simple to the complex, from the easier to the more difficult (KLT, p. 291 [KLL, p. 280]).<sup>34</sup>

Thus, empirical knowledge is not to be gained by the application of the most general concepts provided by our faculties and imposing on nature its most general laws. Rather, it has to be developed by finding and testing specific laws for particular realms of objects and by mediating them with the most general laws of our understanding. Only in this laborious process can empirical knowledge in the sense of “experience as a system in accordance with empirical laws [*Erfahrung als System nach empirischen Gesetzen*]” (KLT, p. 297 [KLL, p. 286]) be established, as Cassirer quotes Kant emphasizing this often overlooked, but significant wording.<sup>35</sup>

Empirical concepts therefore fulfil a very different function than a priori concepts in general and the Kantian categories in particular. Whereas the latter can be understood as general rules of synthesis to be applied to every given manifold, empirical concepts mediate between the given phenomena and laws with different degrees of generality ultimately aiming at a “system of empirical laws”. Thus Cassirer writes:

The empirical concept must determine the given by progressively mediating between it and the universal, since it relates the data to the universal through a continuous series of inter-

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**34** “Die Gesetzlichkeit der Erscheinungen überhaupt hat damit aufgehört, ein Rätsel zu sein; den sie stellt sich nur als ein anderer Ausdruck für die Gesetzlichkeit des Verstandes selbst dar. Der konkrete Aufbau der empirischen Wissenschaft aber stellt uns zugleich vor eine andere Aufgabe, die mit jener ersten noch nicht gelöst und bewältigt ist. Denn hier finden wir nicht nur eine Gesetzlichkeit des Geschehens schlechthin, sondern eine derartige Verknüpfung und ein solches Ineinandergreifen besonderer Gesetze, daß dadurch das Ganze eines bestimmten Erscheinungskomplexes in einer festen Stufenfolge, in einem Fortgang vom Einfachen zum Zusammengesetzten, vom Leichterem zum Schwereren sich für unser Denken fortschreitend aufbaut und gliedert”. It is significant that here Cassirer distinguishes between “lawfulness [*Gesetzlichkeit*]” and “laws [*Gesetze*]”, a difference that is also important for Cohen.

**35** See the original wording in CPJ, §II, p. 9 [Ak. XX, p. 202]. This passage is in Kant’s so-called “First Introduction”, which I will come back to later.



mediate conceptual stages. The highest laws themselves, since they are mutually interrelated, must be specified to the particularities of the individual laws and cases – just as conversely the latter, purely because they are juxtaposed and illuminate one another, must permit the exposition of the universal connections holding between them. Only then do we possess that concrete unification and presentation of the factual our thinking seeks and insists on (KLT, p. 292 [KLL, p. 281]).<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the attempt to gain empirical knowledge necessarily assumes that we can find laws adequate for the objects, coherently connect these laws with each other and mediate them with the a priori laws of our understanding. As Cassirer emphasizes, these assumptions are premises of every empirical research and its struggle for “experience as a system according to empirical laws”.

But, as Cassirer makes clear, according to Kant these premises are not necessarily met, unlike the necessary conditions of objective knowledge the *Critique of Pure Reason* deals with. It is at least conceivable that empirical objects do not conform to the general concepts the power of judgment is striving for (KLT, pp. 293 f. [KLL, pp. 282 f.]). Further, it is possible that the empirical laws we nevertheless stumble upon do not allow for their systematization with each other and the a priori laws given by understanding. Neither in mechanics nor in biology there is, so Cassirer, an a priori guarantee that the general and the particular can be mutually interwoven so that further empirical knowledge can be gained (KLT, pp. 291 f. and 296–299 [KLL, pp. 281 and 286–288]). Without any guarantee, we still have to assume that this is possible if we strive for empirical knowledge (KLT, pp. 293 f. and 298 f. [KLL, pp. 283 and 288]). Thus, in empirical knowledge we do not give laws to nature, as Kant argued in the case of a priori laws of nature and the categories of our understanding. Rather we have to explore and discover the empirical laws of nature in hope that we can grasp and systematize them. In the case of empirical knowledge, we are not law-giving, but we are law-seeking (KLT, p. 293 [KLL, pp. 282 f.]).

It is this discussion of empirical knowledge in which Cassirer sees the “progress in the critique of theoretical knowledge” that should lead from the *Critique of Pure Reason* to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: It is the new condition of

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**36** “Der empirische Begriff muß das Gegebene dadurch zur Bestimmung bringen, daß er es fortschreitend mit dem Allgemeinen vermittelt, indem er es durch eine kontinuierliche Folge gedanklicher Zwischenstufen darauf bezieht. Die obersten und höchsten Gesetze selbst müssen sich, indem sie sich wechselweise durchdringen, zu den Besonderungen der Einzelgesetze und Einzelfälle ‘spezifizieren’ – wie diese letzteren umgekehrt, rein indem sie sich aneinanderreihen und sich gegenseitig beleuchten, die allgemeinen Zusammenhänge, in welchen sie stehen, hervortreten lassen müssen. Dann erst erhalten wir jene konkrete Verknüpfung und Darstellung des Faktischen, wie unser Gedanke sie sucht und fordert”. See also KLT, pp. 300 f. [KLL, p. 290].

empirical knowledge, i. e., the possibility of a “system of particular laws and particular natural forms [*Gliederung der Natur zu einem System besonderer Gesetze und besonderer Naturformen*]” (KLT, p. 334 [KLL, p. 321]), which hints at an “extension and a keener comprehension of the concept of apriority itself [*eine Weiterbildung und eine schärfere Fassung des Aprioritätsbegriffs selbst*]” (KLT, p. 305, fn. [KLL, p. 294, fn.]). This formal purposiveness of the objects of empirical knowledge is a new form of transcendental conditions that are not philosophically provable, but must necessarily be embraced if we are to strive for empirical knowledge. However, these conditions may be supported by the progress of our research. If the latter is the case, it goes hand in hand with the experience of pleasure, since the formal purposiveness of empirical objects in respect to knowledge is accidental and it is therefore experienced as pleasant when an empirical object actually is formally purposive (KLT, p. 302 [KLL, p. 291]). Thus, Kant came across the experience of “pleasure” in his in-depth examination of the conditions of empirical knowledge and thereby paved his way to the experience of pleasure linked to the aesthetic judgment:

Kant has not contrived a third thing in addition to the two already existing *a priori* principles [in the first and second *Critique*, A.S.] for the sake of symmetry; it was an extension and a keener comprehension of the concept of apriority itself that came to him on what were basically theoretical grounds – in the idea of the logical “adequation” of Nature to our cognitive faculties. But in this the consideration of ends in general – or, to put it from the transcendental psychological point of view, the realm of pleasure and pain – had been shown to him to be a possible object of *a priori* determination, and the trail led on further from this point, ultimately to the winning of the *a priori* foundation of *aesthetics* as a part of a system of universal teleology (KLT, p. 305, fn. [KLL, p. 294, fn.]).<sup>37</sup>

Consequently, it is the examination of the *formal purposiveness* of the objects of empirical knowledge that led Kant to two essential characteristics of the new forms of judgment analyzed in the third *Critique*, an experience of pleasure linked to the conditions of experience and a new form of concepts that articulate a structure of a whole and its parts. Thus, it is the *formal purposiveness* that

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<sup>37</sup> “Kant hat nicht zu den beiden bereits bestehenden apriorischen Prinzipien [der ersten und zweiten *Kritik*, A.S.] um des symmetrischen Aufbaus willen ein drittes hinzuerfunden, sondern eine Weiterbildung und eine schärfere Fassung des Aprioritätsbegriffs selbst war es, die ihm zunächst auf theoretischem Gebiete – im Gedanken der logischen ‘Angemessenheit’ der Natur für unser Erkenntnisvermögen – entgegentrat. Damit aber hatte sich ihm weiterhin die Zweckbetrachtung überhaupt – oder, nach der transzendental psychologischen Seite ausgedrückt, das Gebiet von Lust und Unlust – als ein möglicher Gegenstand apriorischer Bestimmungen erwiesen: Und von hier aus führte der Weg weiter, auf dem sich zuletzt die apriorische Grundlegung der Ästhetik, als Teil eines Systems der allgemeinen Teleologie, ergab”.

prompted Kant to consider *aesthetic* and *teleological purposiveness* as well (KLT, p. 335 [KLL, p. 322]).

Cassirer's assertion of three forms of purposiveness might seem rather surprising, as the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* consists only of two parts devoted to aesthetic and teleological judgments and their respective forms of purposiveness. Yet, Cassirer's attempt to add the "formal purposiveness" that has to be assumed in our strive for empirical knowledge is anything but arbitrary (KLT, p. 334 [KLL, pp. 321f.]). On the contrary, he can draw on the difference of "formal purposiveness of nature", the "aesthetic representation" and the "logical representation of the purposiveness of nature" Kant unfolds in the "Introduction" to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (CPJ), §§V–VIII, pp. 68–80 [Ak. V, pp. 181–194]). Moreover, Cassirer's interpretation relies on an additional text, the so-called "First introduction".<sup>38</sup> This is a more comprehensive draft of an introduction into the third *Critique* which Kant did not include in the publication. It was first made accessible in its integral form in 1914 in Cassirer's edition of *Immanuel Kants Werke*, so that it comes as no surprise that the interpretation of the third *Critique* in *Kant's Life and Thought*, i.e. a supplementary volume to this edition published in 1918, is heavily inspired by this 'new' text by Kant.<sup>39</sup> What is surprising, however, is the fact that these questions of historical scholarship attain a systematic, even a constitutive meaning for Cassirer's philosophy of culture, as I have shown in detail elsewhere (Schubbach 2016).<sup>40</sup> Cassirer first outlined his project of a philosophy of culture in 1917, that is, in immediate temporal proximity, and thereby systematically exploits his interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, as I will briefly outline in the last section of this article.

## 4 Cassirer's Adaptation of Kant's Third *Critique* and His Philosophy of "the Symbolic"

What would later become Cassirer's main work, the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, is first sketched in a "disposition" of a "Philosophy of the Symbolic"

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<sup>38</sup> See Cassirer's repeated references to the "First Introduction" in KLT, pp. 294 ff. [KLL, pp. 283 ff.].

<sup>39</sup> See CPJ, pp. 1–51 [Ak. XX, pp. 195–251]. For some hints to the fascinating history of this "First Introduction", see Schubbach 2016, pp. 145 f.

<sup>40</sup> In the following, I rely heavily on this much more detailed study on the emergence of Cassirer's philosophy of culture.

dated June 1917.<sup>41</sup> In this draft, Cassirer outlines a philosophy of culture arranged around the term “symbol”. Yet, Cassirer does not define this term at this stage, but keeps the basic concept of his philosophy of culture relatively vague. Still, it is obvious that “the symbol” or “symbolization” is supposed to achieve for culture what in Cassirer’s earlier theory of scientific knowledge was accomplished by the scientific concept, i.e. to determine objects within relational contexts. Thus, Cassirer’s concept of the symbol has its origin in his theory of the scientific concept, but is intended to characterize culture in general and encompass all its forms, e.g., language, science, myth, religion and art.

At first glance, this has little to do with the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. On closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that Cassirer’s philosophy of culture shares some of the challenges Kant tackled after the *Critique of Pure Reason* and led to the “progress in the critique of theoretical knowledge” Cassirer sees in the third *Critique*. The conceptual conditions of knowledge in general discussed in the first *Critique*, i.e., the categories, proved to be too general to grasp the different forms of empirical knowledge (in physics, biology or chemistry). Thus, the problem of the particular empirical laws arises, i.e., the question whether there are such laws adequate for specific types of objects and whether they constitute a “system of empirical laws” that allows for scientific experience or knowledge. Kant answers this question by introducing the reflecting power of judgment and its principle of formal purposiveness, i.e., a new type of *a priori*, which we necessarily assume as we strive for empirical knowledge, but which we cannot theoretically prove, unlike the categories.

Cassirer’s “disposition” of a philosophy of culture is confronted with a similar problem. Cassirer postulates that symbolization is a condition of culture in general and conceives of scientific knowledge, myth and religion or art as its specific forms. Yet, the question remains whether and how these forms constitute a system in which each of them would be a specification of symbolization in general. It is such a system that the “introduction” of Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* in fact envisages, but it is a practical assumption of Cassirer’s approach, that there is such a system, and not a proven theorem of this philosophy of culture (Cassirer 1955, p. 77 [2001c, pp. 5 f.]), with reference to science and its disciplines; Cassirer 1955, pp. 82–85 [2001c, pp. 12–15], with reference to culture in general). Moreover, Cassirer is convinced that the forms of symbolization cannot be derived from some sharpened concept of the symbol any more than the particular empirical laws from the general *a priori* laws of un-

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<sup>41</sup> For a detailed description of this hitherto unknown “disposition” and the reproduction as well as a transliteration of its 32 pages, see Schubbach 2016, pp. 40–50 and 367–433.

derstanding in the third *Critique*. It is therefore his endeavor to establish such a system of symbolization through a bottom-up approach, i. e., by specifying the different forms of symbolization in a painstakingly detailed research on the historical and empirical findings of the cultural sciences, while aiming at the same time at their generalization in an encompassing general concept of the symbol. For Cassirer, correspondingly, the concept of the symbol is not a starting point of deduction, but the vanishing point of a philosophical reflection based on empirical findings. In this way, the evolvement of Cassirer's philosophy of culture from his earlier theory of scientific knowledge connects to the "progress in the critique of theoretical knowledge" to be found in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. There is no doubt that Cassirer saw his own new project of a philosophy of culture within the context of an "immanent progress of the actual tasks of the critique of reason" that led to Kant's third *Critique* and opens up the way to a philosophy of culture: for reason has to be understood as "culture" as Cassirer stresses already in *Kant's Life and Thought* with his own project in mind.<sup>42</sup>

Cassirer's philosophy of culture is thus systematically linked with the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In contrast to Cohen, he does not read it as a philosophy of art complementing the other parts of philosophy and finally fusing them into the system of a philosophy of culture. On the contrary, Kant's further examination of empirical knowledge, the innovation of the reflecting power of judgment and the respective new forms of *a priori*, be it the formal purposiveness of empirical knowledge or the forms of purposiveness linked to the aesthetic and the teleological judgment, shall develop and transform critical philosophy as such. Therefore, Cassirer does not understand the plurality of culture in terms of a preconceived set of cultural domains, such as morality, science and art; rather, this plurality is present with the great diversity of cultural phenomena and poses a challenge to our attempts to structure this empirical diversity. Accordingly, the unity of culture is not understood as a preconceived system of cultural fields, but is an essential telos of this cultural philosophy, which seeks to grasp the diversity of cultural phenomena and keeps itself open to further in-

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42 "Only now do we fully understand Kant's statement, that the torch of the critique of reason does not light up the objects unknown beyond the sense word, but rather the shadowy space of our own understanding. The 'understanding' here is not to be taken in the empirical sense, as the psychological power of human thought but rather in the purely transcendental sense, as the whole of intellectual and spiritual culture [*Jetzt erst begreift man ganz das Kantische Wort, daß die Fackel der Vernunftkritik nicht die uns unbekanntes Gegenden jenseits der Sinnenwelt erleuchten, sondern den dunklen Raum unseres eigenen Verstandes erleuchten solle. Der 'Verstand' ist hier in keiner Weise im empirischen Sinne als die psychologische Denkkraft des Menschen, sondern im rein transzendentalen Sinne als der geistigen Kultur zu verstehen*]" (KLT, pp. 154 f. [KLL, p. 150]).

sights achieved by the cultural sciences. This approach to a philosophy of culture systematically takes up what Cassirer's reading of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* has outlined: the further and innovative development of a critique of reason whose path was opened by Kant, but by no means paved or even completed.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See the well-known wording "the critique of reason becomes the critique of culture" in Cassirer 1955, pp. 78–81 [2001c, pp. 7–10].

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Günter Figal

## Blank Spaces and Blank Spots

Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in Heidegger's Philosophy and in Phenomenological Aesthetics until Today

### 1

Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) philosophy of art as developed in his essay on the origin of the work of art is an explicit rejection of aesthetics. However, Heidegger discusses aesthetics only in the “epilogue [*Nachwort*]” of his essay, and he does so only quite briefly. As he writes, the examination of art and the artist has been aesthetic in character almost from the time when it began. What Heidegger understands as “aesthetics” is a philosophical inquiry that takes art as an object (“*Gegenstand*”), namely as the object of αἴσθησις, which, according to Heidegger's explanation, is sensuous perception in a wide sense (“*sinnliches Vernehmen im weiten Sinne*”). As Heidegger adds, “today” this kind of perception is called “lived experience [*Erlebnis*]”, and accordingly, the clarification of art's essence is expected from an investigation of how human beings experience art, either enjoying or producing it (Heidegger 1977a, p. 67).<sup>1</sup>

Heidegger develops the sketched argument more extensively in a lecture course given in the winter term 1936–1937 and thus concurrently with the presentation of the three lectures on the origin of the work of art that form the basis of his essay. Whereas in the epilogue Heidegger does not mention any particular conception of philosophical aesthetics at all, in the lecture course he briefly refers to Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics* stating that with Hegel's conception aesthetics was completed, and not at least so, because Hegel, according to Heidegger, acknowledged that great art had come to an end. So in both versions Heidegger presents the philosophical project of aesthetics without mentioning the book that in general is most closely associated with it: Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In Heidegger's considerations on aesthetics and art Kant's groundbreaking examination of aesthetic experience is just a blank space.

This is puzzling and needs further explanation. How could Heidegger so demonstratively ignore what justly is regarded as the key conception of modern

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<sup>1</sup> Except for the quotations from the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, all the English translations are mine. The page numbers given in brackets refer to the German editions of the texts.



philosophical thinking on art and the beautiful? And why did Heidegger, maintaining that philosophical thinking on art must not be “aesthetical”, avoid critically discussing the most representative philosophical version of the position in question? Why didn’t he clarify his conception of art via a “destructive” reading of Kant’s third *Critique* and thus by taking a way he took clarifying the very possibility of ontology via a “destructive” discussion of Aristotle’s conception of being and being-ness? These questions cannot be answered directly because Heidegger’s texts do not include any evidence concerning his position to the third *Critique*. He simply ignores it.

An indirect answer to the foregoing questions can be construed first from a remark in Heidegger’s so-called *Black Notebooks* that reveals how radically Heidegger breaks with his philosophical work of the twenties along with his increasing sympathy for National Socialism. In March 1932 he declares to be completely alienated from his precedent writings including *Being and Time* and his book on Kant from 1929, in which he had attempted to explain the philosophical position of *Being and Time* with Kant’s transcendental philosophy as a paradigm (Heidegger 2014, pp. 19–20). So for Heidegger Kant’s philosophy obviously has lost the importance it had had only a few years earlier.

Heidegger’s distancing himself from Kant in the thirties, however, is no sufficient explanation for his ignorance of the third *Critique*. Heidegger’s book on Kant (Heidegger 1991), just like the lecture course given in the winter term 1927–1928, which is a kind of first draft of the Kant book (Heidegger 1977b), are concentrated on the *Critique of Pure Reason* and do not entail any remarks on the third *Critique*. The same holds true for seminars Heidegger taught in the early thirties (Heidegger 2013). As it seems Heidegger did not feel challenged by Kant’s third *Critique*; the book did not speak to him. Nevertheless, one would expect that Heidegger, with his turn to philosophy of art and aesthetics in the thirties, could not have avoided a critical discussion of the third *Critique*. Accordingly, the lack of such a discussion must be explained from Heidegger’s view of aesthetics as it becomes manifest with the epilogue to his essay on the origin of the work of art as well as with his aforementioned lecture course on Nietzsche. Since Heidegger hardly could underestimate Kant’s contribution to modern philosophy of art, his understanding of aesthetics must be of such a kind that he saw no need to take Kant’s contribution into account or, even more likely, that he wished to avoid it. Since Heidegger could not seriously regard Kant’s contribution to aesthetics as marginal, he maybe skipped it because it might have been a serious challenge of Heidegger’s view on aesthetics and thus also of his own thinking on art.

In order to make these conjectures plausible a more detailed examination of Heidegger’s view on aesthetics should be helpful. To this effect one should take

up Heidegger's considerations on aesthetics in the epilogue of his essay on the origin of the work of art. Defining aesthetics in reference to the Greek word, αἰσθησις, the term "aesthetics" dates from, and explaining aesthetics as the conception of artworks as "objects of sensual perception", Heidegger does not yet say something special, and accordingly his view will not cause any objection. Heidegger's next step, however, is not *prima facie* intelligible. Why should sensual perception be understood as "lived experience", if not on the basis of the quite unspecific assumption that every perception is a kind of "lived experience"? For an answer a more detailed explanation of "lived experience" is required.

The German term often translated as "lived experience", "*Erlebnis*" (Heidegger 1993 and 2012), became philosophically prominent mainly with Wilhelm Dilthey's "descriptive" psychology and its program to conceive the continuity of perceptive and cognitive experiences. As Dilthey argues, this continuity is not provided by experienced entities, but rather constituted by actual living ("*Erleben*"), in such a way that actual living encompasses all particular experiences, "*Erlebnisse*" (Dilthey 1968, p. 152). Husserl has refined this conception in his *Logical Investigations*. For him *Erlebnis* is not a just psychic event but rather the intentional reference to something that, along with this reference, has the character of an appearance ("*Erscheinung*"). As appearance, again, it is an integral element of appearing in lived experience, "*Erleben*", and thus can be called an *Erlebnis*. This, however, is not to be confused with a reduction of appearing things to appearances. As Husserl stresses, the appearance of a thing ("*Dingerscheinung*") is different from something appearing ("*das erscheinende Ding*"). Only the appearances of things, the "*Dingerscheinungen*", belong into actual living (Husserl 1984, pp. 359–362). Only as appearances all things essentially belong to appearing and thus to actual living ("*Erleben*"). Only as appearances, however, things are accessible for us.

This explanation, though very sketchy, should have made clear that Dilthey and Husserl understand *Erlebnis* as essentially *subjective*. Everything experienced as *Erlebnis* is dominated by the act of experiencing. This, however, does not mean that the objectivity of something experienced is necessarily neglected or marginalized. According to Husserl's epistemological conception of *Erlebnis* something that is experienced as *Erlebnis* may very well be understood as something objective. An appearance that is experienced and thus is an *Erlebnis* can be the appearance of an object.

Since Heidegger is very familiar with Dilthey's and Husserl's work, his remarks on *Erlebnis* are clearly based on the meaning of the term just sketched. However, discussing aesthetics Heidegger is not interested in problems of "descriptive psychology" or phenomenological epistemology. He only adopts the

subjective character of *Erlebnis*, and he understands it in a very specific way. In his epilogue to the essay about the origin of the work of art this understanding is indicated only by a single word designating the experience of artworks: “*Kunstgenuß*”, the enjoyment and consumption of art. If *Erlebnis* is *Kunstgenuß* the term “*Erlebnis*” indicates what can be called a “hedonistic” conception of aesthetic experience. According to Heidegger such a conception determines aesthetics as such.

Heidegger introduces this view of aesthetics in his lecture course on the will to power as art already with an explanation of αἴσθησις that is quite different from the one in the epilogue. According to the lecture course αἴσθησις is not just “sensuous perception”, but rather the “sensuous, sentimental and emotional conduct of human beings [*sinnliches, empfindungs- und gefühlsmäßiges Verhalten des Menschen*]” (Heidegger 1985, p. 90). And a few passages further Heidegger defines aesthetics as that kind of reflection on art for which the emotional relation of human beings to the beautiful as represented in art is the authoritative scope of definition and justification (“diejenige Besinnung auf die Kunst, bei der das fühlende Verhältnis des Menschen zu dem in der Kunst dargestellten Schönen den maßgebenden Bereich der Bestimmung und Begründung abgibt”). As he adds, such an emotional relation is possible either as “‘creating’ or as ‘enjoying and receiving’ [*‘Erzeugen’ oder ‘Genießen und Empfangen’*]” (Heidegger 1985, p. 91).

Considering these explications, one should, of course, not forget that they are given in a lecture course on Nietzsche’s philosophy as philosophy of art and thus could easily be taken as paraphrases of Nietzsche’s pertaining thoughts. However, to repeat, Heidegger’s characterizations are meant as referring to aesthetics in general, and accordingly for Heidegger Nietzsche’s reflections on the emotional character of art and the experience of art function as a paradigmatic explication of what aesthetical experience as such is supposed to be. For Heidegger art, understood aesthetically, is nothing but an object of emotional experience. This, again, does not hold true only for philosophical reflections on art, but also for art itself. Though for Heidegger an aesthetic understanding of art is clearly inadequate, art can become aesthetical and thus lose what Heidegger supposes to be its essence. As Heidegger points out, Richard Wagner’s musical drama is aesthetic art – that kind of art for which artworks are nothing but “pathogens of emotional experiences [*Erlebniserreger*]” (Heidegger 1985, p. 101).

As already mentioned, for Heidegger aesthetics is a general and not only modern possibility of understanding art. This is confirmed by his statement according to which aesthetics, though the term was coined in the eighteenth century, already begins in classical Greek philosophy (Heidegger 1985, p. 92). Since

Heidegger thus regards Plato's and Aristotle's considerations on art and on the beautiful as "aesthetical", modern philosophy of art and modern art like Wagner's music are nothing really new. They only radicalize what had begun with Plato and Aristotle, at a time when "great art and great philosophy" already had come to an end (Heidegger 1985, p. 93). So Heidegger's narrative on art and philosophy of art is parallel to his narrative on what he calls "metaphysics" – philosophy beginning with the loss of authentic thinking. As it seems, art and philosophical reflection on art under "metaphysical" conditions are aesthetical, and they are so in a radicalized way under the conditions of "modern metaphysics". According to Heidegger the aesthetical emphasis on sensuousness and emotion corresponds to the Cartesian foundation of knowledge in subjectivity (Heidegger 1985, pp. 97–98). And like Heidegger's narrative on "metaphysics" forms a contrasting background for his evocation of a non-metaphysical and thus true thinking, his narrative on aesthetics is supposed to provide the same for the evocation of truly great art.

There is no need now for discussing more in detail Heidegger's tableau of occidental history as a hopeful beginning, a long period of decay and the chance of a new beginning. It may be sufficient to realize how his conception of aesthetics, functioning as a contrasting background for "true art", fits into his overall historical scheme. So Heidegger's narrative on aesthetics is as problematic as his historical scheme in general – as overall historical schemes, reducing complex fields of phenomena to a simplified picture, are in general. Should really no "great art" exist after Greek tragedy? Is there no modern art except "pathogens of emotional experience"? For someone having just some knowledge of more than two thousand years of art and of the rich diversity of modern art these mere questions may reveal the implausibility of affirmative answers to them.

With these objections, however, the importance of further clarifications concerning aesthetics may become evident. If "great art" after the "Greek beginning" does exist and thus also "great modern art", then this art must be either of the kind Heidegger presupposes as that of the "Greek beginning" or, if there is no third alternative, it must be aesthetical. But aesthetical in which sense? Not necessarily in Heidegger's sense and so not as an object of or as a stimulus for sentimental or emotional experiences. Art could also be aesthetical in a sense Heidegger does not even take into account – possibly because he does everything to maintain his own hedonistic understanding of the aesthetical.

This consideration may, at least to a certain degree, explain the blank space in Heidegger's discussion of aesthetics. Even with a cursory view on Kant's third *Critique* one will realize that Kant, indeed, regards aesthetical experience as emotional, but also argues for a clear differentiation between aesthetical and

non-aesthetical emotions. According to Kant's argument aesthetical emotions essentially have a cognitive aspect and thus go along with an experience of freedom and sociability. Following Kant's argument one could even call aesthetic experience an emotional purification and thus understand his argument in line with Aristotle's considerations on the purifying effect of tragedy. So Heidegger's definition of aesthetics as concerned with the emotional character of the experience of artworks proves to be correct. However, prominent representatives of aesthetics – taken in the broad sense introduced by Heidegger –, Aristotle and Kant, have never reduced aesthetic experience to an emotional stimulation by artworks and thus reduced artworks to such stimulations. Instead they have stressed the particular aesthetical modification of emotional experience and thus conceived aesthetics as a reflection on and a practice of a different and more conscious experience of emotions. In no case, however, prominent representatives of aesthetics, Nietzsche included, have understood aesthetic experience as a mere stimulation of emotional states.

Why did Heidegger nevertheless maintain such a simplified picture of aesthetics? The question, as should be stressed again, cannot be answered without fail, because Heidegger himself did not even indicate an argument for his view, but rather just states it. One may guess, however, that the simplified picture made things easier for him. The contrast between the evocation of "true art" and a self-centered reduction of art to a stimulus of emotional states is more suggestive than a differentiated tableau of the aesthetic tradition that, mainly with Kant's third *Critique*, would have been a serious challenge of Heidegger's own conception. As it seems, Heidegger wished to avoid the critical discussion of this challenge and preferred a more simplified and suggestive historical project.

## 2

In one respect, however, Heidegger could have maintained his conception of aesthetics even in a detailed discussion of the third *Critique*. Undoubtedly Kant conceives aesthetic experience as subjective. Not Heidegger himself, however, but Hans-Georg Gadamer, following Heidegger's line, made this point in *Truth and Method*. Gadamer, in a certain way, makes good for Heidegger's ignorance of Kant's conception of aesthetics, and accordingly his discussion of the third *Critique* in line with Heidegger deserves special attention. Moreover, with Gadamer's discussion of aesthetics the weak points of his anti-aesthetical objections will become clear. This, again, will lead to the conclusion that aesthetics is inevitable for an adequate philosophical understanding of art.

According to Gadamer, Kant's third *Critique* is not just one contribution to aesthetics among others, albeit an important one, but rather the foundation of aesthetics. So for Gadamer, in contrast to Heidegger, aesthetics is not a philosophical endeavor from Plato and Aristotle on, but a specifically modern project that begins with Kant's restriction of "leading humanistic concepts" like "*sensus communis*" and "taste" to aesthetic experience as an autonomous and independent, purely subjective sphere. Thus Kant, according to Gadamer, denied the epistemological value of a cognitive competence like taste and regarded only theoretical and practical reason as epistemologically relevant (Gadamer, 1986, pp. 46–47). Furthermore, Gadamer, as to this point like Heidegger, is convinced that the aesthetical conception of art and its experience cannot adequately grasp art in its essence. Gadamer, however, does not only maintain this. Rather, and again in contrast to Heidegger, he develops his critical arguments against Kant's aesthetics quite extensively. What Gadamer questions, is mainly the autonomy of aesthetic experience. As Gadamer puts it, Kant's conception of aesthetic experience goes along with the suggestion that the aesthetic character of something is independent from its essence and properties. Aesthetical experience pretends to be beyond all contexts of reality. Such an attitude without any ties to the real world cannot justly be called "experience". Instead it is "*Erlebnis*" – a subjective mental process without real content (Gadamer 1986, p. 75)

Gadamer's alternative to aesthetics, like Heidegger's, consists in claiming the truth-character of art. However, in which respect artworks could disclose truth, according both to Heidegger and Gadamer, is difficult to discern. In his essay on the origin of the work of art Heidegger defines the truth of artworks mainly as their opening up a historical world of a particular people. However, if at all, this could only apply to very few artworks. Which historical world would be opened up for instance by one of Johann Sebastian Bach's violin sonatas or by one of Barnett Newman's paintings? And does a Greek temple, Heidegger's leading example, really open up the historic world of the Greeks? Heidegger himself doubts this, stating that only poetry can have the founding character he ascribes to art in general (Heidegger 1977a, pp. 60–62; Figal 2017, pp. 165–176). Also Gadamer too that artworks disclose the world they belong to. According to him, however, they do not originally open up this world as a whole, but rather discover it under certain aspects. As Gadamer says, experiencing artworks we recognize something or ourselves (Gadamer 1986, p. 119). The world, or more precisely, an aspect of the world an artwork belongs to, is entirely made explicit in the artwork so that those contemplating a work, readers, spectators, listeners, would recognize "That is just how it is" (Gadamer 1986, p. 118).

Gadamer does not make really clear how the insight he ascribes to the experience of artworks should be understood concretely. Some clarification may

come from his remark that Plato, though being a radical critic of art, speaks of “the comedy and tragedy of life” and thus suggests understanding comedy and tragedy on stage as the explicit version of what takes place in life. As Gadamer stresses, in such a case the difference between life and stage would be suspended. Enjoying a play would be the joy of recognition (Gadamer 1986, pp. 117–118), because understanding the meaning of a play one would understand the meaning of life and thus would not mark a difference between art and life. Understanding artworks truly excludes what Gadamer calls “aesthetical differentiation [*ästhetische Unterscheidung*]” (Gadamer 1986, p. 91) – a differentiation according to which artworks, because of their specific aesthetic qualities, are different from normal life.

Examined more closely, however, Gadamer’s argument concerning the “aesthetical differentiation” proves to be unconvincing. Expecting whatever insight into life from artworks, one would very likely assume that such insight would be specific in character; it would be insight of a kind that could only be provided by artworks. Following Gadamer’s argument, however, an understanding of what may be called “comical” or “tragical” situations in everyday life would not be different from the insight a play on stage may offer. Then, however, there would be no reason to visit theater performances motivated by the expectation of insight at all. Already Aristotle has argued against such indifference, showing in his *Poetics* that human action in plays is different from action in life. So the plot of a play like a tragedy is necessarily “complete” (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1450b 24–25), whereas human life is open to future continuation. The action of a play starts at a certain point, and at a certain point it is finished. Accordingly, it does not make sense to ponder how the life of a person in a play will go on after the curtain has fallen, whereas action in real life would continue in one or another way or at least continue to determine the life of people as long as it is present in memory. Also what would happen to people in life would affect their relatives, friends or acquaintances more or less earnestly, whereas, attending a play on stage one would more or less clearly be aware of the fact that it is “only a play”. Only because of this “aesthetical difference” attending a play can go along with the “purification of affects” that Aristotle ascribes to tragedy (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449b 27–28). “Purification” means that the graveness affects have in real life is suspended. Attending a tragedy one would experience pity and fear without really being concerned (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449b 27). Thus one would experience affects in a particular kind of freedom that would allow reflection and insight into emotional experience.

Generalizing this argument one may resume that, in order to lead to insight, an experience of artworks must in any case be specific and, in its specific character, aesthetic. Such an aesthetical experience, again, is only possible if the art-



work experienced allows or even initiates it. Accordingly, artworks as such must be aesthetical. They must be essentially different from other correlates of experience, and it must be possible to define this difference as precisely as possible.

Since Kant's third *Critique* offers the most elaborate version of an aesthetical conception of art, there is good reason in general to rely on Kant's conception. Admittedly, this conception is "subjectivistic" in many, even decisive respects, and so especially Gadamer's critical objections against Kant cannot simply be rejected. These objections, however, can only be a serious obstacle for an aesthetical conception of art and its experience, if philosophical aesthetics as such could not do without Kant's "subjectivistic" determinations.

However, these determinations could also prove to be specific for Kant's version of aesthetics instead for aesthetics as such. If this is the case, Kant's conceptual framework very likely is too narrow for sufficiently taking into account the objective aspects of the aesthetical. Aesthetic objects are a kind of blank spot in Kant's conception. Kant has no conceptual place for them, and it is just this dilemma that leads him to the "subjectivistic" reduction of aesthetics he has been blamed for by critics like Gadamer. Kant, however, does not completely neglect aesthetic objects. Rather he tacitly presupposes them and thus avoids reducing aesthetic experience to a kind of subjective auto-affection. So discussing Kant's conception of aesthetics and being attentive to its tacit objectivity one may find to an understanding of aesthetics longer determined by Kant's restrictions. Aesthetics that is essentially objective is resistant against Heidegger's and Gadamer's critique.

### 3

Kant's dilemma concerning aesthetic objectivity results from his decision to define aesthetic experience as it is made with a "judgment of taste" in contrast to propositions, or, as Kant says, "logical judgments" as well as to affective references to something that is motivated by "interest" (CPJ, §§1–3). Aesthetic judgments do not determine something as to what it is or which properties it has, and the pleasure going along with aesthetic experience is different from the pleasure of consuming something. Aesthetic experience is not concerned with real existence, whereas both, a "logical" or propositional attitude to something as well as the pleasure of consumption, are related to something insofar as it really exists. Determining something or ascribing particular properties to it implies an affirmation of its existence; one more or less explicitly asserts that something "really" is as what it has been determined and "really" has the properties ascribed to it. Likewise, one affirms the reality of something under the aspect of



its consumption. Because something could not be consumed without really existing, actual or potential consumption more or less explicitly counts on its existence.

Kant's determination of aesthetic experience in contrast to propositions and to consumption should be plausible. Judging something as beautiful, indeed, is essentially different from propositional attitudes though both are articulated with statements. Beauty is no property like, for instance, color or surface quality. And though experiencing something as beautiful essentially goes along with pleasure, beauty cannot be consumed, and thus the pleasure of something beautiful must be essentially different from the pleasure caused by something to eat or to drink. So Kant can justly resume that experiencing something as beautiful goes along with indifference concerning its existence (CPJ, §2).

From this result, however, Kant draws the consequence that aesthetic judging does not include reference to an object at all. As Kant says, for aesthetic experience the "constitution [*Beschaffenheit*]" of an object only is connected with a feeling of pleasure or aversion (CPJ, §5, pp. 94–95 [Ak. V, p. 209]), in such a way that we ourselves make something an object of pleasure (CPJ, §5, pp. 95–96 [Ak. V, p. 210]). In aesthetic experience we take something as an occasion for a kind of pleasure that as such consists in the enjoyment of one's own epistemic faculties. According to Kant's famous definition, aesthetic experience is the "free play [*freies Spiel*]" of the power of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) and reason (*Verstand*). In this play the two epistemic faculties mentioned are experienced in their very possibility. They do not lead to a particular epistemic determination, as it would be expressed in a statement, but rather are manifest only as faculties – as if someone would experience her or his faculty of running without running.

Though Kant thus conceives aesthetic experience as joyful epistemic self-experience, he does not wish to say that the beautiful is in the eye of the spectator only. This becomes obvious with Kant's sharp distinction between aesthetic pleasure and the pleasure experienced with something to be consumed. Whereas the latter is entirely individual, every particular aesthetical experience is supposed as sharable. Having for instance a predilection for chocolate one would not presuppose that everyone else should like chocolate. However, articulating an experience of something beautiful, according to Kant we are convinced that everyone else should find the same thing beautiful, and therefore we may encourage others to share our experience (CPJ, §6, pp. 96–97 [Ak. V, pp. 211]). In doing so, we speak, as Kant says, with a "universal voice" (CPJ, §8, p. 101 [Ak. V, p. 216]).

Kant's argument is plausible. Supposing that for instance one's own favorite meals should also be the favorite meals of others, would, indeed, be odd, where-

as the aesthetic quality of an artwork is not regarded as reducible to individual preferences. Speaking for instance about the pleasure experienced with Wagner's music one does not just articulate an individual preference, but rather is convinced that the aesthetic quality of this music is beyond any doubt and accordingly can and should be regarded so in general.

According to Kant, however, the reason for this conviction has nothing to do with the aesthetic quality of artworks. As he argues, the "universal voice" of aesthetic judgments roots in the joint possession of the epistemic faculties, namely power of imagination and reason. Because all human beings have these faculties, they immediately are able to share or at least to understand the "state of mind [*Gemütszustand*]" going along with the "free play" of epistemic faculties (CPJ, §9, p. 102 [Ak. V, p. 217]). However, for those experiencing aesthetically this root of their commonality is not at all clear. According to Kant, they do not express their aesthetic pleasure as an effect of the free play of their epistemic faculties, but rather refer to something beautiful – as if beauty would be a quality of an object and accordingly could be articulated in propositions. So aesthetic experience is essentially confused and wrong about its very nature.

This is a problematic assumption. Philosophical explanations claiming to clarify something that allegedly must remain unintelligible for non-philosophical thinking are not very convincing. They can neither be accepted nor rejected by someone not sharing the pretended philosophical insight, whereas the pretention of such an insight cannot be made plausible in reference to the experience explained, because the reason for this experience necessarily remains hidden when the experience is made. However, also apart from this difficulty, Kant's explanation of aesthetic experience in its commonality is not convincing. Rather Kant's explanation compromises the distinction between aesthetic pleasure and the pleasure of consumption that is so crucial for his general argument. Provided that all human beings in principle have the same faculties for enjoying drinks or meals, human beings should be able to agree with others concerning their enjoyment also if they would not prefer the same drinks or meals. Conversely one could claim without hesitation the agreement of others concerning one's pleasures of consumption, because the pleasure as such could be well understood by everyone. The claim for aesthetical commonality, however, goes further. It goes along with the expectation that others do not only share the mere possibility of aesthetic pleasure, but rather the pleasure concerning a particular aesthetical object. Because this is so, aesthetic judgments, as Kant stresses, are articulated in proposition-like sentences. Asserting that "something is beautiful", we speak about beauty "as if it were a property of things" (CPJ, §7, p. 98 [Ak. V, p. 212]; §9, p. 102 [Ak. V, p. 217]). As it seems there is no other possibility to conceive aesthet-

ic commonality than understanding it as an agreement concerning aesthetic objects.

Kant surely would not have agreed with this consequence. He would have objected that beauty cannot be something objective, because recognizable objectivity is reserved for characters and properties as correlates of “logical judgments”. On the other hand, however, Kant cannot avoid speaking of something objective as correlate of aesthetic experiences. Though stressing the difference between “objective sensation [*objektive Empfindung*]” which is the “perception of an object of sense [*Wahrnehmung eines Gegenstands des Sinnes*]”, and “subjective sensation, through which no object is represented [*subjektive Empfindung, wodurch kein Gegenstand vorgestellt wird*]”, Kant explains subjective sensation as a feeling “through which the object is considered as an object of satisfaction [*Gefühl, wodurch der Gegenstand als Objekt des Wohlgefallens [...] betrachtet wird*]” and thus, more or less involuntarily, recognizes objects as correlate of aesthetic experience (CPJ, §3, p. 92 [Ak. V, p. 92]). He also does so in characterizing aesthetic judgments as “contemplative” (CPJ, §5, p. 95 [Ak. V, p. 209]), since contemplation is not possible without a contemplated object. And he does so most significantly by explaining aesthetic sensation in reference to an “effect [*Wirkung*]” of the experienced object (CPJ, §9, p. 104 [Ak. V, p. 219]).

Kant very likely has refrained from making frankly explicit this objective side of aesthetic experience, because he did understand objects exclusively as correlates of “logical” judgments. This, however, is by no means necessary. Asserting the beauty of something one does not refer to a property like color or surface quality. Referring to and designating such properties one claims to articulate a true proposition that can be verified by appropriate empirical procedures. However, calling something beautiful is different. It is an indication of another view on something and accordingly a suggestion to look at it differently. Beauty is no property, but rather an overall mode of something, namely the mode of *mere appearance*. In order to experience something in its mere appearance, knowledge concerning its character and properties is not needed. As Kant says, we can regard for instance flowers as beautiful without even knowing what a flower is (CPJ, §4, p. 93 [Ak. V, p. 207]; §9, pp. 102–103 [Ak. V, pp. 217–218]). But, and as to this Kant would very likely disagree, one can describe flowers and all beautiful objects in their beauty and thus must refer to them. In doing so one would not describe a determinate entity, but instead an appearing coherence that, being a free association of different aspects, cannot be reduced to whatever organizing principle. Because the association is free, the correspondence of its elements is not definite, so that its coherence can be experienced and described in many different ways. Such coherence, it can be called a “decentered order” (Figal 2010, pp. 72–76), cannot be determined. However, it can be described

from different perspectives that may complement each other without ever forming a homogenous whole. It is not a correlate for propositions, but for *interpretations*.

Calling something beautiful, to resume, one announces to contemplate it as mere interpretable appearance, and one addresses others requesting them to join such contemplation and also to give interpretations of it. Very likely such request will not in any case be successful. Others may even announce their disinterest concerning the particular beautiful object. For the commonality of aesthetic experience, however, no homogeneity of taste is required. It is completely sufficient to admit the aesthetic quality of an artwork and thus its character as artwork, which includes its interpretability. The assumption that an object can justly be understood as beautiful and accordingly be regarded as interpretable has not the character of a statement that could be verified in reference to its character or properties. It can only be confirmed by the aesthetical practice of contemplation and interpretation.

## 4

Aesthetical experience that essentially is contemplative and interpretative clearly has a subjective aspect. The experiencing person's faculties and perspectives determine it, and it also is essentially emotional. Experiencing something aesthetically, one is affected by something in its mere and coherent appearance, or, what is the same, in its beauty. This pleasure, however, is by no means self-centered. It is a beautiful object like an artwork that initiates the pleasure of beauty. One feels, as it were, "addressed" by it, and "answering" to this address in contemplation and interpretation, one experiences that one's own views and interest no longer are important. The work is prior to oneself, and everything one can do is realizing the work's appearing with one's perceptive attentiveness and understanding. Thus, aesthetic experience is by no means the subject-centered "*Erlebnis*" in Heidegger's and Gadamer's sense. Rather it is devotion to something independent from the context of subjective aims, convictions and positions. Being independent from practical and theoretical interests, artworks offer freedom. They do not disclose the historical world of a particular people, but speak to all people who have sense for the beautiful. And they also do not present a world they would belong to in its truth, but offer free views, possibilities of perceiving and understanding not determined by everyday practices. Contemplating a picture one may feel to experience color like never before; a novel may present possibilities of narrating human life with special clarity, and a piece of music

may, as if for the first time, open up the space of sound and silence. All this is possible only because artworks are aesthetical objects.

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Dennis J. Schmidt

# The Place of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in Gadamer's Hermeneutics

## 1

Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is a masterpiece that its author never fully grasped. There is a very real sense in which Kant's discoveries in the third *Critique* outstrip Kant's own capacities to interpret and fully understand those discoveries and so one might argue that Kant is a bad interpreter of Kant. Of course, such a claim will not be welcomed by all and the apparent hubris driving such a remark is easily off-putting. However, to make such a comment is a way of saying that in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant has exposed and opened possibilities that exceed the frameworks in which that work is forged, and that is the mark of a truly revolutionary work. It is also a way of indicating that the task of interpreting Kant and of unfolding the possibilities of his great achievement in the third *Critique* still remains for us today – it is a work that reaches not only in advance of its own times, but of our times as well and so we too have yet to come to terms with the most far-reaching consequences of what Kant demonstrates. Some of the most interesting and innovative paths of thinking in our time find their own beginnings in this task of furthering what is found in Kant's great text.

Indeed, one of the most important developments in the twentieth century owes itself directly to Kant, even if that debt is not always so clearly acknowledged. Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1900 – 2002) hermeneutics, especially as it is formulated in his *Truth and Method* (1960), can in many ways be read as a real renewal of the project of the first part of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.<sup>1</sup> Setting out to liberate the notion of truth from the sense of truth defined by the natural and quantitatively based social sciences, Gadamer turns to the human-

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<sup>1</sup> The qualification “first part” of the third *Critique* is important and an indication of work still to be done. Gadamer's *Truth and Method* owes itself quite directly to the analytic of aesthetic judgment, more precisely to the analytic of beauty and taste, but never really addresses the questions raised by Kant in the “second part” of the third *Critique*, the analytic of teleological judgment which not only raises the question of the natural world, but also significantly re-writes the analysis of the aesthetic judgment. This essay will not pursue this qualification, but it should stand as a marker of yet another path to be opened by those who explore the horizons opened for philosophy by Kant.

istic tradition where a different sense of truth is preserved. In order to elaborate upon that humanistic sense of truth Gadamer identifies four basic concepts that shape the humanistic tradition and its measure of truth. These four concepts – of education (*Bildung*), a sense of the common (*sensus communis*), judgment (*Urteilskraft*), and taste (*Geschmack*) – are all conceptual pillars framing Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and they equally serve as the framework that opens the hermeneutic conception of truth. Gadamer recognizes, often in ways that Kant himself did not fully appreciate, just how the horizon of experience that Kant outlines as aesthetic experience fundamentally shifts and even displaces traditional frameworks of understanding. A different idiom for philosophy, a different conception of truth, is opened up here.

Gadamer's originality starts with his reappropriation of Kant's efforts to expose the kinship of aesthetic experience and truth. To be sure, Gadamer is not a Kantian in any orthodox sense, nor is his intention to simply advance Kant's own intentions. Kant's third *Critique* is an inspiration to be pressed forward and even radicalized. While his debt to Kant is wedded to the inspiration that Gadamer draws from Aristotle, particularly the *Nichomachean Ethics*, and Heidegger, above all *Being and Time*, one can rightly argue that the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is the key text in the formulation of hermeneutic theory for Gadamer.

There are differences between Gadamer and Kant that are significant. Two in particular need to be noted: first, that for Gadamer it is the work of art more than the experience of beauty that will define aesthetic experience and build the bridge to the hermeneutic sense of truth; second, Gadamer submerges the important role of nature and natural life that is so decisive for Kant, even in the analysis of aesthetic experience and the work of art. These differences do not speak against the view that Gadamer's indebtedness to Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is immense and decisive. One can in fact legitimately argue that *Truth and Method* is among the most philosophically imaginative efforts to press forward with the possibilities exposed by Kant in his third *Critique*.

In what follows, my intention is to look more closely at Gadamer's most extended and detailed treatment of Kant in *Truth and Method*. While there are a number of places in which Gadamer takes up Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, no place is more important in the project of formulating hermeneutic theory than the treatment of Kant in the first part of *Truth and Method* where the theme is "The question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This section of the text is found in pages 1–171 of the English translation (Gadamer 2004) and in pages 9–176 of the German edition published in Gadamer's *Gesammelte Werke* (Gadamer

## 2

Gadamer begins *Truth and Method* with the claim that the full extent of the questions governing the so-called “*Geisteswissenschaften*” has been lost to the progressive subordination of those questions to the model of thinking defining the natural sciences. Mathematization, objectification, calculability, and conceptual determinability become the ideals; method was the guarantor of security of our access to those ideals. Truth is said to be secured by method. This is so much the case that methodology comes to be the driving concern of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. One of the first concerns of *Truth and Method* is to argue against this modernist assumption and to show that “what the tool of method does not achieve must – and really can – be achieved by a discipline of questioning and inquiring, a discipline that guarantees truth” (TM, p. 484 [GW 1, p. 494]). In *Truth and Method*, the project of unfolding the question of truth within the horizon of understanding rather than of method is divided into three moments: how the question of truth emerges in the experience of art, how it is extended by the problematic of understanding in the realm of history, and how an ontological shift is required once the elementality of language is taken into account. The centerpiece of the first moment in this development of philosophical hermeneutics is found in Gadamer’s analysis of Kant’s aesthetics.

Kant’s role in demonstrating the limits of the ideal of method and in opening up the alternative conception of truth defining hermeneutics is pivotal in *Truth and Method*. In the final pages, Gadamer acknowledges this when he says that “In our analyses of the aesthetic we discussed the narrowness of the concept of knowledge that limited Kant’s position in this matter, and from the question of the truth of art we found our way into hermeneutics, where art and history were combined for us” (TM, p. 482 [GW 1, p. 492]). Entry into the first stage of hermeneutics comes with the critique of Kant’s aesthetics. While Kant will play some role in every stage of the evolution of hermeneutics in *Truth and Method*, the most intensive engagement with Kant is found in the section entitled “The subjectivization of aesthetics through the Kantian critique” (TM, pp. 37–79 [GW 1, pp. 48–87]). It is a difficult and decisive section in which the *failure* of the modernist project to grasp the being of the work of art is exposed. It is a far-reaching section in which one first comes to understand why

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1990). All further citations from *Truth and Method* are cited according to these editions and abbreviated as TM and GW 1.



the work of art is a privileged site in the development of hermeneutic theory.<sup>3</sup> One sees as well that the hermeneutic perspective on the art work is genuinely original and marks a fundamental departure from the metaphysical and modernist approaches to art. In this section on Kant where the foundations of Gadamer's ontology of the work of art and its relation to truth are developed, one also sees how Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, though owing much to Heidegger's treatment of the relation of art and truth, marks both an advance and even a departure beyond Heidegger.<sup>4</sup> One of the most significant wedges which helps Gadamer take up this critical distance to Heidegger is found in the seriousness with which Gadamer, unlike Heidegger, regards Kant's third *Critique*.

In order to appreciate the stakes of these pages on the "subjectivization of aesthetics through the Kantian critique", one needs to understand both why Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is a *necessary concern* for Gadamer and what obstacle to the proper consideration of art it both forms and, in some part at least, overcomes. To do that the position of these pages needs to be regarded systematically: there is nothing arbitrary or elective about the turn to Kant at this point in *Truth and Method*. Following on the heels of the discussion of "The significance of the humanist tradition for the human sciences" and ending by leading to the "Retrieving of the question of artistic truth", the analysis of Kant forms the bridge that connects Gadamer's own project with the project of humanism and the alternative that it has long posed to the scientization of thinking that governs the *Geisteswissenschaften*. The recovery of the question of truth in the horizon opened up by the work of art is accomplished by Gadamer's analysis and critique of Kant's aesthetics.

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**3** The original conception of *Truth and Method* did not include what we now know as Part I which has as its centerpiece the analysis of Kant's third *Critique* and which has as its task of the "Question of truth as it emerges in the experience of art". In later years, the importance of the artwork for Gadamer would be so obvious and so clearly central that one is surprised to realize that in *Truth and Method* the analysis of the work of art is a later addition. The necessity of the treatment of art is, in the largest measure, owing to the role that Kant assumes as the inheritor of the humanistic tradition in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. One would not have strong reasons to explain Gadamer's interest in Kant outside of the problematic of hermeneutics as it is developed in *Truth and Method*. Prior to *Truth and Method*, the sole article by Gadamer that takes up Kant's aesthetics is an eight-page article in 1939 (Gadamer 1939).

**4** It is no accident that one of the very first essays Gadamer would ever write that dealt with Heidegger was Gadamer's introduction to Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art*, a text considering themes that both connect Gadamer's own work to his teacher's, but – at the same time – allows Gadamer to establish the originality of hermeneutic theory *vis à vis* Heidegger.

## 3

Early in *Truth and Method* Gadamer notes that the humanistic tradition has long respected and been based upon “a kind of experience quite different from the one that serves in investigating natural laws” (TM, p. 7 [GW 1, p. 14]). In short, it is a tradition that has preserved a conception of experience and of truth that has not been defined by the models and ideals of the natural sciences. When examining the humanistic tradition Gadamer argues that it has been fundamentally defined by four governing concepts: *Bildung*, *sensus communis*, judgment, and taste. These notions name the experiences and the ideals that preserve a sense of truth not captured by those rules of method and the objectifications which ground the natural sciences and which have come to determine – inappropriately – the *Geisteswissenschaften*. By acknowledging an experience and a possibility of truth that cannot be recuperated by method and by the ideals of science, the humanistic tradition provides the historical basis upon which questions of human experience and of truth can be recovered from the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Kant's great achievement in this history is to have gathered these four concepts together and thought them systematically insofar as he demonstrated how aesthetic judgment is defined by precisely these notions.

Kant recognized that taste, which he takes to the most interesting form of aesthetic judgment, cannot be grasped by conceptual reason. But, according to Gadamer, while recognizing that this is indeed the case, Kant also reserved the concept of truth for conceptual knowledge thereby severing the kinship of art and truth that Gadamer sees as being essential. This is the chief concern of Gadamer's critique of Kant's aesthetics in this section: even though Kant gathers together the key elements of the humanistic tradition, Kant does not do justice to the experience of the work of art insofar as he radically subjectivizes and isolates it. Gadamer introduces his analysis of Kant's aesthetics by making this clear:

The transcendental function that Kant ascribes to the aesthetic judgment is sufficient to distinguish it from conceptual knowledge and hence to determine the phenomena of the beautiful and of art. But is it right to reserve the concept of truth for conceptual knowledge? Must we not also acknowledge that the work of art possesses truth? (TM, p. 37 [GW 1, p. 47]).

This becomes the first issue of Gadamer's reading of Kant in these pages: “that he denies taste any *significance as knowledge*” (TM, p. 38 [GW 1, p. 49]). The claim of art to be a form of knowledge is foreclosed. This is where the subjectivization of aesthetics begins. It will end in the formation of what Gadamer calls the aesthetic consciousness and aesthetic differentiation, two ways in which the significance of the work of art is effaced.

Gadamer rightly notes that taste tells us about the judging subject, but says nothing about the aesthetic object. As Kant says: “What is merely subjective in the representation of an object, i.e., what constitutes its relation to the subject, not to the object, is its aesthetic property” (CPJ, p. 75 [Ak. V, pp. 188–189]). The judgment of taste is a sort of self-confession of the subject; it is defined by its disinterestedness in the object, even in the very existence of the object. With this thorough subjectivization of aesthetics, the disappearance of the aesthetic object begins. Gadamer turns to Kant’s treatment of free and dependent beauty to elaborate upon this point by demonstrating how the reasons for Kant’s appreciation of abstraction in art and for ornament only confirm Gadamer’s contention that the work of art is prized for its effect upon the subject, not for itself, and that consequently “It seems impossible to do justice to art if aesthetics is founded on the ‘pure judgment of taste’ – unless the criterion of taste is made merely a precondition” (TM, p. 40 [GW 1, p. 51]). This will be Gadamer’s most basic criticism of Kant: even though Kant will gather together and crystallize the unity of the leading concepts of humanism, and even though he will recognize that the realm defined by *fine* art (the emphasis on “schöne *Kunst*” is all important here) plays a privileged role in any account of the unity of these concepts, in the end, from the vantage of pure aesthetic judgment, the work of art contributes nothing to what is disclosed.

Gadamer points out that one might expect this situation to change with the move from taste to genius. After all, genius is concerned not with the reception of the work by the subject, but with the *production* of the work and in this regard the work itself is very much at issue. However, Gadamer notes that such a recovery of the work itself does not occur in Kant’s treatment of the genius. The reason for this is that Kant considers genius – “a favorite of nature” (CPJ, p. 196 [Ak. V, p. 318]) – to be producing “another nature” (CPJ, p. 192 [Ak. V, p. 314]) so that art, insofar as it does not completely disappear, remains only as subordinated to the realm of nature which it repeats. Art is thus never able to find its own worth within the horizon of Kant’s aesthetics. The only site where a real appreciation of art is potentially available in Kant is, according to Gadamer, found in the doctrine of the “Ideal of Beauty” (CPJ, pp. 116–120 [Ak. V, pp. 231–236]), which “prepares a place for the essence of art” (TM, p. 42 [GW 1, p. 53]). In the ideal of beauty, where the human form is represented (as, according to Kant, “the expression of the moral”), the task of art “is no longer to represent the ideals of nature, but to enable man to encounter himself in nature and in the human, historical world” (TM, p. 43 [GW 1, p. 55]). This is the sole opening for art not to be regarded as either subordinated to nature or simply for its effect. In other words, this marks the possibility of art being regarded as an autonomous phenomenon. However, this exception remains only an exception and is never pursued by

Kant since the ideal of beauty is not a mere judgment of taste; in the end, it does not open the question of art that Gadamer finds Kant to have shut down. Instead, Gadamer notes that there is in Kant's aesthetics an indifference about the object being judged aesthetically because ultimately, "Whether in nature or art, beauty has the same a priori principle, which lies entirely within subjectivity. The autonomy of aesthetic judgment does not mean that there is an autonomous sphere validity for beautiful objects" (TM, pp. 48–49 [GW 1, p. 61]).

## 4

Kant's aesthetic theory is powerful and influential, and so it is no surprise that the consequences of this subjectivization of the aesthetic realm are far-reaching. When Kant's successors sought to rehabilitate the originality of genius to acknowledge the autonomy of the work of art as well as its possible relation to truth, they did so still fundamentally within the transcendental horizon that regards the entire field of the aesthetic as defined by subjectivity. Beginning with Schiller, who "gave *the standpoint of art* – rather than taste and judgment, as with Kant – pride of place", genius was progressively elevated to become "the more comprehensive concept", while, "contrariwise, the phenomenon of taste had to be devalued" (TM, p. 49 [GW 1, p. 61]). This is the move that defines German Idealism. It begins with the recognition that "Taste is, if anything, a testimony to the mutability of all human things and the relativity of all human values. Kant's grounding aesthetics on the concept of taste is not wholly satisfactory" (TM, p. 51 [GW 1, p. 63]). Genius is much more suitable as a universal aesthetic principle since "The miracle of art – that enigmatic perfection possessed by successful artistic creation – is visible in all ages" (TM, p. 51 [GW 1, p. 63]). So, the corrective of German Idealism with respect to Kant is found in the recognition that "Aesthetics is ultimately possible only as the philosophy of art" (TM, p. 51 [GW 1, p. 64]).

The basis of aesthetics shifts from taste to genius, from nature to the work of art, in German Idealism. Now beauty is understood not as the gift of nature, but as a reflection of *Geist*, or, as Gadamer puts it, "In art man encounters himself, spirit meets spirit" (TM, p. 52 [GW 1, p. 65]). This shift inaugurated and systematically developed above all by Hegel is so persuasive that even when the rejection of Hegel begins "under the banner 'back to Kant'", "the phenomenon of art and the concept of genius remained at the center of aesthetics [and] the problem of natural beauty and the concept of taste were marginalized" (TM, p. 52 [GW 1,

p. 65]).<sup>5</sup> What will remain of Kant is the notion that the realm of the aesthetic is defined by the horizon of subjectivity. More precisely, Kant's reference to the quickening of the feeling of life, the *Lebensgefühl* that determines aesthetic pleasure, will be translated into the idea of the accomplishment of the genius where it will develop into an all-embracing concept of life. This is why Gadamer will say that, "by trying to derive all objective validity from transcendental subjectivity, neo-Kantianism declared the concept of *Erlebnis* to be the very stuff of consciousness" (TM, p. 52 [GW 1, p. 65]).

Here we find the roots of the notion of *Erlebnis* and of "life philosophy" that would come to define so much of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thought, and that would mark a turning point in the formation of the idea of a philosophical hermeneutics. This is the point at which the question of experience, as well as the question of the relation of experience to life, is opened up anew. All of this is captured by the neologism "*Erlebnis*", a word that emphasizes that "What is experienced is always what one has experienced oneself" (TM, p. 53 [GW 1, p. 66]). This word carries a heavy burden. First, it highlights the concept of life as that which must be experienced; there is nothing abstract about what *Erlebnis* names. Furthermore, "this concept [life] implies a connection with totality, with infinity" (TM, p. 55 [GW 1, p. 69]). Second, it carries forward the notion that transcendental subjectivity founds all objective validity; *das Erlebte* is always mine. Third, it carries forward the productive sense that belongs to the notion of the genius: every *Erlebnis* has an *Ergebnis*.

When Dilthey develops his hermeneutics by making the concept of *Erlebnis* the central concept it contains "two moments, the pantheistic [the connection with totality] and the positivist, the experience (*Erlebnis*) and still more its result (*Ergebnis*)" (TM, p. 56 [GW 1, p. 70]). Dilthey sees the concept of *Erlebnis* as a way

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<sup>5</sup> Gadamer will return to a discussion of this shift in the final section of *Truth and Method* where he outlines "the universal aspect of hermeneutics" (TM, p. 469 [GW 1, p. 478]) by turning once again to the concept of the beautiful. There he comments that "When describing the reversal of the relationship between the beauty of nature and the beauty of art, we discussed the shift whereby the beauty of nature finally lost its priority to such an extent that it is conceived as a reflection of the mind. We might have added that 'nature' came to be conceived in the way it has been ever since Rousseau: as the mirror image of the concept of art. As the counterpart of the mind, as the non-I, nature became a polemical concept, and as such it has none of the universal ontological dignity possessed by the cosmos, the order of beautiful things. Certainly no one will want simply to reverse this development and try to re-establish the metaphysical dignity of the beautiful that we find in Greek philosophy by reviving the last embodiment of this tradition, the eighteenth-century aesthetics of perfection" (TM, p. 475 [GW 1, p. 484]). It is also worth noting that Gadamer will return yet again to this topic in an important and rather lengthy essay (Gadamer 1986).

of grasping the special nature defining that which constitutes the given for the *Geisteswissenschaften*. The works of the past – that which is given by history in the form of art and other texts handed down through time and that bear the traces of time – are the peculiar “data”, the given, of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. Gadamer notes that, for Dilthey, this sort of given constitutes a special epistemological problem: since the *Geisteswissenschaften* had modeled themselves on the natural science where the standard of “clear and distinct perceptions” held sway, the *Geisteswissenschaften* suffered a sort of alienation from the world of history where what is given is no longer able to be understood as self-evidently present. The concept of *Erlebnis*, however, allows Dilthey to address this problem of how historical givens can be understood. Insofar as part of the meaning of *Erlebnis* is that it not only speaks of the unity of the self which is undergoing experiences, but also that it refers to the relation of what is experienced to the whole of life, it becomes possible to see how life objectifies itself in the works which emerge out of experience: “Because it is itself within the whole of life, the whole of life is present in it too” (TM, p. 60 [GW 1, p. 75]). Thus, “Since life objectifies itself in structures of meaning, all understanding of meaning consists in ‘translating the objectifications of life back into the spiritual life from which they emerged’. Thus, the concept of experience is the epistemological basis for all knowledge of the objective” (TM, p. 57 [GW 1, p. 71]). Gadamer notes that in both life philosophy and phenomenology, the concept of *Erlebnis* has this purely epistemological function.

## 5

Gadamer's interest in tracing this notion of *Erlebnis* from its emergence in the neo-Kantian recovery of Kant by means of an emphasis on the role of life in Kant's understanding of aesthetic pleasure is to show how this new understanding of experience leads to a new understanding of art as “*Erlebniskunst*”. The move here is made quickly, but it is nonetheless a crucial development for Gadamer since it marks a transformation in how art is thought of, a transformation that will change the foundations of aesthetics and lead to Gadamer's claim that what is called for if the real accomplishment of the work of art is to be grasped is “a fundamental revision of the basic concepts of aesthetics” (TM, p. 70 [GW 1, p. 86; translation modified]).

The move that Gadamer makes from the analysis of *Erlebnis* in Dilthey (and to a lesser degree, Husserl, Bergson, and Simmel) is broadly sketched. The first point is to emphasize that “Every experience is taken out of the continuity of life and at the same time related to the whole of one's life” (TM, p. 60 [GW 1, p. 75]).

From this, one can see the “affinity between the structure of *Erlebnis* as such and the mode of being of aesthetic. Aesthetic experience is not just one kind of experience among others but represents the essence of experience per se” (TM, p. 60 [GW 1, p. 75]). What gives art this special status is its power to take the person experiencing the work out of the normal context of life and thereby to relate the person to the whole of life. Art thus represents a privileged form of *Erlebnis* because in it the whole of life is present. It intensifies the character of all true experience; that is, it relates experience to the whole of life. Most experiences conceal this character of experience; art, on the other hand, has this characteristic as one of its defining traits. Gadamer makes the significance of this clear: “the concept of *Erlebnis* is a determining feature of the foundation of art. The work of art is understood as the consummation of the symbolic representation of life, and towards this consummation every experience already tends” (TM, p. 61 [GW 1, p. 76]). This means that the recovery of the work of art that begins with German Idealism’s criticisms of Kant’s aesthetics of taste will be based upon foundations that are, in Gadamer’s view, insufficient for any effort to grasp the real mode of being of the work of art. Even more, when the conclusion is eventually drawn that “so-called *Erlebniskunst* (art based on experience) is art per se” (TM, p. 61 [GW 1, p. 76]), the new foundation for thinking the work of art will be tied to a metaphysical conception of the art object that will, in a new way, serve to efface again the being of the work of art itself.<sup>6</sup> The discussion of “the limits of *Erlebniskunst* and the rehabilitation of allegory” (TM, p. 61 [GW 1, p. 76]) that follows is devoted to tracing out these claims.

Gadamer begins his discussion of this new foundation for the conception of art that develops in the nineteenth century by noting an ambiguity in the notion of *Erlebniskunst*; namely, that while it originally meant art that emerges *out of* experience and was an expression *of* experience, it also came to refer to the notion that art is intended *to be* experienced aesthetically. The legacy of this view is evident today in the way we still tend to speak of art as an expression of experience and as calling for another experience for its appreciation. From this point of view, art ultimately becomes an experience of itself, not of the real. The knowledge it yields is, at best, the knowledge of itself, not a knowledge that could be said to be “true”. However, once we look beyond these seemingly self-evident assumptions of this nineteenth-century view that art is to be understood as *Erleb-*

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<sup>6</sup> Goethe defines the age and attitude of this view most of all. One sees the view that art is rooted in personal experience clearly articulated in his autobiography, *Poetry and Truth* (Goethe 1994a and b). Dilthey would become the theoretician of this view in his *Poetry and Experience* (Dilthey 1985). Both books are crucial works forming the background for the tradition into which Gadamer wants to place his own *Truth and Method*.



*niskunst*, “other criteria” and “new vistas” open up upon “totally unfamiliar artistic worlds” (TM, p. 62 [GW 1, p. 77]). No longer are “the genuineness of the experience or the intensity of its expression” the criteria for grasping the work, but other criteria, for example “the ingenious manipulation of fixed forms and modes of statement” (TM, p. 62 [GW 1, p. 77]), can be seen to make something a work of art. One sees these limits of the assumptions of *Erlebniskunst* in various arts, but Gadamer focuses his analysis on one event in particular: the banishment of rhetoric from the realm of art and the accompanying devaluation of allegory. Gadamer finds this revealing of the prejudices that limit the idea of *Erlebniskunst* because allegory, which was originally a form of rhetoric and then a form of painting, refers to something real that is outside of the work. From the point of view of a conception of art that takes art ultimately only to be an experience of itself, this reference to what is outside of the work is untenable. Gadamer's rehabilitation of allegory is an effort to illustrate some of the consequences of recognizing the relation of art and truth that has been severed by the subjectivization of aesthetics and the birth of what he calls the aesthetic consciousness.

## 6

One sees what is at stake in this claim in tracing out the shifting conceptions of the relation of the symbol and the allegory. As Gadamer points out, the aesthetic opposition between the notions of the symbol and allegory seems self-evident today, but this distinction was only elaborated in the wake of Kant. Prior to the nineteenth century, these notions were often even used synonymously (one sees this, for instance, in Winckelmann) and so the question that Gadamer asks is “how the need for this distinction and opposition arose” (TM, p. 62 [GW 1, p. 77]). In short, what agenda does this nineteenth-century distinction serve and what consequences follow from it?

Gadamer begins his discussion of these notions by noting that “The meanings of the two words have in fact something in common. Both words refer to something whose meaning does not consist in its external appearance or sound but in a significance that lies beyond it” (TM, pp. 62–63 [GW 1, p. 78]). While allegory originally belonged to the sphere of talk and was a way in which a meaning is expressed by another meaning, the symbol operated in a wider sphere and its meaning even relied upon its sensuous being as in the



case of the *tessera hospitalis*.<sup>7</sup> In this respect, symbol and allegory belong to different spheres: the symbol achieves its representational function through the presence of what is shown or said; the allegory operates primarily in the sphere of meanings. Despite this difference, Gadamer argues that symbol and allegory are essentially close to one another, not only by virtue of their referring beyond themselves to something else, but also because both find their preeminent application in the realm of religion: both are means of knowing the divine by starting with the human world of the senses. One significant difference will develop out of the roots of the symbol in the sensuous character of its appearance. More precisely, the metaphysical background of the symbol will begin to emerge and from out of this we can see the reasons that the aesthetic consciousness that severs art from the idea that it is a knowledge of the real will come to interpret art symbolically while devaluing the allegorical.

One can see how the symbol has a metaphysical aspect insofar as it is not understood as an “arbitrarily chosen or created sign” but presupposes “a metaphysical connection between the visible and the invisible” (TM, p. 64 [GW 1, p. 79]). This necessary link between visible appearance and invisible meaning that defines the religious meaning of the symbol translates easily into the aesthetic sphere where the symbolic significance of the work is that it represents the infinite ideal in the form of a finite appearance. Allegory, on the other hand does not assume any sort of original metaphysical relation binding the meanings it relates; rather, the connection that sustains it is created by convention and agreement. Thus, the relation defining the symbol is taken as something inherent and essential, while the allegorical relation is understood as external and artificial. When this difference is taken up in the wake of Kant by the aesthetics of genius and the subjectivization of aesthetics this difference in meaning becomes a

contrast of values. The symbol (which can be interpreted inexhaustibly because it is indeterminate) is opposed to allegory (understood as standing in a more exact relation to meaning and exhausted by it) as art is opposed to non-art. The very indeterminateness of its

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<sup>7</sup> See Gadamer 1986 where he returns to the themes of this section of *Truth and Method*. That later essay gives a clear account of this original meaning of the symbol: “Originally it was a technical term in Greek for a token of remembrance. The host presented his guest with the so-called *tessera hospitalis* by breaking some object in two. He kept one half for himself and gave the other half to his guest. If in thirty or fifty years time, a descendant of the guest should ever enter his house, the two pieces could be fitted together again to form a whole in an act of recognition. In its original technical sense, the symbol represented something like a sort of pass used in the ancient world: something in and through which we recognize someone already known to us” (Gadamer 1986, p. 31).

meaning is what gave the victory to the word and *concept of the symbolic* when the rationalist aesthetic of the age of Enlightenment succumbed to critical philosophy and the aesthetics of genius (TM, p. 65 [GW 1, p. 80]).

The opposition between symbol and allegory is not present in Kant who enlists the symbol to outline an indirect mode of representation of concepts (which is distinguished from the schematization of the concept described in the first *Critique*) and as an example of the symbolic uses of what is dearly an allegory (a monarchy ruled by a constitution is like an animate body, while a monarchy ruled by an individual absolute will is like a mere machine; CPJ, p. 226 [Ak. V, p. 352]). Gadamer traces the opposition between the symbol and allegory to the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller. In particular, it is Goethe who presses for the primacy of the symbol by seeing in it the structure of meaning that he sees in all phenomena; thus we find him writing: "Everything that happens is a symbol, and, in fully representing itself, it points towards everything else" (Goethe 1949, p. 286).<sup>8</sup> What is being valued here is the metaphysical aspect of the symbol that is not present in allegory. The necessary relation between the finite appearance and the infinite idea, which finds meaning in the phenomenon itself, when taken up as the truth of the work of art means that art now finds its meaning in being the existence of the idea itself. One does not need to look beyond the work of art to find its meaning. Art is sufficient unto itself. This intrinsic unity of the symbol and what is symbolized is what makes it possible for the symbol to both be opposed to the allegory and to become the basic concept of aesthetics that has been subjectivized. There is obviously a difficulty with the effort to make the symbol a universal aesthetic principle insofar as the tension between the world of ideas and the world of senses is not simply dissolved by the notion of the symbol. Nonetheless, the assumption that these disparate worlds belong together guides the discussion of the work of art in a manner that seeks to address this special riddle which emerges out of the symbolic interpretation of art. In the end though, this notion of the unity of appearance and meaning in the symbolic order comes to dominate aesthetics and works to justify a sense of the autonomy of the realm of art against claims of the concept.

With the triumph of the notion of the symbol, we find the corresponding devaluation of allegory. With the nineteenth-century emphasis on the aesthetics of genius and on the view that the productions of genius are unconscious productions allegory becomes suspect since it is not the product of genius alone, but it

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<sup>8</sup> One sees this, for instance, in the way he applies the notion of the symbol to the analysis of colors.

“rests on firm traditions and always has a fixed, stateable meaning which does not resist rational comprehension through the concept” (TM, p. 68 [GW 1, p. 85]). Because the bond holding the meaning relation together in allegory rests on convention and tradition, in other words, because allegory cannot be defined as the unconscious expression of the experience of genius, allegory loses its legitimacy for any understanding of art that thinks art as *Erlebniskunst*. As the nineteenth-century conception of art progressively freed the idea of art from any relation to what is not art, the allegorical tradition lost its final claim upon the idea of art. Again, Goethe is decisive in making the symbolic a positive and the allegorical a negative artistic concept. What is truly important about this acceptance of the symbol as the universal principle of aesthetics is that it will only serve to advance the sense of an opposition between reality and art. This opposition is what will lead Gadamer to develop his own important notion of aesthetic differentiation (“*ästhetische Unterscheidung*”):

What we call a work of art and experience (*erleben*) aesthetically depends on a process of abstraction. By disregarding everything in which a work is rooted (its original context of life, and the religious or secular function that gave its significance), it becomes visible as the “pure work of art”. In performing this abstraction, aesthetic consciousness performs a task that is positive in itself. It shows what a pure work of art is and allows it to exist in its own right. I call this “aesthetic differentiation” (TM, p. 74 [GW 1, p. 91]).

This notion of aesthetic differentiation will serve as the leading edge of Gadamer’s critique of the contemporary forms of aesthetic consciousness since it is through this aesthetic differentiation that “the work loses its place and the world to which it belongs” (TM, p. 76 [GW 1, p. 93]). This is the point at which the most far-reaching consequences of the subjectivization of aesthetics that Kant inaugurates become visible. It is also the point at which Gadamer’s critique of this development and his call for “a fundamental revision of the basic concepts of aesthetics” (TM, p. 70 [GW 1, p. 86; translation modified]) is announced.

Gadamer contends that “The fixed contrast between the two concepts – the symbol that has emerged ‘organically’, and cold, rational allegory – becomes less compelling when we see its connection with the aesthetics of genius and experience (*Erlebnis*)” (TM, p. 69 [GW 1, p. 86]). He further contends that we witness now a “certain rehabilitation of allegory” and that we can see the theoretical grounds for this when we recognize the insufficiency of the foundation of aesthetics upon the “symbol-making activity of the mind” (TM, p. 70 [GW 1, p. 86]). This insufficiency is evident in several ways in which the horizon of art is unjustly restricted – for instance, in the exclusion of allegory from the idea of art and in the limitation of art to the experience of genius – but the most evident presentation of this inadequacy of the symbolic as a principle

for aesthetics is found in the “aesthetic consciousness” and “aesthetic differentiation” which are its consequences. These notions name the real destiny of the subjectivization of aesthetics that begins with Kant. Neither can account for the real possibilities and the history of art:

At any rate, it cannot be doubted that the great ages in the history of art were those in which people without any aesthetic consciousness and without our concept of ‘art’ surrounded themselves with creations whose function in religious or secular life could be understood by everyone and which gave no one solely aesthetic pleasure. Can the concept of the aesthetic *Erlebnis* be applied to these creations without truncating their true being? (TM, p. 70 [GW 1, p. 87]).

Each of these notions, rooted in the nineteenth-century heritage of Kant's subjectivization of aesthetics but fundamentally shaping our understanding of art today, underpins a conception of art that separates art as appearance from the real. Each serves to deny the possibility that there is knowledge and a claim to truth in art. And yet, it is precisely this connection between art and knowledge, art and truth, that Gadamer wants to expose as the first step in his formulation of philosophical hermeneutics:

[...] is not the task of aesthetics precisely to ground the fact that the experience (Erfahrung) of art is a mode of knowledge of a unique kind, certainly different from that sensory knowledge which provides sciences with the ultimate data from which it constructs the knowledge of nature, and certainly different from all moral rational knowledge, and indeed from all conceptual knowledge – but still knowledge, i.e., conveying truth? (TM, p. 84 [GW 1, p. 103]).

The “retrieving of the question of artistic truth” (TM, p. 70 [GW 1, p. 87]), which is the real opening in *Truth and Method* upon the original problematic it will define, begins then by going to the heart of what is questionable about the view of “aesthetic cultivation [*Bildung*]” (TM, p. 70 [GW 1, p. 87]) that operates with such an understanding of the fundamentals of art emerging out of the subjectivization of art that begins with Kant's aesthetics. From here the fundamental revision of the basic concepts of aesthetics begins. The originality and radicality of Gadamer's conception of art becomes most visible by following out this critique of the legacy of Kant's aesthetics. Starting from this point, one can begin to see what is required if one is indeed to open the question of the relation of art and truth. Clearly taking Heidegger's lead in this project, Gadamer nonetheless is not simply following in Heidegger's footsteps in thinking this kinship of art and truth. Here, the guiding assumptions about how art is produced, experienced, and thought come under a rigorous and severe critique so that a new foundation for understanding the great enigma of art is prepared.

Gadamer's critique of these dominant forms of thinking art is broad, yet compelling. These densely argued pages carry a great burden in the text since they, above all others perhaps, open the question that will allow Gadamer to expose the problem of truth as a problem of understanding. One could, perhaps, pick at some of the details of his treatment of this process of the subjectivization of aesthetics, but, in the end, his point is made forcefully and powerfully, and without any real compromise in the interpretations he offers of Kant and others. There do remain aspects of Kant's third *Critique* that go unexplored by Gadamer. Most of all, the role of nature and natural beauty (including its link with the teleology of nature), as well as the role of the sublime in aesthetics, remain unexamined. Likewise, the ethical dimension of Kant's aesthetics, the fact that it belongs to the larger question of *judgment* still needs to be asked. But, in the end, Gadamer's intent in this section of *Truth and Method* is not to provide a full reading of Kant's third *Critique*, but to analyze and criticize the core of the assumptions, still living assumptions, that are the heritage of Kant and that remain as obstacles to one who would think the connection of truth and art. This is something that is done with masterful precision in these important pages which open the field of philosophical hermeneutics out of the question of the art.

## Conclusion

It is clear that Gadamer's intention with respect to Kant is not to "interpret" Kant's text as such, nor is it to get Kant "right" as it were. The fidelity to Kant's third *Critique* that we find in Gadamer's formulation of his hermeneutic theory is greater than any scholarly precision. It is rather the fidelity to an idea, a thought, and an insight. More precisely, Gadamer radicalizes the phenomena and experience that Kant first exposes in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. It is in this sense that Gadamer can be read as one of Kant's most loyal successors in the twentieth century.

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Hans-Peter Krüger

# Modern Research Procedures and their Conflicts in View of Dignity

Helmuth Plessner's First Transformation of the Kantian  
*Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1920)

## 1 Introduction

Helmuth Plessner's (1892–1985) engagement with the philosophy of Immanuel Kant pervades his entire life-work from his first philosophical publication *Die wissenschaftliche Idee. Ein Entwurf über ihre Form* (Plessner 1980a), published in 1913 when he was 21 years old, through his 1916 dissertation *Krisis der transzendenten Wahrheit am Anfang* (Plessner 1980b) all the way to his article “Kants Kunstsystem der enzyklopädischen Propädeutik” (1976) from when he was 84 years old, where he still writes: “Understanding Kant means going beyond him” (Plessner 1981b, p. 439). It is not possible here to write a separate account on the very worthwhile issue of the transformations of Kantian philosophy in Plessner's philosophical anthropology as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Plessner certainly adopts Kant's way of thinking in liminal concepts and in functions. In the following I will content myself with discussing this transformation in Plessner's *Untersuchungen zu einer Kritik der philosophischen Urteilskraft* (Investigations towards a Critique of Philosophical Judgment) from 1920 (Plessner 1981a),<sup>2</sup> written for his university teaching qualification (*habilitation*), because it is dedicated to judgment, a problem that pervades the entire Kantian philosophy, and because Plessner's transformation starts precisely there with the power of judgment: “Just as Plessner found not only the orbit of his philosophy but also its basis and its limits in Kant with the judgment, he also takes up such an orbit *a priori* in his system” (Redeker 1993, p. 82).

Plessner developed his own conception of qualitative experience, which he referred to phenomenologically as *intuition* (*Anschauung*), starting with his book *Die Einheit der Sinne. Eine Ästhesiologie des Geistes* (1923) (Plessner 1980c) and leading to *Levels of Organic Life and the Human* (Plessner 2019) (*Die Stufen*

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1 On this, see Krüger 2001 and 2017.

2 Hereafter referred to as UKpU.



*des Organischen und der Mensch*, Plessner 1975, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1928). This shifted the conditions of possibility of forming judgments back into the life-conduct of persons, which also embedded the justification of judgments in the contexts of personal life, which I have called the *performative turn* of his philosophical anthropology (Krüger 2001, p. 248). Life experience, for Plessner, is a qualitative unity of outside and inside even on the object side, and certainly on the side of those having the experience (Plessner 2019, pp. 22–27). This is not to be confused with the necessary restriction that is undertaken in the natural-scientific laboratory when an outside strictly separate from the inside is made the focus of investigation because it is the only thing that is measurable (Plessner 2019, pp. 110–112). Plessner converges, as Redeker argued, all the typical divergences between outside-inside, subject-object, thought-perception, *physis-psyche*. Thus the dualistic fixations of objects are supplanted by living spectra of variously proportioned boundary-crossings. Plessner managed a great “trick” which he called the “double-aspect of intuition” and by which he was able to discover “the point of convergence of Kant (judgment), Dilthey (dichotomy) and Husserl (phenomenon)” (Redeker 1993, p. 88). We have to keep this point of convergence in mind in order to understand where Plessner’s philosophical path takes us. But to start on this path at all we have to first reconstruct Kant’s path as an *open* task that could be carried out in another way. In his primary natural-philosophical work *The Levels of Organic Life and the Human* (1928) Plessner explicitly presented his own path of “creating philosophy anew” in analogy to Kant’s path (Plessner 2019, p. 27).

For all the novelty that Plessner’s transformation of Kantian judgment into the personal form of life generates, it remains committed to the specifically Kantian understanding of philosophy. Philosophy is to preserve the dignity of the rational creature even and precisely when this rational creature, as the natural human creature, is integrated into the life-form of persons. Even later Plessner’s transformation of Kantian philosophy adheres to the understanding of philosophy that it began with in his 1920 study of Kant: philosophizing preserves the idea of the dignity of persons. Thus we are entitled to start the larger task of examining Plessner’s transformation of Kant’s philosophy with the smaller task of determining the understanding of philosophy that Plessner adheres to even later despite all the further modifications it undergoes. This question is important since otherwise we will not understand precisely what is *philosophical* in his philosophical anthropology.

In his 1920 work written for his university lecturing qualification, *Untersuchungen zu einer Kritik der philosophischen Urteilskraft* (1920), Plessner essentially challenges philosophy to a new self-determination in a new world-historical situation. Neo-Kantianism was heading towards its own dissolution out of

over-maturity. Its claim to leadership had been challenged by Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Wilhelm Dilthey's historical life-philosophy. Within the scientific edifice, history and cultural science took a side role to the exact natural sciences, such that the foundations of the concept of science themselves underwent revision (UKpU, pp. 21–24). The history of philosophy no longer seemed like an answer to the developments of physics by Galileo and Newton through the philosophical foundations of a science proceeding by reason – Kant's way – but rather as “the history of the engagements of fundamental contrasts in world-view and life-will through rational demonstration as the means of power” (UKpU, p. 17). In the meantime, this concerns not just the well-known difficulties of Kantian philosophy, its psychology of the faculties in view of the “phenomenalism of transcendental aesthetics and the problem of the thing-in-itself, the table of categories, schematism and the dialectics” (UKpU, p. 21), but rather the “principle of the system” and thus the “idea of a scientific philosophy itself” (UKpU, p. 26). Since philosophies as world-views seem to dissipate into phenomenological types (Dilthey) or into Karl Jasper's psychology of world-views, there is a need to finally undertake a philosophical “critique of philosophy” itself (UKpU, p. 27). “This inner overcoming of Kant will clear the way not least of all for a new concept of science, which can support the humanities in the same manner as the mathematical natural science, now caught in an extraordinary revolution, and biology” (UKpU, p. 30) – Plessner was not just the son of a doctor but was himself a biologist who had worked together with other biologists both empirically and theoretically before and after becoming a philosopher.

To anticipate the results of this work, Plessner argued for the idea of a philosophy in a systematic form by inverting the relation between determinative and reflective judgment in Kant into a future orientation for modern research. Modern research as innovation into the future historicizes that which had previously been considered universal and seeks to universalize that which previously had only a subjective and hypothetical claim to validity. Plessner functionalizes Kant's reflective judgment for modern research into a procedure. But this functionalization could occur in various proportions in reflective judgment. Hence it leads to a conflict between various determinable research procedures. It is in the midst of this conflict (*Widerstreit*), which even for Kant was something more and different than a contradiction (*Widerspruch*), that the new specification of philosophizing takes root. In the second section of this article I will reconstruct Plessner's proposal to understand sciences in the modern sense as a research procedure that makes possible not just the natural sciences but also the cultural and biological sciences and in a certain way the research character of modern socio-cultural endeavors itself. In the third part of this contribution I turn to Plessner's understanding of the specifics of philosophizing from the con-

flict between the functionally variously proportioned research procedures. He holds the philosophical delimitation of this conflict through the preservation of the dignity of persons to be indispensable, even if philosophizing unfolds historically within the difference between this *idea* of philosophizing and the *ideal* of the particular philosophical system. The conflict is kept running by critique, i. e. the discovery of this difference. Finally, in the fourth section of this article I suggest how Plessner adheres to this orientation to the preservation of personal dignity even in his later works through modifications of this ideal.

## 2 The Functionalization of Reflective Judgment for Modern Research Procedures

Plessner's understanding of science accounts for the research character of modern science,<sup>3</sup> which he underlines with the "work concept" in contrast to the "revelation concept of science". Scientific meaning is "made" in contexts of "discovery and invention" according to methodological rules of observation and experiment (UKpU, pp. 13, 19, 25, 75 f., 160). For this purpose, we need a procedure, as Plessner argues throughout, that makes it possible, through a division of functions and their reintegration, to resolve the following circle: those standards we must always already use to make judgments in research can only be generated in research. The procedure must make judgment possible, which explains Plessner's focus on the functional circle of judgment in Kant's mediation of his philosophy under the primacy of the practical. "It is the judgment that connects, in its own transition across the boundary, a certain matter (as subject) with another certain matter (as predicate) synthetically and that goes across the boundary that the concept draws in signifying" (UKpU, p. 106).

Plessner is thinking semiotically here, which can be read in terms of the contemporary "boundary crossing" of Georg Spencer-Brown. Seen semiotically, Plessner understands that which makes judgment possible as the crossing of a boundary. After a conceptual distinction has been described by a technique of representation (and not just named), the side of the distinction on which we now operate is marked. The empirically representative distinction is used from the indicated side. Can this use play a right role in the predication of conceptual terms? This question becomes the task of judgment. Fulfilling this task requires a methodological transition across the representative boundaries that have been

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<sup>3</sup> On the double-aspect of the rationality of research and of representation in the European tradition of rationality see Mittelstraß 1989, pp. 260–266.

drawn into the conceptually demarcated boundaries (Spencer-Brown 1979, pp. 2–5), the crossings of which are connected grammatically depending on their role as subject or predicate of sentences.

Since moreover research involves not just working through known laws or rules but rather revolves around the discovery and invention of the new, Plessner focuses on reflective judgment. In contrast to *determinative* judgment, which subsumes the particular under the given general, *reflective* judgment has to fulfill the following heuristic function: starting from a given contingency, particularity and subjectivity, it seeks the suitable general and objective validity by playing through variations in analogy to a certain purpose, *as if* this purpose were generally and objectively given (in the subjunctive). Reflective judgment thus can only develop a *regulative* meaning in the research *procedures* but no *constitutive* meaning for the *objects* of research (CPJ, §§IV–V, pp. 66–71 [Ak. V, pp. 179–184]).

In the case of aesthetically reflective judgment, feelings of pleasure or displeasure called up by certain phenomena become judgments of taste, which raise a subjectively generalizable claim to agreement in common sense. Although judgments of taste cannot be proven, they can be contested and argued for (CPJ, §20 and §56). They concern the subjective generalization of the possibility of an interplay of functions that would be necessary for objectively generally valid knowledge. Thus aesthetic judgments of taste as a point of departure create the hope that, by reflecting on their conditions of possibility, we can work towards the research task of allowing phenomena to be *represented* intuitively in a certain manner. If we connect aesthetic reflective judgment to the production of the new, then in functional terms this judgment concerns the task of intuitive representation.

In contrast to aesthetic reflective judgment, *teleological* reflective judgment starts not with the task of intuitive representation but rather with the *explanatory task of research*, which can lead all the way to a *technique of production* (CPJ, §78). Particularly in view of self-organizing creatures, as Kant had already described the intuitive phenomenon of living creatures in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the purely mechanical explanatory mode of natural causality is insufficient to do justice to this type of phenomenon in a suitable proportion of the epistemic functions. On the one hand, in a self-organizing living creature there is a reciprocal interaction between cause and effect, which leads to the circle of self-causation and self-effecting. On the other hand, the holistic nature of organisms does not arise from the sum of their parts, just as conversely organs cannot be treated as parts of the organism without the organism as a whole being damaged. In light of these problems we rely on our teleological self-understanding as beings acting purposefully and as ends in ourselves who can use means suited to the conditions for the ends we have set or ends in themselves.

At the same time we are aware that we may not project our own teleology onto nature as a whole or to certain products of nature as particular natural ends (CPJ, §65). The reflection upon the projection of teleology can only serve to fashion hypotheses, hypotheses *as if* self-organizing creatures were a whole beyond the sum of their parts and could set themselves as ends in themselves (in the subjunctive).

The division of functions in the research procedure is expressed, for Plessner, in the distinction between grammatical and logical ways of using language in science. Following Wilhelm von Humboldt he emphasizes “the pragmatic problem of the origin of language, i.e. the conditions of possibility of the phenomenon of language, hence the critical problem of language” (UKpU, p. 107), which he conceives grammatically as the boundary-crossing between subject and predicate. Whereas theoretical judgments belong relationally “to the hypothetical circle” in their logical form, grammatically, i.e. pragmatically, in the research procedure, they have to first proceed through the “modalities of their certainty”, namely whether they can be assumed problematically, assertorically or apodictically: “In the form of relation between subject and predicate other laws hold than in the manner of the certainty with which the statement is made” (UKpU, p. 16). Seem pragmatically, the procedure has to make it possible for the “conditions of demand” that one can impose on others to be “at the same time the conditions of agreement or at least of the corresponding response” (UKpU, p. 33). The traditional grammatical-philosophical approach is transferred by Plessner into a linguistic-pragmatic conception of the distribution of roles in which one can assume responsibility for creating the conditions of demand under the conditions of agreement. In contemporary philosophy Brandom has developed a corresponding normative pragmatism to solve this challenge (Brandom 1994).

As it more closely concerns the formalism of the research that secures the necessary representability of elements in the procedure, Plessner distinguishes between the discursively operational formalism and the formalism of the intuition. “In both cases there is the same underlying liminal relation, only it is assessed as equal in value in according with a procedure [the discursive-operative procedure, HPK], equal in type in the intuition” (UKpU, p. 120). The discursively operative procedure leads in its development to “calculation” and the forms of intuition lead to the “countour” of “drawing”. For the transition between the discursive-operative formalia and the formalia of the intuition, the “mental or also bodily nature of our existence is set into play”: for which however “the conditions of all play are sufficient, i.e. subjectively generally valid, but only from subject to subject, never intersubjective” (Plessner 1981a, p. 123). Hence the reciprocal satisfaction of the “conditions of drawing and calculation” for one another

needs to be brought, in accordance with the “type of analogy”, to an intersubjectively general “agreement between object and logical form” (UKpU, p. 125). This occurs methodologically with a figurative schematization of intuition into perception and the analogizing typification of discourse (UKpU, p. 131). One tries out a reciprocal adaptation of perception and discourse until the interplay that was initially contingent and subjective becomes a methodologically tenable boundary-crossing between the intuitive method of representation and the operative procedure of discourse. In the case of success, which is not guaranteed, the boundary-crossing can be assessed in accordance with its logical form of the theory as *equal in value* and in accordance with the method of representation as *equal in type*.

Plessner’s research conception of science ultimately sees itself agreeing with Kant in that the language of the sciences “has no direct picturing function” but rather has to “explain and make understandable the form and function of the real objects” with a “model”. Hence the attempt at directly picturing the subjectivity of knowledge and theory of knowledge with “introspective self-observation” and “experiential evidence” becomes superfluous: epistemic theory has to ask “how” – despite this “problematic solipsism” as an objection against the claim of “intersubjective objectivity” – “supra-individual objectivity is possible” (UKpU, pp. 30–31).

So far I have emphasized the most important terms in which Plessner conceives the research procedure of modern science. The aesthetic reflective judgment is functionalized for the discovery of phenomena and the invention of methods of representation. The teleological reflective judgment is functionalized to gain hypotheses and explain hypotheses. To generate the interconnection of both research tasks, the phenomenon-related task and the hypothesis-related task, Plessner distinguishes the grammatical use of language from a pragmatic viewpoint and the relationally operative use of language from a logical viewpoint. The correlation between the intuitive formalism and the discursively operative formalism in research is initially done contingently and subjectively, namely according to their interplay depending on the bodily or psychic peculiarity of the researcher involved. This dependence is overcome insofar as the intuitions can be schematized into perception and the discursive operations can be typified until the personal interplay can be represented in terms of the above-mentioned equality in value and type. Hence to make modern research possible all over again we need, seem pragmatically, a procedure that divides functions and integrates them, that regulatively develops reflective judgment until the conditions of demand have become the conditions of intersubjective and inter-individual agreement or at least the corresponding responses.

If modern research can be understood in this way as the functional analogue of reflective judgment, this presents an initial advantage against logical positivism as well as in comparison with the hermeneutic problem of phenomenology. Rather than working himself into a new dualism between the empirical and a transcendental logic, Plessner presents a pragmatic procedural model that relies on capturing the conditions of possibility for assessing the correlation between the discourse and the perception of the phenomenon. This orientation of the procedure functionalizes for the sake of the scientific character of the research as an intersubjective and inter-individual endeavor that remains fallible.

However, we can also imagine the functionalization of the procedure differently, namely through a proportioning of the conditions of possibility of still being able to assess the boundary-crossings but now for the sake of the *individualization* of the comparable. The research procedure then gets proportioned in favor of cultural sciences and arts, which are not less of a procedure but simply a differently assessable procedure in the tendency of its proportions, at least if they proceed in a modern way and are not meant to simply repeat traditional determinations and certainly not compensatory ones. Plessner explicitly refers to the project of a “cultural science” in terms of a comparative research into various historical and contemporary cultures. However, this intercultural comparative research stands in contrast to the introspective self-assessment of a particular individual culture, since it does not open up any indirect procedure that makes a comparison with a third term possible, no matter what proportion of the possibility of comparison it itself makes use of (UKpU, pp. 21, 193, 244 – 245). The comparable meets the incomparable at its boundary, i.e. the indivisible uniqueness of another culture.

We can say, in summary for the question of research procedure characteristic of all cultural areas in modernity, that Plessner, who was familiar with Max Weber, in systematic terms reads Kant’s philosophy as it were back to front, from the third *Critique* with its functionalization of reflective judgment. From the research procedure worked out there, the first and second critiques and the corresponding metaphysics of nature and morals follow as *historicizable* results, namely insofar as reflective judgment was successful and historically held to be determinative judgment. The research procedure of a certain proportioning yields, under historically finite conditions of realization, finite consequences that sediment themselves culturally. Historically the research procedure of the functionalized third *Critique* can then only be set in motion and completed to a limited extent depending on its cultural relevance. Thus for Kant a certain Protestant ethics of conscience and interiority and a certain psychology of the faculties seemed self-evident. Plessner considers both to be private and historical pecu-



liarities that can no longer be universalized publicly and hence that require functional equivalents systematically. That which

was called a faculty in the old-fashioned language of Kant relates in its literal meaning to the psychology of faculties of the time, in its significance it only brings in this entirely problematic constructions in order to find an expression for the relation between the fields, the laws of which are apparent as theoretical, ethical, aesthetic, and the epitome of objects that the concepts relate to (UKpU, p. 207).

For Plessner the point does no longer consist in the faculties, but rather in the achievements for public functions in modern society and culture.

### 3 The Idea of Philosophizing and Its Ideal of Dignity in the Conflict among Research Procedures

With the question of the exact proportion to which a research field should be functionalized for a determinable and conditionable domain in contrast to others we have finally arrived at the question of the specifics of philosophy:

That which serves as a model and gives us the idea of the procedure is at the same time the object that we are to know. In conceiving the possibility of the object (of the exact sciences) we justify at the same time the choice of this scientific method as a model for philosophy. Of course this is a circle, just as every system must demonstrate its coherence to us within a circle (UKpU, 20).

Assuming that philosophy can also take the form of research and thus reformulate the idea of scientific philosophy by defending philosophizing in systematic form, what distinguishes it from research procedures that depend on experience, in particular experimentally observational research procedures?

Such epistemically productive research procedures already presuppose something unconditioned in the form of an *idea* that is developed regulatively into an *ideal* for the procedure and in the procedure, in order to delimit the domain in which it is possible to determine and condition objects according to the idea. The philosophical does not simply arise from the engagement with this or that unconditional of a certain research area presupposed as *its* unconditional in order to be able to indicate the conditions. Rather the philosophical emerges from an unavoidable conflict:



Like Kant we understand antithetics not as the doctrine of some opposite to a doctrine already expressed and justified, but as the conflict of certain items of knowledge among one another for which the same justifying grounds can be advanced, with the significant restriction that this conflict can lie in the essence of arguing reason and is thus unavoidable, if scientific consciousness has uncovered the grounds of this conflict in the logical and epistemological organization of the judgment and its principles (UKpU, p. 152).

Accordingly, philosophy can be described “as the liminal system of all legislations in all domains in consideration of the connections between them, which does not determine any legislations but rather a law-like harmonization among them” (UKpU, p. 228).

If philosophizing concerns the law-like harmonization of the legislations of certain research domains that are in conflict with one another, then we are seeking in philosophizing “an indeterminable concept, i.e. a lawfulness but without law, a regularity but without rule, a purposiveness without purpose” (UKpU, p. 222). Otherwise we would seek to resolve the question of the harmonization in terms of the functional autonomy of a certain research area. But the concern is not with a *contradiction* within a certain research area but with the *conflict* between them. The functional autonomy of a certain research area would not only fail to do justice to the other research areas, but would lead us to the circle of self-application of a single possibility of determining research. Plessner rejects such attempts at resolving philosophizing through positing false absolutes in scientism, aestheticism, legalism, moralism, economicism, historicism, sociology as temptations towards functional ideologization, since they abandon the systematic challenges of philosophizing. On the other hand, Plessner considers Kant’s attempt to find the solution in the *heautonomy* of reason, i.e. in the self-knowledge and self-legislation of reason, to be rather unpersuasive in the context of the problematic discussed above in the first section.

Plessner also turns to reflective judgment for the specification of philosophy, though he rejects *teleologically* reflective judgment as a possible way of delivering an idea to philosophy. It reveals itself to be either just reflective judgment in contrast to determinative judgment or its teleology comes through in such a determined and conditioned manner that it doesn’t figure as an option for the problem of harmonizing conflicting research areas (UKpU, pp. 213–214). Thus Plessner criticizes the “Romantic pride” of the Marburg School, since with their teleological orientation around the concept of the organism they abandon the autonomy of philosophy (UKpU, p. 249). What remains of Kant’s system is solely and anew the aesthetically reflective judgment, with specifically philosophical judgment conceived as a functional analogy to this, since in its manner of functioning it concerns an indeterminable concept, a lawfulness without law, a regularity without rule, a purposiveness without purpose. Of course this doesn’t yet

indicate the “difference between art and philosophy”, since in their historical commonality “both entail heautonomy of reflective judgment” (UKpU, p. 227).

If on our first approach we understand philosophical judgment in analogy to *aesthetically* reflective judgment, this after all makes it possible to prepare the ground for philosophizing. Since philosophy does not lead to a clearly determinable domain like an empirical science, the linguification of the idea necessary for philosophizing cannot occur through a typification of discourse becoming operative. For the same reasons the sensualization of the idea cannot occur demonstratively through a schematization of the intuition into perception. Rather the idea that makes philosophizing possible requires the indirect procedure of its *symbolization*, which Kant had already discussed in his conception of beauty as the symbol of morality (CPJ, §59). For the symbolization of the idea of philosophizing Plessner draws on the significant multivalence of colloquial language for the interpretation of an image.

Plessner proposes, as a point of departure for the sensualization and linguification of the possibility of proportionable interplay of functions, moreover as a point of departure that can be given and described phenomenally, the “image of dignity”: for a “unity without purpose”, thus a formal unity but not subjective, merely received in feeling, rather a unity objectively suited for a clearer representation, the language has the name of “dignity”: Dignity is an “analogue to the [bodily apparent, HPK] attitude in the free but lawlike harmony of all faculties of our being, a harmony only finding itself according to a conceptless rule, hence purposeless” (UKpU, p. 247). In view of the critique of practical reason, Plessner describes the image of dignity as the symbolic possibility that the essence of the human as a whole can harmonize dispositionally with the highest good:

Purposive in the proportion of all parts in the whole (without the whole thereby being the purpose), formal in the purposelessness of the proportion, objective in the assessability of the proportion in appearance [as bodily attitude, HPK], the image of dignity for a human offers the expression of dignified maturity in terms of the determination of the whole of human nature, i.e. in consideration *towards* the highest good (UKpU, p. 248).

This image, or perhaps we should say this symbolic framework for possible concrete images, is not committed to a certain objectual content, which would transform its “expressive purposelessness” into a certain purpose with its means:

For in the appearance of dignity we possess something, even if no schema and no type, but nonetheless something that replaces both for us in a certain sense, but only for an internal clarity, namely a symbol in which we project the type of procedure in the representation of

the sensory appearance of dignity onto the unrepresentable idea of the work of the human in terms of his determination (UKpU, p. 248).

Here this concerns not the determinacy of the human, a determinacy to which we are fixated, but rather what we can make out of this determinacy under certain conditions into our own determination in consequence of our own indeterminacy. The human can live according to the principle of harmony both in the sensual realm of the appearance of all his limbs or also in the mental realm in all his fields of achievement “in the suitability of serving the highest good and the meaning of the world” (UKpU, p. 249).

The symbolism of dignity not only makes philosophizing possible as *idea*, but also makes possible as *ideal* the procedure of orientation in philosophizing, if those philosophizing do not take the symbol of dignity in this or that concrete representation, which of course varies from epoch to epoch, from culture to culture, from one human life to another. “Only that function in which the human in the whole of his existence offers an image and conveys an inner constitution [...] only that function is what we call dignity” (UKpU, p. 273). This *symbolic function* can only become an ideal insofar as we inquire into the *exemplary* connection between the life-conduct of those philosophizing and the systematic form of their philosophizing. The systematic form of philosophizing is unique relative to clearly determinable “domain research” in approaching a “universality” “that lies in the form itself, without being universality in the composition of the objects, which no finite knowledge would ever fulfill” (UKpU, p. 274). The reflective form of judgment involves the boundary transition between determinable research domains, which is contestable in view of dignity. Insofar as the life-historical question of the “whole of all faculties” of those philosophizing can now be taken as an analogue for the systematic form of philosophizing, the symbolic function of dignity functions as the particular “ideal of philosophy” (UKpU, p. 273).

This ideal makes possible for us the specifically philosophical dispute that now also resists the analogy to the work of art. The discourse of art criticism discusses works of art separately from the works and from their authors, without the artists needing to position themselves propaedeutically in the public teachings of the systematic form of boundary transition (UKpU, pp. 216–217, 224, 227, 279–280). The philosophical dispute makes it possible to compare how boundary transitions are lived in various cultures in view of the symbolic function of dignity and as the case may be how they become conscious and are reflected upon. Through this dispute, which thus has a possibility of comparison at its disposal if not a definitive standard, philosophical judgment ends up in a *critique* of philosophical judgment: If the aesthetic reflective judgment makes possible the idea

of philosophizing, then the teleological reflective judgment now makes possible the ideal of a determinable philosophy as system.

For the finitely delimited execution of the *ideal* of a determinable philosophy, and not the undeterminable *idea* of philosophizing, those philosophizing share the following assumption: they proceed *as if* this determinate philosophical system could fulfill the symbolic function of dignity (in the subjunctive). Thus to concretely fill in this systematic form of philosophizing in contrast to other systems of philosophizing, the teleologically reflective judgment comes into play.

That it is a goal of human education to do justice to every form of human dignity and to place them all on an equal footing, each after their own kind, is an idea that is possible on the basis of the thought of the dignity of the human per se as a form of relation to that which is considered the highest good. The strength of the formal consideration is in this fundamental liberalism, since it no possible objection that has its system of reference in materially bound actual-individual dignity [...] can get a handle on it, as it makes all objections possible (UKpU, p. 275).

It is precisely here, in criticism rather than dogmatism, where Plessner is closest to Kant and honors him as the greatest, that he is also the furthest away, namely where it concerns the “critique of philosophizing” itself (UKpU, p. 275). Kant wanted to decide the conflict in advance, not rationally but rationalistically for historical reasons, with the “primacy of the nomothetic form”:

Kant does not break the framework of this criticism itself. [...] The idea of dignity now corresponds to an open system, not a closed one; i.e. the only thing given and demanded is the idea of a proportion of all faculties of the mind under the highest norms and ideals, an architectonic only in function [...] The system is only open in the idea; every actually given system is closed (UKpU, p. 278).

A closed system follows an ideal of philosophy, which is necessary to take a position in the dispute, without which the dispute about judgment would dissolve into the expression of private predilections. But the systematically proceeding ideals of philosophy remain contested at the foundation of philosophizing, i.e. in light of the idea of dignity. They are reopened historically through critique. The historical character of philosophical systems belongs to their symbolic function, namely upholding the dispute, since the critique of a system of philosophy challenges philosophizing in systematic form anew. The historical difference between the idea of philosophizing and the ideal of a systematically determinable philosophy cannot in turn either capture itself within a system or be justified by such a system, rather it must be revealed by critique.

Although Plessner has a great appreciation for Fichte's treatment of the theme of boundary-setting and boundary-crossing (Beaufort 2000, chap. 6), he considered Fichte's romantic idealism to be the worst example of the attempt to flatten the historical difference between the idea of philosophizing and its realization in an ideal of a systematically determined philosophy through systematic deductions. Fichte conceived

the pure I as mere spontaneity without any addition, thus not as a complete given but as a fact-act, i.e. a transition into execution of a determining-determined will. But he didn't draw from this boundary notion of spontaneity the consequence, determined by its essence, of conceiving (understanding) it in the only way appropriate to it as boundary (UKpU, p. 98).

The doings of finite creatures, in contrast to the fact-acts of the absolute, have consequences that take on a life of their own independent of this doing, which is why the task of boundary-crossing arises anew historically. Fichte's "mysticism of daily consciousness" (UKpU, p. 101) does not last eternally.

Thus at the end of Plessner's philosophical critique of judgment we have gained a pragmatic functionalization of reflective judgment, this time for the possibility that is necessary for the specific character of philosophizing itself. If the specific philosophical problem of drawing and crossing boundaries between the various determinate procedures of research arises again, then this is due to a conflict between the procedures in view of the interpretation of an idea. In the case of philosophy this idea is the symbolism of dignity, which one – on the one hand – has to remain free of every determinate positive interpretation, on the other hand offers us, in a formal sense, the task of determination if this symbolism is to orient us at all. The pragmatic functionalization of the aesthetic reflective judgment makes it possible to outline a determinable framework of possible images for the idea of dignity – for its sensory form. This categorical interpretation is in turn made possible by the heuristic subjunctive of the teleologically reflective judgment. This symbolically indirect manner is the way that not just the conflict between the research procedures is carried out by through philosophizing, but also between the various philosophical systems themselves, namely *as if* they could fulfill their ideal and thus the idea of philosophizing. The reciprocal critique of philosophical systems opens up once more for the future the ideal of philosophizing – in contrast to its exemplary ideals.

If we understand "transcendental" classically, with Kant, to mean the reconstruction of the conditions of possibility of experience in terms of physical science, then neo-Kantianism has already expanded this question of possibility to include the experiences of the biological and cultural sciences and the humanities. Plessner reaches a further understanding of this expansion to all pos-

sible procedures of research, which through technology and art could also affect other non-scientific endeavors. Above all however his way of reconstructing the structures of possibility is directed at the future in the pragmatic sense. Thus this work from 1920 could be called a *transcendental-pragmatic* investigation, which will later develop into a *quasi-transcendental* reconstruction of life experiences (Krüger 2001). *Pragmatic* here means the integrative interaction of sensory conditions of intuition with conditions of conceptual interpretation against the division of both types of condition. Pragmatic does not mean any subordination to specific purposes for which we then only seek the suitable means. The conflict between the procedures of research only arises in view of the idea of dignity, a free purposelessness that can understand itself as an end in itself in order to critically delimit certain means-end relations.

## 4 Prospective of Plessner's Later Reformulations of the Philosophical Orientation around the Dignity of Persons

This article is to conclude with a prospective look at how Plessner articulates his philosophical orientation around the dignity of the human – an orientation gained through his engagement with Kant – in his later life-work. If for Plessner modern philosophizing remains bound to preserving the dignity of persons, what does the development of this symbolic idea mean for his ideal in social philosophy? He answered this question four years later in his 1924 book *The Limits of Community: A Critique of Social Radicalism* (Plessner 1999), in which he addressed his fellow humans as persons. He also continued to adhere to this in his primary natural-philosophical work *The Levels of Organic Life and the Human: An Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology* from 1928 (Plessner 2019, pp. 20 – 21, p. 32).

Addressing the human as person has historically meant, first of all, not limiting the human to only being a cospecific or an ethnic or class comrade. Germany at the time was dominated by communitarian ideologies that reduced the individual human to fulfilling the task to which he or she was born by way of familial community and to which he or she had been raised by a vocational community. These necessary communal forms were then projected onto the whole of society through a false ideological generalization by practicing racial affiliation (National Socialism) or social class affiliation (Bolshevism) as the all-decisive criterion for the particular totalitarian movement (Plessner 1999, p. 85). In contrast, addressing humans as persons means acknowledging the legal status

that makes possible their freedom not to be reduced for the whole duration of their life to their social or allegedly biological heritage. The legal institution of personality leads by way of communal affiliations and beyond into a civilizing “public sphere”, i.e. “an open system of interaction between persons who are unattached to each other” (Plessner 1999, p. 149). In society – relative to their communal bonds – they are other and foreign to one another and can remain other and foreign without needing to assimilate to a certain community, who can also form new socio-cultural relations of economic, cultural and political exchange. “Society lives solely from the spirit of play” (Plessner 1999, p. 146). Societal interactions can be stabilized (in contrast to pure violence or avoidance) to the degree that they fulfill the functional values of specific spheres of interaction such as politics, economics and civilization (Plessner 1999, p. 149 f.). “All relations in the public sphere are founded on the principle of reciprocity” (Plessner 1999, p. 157).

This contrast between communal and societal forms requires a modern form of solution, which Plessner conceives as the procedure of separation of powers that draws a civilizational lesson from the external and internal wars of world history. Each human as person is accorded the basic rights of Western constitutional history. The state is “not a substance” but a “procedure” that balances the claims of communal forms and societal forms against one another (Plessner 1999, p. 174). The “method of balance” consists in “law”: “On the imaginary cut between the circle of community and society lies law [*Recht*] as the unity of legislation and the dispensation of justice – a unity eternally in the process of change” (Plessner 1999, p. 175).

The fundamental problem of social philosophy, namely whether in Western modernity the communal forms can and must claim priority over the societal forms or vice versa, is by now very familiar to us from the Anglo-American discussion of the last half-century. The primacy of the community has been championed under the heading of communitarianism and the primacy of society under the heading of liberalism. If we wished to update Plessner’s position for this discussion, we would have to call his method of a balance won through legal history a communitarian liberalism of the institution of basic personal rights. But that which distinguishes Plessner’s justification for the balance between communal and societal forms is his understanding of the “indivisibility” and “uniqueness” of the person, i.e. their “individuality”. It is only the balance struck between community and society that makes the individualization of the person possible, since the individualization of the person before themselves and others is not to be confused with their physical “individuation” in their organism (Plessner 1999, p. 107.). The human does not somehow grow into a human by himself, whether as an organism in the outer world or as a soul in the inner world. His



individuality is not given as a property of a thing, rather he has to “take upon himself the fate of individualization” (Plessner 1999, p. 106). For this, to arrive at himself, the human needs the detour by way of the forms of community and society from which he can come to himself. Thus we should also not confuse the individuality of persons with their unambiguity, for individualization of a person in her life-historical process can only be understood on the basis of her “ontological ambiguity”:

The dual character of psychological being pushes towards and, at the same time, pushes away from being fixed and determined. We want ourselves to be seen and to have been seen as we are; and we want just as much to veil ourselves and remain unknown, for behind every determination of our being lies dormant the unspoken possibility of being different. Out of this ontological ambiguity arises with iron necessity the two fundamental forces of psychological [*Seelischen*] life: the impetus to disclosure – the need for validity; and the impetus to restraint – the need for modesty (Plessner 1999, p. 109).

Rather than fixating humans to their positive characteristics and thus taking away their freedom to change themselves, what we require are social forms in which our future “potentiality”, which always exceeds the “actuality” achieved here and now (Plessner 1999, p. 111), can be preserved. The personal life-form is fragile, since it imposes on its members the task of interweaving their *physis* and *psyche*, their body and soul, under the “idea of a harmony”. This worthwhile idea is that of dignity, measured against which the insufficiency of the here and now emerges. “Dignity concerns at all times the person taken in his entirety – the unity of what lies inside and outside” (Plessner 1999, p. 123). But one has to be able to perform this oneself before the others and be able to give others the latitude for their own performance before oneself. This is not possible so long as we are moving within the circle of honor of merely confirming “the purity of his character” and his “sincerity” alone or with like-minded others (Plessner 1999, p. 123). Only through the detour of play-acting *in* and *with* communal and societal roles for persons can one come to oneself as an individual. Without this path of comparison with the comparable and incomparable no-one could understand and experience to what extent they themselves and others can be indivisible and unique (Krüger 1999).

The Western basic values of persons seem retroactively to be the result of a much longer civilizational history in which “ceremony and prestige” (Plessner 1999, p. 129) and “diplomacy and tact” (Plessner 1999, p. 148) can first be developed in order to find a way out of the history of violence. Since Roman antiquity *persona* has had both meanings, on the one hand the legal institution of free persons, on the other hand the civilized status of achieving esteem through the public performance of role-masks. In this civilizational history the status of person



was limited to the upper layers, but it was nonetheless possible for the utopian potentials of the universalization of personality to all humans to be formed here (Plessner 1999, pp. 145–153, 161f.) To be able to develop the value of individuality before oneself and others we need, as a structural condition of possibility, according to Plessner, the doubling of the person into a private and a public person before other persons in the *co-world* (*Mitwelt*). Only the co-world shared intellectually by persons makes possible the concrete experience of being able to say I, you, he/she/it and we to and about one another “by means of the first, second, third person” in the “singular and plural” (Plessner 2019, pp. 279f., 282f.).<sup>4</sup>

Systematically Plessner maintains the value in itself of human individuality by liberating it from the dualism of needing to occur either in the *outer world* as a property of the organism or in the *inner world* as a property of the soul. The value in itself of individuality is conceived as the life-historical task of individualizing personality in the co-world. This also avoids the one-sided confinement of individuality to the introspection of the inner world and its equally one-sided confinement to natural-scientific observation of the outer world (Plessner 2019, pp. 43–46, 62–66). We no longer face the false dichotomy of needing to bring about either individualization through atomization or else socialization through collectivization. Rather the task of individualizing personality obtains on the one hand “horizontally” in the relations between persons, i.e. in *inter*-personal relations, and on the other hand “vertically” (Plessner 2019, pp. 28f., 32) in the relation of personality to lived and physical bodies, i.e. in the *intra*-personal relations.

Since the person is situated outside her organism in relations to other persons, she can form a doubled relation to her organism (Plessner 2019, p. 272). She can use it on the one hand as an instrument or medium, which Plessner terms “having a physical body”, in which the physical body can be exchanged, replaced or represented by other physical bodies. On the other hand, in her living execution the person is also one with her organism, which Plessner calls “being a lived body”, in which her organism is irreplaceable, inexchangeable and unrepresentable for her, as exemplified by unfeigned laughing and crying (Plessner 1982, pp. 238–241). Thus for Plessner persons are not atomized instances of self-consciousness, but rather relata of such horizontal and vertical relations, without which they would not be able to exist or to be understood. We grow into this historically coalesced distinctions and thus consider them to be natural, although they result from a world-historical process of mediations, which is why

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4 For an interpretation of this, see Krüger 2017, pp. 188–189, 213–223.

we encounter them here and now as “mediated immediacy” (Plessner 2019, pp. 298–316).<sup>5</sup>

In his 1931 book *Political Anthropology (Macht und menschliche Natur. Ein Versuch zur Anthropologie der geschichtlichen Weltansicht*, Plessner 2018), Plessner articulated the principle of dignity in view of the humanities in the form of the principle of the open question, or – which means the same – the principle of the unfathomability of personal life. This involved explicating that potential that since Dilthey has been known as the hermeneutic task of understanding in contrast to explanation and that Georg Misch systematized according to the principle of unfathomability. This concerns the understanding of phenomena “that pronounce and testify to themselves” (Plessner 2018, p. 173). They themselves testify how they understand conducting themselves towards their own conduct by expressing themselves and speaking, engaging with the expression of others and allowing themselves to be addressed by them. The humanities as sciences cannot dispense with a “guarantee of answerability” of their questions in the sense that their questions have to be formulated so as to be “reasonable” and “allows for decisions”. However, they must dispense with a guarantee of “being answered” through experiment and measurement:

Its objects cannot be regarded as phenomena, i.e., variables that are exhausted by determining points in space and time. The impossibility of freely disposing of its objects (as in an experiment) and the non-measurability of their nonspatial and nontemporal consistency, however, are positively counterbalanced by their immediate accessibility or comprehensibility. The objects of the humanities express themselves and lend themselves to meaning something to those concerned with them (Plessner 2018, p. 43).

Compared with the natural-scientific guarantee of answer, the questions of the humanities are “open questions”:

To be sure, insofar as the degree of certainty of its decision is concerned, an open question is inferior to the formally closed question asked by a scientist. Yet instead it aims into the matter itself rather than aiming at the rule according to which a thing can be unambiguously determined (Plessner 2018, p. 43).

The temporality of personal life requires attempts to answer the questionability of this life through attributions. “The delimitation of the spheres of what is mine, yours, ours, everyone’s operated in being able to say I and You and We is already an *attribution*. It does not yet have an explicitly juridical character but it does necessitate a legal organization of life in all its manifestations” (Plessner 2018,

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<sup>5</sup> For an interpretation of this, see Krüger 2017, pp. 195–208.

p. 59) Attributions generally are to be expected in treating the theme of personal life, but in contrast to the modern Western focus on the I as the center of all attributions, Plessner emphasizes the You, We, and One as equal possible modes of attribution (Plessner 2018, p. 209). But even this expansion of perspective to an “interlocking of perspectives in the with-one-another and the against-one-another” (Plessner 2018, p. 56) is not enough for Plessner in view of the those cultural-historically foreign to the West: it is

to be left to the human – and to be learned from him without coercion what he is and how he interprets himself, whether he sets the essence of his existence in his existence or in another human, in an animal or a plant, a star or the Earth, a God or the elements. The breadth of the vision achieved by the West requires relativizing one’s own position against other positions. The means and the discovery of this is the concept of the human, and of essentially all formal or formalizable categories such as life, culture, world. One’s own position must remain conscious of its relativity if it is to avoid the danger, in the equal possibility of understanding and interpreting other positions, of homogenizing that which is foreign according to the contours of one’s own essence (Plessner 2018, p. 159).

If we take the manner of questioning in the humanities seriously, we have to acknowledge that the answerability of these questions depends on the answer given by the one being questioned, by making them answerable for the “criterion of the correctness” of statements of essence (Plessner 2018, p. 53). But then the manner of questioning in the humanities consists in making possible a shared historical process in the future between questioning and answering persons. Establishing an epistemic practice in the humanities cannot be separated from the political aspect that makes a common historical process possible in the future. Hence for Plessner the humanistic manner of questioning into the historically achieved and historically changeable grounds of understanding of the future is connected with the political project of a plural and democratic Europe.

In renouncing the supremacy of its own system of values and categories, the European mind opens its horizon onto the originary diversity of historically developed cultures and their world aspects as a diversity that is open, unlimited, not bound intentionally by any kind of ‘world spirit.’ The universality of its perspective requires that the world aspect of this very universality, too, no longer be posited as absolute. Achieved at a late date, historical relativization finally becomes conscious of its own relativity and, after a period of historicist despair, learns to understand this relativity as the condition of genuine objectivity (Plessner 2018, p. 48).

The future gained in this renunciation of hegemony of the prior Western self-understanding is conceived in terms of a pluralist democracy as a new world-framework that entails the political reference of Plessner’s philosophical anthropology: “For the concept of the human is nothing but the “means” by which and

in which the reference back to a creative basis of life executes the value- democratic equalization of all cultures” (Plessner 2018, p. 47). However, Europe, as we know, ended up taking the path, not of democratic values, but of total politicization in the form of Stalinist, fascist and National Socialist dictatorships, which Plessner noted as a real possibility in 1931 by reference to Carl Schmitt (Plessner 2018, pp. 5 f., 54 f.). Whether Europe can continue to extend the project of a plural democracy begun in 1989–1992 is to be hoped in view of the pressure from other centers of a multipolar world order. World history structurally stands once more before this spectrum of possibilities of answering this challenge, ranging from the democracy of social welfare states, in which within the framework of basic constitutional values a plurality of values can be lived, leaving the question of the human open, to new dictatorships that ideologically close the question of the human. In his later work in the 1960s and beyond Plessner still continued to defend openness and criticize the ideological closure of this question (Plessner 1983a). The symbolism of dignity was preserved under the heading of *homo absconditus* (Plessner 1983b), i.e. in the principle of the unfathomability of the human (Krüger 2019).

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Tom Huhn

# Disinterest and an Overabundance of Subjectivity

Theodor W. Adorno on Kant's Third *Critique*

## 1

Theodor Adorno's (1903–1969) writings and published lectures on aesthetics offer a prime opportunity to consider how Kant's aesthetics fare in the twentieth century, and perhaps still more importantly, reveal how early in the nineteenth century Hegel had already taken up and re-worked the Kantian legacy. Adorno, an avowed Hegelian in this regard, continued to work through Hegel's philosophy of art, especially having granted it the status of a proper dialectical response to Kant.<sup>1</sup> What I hope to trace in the present essay is the persistence of Kantian aesthetics in the two most forceful and elaborate attempts – Hegel and Adorno's – to somehow get past just that.

Let us begin with disinterest, the first and most prominent of Kant's four elements of aesthetic judgment (CPI, §§1–5, pp. 89–96 [Ak. V, pp. 203–212]). Disinterest is a mode of disavowal, of the *subject* of aesthetic experience disavowing, by identifying and then separating off from itself, that which seems to embody the most personal share of experience. We might regard this disavowal as a movement *toward* super-subjectivity, not in the sense of a super-sized, super-empowered subjectivity, but rather the act of the subject attempting to disown a feature of itself, and then install in its place a refined subject. This *über*-subjectivity would reside above whatever in it remains complicit with an interest in its own objectivity. As Kant might have it: disinterest moves to overcome the insufficiently subjective faculties of sensuousness and the understanding. The other side of the aesthetic coin of disinterest, so to speak, is the apparent retreat of the personal share in the supposed timelessness of the masterpiece, of the classical, in sum, of beauty, whose existence likewise marks the denial of the time-bound nature of the subject and its experience. Still, the question, and

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<sup>1</sup> There is no better place to appreciate Adorno's deep affinity with Hegel than in the former's *Hegel: Three Studies* (Adorno 1993), and, for the focus of this essay on the question of the dynamic character of the experience of the work of art, the second of the three studies, titled "The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy", is most helpful.

the quest, to do justice and to pay homage to that which is at once both subjective and more than subjective, is nonetheless addressed equally by Kantian disinterest, by the Hegelian sensuous appearance of the idea, as well as by Adorno's objectivity of beauty.

Adorno locates Hegel's primary assault on Kantian aesthetics as directed against what Kant formulates as the objectivity of subjective affect. Or put differently: Hegel and Adorno's dispute with Kant has to do with precisely where to locate – within subjectivity – what remains of objectivity. However, to put it this way, to imagine objectivity within the subject – and indeed as a matter of residue – is to mis-identify the dynamic, generative character of objectivity, which is much closer to Adorno's conception of it. Adorno further sees Hegel as insisting just here – in response to subjective affect – on the objectivity of beauty, the notion that beauty truly resides within the object, or better: the object transformed, and as Hegel has it, baptized by subjectivity (Hegel 1975, 1, p. 29). And yet, arguments regarding the objectivity of beauty are not Adorno's main concern; it is rather that the objectivity of beauty is a gateway to the objectivity of subjective experience. The key difference is that Hegel and Adorno do not argue for the objectivity of subjective response, as if feeling might somehow be made objective. Rather than the all-too-Kantian universalization of subjective affect, they would prefer the objectivity that *addresses* subjective responsiveness and capacity. The objectivity, we might also say, that *resists* subjectivity, not by positioning itself as an external adversary, but rather by installing itself between the pores of subjectivity, perhaps akin to a homeopathic inoculation.

There is something scandalous about aesthetic pleasure, measurable even in the minutest portion of the classical music concert-goer's tapping of the foot. Pleasure, even or especially in the aesthetic, is something Adorno claims we have historically become "increasingly allergic" to (Adorno 2018, p. 133). Grant that we are increasingly aware of the extent to which our pleasures have become a means by which we have been put under the agendas of others. There is no constancy over historical periods in regard to the ratio of subjectivity in objectivity and vice-versa, and indeed no necessary timelessness to any feature of subjectivity, except perhaps its capacity to develop as well as to shed each and every capacity. Perhaps it is the fate of nearly every human capacity to imagine itself as the final one, and thereby complete the historical journey of the species. And yet, there might well be a certain constancy in regard to human intelligence, even if only in the sense that consciousness continues to exist and to bear the

premier mark of what brought it into existence: its *resistance* to sensuousness.<sup>2</sup> Consciousness resists in its attempt to gain a purchase on sensuousness: consciousness arises as no mere disavowal of sensuousness but of course also its fulfillment, a sensuousness that might know itself as such, and in this very knowledge thereby become something else again. This knowing had to proceed necessarily at some distance from the phenomenon of sensuousness itself. In that regard consciousness resisted the comprehensiveness of the sensuous. Kant's prejudice was to take what was a historically specific feature, indeed a capacity of subjectivity – the sentiment described as aesthetic pleasure – and make it universal and timeless, at least for those deemed civilized. Even though subjectivity had the ability to develop this capacity, it need not thereby become a permanent feature of human experience.

As Adorno outlines the situation in the opening remarks of his 1958–1959 lecture course on aesthetics, Kant's "transcendental subjectivism" is precisely what stood in the way of formulating the experience of beauty as anything other than something which takes place *between* subjects and the object deemed beautiful (Adorno 2018, p. 2). This orientation thus precludes the possibility of beauty ever attaining the status – and indeed the location – of something in the "matter" itself. Still more problematic is the concomitant conclusion that beauty then has no *autonomy* from the subjects who might have occasion to experience it. By Kant deeming it always and only relational, beauty thereby also loses any chance at historical specificity. Further, what Adorno takes as Kant's evidence for the unavoidability of the *relation* to subjectivity is not simply the central role of disinterest but still worse, it includes as well disinterested *pleasure*. The supposed necessity of pleasure in aesthetic experience, albeit disinterested, is what dooms Kantian aesthetics for Adorno, who asks the ad hominem question whether pleasure still accompanies all one's aesthetic experiences. For Kant, aesthetic pleasure – and this is even more obvious in the case of the sublime – is the pleasure subjectivity takes in superseding its own limits. And yet each capacity the human species develops, by overcoming whatever appears in us as limited, is not accompanied by pleasure. Aesthetic *pleasure*, in other words, is for Adorno a historically specific feature of aesthetic experience.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This might well be a place to think about the historically changing fortunes of those artistic movements that considered themselves as having a privileged access to reality.

<sup>3</sup> Shades here of Hegel's famous dismissal of natural beauty, which is to say of beauty as a phenomenon that transcends human capacity.



## 2

Aesthetic experience for Hegel and Adorno is a historically dynamic phenomenon, one that changes with the transformations not only of subjects and objects, but perhaps still more importantly, changes with the historical flux in the very *relations* between the two. Though the subjective and objective might well unavoidably co-determine one another, this does not mean that the objective is somehow thereby less itself, less objective. This, for Adorno, was one of the key insights of Hegel, not only that things change historically but that the *relations* between things alters even while these same relations help determine how each comes to be what it is and what it will further become.

The artwork, or rather the experience of the work of art, is a kind of seismograph measuring, or at least recording, and eliciting an image of, the alteration in the very midst of the alteration. And the seismographic means and measures of art itself changes, so that now one feature of objectivity within the subject, and now another, come to the fore; it's as if the stature and indeed status of objectivity – not to mention subjectivity – is itself fleeting. Hence the artwork's objectivity, even if only for subjectivity. Kant's having yoked pleasure to the aesthetic as an unavoidable element of this experience snatched, for Adorno, what was a historical component of aesthetic experience and attempted to make it ahistorical and absolute, and thereby hold static what even Kant acknowledges is essentially fleeting.

For Adorno it seems there are no absolute features of human experience, and yet, there are moments of genuine objectivity. The inexorability of pleasure, so to speak, in aesthetic experience, might thus be read dialectically as the attempt by Kant to achieve a kind of objectivity of aesthetic experience by lending it something deeply, emphatically subjective. So too then the *disinterested* character of aesthetic pleasure was still more evidence in favor of the pleasure not belonging entirely to the subject itself. Disinterest is also then, dialectically, Kant's strategy for employing a potential detachability of pleasure from subjectivity. Kant's most obvious attempt at the 'objectivity' of disinterested aesthetic pleasure lay of course in his formulation of aesthetic judgment as the single case of subjective universality.

And yet Adorno here is not entirely fair in his criticism of Kant, when for example in his lectures he describes disinterested pleasure as Kant thinking of the mere effects on subjects (Adorno 2018, p. 4). More fair would be to acknowledge that Kantian aesthetic disinterested pleasure is a pleasure of subjectivity and not just of this or that subject. Kant might well respond to Adorno's criticism that the very distinction that allowed the composition of the *Critique of the Power of Judg-*

ment, that between determinant and reflective judgment, was just an acknowledgment of the peculiar character of necessity that resides in aesthetic pleasure. Kant thus points his account of subjective experience in a direction away from a wholly determined subjectivity.

Hegel continues in this same direction by moving still farther from that feature of subjectivity that is pre-eminently the mark and defining capacity of subjectivity: consciousness. For Hegel, art's objectivity comes in large measure from its successful skirting, even if only briefly, that thing which is most subjective: consciousness. This returns us to resistance, a key term for Adorno's account of Hegel's formulation of dialectical becoming. In this light consciousness is at once both the fulfillment of sensuousness as well as the most emphatic resistance to it. Forget for a moment whatever content consciousness might come to have, and consider instead what it arises in opposition to. Hegel's dialectical account has it that the saturatedness of sensuousness in the end is even too much for sensuousness itself. It is as if sensuousness, when it is the entirety of what and how we are in the world, is no longer a mere faculty or capacity. Rather, it is a state of being, and, as such, cannot be pointed – cannot point itself – in one direction or another as a capacity of something *else*, a subject let us say. It is not merely the feeling or experience of something like the oceanic, it is instead itself the ocean: a capacity inseparable from the creature in which it is anchored. How might it then come to be not the whole of a being but rather only a particular expression of a being? Hegel's answer is that a faculty comes into existence by dint of its opposition to some other ability, its otherness to what is already the case. Some capacity becomes a faculty rather than the whole of being only when it dirempts itself from the capacity – we might say: when it *disavows* itself as only capacity. Hence consciousness has its true import not in any content it might later come to have but in the *direction* of its genesis away from and against what is already the case. Thus consciousness, famously, is the determinate negation of sensuousness. *À la* Kant we might say consciousness disavows sensuousness and thereby achieves a certain disinterest in regard to it.

And yet, so too consciousness, in its own further development, also inherits and continues the very motion which brought it into existence in opposition to sensuousness. Just as sensuousness, we might say, carried its negation within itself, so too does consciousness, regardless whatever else it might become, also continue the motion that brought it into being. Consciousness is not a full stop, but only always a respite during the long unfolding momentum that brought it into existence and that will likewise carry it on and beyond. The dialectic of motion and rest is mimetically re-enacted within consciousness itself between its endless flow and the stutters we call ideas.

Throughout the long history of consciousness, it too has prolonged itself by maintaining, reinvesting even, in its constitutional opposition to sensuousness. Consciousness mimetically re-enacts the force of its coming into existence by practicing its opposedness within in its own borders; one name for this conscious opposition to self is resistance. And just here we might better understand Adorno's complaint regarding the centrality of subjective affect in Kant's aesthetics, for this Kantian insistence misses the *objectivity* of resistance within subjective consciousness. Adorno's fervent embrace of Hegelianism, or at least in just this regard, is due to the acknowledgment that Hegel saw the resistance to consciousness residing within the aesthetic lodged precisely in the aesthetic matter itself, and not merely registered by subjective affect, as Kant might have it in the fleeting moments of disinterest. Curiously then, Adorno's interpretation of Hegel lands him in what can only appear as a kind of pre-Enlightenment, empiricist commitment to the objectivity of beauty. Adorno was doubtless well aware of the anomaly of this position and explained it as a feature of the dialectical nature of beauty, that beauty might have become once again something objective.<sup>4</sup> More broadly even, we might surmise that art's continuing allegiance to some feature or another of sensuousness – Hegel of course provides the pre-eminent acknowledgment that all art is inescapably sensuous – is already testament to the ongoing resistance of, and to, consciousness. Art, we might say, or rather especially modernist art, is the witness mutely testifying against the ideology and hegemony of consciousness.

### 3

Adorno explained that Kant's definition of beauty lost much of its "plausibility" because of the very "precondition" of Kant's philosophical commitment to a transcendental subjectivity. And with this entanglement of the problem of beauty in the very constitution of a transcendental subjectivity, Kant thereby sweeps together the problems of aesthetics with those of philosophy *überhaupt* (Adorno 2018, p. 3). For Adorno, who better than Hegel to take up what Kant inaugurated as the philosophical problem of the embeddedness of the aesthetic in the whole complex of subjective coming-into-existence. The crucial Hegelian formulation for Adorno, of this entanglement of the sensuous with what is more than sensu-

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<sup>4</sup> It is of course tempting to wonder if the anti-intellectualism that periodically resurfaces in art might not be evidence of the ongoing resistance – even within conscious efforts – to consciousness.

ousness, is then the specification of beauty as “the sensuous appearance of the Idea”. By extension then, beauty, Adorno contends, is not a formal thing, “or merely a subjective thing, but rather something in the matter itself” (Adorno 2018, pp. 3–4). Adorno orients his lecture course on aesthetics as follows: “that objectivity of the aesthetic which I assume will occupy us here can result as objectivity only from an analysis of the facts, problems and structures of aesthetic objects – that is to say, the works of art” (Adorno 2018, p. 4). This is hardly controversial as commentators readily accept Hegel’s specification in his own lectures on aesthetics that they ought to be more rightly considered a philosophy of art.

Still, Adorno’s further comments in his introductory lecture indicate that his own objection to Kant’s orientation had as much to do with what Adorno calls its formality as it did with its subjective focus. This formality might well prove to be for Adorno the still larger stumbling block as it indicates the stiff rigidity of Kantian aesthetics, and what thereby disallowed Kant from identifying what was for Hegel and Adorno the consummately historical nature of art and thus the aesthetic, including precisely aesthetic experience. It’s as if, from Adorno’s position, Kant was too readily seduced by beauty’s own formal self-presentation, by the very phenomenon of beauty presenting itself as something situated above, and more permanent than, the mere flux of experience. There is however, to be noted in Kantian disinterest, a moment of resistance to this seduction by the formality of beauty in its claim to be more than it appears to be. Adorno might well comment that disinterest did not quite register resistance enough, for he locates resistance as central to the direction and force of the aesthetic: “Art, then, cannot simply be subsumed under the concepts of reason or rationality but is, rather, this rationality itself, only in the form of its otherness, in the form – if you will – of a particular *resistance* against it” (Adorno 2018, p. 9; emphasis added). Art, in other words, is not absolute otherness – whatever that might mean – but rather the resistance within rationality to its own claim to completeness and sovereignty. Resistance, put differently, is the form that the otherness inherent to rationality takes in the realm of the aesthetic. Returning to sensuousness, and even with the “sensuous appearance of the Idea” in mind, we might once again note that the character of sensuousness in the aesthetic is not the return of sensuousness per se but rather it takes place as a form of otherness to what is conscious in art. The return to “something in the

matter itself” is thus a return to the correlate of sensuousness in and by consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

Adorno returns, near the end of his course of lectures on aesthetics, to the debt he felt was owed Hegel in the latter’s critique of Kant, and so too especially to the supposed foundation of the aesthetic in subjective affect. But Adorno now expands his description by naming the scope of Hegel’s re-orientation from subjective to objective aesthetics as the critique of taste. Here then we find an interesting correlation, and indeed correspondence between what Adorno terms the ephemerality of taste and what he describes as the surface of the work of art. So then, just as art presents itself initially as surface and appearance, taste – subjective affect – thereby becomes the subjective correlate of the superficial appearance of the art object. Appearance and taste: one the surface of the work of art, as it were, corresponds to the other, the surface of the subject.

Hence for Adorno’s reading of Hegel, the transitoriness of taste aligns with the superficial aspect of the work of art. Both features share the character of being unfixed, unanchored in their respective hosts. The work of art is something more than its appearance, just as the subject is something more than its fleeting responses.

Recall that for Kant beauty, be it natural or artistic, is but the “occasion” for aesthetic judgment. Recall too that Kant was even at pains to somehow account for the superficiality of the aesthetic object (be it nature or art) in contrast to the bound, indeed necessary, character of aesthetic response (CPJ, §VII, p. 76 [Ak. V, p. 190]). This led him to position aesthetic judgment as somehow occurring prior to the appearance that served as its occasion. Put differently: there is no single feature of an object of natural or artistic beauty that might correspond to the necessity and universality within subjective affect. Kant’s ingenious solution, if you will, was to counterpose the fecklessness of objects of perception by likewise withdrawing from subjectivity the premise that it has any particular faculty or location of aesthetic judgment. Kant instead formulates aesthetic judgment as the product not of this or that component of subjectivity but of what we might call the systematicity of the subject; it resides nowhere in subjectivity, mimetically akin to the absence of beauty in the object. This is explicitly explained by Kant as the famous harmony of the faculties (CPJ, §VII, p. 77 [Ak. V, p. 191]).

Aesthetic judgment occurs in no single subjective faculty but is rather the expression of the whole unity of subjectivity. Returning in this light to taste, we might now better appreciate Adorno’s characterization of taste as an attempt,

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<sup>5</sup> Hence the work of art is a puzzle and conundrum for Adorno, and requires that consciousness take up the question and the problem of its truth content (Adorno 1997, pp. 118–136).

within subjective affect, to lend it some systematic tone. Any doctrine of taste, in other words, presumes there is some formal structure and consistency underlying the ephemerality and will-o'-the-wisp phenomena of taste. This is what leads Adorno in turn to liken taste to style. Style, we might say, is the systemization of certain features of appearance. It is for Adorno the correlate in the world of art objects (or fashion for that matter) to the standardizing of subjective affect that is denominated by taste.

## 4

Kant's subjectivist position in aesthetics is far from anomalous; it is more like that point of view's most systematic and robust expression. Adorno points out that the first, classical formulation of subjectivist aesthetics, and one that remains a salient touchstone, is Aristotle's proclamation in his *Poetics* that the purpose of tragedy is to evoke fear and pity. In short, the premise of the *Poetics* is that the *telos* of art is to arouse subjective affect. Adorno's rejoinder to this whole tendency is buttressed by a key passage in Hegel's *Aesthetics* detailing the limitations of any subject-oriented aesthetics:

But it remains ever the case that every man apprehends works of art or characters, actions, and events according to the measure of his insight and his feelings; and since the development of taste only touched on what was external and meager, and besides took its prescriptions likewise from only a narrow range of works of art and a limited training of the intellect and the feelings, its scope was unsatisfactory and incapable of grasping the inner meaning and truth of art and sharpening the eye for detecting these things (Adorno 2018, p. 168).

Taste, in other words, is not only inadequate to measure the meaning and truth of the artwork, so too is taste's very foundation – in the arbitrary and limited responsiveness of subjects – the ultimate disqualification for any attempt by taste alone to penetrate whatever is objective in the work of art. Note especially in the passage above that Hegel is not complaining about the artwork's “external and meager” aspects, but rather his critique is aimed at the orientation of subjective *taste* toward the work of art.

Taste is precisely the wrong capacity to encounter the “meaning and truth” of art. Taste's singular and constitutive inability is to orient itself beyond what is superficial in the work of art. Taste, put differently, is the subject aiming its own capacities toward the object, whereas Hegel and Adorno recognize the work of art as already aimed *against* the subject. In this light we might understand taste as the defensive posture of the subject against just those objects that con-

stitute a threat to the fragility of subjective capacity. The obvious rejoinder here is to point out that it is just the *refinement* of taste that seeks to deepen subjective responsiveness beyond all that is superficial and ‘meager’ in the work of art. Adorno addresses as follows how taste might come to refine itself into a less superficial experience of the artwork:

human beings, for whom, in the world of today, the concept of taste is central in aesthetic matters, are what, in a derogatory sense, I would call ‘refined’, in the same way one might find embodied in a particular type of book-collector. These are generally people who essentially experience education – what one calls education – in terms of property, for whom education amounts to an accumulation of possessions, for whom the bourgeois concept of property continues into matters of the spirit [...] (Adorno 2018, pp. 169–170).

On first blush this seems a somewhat shocking formulation, that refinement might amount to – however spiritual – an attainment, to be sure, but perhaps what is attained is possessed as a kind of property or belonging. Consider in this light C.B. Macpherson’s well-known theory of possessive individualism, in which, following Hobbes, the individual comes to be conceived – and perhaps more importantly takes hold of herself – as a proprietor and property owner of her skills and attributes (Macpherson 1962). Taste, about whose refinement we are currently concerned, is grounded in the unassailable assumption that one’s taste is wholly one’s *own*, regardless how much or little it conforms to that of others. Indeed, the distinction between natural and acquired taste relies squarely on the notion that acquired taste (note the property connotations of the term acquired) not only belongs exclusively to she who has it, but still more powerfully: originates in her. Further, recall that a taste is not at all one’s own until it becomes something more than an affectation to a liking for one thing or another, and instead actually provides the *pleasure* that is the signal mark of full possession. In other words, the education and refinement, and especially the pleasure they afford, albeit as a kind of attainment, is another instance of subjectivity disavowing its own particular history in order to feel itself having some basis in something other than, well let us call it, if not the dead hand of the past, then the dead hand of property.

The aliveness of the object – the work of art – rather than the taste, refinement, or possession by the subject, is what signals the success of such objects. And Adorno asserts that the experience of the work of art only genuinely encounters that object when it finds it a living thing, akin thereby to itself. Taste is, on the other hand, a movement in the opposite direction, toward the work of art, or bit of nature, as a fixed, complete, and quasi-absolute thing. Subjectivity, in the refinement of its taste, is in effect in search of an absolute object, which it might in turn fix itself in relation to. Refinement seeks a correlation

and correspondence between a wholly reliable and unmoving characteristic of an object around which the subject mimetically might accordingly fashion itself.

The most obvious lack of fit, and equivalence, between the work of art and taste is that while the latter, and especially according to Kant, must be singular, the artwork is instead a multiplicity, or to use Adorno's own terms for it: a *constellation* or force-field.<sup>6</sup> That is, the artwork is a live, *dynamic*, phenomenon while taste installs itself as a permanent capacity that aims at what it likewise construes as a correspondingly unchangeable feature of the artwork. The still further narrowing of taste's own reductivist orientation, beyond refinement even, is captured by the concept of the aesthete. The aesthete might be imagined as coming into existence as the product of taste having become – indeed insisting upon itself as – the central and defining principle of subjective affect. One might well imagine Adorno being especially critical of the aesthete as an extreme example of taste withdrawing ever further from anything but the superficial, exterior aspects of the work of art, and withdrawing ever more into a kind of defensive posture. It is thus surprising to read that Adorno instead expresses no small compassion for the aesthete, as he imagines the genesis of the aesthete alighting from the fear of being hurt by the experience of a work of art. The aesthete's fear of being touched by an object thereby registers an acknowledgment that works of art – in their aliveness – bear the possibility of a dislodging and transforming experience. This is however no illusory or baseless projection on to the work of art by the aesthete, rather, as Adorno explains in his lecture,

I would say that the idea of the externality and superficiality of taste, as described by Hegel [...] is really based on the fact that, by containing the simultaneously critical and utopian intention I pointed out to you, the work of art is simply always something hurtful and that, where it no longer hurts anyone but, rather, blends completely into the closed surface of experience, it essentially ceases to be a living work of art at all (Adorno 2018, p. 170).

The aesthete is thus correct in choosing the refinement of taste as a strategy of self-protection from the threat the artwork represents. To focus exclusively on what is external and superficial in the art object – or any object for that matter – is to foreclose the possibility of being hurt by any other feature of that object.

The aesthete and the hyper-refinement of taste suggest but one side of what Adorno considers the dialectic of taste, and there is to be found in the very deficiencies and limitations of taste an opportunity and advantage for something

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<sup>6</sup> We might just here appreciate an interesting parallel between the Kantian subjectivist aesthetics and the Hegelian/Adornian objectivist aesthetics. Whereas Kant's focus is on the complex, subtle, and nearly indiscernible *relations* that constitute the unity of the subject, objectivist aesthetics aims at a rather similar constellation, but within the work of art.



else to come about. It is important in this light to recall the earlier kinship that was pointed out between taste and style insofar as both rely on what might be termed a consensus or consolidation of affect. Adorno also explains this kinship in terms of the ‘accumulation’ that occurs in both taste and style, and which thus leads directly to the notion of culture, here understood as that which resides in the accumulations expressed by style as well as in the accumulations that designate what counts as taste in one culture or another.

## 5

In his objectivist aesthetics Adorno deploys the term *technique* to locate that which thus lies in dialectical contrast to the randomness of a subjectivist aesthetics rooted in *taste*. Technique refers not simply to the achieved artwork but rather to the *process* by means of which the work comes to be. It is in that process where the living character of the work resides. Technique is then the dialectical contrary to taste. And here too we find where the vice of taste becomes a virtue for the work of art. It is the very arbitrariness of taste’s relation to its objects that nonetheless qualifies taste as the most adept subjective faculty to respond to the genuine novelty of artistic technique. As Adorno has it:

It is precisely the ephemerality that inheres in taste, this aforementioned non-binding quality that is not tied to anything objective, this negativity of taste, its deficiency, that makes it especially qualified [...] to have these innervations for the most advanced standard reached by artistic technique and language during a particular time (Adorno 2018, p. 173).

This formulation provides an interesting opportunity for noting the difference between Adorno and Walter Benjamin on just this point regarding how art might possibly advance over what has previously existed. Benjamin famously uses the term *aura* to describe the historical legacy that unavoidably inheres in human artifacts. Benjamin saw the most acute limitation of any revolutionary potential as residing in just the historical continuity that festers in all objects made by human beings, despite the contrary posture and intent of any number of modernist works of art. Cinema was Benjamin’s ingenious solution, which he believed could break the spell of *aura* as well as historical continuity. That is, a work of art, or even just an artifact, when fabricated by an apparatus – rather than by a human act that unavoidably leaves its indelible fingerprints – the apparatus’ supposed lack of a human legacy might then produce objects free of the stain of the human. By means of the apparatus we might thereby, thought Benjamin, find ourselves liberated from the continuity – and its implicit limitations –

that inevitably collects in all human things. The cinematic image, untethered from the taint and continuity of human desire, might present us with a genuinely new image of a human future, albeit without the penitenti of all previous, and failed, human aspirations and projects (Benjamin 2004).

Taste's very deficiency, its not being bound to anything permanent or necessary, indeed its very *subjective* arbitrariness, is just what qualifies it, dialectically, to receive the products of the most historically advanced artistic techniques and language. Though taste is of course localized and historically specific to one culture and era or another, there remains an ability within taste that might nonetheless ground itself in opposition to all local and historical influence. This is what we earlier described as the genesis of *acquired* taste. That taste might be something *to be acquired* puts it into a kind of preparatory position, primed by its potentially unbound condition, to register and respond to that which has no apparent history. Here we might appreciate a kinship between the aspirations Benjamin expressed for cinema and what Adorno formulates as what could be called the avant-garde condition, or orientation, of taste. The kinship lies in the formulation of whatever – in exceeding its own limitations – produces, or at least registers, that which is historically advanced.

Fashion comes to mind here, especially in regard to what Adorno terms, in one of the infamous essays on jazz, the dignity of fashion (Adorno 1981, pp. 119 – 132). Such dignity resides, perhaps akin to what we might in turn call the dignity of acquired taste, in a marked non-allegiance to what has preceded it, not so much to the dead hand of the past, but rather to the dead nose of the past. The problem with jazz – and I write this full well expecting fans of popular music (even though I am myself one of them) again to complain of Adorno's supposed elitism and lack of comprehension – is that it invites a regression not only to natural taste, but still more problematically, to a self-imposed limitation and embrace of natural taste.<sup>7</sup> When Adorno describes jazz afficianados as dancing unwittingly in celebration of their own self-mutilation, I imagine he is referring especially to the condition of their taste (Adorno 1981, p. 126). That is, the repression that cuts into us most deeply is not that of external authorities but precisely the self-limitation, or more strongly, self-mutilation that destroys us. And this occurs in advance of the possibility of becoming something other than a mimetically regressive copy of our own limitations.

It is not here a question of taste being in favor of inappropriate things, of taste being wrong so to speak, but rather of taste's own bad faith, of its refusal

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7 See Oberle 2018 for a keen treatment of how Adorno's essays on Jazz are central to understanding the dynamic of negative identity formation.

to exercise itself as a genuine step beyond what is already the case, the stasis of taste as a confirmation of what taste is already inclined toward. And yet one knows this experience of developing a taste for something previously unknown, or underappreciated, of the pleasure and confirmation in taste being a mobile capacity, which is to say: of the pleasure of the *mobility* of human capacity. And the thought of this pleasure helps capture the dialectic of taste, as something whose two-sidedness allows the experience of both necessity and freedom. The necessity of taste, the feeling that one's taste is not truly a choice, but rather an unalterable response to something or other, is balanced, or contradicted even, by the experience of the freedom of taste, of not only the *volition* to enjoy something, but more strongly: that a choice to find a pleasure in something might itself become a permanent feature of oneself.

## 6

Pleasure's very fleetingness is somehow counteracted in the experience of *aesthetic* pleasure, which proclaims itself – under the rubric of taste – as a necessary feature of the self. And in its seeming necessity aesthetic pleasure thereby diminishes the import of the *fleeting* character of pleasure itself. It's as if aesthetic pleasure's primary effect is to comfort us for the all-too-temporary nature of pleasure. For Kantian aesthetics, the price to pay for this comfort is the disavowal that the pleasure is indeed ever ours in the first place. We might align Kant and Adorno on just this aspect of aesthetic pleasure, and their shared hesitation, indeed distrust of it.

An all too common misreading of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* has it that Kant's goal is to provide a prescription for how to obtain aesthetic pleasure. Rather, the critique orientation of Kant's presentation is to analyze what is entailed in the claim that aesthetic judgment, and pleasure, have taken place. Kant shows there is no positive method for arriving at aesthetic experience; he can instead only detail all of the factors and orientations that disallow such experience. Note that the strictness that disqualifies an experience from being aesthetic is matched by the discipline to disavow sensuous pleasure, which Kant refers to as charm (CPJ, §13, pp. 107–108 [Ak. V, p. 223]). Disinterest is thus the key criterion for putting the self in a position from which something might then present itself as an occasion for aesthetic experience.

And this question regarding the nature of aesthetic experience is arrived at by Adorno by means of his earlier questioning whether pleasure is an adequate or meaningful component of the experience of the work of art. As he puts it in the concluding sentence of the eleventh lecture of the course on aesthetics:

from this necessarily follows the question of the nature of aesthetic experience itself and the question of whether, after what I have told you here, the correlate of the subjective concept of aesthetic beauty is tenable at all or, to formulate it very radically, whether it is actually possible for the enjoyment of art to be an adequate aesthetic experience (Adorno 2018, p. 115).

Note that this questioning of the sufficiency of pleasure for aesthetic experience is inextricably tied to beauty. They are, in effect, two sides of the same coin, and their kinship consists in two features, the first being that both beauty and pleasure are of course oriented entirely toward only a portion of subjectivity, the second feature is perhaps even more problematic, as it has to do with the unitary character of both beauty and pleasure. That is, just as beauty exists only to the extent that the attractiveness of any and every particular feature of an artwork is subordinated to the cohesiveness and consistency of the whole work of art, so too – just as we see so clearly formulated by Kant – must *aesthetic* pleasure be the enjoyment of the unity of the subject, thereby mimetically mirroring the unity – harmony even – of subjective capacities. Adorno instead has it that the experience of the work of art cuts at once against both the artwork as a totality as well as against the subject as a cohesive whole, indeed as a unity at all. The work of art is experienced – and here we see especially the trace of Adorno’s commitment to a modernist aesthetic – piecemeal. It is not, Adorno explicitly proclaims, an experience *for* subjectivity.

This notion that the artwork is not created with subjective experience as its telos brings immediately to mind the brilliant essay by Jean Genet on the sculptures made by his friend Alberto Giacometti in which Genet in effect illustrates Adorno’s contention by stating that Giacometti’s sculptures are not only not intended for subjective experience, but that the sculptures would best be served if they were buried underground (Genet 1979). Underground burial suggests that the sculptures are in effect dead for human experience and so too that their burial would also insure that they were protected from any inadvertent experience, which might presumably constitute a kind of injustice toward them. Adorno himself refers to Benjamin’s own statement to the effect that artworks “are not directly intended for an audience” (Adorno 2018, p. 119). If artworks, all of which by definition are made – and even if sometimes only merely just found – by human beings, might nonetheless suffer by their being experienced by human beings, what might this tell us about the work of art as even being a thing for human beings? In attempting to answer this we might speculate about the seam between experience and what happens to us, let alone the seam between the subject and object. For Adorno, the genuine work of art is one not so much that we experience, but rather one that because its main feature is that it is a living thing, is

something that we at most and at best might live with or alongside. And this is not an experience, which has the disadvantage here of being structurally aligned with the well-being, continuity, and unity of subjectivity.

In this light it is most important to ask who, or what, precisely is the subject of aesthetic experience, especially if it is the case that aesthetic experience is not, after all, for the subject at all. We might best consider this in terms of the dialectic of subjectivity, the dialectic of being a subject. Adorno reminds us of Schopenhauer's characterization in Book III of *The World as Will and Representation* of the effects of the work of art, in which,

It is then as if, in that moment – one could call them moments of weeping – the subject were collapsing, inwardly shaken. [They are] really moments in which the subject annihilates itself and experiences happiness at this annihilation – and not happiness at being granted something as a subject. These moments are not enjoyment; the happiness lies in the fact that one has them (Adorno 2018, p. 123).

This happiness is not then the pleasure of surviving, in whatever form, the annihilation of the subject. It is not the pleasure of the persistence or continuity of the subject. It is rather, one imagines, the relief from the burdens of maintaining oneself as a persisting subject. This experience by the “subject”, compliments of the work of art, is, in effect, the mimetic correlate to the very same process that brings the work of art into existence as a thing at odds with itself, or at least at odds with the world in which it finds itself. So too might we say the work of art, and likewise the subject, share an opposition to the merely sensuous. If art is rationality in its otherness, perhaps then aesthetic experience is sensuousness in its otherness. This would explain why such experience is not strictly for subjectivity. Adorno also characterizes the work of art and aesthetic experience as a response to the “intolerability” of the world as it is, just as the moral impulse comes from the wish to change the world. The matter seems to come down to how the unity of the work of art, and likewise the unity of the subject, come to be. There is the false unity of the concept, the idea of the thing as that which brings its elements into a cohesive whole. It is not the whole per se that is false, this despite Adorno's infamous counterpoint in *Minima Moralia* to Hegel's the whole is the true, but rather the whole when it is achieved at the price of the loss of difference and particularity, just those things sacrificed first by the logic of the concept, the whole that appears in only the sweeping away of any and everything that stands in its way (Adorno 1974, p. 50).

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Nicola Emery

# Kant, Max Horkheimer and Picasso

## The Critical Community of Judgment

### 1

Of course, there may be a great and legitimate temptation to read “Art and Mass Culture”, the 1941 essay by Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), in light of what Adorno was working on at the same time. After publishing “On Popular Music” (Adorno 2002a) that same year, Horkheimer’s musicologist friend was in California too (as was Thomas Mann, sharing part of his house with Horkheimer). There Adorno was rounding off the first part of *Philosophy of Modern Music*, in particular the part dedicated to Schönberg and atonal music, which with its “discords”, he notes, “touches on the social disaster rather than volatilizing it”;<sup>1</sup> on his part, at the same time, Horkheimer welcomes the “queer, discordant” forms of expression, in turn the plastic expression of “one cut off from society” (Horkheimer 2002a, p. 278),<sup>2</sup> in Picasso’s *Guernica* and Joyce’s prose. No doubt, there is quite a close correspondence between these observations. In the same way, Adorno’s observations on the “social cement” (Adorno 2002a, pp. 460 ff.) formed by “rhythmically obedient” popular music are also reflected in the musings in “Art and Mass Culture” on the “dialectics of popularity” that mars the critical element of art and inverts the experience into one of “obedience”, “amusement” and “actual hatred” (AMC, pp. 288–290).

While dwelling on this, however, one must not forget that, unlike Adorno, a musicologist and a musician himself whose association with the field was direct and ongoing, Horkheimer’s participation in aesthetic reflection was rather rhapsodic and did not play an essential role in his thinking. It is nevertheless true that, with painting in particular, Horkheimer must have already had some familiarity, as a result of his family background. His father was a patron and collector

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**1** “The isolation of radical modern music is due not to its asocial content but to its social content, in that by virtue of its quality alone [...] it touches on the social disaster rather than volatilizing it in the deceitful claim to humanity as if it already existed” (Adorno 2006, p. 101).

**2** Hereafter referred to as AMC.



of art, with an important role in the so-called Stuttgart school of painting, as well as numbering among the founders of the Deutsches Museum in Munich. He also gave his only son Max, as a very young boy, an early pastel by Picasso.<sup>3</sup> Then, in his first home, in Kronberg, not far from Munich, along with Friedrich Pollock Max Horkheimer possessed works by Chagall, Klee and Franz Marc. Hence, *Neue Kunst* was by no means foreign to his life experience (what is more, it was not rare for Horkheimer to dabble in drawing, in the shape of small portraits and caricatures, while his wife Maidon made a fair number of curious collages).<sup>4</sup> But, beyond the 1941 essay, for the most part his activity in the field of the philosophy of art only concerned the odd circumstantial text. Nonetheless, it should not be ignored that in his later years he actually wrote quite a large number of fragments on these topics, at times together with the same Pollock. Having said that, there is nevertheless no doubt that between his albeit brief interpretation of Picasso in 1941 and Adorno's much broader reading of Schönberg, there is some precise harmony.

And here are Horkheimer's words:

This other world was that of art. Today it survives only in those works which uncompromisingly express the gulf between the monadic individual and his barbarous surrounding – prose like Joyce's and paintings like Picasso's *Guernica* [...]. The consciousness behind them is rather one cut off from society as it is, and forced into queer, discordant forms [...]. Today art is no longer communicative (AMC, p. 278).

If we were to go through other texts by Adorno, we could of course verify the whole spectrum of these relations, differences included, following a path that could even begin with the inaugural “On the Social Situation of Music” (1932). Indeed, here he was already holding forth on music that sketches the “contradictions and flaws which cut through present-day society” (Adorno 2002b, p. 391) in addition to the analogy between “musical material” – which is evidently not the same as the author's individuality, as Horkheimer instead tends to think – and “the monad of Leibniz” (see Wiggershaus 1998 and Petrucciani 2007, pp. 24ff.). And no doubt we could even go so far as Adorno's posthumous and paratactical *Aesthetic Theory*, which sets out that

the process of spiritualization in art is never linear progress. Its criterion of success is the ability of art to appropriate into its language of form what bourgeois society has ostracized,

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<sup>3</sup> The family's art collection was seized by the Nazis, and in 1966 all that remained of Picasso's pastel was a photograph. See other information in this regard in Horkheimer 1984, pp. 624–626.

<sup>4</sup> Some of these collages, made from photographic materials not infrequently also including portraits of Horkheimer, have been reproduced in Boll/Gross 2009, pp. 201–216.

thereby revealing in what has been stigmatized that nature whose suppression is what is truly evil [...]. Spiritualization in new art prohibits it from tarnishing itself any further with the topical preferences of philistine culture: the true, the beautiful, and the good. Into its innermost core what is usually called art's social critique or *engagement*, all that is critical or negative in art, has been fused with spirit, with art's law of form (Adorno 2013, p. 128).

Now, these same demands, both for an approach that was *immanent* but not for this reason "bureaucratically" formal or self-referential (as the elderly Lukács [1953] would instead admonish, contrasting what he described as the "formalistic" point of view of the modernist "bureaucrat", with the "tribune's" content- and perspective-related standpoint),<sup>5</sup> and, above all, for a break with the ahistorical linear visions which reify art in the name of the static reproduction of the dogmatic criteria of beauty, truth and good, are by no means alien to "Art and Mass Culture".

The first of these requirements, typical of Adorno and closely linked to the concept of "musical material",<sup>6</sup> can only be said to somehow transpire in Horkheimer's essay, however. It is not thematized as such, and, looking in perspective, in his subsequent fragments one might say that it was not subject to development, but, instead, indirectly at least, to criticism. As regards the second requirement on the other hand, concerning criticism of the hypostatization of classical values, Horkheimer had already explicitly engaged on this front in 1941, extending his observations to the metaphysical theories of Mortimer Adler, and to the denouncement, not without some farsightedness, of the mass kitsch and absolute pop (and *ante litteram* post-modern) eclecticism-relativism which would result from it:

Adler has tried like few other critics for a view of art independent of time. But his unhistorical method makes him fall a prey to time all the more. While undertaking to raise art above history and keep it pure, he betrays it to the contemptible trash of the day. Elements of culture isolated and dis severed from the historical process may appear as similar as drops of water; yet they are as different as Heaven and Hell. For a long time now, Raphael's blue horizons have been quite properly a part of Disney's landscapes, in which *amoretti* frolic more unrestrainedly than they ever did at the feet of the Sistine Madonna. The sunbeams almost beg to have the name of a soap or a toothpaste emblazoned on them; they have no meaning except as the background for such advertising. Disney and his audiences, as well as Adler, unswervingly stand for the purity of the blue horizon, but pure loyalty to

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion from Adorno's point of view, see Perlini 1968, in particular chapter 3, "Realismo e antirealismo", pp. 237 ff.

<sup>6</sup> A concept that is also worked on in the previously mentioned text of Adorno 2002a.

principles isolated from the concrete situation makes them turn into their very opposite and finally results in perfect relativism (AMC, p. 281).<sup>7</sup>

Evidently, *Neue Kunst* was laying claim to other categories than the traditional category of *beauty*, which the cultural industry was meanwhile absorbing in abundance and reducing to a cliché, as it built its system of mass “manipulation”, also for evident social and political ends (Horkheimer/Adorno 2007, pp. 96–97). Besides, it must not be forgotten that under the totalitarian state, the non-conventionalism of *Neue Kunst* or *different art* was accused of being “degenerate language”, *Entartete Kunst*, and banned. In its stead, the authoritarian state promoted “Great German Art” – for example, the then celebrated “Farming Family from Kalenberg” by Adolf Wissel – and its emphasis on harmonious family portraits, and rural and organicist atmospheres.<sup>8</sup> Hence, ideology was evidently at play in the revival of the traditional languages and sclerotic categories untringly evoked, albeit in different tones, by both totalitarian propaganda and the cultural industry. So, on this basis, let us more urgently ask ourselves what meaning Horkheimer was welcoming in the pictorial art of discord and contrasts, whose works, he immediately observed, “[cut] through the veneer of rationality that covers all human relationships” (AMC, p. 278).

In dealing with this matter, “Art and Mass Culture” goes beyond a critical sociological discourse and makes an important reference toward the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In this connection, it is first of all necessary to make the premise that almost twenty years earlier Horkheimer had already devoted his work to qualify for university teaching, under the guidance of Hans Cornelius, to Kant’s third *Critique*. In 1941, the phenomenological and *Gestalt* criticisms which in that youthful academic work Horkheimer had deemed he could level at the “gnoseological foundation of aesthetics”, were not totally forgotten. Indeed, it may be that, as said, his tendency at least to pay attention to the immanent reading of artworks may have stemmed from his thought, following Cornelius, that in the figurative arts “aesthetic pleasure is based on a type of knowledge, whose essence is examined solely with the aid of an in-depth phenomenological analysis of the thing’s concept, still dogmatically used by

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7 It would be interesting to make a comparison, around the interpretation of Disney productions, between the cues found in “Art and Mass Culture”, and the fragments on the topic by Walter Benjamin, now collected in Benjamin 2014.

8 On the exhibition of “Great German Art” inaugurated in Munich in 1937 and the preference for family portraits, see the observations in Ginsborg 2013, pp. 528 ff.

Kant” (Horkheimer 2012, p. 124; own translation).<sup>9</sup> But the references to Kant that I consider most productive to highlight, on reading “Art and Mass Culture”, are nonetheless different, and go in the opposite direction. As to the basic question about the meaning of art, the first, totally explicit reference to Kant enables Horkheimer to reply that its aim lay in the (*communitarian*) *erecting of a new world*, in “opening the gates of the new world”. And in this reply, the term *world*, mainly accompanied by the adjectives “new” or “other”, also has a *political* meaning. Not by chance does Horkheimer (AMC, p. 274) use the term *society, new society* (in German, *neue Gesellschaft* [1988a, p. 420]), which he borrows from Jean-Marie Guyau, as an equivalent. It is precisely this *political-associative* – or communitarian – meaning which Horkheimer wishes to point out here and to connect with the experience of art and the faculty of imagination, not least in order to highlight its critical potentials concerning the existent.<sup>10</sup> To take a cue from Kant himself, it seems that the possibility of this *world* is open and drawn by the *enlarged*, or *communitarian thinking* called into being and invoked by aesthetic judgement as its transcendental social “foundation”. As it reflects and does not determine, and at the same time aims toward universality, aesthetic judgement implies reference to a communality and concordance between subjects which is as potential as it is forever non-totalizable; it implies and actively requires plural communication, based on “respect” and “disinterest”. Namely, when trying to elaborate the experience of aesthetic taste, the reflecting judgement arouses and presupposes the possibility of a community (or *world* or *society*) evidently *other* to those dominated “by the competition” and the instrumental reduction of reason, and ultimately *other to all totality enclosed* in presence and the present. Albeit very concisely, by referring to Kant – specifically to sections 22 and 40 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* – in “Art and Mass Culture” Horkheimer thus pinpoints a fundamental aspect linked to the treatment of the judgment of taste, that is, its transcendental foundation in the idea of communicative potentiality, in the ideal of communicability.

As is known, it would be Hannah Arendt who was often pivotal on this aspect of Kant’s judgment of taste, setting out its pluralistic moral and political implications. “‘In taste’, Kant says, ‘egoism is overcome’ – we are considerate”,

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<sup>9</sup> On this work by the young Horkheimer (“Über Kants *Kritik der Urteilskraft* als Bindeglied zwischen theoretischer und praktischer Philosophie” [Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* as a Link between Theoretical and Practical Philosophy]) and some of his other contributions of the time concerning Kant in particular, see Boccignone 2006.

<sup>10</sup> This is not to be confused with Heidegger’s notion of “world” expressed in the 1936 essay on the origin of the work of art (Heidegger 2002).

Arendt annotates, “in the original sense of the word”, namely in that we seek to “woo their consent” (Arendt 2003, p. 142; 1992).

Hence, it is interesting to note that, in the same way, as “Art and Mass Culture” has it too, the Kantian question about aesthetic judgment is *ipso facto* already a question about the *possible community*, the dynamic-potential community, the ability of an apparently private-subjective dimension to become “common”: “How [...] can the esthetic judgment, in which subjective feelings are made known, become a collective or ‘common’ judgment?” (AMC, pp. 273–274). In the 1941 text, Horkheimer consistently questions the aesthetic experience, succinctly but precisely starting from this motion taken directly from Kant. He sees it as an experience of *transformation and overcoming the historical primacy of the private sphere*, which can go beyond the “deadly competition” that dominates among humankind. Hence, it can overturn the competition and make it into a critical community of judgment, that is, into a community that is permanently in becoming and non-totalizable, whose sense constitutively listens to, and depends on, “the viewpoints of others” (AMC, p. 274). The reflecting judgment, the *decentralizing* experience of encountering their point of view, is inexhaustible and new each time. It constitutes the very *dynamis* of this form of plural thought that communicatively reaches out to a universal which cannot be reduced to any form of presence. It marks the opening of this dynamic community, where the possibility of concordance implies the possibility of differential enlargement and vice versa.

But this plural dimension, this decentralization which institutes and produces sense, wholly irreconcilable with and inconceivable within the domination, relations and forms of instrumental intellect and cultural forms, is revealed to be the same *hidden faculty*, the *plural hidden faculty of the subject's identity*. For Horkheimer, here the aesthetic experience of reflecting judgment, of universal aspiration, takes on the very role of reawakening and activating this faculty, we could say *of the other in us*, of the *cum* that *constitutes us* and that constitutes the decentralizing and critical movement of thought, or rather, to put it in the almost rhyming German words, the *geheim of the gemein*. So the aesthetic experience bears a communitarian role and an importance that also has an *ipso facto* moral and potentially political meaning, all the more so if contrasted with the historical context of state capitalism, producing positivistic authoritarianism and immunitarian organicism-sovereignism.<sup>11</sup> In other words, subjective feeling

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<sup>11</sup> On the immunitarian paradigm and the relationship between community and immunity, see the important works of Roberto Esposito (2010; 2011) as well as the collection of essays by the same author (Esposito 2012).

becomes “common” judgment, disinterested judgment of taste, insofar as the aesthetic event undoes the reification of the self-enclosed subject and reveals its original linkage with the other, and sensitive communality with infinite others. This, says Horkheimer, is the “hidden faculty” (AMC, p. 274), “*die geheime Instanz*” (Horkheimer 1988a, p. 421), of a singularity which would hence seem to find the possibility of redefining and freeing itself in aesthetic sensitivity in the sense of *common movement*, of abandoning the individualistic prison corresponding to the function to which the individual is confined by the contemporary division of labor and by the corresponding instrumental-computational reduction of forms of thought. By arousing this enlarged communitarian dynamic, from this point of view the *reflecting judgment* draws the open space in which the *subject’s movement develops* and fights its historical affliction, combats the expropriation of its *cum* and its *dynamis* imposed by the positivistic closure of the critical and plural experience of truth. In other words, it is thanks to this plural experience that the subject remains faithful to itself, to its never-ending self-seeking, by relating to the other and breaking-overturning its identity, as Horkheimer would say later on, in *relation*, or in *religion*:

This taking of ideas only as verdicts, directives, signals, characterizes the enfeebled man [*die Schwäche des Subjekts*] of today. Long before the era of the Gestapo, his intellectual function had been reduced to statements of fact. The movement of thought [*die Bewegung des Denkens*] stops short at slogans, diagnoses and prognoses [...], “ideas,” mental products that have become fetishes. Thinking, faithful to itself, in contrast to this, knows itself at any moment to be a whole and to be uncompleted [*Denken, das sich selbst treu bleibt, weiss sich demgegenüber in jedem Augenblick zugleich als Ganzes und als Unabgeschlossen*] (AMC, p. 287).

But, indeed, in the first part of “Art and Mass Culture”, the *Schwäche des Subjekts*, also diagnosed by discussing the repercussions of Adler’s theories, symmetrically corresponds to the explicit reference to the subject’s *power* or *Macht*. Solicited by aesthetic experience, this power is a permanent movement of thought enlarged and decentralized from its own to the common. It is a reference that, here too, certainly highlights the situation of danger, pressure and extinction which this *power* or *Macht des Subjekts* has historically found itself exposed to, ever since the violence of original accumulation that took from the *commons* (here Horkheimer clearly has the first book of Marx’s *Capital* in mind) up to the depersonalization imposed by state capitalism in all its variants. It is a situation expressed figuratively through recollection of the constrained living conditions in the slums of Engelsian memory and then in anonymous *Siedlungen* or modern settlements, also emblems of a massification lacking any *public space*, which is either inexistent or already pre-occupied by “*geistlose*”

activities such as sport, cinema, bestsellers and the radio. Capitalistically increasingly burdened by a *mortgage* – according to a marvelous expression encountered in the text which takes us not so indirectly to Benjamin’s capitalism as an indebted and guilt-producing cult – the incomplete *reflecting-judging life, with its hidden communitarian sense*, is entirely *foreclosed*.

The subject, isolated and separated, is also disempowered, deprived of the possibility of opening worlds, or is as such properly “dismembered” and “depoeiticized”: “... in slums [and] in modern settlements – man has lost his power [*die Macht der Subjekts*] to conceive a world different from that in which he lives. This other world was that of art”.<sup>12</sup>

Now the word *Macht* does not come from *machen*, to do or to make, but from the modal verb *mögen*, may, and from *möglich*, the adjective meaning *possible*. The loss of the *subject’s power*, its *dismemberment*, corresponds to the loss of the possibility-common power inherent in its hidden faculty, that is, the loss of its *communitarian sense* as a permanent *possibility* of life beyond form, as an enlarged and continual *power* to create worlds.<sup>13</sup>

Against the historical threat of this loss, the aesthetic experience, as an experience of enlarged and unprejudiced thought, appears as an experience of *resistance* toward a communitarian future:

The feelings widespread among the masses are definitely simple to explain: they are always the product of social mechanisms. But what is the hidden faculty in each individual to whom the artwork is directed? What is the by no means misleading feeling in which it trusts, in spite of all experience to the contrary? Kant seeks to clarify this problem through the concept of a *sensus communis aestheticus*, to which the single person is to assimilate his

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**12** In the English version, as in the German, Horkheimer intentionally distinguished between “ability” and “power”: “But with the loss of his ability to take this kind of refuge – an ability that thrives neither in slums nor in modern settlements – man has lost his power to conceive a world different from that in which he lives. This other world was that of art [*Mit der Fähigkeit zu solcher Flucht aber, die weder in Slum noch in moderner Siedlungen gedeiht, erlischt auch die Macht des Subjekts, eine andere Welt zu gestalten als die, in welcher er lebt. Diese andere Welt war die der Kunst*]” (AMC, pp. 277–278). However, in the Italian version, there is no distinction between the two terms *Macht* and *Fähigkeit*, both being rendered by the Italian translator Giorgio Backhaus with the word “*capacità*” (Horkheimer 1997).

**13** I have adopted the thematization given to the term *Macht* by Arendt (1958) who includes it in the horizon of action, that is, of *praxis* and not of *poiesis*. The subject as *Macht* is an incessant possibility, a being, which finds its purpose in its same activity. Not forced to alienate itself in a work, it determines itself through self-revelation in action and discourse. It is the defense of an idea of life in which the single ways, acts and processes of living are never simply facts, but possibilities of life, always power first of all, ultimately meant as the essence of the non-reifiable being. In this sense, see also Agamben 2016, p. 207.



or her aesthetic judgement. This concept should be clearly distinguished from *common sense*. Its determining characteristics are those of the “unprejudiced” (not biased), “consistent” and “broad-minded” way of thinking (which includes other people’s point of view). In other words, Kant thinks that every person’s aesthetic judgement embraces his or her very humaneness. Despite the deadly battle in business culture, people are nevertheless thought to agree on their possibilities of development. Great art, says Pater, must “have something of the human soul in it”; and Guyau declares that “art occupies itself with the possible, erecting a new world above the familiar world [...] a new society in which we really live”. An element of resistance is inherent in the most aloof art (AMC, p. 274).

The field of art and of the faculty of taste, which corresponds to it in modern times, hence seems to exceed and tear open the solipsistic domination of instrumental reason, and rather move in such a way as to form a shared imaginary. And it is by participating in this critical movement, critical movement also of re-semanticization and redistribution of the meanings of the “real”, that “man has lost his power to conceive a world different from that in which he lives” (AMC, p. 278). But if this is the transcendental possibility of the aesthetic community which Kant can be very much credited with highlighting, considering art’s autonomous becoming in terms of emancipatory potentialities extended to the whole of humankind, it has to be said that, despite evoking it and succumbing to its charm, in 1941 Horkheimer did not intend to stop at this. Nor, indeed, would he have been able to, owing to the very premises that he himself set out. Before looking at this, it must be acknowledged that this aesthetic experience, thought of in its dimension of *producing a free community*, or even a new *society* and a new *world*, could have dialogued perfectly well, not only with the youthful utopia of the *Île Heureuse*,<sup>14</sup> but also and above all with that search for the *historical subject of critical thought* on which Horkheimer had dwelled in 1937 in the programmatic essay “Traditional and Critical Theory” (Horkheimer 2002b).<sup>15</sup> Already dramatically recognizing that “there are no general criteria for judging the critical theory as a whole ...”, and in particular that “[n]or is there a social class by whose acceptance of the theory one could be guided” (TCT, p. 242), the desire for “a community of free men” as an open and *undistinguishable*, essentially neither factual nor organic end, constituted the only “positive” point of reference of the critical theory (TCT, p. 217).

There being no example of mechanical-factual construction to produce, and having highlighted the contradictions that such a positive saturation would have

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<sup>14</sup> I cannot go into this aspect here even though it could find the ideal of (*aesthetic*) *community* an important topic for comparison. Allow me to refer in general to Emery 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Hereafter referred to as TCT.



led to with regard to the open and plural critical *dynamis* of the critical communitarian project,<sup>16</sup> Horkheimer was keen to assert that “[n]onetheless the idea of a future society as a community of free men, which is possible through technical means already at hand, does have a content, and to it there must be fidelity amid all change” (TCT, p. 217).<sup>17</sup> Horkheimer then added that “in the general historical upheaval the truth may reside with numerically small groups of men” (TCT, p. 241), but evidently he was again alluding to the community of free men and ultimately to the expansive possibility of enlarged thought as the *telos* of future, post-revolutionary society. The community (*Gemeinschaft*) which Horkheimer looked to as holding the truth of future society, to all appearances does not have an organic nature, can definitely not be traced back to the nostalgic Tönnesian mythologem, but is defined by a universalistic-cosmopolitan ideal which could once again be defined as having a Kantian basis. The fact it was then recognized, alongside the evocation of its real possibility dictated by the “present stage of productive forces” (TCT, p. 219), that this ideal of an “*association of free men in which each has the same possibility of self-development*” also had a moment in common with *fantasy*, only sets value by my hypothesis of a connection between the manifesto text of 1937 and that of 1941, *a connection in terms of a Kantian type of aesthetic-political community as an important, and I would say even go so far as to say practically constant, term of orientation in Horkheimer’s research*. While in 1937 it was said that this idea, albeit imbued with “fantasy”, was “not an abstract utopia”, it must be observed that in 1941, against the background of the advent of totalitarianism and mass society, it instead seems forced into being evoked in a wholly negative and almost apophatic manner, by drawing on an art and an experience at the limit of the sayable. In this sense too, and with reference to Jewish *unrepresentability*, that is – we will see again – in (Kantian) terms of the sublime, in 1941 it was said that “Art, since it became autonomous, has preserved the utopia that evaporated from religion” (AMC, p. 275). And, in order to find confirmation, this autonomy had to result in the breakdown of communication, as repeated several times in the text, against Dewey. As such, among other things, it is worth highlighting the sentence that rounds off the 1941 text – “Therefore it may not be entirely senseless to continue speaking a language that is not easily understood” (AMC, p. 290) – which claims

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**16** The interdisciplinary project of the *Institut für Sozialforschung* was also explicitly devised in a free communitarian key, that is, as a *Gemeinschaft* and *Gruppe*, to adopt the terms of the numerous “Memoranden” written jointly by Horkheimer and Pollock.

**17** “... Trotzdem hat die Idee einer künftigen Gesellschaft als der Gemeinschaft freier Menschen, wie sie bei vorhandenen technischen Mitteln möglich ist, einen Gehalt dem bei allen Veränderung die Treue zu wahren ist” (Horkheimer 2009, p. 191).

an intentional split between communication and the production of critical sense in philosophical reflection too. This same idea of an *unrepresentable (aesthetic-moral) community* without any affirmative faith, which today might be called *in-operative*, would then be at the center of that important late fragment portraying the descent to the catacombs of the pitiful clear-sighted of spirit. The ideal of the aesthetic community, the ideal of the critical community of judgment sets and gives a concave and subterranean shape to the philosophical figures of the late Horkheimer. The scene that he paints, let there be no mistake, becomes of a sublime genre:

*For an Association of the Clear-sighted:* One should found an association in all countries, particularly in Germany, which would express the horror of those without affirmative belief in either metaphysics or politics. As a humane practice in insane post-war Europe, the latter would seem impossible to them, and the former galimatias. For those who are appalled by the economic miracle, the mendacious democracy, the bribery charges with Hitler judges, the luxury and the misery, the rancor and the rejection of every form of decency, the admiration of eastern and western magnates, the disintegration of spirit, the slide into parochialism of this old civilization, such an association would be a kind of home. They would plot no revolution because it would end in naked terror. But they would nonetheless be the – admittedly impotent – heirs of the revolution that did not occur, these pitiful clear-sighted ones who are going into the catacombs (Horkheimer 1978, p. 166).

## 2

Nevertheless, for historical and methodological reasons closely connected to Horkheimer's criticism of the figures of "traditional theory", the perspective of "enlarged thought" and the aesthetic-moral community as the surrogate and/or critical truth of the historical subject (class, party, etc.), as I have started to say, could not simply be adopted in 1941. The Kantian transcendental perspective, in particular the neo-Kantian one, had already been criticized, severely, by Horkheimer in his aforementioned "Traditional and Critical Theory".<sup>18</sup> Owing to their "abstract" nature (TCT, p. 191), these forms of theory (TCT, p. 192), ahistorically autonomized from the real social process, were indicated as forms of "false consciousness", and since they were motivated on the basis

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**18** Obviously this discourse does not claim to be exhaustive. Indeed, we should also dwell on texts prior to the foundation of the Institut für Sozialforschung, not least the opening conference as Privatdozent, entitled "Kant und Hegel", held by Horkheimer (1987) at the University of Frankfurt on 2 May 1925. "Traditional and Critical Theory" also notoriously has programmatic value as a text-manifesto for the critical theory.

of the inner essence of knowledge, they were already also deemed expressions of a “reified, ideological category” (TCT, p. 194). Only “in the context of real social processes” (TCT, p. 194) must the theoretical frameworks be brought to their critical truth. This is the same principle as the critical theory, and the 1937 essay pointed this demand not only toward positivism and scientism, but, not least, and explicitly, also toward Kantianism. The “obscurity” of Kant’s transcendental subjectivity, observes Horkheimer, must be grasped as an *idealistic expression of social activity*. While on one hand, the two-sidedness of Kant’s concepts, split between phenomena and things in themselves, between intellect and sensitivity, “show the depth [and the honesty] of his thinking”, on the other they correspond to as many forms of “alienated” knowledge (TCT, pp. 203–204). It is to be remembered that in 1923, in *History and Class Consciousness*, the great work that also exercised some influence, however covertly, on the texts at the basis of the critical theory (TCT, pp. 203–204), Lukács had already insisted on seeing Kantism as ambiguously revealing the antinomies of bourgeois thought (see Lukács 1971, pp. 110 ff.). This criticism of idealistic alienation in the manifesto text from 1937 also involves the concept of *common sense*, where the “power ... of common sense” (TCT, p. 202), recognized in its metaphysical and/or positivistic alienness, is traced back to social activity, namely, in concrete terms, to the “modern mode of production” (TCT, p. 201) and its ideology. After all, in certain aspects, “Art and Mass Culture” evidently continues along this line: it is as if the evocation of the communitarian sense of the aesthetic experience – interpreted à la Kant, and albeit duly distinguished from the empirical sphere of *common sense*, despite all its potentialities, also with reference to the primary questions of the critical theory – were forced to come to a halt.

Against a historical background marked by the establishment of the cultural industry, connected to the affirmation of totalitarian forms of propaganda and aimed toward subjecting fetishistic artistic production to the most invasive heteronomy, the radical transformation inflicted on the subjectivity and its possibilities of expression and organization had to be recognized and denounced. All the more so, the possibility of an aesthetic community in the Kantian sense seemed to vanish way beyond the transcendental, to be historically dismissed, brutally annihilated by an aesthetic manipulation capable of saturating even all the pores of *sensus communis*. The possibility of the survival of subjectivity and its incommunicable hidden faculty becomes the decisive issue of the time of *thanatopolitics* and the regression connected to popular culture (see Adorno 2002a), while that idea of society as a *community of free people*, despite being the only consciously “positive” content of the critical theory, seemed forced to slide further and further away, into an underground or a mysterious and –

due to its alterity – absent overworld. So, in the end, the theory finally becomes nostalgia.

Of course, looking back, we may want to object that a normative plan should have been drawn out of here, out of this ideal of a community of free people. Lacking this normative plan, the first critical theory and Horkheimer in particular – according to Habermas – descended into philosophically stuttering pessimism.

Besides, how could one carry on thinking about the nexus between communicability and sociability – rational enlarged society – while – we are in 1941 – “Europe has reached the point where all the highly developed means of communication serve constantly to strengthen the barriers ‘that divide human beings’”? (AMC, p. 279).

In other words, could that communitarian sense perhaps be thought-preserved as a sort of Platonic and/or Kantian idea, however regulatory, almost mystically abstracted from the totality, while the subjectivity and historical communities were being subjected to such a deep and violent manipulation-devastation-solution?

By making the crisis and the break-up of languages and traditional-conventional forms their own, and making the end of communicability the subject of their research – in addition to Picasso, evidently also think of the Adornian Beckett – for some time the same works of *Neue Kunst* had already been teaching, contrary to what the advocates of academism of all types were hesitating to do, to only negatively, apophatically question that communitarian and cosmogonic sense of the aesthetic experience. The cancellation of the world, the crisis of every formal symmetrical-constructive structure, the unrepresentability and the explosion-fragmentation of the common semblance – the buckets of waste with corpses in Beckett’s stage play – were becoming the only possible response to the complete colonization of the moral and cultural world by propaganda and the cultural industry. Figurative art, as *worldless art and art against all worlds*, was increasingly forced toward formlessness and to express a tonality of solitary “despair”. And that in 1941 the attention of Horkheimer should fall precisely on *Guernica*, it seems superfluous to say, is totally convincing and precise from a historical-artistic point of view too, not least remembering the fundamental effect that this work by Picasso, linked to denouncing the fascist violence in the Spanish Civil War, exercised on pivotal artists from following periods, personalities both tormented and despairing – such as Jackson Pollock and closer to us Jean Michel Basquiat – from not just a linguistic point of view.

Hence, starting from *Guernica*, so to speak, rather than opening a new world, it remains for Horkheimer to express that *there are no bridges*, that the characteristic of the era is that community, communicability and language has

been violently sucked up. Besides, one could also hypothesize a certain influence of Guyau's descriptions (see Guyau [1889] 2016, chap. IX, pp. 77 ff.) of the *decadent* and emarginated art on these analyses by Horkheimer, which do not somehow aim to idolize fragment or fall, do not make the lack of perspective a sufficient counterpart to somehow compensate for, or even aesthetize, the crisis. Fragmentation and even theoretical "*despair*" here are joined, and this is another reason why it seems to me that, however interesting they may be, Lukács' criticisms of avant-gardism as the deliberate-complacent ridding of perspective cannot be applied here (see also Bürger 1984, in particular chap. 4).

So, in short, states Horkheimer, seismographer of the real abyss underneath Kantian transcendentalism:

The last substantial works of art, however, abandon the idea that real community exists; they are the monuments of a solitary and despairing life that finds no bridge to any other or even to its own consciousness [...]. To the extent that the last works of art still communicate, they denounce the prevailing forms of communication as instruments of destruction, and harmony as a delusion of decay (AMC, p. 279).

The subject is violently desecrated and stripped of its "hidden faculty", its power to dilate into communitarian expression-reflection, which is turned on its head and dissolved into mass culture. The subject's power, its *communitarian dynamis*, now seems to seek to resist by no longer seeing itself positively in a "world", but instead expressing a bitter conflict, an irreconcilable discord between sensitivity and reason, that is, by in its way fundamentally bringing up to date, transforming even, none other than the category of the *sublime*. What is required is bitter and grotesque "discord" and "rupture" of the reified "vener of rationality". In other words, the *counterpurposiveness* needs to be unveiled and denounced in order to "remain loyal" to the individual's alterity, or *autonomy, power and moral subjectivity* in the face of the infamy of existence. The need is not for sentimental representation of a "life analogous to our own", so obviously not *Einfühlung*, empathy and the connected "promotion of life", but neither is it for modernist *abstraction* – which is already too close to an appeasing ornamentation.

It is not the shape, but in contrast the *Verwüstung*, the "devastation" of shapes and the explosion of the apparent *concord* between them, their disintegration into "chaos" and "most unruly disorder", that can "*allow us to discover within ourselves a capacity for resistance of quite another kind [ein Vermögen zu Widerstehen von ganz anderer Art in uns entdecken lassen]*" (CPJ, §§23–24, pp. 128–131 [Ak. V, pp. 244–247]): this is what Kant had already written in the paragraphs dedicated to the sublime in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Presumably Horkheimer was highly familiar with them, as well as with his

words on *sensus communis*, owing to their explicit mention in his “Art and Mass Culture”. Besides, already in Kant, the possibility of judgment on the sublime is explicitly kept at bay by *convention*. The reference is not to *sensus communis* or *communicability*, but it is directly based on moral sentiment, on that gap between the sayable and the unsayable which regards each one of us.<sup>19</sup> This fundamental aspect evidently must have been appreciated by Horkheimer, who also saw in this the possibility of mitigating, in part at least, the historical aporias weighing down on the idea of aesthetic community itself. It is by referring to a dynamic of thought, a terminology even that seems to almost explicitly extend the Kantian outline of the sublime, that in any case, in the 1941 text, he interprets the artistic avant-gardes and the need of the arts to bid farewell to *beauty* and to all still entirely sayable, representable positivity.

The avant-gardes throw open the *Abgrund*, they pierce and cut the horizon of representation and communication. But insofar as they do,

[t]hese inhospitable works of art, by remaining loyal to the individual as against the infamy of existence, thus retain the true content of previous great works of art and are more closely related to Raphael's madonnas and Mozart's operas than is anything that harps on the same harmonies today, at a time when the happy countenance has assumed the mask of frenzy and only the melancholy faces of the frenzied remain a sign of hope (AMC, p. 278).

And for this very reason, he continues: “An element of resistance is inherent in the most aloof art” (AMC, p. 274).<sup>20</sup> The sense of this resistance is without doubt expressed better in the original English version which avoids all misunderstanding over the dimension of *gemein*, which is obviously not meant as *common*<sup>21</sup> but as *banal*, *ordinary*. Precisely because it is an “aloof” art, of *distance* and *rupture* from the banal and vulgar world of existence, its inherent negation and incommunicability preserve the subject's hidden faculty, the *geheim of the gemein*, the *hidden faculty of the common* which brings it to express *the loss of voice*, absence, lack and dizzying void. In the distance from the banal which resolves and anni-

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**19** “But just because the judgment on the sublime in nature requires culture (more so than that on the beautiful), it is not therefore first generated by culture and so to speak introduced into society merely as a matter of convention; rather it has its foundation in human nature, and indeed in that which can be required of everyone and demanded of him along with healthy understanding, namely in the predisposition to the feeling for (practical) ideas, i.e., to that which is moral. This is the ground for the necessity of the assent of the judgment concerning the sublime to our own” (CPJ, §29, pp. 148–149 [Ak. V, pp. 265–266]). See also Bonometti 2011.

**20** “Ein Element von Widerstand wohnt die Kunst inne, die es verschmäh't, sich gemein zu machen” (Horkheimer 1988a, p. 420).

**21** Translator's note: This passage is rendered in Italian as “*Nell'arte che rifiuta di rendersi comune, è insito un elemento di resistenza*” using the more ambiguous word “*comune*”.

hilates the experience into sayability, our hidden faculty of the other is preserved, driven to become silent, aphonic, unsayable, but not thereby entirely annihilated.

Hence, the subjectivization which criticizes the avant-garde, which is immanent to it, is all the more meaningful the more the historical context strives to cancel interiority, to drain movement of thought and destroy all power of *Widerstand*, namely to also fundamentally liquidate the constituent freedom (*moralität*).

But, in order to be found, this freedom needs *traumas* and *shocks*, or as Lyotard would say, “sacrifices” and “spoliation”, because a certain “violence” and “enthusiasm” are necessary for the sublime to burst forth (Lyotard 1994, pp. 188–189). But as Horkheimer had already said:

Yet, every new work of art makes the masses draw back in horror. Unlike the Führers, it does not appeal to their psychology, nor, like psychoanalysis, does it contain a promise to guide this psychology towards “adjustment”. In giving downtrodden humans a shocking awareness [*shockierendes Bewusstsein*] of their own despair, the work of art professes a freedom which makes them foam at the mouth (AMC, p. 280).

Hence, in the impossibility of an aesthetic community, are we propelled to renew the experience of the *sublime* via the twentieth-century aesthetic of alienation? It is significant to ask this question, which has once more become of doubtless topicality in the contemporary debate, starting from Horkheimer’s almost forgotten text. Of course, Kant seemed to have limited the sublime experience to a comparison with nature and with its colossal and terrible formlessness (“this inadequacy ... is horrible [*Seine Unangemessenheit ... ist grässlich*]” [CP], §23, p. 129; Ak. V, p. 245]), but Horkheimer’s dismissiveness of this point should be recognized as a sign of his farsightedness and contemporaneity, also presumably, but of course not only, with regard to Adorno, in whose posthumous *Aesthetic Theory* we read:

In the administered world, artworks are only adequately assimilated in the form of the *communication of the uncommunicable*, the breaking through of reified consciousness. Works in which the aesthetic form, under pressure of the truth content, transcends itself occupy the position that was once held by the concept of the sublime. In them, spirit and material polarize in the effort to unite. Their spirit experiences itself as sensually unrepresentable [...] Kant’s doctrine of the feeling of the sublime all the more describes an art that shudders inwardly by suspending itself in the name of an illusionless truth content, though without, as art, divesting itself of its semblance character (Adorno 2013, pp. 266–267; my emphasis).<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> See also Welsch 1991, pp. 114–156.



Concerning the incommunicability of this art, which “shudders inwardly”, there too seems to be notable consonance with the 1941 essay.

Yet, it is precisely from this point, that is, from his covert recovery of the sublime, that Horkheimer would question the historical legitimacy of art’s “semblance character”. His aim, however, was not to promote its simple cancellation, but in any case to think and desire to go beyond it, if not to exactly abolish it as Adorno would have so abhorred. Before following this further line of criticism, which leads the elderly Horkheimer, in particular, to go beyond the ideal-typical dualism of modernism/avant-gardism, it must nevertheless be remembered that in any case, already in Kant, the sublime evidently implies a shift from the object to the *subject*: “sublimity is not contained in anything in nature, but only in our mind, insofar as we can become conscious of being superior to nature within us and thus also to nature outside us” (CPJ, §28, p. 147 [Ak. V, p. 265]). It is only in a wholly improper way, Kant observes, that we attribute the sublime to the object, while in reality it must be thought of as a moment and *movement of subjectivization*. It is the subject who is *angereizt*, that is, encouraged and stimulated toward independence, toward the discovery of a *capacity of independence* (“*ein Vermögen uns als von ihr unabhängig zu beurteilen*” (CPJ, §28, p. 145 [Ak. V, p. 261]); and whose power of judgment (CPJ, §28, p. 145 [Ak. V, p. 261]) and of imagination, which is the capacity to resist (*Widerstehen*), is awoken and remains aroused. So, will renewing the experience of the sublime with the avant-gardes and thereafter perhaps not mean a renewed search for *communitarian subjectivity*, creation of the active – incomplete – informal subjective community as the historical truth of new art? Art becomes the search for forms of critical life.

### 3

On the back of this outcome, in the 1941 text there are already, however hidden, all the premises that would take the same Horkheimer, in the fragments of *Notizen 1950 bis 1969*<sup>23</sup> written in Montagnola, and in *Späne*, to denounce the *fatal aging* of new art too, as the artworks tend to lose themselves in abstraction and fetishistic self-referentiality. These premises would lead him to mistrust and in short to withdraw all philosophical-critical legitimation of artistic, as well as modernist objectivization, which he now considered definitively unable to go beyond itself into subjectivization and hence to correspond to a form of alienation.

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<sup>23</sup> Translator’s note: Some of these Notizen have been translated into English in the volume *Decline: Notes 1950–1969* (Horkheimer 1978)



The failure to go beyond itself, potentially inherent in a sublime similar even to that of Hegel, is due to the artwork's authoritarian fetishism. Under the title "Moderne Kunst", in *Späne* Horkheimer and Pollock note: "Modern artists offer products as ornaments, and nonetheless they intend to express that the ornaments are meaningless", in which the first part – "*die modernen Künstler bieten Produkte als Wandschmuck an*" – namely the part which denounces the endurance, despite all efforts and poetics to the contrary, of the *Produkt* (Horkheimer 1988b, p. 368; own translation) must be highlighted in particular. And then: "*Früher diente das Kunstwerk den Menschen. Heute hat der Mensch vor 'Kunstwerken', oder was sich dafür ausgibt, stramm zu stehen*" (Horkheimer 1988b, p. 368), or "once artwork served people. Today before artworks, or that which manifests itself as such, people have to stand to attention" (own translation). Hence it is not subjectivization, but ultimately analogous subalternity to that which capital imposes upon live labour. Art's failure to go beyond or criticize itself leads to an idolatry of the artwork that imposes itself upon humankind like a figure of domination and asks us to *stand to attention*, to fall in, to get in line, to celebrate its fetish-value. Irony and disenchantment allude to the experience which makes the communitarian subject the betrayed root of art. The elderly Horkheimer and Pollock made this sarcastic, almost unsayable interrogation of the destitutional-constitutional action, and remembered its centrality precisely in the moment when, within the cultural industry, the definition of person and artist was increasingly being restricted to the figure of *homo faber* and the sphere of production, and while art was being increasingly openly reduced to "dead labour" and an object of investment. It was this timing that almost paradoxically brought their great disillusionment on the meaning of art closer to the abandonment and abnegation of retinal and reified art. And so they would favor action and the *Denkakt* which would develop, after Duchamp, as an attempt, albeit failed and tried and tried again, to go beyond art in the direction of an actual work-less praxis.

The famous criticism, leveled by Adorno in 1954, which he then in part reviewed, against the *serial technique* and the radicalism of Pierre Boulez, and his "dreadful irrational trust that an abstract material can in itself have meaning" (Adorno 2003; own translation),<sup>24</sup> corresponds to the no less bitter criticism by Horkheimer, in more or less the same period, but which he then radicalized rather than reviewed, against the "abstract ornament" in painting or, and no less provocatively, against the "boredom of abstraction". The presuppositions for his criticism were nevertheless different to those of the musicologist-philosopher,

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<sup>24</sup> See in particular the 1954 conference "Das Altern der Neuen Musik".

which, here too, were aimed more toward penetrating the immanent logic of the “musical material”. The criticism of the philosopher-philosopher Horkheimer is directed not at abolishing the denotative level, but at the fact that this abolition, moreover made possible by the crisis in representation brought about thanks to *Neue Kunst*, got “perversely” mixed up with the disempowerment of subjectivity, with the weakening of its hidden faculty and its ability to always be something different from itself. And the result of all this was “inexpressive and conformist”, incapable of giving consistency and permanency in order to *remain loyal to the power of the free community* which seemed, in negative terms and through absence too, to constitute the basic motivation of new art and to drive it toward subjectivization, the liberation of life forms, and in short, to potentially permanently go beyond its own reification. In the end Horkheimer’s reference to an *expressionist* core, by no means absent from the Adornian celebration of atonal music, is but a moment in the defense of the self-determination of a subject who has to go back to thinking of itself, of its ability to be other and of its constituting other life forms, inside and against every artwork.

By now an old man, Horkheimer still has the capacity to make stinging and radical remarks, which here bring him to focus on:

the puzzle of why other art is boring. Abstractionism had a language when it defied naturalism, and even impressionistically and expressionistically progressive naturalism. Now that the works of the nineteenth century have become petrified museum pieces, abstract art pales, turns into a consumer product, an ornament. It is becoming insipid and conformist, however rebellious its gesturings. “There should be a spot of color on this wall”, says the up-to-date bank director. “Look how funny”, says the American employee of a Picasso, “that woman has three eyes, doesn’t she”, The artists won, but it was a Phyrric victory. In times such as these, art survives through its defeats (Horkheimer 1978, p. 163).

“Ornamental” abstraction is the ironic outcome of the autonomization movement: despite it all, the power of contradiction and destitutional-constitutional truth expressed-attested to by *Neue Kunst* at its outset seems in no way to have produced a breakdown capable of piercing and in the end surpassing aesthetic appearance in a movement of subjectivization capable of going beyond reification and therefore the separation between subject and object and the same “aesthetic separation”. And it cannot fail to strike us that Horkheimer here also comes to include Picasso, as well as all the other forms of “new art”, such as abstraction and abstract expressionism, in this movement of defeat.

For this reason too, in the joint reflections of Horkheimer and Pollock, art only seems to continue to exist and to be reproduced as a *blind mirror, ein blinder Spiegel*:

The plastic arts were quick to sense the breakdown of Western culture [*der Zusammenbruch der Alten Welt*] and sought to bring it to expression. But in painting this attempt failed. A similar attempt in literature is also condemned to failure [...] what is taking place in the present cannot be rendered in words. Since the word is no longer a means of expression, but just a means of communication. Language is already so very set in stone [*Denn das Wort ist nicht mehr ein Mittel des Ausdrucks, sondern nur noch Kommunikationsmittel. Die Sprache ist schon so sehr erstarrt*] (Horkheimer 1988b, p. 311; own translation).

Another fragment of *Späne* relates modern art with the expression of breakdown, *der Zusammenbruch der Alten Welt*, and here too it is said that this expression fails. Modern art has failed as the expression of breakdown, it has become institutionalized, it has institutionalized protest, making it nonsense (Horkheimer 1988b, p. 396).<sup>25</sup> With this, returning quite directly to the background is what I would call a Pollockian device, which he came up with in contact with the 1929 crisis and the consequent “freezing” of capitalism into an almost eternalized “state capitalism”, despite the dialectic promises of collapse which Marxism – together with Grossmann looking optimistically toward the *Zusammenbruchsgesetz* – was still able to see in the contradictions of the crisis.<sup>26</sup>

And yet, with these considerations on the subject of art, around the second half of the 1950s, in the end in a not entirely different manner, Horkheimer and Pollock enabled the thought that the breakdown of denotation and of the canon of harmony and symmetry, with its potential to go beyond art within and beyond the revival of the sublime, had been reabsorbed and frozen once more in the reified terms of art, and, moreover, of “art for art’s sake” and similar tautologies and self-referentialities. In short, art again assumed new forms that made the subject bounce back violently and be reabsorbed into the object. Hence, they ended up underlining the primacy of the object, and alienation and authoritarianism as even the sole paradigm, fatally releasing these “products” from all relations with the sphere of *truth practices*.

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25 “Die Moderne Kunst ist ein Ausdruck für den Zusammenbruch der Alten Welt, einer Zeit, in der noch glauben konnte, dass in der Gesellschaft, in der man lebt, ein richtiges Leben möglich ist [...]. Kunst kann nicht auf lange Sicht vom Protest Leben. Protest, der institutionalisiert wird, ist Unsinn [...]”

26 Fundamental for a reading in this light are the early 1970s works of Giacomo Marramao, later collected in Marramao 1979. Marramao also edited and wrote the introductory essay for the only Italian anthology of writings by Friedrich Pollock, see Pollock 1973. The works by Helmut Dubiel are also important, in particular his introduction to the Pollock (1975) collection. May I also refer in particular to chap. 2, “L’era del capitalismo di Stato: morfologia e genesi a partire da F. Pollock”, of my *Per il non conformismo* (Emery 2015, pp. 81 ff.), English translation forthcoming (see bibliography).

What Horkheimer is constantly concerned with in his later considerations on art is in short still, and coherently with the writing of 1941, the relationship between expression, taste judgment and realization of the *self-determination of life forms*. In other words, he is interested in claiming an essential nexus, one might say of distant Kantian derivation, between aesthetics and practical philosophy. Hence, on reading the thoughts in *Späne* and *Notizen* in this light, we should not simply criticize what might appear as an at times scandalously anti-immanentist approach, in particular if compared with the sharp observations of Adorno not least against the “totalitarian” abstractism of those who would have liked to abolish art (Adorno 2013, pp. 250 ff.), and the strong defense of the “aesthetic dimension” as a dimension of another *Schein* from the principle of reality formulated right until the end by Marcuse (like Adorno, also on a collision course with the artistic-political experiments of his time [see Marcuse 1979]).

An aphorism from *Notizen* seems to aim to respond *dialectically* to Marcuse’s apologia for the “aesthetic imagination” too:

Art sends beyond the material existence of the single work – not toward the dominant reality, but toward that unconditional element that is in a certain sense guaranteed by the work’s internal perfection and harmony. Every work attests to a different principle to that of the world [...]. And yet one cannot simply replace mass culture with art and find peace in the latter – in its harmony or discord. Indeed, art identifies with truth, and this forces us to deal with real praxis, the endless and unequal fight for every creature (Horkheimer 1974, p. 11; own translation).

Indeed, this states the decline of the role of the arts which is now deemed definitive. They *fatally* remain *arts alone, poiesis*. Significantly, these arts also include those more linked to the word, which is already very much about to become a mere “coin that counts” (Horkheimer 1988b, p. 291; own translation). The diagnosis of an aphorism from 1965 on the “Ende des Romans”, reduced to *entertainment*, starts from the denunciation, as also expressed in the previous “Die Rolle des Romans heute”, of the loss of the possibility of that “*Identifikation*” and “*Mitgefühl*” which in the era of the great novel and the great musical works could grow and become stronger to the point of becoming passion (*Leidenschaft*). Fundamentally, it could become a “faculty of movement” which, as Horkheimer highlights – despite his age by no means deaf to the message of the avant-gardes – could in some cases lead to “*politischen Aktivität*”.

Among the examples that this aphorism from 1965 provides on this matter, the one concerning the bond between the performance of the opera by Daniel Auber *La muette de Portici*, which narrates the revolt of Masianello, and the outbreak of the revolution in Belgium, is recognized as paradigmatic. Here the fragment of *Späne* further specifies that the staging of this work in Brussels, on 15

August 1830, “*kam es zu Aktionen*” (Horkheimer 1988, p. 397). In other words, it was carried on and directly resulted in action and revolutionary movement, making the theatrical performance – also for Arendt the art with most agency – into action on the streets and in the squares of Brussels, establishing the nation’s *self-determination*.

As is well known, in the 1960s, after Duchamp the attempt to go beyond art to make action was then formulated on many occasions, both at the theoretical and at the practical level, from Debord’s manifesto on the Situationist overcoming of art, to the *Sozialplastik* and *Aktionen* of Joseph Beuys and his many imitators (perhaps up to the present-day relational aesthetics, which is also not without its interesting reference to Kant, if we have not already gone beyond this too ...).

In any case, this is certainly not the only reason perhaps authorizing us to see something more, and something better, than a stuttering autobiographical projection of his own aging, in Horkheimer’s drastic diagnosis on the “blinding of Art”, as well as in his nostalgia for an “*es kam zu Aktionen*”.

Besides, it is precisely this moving to common action – this primacy of praxis and of the incomplete communitarian sense with its political agency over production and the mere *homo faber* – that Horkheimer and Pollock feared had historically now been put out of play. Starting from the Pollockian *Automation* their diagnosis as to this was totally clear. It is almost right at the start of *Späne* that they plainly state: “the downfall of the individual can be deduced from the economy [*Der Untergang des Individuums lässt sich aus der Ökonomie ableiten*]”. And under this title-theory, already complete in itself, one can read: “Catchword: the producers’ dictatorship over the consumers. Everyone is superfluous” (Horkheimer 1988b, p. 202; own translation).

Evidently, on this basis, Adorno’s stinging observation that “Whoever wants to abolish art cherishes the illusion that decisive change is not blocked” (Adorno 2013, p. 340) could not have been aimed at Max and Fred. At night, in Montagnola, perhaps even taking aim at Teddy, Max and Fred note:

The essence of *Neue Musik* can be clarified in five minutes. For Bach or Beethoven it takes many hours. The passionate criticism of contemporary civilization still grants it far too much honor. Resistance against the current order cannot be expressed through a more or less fine semblance [Schein], but only *through life itself* (Horkheimer 1988b, p. 349; own translation).<sup>27</sup>

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27 “Das Wesen der modernen Musik lässt sich in fünf Minuten erklären. Für Bach oder Beethoven braucht man viele Stunden. Die leidenschaftliche Kritik an der gegenwärtigen Zivilisation tut ihr noch viel zu viel Ehre an. Der Widerstand gegen die heutige Ordnung kann sich nicht

But, in this extreme proposition, seeing as “*what is taking place in the present cannot be rendered in words*”, does a return of the experience of the sublime not still occur? In other words, is there not an extreme revival, between aesthetics and politics, of the uncommunicable-unimplementable future community? The project of the aesthetic community, whose work is resolved and dynamically overcome in *criticism*, even returns in the last aphorism of the *Notizen* written by Horkheimer shortly before his death:

The importance of the individual is waning but in theory and practice, he may critically intervene in this development. Using up-to-date methods, he can contribute to the creation of collectives that are out-of-season, which can preserve the individual in genuine solidarity. The critical analysis of demagogues would be a theoretical, the union of men who psychologically, sociologically and technologically see through them, a practical element of nonconformism in the present (Horkheimer 1978, p. 240).

Hence, the aesthetic community and untimely collectivity are again, and forever more, called upon to find their reflection in a form of negation (non-conformist, non-identical, non-substantial, etc.), in an “unprejudiced, consistent and broad” search for critical languages.

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durch den mehr oder weniger schönen Schein, sondern nur durch das Leben selbst ausdrücken”.

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Serena Feloj

# Think for Oneself and Broad-Minded Thinking

Hannah Arendt on Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

## 1 Introduction

Over the last two decades, new and increasing interest for Kant's aesthetics, notably for the notion of judgment, has come to the fore in contemporary debates. Also in the realm of analytical philosophy (Consoli 2018), the topic of judgment has made a comeback among aesthetic questions and contributed to define, in reference precisely to Kant, the issue of aesthetic normativity (Ginsborg 2015; Zangwill 2014; De Clercq 2008; Budd 2007; Goldman 2006; Matravers/Levinson 2005; Feloj 2018). The 2001 collection of essays edited by Ronald Beiner and Jennifer Nedelsky, under the title *Judgment, Imagination and Politics*, makes clear to what extent the new millennium has expressed the need for a suitable theory of judgment, fulfilling the task of defining the nature and norms of judging (Beiner-Nedelsky 2001, p. x). In line with this purpose, and in the light of the contemporary debate, I will go back to Hannah Arendt's (1906–1975) interpretation of Kant's judgment, as the one which most thoroughly embarked in the scrutiny of how the transcendental subject performs judging.

Needless to say, Arendt's interpretation of Kant is far from being rigorous. At times it is even misleading, and several critical voices have raised – and could still be raised – against this kind of interpretative approach (Riley 1987; Flynn 1988; Schürmann 1989; Lories 1989; Buci-Glucksmann 1989).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, one should acknowledge the significant impact of Arendt's ideas on judgment on the general orientation of the reception of Kant's *Critique* in the second half of the twentieth century. Arendt should also be credited with a great interpretative intuition, that is to say the idea that the “critique of judgement”, as a topic and as a text, is concerned with the power of judgment in general, and not only with aesthetic judgment. Based on this assumption, Arendt takes the power of judgment as the condition for community life, thereby developing the topics of intersubjective communicability of reflective judgments and of exemplary valid-

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning the relationship between Arendt and Kant, Simona Forti mentions an “impossible conciliation” (Forti 2006, pp. 325–360).

ity. She thus gives prominence to a series of topics in Kant, such as the opposition between determinant judgment and reflective judgment; the subject of judgment as spectator; the broad-minded way of thinking, in connection to disinterest and freedom; the notion of “common sense”; the topic of the public use of one’s reason.

Furthermore, we mainly owe to Arendt’s contributions the pinpointing of two fundamental aspects in Kant’s aesthetic judgment, concerning which the contemporary debate identifies a core tension, that is to say the impossibility to give a veritative criterion to the evaluation and simultaneously the evidence that what is at stake is not a merely subjective and private judgment. Arendt’s suggested solution – clearly not backed up by Kant’s text – defines the aesthetic community gathered around the judgment by giving up on the regulative aspect, so to speak the promise of a communitarian union outlined by Kant’s text, in favor instead of an actual community. Within such a definition it is all the more important to establish a good balance between the first two maxims that according to Kant account for the aesthetic judgment: thinking for oneself and broad-minded thinking, in other words the autonomy of judgment and the ability to put oneself in everybody else’s standpoint. In the attempt to establish such balance, the aesthetic judgment brings out the distinctive features of what is human. Arendt’s interpretation, in fact, insists heavily on the anthropological aspects of Kant’s aesthetic and on the idea, already partially presented by Kant, that a definition of humanity should be sought in the form of judgments independent of truth and favoring the function of imagination. While also taking into account the output of the contemporary debate on aesthetic judgment and its normativity, I will endorse an account of Arendt’s interpretation emphasizing – more than the applicative and political elements of the community of taste – those elements defining the very nature of judgment.

Upon her sudden death on 4 December 1975, a sheet of paper titled “Judgment” was found in Hannah Arendt’s typewriter. The text was meant to complete *Thinking and Willing*, the already achieved first two parts of *The Life of the Mind*, posthumously published in 1978. Kant’s retrieval is here meant to answer the need to complete Arendt’s political theory by means of an investigation on judgment. J. Glenn Gray writes in this regard: “as Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* enabled him to break through some of the antinomies of the earlier critiques, so she hoped to resolve the perplexities of thinking and willing by pondering the nature of our capacity for judging” (Gray 1979, p. 225).

In 1970 Arendt held thirteen lectures on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, thus probably completing the groundwork of her account on the topic. Based on these lectures one gathers that, according to Arendt, judgment is the power of judging in particular circumstances. Judgment requires the ability to

distance oneself from something as well as impartiality, which entail for Arendt also freedom and the resolution of the antinomy freedom-nature. In this sense, judgment is the moral pivotal center of our community life; inasmuch as it is based upon shared feeling and imagining, it is what allows us to have open access to a condition of plurality. Here lies, according to Arendt in *Thinking*, the link between morality and politics. Judgment means political ability; it is “the most political of man’s mental abilities” (Arendt 1978, p. 193), inasmuch as it allows us to find orientation in the public space. It is ultimately what, against the dangers of indifference and abstention, gives political relevance to thinking.

## 2 The Universality of Aesthetic Judgment according to Kant

Typical tensions in Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, notably leading to the definition of the aesthetic judgment, concern mainly the two elements supporting the “Deduction of pure aesthetic judgments”: aesthetic necessity and subjective universality. The tension between necessity and universality on one side and subjective nature on the other should be understood within the framework of the definition of the reflective judgment, as clearly outlined in the “Introduction” to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. What is at stake is the formulation of judgments in the absence of abstract and determinant concepts; these judgments are based on particular, individual experience, and thereby support an order and a rule that must necessarily be subjective (CPJ, §IV, pp. 66–68 [Ak. V, pp. 179–181]). The aesthetic experience is then situated within the realm of reflection and not of logical knowledge. The indeterminacy of the real is faced by means of feelings. The aesthetic judgment is therefore the result of a reflection on the object whose representation is ‘necessarily’ connected to the feeling of pleasure. The necessary nature of the connection between the representation of the object and the feeling of the subject gives rise to several theoretical issues. However, it is precisely said necessity that allows the extension of the feeling of pleasure “not merely for the subject who apprehends this form but for everyone who judges at all” (CPJ, §VII, p. 76 [Ak. V, p. 190]). It is inevitably an empirical necessity, originating in the particular experience and “must always be cognized to be connected with this only through reflected perception” (CPJ, §VII, p. 77 [Ak. V, p. 191]); the judgment of taste is, in fact, singular, empirical, and contingent. Based on said necessity, then, “the judgment of taste, like every other empirical judgment, also only makes a claim to be valid for everyone, which,

in spite of its intrinsic contingency, is always possible” (CPJ, §VII, p. 77 [Ak. V, p. 191]).

The distinctive feature of the judgment of taste, what Kant calls “strange and anomalous”, is that “it is not an empirical concept but rather a feeling of pleasure (consequently not a concept at all) which, through the judgment of taste, is nevertheless to be [soll] expected of everyone and connected with its representation, just as if it were a predicate associated with the cognition of the object” (CPJ, §VII, p. 77 [Ak. V, p. 191]). Since aesthetic evaluations do not attach a predicate to the object, aware that beauty pertains to the subject’s feelings and not to things, the ‘should’ element ruling the experience of taste usually generates great puzzlement. How come that the same pleasure is *to be expected* from others face to the object? Kant’s way of putting it is very subtle. He does not imply that I have to show that the others should feel pleasure, but that I should be able to request from the others the same feeling I have. The goal is then not the achievement of an actual agreement, but only the setting of its possibility, based on a regulative principle and not on a constitutive one. Here lies one of the main elements of departure from Kant’s text when it comes to Arendt’s interpretation.

### 3 The Agreement among the Judging Community

While reiterating the distinctive ambiguity of the notion of taste in the eighteenth century (see Franzini 2012, pp. i–vii), Kant firmly believes that the faculty of aesthetic judgment is part of man’s natural endowment, but that it also requires education, development, and refinement. When defining common sense, as what warrants the universality and communicability of aesthetic feelings, Kant is adamant, in fact, that he takes the capacity for judging more as an acquired faculty (Guyer 1997, pp. 126–130) than as an original and natural trait.<sup>2</sup> In Kant, then, communicability and the community of taste pertain to a deeper level. Common sense is the a priori principle of taste and the communitarian nature of human beings is an irreplaceable reference point. What is at stake is clearly not a “natural sociability”, but the identification in the reflective element of a pre-cognitive openness that resembles the feeling of accordance with the objects, *as if* there was a correspondence between the given world and the subject experiencing it, a correspondence which triggers a vivification (*Belebung*) of the experience.

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<sup>2</sup> In this regard it is significant that in the *Lectures on Anthropology* Kant claims that, while feeling can occur spontaneously, taste, as capacity for judging based on feeling, must be acquired, despite its fundamental ground relies on the concept of humanity itself (V-Anth/Busolt, Ak. XXV/2, pp. 178–180).

It is then difficult to pinpoint the function of common sense, which is not based on experience, but rather makes it possible, and which does not even entail an actual community sharing judgments and opinions. The community here envisaged is more a possible community based upon the sharing of feelings.

In the theoretical and practical realms, the normativity of the law, respectively of natural laws and of the laws of reason, establishes the universality of the subject as member of the necessary community of the law. In the aesthetic realm, instead, the constitution of a community of feeling made of a plurality of subjects immersed in experience is required without any a priori normativity. It is then an ideal community: an intersubjectivity – an us – formed as an idea, through variations in imagination and eidetic comparisons: an intersubjectivity as need for relations with the others, where the subjects feels themselves by feeling the others. It is not then an already constituted community, but a mobile horizon constantly constituting and reconstituting itself. It is ultimately a ‘community to come’.

Through the ideal and undetermined normativity of the judgment of taste a possible community is outlined, the idea of which alone would make an actual community possible. It is in this sense that Kant identifies common sense as a universal condition and as the a priori possibility of feeling;<sup>3</sup> the subject is first of all the subject of feelings, and precisely thanks to the indeterminacy of feeling, the subject is able to conceive a community: “a man [reveals] a *broad-minded* way of thinking if he sets himself apart from the subjective private conditions of the judgment, within which so many others are as if bracketed, and reflects on his own judgment from a universal standpoint (which he can only determine by putting himself into the standpoint of others)” (CPJ, §40, p. 175 [Ak. V, p. 295]).

The normativity of judgment is thus coupled with an intrinsically non-normative experience, such as the aesthetic one, where the right use of thinking amounts to the ability of putting oneself in the standpoint of others, where sharing is not prescribed by law and it is not even a simulation of the others nor feeling the same thing. The aesthetic experience defines, instead, the capacity for universalizing one’s standpoint (and one’s feeling), so that the aesthetic ‘should’ relies on a notion of common sense, as theoretical ground of taste’s communicability, not justified by first order experience nor legitimized by the common sociability of people. From Kant’s point of view, it is rather a transcendental matter

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<sup>3</sup> Lyotard will write that “The feeling of beauty is the subject at an incipient stage” (Lyotard 1987, pp. 67–87).

aimed at avoiding the shortcomings of aesthetic skepticism, which is notably looming over the reflecting judgment due to its subjective character.

To the “Deduction of pure aesthetic judgments” is therefore entrusted the task of providing a transcendental justification to the universality of the judgment on beauty. Such a justification, as Kant himself concedes, appears rather simple, inasmuch as it is deemed responsible not for the objective reality of the judgment, but only for the subjective condition of those who judge. Kant is then able to lay out in few lines the transcendental foundation of the universality of taste. The capacity for judging concerns only the subjective conditions of taste, that is to say the faculty which can be legitimately assumed to be shared by every human being. In this respect, “the correspondence of a representation with these conditions of the power of judgment must be able to be assumed to be valid for everyone *a priori*, i.e., it can rightly be expected of everyone” (CPJ, §38, p. 170 [Ak. V, p. 290]).

Common sense displays a very peculiar transcendental character determining the overall quality of its deduction. It is indeed a quasi-transcendental principle, in other words a principle which does not concern the conditions of a possible experience, as it is the case within the realm of logical knowledge, but rather the (subjective) conditions for the actual achievement of an experience for the subject. Universality here is not based upon some human need for ‘tuning in’ with others, but it is ultimately based upon the concept of humanity as an end in itself. It is the fact that we share the same faculties that guarantees universality in a subjective judgment such as the reflective one. Shared humanity is what lays the ground for the public dimension of judgment, not the human need for communicating with one’s peers. Based on Kant’s perspective, in fact, the universal voice is not the prerequisite of judging, but rather its testing ground; similarly, subjective universality is a confirmation of the accordance between subjects’ faculties, not its origin. It is this sort of ‘subjective translation’ between the faculties of the intellect and of the imagination what makes the experience of beauty universally communicable; it is not the comparison with others that gives validity to the aesthetic feeling, as if its expression could guarantee its existence.

Differently, one can argue that, according to Kant, those who utter a judgment of taste feel like the spokespersons of a community; somehow they become a ‘super-individual’ voice in virtue of the element of humanity as an end in itself shared by all those who judge. The appeal of Kant’s proposal lies then in the pre-logic quality of the reflective judgment, in other words in the capacity to shape a feeling-based experience that can be shared by others, not based on common language, communicability or sociability, but based on the common capacity for feeling.

## 4 Hannah Arendt and Kantian Judgment: Common Sense as Community Sense

Arendt's interpretation hinges mainly upon the idea that taste should be defined in reference to "*Gemeinsinn*", understood as the feeling of primal opening onto the world, shared with the other subjects. To Arendt's account one should credit the merit of pointing out that the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is not only concerned with aesthetics and teleology, but it is devoted to the faculty of judgment in general. Also the title Arendt intended to give to her latest work, *Judging*, stands in all likelihood for an investigation going beyond aesthetics, beyond teleology, and assessing judgment as a whole. Arendt, furthermore, has significantly contributed to shedding light on the importance of the public use of one's reason as well as on the pivotal role of the "broad-minded way of thinking" in Kant's third *Critique*.<sup>4</sup>

In the "Post-scriptum" to *Thinking*, while stating her intention to devote the third part of her work to an account on judgment in Kant, Arendt states her wish to follow the hints of that "silent sense" that in the practical realm is called "conscience", this sense having a voice which "cannot be said to be 'silent'" (Arendt 1982, p. 4). The goal is then to define that 'universal voice' outlined by Kant in his aesthetic and provide it with a political function. While giving a – inevitably individual – body to such voice, though, one runs the risk to significantly weaken it, to the point of even depriving it of theoretical foundation.

Arendt firmly believes that the main elements of Kant's political philosophy are to be found more in the third *Critique* than in his *Political Writings* and, as to justify this idea, she makes reference to the notion of "sociability", which would be, according to Kant, indispensable for the good functioning of reason.<sup>5</sup> Based on Arendt's reading, the need for a social life and for the comparison with other human beings is, therefore, key to the correct understanding of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Hence, the fourth question Kant adds, in the *Logic*, to the three transcendental questions, that is to say "what is man?" should be understood as "why do men exist?". This is, according to Arendt, the leading problem

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4 On the public features of the judgment and on the peculiar communicability defining taste, see Fonnesu 2015.

5 Arendt's position on Kant's political thinking is hardly tenable today, also in the light of the contemporary debate. Among other studies conducted on Arendt, Beiner openly acknowledges that "Arendt is clearly dead wrong when she states in Lecture 10 that Kantian political philosophy must be reconstructed from the third *Critique* because his real political philosophy remained unwritten" (Beiner 2001, p. 93). See also Kateb 1999.



in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, a question concerning the existence and actual co-existence of men, which brings out the – very broadly speaking – political meaning of the third *Critique*. In this regard, Arendt writes:

the topics of the *Critique of Judgment* – the particular, whether a fact of nature or an event in history; the power of judgment as the faculty of man’s mind to deal with it; sociability of men as the condition of the functioning of this capacity, that is, the insight that men are dependent on their fellow men not only because of their having a body and physical needs but precisely for their mental faculties – these topics [are] all of them of eminent political significance – that is important for the political (Arendt 1982, p. 14).

Beside a political interpretation of the third *Critique*, this passage features as well the core element of discussion when it comes to Arendt’s interpretation, that is to say the idea that Kant’s theory of judgment is based upon men’s need to communicate with the others and that sociability is the prerequisite for the functioning of the capacity for judging.

Arendt gets even as far as to openly claim that “critical thinking, while still a solitary business, does not cut itself off from ‘all others’” (Arendt 1982, p. 43) and that the public nature of judgment should be taken as some sort of transcendental principle. Based on Arendt’s reading, the second maxim of judgment, that is to say the broad-minded way of thinking, takes over, or even suffocates, the other two maxims, i.e. thinking for oneself, and thinking with consistency. If, as she puts it, I’m required to judge as member of a community in the respect of others and of their opinions, even bracketing my own interest (Arendt 1982, p. 67), what space is left for the principle, dear to Kant, of *Selbstdenken*?

Arendt is certainly aware of the cosmopolitan nature Kant sees in universality and adds that, even though judging is enabled by belonging to a community, the reference here is to “a world community by the sheer fact of being human” (Arendt 1982, p. 75). However, it is not the common belonging to civilization what guarantees that our judgment is both universal and subjective; this is rather ensured by the sociability element, which, according to Arendt, is featured in the third *Critique* as the very origin of the civilization process, not as its goal. Within the framework of the above outlined sociologization and anthropologization of judgment (Lyotard 1987, p. 30), what Arendt’s reading tends to overlook is the possibility to provide a deduction of the rooting of judgment in common sense. All in all, Arendt claims that sociability and community sense lay the foundations of the judgment, but she does not explain how that is possible. An explanation is nevertheless due, all the more given that Kant himself states that taking sociability as foundation of judgment makes for ‘too weak’ of an interpretation.

Kant warns us against such an approach very clearly, when, after comparing sociability and likeability (§7), at §9, he claims:

that being able to communicate one's state of mind, even if only with regard to the faculties of cognition, carries a pleasure with it, could easily be established (empirically and psychologically) from the natural tendency of human beings to sociability. But that is not enough for our purposes. When we call something beautiful, the pleasure that we feel is expected of everyone else in the judgment of taste as necessary (CPJ, §9, p. 103 [Ak. V, p. 218]).

## 5 The Linguistic Nature of Judgment

What Arendt misses in her account of Kantian judgment is the need for an a priori foundation, in other words its transcendental quality, which ultimately defies its confinement within a singular, pre-constituted community. It is certainly true, as suggested by Arendt, that the judgment ends up forming a given community of those who judge; but it is also true, in Kant, that the strength of this community is ensured by the a priori relation among their faculties. It is the shared humanity element what establishes the public dimension of judgment, not the need of human beings to communicate with their peers. In order to back up her position, Arendt retrieves the notion of moral dignity. Sociability would then be guaranteed, in her reading, by considering man as an end in itself. Since men have no other end than themselves, sociability, that is to say considering the existence of other human beings, would be the 'end' of the existence of men understood as plurality.

On these premises, Arendt provides a schematic outline of the first part of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*:

men = earthbound creatures, living in communities, endowed with common sense, *sensus communis*, a community sense; not autonomous, needing each other's company even for thinking ("freedom of the pen") (Arendt 1982, p. 27).

Needed by men even to be able to think, sociability entails a notion of communicability of taste that, while having little to do with the Kantian ultimate end and the freedom of the will power, is connected to a more general Enlightenment-based theory of freedom, as freedom of speech and thought, echoed by Kant's claim that "reason is not made to stay in isolation but to join a commu-

nity”.<sup>6</sup> Arendt takes this claim against the backdrop of sociability. If it is impossible to communicate and have others assess one’s own thinking, then the judgment will lose validity, since, as Jaspers would say, truth is what I can communicate (Jaspers 1956). Although she relies on Kant’s philosophy for support, when it comes to the validity of thinking, Arendt’s position is the opposite of Kant’s. Whereas Arendt maintains that, in order to have universal validity, philosophy, and with it judgment, must have universal communicability (Arendt 1982, p. 62), according to Kant only a universally valid judgment can be communicated (CPJ, §V, p. 70 [Ak. V, p. 183]). At variance with Arendt’s interpretation, which deems language and expression fundamental for judging, Kant’s judgment possesses a pre-logos character, in other words the capacity to shape a feeling-based experience that can be shared by other subjects, not because of shared language, communicability, or sociability, but because of the common capacity for feeling.

Arendt detects the root of Kant’s critical thinking in the Socratic Plato, notably in the *logon didonai*, understood as being accountable to the others, as political act inevitably conveyed through language. It would be interesting, instead, to ask whether a political act could instead be pre-linguistic, acting in virtue of the ‘community of feeling’ expressed by that super-individual ‘universal voice’ that the intellectual categories of language can hardly grasp.

## 6 The Notion of *Weltbetrachter* and the Contemplative Position of the Aesthetic Judge

While developing her account of political acts based on Kant’s notion of judgment, Arendt traces an opposition between spectator and actor, and establishes a connection between the subjective finalistic principle and the progression of history, here interpreted – not without adding some Hegelian element to Kant – as “natural history”. Based on such a teleological understanding of history, the aesthetic judgment provides, according to Arendt, the model for any judgment on historical progression.

One should preliminary define the elements the judgment is made of: the judging person, what is judged, the author of what is judged. Consistently with the importance in her interpretation of the maxim on the broad-minded way of thinking, Arendt states that the judgment should be formulated from a general point of view. The viewpoint shall be that of the judging person, here taken as

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6 “Die Vernunft ist nicht dazu gemacht, daß sie sich isoliere, sondern in Gemeinschaft setze” (Refl, Ak. XV, refl. 897, p. 392). On Kant’s pluralism, see Hinske 1986.

“citizen of the world”, or even better as *Weltbetrachter*, world-spectator (Tavani 2010, pp. 147–196).

Being a spectator means to maintain distance from what is judged, such a distance being required for a truly disinterested judgment and in order to lay claim on universality. Distance in judgment is furthermore required in order to catch a glimpse of the providence’s design in the events, in order to achieve a 360-degree view on things, or even reach a wider perspective than what is achievable by the actor in the event.<sup>7</sup> By embracing this vantage point on history, the spectator is prompted to appropriate, in judging with greater priority than in acting, the Kantian maxim prescribing the private to become public (Newton 2014, pp. 271–290), thereby to act as if one’s maxim was to have universal validity. With this interpretation of the judgment on history, Arendt ratifies the privilege of the contemplative position compared to the *vita activa*, thus reiterating the opposition between speculation and praxis. The position of the judge is that of the spectator, who is the only one to hold impartiality (or disinterest, in the Kantian sense) on the event.

The output of this position becomes all the more clear when one examines a rather controversial problem, not only for Arendt but also for Kant, such as that of war. In the practical realm, war is condemned by Kant; however, for the spectator, who does not experience it but only contemplates it, say in artistic representation or literary account, war can even become sublime.<sup>8</sup> The aesthetic considerations that one can draw from the contemplation of a battle have indeed no consequence on the practical realm and, yet, Arendt claims, the disinterested spectator can understand that war might serve the progress of civilization, in other words, again according to Arendt, that “the secret ruse of nature” exists (Arendt 1982, p. 8).

The spectator shall be the only one who is able to see, better to judge, history as a whole, where “the true hero of this spectacle is mankind in the ‘series of generations proceeding’ into some ‘infinity’”, in the direction of peace and freedom (Arendt 1982, p. 58). In the judgment on history, imagination – here defined as the power to make what is absent present – has an essential role, inasmuch as it does not directly reflect on the object but on the representation, thus creating the required distance for judging. The spectators are not directly involved in the

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<sup>7</sup> In the description of the figure of the spectator, one perceives a hint to the Eichman case, which is discussed in Arendt 2006.

<sup>8</sup> “Even war, if it is conducted with order and reverence for the rights of civilians, has something sublime about it, and at the same time makes the mentality of the people who conduct it in this way all the more sublime, the more dangers it has been exposed to and before which it has been able to assert its courage” (CPJ, §28, p. 146 [Ak. V, p. 263]).

facts; the events do not make for their lived present, but they are rather the product of re-elaboration in imagination, so that “by removing the object, one has established the conditions for impartiality” (Arendt 1982, p. 67).

Hence, according to Arendt, one establishes with history the same relation established between the genius and the formulation of taste. Outlined at paragraph 49 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, the genius is according to Kant the creating artist, that is to say the artist giving shape to the aesthetic idea thanks to an exceptional talent. However, whereas the genius corresponds to a natural talent, which cannot be taught and that is out of the ordinary, everybody has the capacity for judging and the capacity for taste. Unlike creative abilities, then, taste, as pertaining to the spectator, is prior to genius, but a prerequisite for the judgment on beauty. Based on the so-outlined relation between the genius and the man of taste who judges, it is also possible to understand one more feature of the spectator as presented by Arendt. Face to history, those who become spectators have no exceptional talent nor qualify as out of the ordinary; on the contrary, anyone, because of their being human, can be judge and spectator, by taking advantage of a distanced and disinterested position on history. As it is the case for Kant’s sublime, also the most horrendous phenomena can become the object of aesthetic contemplation, if those who judge are safe and, in the end, are also disinterested in the existence of the object. This is how, according to Arendt, the spectator can judge history with the necessary neutrality.

While in her assessment of the relation between taste and spectator Arendt can be said to be faithful to Kant’s text, in her remarks on the function of genius, prominence is once more given to communicability, thus invalidating any possible a priori foundation. As already Kant would have said, the capacity of genius amounts to giving a representation to phenomena for which we have no words. The genius is then able to express the unfathomable, that is to say the idea.<sup>9</sup> According to Arendt, this is proof of the importance of communicability in judgment, once more rooted in the intersubjective possibilities of language and in sociability. Kant’s remarks, however, revolve around the assessment of the limits of language and the impossibility to put the idea in words. The work of art of the genius could on the contrary be considered as a way to circumvent the difficulties of language connected to logical categories, and to express, not through

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<sup>9</sup> The aesthetic idea is for Kant “a representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., *concept*, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no language fully attains or can make intelligible” (CPJ, §28, p. 146 [Ak. V, p. 314]).

words but artistically, the unfathomable, which otherwise would no longer be such.<sup>10</sup> It is from this pre-linguistic nature that artistic beauty draws its symbolic power, and precisely its capacity to express a feeling by means of the work of art makes beauty the symbol of morality, thus guaranteeing the systematic unity that Kant aims to establish in the third *Critique* by means of the power of judgment.

Also in her account of the relation between spectator and actor, or between taste and genius, Arendt overlooks the systematic function of the judgment, which is required to give reality to the idea or, in Kantian terms, to mediate between nature and freedom. In this sense, the capacity for judging provides a systematic unity to the actual experience and thus provides a basis for communicability, this latter standing for a notion of shared experience supported by judgment, not the other way round.

## 7 Open Questions

All things considered, Arendt's interpretation of the third *Critique* not only marks an essential step in the reception of this text in the twentieth century, but also brings to the fore a set of theoretical problems that still contribute to animating the contemporary debate. From my account of Arendt's *Lectures*, one should be able to see that their distinctive trait lies not only in the interpretative emphasis on the political function of Kant's aesthetic community, but also in the empirical foundation Arendt gives to the sharing of taste. Whereas in the light of the most recent studies on Kant's political writings it is clearly difficult to make the third *Critique* responsible for conveying Kant's political thinking, it is instead fruitful to give further thought to Arendt's distinctive forfeiting of the transcendental foundation, which, from different angles, seems to qualify also other contemporary readings.

The aesthetic community, as outlined by Kant, in virtue of the regulative nature identifying the judgment of taste, qualifies as a promise. What is at stake is not the description of an actual community, but rather reaching an agreement on the sole warranty of the idea.<sup>11</sup> Differently, as she aims to describe how culture and politics converge, Arendt embraces a realistic perspective, which under some respects limits the validity of the Judgment.

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<sup>10</sup> On the topic of the unfathomable in Kant, see Derrida 1981, pp. 2–25.

<sup>11</sup> Lyotard stresses the role of the regulative idea of nature operating in the direction of freedom and defines Kant as an analogist, as opposed to Arendt's realism (Lyotard 1991, p. 69).

As Beiner has aptly emphasized, Arendt's attempt to complete Kant's morality with aesthetics fails to acknowledge the role of the moral idea as common foundation of both practical reason and aesthetic judgment. Similarly, Arendt is reluctant to admit that aesthetic concepts are not responsible for connecting the judgment to empirical sociality, as they rather correspond to a transcendental activity. Beiner labels then Arendt's account as a detranscendentalization of Kant's aesthetics (Beiner 2001, pp. 95–96).<sup>12</sup> In this regard, Arendt's valorization of thinking in the standpoint of others, which is the mode of thinking favoring the constitution of the community, runs the risk of weakening the thinking for oneself, which instead is the basis for the autonomous exercise of taste and which makes us independent of the judgment of others.<sup>13</sup> As remarked also by Jennifer Nedelsky, in the controversial combination of broad-minded thinking and thinking for oneself outlined by Arendt's interpretation, the question about diversity is left open. To what extent is the aesthetic community, empirically defined by Arendt on the basis of sociability, able to guarantee the respect of diversity? (Nedelsky 2001, p. 116).

The weakening of the Kantian judgment is also expressed by the tendency to favor a general validity of judgment, rather than its universal validity, as well as by Arendt's matter of fact containment of the judgment to the spectator only, thus failing to aim for real universality (Beiner 2001, pp. 98–100). Kant's notion of common sense makes display of a very peculiar transcendental character which also influences its deduction. It qualifies indeed as a quasi-transcendental principle, in other words a principle that does not concern the conditions of a possible experience, as it is the case within the domain of logical knowledge, but rather the (subjective) conditions of the actual achievement of the subject's experience. The subjective nature of common sense does not imply, however, that it fails to be transcendental; it is on the contrary in virtue of its transcendental nature that common sense can be taken as the principle regulating the conditions of achievement of the subject's experience.

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**12** Beiner detects the same detranscendentalizing behavior also in Rawls' reading of Kant's ethics.

**13** See Kant's example of the young poet: "hence a young poet does not let himself be dissuaded from his conviction that his poem is beautiful by the judgment of the public nor that of his friends, and, if he does give them a hearing, this is not because he now judges it differently, but rather because, even if (at least in his view) the entire public has a false taste, he nevertheless (even against his judgment) finds cause to accommodate himself to the common delusion in his desire for approval. Only later, when his power of judgment has been made more acute by practice, does he depart from his previous judgment of his own free will, just as he does with those of his judgments that rest entirely on reason" (CPJ, §32, p. 162 [Ak. V, p. 282]).

Differently, Arendt takes away from common sense its transcendental justification. On the one hand she seems to derive it from the very experience it is called to legitimize; on the other hand, she seems to infer it from the very sociability Kant deems insufficient to explain its universality. Arendt thus brings Kant to a new form of empiricism,<sup>14</sup> underpinning an understanding of the subject as single person and not as transcendental function.

Arendt's reading might well make Kant's notion of aesthetic judgment weaker, however it should not be underestimated. Although in some respects possibly already obsolete, Arendt's interpretation remains valid still today on two interconnected grounds, one theoretical and one historical. First, Arendt's account allows us to find in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* new research perspectives, leading to the original re-elaboration of those elements of Kant's aesthetics that are still valuable today, such as the *sensus communis* and the genius. Second, Arendt's account has had the merit of producing an intense debate, which after the 1970s has brought to a renaissance of the studies on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Arendt's interpretation of the *sensus communis* has in fact been retrieved and developed by Habermas, widely criticized by Lyotard, who would deny the political function of Kant's aesthetics,<sup>15</sup> again echoed by Gadamer, who argues with Habermas about the *sensus communis*, and it is still prominent in Ricœur's account. While keeping in mind the limits of her interpretation, one should at least acknowledge Arendt's merits in shedding light on the significant difficulties entailed by the "Deduction of pure aesthetic judgments", which according to Kant is instead "so easy" (CPI, §38, p. 170 [Ak. V, p. 290]).

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**14** Against this idea, Degryse has recently argued that the "empiricalisation" or "detranscendentalisation" attributed to Arendt should be taken differently, that is to say with the perspectival evolution of Arendt's thinking: "I claim that Arendt's empiricalization must be understood differently than it has been thus far. Her interpretation of Kant's *sensus communis* especially is not only impressively original but also extremely important for her philosophy in general, as it establishes human beings as political beings. Unfortunately, her interpretation of *sensus communis* as community sense has often been overlooked or misunderstood" (Degryse 2011, p. 346).

**15** Reference goes, in particular, to the essay "Sensus communis", but also to the texts "Survivant" and *Le Différend*.



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Patrice Canivez

# Eric Weil's Reading of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

## 1 Introduction

Eric Weil (1904–1977) develops his reading of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in his book entitled *Problèmes kantians* (1963), a collection of studies dealing with Kant's three *Critiques* and the problem of radical evil in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. The analysis of the third *Critique* takes place in the chapter entitled "Meaning and Fact [*Sens et fait*]". This analysis is of a particular importance for two reasons. First, it is a major contribution to the understanding of the third *Critique*. Second, it helps to understand Weil's own philosophical project. According to Weil, Kant's major discovery is a philosophy of meaning that breaks away with the philosophy of being, although the conceptual language that Kant uses in order to formulate his discovery obscures it. Eric Weil's project, especially in his *Logique de la philosophie* (1950), is in line with this reading of the third *Critique*. More generally, there are two points of entry in Weil's philosophy. The first is the problem of violence, which has been investigated in significant studies.<sup>1</sup> The second point of entry is the question of meaning, which is central in Weil's interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. The present analysis aims at gaining a better understanding of this interpretation. It also aims at clarifying the way in which Weil's *Logique de la philosophie* may be seen as a follow up on Kant's third *Critique*.

## 2 Eric Weil's Analysis of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

According to Eric Weil's reading, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* may be summed up as bridging the gap between nature and liberty, between science and the moral law. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the solution lies in the distinction between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself. Science and natural necessity relate to the domain of the phenomenal, freedom and morality to that of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Kirscher 1989, 1999, 2017; Perine 1987, Perine/Costeski 2016; Strummiello 2001; Guibal 2011; Canivez 1998, 1999.

noumenal. The distinction between the two domains enables Kant to circumvent the contradiction between necessity and liberty. Modern science can neither prove nor refute the ideas of man's liberty, of God's existence, and of the soul's immortality. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant further argues that the moral imperative commits us to admit these ideas because they permit us to think through the accomplishment of moral duty as a meaningful and meaning-giving endeavor. The reconciliation between man's natural desire, which is to achieve happiness, and man's moral duty, which is to aim at virtue, is guaranteed by the "accepted and affirmed existence of God" (Weil 2002, p. 58)<sup>2</sup>.

However, the solution achieved in the first and second *Critiques* is merely *negative* in the sense that the contradiction between necessity and liberty, nature and moral autonomy, is merely avoided. A gap remains between nature and liberty. Duty requires us to pursue moral ends in a world that is structured by the mechanism of the laws of nature. In such a world, we have control over our decisions but we have none over their effects. The effects depend on nature's mechanism. Eric Weil rephrases the problem in terms of the relationships between facts and meaning. How can meaningful (moral) ends be pursued in a world of meaningless (natural) facts? The *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* do not answer the question, because they still see facts and meaning as worlds apart (Weil 2002, p. 96, n. 34). According to the first and the second *Critiques*, we can think of these worlds as coexisting in such a way that the one (nature seen as a mechanism) is subordinated to the other (the pursuit of moral ends). Nevertheless, facts and meaning are still viewed as two separate domains. This is why the solution achieved in the first two *Critiques* is not fully satisfying. Moral action must be understood as an action in the full sense of the word. That moral ends must be pursued is a categorical imperative. That these ends may be achieved requires a new approach to nature. It is not enough to *know* nature's mechanism. We must *understand* nature in a way that leaves room for finality, for the realization of meaning-giving ends. The aim is "to elucidate this passage between theory and practice, between knowledge and decision, which [...] is constituted by the concept of an end being achieved, of the present and immediately perceived finality" (Weil 2002, p. 65). This is the task of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* – a title that Eric Weil renders in French by *Critique de la judiciaire*.

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<sup>2</sup> In the following, I quote from the recent translation of Weil's *magnum opus*, *Logique de la philosophie*. I thank the translator, Sequoya Yiaueki, for authorizing the use of this English version. Quotations from Weil's other works have been transposed into English by myself.

In this view, the major discovery of the third *Critique* is the existence of facts that are meaningful in themselves. This discovery opens the way for reconciling the world of facts and that of meaning. However, the reconciliation is not a matter of a conceptual construction or reconstruction – a method that Weil broadly brands as “constructivism”. What is discovered in the third *Critique* is a layer of human experience where facts and meaning are not separate, a layer at which meaning and fact do not have to be reconciled because they are not yet opposed. Consequently, the method must be analytical as opposed to “constructivist”. What needs to be analyzed is this deeper and more primary experience of the world. At this level the world of facts and that of meaning are one and the same.

The *Critique of the Judiciary* [...] wants to understand meaningful facts, not only meaningless facts organized by science, not only, at the level of practical reason, a meaning that is always postulated and eternally separated from the facts (eternally, since, even in the after-life, the individual does not cease being finite, limited, and therefore always imperfect and in progress); now, meaning is a fact, facts have a meaning, this is the fundamental position of the third *Critique* (Weil 2002, pp. 64–65).

The facts in question are the beautiful and the sublime in nature, genius in the various arts, and living organisms. Such facts awaken the faculty of judgment, which is concerned with the search for finality. What is at stake is the possibility of comprehending the world in its concrete reality. In order to achieve this task, a specific faculty is required. Because the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition and the understanding's categories account for the structure of our knowledge, they do not determine its concrete content. Practical reason tells us what we must do. But the moral law is merely formal and the content of our actions depends on external and internal data (needs, social constraints, desires, etc.). Thus, when “it comes to the real world, understanding and reason are not qualified to prescribe laws to phenomena insofar as they have concrete content” (Weil 2002, p. 62). That is why another faculty must account for our ability to comprehend the world as it appears to us as endowed with a concrete structure. This faculty is the faculty or power of judgment.

Weil then analyzes the two forms of finality: the subjective finality, which appears under the forms of the beautiful and the sublime, and the objective finality, which presents itself in the form of living organisms. Beauty provokes the free play of imagination and understanding that is experienced as aesthetic pleasure. But the beautiful is without concept: in the presence of beauty we sense the world to be meaningful, though this meaningfulness cannot be captured in a definite concept. Weil then notes, in what he presents as a legitimate extrapolation of Kant's thesis, that the experience of beauty evolves in time and is expressed in different ways in diverse cultures (Weil 2002, p. 74 and note 11). We will need to

recall this remark when considering the relationships between Weil's reading of the third *Critique* and his own *Logique de la philosophie*. As for the sublime, which Weil renames the *grandiose* because the German word ("*das Erhabene*") stresses its overwhelming character, Weil notes that it consists in a relationship between the imagination and practical reason in which we experience the awesome strength of nature along with the even greater power of practical reason.

What is at stake in the sense of beauty and the feeling of sublime is the interplay between the human faculties. In communicating our aesthetic experience to others we presume that they experience the same interplay. In other words, we affirm that all human beings have the same cognitive structure. Such structural identity makes communication possible and grounds the claim to universal consent, a claim that is neither demonstrable nor questionable. Eventually, artistic genius creates beauty and thus "produces a new language of emotions" (Weil 2002, p. 72). The new language's possible "reception" is also accounted for by mankind's unity from the viewpoint of its mental structure: "it is the *de facto*, non-deducible unity in the constitution of humankind that accounts for the action of genius" (Weil 2002, p. 72). All these experiences – aesthetic pleasure, the feeling of the sublime, the creativity of genius – bear witness to the fact that nature itself makes possible the unity of mankind and even its cultural development. "Humanity is one, individuals can communicate, because nature has endowed them with the same faculties, the same inner organization, the same relationships between their forces; it is nature that makes men's humanity possible and real" (Weil 2002, p. 73).

As for the living being, it presents itself as a structure that differs essentially from the things whose form merely results from nature's mechanism. Yet, living organisms belong to nature. Within the realm of nature, they point to something that is irreducible to nature's mechanism: an internal finality, a relationship to oneself (Weil 2002, p. 76). A living organism is a thing that is both the cause and effect of itself. It contributes to the reproduction of its species. It also reproduces itself in the sense that its parts mutually support each other. Although our knowledge of these bodies consists in identifying the chemical and physical mechanisms that enable them to function, we need to apply an idea of inner finality in order to grasp the way they function. Whereas the beautiful and the sublime are ends *in themselves*, living organisms are ends *for themselves*. In both cases, however, it is nature itself that makes us ask the question of the end pursued.

Once this question has arisen, it not only concerns the living organisms, it also relates to the world considered as a whole. In this world we encounter realities that awake in us the idea of nature's purpose. Since we are the beings that ask the question, we have good reasons to believe that our very existence is the

purpose. In this view, human beings might be nature's ultimate end (*letzter Zweck*). However, we can think of man as being "nature's *natural* master" (Weil 2002, p. 82). In this case, mankind would be the most gifted of all species, but it would still be an animal species among all the others. Man's predominance over the other species does not mean that he is particularly favored by nature. On the contrary, human beings are exposed to natural misfortunes to which they add the sufferings of their own making. As Rousseau pointed out, civilization develops through conflicts and social distress. Obviously, man's happiness is not nature's purpose. In fact, if the human individual were nothing but this allegedly superior animal, nature as a whole would seem to have no purpose at all. For nature to have a purpose, the human being must be its final end (*Endweck*) in the sense of an end that transcends nature itself. Such an end is the human individual considered as a moral being. A subject that sets the goal for itself of progressing towards moral autonomy gives meaning to its own existence as well as to that of the whole of nature. In other words, natural teleology and moral theology complement each other. The question of meaning can only be answered by practical reason. This is because meaning relates to both ends and value. It is not merely the ends that human action pursues that give it meaning, it is the value of these ends, which for Kant is moral. Therefore, only moral ends give full meaning to human action. The pursuit of these ends requires a practical faith, that is, a faith that is grounded in reason. More accurately, moral action involves the belief that the world is not the mere work of some watchmaker but is organized in view of moral ends. At this point, however, Kant's moral theology takes a significant turn. Moral theology is no longer so much linked to the need of conceiving of the reconciliation between virtue and happiness. God is there to guarantee that moral action is not in vain, that we can make real progress towards the realization of the "kingdom of ends". However, moral theology having the upper hand over natural teleology does not mean that natural teleology is superfluous and meaningless. On the contrary, the third *Critique's* important discovery is that nature is not merely *knowable* as a law-governed mechanism: it is also *understandable* as a meaningful whole. In other words, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* rediscovers the concept of a cosmos. But Kant's cosmos is not an object of pure *theoria* or speculative thinking. It appears as a well-ordered world only in the eyes of the moral subject. It is the response to the human quest for meaning and action, that is, for meaningful action. Moreover, human beings ask the question of meaning because nature itself makes them ask it. Not only does nature attune to the structure of the human mind, it also awakens a sense of purposiveness in the human being. It is nature itself that makes us human.



Hence, Kant's rediscovery of the concept of a cosmos presents us with another specificity. The understanding of nature as a well-ordered whole leads to a reflection on history. Nature awakens a sense of purposiveness in the human being's mind. But it is also nature that prompts the development of the faculties that enable men to answer the question and act in accordance with the answer. Mankind's natural condition is such that men are compelled to develop their technical and pragmatic dispositions. This is achieved through conflicts between groups and individuals, through the mechanism of the "unsociable sociability". Here again, nature's goal is not to secure the human being's happiness; it is the development of its abilities. Thus, the process of civilization is a natural process. It is in line with nature's dynamics and intent. However, the process has no worth in itself. Civilization has value inasmuch as it prepares the next stage of mankind's development: the cultivation of its moral disposition. This does not mean that nature ensures that all human individuals are bound to become moral. Whatever the stage of human development, morality implies the free choice of progressing towards moral autonomy.

Weil's conclusion is that the third *Critique* succeeds in solving the problem that it sets out to resolve. As it appears in our encounter with meaningful facts and with the fact of meaning, we experience the world as "comprehensible" before trying to seize it in scientific terms. "We come to understand, we can seek to understand because any act of new understanding is only the explanation of a previous, more obscure understanding ... the path of reflection is traced in a world that already has a structure for us, in which we are already oriented" (Weil 2002, p. 90). Hence, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* fulfills Kant's fundamental quest, which is the quest for comprehension. The theory of scientific knowledge is subordinated to the wider task of grasping the world as a meaningful reality. The task concerns understanding reality as a meaningful whole and the very possibility of such understanding. Moreover, the question of meaning is inseparable from the question of action. The question concerns the world as a whole and the significance of human action in this world. Both aspects are closely linked. The world appears as a meaningful whole only from the point of view of moral action. What is of importance here is not only the moral viewpoint. It is also the anthropological implications of the notion of *action*. Action only makes sense for a finite being, that is, a being that is not God, that does not master the entire course of events, that makes choices and faces unforeseen consequences. In a word, action characterizes the mode of existence of a being that is both "reasonable and finite". A philosophy of meaning is thus inseparable from a philosophy of action. Consequently, a philosophy of meaning is only possible and only makes sense from the human being's viewpoint, not from God's. "The world has meaning and value to the extent, and only to the extent, that

man establishes himself, in his action and by his decision, as meaning by making his own life meaningful" (Weil 2002, pp. 91–92). According to Kant – or as a consequence of Kant's way of thinking, as Weil understands it – there is no philosophy from God's viewpoint. "We must neither look to make a philosophy from God's point of view, nor any claim to omniscience" (Weil 2002, p. 100). This does not mean that the notion of God is meaningless. But God is God *for man*: The moral quest for meaning and meaningful action is the precondition for the world to appear as a cosmos. The quest is also a precondition for God to reveal himself. "In a creation deprived of free beings, [God] would be inconceivable, unconceived-of, and dead. Man is indeed the image of God the creator, but the image of an original that exists only for this image and, in this sense, only through this image of his own creativity: by creating man, God creates himself in man" (Weil 2002, p. 101).

According to this reading, the third *Critique's* achievement is far reaching. In Eric Weil's view, Kant's discovery of the reality of meaning is a turning point in the history of western philosophy. However, it is also Weil's assessment that Kant, in a sense, downplays his own achievement. Weil contends that Kant does not clearly affirm that the problem of the third *Critique* is solved: he is doing "everything to hide a result that he had nonetheless announced at the beginning" (Weil 2002, p. 94). Weil sees two reasons for that. The first reason is that Kant does not want his solution to be misinterpreted, that is, construed as a renewed version of dogmatism. He does not want the "theology of reason" to be interpreted as a new form of theoretical knowledge. In this case, respecting moral duty would be a way of complying with God's will and we would regress into moral heteronomy. Consequently, Kant had to prevent the risk of his discoveries being interpreted in the terms of ancient metaphysics. He thus "did everything possible to weaken his proof" (Weil 2002, p. 95). However, there is a second reason for the third *Critique's* puzzling outcome. Kant's point of departure is that there are meaningful facts. For Kant however, these facts are purely fortuitous. There is nothing necessary in the existence of natural beauty and living organisms. The fact that we experience the world as a meaningful reality is itself fortuitous. Therefore, our comprehension of the world and of ourselves is not really grounded. Inasmuch as it is purely contingent, the fact of meaning is in fact meaningless. According to Weil, the consequence is inevitable and puts Kant's entire line of argument into question through a sort of *reductio ad absurdum*. "That meaning be but a fortuitous fact, that everything making the reality of thought conceivable be fortuitous ... all this is unacceptable" (Weil 2002, p. 103).

Although Weil does not put it that way, the whole issue concerns the signification of the word "fact". On the one side, a fact is a reality that is neither deduced nor created, but simply acknowledged. In this sense, the third *Critique's*

discovery is crucial. There are meaningful facts, that is: meaning is a fact. There is a meaningfulness of reality and a reality of meaning. We are never faced with a “neutral” given to which a meaning should be attributed.<sup>3</sup> On the other side, empirical facts are contingent. Any empirical state of things could be different. Since beautiful things and living beings are part of our empirical experience, Kant considers them to be fortuitous. However, it is the existence of meaningful facts such as beauty and life that awakens our power of reflection and eventually leads us to understand the world as a meaningful whole. Therefore, the fact that we come to understand the world as a meaningful reality is itself fortuitous. Hence, the meaningfulness of the world is not fully grounded. It is a mere possibility that is in need of a foundation. In order to make sense of our experience of the world we need to turn to a supra-natural foundation of nature as a whole. Kant needs such a foundation to vouch for the *reality* of meaning. The third *Critique* thus succeeds in solving the problem of bridging the gap between facts and meaning, but this result is obscured by the way Kant presents it. The gap between facts and meaning is, at the same time, overcome and maintained.

In Weil’s view, this is due to the “conceptual language” that Kant uses when formulating his results. Weil justifies this assessment in two different but complementary ways. In the first chapter of *Problèmes kantien*s, he refers to his *Logique de la philosophie* and speaks of a “reprise” of the philosophical category of the *conscience* under that of the *condition*. In the third chapter, which deals with the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, he speaks of a philosophy of meaning being formulated in the language of a philosophy of being. With respect to the first diagnosis, what Weil means by “reprise” is “the grasp of the new in an old language, the only one at the innovator’s disposal (who nevertheless transforms it) and, above all, the only language in which he can make himself understood to his contemporaries” (Weil 2002, p. 19, n. 4). In other words, the concept of reprise expresses the fact that a new way of understanding the real, a new mode of thought, is being formulated – “repeated” – in the conceptual language that characterizes the mode of thought being surpassed by the new one. This is due to the difficulty of breaking off from the old conceptual framework. It takes time to elaborate the concepts and the kind of logic that adequately articulate the new way of philosophizing. This is also due to the problem of “reception”: the new philosophy must be formulated in the language of its time in order to be understood and accepted. Philosophical breakthroughs happen by formulat-

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<sup>3</sup> This is one of the issues that give rise to Weil’s discussion with Max Weber. See Weil 2000b, chap. 12.

ing new ideas in the language of old ones, at the risk of being misinterpreted by contemporaries and by the following generations.

Specifying the kind of “reprise” that characterizes a given philosophical discourse means identifying the two forms of conceptual language involved: the one that is being surpassed and the one that surpasses it (nonetheless initially being formulated in the language of the former). According to Weil’s terminology, the notion of a “conceptual language” corresponds to the concept of a philosophical category. A philosophical *category* is a form of coherent discourse that develops the implications of a central concept. This central concept expresses what is experienced as “essential” in a lived *attitude*, that is, in a certain way of existing, of relating to the world, to oneself and the others. Eric Weil makes a distinction between *philosophical* and *metaphysical* categories, the latter being the categories in the Aristotelian or Kantian sense. Metaphysical categories account for the possibility of science. They are metaphysical in the sense of meta-scientific. Philosophical categories account for the possibility of philosophy itself, that is, they account for the possibility of comprehending the real as a meaningful whole. There is a relation of dependence between the two types of category: metaphysical categories have different meanings according to the form of discourse that rule their usage. The concept of causality, for instance, does not have the same meaning and is not used in the same way within the framework of modern science and within that of medieval astrology – a topic that was of particular interest for the young Weil (Weil 2000c; Deligne 2007). Philosophical categories thus give a definite meaning to metaphysical categories and rule their usage according to this meaning. Reciprocally, the way metaphysical categories are used within this form of discourse makes explicit the meaning of the philosophical category, a trait that legitimates a reading of *Logique de la philosophie* in a pragmatist and expressivist perspective such as Sequoya Yiaueki’s (Yiaueki forthcoming).<sup>4</sup>

In *Logique de la philosophie* the philosophical category of the *condition* corresponds to the way modern science and positivist philosophy grasp the real. The philosophical category of the *conscience* corresponds to the form of coherent discourse where the moral conscience – the primacy of practical reason – plays a central role. The idea of a “reprise” of the *conscience* under the *condition* may be interpreted in different ways. But the most obvious interpretation is that Kant formulates his concept of experience in a way that is dominated by the language of modern science. Science aims at discovering nature’s necessary laws.

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<sup>4</sup> This reading is compatible with other interpretations. Peter Gaitsch, for instance, has developed an insightful phenomenological reading of *Logique de la philosophie*. See Gaitsch 2014.

However, the data of empirical experience are contingent. They belong to the sphere of the *possible*. In contrast, the *necessity* that characterizes scientific knowledge comes from the *a priori* framework of the understanding. When formulated with reference to this contrast between the possible and the necessary, any concrete experience falls on the side of the possible. Thus, Kant's conceptual language compels him to view the existence of meaningful facts as fortuitous. Consequently, the existence of such facts must be related to some underlying structure or transcendent being.

This weakening of the significance of our experience of reality results from the fact that a philosophy of meaning centered on the concept of the moral conscience – a moral conscience that understands itself as living and acting in a meaningful world – is being formulated in a conceptual language that is still dominated by the modern idea of science. In the conclusion of his essay on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, however, Weil formulates his assessment of Kant's philosophical project in a different way. Instead of speaking of a reprise of the philosophical category of the *conscience* under that of the *condition*, he now considers that Kant develops a philosophy of meaning in the language of being.

Kant speaks a language that is neither adequate to its solution nor even to the problem that he was the first, perhaps the only one, to pose: the problem of the meaning that is, of existing meaning. His language remains that of the philosophy of being – and meaning is not if *being* refers, even if as their foundation, to objects. What he discovers is that any being of things can only be understood on the basis of a real, existing meaning, prior to any fact and any given [...]. But Kant does not dare to explicitly move from a philosophy of being (back into which Hegel will fall ...) to a philosophy of meaning (Weil 2002, p. 105).

What does Weil mean by the formula “philosophy of being”? The phrase refers in part to the idea of knowing things as they are “in themselves”. In this view, a philosophy of being would be a philosophy from God's viewpoint – that of the *intellectus archetypus* –, which is inaccessible to human beings. More specifically, a philosophy of being accounts for what exists by relating it to a being that is *necessary* (Weil 2002, p. 95, n. 34). According to Weil, Kant moves away from such a philosophy but he does not do so explicitly. He does not abandon the “language” of being. This is because he needs a transcendent foundation for the “fact of meaning”. Since this fact is contingent, it requires a foundation to guarantee that our encounter with meaningful facts *really* is meaningful. Therefore, the reformulation of Kant's discovery in the language appropriate to it must start with saying that our experience of the world is fundamental in the strictest sense. This experience is not in need of a foundation. The experience, that is, our pre-comprehension of reality, is itself the foundation. As we have seen, Weil con-

tends that we never experience the real as a “neutral” given. On the contrary, the idea of such a neutral given is a product of our reflection. We experience the given as a meaningful reality that gives us something to think in the most literal sense. It is only on the basis of this experience that we can start thinking. The experience of such *reality* is prior to any distinction between the *possible* and the *necessary* (Weil 2000b, I, p. 316).

### 3 Eric Weil's *Logique de la philosophie* and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

In order to get a better grasp of what Weil means by a philosophy of meaning that breaks loose from the language of being, we need to take a brief look at *Logique de la philosophie*, especially at the book's first chapters. By clarifying the link between Eric Weil's masterwork and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, we may gain a better understanding of Weil's reading of the third *Critique* as well as of his own philosophical project. At first, however, the comparison is puzzling, for Weil develops his philosophy of meaning in the form of a “logic”. Weil's project is in line with Kant's third *Critique*, but the project develops in what seems to be a mere update of Hegel's *Logic*. How are we to make sense of this paradox?

The most obvious difference between Hegel's *Logic* and *Logique de la philosophie* is that the latter concerns itself not with metaphysical but with *philosophical* categories in the sense defined above. Each chapter of the book describes an attitude and, at the same time, defines a philosophical category – i.e. an ideal-typical form of coherent discourse and/or a certain way of relating to the very idea of coherent discourse. The category owes its name to the central concept around which its discursive coherence develops. *Logique de la philosophie* analyzes these philosophical categories, which taken together along with their diverse combinations constitute the possibilities of the human discourse on meaning. Among these, we find, for example, the category (the *Absolute*) that accounts for Hegel's philosophy and makes sense of it.

The first chapter gives us an additional clue concerning Weil's move from a philosophy of being to a philosophy of meaning. The very title of the chapter – “Truth” – tells us that we are entering a path that will lead in a direction quite different from that of the Hegelian system. The starting point is the same as Hegel's. In order to answer the requirement of a scientific discourse, we must leave aside all preliminary assumptions. Consequently, we start with a mere word that sets the discourse in motion. However, Weil provides a justification for the choice

of the word “truth” instead of the word “being”. He discards the latter in order to:

mark the danger of the usage of the term Being which [...] will always be understood as designating the object: at the level of Being, man *is*, nature *is*, history *is*, and the absolute knowledge of Being (which is not, at least in Hegel) will be interpreted as the science of all the things that *are*. This single reason, of a “pedagogical” order, even if there were no others, would suffice to make us prefer the term *Truth* (Weil 2000a, p. 94).

It is better to start with the word “truth” because the word “Being” connotes an “ob-ject” facing us.<sup>5</sup> In spite of the “ontological difference”, which according to Weil Hegel is well aware of, the word “Being” connotes something we are faced with, even if this something is anything but a “thing”. Starting with the word “truth”, which does not have this connotation, is more appropriate to the project of a philosophy of meaning. As the rest of *Logique de la philosophie* will show – and especially the last two chapters: “Meaning” and “Wisdom” – what is being designated by the word “truth” is the presence of, and to, a meaningful reality. It is the original unity of meaning and reality that Weil considers to be the crucial discovery of the third *Critique*. And the subsequent development will not take the form of an ontology but that of a theory of discourse. What is at stake is not the conditions of possibility of scientific knowledge – at least, not directly.<sup>6</sup> In line with the third *Critique*, the project concerns the possibility and criteria of a philosophical comprehension of reality. Here, the primary fact is that the real is not a “thing” that faces us. In truth, we experience the real through the pre-comprehension that we have of it. Such pre-comprehension is the fact of an *attitude*. Once elaborated in the form of a philosophical category, it becomes an explicit comprehension. However, the passage from attitude to category is not merely a matter of expression: it is not merely about expressing the former in the form of the latter. It is also a question of justification because giving the form of an explicit discourse to the sentiment that characterizes the attitude’s experience of reality implies formulating this feeling in universally communicable terms. Through this test of “universalizability” the meaning that is both felt and

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<sup>5</sup> In the terms of *Logique de la philosophie*, this means that the structure of ontological discourse is based, at least in part, on a reprise of the philosophical category of the *object*. In spite of the differences that separate them, the diverse kinds of ontology – the Platonic and Aristotelian ontologies, the Hegelian onto-theology, Heidegger’s questioning of Being, etc. –, correspond to different modalities of this reprise.

<sup>6</sup> It concerns it indirectly, inasmuch as *Logique de la philosophie* deals with the understanding of reality that makes modern science possible. See the philosophical category of the *condition* in Weil 2000a.



given to the real appears to be more or less satisfying, that is, truly meaningful or partially senseless. Consequently, *Logique de la philosophie* travels through the different philosophical categories by subjecting them to the test of their universality or, which amounts to the same thing, of their “comprehensiveness”. In concrete terms, these forms of discourse provide a more or less universal, that is, more or less partial, understanding of the real. And the limits of each of these forms of discourse appear in the fact that they can be refused and rejected by some (possible) interlocutors, a fact that reveals a point of view from which they appear as obsolete, incomprehensible or unacceptable.

Weil's *Logique de la philosophie* starts with a pure attitude that is a way of experiencing the real as a meaningful whole. The point of departure is a feeling of meaningfulness that is analogous to the feeling of aesthetic pleasure in the third *Critique*. However, Eric Weil neither starts with the experience of aesthetic pleasure nor with the existence of living organisms. The reason is that aesthetic pleasure is a cultural phenomenon. It differs from one civilization to the other. Accordingly, the doctrines that account for our aesthetic experiences also differ from one philosophical category to the other. This is in line with Weil's remark, which we mentioned above, about the sense of beauty evolving in time and being expressed in different ways across diverse civilizations. However, the same goes for the scientific and metaphysical doctrines that account for the existence of living organisms. The meaning of the concepts of life, beauty, the sublime, etc. depends on the philosophical category that rules their usage. Therefore, *Logique de la philosophie* cannot start with elaborated theories on life or beauty because such theories take root in philosophical categories whose explanation will only come later in the book.

Starting from that, the problem is not the problem of knowledge and its solution is not to be found in an epistemic ontology. However, Eric Weil distinguishes between “truth” and “the true”. The true is true in opposition to the false. The false is truly false: we know it to be false because we know what is true. The distinction between the true and the false, however, presupposes that we claim to “speak in truth” and not merely to act upon others, to express our desires, etc. In other words: the distinction between the true and the false makes sense once, and only once, the choice is made to enter the sphere of argumentative discourse. At this point, however, we rejoin the other way of entering into Weil's philosophy (or conception of philosophical practice). For the alternative to speaking in truth, or trying to speak the truth, is either violence or poetic expression. Poetic expression may be understood as an expression or unveiling of the truth – which nevertheless needs to be put in the form of an argumentative discourse in order to be convincing. But violence in its most radical form manifests itself by rejecting “the game of giving and asking for reasons”,



to use Robert Brandom's phrase (Brandom 1998). The rejection can take the common form of total indifference towards argumentative discourse. It becomes overt rejection when the very idea of asking and providing justifications for one's actions and beliefs is viewed as senseless. However, we would be mistaken in considering that argumentative discourse and violence are two worlds apart. The domain of truth, the domain within which we distinguish between the true and the false, between valid and non-valid arguments, is infinite (in the Hegelian sense). Violent individuals decide to remain "outside" of discourse. From their standpoint, the game of giving and asking for reasons is just a game. It is purposeless. The game is only worth playing as a way of effectively acting upon people who need reasons in order to let themselves be used, people who take seriously having reasons for acting in the way they do and being who they are. But for discourse itself there is no "outside", because everything can be expressed in the discursive form of conceptually articulated propositions that are true or false. The result is an asymmetric situation: there is an "outside" of discourse for the individual that opposes discourse. For discourse, however, there is neither "inside" nor "outside". Discourse can express everything in its own terms.

This also means that within the sphere of discourse, violence appears in such a way that it can be dealt with through argumentation. Violence then manifests itself as *contradiction*: a contradiction that takes diverse forms and may be reduced by different kinds of logic: the Socratic dialogue, the logic of classical ontology, Kant's transcendental logic, the Hegelian dialectic, etc. In all these cases, philosophy performs a double reduction: the reduction of violence to a definite form of contradiction and the further reduction or surpassing of contradiction through a specific form of philosophical logic (Canivez 1998, pp. 6–9). In dealing with the problem of logical contradiction and discursive coherence, however, philosophers lose sight of the fact that the problem takes root in the experience of violence. According to Weil, and this is obviously a response to Heidegger – just as the difference between "truth" and the "true" echoes the ontological difference at the level of a theory of discourse – what is obscured in the philosophical tradition is not the question of Being.<sup>7</sup> It is the fact of violence. Within the limits of discourse, violence manifests itself in the form of logical contradiction. Eric Weil's project reposes on the rediscovering or un-covering of the fact of violence as the underlying problem of philosophical discourse.

On that basis, the specificity of the logic of philosophy that Weil thinks is needed comes from the existence of a form of violence that cannot be reduced

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<sup>7</sup> On Weil's interpretation and critique of Heidegger, see "Le cas Heidegger" in Weil 2003, II, pp. 255–266. See also Quillien 1982.

to logical contradiction. Such a form of violence characterizes individuals who do not care about giving valid reasons for their beliefs or ways of acting, but only about acting upon others in the most efficient way, which includes having recourse to non-argumentative uses of language such as the imperative – “the Führer demands it so!” – or political mythologies (Weil 2000a, chap. 14). Such violence is not due to ignorance or weakness. It takes root in a knowing refusal of argumentative discourse – but not the *semblance* of this discourse, if it be necessary in order to act effectively upon others. Taking into account the possibility of this radical form of violence is consistent with the idea of a philosophy of meaning. For the problem of violence, in this form as well as in all others, appears against the backdrop of the project of grasping the real in a comprehensive way. However, violence does not merely consist in the refusal of discourse, it develops within discourse itself. Philosophical categories must be combined in order to grasp the real as it manifests itself in the context of a historic situation. The situation is in constant evolution. Therefore, philosophy – understood in line with Kant's *Weltbegriff der Philosophie* – never comes to an end. In order to grasp the real, we constantly need new and creative approaches. It remains that each philosophical category is a form of discourse in which individuals, as well as entire societies, can lock themselves. Individuals stick to their own logic or conceptual language. They may understand the objections made to their convictions or ways of acting and still reject these objections not because they are not convinced, but because they do not want to be. In this view, Weil's enterprise is also Kantian inasmuch as it enquires into the limits not of pure reason but of philosophical discourse, into the limits of the philosophical practice in general and, in particular, into the limits of each specific form of discursive coherence. What is at stake is the scope of our capacity to convince and be convinced by the force of the better argument.

## 4 Conclusion

Eric Weil's reading of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* raises many questions. To begin with, the existence of living beings and beautiful things, on the one hand, and human history, on the other, are not situated at the same level in the third *Critique*. The existence of beautiful things and living beings belong to what Weil calls meaningful facts. Beautiful things give us a sense of meaning while living organisms cannot be investigated without reference to an end. Taken as a whole, however, the human history is not a fact. We may conceive of mankind's history as the development of nature's plan. But in order to do so, we need an argument that authorizes us to bridge the gap between internal and external

finality, between the inner organization of living beings and the external relationships between existing species and, finally, between the development of mankind's dispositions and the (natural and social) circumstances in which it finds itself. Roughly speaking, the argument is that once the search for finality appears legitimate, there is no valid criterion for setting a limit to this search [CP], §§66–67, pp. 247–252 [Ak. V, pp. 376–381]; IUH, pp. 109–111 [Ak. VIII, pp. 19–21]. However, it remains that, viewed as a whole, history is not a meaningful *fact*. It is an idea. Therefore, it is hard to see why the mere fortuitous existence of meaningful facts should be incomprehensible or unacceptable. Living beings and beautiful or sublime things could exist as archipelagos of meaning in a world that is, on the whole, unorganized or heading towards a final disorganization. Eric Weil himself considers this prospect, notably in passages referring to modern astrophysics and the principle of entropy (Weil 2003, I, pp. 30, 167–168). More importantly, one of Eric Weil's early works deals with the notion of history. In an article published in 1935 entitled “De l'intérêt que l'on prend à l'histoire” (Weil 2000b, I, chap. 10), Weil deals with the relationship between history and historical narrative. History as a whole is so fully an idea that it only takes form in the framework of a narrative. In fact, there are as many narratives of mankind's history as there are philosophical categories that allow for such narratives. Weil was not only aware of this fact: it is a matter of crucial importance in his *Logique de la philosophie*.

In order to maintain the idea that we experience reality as a meaningful whole, we must understand the word “meaning” in the enlarged sense of an overall signification that is not necessarily linked to the pursuing of an end – more precisely, to the combined notions of end and value that is central in the third *Critique*. Paradoxically, Weil envisages such a notion of overall signification in the second category of his *Logique de la philosophie*, that of *nonsense*. “All is nonsense” is the proposition that sums up a certain way of experiencing the real that has no relation to an end, even less to an ultimate end. Of course, we may consider that this is merely an early stage in a philosophy of meaning that, at some point in the book, will retrieve the notion of finality and the Kantian notion of a moral end to human action.<sup>8</sup> It is not by an accident that *Logique de la philosophie*'s antepenultimate and penultimate categories are those of *action* and *meaning*, two concepts whose close connection plays a crucial role in Weil's reading of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. But it remains that the notion of a *fact of meaning*, as it is understood in Weil's interpretation of the third *Cri-*

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<sup>8</sup> On the relationships between Weil's conception of philosophy and the concept of action, see Savadogo 2004.

*tique*, is problematic when applied to human history as a whole or to nature viewed as endowed with a history. In other words, the transition from *meaningful facts* to the *fact of meaning* requires a concept of meaning that goes beyond the notion of a valuable end. *Logique de la philosophie* develops such a concept (Weil 2000a, especially chap. 17). However, this poses the question of the complex relationship between the concept of meaning and that of finality.

Finally, according to Weil's reading of the third *Critique*, the world exists as such only for man – just as God is God for man, meaning that he creates himself in man. From his analysis, Eric Weil draws the consequence that “Kant would certainly have refused imagining a world without men; the world is constituted only in human thought” (Weil 2002, p. 51). Here, the problem lies in the fact that mankind's disappearance is a realistic prospect. Again, Weil was fully aware of the prospect. At the end of his *Philosophie morale*, he writes: “It is possible, it is likely, that humanity will one day disappear” (Weil 2000d, p. 219). Similar remarks are made in other texts. In “La fin de l'histoire”, for instance, Weil evokes the possibility of mankind disappearing “either by destroying itself or by the slow transformation of natural conditions leading to the same result” (Weil 2003, I, p. 167). Still, he maintains that “Reality without man is an abstraction that reveals incomprehensible as soon as it is taken seriously” (Weil 2000b, I, p. 312). In Weil's texts, there are indications of how the problem could be resolved. Whether it is actually solved and whether Weil addresses it head-on remains an open question.

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Anne Sauvagnargues

# The Discordant Accord of the Faculties

Deleuzian Readings of Kant

## 1 Introduction

The relevance of Kant for contemporary aesthetics is decisive, as evidenced by the multiple fortunes of the notion of the sublime, especially in the work of a contemporary philosopher, Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), who, although he often sides against Kant, develops his philosophy of art through a critical and renewed meditation on his *oeuvre*. In fact, not only does Deleuze return constantly to his reading of the third *Critique*, but Kant is one of the crucial figures in relation to whom he builds his own system, both with regard to the elaboration of a paradoxical *transcendental empiricism* culminating in the years of *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and to the role of creation in his late philosophy, when the importance of Kant and his analysis of the sublime stand out as major references in his philosophy of cinema, the image and time (*The Movement-Image* [1983] and *The Time-Image* [1985]).

## 2 The Doctrine of the Faculties and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

Deleuze's reading of Kant presents different strategic emphases: whereas the 1963 monograph, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, places the three *Critiques* exactly on the same conceptual level, the article "The Idea of Genesis in Kant's Aesthetics", which appeared in the same year in the *Revue d'esthétique*, emphasizes the innovation introduced by the third *Critique* and, more specifically, the peculiarity of the "Analytic of the Sublime" (Deleuze 1984; 2004a).

The divergence between these two interpretations depends both on the status of the commentary in the history of philosophy and on the place of the question of art. Of the Kantian corpus, Deleuze retains in his monograph only the

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three *Critiques*, which he illustrates from the linear perspective of a general theory of the faculties, with a striking contraction of the structural density. Deleuze hardens the architectonic unity of the system and considers the doctrine of the faculties as the kernel of a “real network which constitutes the transcendental method” (Deleuze 1984, p. 10). This allows him to understand the three *Critiques* as a “system of permutations” (Deleuze 1984, p. 68). This reading of the system – which is a commentary inspired by the recapitulative table at the end of the “Introduction” to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (CPJ), §IX, p. 83 [Ak. V, p. 198]) – reveals the influence of the systematic method of Martial Gueroult (1891–1976) and projects the three *Critiques* on a systematic and unified level, thereby neglecting other aspects of the Kantian *opus*. Deleuze then explains his methodological stance regarding the history of philosophy as follows: one has to single out the philosophical problem that is at the core of the system and stick to it as if to a formula allowing to generate or deduce the crystal of the work.

In this case, the formula is the following: in each of the three *Critiques*, the faculties – imagination, understanding and reason – enter into relationships which are variable but regulated by one of them, raised to its higher exercise, in order to meet an interest of reason. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* the understanding legislates in the faculty of knowledge in conformity to the theoretical interest of reason, while in the *Critique of Practical Reason* reason legislates in the higher faculty of desire according to the practical interest of reason. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* imagination comes into the picture and enables the free play of the faculties in aesthetic experience. By propelling the doctrine of the faculties to the level of the theoretical matrix of Kantianism, Deleuze can arrange the three *Critiques* as different faces of a single system of regulation of the faculties, under the alternating authority of one of them elevated to its higher exercise. However, in the same year, in the long article written for the *Revue d'esthétique*, Deleuze re-evaluates the status of the third *Critique* and puts it clearly in a prominent position by virtue of the fracture opened at its core by the “Analytic of the Sublime”.

In *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, Deleuze stressed that the determined accord of the faculties entailed as its necessary condition the possibility of an indetermined and free accord between the faculties that differs in nature. If the faculties can enter into variable relationships under the authority of one of them raised at its higher exercise, this is due to a condition that exceeds the logic of structural permutations. What guarantees the possibility for the subjective faculties in their constitutive disparity to form an accord? This new issue brings the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* and the question of art to the fore.

In fact, whereas the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* define an harmonic and stable relationship between the faculties under the authority of one of them, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* can neither affirm nor postulate the existence of an aesthetic common sense moderating the accord between the faculties, so that they are forced to enter into a new assemblage [*agencement*]. This suprising, disharmonious and complex accord explains the growing importance of the third *Critique* in Deleuze's oeuvre. On the one hand, were they not capable of entering all together into such an indetermined accord, it would be impossible for the faculties to play by turns a legislating and determining role. In this respect, Deleuze believes that the aesthetic common sense does not simply complete the other two, but makes them possible. On the other hand, the "Analytic of the Sublime" promotes the idea of a discordant synthesis which marks the shift from the classical harmony of the faculties in the apprehension of the beautiful to their dysregulation, their disaccord, their constitutive disparity felt when we are confronted with the formless or the shapeless (the immensity or the power) of the sublime.

The point is not only to guarantee the condition of possibility of a harmony of the faculties in the exercise of knowledge or practical freedom. It is also to deeply transform the very concept of this accord, to move from a *classical* theory of harmony qua consonance of the faculties to a *romantic* theory of the dissonance. This is why we should assign to the third *Critique* a new place in the *dispositif*: it "does not simply exist to complete the other two", but it actually "provides them with a ground" (Deleuze 2004a, p. 58).

The peculiarity of the third *Critique*, which Deleuze had already pointed out in his monograph, now appears as decisive. In fact, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* the faculty of feeling does not attain its higher use, even though it reveals, in the free accord of the faculties that it promotes, the condition of possibility of judgment, and it retrospectively articulates and binds together the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Imagination never gets to play a legislative role on its own, but it only emancipates itself from the tutelage of the understanding: an emancipation that allows the free play of the faculties and makes it possible for a faculty to become legislative. The free subjective harmony that one discovers in aesthetic judgment (reflective judgment) allows the passage from the faculty of cognition to the faculty of desire and ensures the retrospective unity of the three *Critiques* (Deleuze 1984, pp. 9–10, 49–50, 65–67).

In other words, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* completes and serves as the foundation of the previous *Critiques* precisely because it lacks a domain of its own. In Kantian terms, this implies that the aesthetic judgment can neither be legislating nor arrange for any other faculty to legislate over its objects. For



Kant, indeed, there are only two kinds of objects: the phenomena, over which the understanding has jurisdiction, and the things in themselves, which refer to the legislation of reason within practical reason. Hence the specificity of aesthetic judgment, which is neither legislative nor autonomous, but rather “*heautonomous*”, that is, legislating only over itself. Such a “heautonomy”, later re-pressed by Deleuze in his philosophy of cinema, gives the third *Critique* a central role in the foundation of the system. But this is also where Kant is forced by Deleuze to undergo a radical distortion that allows him to understand – or should we say misrepresent – the higher use of a faculty as its passage to the limit, in accordance with a model that reveals the influence of the concept of the sublime.

The reason why Deleuze in his monograph does not dwell on this question concerning the ground and goes on projecting the three *Critiques* on the same level, tightening up their complementarity, is that he pursues a different objective: a systematic exposition of Kantianism. Showing how the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* renews the previous ones would have compelled him to explain the prominent role that his interpretation implicitly confers to art and the priority it gives to the “Analytic of the Sublime”, that which would have forced him to deviate from his method of immanent critique. His beautiful architecture emphasizing the role of the faculties would have been threatened and he would not have had the chance to insist so clearly on their synchronic articulation or on the system that they constitute. Thus, while the monograph reflects a desire for systematicity in the history of ideas, the article, published in the same year but focused on the question of art, allows Deleuze to stress another aspect of Kantianism, an aspect that will become increasingly important for him: the disjointed harmony of the sublime and the dysregulation of the faculties, which renew the philosophy of art.

### 3 Kant, Proust and the Doctrine of the Faculties

It is in Kantian terms that Deleuze determines the place of art, in the double sense of an aesthetics of the sensible and a philosophy of art. It is in relation to Kant that he defines his attempt to develop a transcendental critique of thought, a “transcendental empiricism” in the elaboration of which art plays a key role. The first book that Deleuze devotes entirely to art and literature, published one year later (in 1964) bears witness to this Kantian influence. *Proust and Signs* tries to condense *In Search of Lost Time* into a constitutive formula generating the crystal of the work.

From this perspective, Proust's novel must be read as a doctrine of the faculties, establishing systematic correspondences between a typology of signs (worldly signs, signs of love, sensible signs, artistic signs) and faculties raised to their higher use, so that every kind of sign evokes a corresponding faculty following an ascending logic that makes *In Search of Lost Time* an authentic search for truth. Signs differentiate themselves on the basis of the faculty that they push to its higher exercise.

Deleuze unashamedly exploits the work done in *Kant's Critical Philosophy*. In Kant, each faculty is elevated to its higher exercise when it legislates *a priori* over the objects that are presented to it, that is, in Kantian terms, when it legislates over its own domain (CPJ, §II, pp. 61–63 [Ak. V, pp. 174–176]; Deleuze 1984, pp. 9–10). Analogously, in Proust each faculty is raised to its transcendent or superior use under the action of the sign that activates it. The typology of the faculties commands the plurality of the worlds of signs that Deleuze locates in the *Recherche* and orchestrates the initiatory itinerary of the narrator, moving from one world to the other, from the sphere of snobbery to that of jealousy, from the emotion stirred up by sensible qualities to the experience of art.

The unstable equilibrium of the faculties is recomposed at every stage of the Proustian itinerary, rising from the social universe of snobbery to the heartrending world of love, from the emotion of sensible signs to the spirituality of art. The hierarchy of these worlds depends on the faculties that they solicit and the attitude each faculty shows in reacting to the intrusion of signs: sensibility grasps them, involuntary memory and the imagination enlivened by desire develop them, voluntary intelligence misses them and pure thought mobilizes them. On this scale, the worldly signs of snobbery fall under the competence of the deceiving intelligence, the signs of love evoke a sensibility lacerated by jealousy and assisted by intelligence, whereas sensible signs, which appeal to involuntary memory and desiring imagination, prepare the exercise of this noetic faculty that art alone reveals: “pure thought” (Deleuze 2000, p. 86). So goes this crossing of sensible lived experience towards art in which the *Recherche* properly consists.

Deleuze applies to Proust the Kantian model of a harmony of the faculties under the authority of a faculty elevated to its higher use, but he also transforms it deeply. In Proust, the faculty is raised indeed to its higher use by the involuntary and violent irruption of a sign: only a sensible encounter has the power to trigger involuntary memory and awaken in the narrator his artistic vocation in the form of an intense experience: “a fragment of time in the pure state” (Proust 1993, p. 264; Deleuze 2000, p. 61).

Deleuze understands this Proustian involuntariness as an overflow, in accordance with the pathological model of the sublime that imposes itself as a power whose force exceeds the organic limits of the subject. Resorting to a typol-

ogy of the faculties which is more Bergsonian than Kantian (the distinction between voluntary intelligence and pure thought recalls the Bergsonian distinction between intelligence and intuition), Deleuze frames the Proustian topic of the involuntary along the lines of the Bergsonian opposition between intelligence (doxic, material and active) and intuition (receptive, passive and enthralled).

Thus, by conceiving of the higher use of the faculties as involuntary, Deleuze forces the framework of the theory of the faculty to undergo a complete metamorphosis. Where Kant stresses the autonomy and the non-empirical character of the pure exercise, Deleuze reformulates this pureness as passivity and irruptive presence of the material sign within thought. By replacing the Kantian empirical and pureness with the Proustian voluntary and involuntary, Deleuze turns the involuntary into the highest mode of exercise of a faculty. The higher exercise of a faculty could be understood, then, as its passage to the limit under the violence suffered through the involuntary encounter with a sign, which forces thought to create. The passive affection, which Kant deemed pathological, turns out to be for Deleuze the condition of creativity and inventiveness of thought (Deleuze 2000, p. 99).

## 4 Transcendental Empiricism according to Deleuze

The valorization of the involuntary allows Deleuze to develop his paradoxical *transcendental empiricism*, the formulation of which occupies the first part of his *oeuvre* until *Difference and Repetition* and reveals the importance of art for philosophy. The novelist, guided by the actual experience of art, produces a typology of the faculties that enables the philosopher to reform the wrong image that thought gives of itself and to itself in its purely theoretical use. The practice of art provides the antidote for the spontaneous dialectic of reason in its speculative use: it shows that thought has nothing to do with autonomy, spontaneity or good will, and that we should get rid of the Cartesian model, ultimately adopted by Kant, of a thought that is transparent to itself and able to give itself a method in order to carve a path to truth. Thought is not the product of the spontaneous activity of the thinker and it does not presuppose the thinker's affinity with the truth, which would impose on philosophy an ideal of recognition.

Whereas the voluntary exercise of a faculty merely reproduces the representational image that thought gives of itself and to itself, its involuntary exercise results in a transcendent but disjointed exercise where the matter of the sign acts like a force extrinsically felt, irreducible to a spontaneous, voluntary and

doxic act. Upon doing so, Deleuze wants to hold on to Kant's critical inspiration while at the same time avoiding the trap into which, in his view, Kant falls, and which consists in modelling the transcendental structures upon the doxic acts of an ordinary consciousness.

Kant – the “great explorer” who “discovers the prodigious domain of the transcendental” (Deleuze 2004b, p. 171) – had correctly raised the *quid juris* question concerning thought, and he seemed to be well equipped to transform the image of thought, inflicting “a kind of speculative death” on God and the self and substituting the substantial self with “a self profoundly fractured by a line of time” (Deleuze 2004b, p. 172). However, he sacrificed his speculative breakthrough on the altar of common reason, forcing thought to find in itself the assumptions of the *doxa*. Unfortunately, the transcendental cannot be deduced from the ordinary forms that the common sense is used to abide by, nor can it be stabilized and constrained by the psychological limits of human experience. In order to meet the demands of an authentic intellectual creation, the idealism of the transcendental structure has to give way to a proper empirical discovery, which measures up to *actual* experience and not merely to *possible*, mental and subjective experience. This is what Deleuze means by “transcendental empiricism”.

## 5 The Sublime and Cinema

In twisting Kantianism like this, for the purpose of affirming that “[t]he transcendental form of a faculty is indistinguishable from its disjointed, superior or transcendental exercise” (Deleuze 2004b, p. 180), Deleuze nonetheless salutes Kant's great inventiveness. Far from doing away with Kantianism, he suggests a new use of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, grounded on the “Analytic of the Sublime” and the discordant accord of the faculties that it promotes. Simply put, the torpedo by means of which Deleuze blows up the edifice of the doctrine of the faculties comes from Kant's *oeuvre* itself. In Deleuze's view, the definition of the sublime that he insolently inoculates the doctrine of the faculties with may well shake the Kantian mountain, but it actually allows him to move from a classical interpretation of a beautiful and a systematic order to a vision of the system that provides us with the “formula of a deeply romantic Kant” (Deleuze 1984, p. xi). In 1963, Deleuze believes that “[i]n the *Critique of Judgment* mature classicism and nascent romanticism are in a complex equilibrium” (Deleuze 1984, p. 57), with the formal aesthetic of the beautiful balancing the pathos of the sublime. However, he progressively shifts the center of gravity of the system towards the late discovery of the sublime, a theoretical invention that, according to him,

relaunches the Kantian apparatus [*appareil*] and culminates with the unregulated exercise of the faculties, “the final Kantian reversal [...] which was to define future philosophy” (Deleuze 1998, p. 35).

When he decides to embark upon the bold enterprise of a philosophy of cinema, Deleuze takes up the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in combination with Bergson’s *Matter and Memory*, in order to question the relationships between thought and sign. Thought arises from the shock of a sensation: that was the conclusion of transcendental empiricism in the analysis of Proust. The violence inflicted on thought reveals the mode under which thought can be inventive and, correlatively, its fundamental passivity. Passivity and creation mutually imply each other in a necessary way, and creation occurs in an extrinsic, contingent and material manner. At this point, one might believe Deleuze to be a far cry from Kant. On the contrary, his heresy inscribes him within the romantic posterity of Kant. Indeed, it is impossible to read that “the signs of art *force* us to think” (Deleuze 2000, p. 98; emphasis added) without hearing the echo of the aesthetic Idea, of the “representation of the imagination that *occasions* much thinking” (CPJ, §49, p. 192 [Ak. V, p. 314]; emphasis added), even if Deleuze transforms the overabundance of the gift into a clinical exposition of force ratios.

From this point of view, the definition of the sublime serves as a model not only for the philosophy of art, but also for the creation of thought. In fact, in the “Analytic of the Sublime” Kant had discovered the discordant accord of the faculties and the irruption of the sensible as violence. The judgment “This is sublime” expresses a paradoxical harmony, an accord reached against the background of a painful tension. As we have seen, Deleuze formulates two original interpretations of the characterization of the sublime as a mixed affect of pleasure and pain – “a discordant concord, a harmony in pain” (Deleuze 2004a, p. 62) – that is classic since Burke: the affect of the sublime has to be understood as an irruption that carries the faculties to their point of maximum tension, to their breaking point, considered by Deleuze as their limit, their transcendental use. And this limit, where the faculty exhausts itself when confronted with the disproportion of the affect, marks the point where it turns into pathos. Deleuze had already remarked this in 1963: “So it is that the sublime confronts the imagination with this maximum, forces it to reach its limits, and come to grips with its boundaries. The imagination is pushed *to the limits of its power*” (Deleuze 2004a, p. 62).

How should we characterize such a force that imposes itself on thought overcoming our faculties? In 1983, Deleuze calls it “image”, with reference to the Bergsonian analysis of the image as a set of moving forces, a material sign affecting us (Sauvagnargues 2013). Now, the Kantian sublime is characterized precisely by excess and dysproportion, which overwhelm a subject crushed by the magni-

tude (mathematically sublime) or the power (dinamically sublime) of an affection. Unlike Kant, Deleuze stresses the moment of impotence or passivity, when a faculty, pushed to the limit of its power, is confronted with the intrusive novelty of an image that compels it to think, and then unfolds into pathos. We call sublime the image (or the set of forces) that goes beyond our ability to answer and irradiates our sensorimotor schemes, pushing our faculties to their limit. Thus we move from a perception involved in the action to a new way of conceiving of the relationship with the sensible, which Deleuze characterizes, along the lines of the Bergsonian intuition, as a passage from active movement (movement-image) to intensive chagement (time-image). The sublime appears then as the way in which certain images, certain sets of signs solicit us and force us to think.

Of course, this does not apply to every image. In fact, most of them simply cause in us a doxic reflex, a sensorimotor process that does no more than repeat a cliché. By releasing perception from the common action and the cliché of ordinary behaviors, the sublime prevents us from converting our states into motricity. By pushing perception to the limit of its power, it makes it available for a superior sensory exercise, which Deleuze calls “vision” (optical or sound sensory images).

This distinction between the motor, active and individualized image (movement-image) and the shattering image that overcomes our responsiveness and makes us feel “a fragment of time in the pure state” (time-image) explains the operational value of the concept of the sublime in the analysis of cinema. Not only does the notion, in the technical dimension of its distinction between mathematically and dynamically sublime, allows Deleuze to underpin his analysis of the different types of montage and the properties of the film image, but it also accounts for the passage from the movement-image – the action cinema centered on the vicissitudes of individual characters, which characterizes pre-war cinema – to the contemporary neorealism of the time-image.

In pre-war cinema, Deleuze detects four different kinds of montage: the organic montage of American cinema (Griffith), the dialectic and material montage of Soviet cinema (Eisenstein), the French school (Renoir) and German Expressionism (von Stroheim). This classification is not meant to be exhaustive or prescriptive: Deleuze just wants to put forward a typology of images that may facilitate the creation of film concepts. The categories of the mathematically and the dynamically sublime enable him to spell out the peculiarities of the German and French schools, which differ from American and Soviet cinema in the way they overstep and dissolve the organic bounds of a montage centered on individual or collective action and on the alternation between action sequences and psychological close-ups. The French school, with its taste for movement (kinetics as a

properly visual art in *Le Ballet mécanique* by the painter Léger or in Grémillon's *Photogénie mécanique*) and its sense of water, sea and rivers (*L'Atalante* by Vigo), goes beyond the beautiful organic unity and turns towards a fluid mechanics free from any defined organic consistency. By distinguishing the "More light!" of German Expressionist cinema from the "More movement!" of pre-war French cinema, Deleuze reformulates in an inventive manner the distinction between the mathematically and the dynamically sublime (Deleuze 2013a, p. 54). While in French cinema, for example in Gance or L'Herbier, imagination deals with the immensity and the dysproportion of the quantities of movement that reduce it to the impotence of the vertigo in a mechanical dance, in the German Expressionism of Wegener or Murnau the modulation of chiaroscuro dissolves the contours of the realist montage into the power of light.

The sublime is functional to the conceptualization of the dissolution of individual organic forms into the "becoming-intensive [*devenir-intensif*]" of the forces: this is why the sublime is also necessary for thinking the passage from the movement-image to the time-image. These two categories are not so much two consecutive stages in the history of cinema as two coexisting modes of relation with the event. Depending on whether an event is reducible to the sensorimotor mode, fits the categories of action of the character or exceeds her responsiveness, it pertains to the movement-image or the time-image. When the event resonates in a sensorimotor way, framed by a perception that grasps it and an action that responds to it, the image becomes movement-image, centered on the individual organic unity of a body that prolongs an ongoing situation.

The time-image consists in a dissolution and a sublime intensification of the event that breaks the classical beautiful unity of the movement-image, organized around the psychology of a character and the unity of an action. The situation is no longer prolonged, it is experienced. The subject, unable to respond, is no longer able to neutralize the event with a motor discharge, an action, a psychological reaction, but is bound, helpless, to the power of an affection. The organic narrative history gives way to a different description, which Deleuze calls the time-image: movement ceases to be a motor translation and turns into the expression of becoming. The causal and psychological path of movement had to be blocked, in order for the visionary violence of the event to be triggered as clairvoyance. The sublime prevents us from dissipating the affect into motive power and obliges us to convert it into thought.

In conclusion, we can appreciate the fruitfulness, but also the distortion, underwent by Kantian categories in the work of Deleuze. These successive operations attempted on the Kantian corpus should not scandalize the commentators, since they show on the contrary the resistant vitality of its text. If Deleuze thought he was going to take leave of Kant, it was by turning his own definition



of the sublime against him, so that a first, classical and structural reading of the doctrine of the faculties was followed, with transcendental empiricism and the interpretation of Proust, by a romantic reading of the third *Critique* based on the free play of the faculties and their transcendent exercise, reformulated as a sublime overflowing [*débordement*] that acquires in the philosophy of cinema the features of a proper logic of thought.

When Deleuze works out the theory of the transcendent exercise and finds in the “Analytic of the Sublime” the “discordant accord” that enables him to replace the transparency of reason with the pathos of the Idea, he clearly creates something personal and original. Kant would have never agreed to this transformation of the sublime into a category of art and to this material aesthetics of pathos and the transcendent use of the faculties that confronts thought with its impotence and passivity. Also, he would have recoiled from Deleuze’s interpretation of the mathematically and the dynamically sublime as formless and shapeless powers.

However, the very boldness of this operation ensures the metamorphosis of the concept and its vivacity in contemporary philosophy of art. It is Kant who invents this disjointed use, this violence done to thought, and puts forward a new image of thought where the faculties enter into an all-new type of relationship, an indetermined “free play”, while thought is confronted with the limit of its power by the force that affects it. The productivity of the concept of the sublime allows to follow this winding path through the Kantian *opus* and explains the unflagging curiosity with which Deleuze returns again and again to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. The sublime does not simply allow to define the relationship between thought and sensibility, philosophy and art; it also ensures the conversion of the well-known, of the sensorimotor clichés and the doxic behaviors, into a discovery of the new, in this irruptive and violent mode that Deleuze attributes to creation and in which “[s]ubjectivity [...] takes on a new sense, which is no longer motor or material, but temporal and spiritual” (Deleuze 2013b, p. 49).

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Pietro Terzi

# “Through Königsbergian Mists”

What Derrida Found in Kant’s Third *Critique*

## 1 Introduction

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) developed his interpretation of Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (CPI) in two essays of different length, “Economimesis” and “Parergon”, resulting from a course he gave in the academic year 1973–1974 at the École Normale Supérieure and then in various foreign institutions, such as the Freie Universität Berlin, the New York University and the Johns Hopkins University.<sup>1</sup> The title of the seminar was “L’Art”, followed by the name of Kant between brackets. “Economimesis” was featured in *Mimésis des articulations*, a collective volume published in 1975 in Flammarion’s highly experimental series “La philosophie en effet” (Derrida 1975).<sup>2</sup> “Parergon”, on the other hand, was included in *The Truth in Painting*, a 1978 collection of essays loosely revolving around the question of art and its social, economic and political margins published once again by Flammarion in the paperback series “Champs” (Derrida 1978).<sup>3</sup> These two texts share then a paradoxical status: despite their academic origin (a course delivered to prepare students for the *agrégation*, whose topic for that year was precisely art<sup>4</sup>), they figure among the most bizarre written by Derrida in terms of style and composition, with a systematic use of blanks, sudden interruptions and omissions.

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1 See the editorial note to “Parergon” (Derrida 1987, p. 16). Henceforth I refer to this text with the abbreviation “Par”.

2 The book also included contributions by some of Derrida’s closest colleagues, such as Sylviane Agacinski, Sarah Kofman, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Bernard Pautrat. As Derrida declared to the *Quinzaine littéraire* in 1976, the book was explicitly against the “hegemony” of the philosophical discourse and in favor of its displacement into non-philosophical (mostly literary) areas, thus it did not follow the usual norms of academic writing (Peeters 2013, p. 280).

3 Actually, the first section of “Parergon”, titled “Lemmata”, had already appeared in two parts in two different numbers of the literary review *Diagraphe* in 1974. The only unpublished section was the last one, “The Colossal”.

4 See the “General introduction” to Derrida’s teachings at the Sorbonne and the ENS-Ulm in Derrida 2016, pp. vii–xiii.

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In order to frame Derrida's reading of the third *Critique*, an often neglected contextual element is worth underscoring. The mid-1970s – which represent a transition period in French philosophy, marking the shift from the “structuralist” framework towards the discovery of new references and theoretical paths – saw Derrida progressively engaging in a reflection on the institutional status of philosophy as a discipline. The two triggering events were the CAPES report of 1974,<sup>5</sup> signaling a drop in the recruitment of philosophy professors, and the 1975 proposal of the then Minister of National Education René Haby (1919–2003) to make the teaching of philosophy in the last year of secondary school optional. Many intellectuals, including Derrida, perceived the Haby Reform as a post-1968 reactionary move targeting the critical function of philosophy and its prominence in French education. Both the events pointed towards the same ideological and economical imperative to sacrifice philosophy on the altar of professional specialization. As a reaction, the project of a Groupe de recherche pour l'enseignement de la philosophie (Grep) was launched with the aim of implementing a very particular strategy: instead of simply defending philosophy for its alleged inherent value, the ambition was rather to elaborate a thorough critical investigation of the epistemological status and the political-institutional frames of philosophy as an academic discipline.<sup>6</sup> As Derrida remarked in a text originally written for a 1976 collective volume on the “politics of philosophy” (Grisoni 1976), the time had come for him to couple the traditional deconstruction of the “conceptual content of philosophical pedagogy” with a surplus of reflexivity aimed at questioning the rules, the rituals and the forms of institutional philosophy (Derrida 2002, p. 72).

That purpose had already been spelt out at the very beginning of the 1973–1974 seminar on the CPJ. There, Derrida had declared explicitly that when we deal with a great philosophical theme such as art, we are actually moving within a certain system regulated by internal epistemological rules (what he called the “onto-encyclopedic” model) and external institutional relations: “its models, its concepts, its problems have not fallen from the skies, they have been constituted according to determinate modes at determinate moments” (Par, p. 18). Thus deconstruction must not limit itself to the “formal” and “semantic” moment, to the solicitation of an internal textual economy, but must also probe the “relays” con-

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5 The CAPES (Certificat d'Aptitude au Professorat de l'Enseignement du Second degré) is a teaching qualification for secondary schools, less prestigious than the *agrégation*, issued after a competitive national exam.

6 For the “Avant-Project” of the Grep, see Derrida 2002, pp. 92–98. An excellent contextualization and assessment of Derrida's commitment to the Grep is provided by Wortham 2006 and Orchard 2010.

necting a text to its context, that is, the “philosophy teaching in France” set up during the Second Empire by Victor Cousin (1792–1867), “the institution of its programs, its forms of examinations and competitions, its scenes and its rhetoric”, in other words, “the historical forms of its pedagogy, the social, economic or political structures of this pedagogical institution” (Par, p. 19). The whole logic of the *parergon*, of the frame, that Derrida developed in his reading of the CPJ would provide a crucial interpretative tool during the Greph years to understand the role of the institutions and the pedagogical practice from which philosophy is inseparable.<sup>7</sup>

What I would like to suggest, then, is that Derrida’s true interest in the third *Critique* had little to do with art or aesthetics per se. Not only, in fact, he admitted lacking expert knowledge in these matters (Peeters 2013, p. 435), but his engagement with the visual and spatial arts was often contingent and occasional.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, art represented for Derrida a “false title” (Par, p. 18), nothing but a pretext to tackle questions that were more intimately related to his own “meta-philosophical” concerns.

In the above-mentioned 1976 essay, Derrida also commented on his role as *agrégé-répétiteur* at the *École normale supérieure* (ENS), a professor in charge of helping students prepare for the *agrégation* and, by extension, introduce them to the set of rules, practices and programs of the “system of reproduction” he represents as a teacher (Derrida 2002, pp. 75–77).<sup>9</sup> Although Derrida claimed to perform a sort of “dissociation” while fulfilling his teaching duties, so as to put between brackets his personal philosophical style and ideas, his reading of the CPJ tells a different story.<sup>10</sup> As heavily reworked as they may appear, there is an almost perfect match between the published texts and the seminar

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7 Derrida would refer explicitly to “the entire [institutional] apparatus that we would have called, last year, *parergonal* [...]” (Derrida 2002, p. 69).

8 While acknowledging this contingency, in a recent book Vitale (2018) takes very seriously Derrida’s engagement with architecture. On Derrida and the arts, see also Jdey 2011.

9 Derrida held this position from 1964 to 1980. On this problem, see also the first session of his 1975–1976 seminar *La vie la mort* (Derrida 2019b, pp. 25–26).

10 This somehow clashes with what Derrida said in a 2003 interview with É. Grossman, where he acknowledged the intervention of his own subjectivity: “I have always tried to help students by explaining Kant or Descartes or Heidegger to them, while at the same time setting a scene that is proper to me with the texts I was writing [...]. I have always tried to combine both approaches: to transmit knowledge, to help students by rereading the texts myself [...] and to do so in such a way that each session is at the same time [...] a sort of theatre, a moment that remains fundamentally irreducible to the logic or to the tradition about which I was talking: a Hegelian and non-Hegelian way of speaking of Hegel, a Kantian and non-Kantian way of speaking of Kant, even in the style, the manner of my writing, of my speaking” (Derrida 2019c, pp. 14–15).

typescript, the empty spaces in “Parergon” replacing summaries of previous lessons or other didactic moments. Derrida accomplished therefore a double operation: in the seminar, he questioned the inclusion of art within a philosophical program, trying to retrace in the CPJ the origin of a certain philosophical enclosure of art in an “onto-encyclopedic” model that Hegel and Heidegger would later assume, although in different ways; in the published essays, however, he stylistically reworked a text drafted for an institutional and conventional context in a way that subverted the traditional rules of academic writing.<sup>11</sup>

“This old philosophy of aesthetics”, he wrote in the seminar typescript, “tells us many things through its Königsbergian mists [*brumes königsbergiennes*]” (Derrida 1973–1974, second session, sheet 12). I claim that what Derrida saw through the intricacy and the mists of the CPJ was precisely this chance of questioning a founding text where the conditions of a *philosophical discourse on art* are fully and paradigmatically deployed.<sup>12</sup> It is Kant, in fact, who applied in the most radical fashion the paradigm of the legislative function of philosophy based on the question *quid juris* (Derrida 2002, pp. 48–62).<sup>13</sup> According to Derrida, from then on a conventional narrative arose that conferred philosophy “the right to define and situate all the regions of being and objectivity”, the right to dominate, having no particular object proper, “the field of the so-called regional disciplines and sciences, cultivating and marking its property lines”. This marked the birth of a “philosophical onto-encyclopedia” that is “at home everywhere”, imposing everywhere, with an “imperialist self-confidence”, its own authority (Derrida 2002, p. 101).<sup>14</sup> And the “era of deconstruction” announces itself

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**11** For more insights on the relation between Derrida’s teaching activity and personal writings, see Baring 2011, chap. 7, pp. 221–243.

**12** For different takes on Derrida’s reading of the CPJ, see Harvey 1989, Vitale 2005 and Librett 2012. For a mapping of Derrida’s dialogue with Kant in general, see Rothfield 2003.

**13** See also Derrida’s reading of Kant’s *Conflict of the Faculties* in “Mochlos, or The Conflict of the Faculties” (Derrida 2004, pp. 83–112).

**14** Here Derrida seems to take up a line of argumentation already put forward by Louis Althusser (1918–1990) in his 1967 course at the ENS on the *Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists*, that Derrida likely attended: in an altogether different context, Althusser writes in fact that, since the birth of “critical idealism”, “philosophy appears to be the discipline that *establishes the rights* of the sciences, for it *poses the question of rights* and answers it by defining *legal rights* to scientific knowledge” (Althusser 2011, p. 127). To be sure, whilst Althusser linked the “theory of knowledge” formulated by the rationalist tradition spanning from Descartes to Husserl and having in Kant its apical moment to the bourgeois ideology, Derrida assumed the impossibility of escaping the Kantian framework. In fact, Derrida still saw in Althusser’s “scientistic” exposure of the concealed ideological layers of a theoretical work just another instantiation of the metaphysical encyclopedic model, where philosophy gives itself the right to pass judgment on the whole body of knowledge. Derrida’s references to Althusser are scarce and often implicit in his early-

precisely as a challenge to “the subordination of all the fields of questioning to the onto-encyclopedic instance” (Derrida 2002, p. 73).

## 2 The Encyclopedic Circle

Against this background, we can understand why the opening gesture of Derrida’s reading of the CPJ consists in drawing attention to the fact that art is proposed as the theme of a national *philosophical* examination, as if art, conceived as a “word”, a “concept” and a “thing”, was characterized by an inherent unity of meaning (Par, p. 20). In fact, when art gets integrated into the corpus of issues that can be broached philosophically, i.e. into the onto-encyclopedia, it winds up being interpreted according to a well-defined set of conceptual schemes. The traditional questions – “what is art?”, “what does art mean?”, “what is its origin?” – presuppose in fact that we can generally speak of “art” as a distinguished essence, that we can determine its “one-and-naked meaning [*sens un et nu*]” (Par, p. 21), while the possible answers to these questions mobilize a whole series of binary oppositions (meaning/form, representation/represented, *physis/tekhne*, etc.) that are gravid of consequences – including, as we will see, a certain hierarchy of the arts. Art is therefore “predetermined or precomprehended” in a theoretical “regime of interpretation”, which means ultimately that it is subsumed under the *logos*, subjected to discursive “protocols” of conceptualization.

The reference to Heidegger is glaring. Apparently, in fact, we are not far from the perspective of the famous essay on the origin of the work of art, included in *Off the Beaten Track* (1950), where Heidegger illustrates how the traditional determination of the artwork is based upon three different metaphysical understandings of the thing in general: as a substance with properties (“bearer of traits [*Träger von Merkmalen*]”), as the “unity of a sensory manifold” (“*aistheton*”) and, most importantly, as a “formed matter”. However, according to Derrida, Heidegger does not cast doubts on the legitimacy of the philosophical discourse on art, not even when, as a precautionary measure, he claims that his task is not “to solve the enigma [*Rätsel*]” of art, but merely to “see” the enigma as such (Heidegger 2002, p. 50). Heidegger simply takes the “roundabout route [*Umweg*]” that

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published works. In his courses at the ENS, on the contrary, he engaged in an open dialogue with the Althusserian school, in particular with the Groupe Spinoza of Tort, Macherey and Balarba (Baring 2011, chap. 8). Althusser’s work is in fact discussed in two seminars following that on Kant: “Le concept de l’idéologie chez les idéologues français” (1974–1975) and the recently published *Theory and Practice* (1976–1977) (Derrida 2019a). On these matters, see Mercier 2019.

shifts the focus *from beauty to truth*, from the artwork as aesthetic object to the artwork as the “unconcealing [*Eröffnung*]” of the being of the thing. What remains untouched in this movement is the idea that philosophy can say the final word on the essence or the truth of art. In this sense, Derrida sees in Heidegger’s essay not so much the overcoming, as the counterpart of what Heidegger himself considered as “the most comprehensive reflections on the nature of art possessed by the West” (Heidegger 2002, p. 51), i.e. Hegel’s *Lectures on Aesthetics*.

Following Heidegger, Derrida detects in Hegel the culmination of the tendency to “domesticate” art in an “onto-encyclopedic economy”: “art forms only one of the circles in the great circle of the *Geist*” (Par, p. 26). As Hegel claims, in fact, the “scientific” interest of art lies in its being a *product* of the spirit – which, incidentally, explains why natural beauty is excluded from the philosophy of art. Therefore, the “thinking spirit” must return upon art in order to “know” and “comprehend itself” even in its opposite, when it has “surrendered” its proper conceptual form “to feeling and sense” (Hegel 1988, 1, pp. 12–13). This ontological determination of art as the sensible manifestation of the Absolute, of “the most comprehensive truths of the spirit”, is paired with its encyclopedic inscription: art, in fact, “fulfils its supreme task when it has placed itself in the same sphere as religion and philosophy” (Hegel 1988, 1, p. 7). To describe this metaphysical connotation of art, Derrida plays extensively on the metaphor of the circle (*Kreis*) that Hegel himself uses to characterize the system of philosophy as a “circlet [*Krone*]” where “each single part is on the one hand a circle returning into itself, while on the other hand it has at the same time a necessary connection with other parts” (Hegel 1988, 1, p. 24). The great historical variety of the artworks is included within a general philosophy of art that, despite being a “science” on its own, has its end elsewhere, in religion – which, in turn, finds its truth in philosophy: “the philosophical encloses art in its circle, but its discourse is at once, by the same token, caught in a circle” (Par, p. 23).

Heidegger surely does not share an encyclopedic conception of philosophy. The philosophy of art itself, as he submits in the preface to the “Origin”, has to be relinquished, which means that its object, rather than being considered as a “cultural achievement [*Leistungsbezirk der Kultur*]” or as an “appearance [*Erscheinung*] of spirit”, calls for a different kind of questioning: “Reflection on what art may be is completely and decisively directed solely toward the question of being” (Heidegger 2002, p. 55).<sup>15</sup> Still, as Derrida points out, Heidegger seems

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15 On Heidegger’s conception of aesthetics as a metaphysical discipline, see Gentili 2003 and Günter Figal’s essay in this book.

to take for granted the existence of an essence of art that can be subjected to philosophical interrogation. At the beginning of the essay, in fact, he acknowledges that, when we inquire into the origin of the work of art, we cannot but refer to a general essence of art that, unfortunately, manifests itself only through its own products. This assumption mirrors Hegel’s admission that the philosophy of art qua particular science cannot but consider the concept of art “lemmatically [*lemmatisch*]”, as if its existence as a scientific concept had already been demonstrated or “deduced”. The problem is that it is only within the system of philosophy as an “organic totality” that this foundation can take place (Hegel 1988, 1, p. 24). The concept of art, Hegel says, “is a presupposition given by the system of philosophy”. Thus, we have as a starting point (“*Ausgangspunkt*”) “only elements and aspects of it as they occur already in the different ideas of the beautiful and art held by ordinary people, or have formerly been accepted by them” (Hegel 1988, 1, p. 25). We must start, in other words, from a general “representation [*Vorstellung*]” of the concept of art.

When Heidegger reads the history of the essence of art as the history of the notion of truth, and asks whether the work of art can still tell something about the way in which truth happens (Heidegger 2002, p. 51), he reiterates the Hegelian gesture of submitting art, still conceived according to a “lemmatic constraint”, to a superior dimension.<sup>16</sup> Hegel’s and Heidegger’s discourses, then, one at the apex and the other at the edge of metaphysics, are, “as different as could be, on either side of a line whose tracing we imagine to be simple and non-decomposable” (Par, p. 23).

For Derrida, the importance of the CPJ has to be understood in light of this encyclopedic concern, as it occupies a central place for both Hegel and Heidegger. Even more, the relevance Heidegger attributes to Hegel’s *Lectures* “can only be determined, in a certain historical topography”, on the basis of the CPJ (Par, p. 35).

In his course on the will to power as art (1936–1937), which was contemporary to the first drafts of the “Origin”,<sup>17</sup> Heidegger in fact defends the CPJ against the Nietzschean/Schopenhauerian “misunderstanding” of the notion of disinterestedness as an indifferent and apathetic delight, by affirming that, on the con-

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<sup>16</sup> “[...] one receives Heidegger’s text as the nonidentical, staggered, discrepant [*décrochée*] ‘repetition’ of the Hegelian ‘repetition’ in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*. It works to untie what still keeps Hegel’s aesthetics on the unperceived ground of metaphysics. And yet, what if this ‘repetition’ did no more than make explicit, by repeating it more profoundly, the Hegelian ‘repetition’?” (Par, p. 30).

<sup>17</sup> The original redaction of the “Origin”, first delivered as a conference in various occasions, dates in fact from 1935–1936. Heidegger held his courses on Nietzsche from 1936 to 1940.



trary, such a disinterest is the precondition for our relation with the object, allowing us to perceive its beauty as the way of its appearance (Heidegger 1991, 1, p. 110).<sup>18</sup> In this sense, the CPJ plays a pivotal historical role inasmuch as for Heidegger it amounts to the “magnificent discovery and approbation” of the very aesthetic stance he seeks to undermine (Heidegger 1991, 1, p. 109). This assessment of the CPJ has to be read against the backdrop of the chapter on the “Six Basic Developments in the History of Aesthetics”, where Heidegger characterizes modernity as the age when man becomes that singular being in relation to which all other beings have to be determined. It is here that the history of aesthetics begins, when the meditation on art turns into a reflection on “man’s state of feeling [*Gefühlszustand*]”: “[man’s] ‘taste’ becomes the court of judicature [*Gerichtshof*] over beings” (Heidegger 1991, 1, p. 83). If Heidegger deems the *Lectures* to be the last great Western meditation on art, it is precisely because Hegel assumes fully the end of great art in the epoch when the aesthetic attitude inaugurated by Kant “achieves its greatest possible height, breadth, and rigor of form” (Heidegger 1991, 1, p. 84).<sup>19</sup> As to Hegel, his ideas on the third *Critique* are well-known: for him, Kant was the first to feel the urgency to resolve the contradiction between the supersensible and nature and to see in art a possible “point of union [*Vereinigungspunkt*]”; however, by conceiving the opposition merely in intellectual terms, he attained only a purely subjective conciliation between them (Hegel 1988, 1, pp. 56–61).

The significance that Hegel and Heidegger attribute to the CPJ as the commencement of the modern reflection on art could not fail to catch Derrida’s attention. However, what ultimately matters for Derrida is the fact that the Hegelian encyclopedic enclosure of art, which determines also Heidegger’s incapacity to reformulate in a non-metaphysical way the relationship between philosophy and art, has its inaugural moment in the CPJ, where art is “used” as a middle term to fill the void between freedom and nature that threatens the philosophical system.

### 3 Form and Pleasure

For Derrida, “Every time philosophy determines art, masters it and encloses it in the history of meaning [*sense*] or in the ontological encyclopedia, it assigns it a

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<sup>18</sup> Here Heidegger plays obviously on the assonances between “*Schönheit*”, “*Schein*” and “*Erscheinen*”.

<sup>19</sup> Derrida does not fail to remark how for both Heidegger and Hegel art is something passed, that we now have in front of us as a totality that has exhausted its historical meaning (Par, p. 29).

function as medium” (Par, p. 34; translation modified). Properly speaking, however, in the CPJ it is not art that plays this median role, but rather the power of judgment. In the “Introduction”, after having outlined the cartography of our faculty of cognition by means of the distinction between “field [*Feld*]”, “territory [*Boden*]” and “domain [*Gebiet*]”, Kant establishes that, if understanding and reason share the same territory – the objects of possible experience –, they have nonetheless two different legislations, i.e. two different coexisting domains. It is here that the problem of unity arises: it is not enough to prove this coexistence between the sensible and the supersensible; one must also conceive of the “lawfulness” of nature as compatible with the pursuit of moral ends. And this in spite of the existence of an “incalculable gulf [*unübersehbare Kluft*]” separating the two domains (CPJ, §II, p. 63 [Ak. V, pp. 175–176]). The *Urteilkraft* intervenes precisely to “throw a bridge” on this “gulf”, to ward off the danger represented by the “great chasm” threatening the thoroughness of the critique and, by extension, the structural soundness of the “system of pure philosophy” (metaphysics) that will be built upon the ground probed by the critique (CPJ, p. 56 [Ak. V, p. 168]).

Derrida radically emphasizes the intermediary place occupied by the *Urteilkraft*, as a “middle term [*Mittelglied*]” that is neither theoretical nor practical, being both at the same time, functioning as their articulation. As is known, this role is that of allowing us to *think* about nature in a regulative way, and not to *know* it in a determinate way. Therefore, although the power of judgment can surely claim for a territory, it does not have a domain of its own. Even more, as Kant makes clear in the “Preface”, its autonomy as a “special part”, separated from both the theoretical and the practical, holds true only within the *critique* of pure reason: the destiny of the *Urteilkraft* is in fact to “occasionally be annexed” to the two other faculties “in case of need” (CPJ, p. 56 [Ak. V, p. 168]). This suggests to Derrida a reading of the power of judgment as such along the lines of his notion of supplement formulated in the *Grammatology*. This supplementary function seems to be vindicated, for Derrida, by the fact that Kant states in the “Introduction” that we can presume, by *analogy* with the other two faculties, that the power of judgment too must have a proper *a priori* principle, which turns out to be purposiveness (CPJ, §III, p. 64 [Ak. V, p. 177]). As Derrida will underline several times, it is the analogy (the “*als ob*”) the fundamental mechanism that regulates not only the internal economy of the CPJ, but also the general economy of the critical edifice, allowing for the bridging of the gap between the realm of nature and that of freedom.<sup>20</sup>

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20 As Derrida claims, the bridge (“*Brücke*”) that Kant wants to throw on the “chasm” “is not an

Now, it is here, at this point, that “Art (in general), or rather the beautiful” (Par, p. 38) is inscribed. Kant says in fact that the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment cannot derive from the concepts of the understanding nor can it be an *objective* rule to which judgment must conform itself; it will rather be a subjective rule that orients judgment. And it is “chiefly in those judgments [*Beurtheilungen*] that are called aesthetic, which concern the beautiful and the sublime in nature or in art” that the “embarrassment about a principle arises” (CPJ, p. 57 [Ak. V, p. 169]). What Derrida finds problematic is the “immediate relation” that, according to Kant, the judgments on the beautiful reveal between the faculty of cognition and the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Kant himself was aware that this relation, which imposed a “special division” for the power of judgment, was the most “puzzling” aspect (“*das Räthselhafte*”) of this faculty. In fact, because of this immediate relation that it establishes between cognition and pleasure, and because the feeling of pleasure is “necessarily combined” with the faculty of desire, which is under the *a priori* legislation of reason, the power of judgment is able to move from pure cognition to reason, from the realm of the concepts of nature to the domain of the concept of freedom (CPJ, §III p. 66 [Ak. V, pp. 178–179]). It is pleasure, therefore, that allows for the passage, insofar as it signals the correspondence between the heterogeneity of the various empirical laws of nature and our intellectual quest for unity. The judgment of taste shows us precisely the *formal* possibility of this immediate and *subjective* feeling of pleasure in association with the pure and simple representation of an object, before or beyond knowledge. Famously, this feeling of pleasure is aroused by the free interplay between imagination as the faculty of pure intuitions and the understanding, i.e. by the “reflected perception” (“without any intention of acquiring a concept from it”) of the *pure form* of an object, and not of the “material” aspects of its representation (CPJ, §VII, p. 76 [Ak. V, p. 190]).

What strikes Derrida’s attention is what we could call the “formalism” of Kant’s treatment of aesthetic pleasure. In Derrida’s view, this formalism, with its underlying opposition between form and matter, is *not a variant on, but rather the very condition of possibility of, a discourse on aesthetics* (Par, p. 68). As the four moments of the judgment of taste described in the “Analytic of the Beautiful” prescribe, the *Wohlgefallen*, this pleasure or satisfaction, must be (1) *pure*, i.e. disinterested; (2) *universal*, although without concept, being free from any private inclination or interest; (3) *formal*, because in its pureness it makes us

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analogy. The recourse to analogy, the concept and effect of analogy are or make *the bridge* itself – both in the *Critique* and in the whole powerful tradition to which it still belongs” (Par, p. 36).

aware of a subjective purposiveness without any specific objective purpose; and (4) *necessary*, for it is seen as universally communicable on the basis of a shared “common sense”. This determination of the judgment of taste sounds to Derrida like a progressive process of purification and formalization of the aesthetic pleasure in the name of a pure representationalism. The pureness and the disinterestedness of pleasure require in fact “a sort of transcendental reduction, the *épochè* of a thesis of existence” that “liberates, in certain formal conditions, the pure feeling of pleasure” (Par, p. 44). From this, two conclusions can be drawn.

First, the object as such is “neutralized”, that is, it is not considered in its determined existence, for its proper phenomenal qualities. On the contrary, it is just something we encounter and that awakens a pleasure that no empirical psychology could grasp, being nothing but the “autoaffection” of a subject taking pleasure from his very own contemplation (Par, p. 47). But this autoaffection is never simple and never immediate: on the contrary, it is occasioned by the existence, albeit neutralized, of the external object itself and its representation. The structure of the autoaffection is thus regulated by a more profound relationship of “heteroaffection”. The subject/object dualism that, according to Heidegger, Kant still retained by reducing the problem of art to a theory of judgment comes in a more nuanced version. There is not merely a subject that judges a beautiful object, but rather a subject that enters in a reflexive self-relation through the mediation of a subjective representation that arises directly from the paradoxical “aesthetic inexistence” of an external object. The subject/object couple is therefore inscribed within the subject himself. However, according to Derrida, both the subject and the object are purely formal, deprived of the traits of the phenomenal existence, “*mises en crypte*”. We have in fact: (i) a subjectivity that is “inexistent or anexistent”, beyond the “empirical subject and its whole world” (Par, p. 46); (ii) a beautiful object that is the “less aesthetic” thing one can imagine insofar as it must not interest us as an *aistheton*; and finally (iii) a pleasure that, being different from pure sensation, “is impossible to experience [...] phenomenally, empirically, in the space and time of my interested or interesting existence” (Par, p. 48).

The second conclusion is strictly connected to the first one: due to the formality and the universality that make it communicable and that tie it to cognition, the feeling of pleasure entails a *discourse* on the inner essence of the beautiful, an appreciation for what is purely formal in its representation, beyond any technical, economical or political concern. As Derrida writes,

[...] you have to know what you are talking about, what *intrinsically* concerns the value “beauty” and what remains external to your immanent sense of beauty. This permanent re-

quirement – to distinguish between the internal or proper sense and the circumstance of the object being talked about – organizes all philosophical discourses on art, the meaning of art and meaning as such, from Plato to Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. This requirement presupposes a discourse on the limit between the inside and the outside of the art object, here a *discourse on the frame* (Par, p. 45).

Kant needs in fact to establish clearly what in the work of art is only capable of arousing a pure pleasure. In the “Elucidation by means of examples” (§14), he famously lingers on this question by radically distinguishing between *pure* and *empirical* aesthetic judgments, between judgments of *taste* in a proper sense and judgments of *sense*. An aesthetic judgment is pure only inasmuch as it excludes any sensation from its own principle or “determining ground [*Bestimmungsgrund*]”, including only what “belongs merely to the form”, namely drawing in the pictorial and spatial arts and composition in music. All that pertains to the “charm” or the “emotion”, such as the play of shapes, colors or sounds, is to be considered as incidental, secondary, as well as what Kant calls “ornaments (*parerga*)”, e.g., “the borders of paintings, draperies on statues, or colonnades around magnificent buildings” (CPJ, §14, p. 111 [Ak. V, p. 226]). The *parergon*, in fact, is a mere decoration that increases the charm of the painting, without being a “constituent [*Bestandstück*]” of the representation as such. Derrida immediately takes up this notion and makes it the blind spot of the Kantian discourse on the work of art.

Now, it would be useless to assess the philological accuracy of Derrida’s reading.<sup>21</sup> It is clear, in fact, that he exploits this (for him, seemingly) peripheral notion in order to bring to light the alleged general logic underlying the CPJ, as if it was an “operative concept” in the Finkian sense.<sup>22</sup> By focusing on an occurrence of this notion in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (R, p. 95 [Ak. VI, p. 52]), he equates the *parergon* with the supplement, as something that is neither inside nor outside, that appears to be external to the work of art but that nonetheless is necessary to its determination qua work of art.<sup>23</sup> This *hors-d’oeuvre* questions in fact the Kantian “delimitation of the center and the integrity of the representation, of its inside and its outside” (Par, p. 57), as it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to establish where the *ergon*

21 For such an assessment, see for example Séguy-Duclot 2017.

22 On the importance of Fink’s notion of “operative concept” for Derrida, see Terzi 2019.

23 “The *parergon* inscribes something which comes as an extra, *exterior* to the proper field [...] but whose transcendent exteriority comes to play, abut onto [*jouxter*], brush against [*frôler*], rub [*frotter*], press against the limit itself and intervene in the inside only to the extent that the inside is lacking. It is lacking *in* something and it is lacking *from itself* [*se manque à lui-même*]” (Par, p. 56).

ends and the *parergon* begins. Derrida extends intentionally the scope of this particular notion to include everything that surrounds the work of art, from its border up to its physical collocation or the signature of the artist. What is at stake is, once again, and coherently with the general concern of Derrida’s previous works, the question of the pureness of meaning, the relationship between meaning (in this case, of a work of art) and its external context.<sup>24</sup>

## 4 The Frame of Judgment

In Derrida’s view, thus, the entire analytic of aesthetic judgment would hinge on a very precise assumption: the sureness of a rigorous distinction between what is intrinsic and what is extrinsic. The aesthetic judgment must in fact bear upon the most intimate essence of beauty, and not on what is merely subsidiary. But why does it have to be that way? What calls for this formal pureness?

The characters of pureness, universality, formality and necessity of the judgment of taste stem directly from the four moments of the “Analytic of the Beautiful” that are drawn from the “Analytic of Concepts” of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant states that, as to their form, judgments can be classified under “four titles” that articulate the “function of thinking”: quantity (universal, particular, singular), quality (affirmative, negative, infinite), relation (categorical, hypothetical, disjunctive) and modality (problematic, assertoric, apodictic) (CPR, A70/B95, p. 206 [Ak. III, pp. 86–87]). In a note at the beginning of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, Kant says that, “In seeking the moments to which [the] power of judgment attends in its reflection, I have been guided by the logical functions for judging (for a relation to the understanding is always contained even in the judgment of taste)” (CPJ, §1, p. 89 [Ak. V, p. 203]). The fact that the judgment of taste is indeed a *judgment* accounts for the importation of the conceptual table of the *Critique of Pure Reason*; however, the *Urteilkraft* is not concerned with the

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24 “*Parerga* have a thickness, a surface which separates them not only (as Kant would have it) from the integral inside, from the body proper of the *ergon*, but also from the outside, from the wall on which the painting is hung, from the space in which statue or column is erected, then, step by step, from the whole field of historical, economic, political inscription in which the drive to signature [*pulsion de signature*] is produced [...]. No ‘theory’, no ‘practice’, no ‘theoretical practice’ can intervene effectively in this field if it does not weigh up and bear on the frame, which is the decisive structure of what is at stake, at the invisible limit to (between) the interiority of meaning (put under the shelter by the whole hermeneuticist, semioticist, phenomenologist, and formalist tradition) and (to) all the empiricisms of the extrinsic which, incapable of either seeing or reading, miss the question completely” (Par, p. 61).

knowledge of the object, and for Derrida this poses a serious problem: with an “artful violence”, “a *logical* frame is transposed and forced in to be imposed on a *nonlogical* structure, a structure which no longer essentially concerns a relation to the object as object of knowledge” (Par, p. 69).

Once again, the problem of art is inscribed within a theory of the beautiful, the theory of the beautiful within a theory of taste and the theory of taste within a doctrine of judgment. Derrida overemphasizes the arbitrariness of the imposition of the analytic of logical judgments upon an analytic of aesthetic judgments in order to question the philosophical and discursive *framing* of art and sensibility. He claims in fact that “The frame fits badly” (Par, p. 69) and that the recourse to the table of the “Analytic of Concepts” is legitimized by “the sole and bad reason that the imagination, the essential resource of the relation to beauty, is perhaps linked to the understanding” (Par, p. 71). Derrida refers here to what Kant says in the very first lines of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, i.e. that when we judge something as beautiful we relate the representation to the subject and his feeling of pleasure or displeasure by means of the imagination, which is “*perhaps* combined with the understanding” (CPJ, §1, p. 89 [Ak. V, p. 203]; my emphasis). This would expose the precariousness of the link between the understanding and the imagination in the judgment of taste. However, what Derrida fails to consider is that, although the judgment of taste does not provide us with a knowledge of the object according to a concept, it implies nonetheless a *determination*, even if purely subjective and without concept, of a given representation (CPJ, §15, p. 113 [Ak. V, pp. 228–229]).

But, again, what matters here is ultimately what Derrida seeks to demonstrate. By stressing that the adoption of the conceptual frame of the “Analytic of Concepts” is a stretch, he comes to qualify the very table of the four moments of quantity, quality, relation and modality as a *parergon*, as something that is artificially required by the subject matter (art) and that, by the same token, helps to define the subject matter itself. The imposition of an analytic of concepts on a process that functions without concepts is warranted by the logic of the *analogy*, of the *als ob*. As Kant writes, in the pure judgment of taste we “speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a property [*Beschaffenheit*] of the object and the judgment logical (constituting a cognition of the object through concepts of it)” (CPJ, §6, p. 97 [Ak. V, p. 211]). Despite being subjective, the judgment of taste implies a sort of non-conceptual universality that suggests the analogy with the determining judgment and that explains the use of the table of the “Analytic of Concepts” in the “Analytic of the Beautiful”. Now, it is this particular framing of the beautiful that underpins “the requirement of formality, the opposition of the formal and the material, of the pure and the impure, of the proper and the improper, of the inside and the outside” (Par, p. 73). This specific conceptual *parergon* is



hence the tool by means of which philosophy can manage to master a domain – that of aesthetic experience – and to enclose it in its encyclopedic circle: “all the value oppositions which dominate the philosophy of art (before and since Kant)” depend for Derrida on the “parergonality” of this specific categorial and meta-physical framing (Par, p. 73).

## 5 The Humanist Analogy

Apparently, it may seem that Derrida centers his analyses only on the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment”. However, he is well aware that, in order to understand the distinctions deployed by Kant in the first part of the CPJ, we have to read them in view of the “Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment”. The oppositions between the pure and the impure, between the subjective and the objective, even the more specific ones like those between the beautiful and the sublime, between free and adherent beauty or liberal and mercenary arts, would not make sense without the ultimate reference to *man* – “the *only subject* of this *Critique* of judgment” (Par, p. 111; my emphasis) – and, therefore, to the possibility of thinking of a higher purpose in nature. As Kant makes clear in the paragraph on the “ideal of beauty”, man is in fact the only creature that, being endowed with reason, with the capacity of giving himself his own ends, is able to think through the purposiveness without purpose of the beautiful and grasp the moral finality of nature (CPJ, §17, p. 117 [Ak. V, p. 233]). Man is in fact the place of the analogical “as if”, ensuring the passage from nature to freedom, from human art to natural finality. The brief text “Economimesis” is devoted precisely to an assessment of the complex “economy” regulating this set of analogies. In paragraphs 43 and 44, Kant characterizes the beautiful art, in opposition to nature, science, handicraft and mechanical art, as a “production through freedom” (CPJ, §43, p. 182 [Ak. V, p. 303]) that is grounded in reason and that, without having a precise purpose, “promotes the cultivation [*Cultur*] of the mental powers [*Gemüthskräfte*] for sociable communication” (CPJ, §44, p. 185 [Ak. V, p. 306]). This amounts to saying that true art can be judged through a pure reflection and without the interference of sensations: the beautiful is “what pleases in the mere judging [*Beurtheilung*]” (CPJ, §45, p. 185 [Ak. V, p. 306]). Art must then be judged as if it was a free and “unintentional” production of nature, devoid of a determinate purpose (CPJ, §45). The human production must mirror the spontaneity of natural creation, and the genius is notoriously introduced by Kant as the natural inborn talent through which nature gives the rule to art itself (CPJ, §46).



Derrida focuses his attention on the economical undertones of Kant's theory of beautiful art and genius.<sup>25</sup> According to him, in fact, we are dealing here with a "pure productivity", "a sort of immaculate commerce" or, again, "a reflective exchange" or "universal communicability between free subjects" where no specific concept, interest or enjoyment intervenes (Derrida 1981, p. 9). What is at stake is the pure appreciation by a cultivated subject of a beautiful work of art produced by a free genius.<sup>26</sup> At the heart of the CPJ, then, a classic humanistic logic – a "reflexive humanism" (Par, p. 108) – would be revealed, according to which the essence of man is located in freedom and in the absence of any material or external subordination.

This "fundamental humanism" of the CPJ is thus functional to the philosophical determination of art as a middle term between nature and freedom. For Derrida, this is stated very clearly in paragraph 59, where the beautiful is presented as a symbol of the good:

Taste as it were makes possible the transition from sensible charm to the habitual moral interest without too violent a leap by representing the imagination even in its freedom as purposively determinable for the understanding and teaching us to find a free satisfaction in the objects of the senses even without any sensible charm (CPJ, §59, p. 228 [Ak. V, p. 354]).

The pure appreciation of the beautiful is therefore the non-conceptual "indirect presentation [*Darstellung*]" that makes us *reflect* upon a life elevated above the binding necessity of nature and the mere receptivity of sensibility. But in order to attain this level, a certain culture is required. Derrida highlights how the subordination of the analytic of the beautiful to an ideal of morality and to the appearance of the objective finality of nature implies ultimately the introduction of "a theory of culture, more precisely a pragmatic anthropology" (Par, p. 108).<sup>27</sup> The

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**25** The opposition between "general" and "restricted economy" that Derrida exploits in this essay, as well as the references to the economy of the gift, are directly linked to the 1967 essay on Georges Bataille "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve", included in *Writing and Difference* (Derrida 2001, pp. 317–350). On these matters, see Plotnitsky 1995.

**26** Furthermore, Derrida maintains that the parallel between the beautiful art and natural productivity is based on the assumption that the latter, as *natura naturans*, can be read in analogy with a God-like act of creation. This is a very problematic claim. As Bernstein (1992, pp. 166–167) has remarked, in fact, Derrida attributes unduly to Kant a notion of nature and divine creation that is ultimately pre-critical.

**27** If the critique of aesthetic judgment conceals an anthropology, then a "whole theory of history, of society, and of culture" (Par, p. 105) is secretly implicated in what claims to be a formal

reference is to the notion of *sensus communis*, which presupposes a “culture of the mental powers” in order to develop that “feeling of participation [*Teilnehmungsgefühl*]” and that capacity to “communicate universally” that constitute the true “sociability [*Geselligkeit*]” (CPJ, §60, p. 229 [Ak. V, p. 355]).

Art is subordinated once again to the predominance of the *logos*. The very logic of the analogy is always linguistic: “Analogy is always language” (Derrida 1981, p. 13). Art takes its place within a *discourse* that subordinates it to a different purpose. The entire classification of the beautiful arts, that Kant borrows almost literally from Batteux (CPJ, §51), rests precisely on this metaphysical need for pureness and presence. In paragraphs 52 and 53 Kant links the beautiful art to the moral ideas and proceeds with the classification of the arts based on their “aesthetic value”, which is judged by reason. Poetry is of course at the apex of the hierarchy, as it emanates directly from genius and is therefore the most suited to the expression of aesthetic ideas, i.e. to the *presentation* of the intelligible. By unleashing the productive imagination, poetry “strengthens the mind [*Gemüth*] by letting it feel its capacity [*Vermögen*] to consider and judge of nature, as appearance, freely, self-actively, and independently of determination by nature [...], and thus use it [...] as the schema of the supersensible” (CPJ, §52, p. 204 [Ak. V, p. 326]). Derrida feels entitled to locate here the manifestation of a metaphysics of presence at its purest. Poetry guarantees the fullness of the idea, of meaning, of conceptual thought, insofar as it is the less contaminated by the constraints of an external sensible nature. It lends itself better than the other arts to the pure and formal appreciation of the judgment of taste; and if it provides us with a clearer glimpse into the supersensible, it is because it allows for a purer *autoaffection*, for a purer and more disinterested play between intuition and concept (Derrida 1981, p. 18). A powerful logocentrism is therefore implicated by the inscription of the question of art within a theory of judgment. The pureness of the judgment of taste involves a purification of representation itself and a peculiar ranking of the arts.

Unfortunately, such a purification generates a remainder, a reject, something that resists assimilation. “Economimesis” ends with the figure of the “vomit”, taken from the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (AP, §21, p. 269 [Ak. VII, p. 157]), incarnating that particular form of “ugliness [*Hässlichkeit*]” that in paragraph 48 of the CPJ Kant qualifies as what cannot be represented and turned by art into something delightful. Being too intimately related to a disturbing enjoyment, its representation cannot be judged beautiful. The disgusting

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and critical analysis of the power of judgment excluding any reference to the empirical (i.e. social) interest for the beautiful (CPJ, §41).

is “the non-transcendentalisable, the non-idealizable”, what cannot be assimilated by the representation and the *logos* (Derrida 1981, p. 22) – in short, what cannot be judged. This question of the disgust is not simply a provocation, but instead a classical issue that seemingly Derrida inherits from Bataille or from Freud, but that actually dates back to Plato’s *Parmenides* (although neither Kant nor Derrida refers to this text), where Parmenides asks Socrates whether even things like mud or dirt have an *eidos* of their own (*Parmenides*, 130b-d). In a contemporary text, *Glas* (1974), Derrida uses the expression “the system’s vomit”, although in a different context, to qualify the paradoxical element that cannot be assimilated by a system but that, for this very reason, like a supplement or a *parergon*, “assures the system’s space of possibility” (Derrida 1986, p. 162). The experience of the disgusting is thus the remainder of the philosophical enclosure of art, a frontier where the metaphysical effort to define the pure essence of art once and for all and to assimilate its realm within the precincts of the discursive onto-encyclopedic knowledge meets its limits.

## 6 The Deconstructor and the Sociologist

One cannot fail to notice how, despite the heavy political and institutional premises, Derrida’s interpretation of the CPJ still remains “internal” to the philosophical discourse, along the lines of previous pieces of deconstructive bravura, coherently with Derrida’s conception of general textuality. According to many contemporary critics, however, the “internalism” of Derrida’s way of reading amounted to a severe constraint to the critical power of philosophy. His “rival” and former classmate Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), for instance, formulated a harsh critique of Derrida’s internalist style of reading, targeting specifically the interpretation of the CPJ in the postscript to his 1979 book *The Distinction*, titled “Towards a ‘Vulgar’ Critique of ‘Pure’ Critiques” (Bourdieu 1984, pp. 485–500).<sup>28</sup> The title of the postscript stresses the difference between the sociological approach and the perspective of post-Kantian philosophical aesthetics, which for Bourdieu rests on the privilege of pure taste and form and the depreciation of the agreeable, vulgar *aisthesis* and popular enjoyment. According to Bourdieu, this preference is inscribed within a social dynamics opposing the culture of the “cultivated bourgeoisie” to “the people, the imaginary site of uncultivated nature,

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<sup>28</sup> To this criticism, Derrida would eventually reply in his 1983–1984 seminar titled “Du droit à la philosophie”, held at the ENS and at the Collège International de Philosophie, and in the long preface to the 1990 book of the same name (Derrida 2002, pp. 63–65).

barbarously wallowing in the pure enjoyment” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 490). The entire CPJ, with its conceptual oppositions (e.g., fine arts vs. mercenaries arts), would thus be regulated by this philosophical mystification of a sort of cultural ideology deeply rooted in a well-defined configuration of social relations. Consequently, the world of the creative genius and the notion of artistic production qua “another nature” are understood by Bourdieu as the results of an “artistic sublimation which is predisposed to fulfill a function of social legitimation. The negation of enjoyment – inferior, coarse, vulgar, mercenary, venal, servile, in a word, natural – implies affirmation of the sublimity of those who can be satisfied with sublimated, refined, distinguished, disinterested, gratuitous, free pleasures” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 491).

This is why Bourdieu proposes to read the third *Critique* in light of other conceptual antitheses established by Kant, such as that – introduced at the beginning of the *Conflict of the Faculties* (CF, p. 248 [Ak. VII, p. 19]) – between autonomous professors/intellectuals and scientific “technicians”. Ultimately, Kant’s thought and texts turn out to be socially determined by *habitus* and “sublimed” dispositions:

Totally ahistorical, like all philosophical thought that is worthy of the name (every *philosophia* worth its salt is *perennis*) – perfectly ethnocentric, since it takes for its sole datum the lived experience of a *homo aestheticus* who is none other than the subject of aesthetic discourse constituted as the universal subject of aesthetic experience – Kant’s analysis of the judgment of taste finds its real basis in a set of aesthetic principles which are the universalization of the dispositions associated with a particular social and economic condition (Bourdieu 1984, p. 493).

According to Bourdieu, although Derrida acknowledges the deadlocks of the conceptual structures regulating the CPJ, he deals with them in metaphysical terms, still abiding by the rules of the philosophical commentary (indeed, is not transgression another way of honoring conventions?). In other words, Derrida “can only philosophically tell the truth about the philosophical text and its philosophical reading, which [...] is the best way of not telling it” (Bourdieu 1984, p. 495). From this perspective, deconstruction is the philosophical analogous of the artistic strategies of Duchamp or Warhol, which objectified tradition in order to deconstruct its fundamental codes, internal mechanisms and rhetoric, but without really stepping off its horizon. Deconstruction is yet another stylistic exercise, where what matters is the performance and not the content (Bourdieu 1984, pp. 496–497). Ultimately, the Derridean gesture still sticks to the formalism of pure critique and reading that is a prerogative of a circle of cultivated initiates devoted to a canon of texts and authors.

According to Orchard (2010, pp. 84–89), Bourdieu’s critique of Derrida reflected the more general divergences between his sociological school, which included also Louis Pinto and Jean-Louis Fabiani, and the project of the *Greph*. However, the rationales behind Bourdieu’s clash with Derrida’s “pure reading” are multiple, and a critical inquiry into the “parallel lives” of these two prominent *normaliens*, who both searched and found a way out of the traditional commentary of philosophical texts, might help shedding some light. Bourdieu, a former philosopher turned sociologist, believed that it was possible to take a step outside the “essentialism” of academic philosophy towards the “objectivity” of a socially and historically constructed field where intellectual postures and theoretical choices could be explained on the basis of structural positioning and acquired *habitus*.<sup>29</sup> For Derrida, on the contrary, it was naïf to believe in the possibility to attain such an objective and actual reference without constructing a discourse, that is, without somehow resorting to the same conceptual tools and metaphysical assumptions that socio-genetic analyses seek to overcome and de-naturalize. In Bourdieu’s view, however, Derrida never got beyond his good political intentions and remained stuck in a sterile textual reflexivity.

## 7 Conclusion

In this essay, I have contended that Derrida’s reading of the CPJ has to be understood against the background of a peculiar cultural moment in French culture in which the institutional framing and the epistemological (“encyclopedic”) organization of philosophy became the object of a radical scrutiny. What Derrida found in Kant’s CPJ was ultimately a paradigmatic example of how philosophy, conceived as a discursive form of knowledge, organized by socio-historical and institutional frames, deals with a distinct practice and sphere of experience, that of art and artworks, which cannot be assimilated by the *logos* without a certain “violence”. Therefore, the significance of Derrida’s two essays lies less in their treatment of aesthetics or art than in a broader investigation into the epistemological status of philosophy itself. The reason why Derrida reiterated the course he gave at the ENS on many occasions, and finally decided to publish it, is that he saw in the case study of the CPJ, motivated by contingent necessities (the *agrégation*), the chance to address the limits of the philosophical rationality and highlight the conceptual resources that philosophy mobilizes when it becomes a discourse on sensibility and art. By means of this case study, Derrida

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<sup>29</sup> See for example the methodological section of Bourdieu 1996, pp. 177–312.

was also able to deploy a more general account of how deconstruction works and which stance it adopts towards the philosophical tradition: in principle, in fact, deconstruction is a questioning of the frames, a supplement of reflexivity that obliges philosophy to unveil and “denaturalize” its own conceptual frameworks and their inner economy.

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Dario Cecchi

# Exceeding Exposures

Jean-François Lyotard and Kant's Sublime

"Il ne peut pas y avoir de *sensus communis*"  
(J.-F. Lyotard, *Au juste*, in dialogue with J.-L. Thébaud)

## 1 Introduction

It is not easy to distinguish the interpretation from the use of the text in Jean-François Lyotard's (1924–1998) reading of the *Critique of the Power Judgment*. As a consequence, I will proceed as follows: a) in the next section, I will sketch a short overview of the philosophy elaborated by Lyotard during the 1990s, also under the influence of Kant's philosophy; b) in the third section, I will consider what the faculty or power of judgment<sup>1</sup> means to him; c) in the fourth section, I will examine his interpretation of the third *Critique*, focusing on the understanding of the sublime; e) in the last section, I will focus on three 'clusters' of his use of the sublime: namely, ethics, politics, and art.

Lyotard's interest in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* dates back at least to the late 1970s. During the 1980s and 1990s, he published a series of articles, essays and books which are either devoted to the interpretation of the third *Critique*, or make an extended use of it in different theoretical contexts. To the first group belong books like *Enthusiasm. The Kantian Critique of History* (1986) and the *Lessons of the Analytic of the Sublime* (1991); to the second group articles and essays like "The Sublime and the Avant-garde" (1983) and "Judiciousness in Dispute, or Kant after Marx" (1985), or also books like *The Differend* (1983) and *Heidegger and "the Jews"* (1988).

Lyotard's work on the third *Critique* often derives from lectures, conferences and seminars. The *Lessons* are, by their author's declaration, the collection of his notes "for the explication of the text" (Lyotard 1994, p. ix), chapters 1 and 7 having been already published in earlier versions, respectively on the *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* (4/1975, 1990) and in the collective volume *Du sublime* (1988). *Enthusiasm* is perhaps Lyotard's only text that deals systematically with an aspect of Kantian criticism, wondering whether the *Critique of the*

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<sup>1</sup> In the following, I will preferably use the formulation "faculty of judgment", in accordance with Lyotard's *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (Lyotard 1994).



*Power of Judgment* provides a better theoretical framework to Kant's political philosophy than the *Doctrine of Right*. More generally, the attention paid to the sublime by Lyotard sheds a new light on both the third *Critique* and his own philosophical reflection. Arguably, what he practiced in the last part of his life was a sort of 'radical' criticism. Therefore, in order to understand his way of reading the third *Critique*, we must first consider the theoretical framework of his philosophy at that time.

## 2 Philosophizing the “Dispute”

Lyotard belongs to the group of those French philosophers, sometimes gathered together under the name of “post-structuralism”, who worked at the intersection of phenomenology, Marxism, linguistics and psychoanalysis. When he started working on Kant, he already was famous for at least two aspects of his thought: a) the investigation, in the 1960s, of the relationship between language and images (Lyotard 2011); b) the theory of a “libidinal economy”, in the 1970s, organizing the “pulsional apparatuses” which canalize and shape feelings and desires of both individuals and societies (Lyotard 2015). In general, his philosophy has always been characterized by the overlapping between art and politics.

In *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) Lyotard argues that modern ideologies, such as Liberalism and Marxism, have turned into “great narratives”, losing their epistemic significance (Lyotard 1984). On this basis, Lyotard has sometimes being accused of thus having elaborated a sort of anti-realism. Arguably, he rather develops a *critical realism* that does not question the relationship between thought and reality, but considers it according to its different levels: not only epistemology and science, but also ethics, politics and art. And Lyotard, of course, is more interested in the latter. With regard to this, Jean-Michel Salanskis (2007) speaks of a “referential depth [*profondeur référentielle*]”.

In the early 1980s Lyotard elaborates the concept of *différend*, sometimes translated as “dispute”. This concept brings the discourse on the postmodern condition to a further level, i.e. a stage of more refined elaboration: there is no ‘big theory’, no ‘-ism’ which is able to ‘subsume’ the human experience into a unified system of categories. Rather, the latter is fragmented: an ‘archipelagos’ made of distinct ‘islands’ of cognition. And the contemporary age is characterized for him by technological transformations, such as the emergence of the webs of the new media that offer a compensation for the abovementioned fragmentation of experience, thus exonerating from the need to make sense of this fragmentation. In this context, as argued by Sfez (2000, p. 20; my translation), Lyotard “discovers, through Kant, and the second Wittgenstein, a philosophy

of the heterogeneity of the forms of judgments”: that is, a thought concerning the various ways of making sense of experience.

Following Wittgenstein, the archipelagos of experience is made of “phrase families” into which “language games” alike are grouped. In this context, to have an experience implies to master the corresponding language games. Within a certain language game or phrase family, it is possible, to use Kant’s words, to share an idea of “common sense”: namely, the idea that by sharing parts of our experience we also share the rules and modes of its elaboration.

Language and experience are strongly intertwined: to have an experience implies to “phrase” it, as Lyotard often claims. Nonetheless, one question is left open: what happens when we move/shift from one language game to another? In other (Kantian) words: how is the “transition [Übergang]” possible from one field of experience to another? The very etymology of the word “archipelagos” designates the “sea” (“*pelagos*”) that “originally” (“*arche*”) divides and connects the islands at the same time. But we cannot have an experience of this archipelagos as a whole. This transition is empowered by a faculty of our mind called by Kant “faculty of judgment [*Urteilkraft*]”. Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language supplies Lyotard with a theory of how experience is “phrased”, but it is Kant that represents a real turn in his philosophy (Sfez 2000, p. 53): for Kant shows him how to *philosophize the transition amid different kinds of phrasing* (Trottein 2002).

### 3 Witz or Judgment?

In the *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* Lyotard considers in depth the entire “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment”. He starts from a very traditional interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, its task being to “restore unity to philosophy in the wake of the severe ‘division’ inflicted upon it by the first two *Critiques*” (Lyotard 1994, p. 1). This interpretation is right and wrong at the same time. It is wrong insofar the two realms of philosophy, nature and freedom, cannot be unified into a single system of thought: an “abyss [*Abgrund*]” divides them. And it is right insofar as this unity concerns only the method of legitimately finding transitions from one realm to the other. We need to establish the proper mode of thinking for each occasion: each case is to be “subsumed” according to the proper rule. Judging requires reflection.

Reflecting judgments empower reflection in the absence of any pre-established rule: this is to be found. Considering them, Kant investigates the logic of judgment. Reflecting judgments can be either “aesthetic” or “teleological”:

the former deal with the “state of the mind” of those who judge as they are affected by an object, while the latter deal with the organization of living beings. Lyotard focuses on aesthetic judgments insofar as he is interested in understanding how the very contingency of experience can be thus grasped, with regard to thought considered beyond its cognitive purposes. Reflecting judgments are in fact opposed to “determining” judgments: “The faculty of judgment is said to be ‘simply *reflecting*’ when ‘only the particular is given and the universal has to be found’” (Lyotard 1994, p. 2, translation modified; CPJ, §IV). Kant calls the reflecting judgment *Witz* or *ingenium* in the *Anthropology* (AP, §44).

To Lyotard, the fact that reflection empowers judgment in the absence of any previously established rule is a “paradox”. Arguably, the paradox of reflecting judgments corresponds to the situation called by Lyotard *différend*, “dispute”. This is not caused by the conflict between different “doctrines”. To Lyotard, this is *litige*, not *différend*. Contrariwise, a dispute properly speaking arises only as the subject undergoes the paradoxical experience of comparing something particular to a universal idea. There is a ‘gap’ between the two that no theory is able to close. For thinking does not mean just theorizing: it implies reflecting upon what theory is mostly adequate to the given particular case.

Let us consider the case of the different doctrines of fairness applied to labor. Lyotard exposes the case in “Judiciousness in Dispute, or Kant after Marx”, considering the different ideas of justice respectively of Capitalism and Marxism (Lyotard 1989f, pp. 551–552). It is a commentary of a passage from Marx’s *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*. Labor is a commodity under Capitalism. Therefore, it is fair to ask someone to work for money. But if we turn to Marx, we discover that the very fact of considering labor as a commodity is fundamentally “wrong” – Marx says exactly *Unrecht*: Lyotard translates it as *tort* in French. Human beings (workers) and things (commodities) become equivalent. This is a real dispute, which is concerned with the ideas of justice at stake in the different doctrines presented:

The critic thus moves between rules and cases, not between doctrines. There lies the real war, the right war, the true *différend*, the *Streit* and the *Widerstreit*. And the *différend* between the academic faculties of 1798 is a *différend* between mental faculties, that is, between regimes of heterogeneous phrases (Lyotard 1989f, p. 333).

Lyotard refers here, of course, to Kant’s *Quarrel between the Faculties*, the political importance of which, particularly the second section, needs no explanation. Kant argues for the political legitimacy of revolutions. This question is the pivot of Lyotard’s *Enthusiasm*. The recurrence of revolutionary events during the second half of the twentieth century – Budapest 1956, Paris 1968, Berlin 1989 –

brings him to put the ideas of freedom and justice at the center of his political thought. In all of these cases, the dispute evaluates the disproportion between our political ideas and their realization. As far as Lyotard (1989a, §9) considers politics as a certain form of “tie” of different genres of discourse, political criticism has to *untie* them, in order to analyze their rhetorical strategies. And the sublime is a process of “constant untie” (Sfez 2000, p. 127). Therefore, the sublime offers Lyotard a favorable standpoint on judgment, for the relationship between universals and particulars is formulated here as an opposition. Lyotard is aware that the “Analytic of the Sublime” is a “mere appendage [*ein bloßer Anhang*]” (Lyotard 1994, p. 53) of the “Analytic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment” (CPJ, §23). His effort goes to show that this “appendage” unveils the logic of judgment: namely, the way thought is to be referred to things, universals to particulars.

In the light of what has been said above, the faculty of judgment cannot be reduced only to *Witz*, that is, a sort of serendipity: for it envisages the reorganization of the cognitive faculties, confirming – or frustrating – the feeling that reality is finalized to knowledge, according to the principle of the *Naturzweckmäßigkeit*. This conformation of the cognitive faculties to nature can be either “final [*zweckgemäß*]” or “contra-final [*zweckwidrig*]”: the former concerns the beautiful, while the latter is concerned with the sublime. Lyotard calls this aspect of judgment “heuristic”. This is not limited to the cognitive uses of reflecting judgments, as happens in the teleological judgments: on the contrary, it is concerned with the ultimate condition of aesthetic pleasure.

Aesthetic pleasure is subjective, but not hedonistically grounded on sensations. It is universal and necessary, though only on the occasion of the particular case considered. And it is bound to no logical principle. In other words, its sensation is a “feeling [*Gefühl*]” rather than an “intuition [*Anschauung*]”, i.e. a sensation bound to the perception of an object. Therefore, aesthetic judgments as such have no cognitive import in themselves: for they consider only the mode, not the content of experience. In short, aesthetic pleasure is bound to the “free play” that imagination and understanding establish with each other. Beauty thus corresponds to a richness in the presentation of natural forms by imagination (Rogozinski 1988, p. 233; Lyotard 1988, p. 214n). And reflection is enhanced insofar the subject’s “state of the mind” – what Lyotard calls “*anima*”, “soul” – undergoes a “quickenings [*Belebung*]” (CPJ, §9): “in taste the imagination is free. The imagination produces new forms ‘beyond’ what is ‘conformable to the concept’ that limits the schema [...], to such an extent that it creates, ‘as it were, a second nature out of the material supplied to it by actual nature’” (Lyotard 1994, p. 168).

Taste is no determining judgment, for understanding gives no concept to explain this state. Aesthetic pleasure results only from the “proportion [*Proportion*]” of imagination and understanding due to the feeling produced by a given object. To this proportion corresponds only a general “disposition [*Bestimmung*]” of the soul. No concept supplies this disposition with its rule. The consensus over the necessity of taste, if well grounded, ought however to be universal. If we go back ‘heuristically’ to the condition of taste, we only find the idea of a “common” or “communitarian sense” (*Gemeinsinn, gemeinschaftlicher Sinn*): namely, the claim for the universal validity of our judgments for everybody. Lyotard remarks that common sense results from reflection, not from an empirical enquiry into the others’ beliefs.

Nonetheless, the heuristic approach does not consider all the aspects of aesthetic judgments as far as these comprehend both reflection and sensation, the *aistheton*. Imagination and understanding cannot do without the “occasion” offered by the object. Therefore, sensation plays a role in aesthetic judgments. But it is neither a sensuous trigger nor a matter for moral evaluation. Lyotard borrows the term “tautegorical” from Schelling to describe how sensation is at work in aesthetic judgments:

Thus, this state, which is the “object” of its judgment, is the very same pleasure that is the “law” of this judgment. These two aspects of judgment, referentiality and legitimacy, are but one in the aesthetic. By moving the term “aesthetic” away from Schelling’s particular use of it (although the problem is a similar one), I mean to draw attention to the remarkable disposition of reflection that I call *tautegorical*. The term designates the identity of form and content, of “law” and “object”, in pure reflecting judgment as it is given to us in the aesthetic (Lyotard 1994, pp. 12–13; translation modified).

Etymologically, the word “tautegorical” implies the idea of self-predication. Aesthetic judgments are a sort of “signs”, Lyotard argues, by which reflection and sensation are, so to speak, combined in a perfect fusion. We judge the object *as if* we were describing its qualities by means of a rule of beauty available to us. But this rule is not available to thought: it is but an aesthetic condition, validating only the given judgment. Aesthetic judgments are signs of a special kind: they subsist in themselves and depend on no pre-existing grammar.

Since aesthetic judgments are signs so construed, the texture of sensation is enriched by much more ‘content’ than its bare empirical matter. Jacques Rancière largely disagrees with Lyotard’s interpretation of the third *Critique*. Nonetheless, he points out to an important aspect of Lyotard’s interpretation of Kant as he argues that sensation appears thus as a “*pure difference*” (Rancière 2009, p. 90). Lyotard gives this experience many names. He calls it “immateriality” – by the way, he curated, together with Thierry Chaput, an exhibition enti-

tled *Les Immatériaux* for the Centre Pompidou of Paris in 1985. He also speaks of a “presence”, an “*il y a*”, that emerges as aesthetic judgments deal with reality. Indeed, aesthetic judgments expand sensibility. In the case of painting, aesthetic judgments expand our optical perception into a “visual” experience.

The tautogorical character of aesthetic judgments largely exceeds the relevance of beauty: because of this character, the aesthetic judgment naturally shifts to the sublime. What Lyotard describes here is, in fact, the manifestation of the transcendental and supersensible texture of experience through its sensible matter. Kant states the difference between the beautiful and the sublime as a difference in the object of judgment: the former is concerned with “form”, while the latter deals with “lack of form” (CPJ, § VII). This difference marks the passage from an aesthetics of the feeling engendered “*in statu nascendi*” by the forms of nature to an “aesthetics by antiphrasis”, or rather an “anaesthetics” (Sfez 2000, p. 122). The latter is bound to “thought” – although, pace Sfez, I maintain that the sublime is not immediately thought, but a *Geistesgefühl*: that is, a feeling that considers thought in its reference to sensibility. In the sublime, imagination is no longer considered as the faculty of schematism, which schematizes the concepts of understanding with the purpose of knowledge, or “schematizes without concept” the forms of nature, as happens in the free play with understanding, having the purpose of aesthetic pleasure. In the sublime, imagination is only the faculty of the synthesis of the sensible manifold of experience. And in this primary function it is confronted to reason, the faculty of pure thought, i.e. the faculty of thinking ideas, the absolutes, beyond the boundaries of sensibility.

Thinking appears here as a sort of pathos engendering suffering in the subject who experiments the disproportion between imagination and reason. Lyotard considers the transcendental logic of aesthetic judgments in light of the sublime, for only under this condition we are able to describe them, not only with regard to the beauty of nature but also according to their referential depth, that is, their capacity of referring ideas to reality. Such a pathos claims indeed for the elevation to an idea. Lyotard is well aware that other passages from the third *Critique* – namely, those on common sense, aesthetic ideas and the *hypotyposis symbolica* (CPJ, §§20–21, §§39–40; §§46–49; §59) – claim for the relationship of aesthetic judgments to ideas. But only the sublime presents this relationship under the form of a struggle between reason and imagination: namely, as a dispute.

## 4 Thinking the Sublime

Before examining Lyotard's reading of the "Analytic of the Sublime", we must firstly consider another aspect concerning imagination. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* imagination is examined as the faculty of schematism. But, as said above, imagination is primarily the faculty of synthesis. Nonetheless, its most essential character emerges perhaps only in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in which imagination is considered as the "faculty of presentation [*Darstellungsvermögen*]". "Presentation [*Darstellung*]" is not equivalent to "representation [*Vorstellung*]", the latter being the mental or perceptual image of the object, while the former is the operation of referring a representation (concept or idea) to an example, a given case, as its rule. Representation is a sort of presentification. Presentation is no presentification of the object. It is rather the "exposition [*Exponieren*]" of a representation to experience (Lyotard 2000, p. 15).<sup>2</sup>

As far as this exposition is bound to cognitive purposes, schematism and presentation are almost equivalent: by means of schematism, the concepts of understanding are indeed "sensibilized [*versinnlicht*]" by imagination, which thus establishes a rule to subsume particulars under universals. However, when imagination is requested to present thought in its totality, that is, as an idea of reason, the absoluteness of this idea exceeds the boundaries of the senses and thus provokes a sort of "spasm" in imagination. The sublime, as argued by Sfez (2000, p. 33), is the "exposition (*mise en présence*) of the fact of the absence" of such a transcendence that are ideas. But this is exactly the place for examining the way in which thought becomes manifest through sensibility: as a matter of fact, thought proceeds by a "manner" ("*modus aestheticus*"), rather than by a "method" ("*modus logicus*"). And this manner, in its most original formulation, is sublime rather than beautiful.

We need to keep in mind another point to understand Lyotard's approach to the "Analytic of the Sublime". The sublime is a matter of the "formlessness [*Formlosigkeit*]" of an object. Lyotard argues that this absence of form has a *transcendental*, rather than an *empirical* meaning. By the way, Kant elaborates a theory of the sublime which is consistent but not coincident with Burke's empirical account: the "cacophony" engendered by the disproportion of reason with regard to imagination must lead here to a "secret euphony of superior rank" with regard

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<sup>2</sup> Lyotard distinguishes the presentation from the presentification carefully: I owe this indication to Herman Parret.



to perception (Lyotard 1994, p. 24).<sup>3</sup> However, we have to understand how this absence of form is characterized in the “Analytic of the Sublime”. Kant distinguishes between two different kinds of sublime, the “mathematical” and the “dynamical”, but Lyotard believes that these are but two moments in the Analytic of only one sublime: “The German is less equivocal: the expressions ‘*vom Mathematisch-Erhabenen*’ and ‘*vom Dynamisch-Erhabenen*’ indicate that the sublime (of nature) is on the one hand considered ‘mathematically’ and on the other ‘dynamically’” (Lyotard 1994, p. 90).

Therefore, the “Analytic of the Sublime” follows the same structure as the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, although there are some differences between the two Analytics: “The analysis of this feeling [sublime] proceeds according to the table of categories, like that of the beautiful” (Lyotard 1994, p. 77). The “Analytic of the Sublime” changes in fact the order between the first and the second moment (quality and quantity) and lacks the fourth moment (modality). The mathematical and the dynamical sublime respectively correspond to the second and the third moment (quantity and relation). The reason why the “Analytic of the Sublime” needs to start with quantity, instead of quality, is quite evident:

The analysis of taste begins with the quality of judgment (it is a disinterested delight, not directed by an interest in the existence of the object) because what awakens the feeling of the beautiful is the form of the object alone, and thus this aesthetic pleasure is distinct from any other pleasure in its specific quality. Form, presented by imagination, prevents thinking from giving any objective determination by concept, for the imagination is busy defying understanding by multiplying the number of associated forms. [...] In the sublime, on the contrary, [...] form plays no role at all. In fact form conflicts with the purity of sublime delight. If one is still permitted to speak of “nature” in this feeling, one can speak only in terms of a “rude nature” (*die rohe Natur* [...]), “merely as involving magnitude” (*bloß sofern sie Größe enthält* [...]). This magnitude is rude and arouses sublime feeling precisely because it escapes form, because it is completely “wanting in form or figure” (*formlos oder ungestalt* [...]). It is this “formlessness” (*Formlosigkeit*) that Kant evokes to begin the analysis of the sublime by quantity (Lyotard 1994, p. 78).

Reason is awakened by this formlessness, rather than by the abundant production of forms characterizing beauty. Lyotard finds an apparent confusion in Kant’s argument:

the terms “magnitude” and “quantity” lead to a certain, overall confusion that reigns in the “Analytic of the Sublime” and renders its reading and interpretation challenging – the same confusion induced by the terms “mathematical” and “dynamical” [...]. For “magni-

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<sup>3</sup> See the “General remark on the exposition of aesthetic reflective judgments” (CPI), pp. 149–159 [Ak. V, pp. 266–278)].



tude” designates a property of the object, and “quantity” is a category of judgment (Lyotard 1994, p. 78).

This confusion is only apparent. What is at stake here is one of those transitions over the abyss that divides the senses from the “supersensible substratum” of experience. And we have to consider this transition firstly according to the sensible synthesis that is so engendered, and secondly according to the presentation of the idea.

In the mathematical sublime imagination is at work for a weird sensible synthesis: it aspires to synthesize the idea of infinity – but it fails. The operations are mainly two in synthesis: “apprehension” (“*Auffassung*”, “*apprehensio*”) and “comprehension” (“*Zusammenfassung*”, “*comprehensio*”). The former operation is fundamentally the ‘capture’ of sense data. As to the latter, Kant distinguishes two forms of comprehension: “*comprehensio logica*” and “*comprehensio aethetica*” (CPJ, §§25–27).

*Comprehensio logica* is the calculation of the physical magnitudes by the means of a unit of measurement. But, as argued by Kant, every unit is still based on some sensible touchstone: as a consequence, it refers, either directly or indirectly, to some ‘aesthetic’ unit of measurement, that is, to an “aesthetic comprehension”. Apprehension of sense data progresses *ad infinitum*, but their *comprehensio aethetica* reaches soon a maximum. Synthesis has a limit: beyond it, every addition of new data produces a loss in the earlier ones. Imagination *collapses* and experiences being unable to think the idea of infinity (Wurzer 2002). This movement provokes a “shaking” (“*Erschütterung*”, “*ébranlement*”) in the soul (CPJ, §27). With regard to this, Andrew Benjamin refers to an edition of the third *Critique* in which “*Erschütterung*” is translated – in my view more properly, at least for Lyotard’s reception of this notion – as “vibration” (Lyotard 1989f, p. 326). But this vibration engenders a “negative pleasure” (CPJ, §23) rather than bare “fear”: for, indeed, the subject feels a “taking up” (“*Erhebung*”, “*enlèvement*”) to reason (Lyotard 1994, p. 129). This aspect is further investigated in the dynamical sublime.

Let us consider what conclusions Lyotard draws from this reconsideration of the mathematical sublime. For him, this analysis leads to rethink the very status of the subject, with regard to the first *Critique*: “The mathematical synthesis thus creates a problem, not in itself once again, but because it is supposed to be doubled by an aesthetic synthesis: the presentation of the infinite” (Lyotard 1994, p. 93). In other words, the synthesis at work in the sublime is no longer consistent with the intellectual synthesis of representations: reflection supplies the presentation of an idea outside the guarantee of the “*Ich denke*” (Lyotard 1994, p. 79). Härle (2007, p. 49) argues that Lyotard is criticizing Heidegger

and his interpretation of Kant, in which imagination plays the key role of the ultimate principle of the synthesis of experience. Lyotard states that: “A reading, even one like Heidegger’s, endeavoring, not without reason, to demonstrate that in the end the authentic principle of the synthesis is not the ‘I think’ but time – such a reading is valid (if it is valid) only for knowledge and only refer to determinant theoretical judgments” (Lyotard 1994, p. 21).

Lyotard’s interpretation is focused on reflecting judgments, and has quite a different purpose than the epistemological status of the subject. Imagination might even govern the synthesis of time in experience. The *Ich denke* might even govern the organization of all representations. But in the sublime we are faced with a different issue: it is the transition from the configuration of time and experience with the purpose of knowledge to another kind of configuration. However, I disagree with Härle’s conclusions according to which Lyotard argues for the condition a “consciousness without subject” (Härle 2007, p. 51). It is rather the preparatory step for a re-subjectivation of human beings as ethical agents who consider the world under the perspective of freedom, not of knowledge. This argument is developed in the dynamical sublime. Nonetheless, these ethical subjects never stop undergoing their unsuitableness to the mediation between world and freedom. Lyotard states that

Under the name of the “Analytic of the Sublime”, a denatured aesthetic, or, better an aesthetic of denaturing, breaks the proper order of the natural aesthetic and suspends the function it assumes in the project of unification. What awakens the “intellectual feeling” (*Geistesgefühl* [...]), the sublime, is not nature, which is an artist in forms and the work of forms, but rather magnitude, force, quantity in its purest state, a “presence” that exceeds what imaginative thought can grasp at once in a form – what it can *form* (Lyotard 1994, p. 53).

No ‘image of the world’ is at stake here. The only way human beings are able to account for their commitment to freedom is to present the unrepresentability of this very idea by the means of imagination, as it is for every idea of reason. As a matter of fact, the sublime is characterized by several ‘mistaken identities’: magnitude for quantity, imagination for reason. Kant gives these mistaken identities a name as far as the dynamical sublime is concerned: “subreption [*Subreption*]”. To Lyotard, it is particularly important to understand subreption correctly:

In canon law *subreptio* refers to the act of obtaining a privilege or a favor by dissimulating a circumstance that would conflict with its attainment. It is an abuse of authority. What in the sublime is the favor obtained at the price of such an abuse? A glimpse of the Idea, the absolute of power, freedom (Lyotard 1994, p. 70).

The most advanced of these subreptions probably takes place as Kant compares the blind “dominion [*Gewalt*]” of nature to the limited power of the human beings (CPJ, §28). Nature is much more powerful than human beings. But the latter are free and subject to the law of reason. In other words, they deserve a superior moral “destination [*Bestimmung*]”. Therefore, the “admiration [*Bewunderung*]” felt for the force of nature is actually a symptom of the respect for our own condition of moral beings. The dynamical sublime corresponds to the moment of relation in the “Analytic of the Sublime”. Therefore, it describes the heuristic, the sort of weird finality at work in the sublime feeling. Actually, while beauty is final properly speaking, sublimity is contra-final because imagination is unsuitable to supply reason with any direct presentation of freedom, as well as any other idea. For Lyotard, however, the abuse is mutual, for it is reason that incites imagination to the task of taking up the subject to its supersensible destination. Elevation or “taking up” recalls, by the way, the earliest sense of the word “sublime” (“*hypsos*”), in continuity with the tradition of the sublime in the ancient and early modern rhetoric, from Longinus to Boileau (Lyotard 1989c, pp. 200 – 203). This taking up works as a sort of *non-dialectical sublation*, in the very sense of an *Aufhebung*:

This “taking up”, this *Erheben*, of reason (the sublime is *erhaben*), which is at the same time the “relieving of”, the *Aufheben* of the imagination (the German, like the Latin *tollere*, evokes the action both of removing and of elevating), seems thus to be a legitimate meaning of the procedure described by the texts cited. As in the dialectical operation, each “moment” of thought – presentation, concept – has its absolute “for itself”. But in relation to the other, the absolute of imagination is not of equal power. The absolute of reason is the impossible of imagination; the absolute of the imagination would only be a moment relative to the absolute of reason. The latter would therefore be, in itself, the only absolute. And because what is in question here is felt by the thought thinking the absolute, the displeasure that it feels in thinking the impossible absolute (impossible for the imagination) is effaced (yet preserved) before and in the pleasure that it feels in thinking the possible absolute (possible for reason) (Lyotard 1994, pp. 129 – 130).

Lyotard, however, argues that “this reading is not the correct one. It is not critical but speculative” (Lyotard 1994, p. 130). It is fascinating to understand the dynamical sublime dialectically, but it is wrong. For, unlike Hegelian “speculation”, Kantian criticism requires that every mode of thinking is addressed to its proper place. The sublime is addressed to the soul as this is affected by the excess of an idea, e. g. freedom, with regard to sensibility. Its place is not reason but imagination, insofar we consider the unrepresentability of ideas. In the sublime ideas are not “regulative principles” but “signs” which open experience to new senses: “This ‘grasping’ is not the apprehension of a given or its subsumption under a concept of understanding. Rather, it is like listening to a ‘sign’” (Lyotard 1994,

pp. 136–137). Taste handles the idea of common sense as a regulative principle: this is possible because it considers the freedom of imagination in the beautiful as comparable to the freedom of reason. But the sublime alone experiments how ideas can be manifest as signs of the “transcendence” of the “absolute whole” of the ethical realm (Lyotard 1994, p. 138) within the texture of experience.

Accordingly, the necessity of the sublime does not depend on common sense, as happens for taste. Some “culture” is required to judge the sublime. This culture is what Kant calls “susceptibility” (“*Empfänglichkeit*”, “*susceptibilité*”) to the ideas of reason (CPJ, §29) – we could also speak of a sort of responsiveness. This is what reason fosters in *diverting* imagination from the mere synthesis of the sensible manifold, *distorting* its power of presenting concepts and *redirecting* it to ideas, that is, to what is in principle unpresentable. Therefore, Lyotard is able to theorize the existence of an “interest of the sublime”,<sup>4</sup> whereas Kant in the third *Critique* speaks only of an “interest of the beautiful”, either “empirical” or “intellectual” (CPJ, §§41 and 42). The interest of the sublime is concerned with the emergence of an array of feelings ranging from melancholy to enthusiasm: “there is an entire family, or, rather, an entire generation” (Lyotard 1994, p. 179) of these sublime feelings. These are not merely “states of the mind”. They are “embedded” in ideas, although the latter’s supersensible presence cannot be presented directly. As a consequence, they affect the soul more deeply and more intensely than the feeling of beauty. They provoke a sort of “spasm”, as Lyotard often claims.

We are now able to understand the meaning of the “denatured aesthetic” discovered by Lyotard in the sublime, in opposition to the “natural aesthetic” of the beautiful. The alternative is between a “figural aesthetic of the ‘much too much’ that defies the concept, and an abstract or minimal aesthetic of the ‘almost nothing’ that defies form” (Lyotard 1994, p. 76). The latter creates harmony and engenders a sense of satisfaction for our permanence within this world. The former inflicts a spasm to the soul and brings the subject to reflect upon its distance from the “anti-landscape” of the world (Lyotard 1994, p. 186). There might be a Cartesian echo in this opposition between the “much too much” of beauty and the “almost nothing” of sublimity: Descartes foreshadows indeed the problem of the aesthetic as a sort of *je-ne-sais-quoi*, a mere rest of cognition. But, as soon as Kant discovers the real nature of aesthetic judgments, this negative definition of the aesthetic is replaced by two different ways of conceiving the relationship of imagination to, respectively, understanding and reason. The

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<sup>4</sup> This is the title he gives to his contribution to the collective volume *Du sublime* (1988) which is an earlier version of chapter 7 of the *Lessons*.

ontological unity of experience granted by the *cogito* is broken. A new kind of reflection is thus engendered: Lyotard calls it “anamnesis”. It is not anamnesis in the Platonic sense. It rather evokes the “working through” – in Freud’s acceptance, broadly construed – of a subject who reconstructs the conditions of thinking each time anew. Consequently, this subject is exposed to the feelings emerging through the anamnesis. And thinking itself depends on this “manner” of elaboration. Eventually, to associate “regimes of phrases” – ethics, politics, art – to every sort of feelings does not imply any doctrine. Rather, it requires a manner. Therefore, our critical effort is to establish how, when and where judging is empowered to make sense of these associations amid phrases, ideas and feelings.

## 5 Sublime Presences, between Enthusiasm and Melancholy

Paul Crowther (1989) and Jacques Rancière (2009) have criticized Lyotard for his undue extension of the discourse concerning the sublime to art. For them, rude nature alone is the proper object of the sublime. Contra them, one could argue that works of art and architectures serve as an example of the sublime already in the third *Critique*: the Pyramids and St. Peter’s Basilica stay together with the Alps. Of course, the sublime cannot be produced *intentionally*. However, Lyotard understands this lack of intentionality only in the sense that something in experience, either artificial or natural, is not under the control of our consciousness.

A second aspect is to be considered here. By interpreting the sublime, Lyotard reconfigures the libidinal economy he theorized in the 1970s as a “libidinal aesthetics” (Parret 2012, p. 22). This theory borrows its economic terminology from Marx and Freud. Accordingly, Kantian criticism is to be examined in the light of an economic perspective (Worms 2007):

Usage, interest, benefit, sacrifice: the text of the *Critiques* works its themes, the true, the Good, the beautiful, with the help of operators (the ones we have just mentioned, but there are others – for example, incitement, incentive) borrowed from the world of economics. Even *Vermögen* makes one think of a potential financier or industrialist. This is because there is an economy of the faculties (Lyotard 1994, p. 159).

In this context, beauty is not likely to be much helpful with the critical task of understanding the aesthetic in the age of its progressive commodification. Adorno’s influence is quite evident here. The feelings bringing the contemporary li-

bidinal economy to its extreme limits are all sublime feelings. Let us consider two of them: “enthusiasm [*Enthusiasmus*]” and “respect [*Achtung*]”. Both of them enjoy a wide use in ethics, religion and politics. But, as usual, Lyotard is concerned with their transcendental meaning, rather than their empirical uses.

Let us start with enthusiasm. Its meaning is to be eminently found in politics. It is the enthusiastic commitment to the event of the French Revolution that Kant admits in some of his political writings, especially *The Contest of Faculties*. Let us keep in mind that he was merely a spectator of the revolution, not being engaged in action. Nor had this spectatorship any official trait: Kant did not write his political essays as a university professor, but as an independent ‘public thinker’. Moreover, he was the citizen of a despotic, though enlightened, state while sympathizing with foreign revolutionaries (Scheerlinck 2017). For Lyotard, these are not limitations in Kant’s view on revolution. They are rather historical contingencies which allow him to understand this event properly, that is, to collocate it in its due historical framework:

It will be necessary to seek in the experience of humanity, not an intuitive datum (a *Gegebenes*), which can never do anything more than validate the phrase that describes it, but what Kant calls a *Begebenheit*, an event (Lyotard 2009, p. 26).

To understand politics, it is necessary to replace our epistemological notion of “datum” with a historical notion of “event”. For events, unlike data, are unpredictable: their meaning is unavoidably bound to a sort of “soothsaying [*Weissagung*]” concerning the future. They are a “sign [*Zeichen*]” of historical changes, in the aesthetic acceptance of the word. They are “tautegorical”: nonetheless, they display a heuristic of ideas to be verified in the future. As soon as we think to the major political events with which Lyotard was concerned during his life, we understand how far this conception of enthusiasm is affected by the contemporary political situation. Furthermore, he argues that political ideologies are all becoming “great narratives”. Enthusiasm, as soon as it is considered as a form of judgment, and not a mere passion, functions as a *therapy* to this narrative turn of politics: it teaches us how to distinguish between genuine storytelling and bare fiction (Gualandi 2007; Silverman 2002).

At any rate, contra Hannah Arendt’s “sociological” interpretation of the *sen-sus communis* (Ingram 1988; Lyotard 2004), a distinction is to be maintained among the agonistic space of action, the public sphere of the debate and the standards of common sense used to judge public affairs. For no common sense might ever replace the foundation of political societies and ethical communities which depend on the pragmatic application of transcendental norms

of reason to associated life, as argued by Apel and Habermas (Lyotard 2000, p. 23). The risk of aestheticizing politics by replacing its normative order with a claim for the common sense of the humankind is high. The role of the critics in the public affairs is sublime, so to speak: they must alert their audience and prevent them from the risks of a too easily predictable ‘happy ending’ of history. Enthusiasm is an ambivalent feeling: it incites to action as much as it invites to the critical discrimination of events. Arguably, Lyotard’s contribution to a Kantian understanding of historical judgment is relevant to the contemporary debate on “re-enchantment” as a political category: for the issue of political soothsaying is a matter neither of prediction nor of prophecy. The political soothsayer binds together present and future: in other words, these are synthesized into a temporal configuration by which history is traversed by the transcendence of an idea, e.g. freedom or justice.

Let us now consider “respect [*Achtung*]”. The ambivalence of respect is of another kind. On the one hand, respect is a sort of pure intellectual feeling, by which we are affected for the very fact of being in front of the moral law of reason. Respect is not the application of the categorical imperative, being rather a sort of ‘vision’ of the law. Accordingly, *Achtung* “might be rendered more accurately as ‘regard’” (Lyotard 1994, p. 117). From this point of view, respect might almost appear as a totally transcendent pathos. On the other hand, however, respect is bound to the sensible condition of humanity. The subject who respects the law is unavoidably a mortal. Otherwise, the question of the respect due to the moral law could not be formulated: the respect of the law and its execution would be the same thing. From this point of view, respect is part of the sublime feelings that measure the hiatus existing between the moral law and the world to which this law is addressed:

“Respect” is explicitly (and strangely) described here as the affect provoked in thought not by grasping the absolute whole; rather, it is provoked by the incommensurability, the *Unangemessenheit*, of our “power” (*unseres Vermögens*), of our faculty to grasp, *zur Erreichung*, at this moment (Lyotard 1994, p. 117).

The categorical imperative of the moral law and the tautological judgment of the sublime constitute two distinct but related “phrases”: the former commands and responds only to itself and is tautological in that sense, while the latter makes a hopeless effort to transform sensibility into a sign of respect for morality. Contrariwise, beauty offers morality a symbol based on the analogy between the free mode of thought due to aesthetic judgments and the freedom by which we accept the moral law. But, for Lyotard, the moral law is indeed a sort of voice from nowhere: it is God’s voice who asks the Jews in the desert to declare their obligation



to his commandments (Lyotard 1990, p. 22). As a regard, respect is paradoxical insofar the law has no sensible face that might engender any feeling or passion:

Regard is an incentive at rest, a sentimental state *a priori*, an a-pathetic pathos. “The negative effect of feeling ... is itself feeling” [...]. We must recall that apathy, *apatheia*, *Affektlosigkeit*, is to be counted among the sublime feelings [...]. There is a great range of disinterested feelings, a range that goes from pure aesthetic favor to pure ethical regard. And the intermediary “tones” are all sublime (Lyotard 1994, p. 179).

Levinas’ influence is quite evident here (Hatley 2002). However, this elaboration of the phenomenology of otherness through the Kantian sublime is significant: it marks the fact that the ‘absent presence’ of the moral law within human lives is a matter of experimenting a void that is either mourned or felt as “melancholy”, in Freud’s acceptance. And, for this very reason, it requires the presence of a witness. The ‘ethical sign’ of the sublime is the statement for the original co-presence of the witness to the law. It is anamnesis in its mostly ethical acceptance, which has its historical embodiment in the task of remembering events like the Shoah (Ross 2002).

Let us now go back to art. Paradoxically, no sublime feeling constitutes the special aesthetic matter of artistic creation. Art might provoke or evoke melancholy as well as enthusiasm, to mention only the two feelings just considered. If we were to find an aesthetic state for art, then we should speak of spasm. It is the less sentimental and the most physical sensation amid the wide array of the sublime feelings. This should not be surprising if we have followed Lyotard’s discourse on the sublime attentively. By reformulating his entire philosophy around the sublime, he is not practicing an ascetic way to transcendence. On the very contrary, he is attempting to establish the transcendental transitions by which even the most transcendent ideas – freedom, justice, the moral law, God – could be sensibly embodied, though only as unrepresentable presences. In that sense, Lyotard is still a student of Merleau-Ponty, as far as the latter sought to describe the invisible texture of visibility in his latest writings.

Lyotard is, of course, a critical student who is much less confident than his teacher on the fact that this invisible texture corresponds to both the unity of Being and the human subject’s belonging to that Being. The metaphor of the spasm suggests, on the contrary, that the subject handles a reality to be reconstructed each time anew in the artistic experience: the unity of Being is replaced by an anamnestic work, the rules and criteria of which being established on the occasion of the event. Therefore, spasm describes the condition of an “inner resonance of the soul” (Sfez 2000, p. 129). Being affected by this feeling, the soul does not undergo a trauma, but, so to speak, is born to transcendence by this very event, though avoiding any “metaphysical illusion” (Sfez 2000, p. 129).



While the work of genius art is the expansion of the free creation of forms typical of natural beauty, the work of sublime art is the sign of this birth to transcendence, although it is not its representation. Let us think of Jackson Pollock's dripping: this is not abstraction *from* reality;<sup>5</sup> it is rather "abstract expression", i. e. *expression transcending itself*. In front of such a work of art, the subject's soul is brought to the condition of an "*infans*" anew (Dekens 2008). Sublime art is anamnesis in the sense of the possibility of a new beginning.

Durafour (2009) argues that the appropriation of the sublime helps Lyotard emancipate himself from his previous iconoclasm: he thinks, in particular, of the criticism of cinema in which Lyotard comes to the conclusion that film can be art only insofar it is "acinema", a sort of non-cinematic sabotage of the mimetic apparatus of cinema (Lyotard 1989b). In light of the sublime, this artistic approach to film, far from being sabotage, results into a creative exploitation of montage as a reconfiguration of our sense of space and time for the purpose of presenting ideas, though indirectly, instead of creating stories that only makes available a mimesis of reality.

Lyotard was much interested in the works of artists, especially painters (Coblence 2008): Valerio Adami (Lyotard 1989d), Karel Appel, Gianfranco Baruchello, Paul Cézanne (Lyotard 1990), Barnett Newman (Lyotard 1989e), among others. But also musicians: Luciano Berio, Philip Glass (Lyotard 2012). And novelists (Tomiche 2008): Samuel Beckett, Gustave Flaubert, Marcel Proust (Lyotard 1990). For modern art broadly construed goes in the direction of putting the reconfiguration of sensibility before, or even in the place of, the mimetic figuration. In that sense, the avant-garde marks the beginning of a sublime age in art. At the opposite side, mimetic art runs the risk of conveying the audience, by the means of fiction and figuration, a false sense of belonging to the world, which "moralizes the *ethos*, both individual and communitarian, the *politikon*" (Lyotard 1988, p. 196; my translation). Accordingly, Lyotard's philosophy of art is not based on Kant's theory of genius, but develops a theory of the sublime art.

Colors, sounds, voices, surfaces, screens, gestures: all of these elements are not just a means by which artists create their works. They are signs of the fact that the 'transcending thing' exciting thought marks its presence: every artistic medium is the *signature of this presence* insofar it is sublime. To conclude, I dare to formulate a hypothesis concerning the future of Lyotard's investigation in Kant's sublime. One of the reasons why Lyotard turned to the sublime was the diffusion of new media based on webs: television, computers. He was afraid

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<sup>5</sup> Lyotard criticizes the concept of "concrete abstraction" coined by Kojève for Kandinsky's art, for instance (Lyotard 2009, p. 31).

that no *sensus communis* could ever be re-created in this new context as far as the exposure to technology has become so deep and intense that information and communication could replace the communicability implied in aesthetic judgments. To challenge this transformation, it is necessary to design a more radical philosophical project than the restoration of *sensus communis*: a new sensible exposure to the unrepresentable presence of ideas. But, when artistically manipulated, the *medium is that presence*: insofar it reconfigures sensibility and is open to an unpredictable number and variety of uses, it makes available to us the source of transcendence to which a long philosophical tradition gave the name of the sublime.

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Claudio Paolucci

# Reflective Judgment, Abduction and Predictive Processing

About Umberto Eco's Interpretation of Kant's *Critique of the Power Judgment*

## 1 Eco and Kant

In this essay, I will deal with Umberto Eco's (1932–2016) interpretation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* by Kant. It is an important topic, since it concerns the transformation and the “adaption” of the concept of schema from the *Critique of the Pure Reason* to the third Kantian *Critique*. In his interpretation, on the one hand, Eco connects the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* to some problems of the contemporary cognitive sciences, especially David Marr's work on vision. On the other hand, Eco sees a very important connection between the reflective judgment by Kant and the idea of *abduction* by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914).

To be more precise, according to Eco, the reflective judgment has a sort of primacy over all the other dimensions of Kantian thought and, once it comes to be introduced, it overturns the whole structure of the Kantian critical philosophy.

By introducing schematism to the first version of the system, as Peirce suggested, Kant found himself with an explosive concept that obliged him to go further: in the direction of the *Critique of Judgment*, in fact. But we might say, once we arrive at reflective judgment from the schema, the very nature of determinant judgment enters a crisis. Because the capacity of determinant judgment (we finally find this clearly spelled out in the chapter of the *Critique of Judgment* on the dialectic of the capacity of teleological judgment) “does not have in itself principles that found concepts of objects”, determinant judgment limits itself to subsuming objects under given laws or concepts such as principles. “Thus, the capacity of transcendental judgment, which contained the conditions for subsumption under categories, was not in itself nomothetic, but simply indicated the conditions of the sensible intuition under which a given concept may be given reality (application)”. Therefore, any concept of an object, if it is to be founded, must be fixed by the reflective judgment, which “must subsume under a law that is yet to be given” (CPJ §69) (Eco 1997, pp. 90–91).

Since, according to Eco (1997, p. 92), reflective judgment in Kant is nothing else than what Charles Sanders Peirce used to call abduction, its primacy means the

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primacy of abduction for knowledge and cognition. I will now introduce the cognitive problems concerning knowledge Eco wants to face in *Kant and the Platypus*. As far as cognition is concerned, I will try to update the old-fashioned view by David Marr, dealing with Andy Clark's Predictive Processing theory on perception. Later, I will deal with the relation between reflective judgment and abduction (section 3) and with the centrality of abduction (section 4).

## 2 Kant and the Platypus

I want to start with the crucial semiotic problem of *Kant and the Platypus* (1997).<sup>1</sup> How to perceptually interpret the platypus? How to construct the percept of an item of which I do not have the concept yet? How to account for what taxonomists do when they see a platypus for the first time, or for what Marco Polo does in front of a rhinoceros? How to account for the *bricolage* of cultural units and previous knowledge that is at work when we try to adapt a schema to an unknown perceptual content and then, on the basis of the latter, readjust the concept so that it fits with the perceptual content?

For example, let's think about Marco Polo, who saw what we now realize were rhinoceroses on Java. Since he had the previous knowledge of the unicorn, coming from his culture, he designated those animals as unicorns. Later, as he was a honest chronicler, he hastened to tell us that these unicorns were rather strange, given that they were not white nor slender, but had "the hair of the buffalo" and feet "like the feet of an elephant". Therefore, he advised us not to send a virgin girl to him, like it was supposed the habit with unicorns (KP, chap. 2). The same thing happened with the scientists when the platypus was discovered in Australia: a pelt and sketch were sent back to Great Britain by Captain John Hunter. British scientists' initial hunch was that the attributes were a fake, believing it might have been produced by some Asian taxidermist, putting together pieces of other animals. It was thought that somebody had sewn a duck's beak onto the body of a beaver-like animal. Marco Polo and the scientists used to interpret the rhinoceros and the platypus in a top-down manner, trying to fit the percepts into their previous knowledge that used to predict and interpret what was in front of their eyes. This is the reason why the rhino was a "clumsy and dark unicorn" and only later, on the basis of new perceptions that could not fit the previous knowledge, Marco Polo readjusted the concept of unicorn.

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<sup>1</sup> See Eco 2000. Hereafter referred to as KP.

While it can be maintained that semiotic processes are involved in the recognition of the known, because it is precisely a matter of relating sense data to a (conceptual and semantic) model, the problem, which has been debated for a long time now, is to what extent a semiotic process plays a part in the understanding of an unknown phenomenon (KP, p. 59).

In *Kant and the Platypus*, Eco is somehow able to formulate and anticipate with his own style a problem of perception which is now at the core of the contemporary debate: the Predictive Processing of the so-called Bayesian brain.

Let us consider what I think to be the best example of the application of the Bayesian brain's principles to perception: Andy Clark's book *Surfing Uncertainty* (2016). In Clark's formulation of the Predictive Processing, perception (in its rich, world-revealing forms) is active and works from the top-down. The brain's key job is to predict the present sensory signal, by constructing it for itself using stored knowledge about the world. In perception, the incoming sensory signal is matched (courtesy of multiple local exchanges) by a complex flow of top-down prediction. As far as this topic is concerned, semiotic tradition has a very important antecedent. Indeed, in "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Men", Charles Sanders Peirce used to tell that we cannot have any "cognition" without "previous knowledge" (Peirce 1934). The word "interpretant" chosen by Peirce in order to name the knowledge that builds up cognition and perception is not a random one. They are "interpretants" because they interpret the world before we interpret the world and they orientate our own interpretation. "Interpretants" was the cognitive semiotics' version of the "Priors" of the Predictive Processing (see Paolucci 2020).

According to this last point of view, as long as the matching proceeds, some populations of cells send predictions downwards, and others send residual errors upwards, signaling mismatches with what is currently predicted ("prediction errors"). When the top-down flow sufficiently matches the sensory evidence, "the system has unearthed the most likely set of worldly causes that would give rise to the sensory barrage", and a stable world-revealing percept is formed (Clark 2016, p. 25, see also the whole chapter 6). This is where Predictive Processing can add to the mix "a potent data compression strategy" known as "predictive coding". Given that the brain is already active, busily predicting its own present sensory inputs and the resulting states at every level of processing, cognitive systems need only bother about whatever escaped the predictive net. What needs to drive further processing (e.g. the selection of some new predictive model, or the nuancing or amendment of an old one) is just the residual difference (the "prediction error") between an actual current signal and some predicted one. As Andy Clark (2016, p. 26) used to say, in some way, "perception carries only the news".



And this is exactly Marco Polo's story of the rhino Umberto Eco was telling us. He did not call it "predictive coding" and he was using semiotics and pragmatism instead, but there is no big difference as far as our problems are concerned.

Marco Polo makes some kind of top-down bricolage with his previous knowledge coded in the encyclopedia (priors) in order to match the sensory data, and only when he sees that he simply can't work out like that, he thinks at constructing a new "coding" for new sensory data inputs.

We perceive a structured external world and not just patterns of light and sound, because we meet the transduced pixels with a top-down cascade of interacting represented distal causes. The so-called 'transparency' of perceptual experience (that we seem to simply see tables, chairs, and bananas, not any sensory intermediaries) seems to fall quite naturally out of these models. Perception and understanding are here inseparable. To perceive like that is to guess how the sensory evidence was generated by means of interacting distal causes, and how it is likely to evolve on multiple spatial and temporal scales. Perceiving and understanding are thus co-constructed and percepts are always at least weakly "conceptualized" (Clark 2016: 196).

The main idea is that we can use stored knowledge (interpretants) and regularities of the environment (habits) to generate a kind of analogue of the driving sensory signal as it unfolds across multiple layers and types of processing. This is the reason why percepts are always at least weakly conceptualized.

The relationship between the percept and the concept is exactly Umberto Eco's problem in *Kant and the Platypus*. The key for the solution is, according to his point of view, a reformulation of the Kantian notion of schematism (see Paolucci 2017b). Indeed, it was the Kantian way: we have concepts, that are intellectual, we have sense data, that come from aesthetics as a theory of sensibility, but *the art of making those two communicate in perception is the art of imagination connected to schemata*. Eco's argumentations on this topic are very famous. I will briefly sum-up two key points, in order to introduce his reformulation of the third *Critique* and his ideas on reflective judgment.

According to Eco, the construction of the percept is grounded on a process of "subsuming something under rules or concepts", (it is precisely on this topic that Eco feels the need of developing his own interpretation of Kant's schematism). According to Eco, the percept defines a *token* that, in order to be interpreted, must be unified under a general *type*. It must be "coded", as Predictive Processing used to teach us. As Eco says, in order to interpret perceptual phenomena, we have to construct a rule: "rather than observe (and thence produce schemata), the reflective faculty of judgment produces schemata in order to be able to observe" (top-down predictive process) (KP, p. 97). This process of "subsuming

under rules” is at work in cases in which the empirical concept is given (i.e. the cases that Eco traces back to Kant’s determinant judgment), as well as in cases in which the concept have to be formulated starting from sensory data (i.e. the cases that Eco traces back to Kant’s reflective judgment). This second set of cases includes the rhinoceros described by Marco Polo and the platypus described by the British taxonomists after his discover in Australia.

In both cases, in order to make what was said possible, Eco claims that *a third element* is required. This third element is a mediating one, that allows for “representing an image according to a certain concept” (KP, p. 82). This third mediating element is needed for constructing the concept or the rule aimed at interpreting an image that is not known yet (e.g. in the case of the rhinoceros or in that of the platypus). According to Eco, for empirical concepts like “man”, “platypus” or “rhinoceros”, this third element that mediates between sensibility and intellect (namely Kant’s schema) has a *morphological nature*.

While the schema of the circle is not an image but a rule for constructing the image if necessary, the empirical concept of the plate should nonetheless include the notion that its form may be constructed in some way – in a visual sense, to be exact. One must conclude that when Kant thinks of the schema of the dog, he is thinking of something very similar to that which, in the sphere of the present-day cognitive sciences, Marr and Nishishara call a “3-D Model”, which they represent as in figure 2.2 [reproduced as Figure 1 below, CP]. In perceptual judgment the 3-D model is applied to the manifold of experience, and we distinguish an x as a man and not as a dog (KP, pp. 85–86).

I believe that both these two points are problematic and should be further elaborated. Indeed, a type/token schema grounded on a process of “unifying under concepts” does not seem to be adequate to account for the phenomenological emergence of the percept. In addition, it does not seem possible to individuate a morphological machinery at the level of the schematism, namely between intuitions and concepts (Paolucci 2010, 2017c). Contrary to what Eco claims, morphologies seem to be an *emergent* phenomenon. If Predictive Processing is right, we are able to build a percept starting from priors, taking care only of the residual difference (the “prediction error”) between an actual current signal and some predicted one, without any need of a figurative resemblance between a schema and the percept, since the so-called ‘transparency’ of perceptual experience is the effect of the fact that perceiving and understanding are co-constructed and percepts are always at least weakly “conceptualized” (Paolucci 2020). We perceive a structured external world and not just patterns of light and sound not because we apply a morphological 3D model to experience, but because we meet the sensory signals with a top-down cascade of priors and interpretants (previous knowledge). In some way, we perceive through the filter of

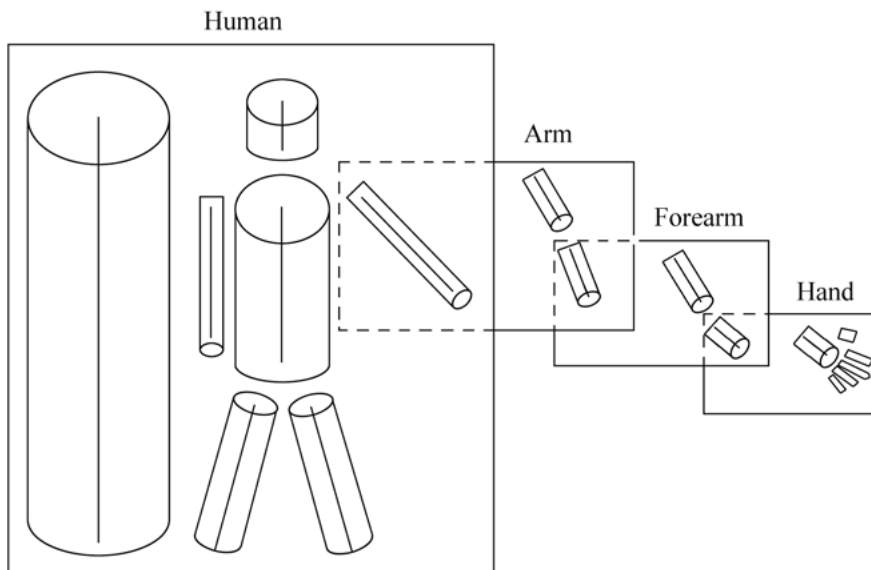


Figure 1: 3d Model by David Marr

these interpretant signs and through these interpretant signs we can perceive things that we could not perceive observing the object directly, without the cognitive semiotics' filter (Paolucci 2008, 2020, chaps. 3 and 5).

### 3 Reflective Judgment and Abduction

As far as this problem is concerned, Eco's solution is grounded on Kant's reflective judgment:

What problem would Kant have faced if he had encountered a platypus? The terms of the problem became clear to him only in the *Critique of Judgment*. Judgment is the faculty of thinking of the particular as part of the general, and if the general (the rule, the law) is already given, judgment is *determinant*. But if only the particular is given and the general must be sought for, judgment is *reflective* (KP p. 90).

However, according to Eco, once Kant arrives at reflective judgment from the schema, the very nature of determinant judgment enters a crisis.

Because the capacity of determinant judgment (we finally find this clearly spelled out in the chapter of the *Critique of Judgment* on the dialectic of the capacity of teleological judgment)

“does not have in itself principles that found concepts of objects”, determinant judgment limits itself to subsuming objects under given laws or concepts such as principles. “Thus, the capacity of transcendental judgment, which contained the conditions for subsumption under categories, was not in itself nomothetic, but simply indicated the conditions of the sensible intuition under which a given concept may be given reality (application)”. Therefore any concept of an object, if it is to be founded, must be fixed by the reflective judgment, which “must subsume under a law that is yet to be given” (CPJ, §69) (KP, pp. 90 – 91).

I would say that Predictive Processing somehow better explains this kind of “come and go” between the particular and the general, between the case and the rule, between the concept and the intuition of an object. It is a kind of fallible matching between top-down predictions and sensory signals coming from our environment, that attune each other in an enactive way. We interpret the world as if it will match our priors, but we are always ready to change our priors if they fail in “reading” the world of our experience (think about Marco Polo in front of rhinoceros). This is why Eco feels the exigence to introduce Charles Sanders Peirce’s theory of abduction.

To interpret something as if it were in a certain way means proposing a hypothesis, because the reflective judgment must subsume under a law not yet given “and therefore in fact it is only a principle of reflection on objects for which objectively there is absolutely no law or a concept of the object sufficient for the cases that arise” (CPJ, §69). And it must be a very adventurous type of hypothesis, because from the particular (from a Result) it is necessary to infer a Rule as yet unknown; and in order to find the Rule somewhere or other it is necessary to presume that that Result is a Case of the Rule to be constructed. Of course, Kant did not express himself in these terms, but Peirce the Kantian did: it is clear that reflective judgment is none other than an *abduction* (KP, p. 92)

The problem of Eco is now to understand whether this abductive way of thinking, the reflective judgment, is applicable in every circumstance. The very first distinction Eco takes into account is the one between natural objects and artifacts. Eco underlines how, according to Kant, the difference between genera and species is not only a classificatory judgment of ours. There is a kind of matching, a kind of parallelism between the way we categorize the world and the way the world is structured. It is not by chance that Kant claims that “there is in nature a subordination of genera and species that we can grasp; that the latter in turn converge in accordance with a common principle, so that a transition from one to the other and thereby to a higher genus is possible” (CPJ, §V, pp. 71–72 [Ak. V, p. 185]). And so we try to construct the concept of tree (we assume it) as if trees were as we can think them. This is where the “as if” connected to abduction jumps in: “we imagine something as possible according to the concept (we try for an agreement between the form and the possibility of

the thing itself, even though we have no concept of it), and we can think of it as an organism that obeys certain ends” (KP, p. 91).

However, Eco notices that “it is Kant who passes with a certain nonchalance from teleological judgments on natural entities to teleological judgments on products of artifice” (KP, p. 92) and quotes the famous passage where Kant talks about the geometric figure perceived by someone in a seemingly uninhabited land, where that object can certainly be considered as an end, but not as a natural end: therefore, as a “product of art (*vestigium hominis video*)” (CPJ, §64, p. 242 [Ak. V, p. 370]).

As he usually does, Eco likes to think at much more concrete examples and considers a garden in the French style, where nature and culture conflate, or a chair as a product of creative design. In both cases, seeing the garden or the chair as organisms with ends calls for a less adventurous hypothesis if compared to the ones we had to introduce for natural kinds, because we already know that artificial objects obey the intentions of the creator. But, in any case, according to Eco “even the artificial object cannot but be informed by reflective judgment” (KP, p. 95).

As Vittorio Mathieu observes with regard to Kant’s last work, “The intellect makes experience by designing the structure according to which the driving forces of the object can act”. Rather than observe (and thence produce schemata), the reflective judgment produces schemata to be able to observe, and to experiment. And “such doctrine goes beyond that of the first *Critique* for the freedom that it assigns to the intellectual designing of the object”. With this late schematism the intellect does not construct the simple determination of a possible object but makes the object, constructs it, and in the course of this activity (problematic in itself) it proceeds by trial and error. At this point the notion of trial and error becomes crucial. If the schema of empirical concepts is a construct that tries to make the objects of nature thinkable, and if a complete synthesis of empirical concepts can never be given, because new notes of the concept [...] can always be discovered through experience, then the schemata themselves can only be revisable, fallible, and destined to evolve in time. If the pure concepts of the intellect could constitute a sort of atemporal repertoire, empirical concepts could only become “historic”, or cultural, if you will. Kant did not “say” this, but it seems hard not to say it if the doctrine of schematism is carried to its logical conclusions (KP, p. 97).

It is precisely for this reason that, according to Eco, we need to interpret the world “as if” it is coherent or “as if” our hypotheses and priors can guess its structure. According to Eco, this is needed in order to have the very same experience of the world. This paves the way for Eco’s extraordinary reflections about abduction, that grounds the very same plot of his *The Name of the Rose*.

## 4 The “As If”: The Centrality of Abduction

According to Eco, we use abductions in order to build coherent wholes starting from otherwise unrelated elements. He gives a masterful explanation of this aspect in his paper “Horns, Hooves, Insteps”, analyzing what allows Voltaire’s Zadig to construct a “normal story” starting from some surprising events and perceptions. Eco shows how Zadig could have interpreted the various “visual utterances” that he has to do with as a “disconnected series” or as a “coherent sequence, that’s to say a text or a story”. And he shows how it is only by following this second path that Zadig manages to make sense of his experience.

He [Zadig] decides to interpret the data he had assembled as if they were harmoniously interrelated. He knew before that there was a horse and that there were four other unidentified agents. He knew that these five agents were individuals of the actual world of his own experience. Now he also believes that there was a horse with a long tail, fifteen hands high, with a golden bit and a silver hoof. But such a horse does not necessarily belong to the actual world of Zadig’s experience. It belongs to the textual possible world Zadig has built up [...] imagination is a world-creating device [...] So Zadig is in a position to make a “fair guess” according to which both the horse and the dog of his own textual world are the same as those known by the officers. This kind of move is the one usually made by a detective: “The possible individual I have outlined as an inhabitant of the world of my beliefs is the same as the individual of the actual world someone is looking for” (Eco 1983b, p. 214).

Eco says that behind this connection between imagination and narratives (Paolucci 2020, chap. 4) there is a Kantian idea: we must interpret the world *as if* it were a story. What is the Kantian idea? It consists in the fact that without our structuring it into “stories” and “texts” – into coherent *worlds* – we could never have any knowledge or experience of *the* world. We interpret the world *as if it were* a “text” or a “story” – that is to say – as if the possible structure we have delineated with our imagination is the same one that is constitutive of the real world. Abduction does exactly this kind of work. And even if this should not be true – this is the predictive error part – it is the only way in which we can have fallible experience of it, trying to predict what it doesn’t match. I would not put things in this Kantian way, like Eco does. I would be more radical: narrativity is a *Gestalt* propriety that shapes perception and experience and makes our attunement to the environment possible (Paolucci 2019, 2020): this is why abduction looks for coherent wholes and builds them through imagination.

However, according to Eco, there is one major difference regarding the “strength” of narrativity when it operates within the real world or when it oper-

ates within the fictional world, as it does in novels. Unlike what happens in the real world, a detective like Sherlock Holmes never makes mistakes and never hesitates to gamble that the world which he has charted out is the same world as the “real” world, since he has the privilege of living in a world constructed by his inventor, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who constantly verifies all the bets, the predictions and the stories. In the real world, on the other hand, there is nothing which corresponds to the author of a novel.

To be sure that the mind of the detective has reconstructed the sequence of the facts and of the rules as they had to be, one must believe a profound Spinozistic notion that “*ordo et connexio rerum idem est ac ordo et connexio idearum*”. The movements of our mind that investigates follow the same rules of the real. If we think “well”, we are obligated to think according to the same rules that connect things among themselves. If a detective identifies with the mind of the killer, he cannot help but arrive at the same point at which the killer arrives. In this Spinozist universe, the detective will also know what the killer will do tomorrow. And he will go to wait for him at the scene of the next crime. But if the detective reasons like that, the killer can reason like that as well: he will be able to act in such a way that the detective will go and wait for him at the scene of the next crime, but the victim of the killer’s next crime will be the detective himself. And this is what happens in “Death and the Compass”, and in practice in all of Borges’s stories, or at least in the more disturbing and enthralling ones (Eco 1990, p. 160).

This is also the case in *The Name of the Rose*: it is no coincidence that, when Eco writes it, he has Borges’ *Death and the Compass* in mind, which not by chance inspired the evil blind librarian who is the protagonist of the novel’s finale. Having understood that William of Baskerville had gambled that the murderer was following the “scheme of the Apocalypse” for his crimes, Jorge de Burgos begins following the scheme himself, in order to kill him, even if all the previous murders were actually the result of chance and not an elaborate or preconceived plan. While William of Baskerville was trying to attune his imagination with the world, Jorge was trying to match its actions with the imagination of William, building a world through action that was exactly the same world William had built through his imagination, in order to match the surprising state of affairs. Since narratives are built in order to match our imagination with the environment, narratives can also be constructed in order to lie, building a matching that looks real, but is not. This relies on the very structure of perception itself, where we select cues and turn them into clues, in order to build a coherent story and attune the morphologies produced by our imagination with the optical data that guide efficacious behavior. As far as perception is concerned, veridicality is not the core business of perception, which, on the contrary, is the tentative of minimizing disorder and free energy, attuning the world through efficacious

behavior (Bruineberg/Kiverstein/Rietveld 2018; Gallagher 2017; see also Friston 2011).

There is nothing in the structure of the world that guarantees our conjectures and our abductive techniques grounded on reflective judgment. On the contrary, in Eco's opinion, man is structurally devoted to falsity and error, constantly running the risk of remaining a victim of his own semiotic creations, which he uses to try to decipher the disorder of the world, but which often do nothing besides show him his own signs and references. This is the "force of falsity" that Eco always puts on stage in his novels.<sup>2</sup> Starting from false ideas and incorrect conjectures, man is certainly able to discover many truths, but these discoveries are often the result of chance and error, just like those of William of Baskerville, who manages to truly discover the murderer of the abbey and his mysteries by following the false scheme of the Apocalypse.

That's why the continuity between the mind and world, "Synechism" as Peirce used to call it (see Paolucci 2004), according to Eco is not a *constitutive* principle, but rather a *regulative* one. We act "as if" our perceptions and conjectures correspond to the structure of the real world. We would be unable to gain experience without this gamble. However, there is nothing in the structure of the world that guarantees the Spinozean parallelism that serves to secure the products of our imagination, just as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did with those of Holmes. In the real world, unlike that of fiction, the matching between the organism and the environment is something that we tentatively try to impose on the world's chaos, in order to produce *an* order. However, without any guarantee that this order exists, and corresponds to that of the world. We produce the order we need to find in the world in order to minimize disorder and free energy.

I have never doubted the truth of signs, Adso; they are the only things man has with which to orient himself in the world. What I did not understand was the relation among signs. I arrived at Jorge through an apocalyptic pattern that seemed to underlie all the crimes, and yet it was accidental. I arrived at Jorge seeking one criminal for all the crimes and we discovered that each crime was committed by a different person, or by no one. I arrived at Jorge pursuing the plan of a perverse and rational mind, and there was no plan, or, rather, Jorge himself was overcome by his own initial design and there began a sequence of causes, and concauses, and of causes contradicting one another, which proceeded on their own, creating relations that did not stem from any plan. Where is all my wisdom, then? I behaved, stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe [...] The order that our mind imagines is like a net, or like a ladder, built to attain something. But afterward you must throw the ladder away, because you discover that, even if it was useful, it was meaningless (Eco 1983a, p. 426).

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2 I have worked a lot on this topic in Paolucci 2017a.



I don't know if Umberto Eco is right. Maybe, as an enactivist, I like to think that Synechism, the continuity between mind and matter, organism and the environment, can also be a constitutive principle of perception and not only a regulative one. However, and this is really a nice idea, this is exactly why Eco finds it necessary to “laugh at the truth” (see Paolucci 2017a, chapter 8). Truth, being a form of correspondence between intellect and things on the one side and between the mind and the world on the other side, is a form of order that we try to impose on the world in order to gain experience. However, many other orders are possible. This is why it is always a good idea not to take just one too seriously.

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# Aesthetic Experience and Its Values

John Dewey's Pragmatist Challenge to Kantian Aesthetics

## 1 Introduction

Influences are a difficult aspect of an intellectual's thought to measure, since great thinkers often rebel against those they closely read or learned from in earlier phases as much as intentionally continue their thought. One of the most prominent figures in twentieth-century American philosophy was the pragmatist John Dewey (1859–1952), and many have noted his influence through his early exposure to the philosophy of Hegel during his doctoral work at Johns Hopkins University, the first secular graduate program in philosophy in the United States (Westbrook 1993; Ryan 1995). There the twin influences of Hegel and modern psychology would influence him in the figures and thought of his mentors, George S. Morris and G. Stanley Hall. Later in his life, Dewey acknowledged his break with Hegel, but admitted that “acquaintance with Hegel has left a permanent deposit in my thinking” (Dewey 1984, p. 154). What is important to note is not just who Dewey respected as a source of ideas to inform his later pragmatist thinking, but also those who Dewey pushed against in making strides in developing his own philosophy. One of the most prominent, but often unacknowledged, figures that exerted this latter sort of influence on Dewey was the Prussian philosopher, Immanuel Kant. In his undergraduate years at the University of Vermont, Dewey learned German and read much of Kant's thought under the guidance of H.A.P. Torrey (Johnston 2006). Dewey's years at Johns Hopkins were capped with his dissertation, directed by the Hegelian G.S. Morris, on Kant's psychology. While this text is lost, we know from Dewey's early articles on Kant that he faulted the transcendental idealist's rather a priori approach to experience and psychology (Dewey 1969).

What has been left unexplored in this reception history of Kant's philosophy in the American pragmatist tradition concerns Dewey's later thought on art and aesthetics. For much of his career, Dewey seemed reluctant to write or talk about aesthetic matters. While he was lecturing in Peking in 1920, Dewey says this much to his art-collecting former student, Albert Barnes:

I was interested in your suggestion about a seminar in esthetics. But I can[']t rise to my part in it. I have always eschewed esthetics, just why I don[']t know, but I think it is because I

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wanted to reserve one region from a somewhat devastating analysis, one part of experience where I didn[']t think more than I did anything else. And now I have a pretty fixed repulsion agt [against] all esthetic discussion. I feel about it precisely as the average intelligent man feels about all philosophical discussion, including the branches that excite me very much (Dewey 2008, 15 January 1920).

In 1925, Dewey finally summoned the nerve to issue a chapter on art in his important treatise, *Experience and Nature* (Dewey 1988). By 1931, Dewey would discuss aesthetics and art as the focus of his William James lecture series at Harvard University, a lengthy set of discourses that would be published as *Art as Experience* in 1934. This complex and rich book was dedicated to Albert C. Barnes, and stands as one of the most important statements of American intellectuals on art. It “has remained ever since one of the most widely read of Dewey’s numerous works, and one of the most widely read works in the history of American aesthetics” (Guyer 2014b, p. 309). Dewey’s connection with Kant is as intriguing as it is antagonistic, so it may prove useful to explore the relationship of his thoughts on art to those of Kant’s aesthetic theory. As this chapter will show, much of the point of Dewey’s account of aesthetics can be seen as an explicit rejection of Kantian approaches to the aesthetic. But as with all influences, the rejection is not complete – it will be shown that Dewey’s account of the importance of aesthetic experience takes something, or can be seen as taking something, of the “Kantian hoop” with it in how he reconciles means and ends in reading the values of experience.

## 2 Dewey’s Rejection of the Kantian Approach to Aesthetics

To understand Dewey’s aesthetics, one must understand his naturalism. A key part of this naturalism was seeing humans – and their mental life – as a continuation of forces and processes resident in a natural environment. Thomas Alexander’s account of Dewey’s aesthetics even goes as far as to argue that Dewey’s essential course was set, or at least greatly influenced, by his early belief that “psychical life is akin to physical, especially with regard to its organic, functional nature” (Alexander 1987, p. 21). Such a naturalistic commitment frames Dewey’s approach to the aesthetic when he begins to write explicitly on it in the 1920s. In his chapter on “Experience, Nature and Art” in *Experience and Nature*, Dewey frames what he sees as the basic choices in theorizing about the aesthetic:

There are substantially but two alternatives. Either art is a continuation, by means of intelligent selection and arrangement, of natural tendencies of natural events; or art is a peculiar addition to nature springing from something dwelling exclusively within the breast of man, whatever name be given the latter (Dewey 1988, p. 291).

The former case connects aesthetic matters deeply with other matters of living, whereas the latter option sees the aesthetic as something that “has nothing inherently to do with the objects, physical and social, experienced in other situations” (Dewey 1988, p. 291). Dewey is most likely picturing Kant’s aesthetics as the prime example of this second path, since Kant makes a point to read judgments of taste as dissimilar from other everyday reactions of approval or pleasure. While Dewey’s objections to Kant are not fully clear in his 1925 work, we can still see his preferred path – one that prioritizes seeing the aesthetic as something common to nature and vast swathes of experience.

By the 1930s, Dewey seems to have worked out his aesthetic theory in enough detail that he can begin to enunciate his differences with Kant’s aesthetic theory. In Dewey’s 1934 book, *Art as Experience* (Dewey 1989),<sup>1</sup> we see the pragmatist explicitly revealing what he takes to be the problem with Kant’s theory of art and aesthetics. In a chapter exploring the “Human Contribution” to art as experience, Dewey notes a fundamental problem in accounts of art: “Attentive observation is certainly one essential factor in all genuine perception including the esthetic. But how does it happen that this factor is reduced to the bare act of contemplation” (AE, p. 257)? This move endangers larger accounts of the aesthetic since it reduces it to one part of our interaction with fine art (what Dewey calls “contemplation” without overt activity). Such contemplative approaches divide human psychology in abstract and artificial ways, with an equal cost to the value of consequent aesthetic theorizing. One of the main proponents of this problematic approach, according to Dewey, was Kant; Dewey claims that this problematic start to fine art “so far as psychological theory is concerned, is to be found in Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*” (AE, p. 257). Dewey continues his objections to Kant as one who divides and dichotomizes nature’s continuums, asserting that he “was a past-master in first drawing distinctions and then erecting them into compartmental divisions. The effect upon subsequent theory was to give the separation of the esthetic from other modes of experience an alleged scientific basis in the constitution of human nature” (AE, p. 257). Dewey is referring to what he sees as Kant’s tendency to divide up the mind into faculties such as understanding and desire, and then map these separate parts on to separate

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter quoted as AE.

types of activities or experiences. Critiquing Kant as separating “Pure Reason” from “Pure Will”, Dewey continues:

Having disposed of Truth and the Good, it remained to find a niche for Beauty, the remaining term in the classic trio. Pure Feeling remained, being “pure” in the sense of being isolated and self-enclosed; feeling free from any taint of desire; feeling that strictly speaking is non-empirical. So he bethought himself of a faculty of Judgment which is not reflective but intuitive and yet not concerned with objects of Pure Reason. This faculty is exercised in Contemplation, and the distinctively esthetic element is the pleasure which attends such Contemplation (AE, p. 257).

Dewey is, rightly or wrongly, reading Kant’s ideas of reflective judgment into this idea of “contemplation”, showing the American’s understanding of Kant’s aesthetic theory as focused on disinterestedness. Whether or not the label of “contemplation” is right – Dewey also takes aim at another batch of theories associated with “play” that might also include Kant’s account – is beside the point. What is usefully revealed here is Dewey’s perception of Kant’s aesthetics, including its putative removal from the worlds of knowledge and action. With Kant’s aesthetics, Dewey charges, “the psychological road was opened leading to the ivory tower of ‘Beauty’ remote from all desire, action, and stir of emotion” (AE, p. 257).

Underwriting this reading of Kant and sequestering the beautiful from “important” matters of living (e.g., knowing and acting) was an antipathy toward emotion. As Dewey retells it, Kant’s century

was, generally speaking, till towards its close, a century of “reason” rather than of “passion”, and hence one in which objective order and regularity, the invariant element, was almost exclusively the source of esthetic satisfaction – a situation that lent itself to the idea that contemplative judgment and the feeling connected with it are the peculiar differentia of esthetic experience (AE, p. 258).

Dewey notes that this reading does make sense of some of the art of Kant’s time, and that when “taken at its best, that is to say, with a liberal interpretation, contemplation designates that aspect of perception in which elements of seeking and of thinking are subordinated (although not absent) to the perfecting of the process of perception itself” (AE, p. 258). Thus, Kant’s account is not entirely useless. But where it errs is in its extreme separation of desire and emotion from the experience of art – including its production and reception. Art, as we will see, struck Dewey as a natural continuation of the practical nature of most of our activity in an environment. It enlivens us, fills us with emotion, and is intimately connected to matters of success or failure in end-driven endeavors. The challenge will be to find an account of art and the aesthetic that usefully ex-

plains the draw of practical architecture as well as abstract art. Kant's emphasis on contemplation, according to Dewey, produces an account of the aesthetic that

not only passes over, as if it were irrelevant, the doing and making involved in the production of a work of art (and the corresponding active elements in the appreciative response), but it involves an extremely one-sided idea of the nature of perception. It takes as its cue to the understanding of perception what belongs only to the act of recognition, merely broadening the latter to include the pleasure that attends it when recognition is prolonged and extensive (AE, p. 258).

Of course, one could argue that Kant's account of reflective judgment *does* involve activity and *can* be related to practical matters, points that I will expand on later. But it is clear that Kant sees the judgment of taste, the core to his aesthetic theory, as vitally disinterested from practical matters that so often center on pleasure-giving ends.

Dewey sees Kant's worries about the pleasures external to the act of judging the beautiful object or scene as a problematic step. As he puts it in his explicit discussion in *Art as Experience*, Kant's move

to define the emotional element of esthetic perception merely as the pleasure taken in the act of contemplation, independent of what is excited by the matter contemplated, results, however, in a thoroughly anaemic conception of art. Carried to its logical conclusion, it would exclude from esthetic perception most of the subject-matter that is enjoyed in the case of architectural structures, the drama, and the novel, with all their attendant reverberations (AE, p. 258).

Dewey's account will foreground the important role of emotion and interest in activity, including that which we would want to label aesthetic. Thus, Dewey concludes his indictment of Kant with a statement that can serve as a guiding thread to figuring out Dewey's reception of Kant's aesthetic theory: "Not absence of desire and thought but their thorough incorporation into perceptual experience characterizes esthetic experience, in its distinction from experiences that are especially 'intellectual' and 'practical'" (AE, p. 258).

It is this theme of the aesthetic as synthesizing desire and thought that would assume prominence in Dewey's description of aesthetic experience. Discussing the topic of art and the aesthetic most fully in his *Art as Experience*, Dewey emphasizes a naturalistic reading of art, following the path demarcated in the previously-cited passage from his 1925 *Experience and Nature* that integrated art with our functioning as a natural organism. For Dewey, the aesthetic denotes a quality of experience, one with a particular and unique felt power. Aesthetic experiences "stick out" from the rest of our lives and streams of experience. But what are these experiences, and how can they be distinguished



from other, non-aesthetic experiences? This serves as the starting point for Dewey's *Art as Experience*, and as his elaborated response to the path he believes Kant's philosophy of aesthetics took instead. Dewey's theory of the aesthetic starts not with humans qua rational beings, but instead with the "living organism". Such a creature – purposefully extending beyond the human for Dewey – always is located in some context or environment. As Dewey puts it early in his exposition of art as experience, "life goes on in an environment; not merely *in* it but because of it, through interaction with it" (AE, p. 19). At some point, there will inevitably be experience with some problematic quality, or with a "temporary absence of adequate adjustment with surroundings" (AE, p. 19). The environment offers resources for the living creature (food, etc.), as well as obstacles (things that cause the creature pain, or flummox its plans). When the creature reaches equilibrium between its needs, emotionally valenced and practical as they are, and its environment, rewarding qualities of experience come to the foreground. For creatures that can take habits, such as humans, our ability to identify and change strategies for living in an often-recalcitrant environment is vital to this equilibrium-reaching. Dewey denotes this capacity as one of "reflection" in the case of humans able to think through ways of overcoming resistances or lacks in their environment.

This state of reaching equilibrium with the creature's environment is central not only to survival, but to understanding our culturally advanced practices of art. Reaching equilibrium with some environment is a temporal process; it implicates a past that provides obstacles, goals, and habitual means of achieving ends, as well as a future that contains anticipated and desired ends. As Dewey puts it, this state segues into aesthetic experience: "For only when an organism shares in the ordered relations of its environment does it secure the stability essential to living. And when the participation comes after a phase of disruption and conflict, it bears within itself the germs of a consummation akin to the esthetic" (AE, p. 20).

What are the characteristics of the aesthetic for Dewey? They seem to be formed in such a way as to be diametrically opposed to Kant's reading of the judgment of taste as free of idiosyncratic emotions, universally binding, and so forth. In Dewey's naturalist account of the aesthetic, we can discern at least three characteristics to this felt experience of equilibrium reaching that Dewey notes as aesthetic or what he will eventually call "consummatory". In a concretized manner that differs from Kant's typical way of arguing for his theory, Dewey begins with a specific group of examples – *that* meal in Paris or *that* trip across the Atlantic. These specific examples then serve as the grounds for extrapolating three qualities that presumably all aesthetic experience will contain. First, Dewey notes that aesthetic experiences of a wonderful meal or a dra-

matic journey are integrated within other surrounding experiences. These experiences stand out from the rest of one's temporary activity, but not entirely – Dewey's naturalism makes him reticent to commit to any position that marks one stretch of experience off as transcending aspects of everyday or "natural" experience. Second, there is a sense in which an aesthetic experience sticks out from surrounding stretches of experience. It forms an integral whole that is separate in some qualitative way from other, non-aesthetic, experiences. Thus, he sometimes refers to aesthetic experience as "integral" experience given the unifying emotional meaning or tone that it is suffused with. Unlike Kant, Dewey's sense of the aesthetic does not separate mind and body, or rational thought and emotion; Dewey believes that the best description of the aesthetic will take account for those intense stretches of time that are tied together by some concrete and individually felt emotional quality. This renders the specific aesthetic experience idiosyncratic, a stark departure from Kant's need (according to Dewey's gloss) of seeing the aesthetic judgment of taste as strictly universal in form. Third, the aesthetic has a sort of consummating unity among its various parts. No experience is simply one experience; in reality, experience can be subdivided into smaller and smaller units that are sequentially linked together for some experiencing creature in a specific environment. For Dewey, aesthetic experience spans some length of time that develops in a certain manner. The beginning of the dramatic sea voyage through a terrible storm, say, sets up and funds the later events – perhaps it makes a safe arrival all the more meaningful as a conclusion to this length of time and activity. Each moment in *an* experience – a confusing way Dewey has of referring to aesthetic experience – also looks forward toward some conclusion or culmination. Each present moment anticipates future experience, and in turn is funded by past experience. This meaningful and orderly rhythm to experience, one that builds toward a meaningful conclusion, is a reason why Dewey introduces yet another term for aesthetic experience in *Art as Experience*: he often calls this "consummatory experience" because of its meaningful conclusion that synthesizes all previous parts of the experience that came before it. It is no accident that aesthetic experience is described like a finely wrought dramatic artwork – Dewey is committed to the idea that fine art builds upon naturally occurring phenomena. As he puts it in *Art as Experience*, "Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is" (AE, p. 24).

Dewey faulted Kant for separating the aesthetic from the natural environment. By this, Dewey surely meant that experiences classed as aesthetic were not ordinary or common everyday experiences for Kant – even when they implicated scenes of natural beauty, Kant's emphasized moments of the aesthetic

were still removed from the sort of practical activities common to our mundane life. Dewey's account of the aesthetic makes an obvious effort to distinguish itself from this putative mistake. The aesthetic is "implicitly in every normal experience", Dewey argues, but it too often "generally fails to become explicit" (AE, p. 18). This is Dewey's reasoning for why all or most of one's experiences do not hit the qualitative high point that we felt during a moving play, *that* memorable meal, or *that* harrowing journey to Europe. The intriguing implication is there, however, that if aesthetic experience is worth having because it signifies a close integration of a living creature with its often-problematic environment, we should seek ways to remove as many obstacles to its instantiation as possible. In other words, Dewey's account seems to hold the possibility that more, if not all, of one's life could be rendered aesthetic in quality. This theme is revealed early in *Art as Experience* when Dewey describes what he calls the "aesthetic ideal" – something far removed from Kant's "ideal of beauty" (the human form, effectively) or the universality of the judgment of taste. For Dewey, the aesthetic ideal signifies a *quality* to concrete, idiosyncratic experiences, one that militates against the human tendency to focus too much on the past or the future without minding the present:

Because of the frequency of this abandonment of the present to the past and future, the happy periods of an experience that is now complete because it absorbs into itself memories of the past and anticipations of the future, come to constitute an esthetic ideal. Only when the past ceases to trouble and anticipations of the future are not perturbing is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive. Art celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is (AE p. 24).

The "aesthetic ideal" points to those moments when the living creature *feels* most alive and *experiences* a deep and meaningful unity among some past and future states in the present. This is not the Kantian separation of the rational being from the world of nature, as Dewey accused Kant of emphasizing. Instead, it foregrounds a radical immediacy or interpenetration of the reflective human with a present situation in an environment funded by past happenings and anticipating future occurrences. Dewey's aesthetics is therefore the experience of an engaged and satisfied organism living in and through some natural or social environment.

One sees that Dewey's account of the aesthetic is a broad one, encompassing a range of natural, fine art-focused, and even process-based experiences. It also strives to connect aesthetic experience to the range of natural experiences, quite the diversion from one reading of Kant that sees the ideas presented in his critique of the aesthetic power of judgment as an attempt to bridge the worlds of

freedom and nature. Paul Guyer (2014a) is one scholar who takes his lead from Kant's revealing comments in the published introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*:

Now although there is an incalculable gulf fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible, so that from the former to the latter (thus by means of the theoretical use of reason) no transition is possible, just as if there were so many different worlds, the first of which can have no influence on the second: yet the latter *should* have an influence on the former, namely the concept of freedom should make the end that is imposed by its laws real in the sensible world; and nature must consequently also be able to be conceived in such a way that the lawfulness of its form is at least in agreement with the possibility of the ends that are to be realized in it in accordance with the laws of freedom (CPJ, §II, p. 63 [Ak. V, pp. 174–175]).

What Guyer believes this indicates is that Kant saw the aesthetic as a sort of bridge between the rigorous demands of the moral law and the determinate pulls and pushes of the causally-structured natural world. Dewey surely saw this positioning as well, since he accuses Kant of separating so many aspects of human experience from the natural world. One of the most important influences of Darwin on Dewey, after all, was the commitment that humans are natural creatures through and through. The environment, not transcendent ideas or ideals, became the formative theme for Dewey's philosophy. But, as Guyer (1996) argues, Kant saw something special about the bridge that the experience of aesthetic phenomena represented, beyond the advantages provided by Kant's "ought-implies-can" mantra or the "fact of reason" from his *Critique of Practical Reason*. The *experience* of the beautiful, or of the sublime, seemed to be central to Kant in the 1790s. The vivid, felt experience of the judgment of taste and the free play of our faculties gave us some indication that the moral enterprise was worthwhile. In other words, Kant's aesthetics did not totally eschew experience, *pace* Dewey's readings, but instead gave it a prominent place.

Why Dewey did not see this experiential role that aesthetic experience took in Kant is a mystery. Dewey clearly knew of Kant's paragraph talking about the "incalculable" or "immeasurable" gulf between the world of the senses and the supersensible realm, as he quoted this passage in his *German Philosophy and Politics* book from 1915. This work was based on a series of lectures given earlier in 1915, and focused mainly on the putative relationship between philosophies in Prussia and Germany – namely the tradition set by Kant – and German political inclinations, especially those that incline them toward militarism (Johnston 2006). A third of the way into the book, he glosses Kant's statement as follows: "Morality is autonomous; man, humanity, is an end in itself. Obedience to the self-imposed law will transform the sensible world (within which falls all social

ties so far as they spring from natural instinct or desire) into a form appropriate to universal reason. Thus we may paraphrase the sentence quoted from Kant” (1979, p. 162). Dewey sees the problem that Kant’s philosophy creates in separating the realms of knowledge and morality, but he simply misses the bridging solution of the aesthetic, at least in 1915. But as we have seen, his reading of Kant’s aesthetics in the 1930s does not improve much; he still sees the sage of Königsberg as separating more parts of the world than he connects. Here, in 1915, he frets about the “gospel of duty” that Kant embarks on – in the third *Critique* and elsewhere – and correctly notes its extreme valuing of humanity and moral agents, but Dewey refuses to acknowledge its relation to the aesthetic, at least as Kant portrays the point of his exploration of aesthetic experience. Indeed, in his summary statements of Kant’s philosophy, one sees little room for the aesthetic as a third aspect:

I find that Kant’s decisive contribution is the idea of a dual legislation of reason by which are marked off two distinct realms that of science and that of morals. Each of these two realms has its own final and authoritative constitution: On one hand, there is the world of sense, the world of phenomena in space and time in which science is at home; on the other hand, is the supersensible, the noumenal world, the world of moral duty and moral freedom (Dewey, 1979, p. 147).

Kant, for Dewey, seemed limited to the first two *Critiques*, even though the American philosopher clearly knew of the project of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Thus, many might conclude that Dewey’s reception of Kant was only a partial reception, one tempered by an incomplete reading of Kant’s purpose in talking about the phenomena of the beautiful and the sublime. This is not incorrect, but not much is gained by chastising Dewey for not reading Kant as well as he should have. Perhaps he had his own, Darwinian, point to push in resisting Kant’s tendency to incorporate the transcendental and *a priori* into his account of humans and the experience of aesthetic phenomena. Whatever the explanation is, we see Kant serving a similar role Dewey’s moral philosophy as he did in his work on art and the aesthetic; Kant becomes the foil for the pragmatist’s novel theorizing, a respected, but wrong, thinker who set so many on the wrong path. As Dewey says toward the beginning of his *German Philosophy and Politics*, “No position unlike his should be taken up till Kant has been reverently disposed of, and the new position evaluated in his terms. To scoff at him is fair sacrilege. In a genuine sense, he marks the end of the older age. He is the transition to distinctively modern thought” (1979, p. 147). Dewey’s naturalistic aesthetics gains much of its purchase by trying to “dispose” of the Kantian view, as he sees it, of dividing the world into water-tight compartments and placing most of the interesting answers to our questions outside of the natural realm. Art and the aes-

thetic may be a bridge, on this account, but it was built at the high price of removing art from the realm of the living creature coming to terms with a concrete environment.

### 3 Internalizing the Value of Aesthetic Experience

There are more interesting parallels that can be drawn between Dewey's and Kant's aesthetics, if one is motivated to find them. Looking closely at these thinkers' accounts of aesthetic experience reveals a tantalizing emphasis – in aesthetic experience, means and ends are joined in ways that much of our experience often lacks. Let us complete this exploration into Dewey's reception of Kant by looking at how his account of aesthetic experience, as tethered to the living organism as it is, shares important points of emphasis with Kant's account of the judgment of taste and the experience of the beautiful in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In so doing, we can gain a greater appreciation for how Dewey's reception differed from Kant, and more fully understand the American philosopher's quick dismissal of Kant's thought on the aesthetic.

Kant's account of aesthetic judgment in the third *Critique* associates the *experience* of the beautiful (in nature or art) with the qualities of *disinterestedness*, *universality*, a certain lack of *purposiveness*, and *necessity*. Kant closely connects the experience of the beautiful with the morally good. He points out four parallels that are shared by the experience of the beautiful and the experience of the morally good (CPJ, §59, pp. 227–228 [Ak. V, p. 354]). First, judgments about beautiful objects please an agent immediately, mainly by being an act of reflective judgment. This is slightly different from the moral experience, since it involves concepts (e. g., of the good). Both share an immediacy of feeling after their experience, however, leading Kant to claim that the experience of the beautiful can serve as a symbol of the moral. Second, both the experiences of the beautiful and the morally good lack any connection to existing desires; our interests in them arise after their experience. Both experiences create pleasure in us, but this comes from us realizing that parts of our nature contain elements that go beyond any sensuous determination. This includes our awareness of the moral law as the non-sensuous source of our autonomy, as well as the beautiful's spurring us to realize that our faculties involve a source of pleasure that transcends sensuous matters. Third, the freedom of the imagination in our experience of the beautiful is “in accord with the lawfulness of the understanding” (CPJ, §59, p. 228 [Ak. V, p. 354]). In our moral experience, our will agrees with itself in its own rational lawgiving – it prescribes the moral law to itself. Likewise, in our experience of the beautiful, we experience our faculty of imagination seemingly issuing

law in accord with the understanding. Fourth, “the subjective principle for judging of the beautiful is represented as universal, i. e., valid for everyone, but not as knowable by any universal concept” (CPJ, §59, p. 228 [Ak. V, p. 354]). Moral concepts are universally valid, and they are determinate concepts. The experience of the beautiful involves a similar feeling of universal validity, but the absence of determinate conceptual content prevents us from fully demanding of others that they recognize a specific object or scene as beautiful.

These areas of commonality lead Kant to claim that beauty is the symbol of the morally good, and that aesthetic experiences can lead to moral cultivation:

Taste as it were makes possible the transition from sensible charm to the habitual moral interest without too violent of a leap by representing the imagination even in its freedom as purposively determinable for the understanding and teaching us to find a free satisfaction in the objects of the senses even without any sensible charm (CPJ, §59, p. 228 [Ak. V, p. 354]).

This freedom of our response is central to the cultivating of our moral powers through the aesthetic. One crucial implication of this commitment for Kant comes in how it shapes his reception of fine art, or the artistic products of purposeful human endeavor. Put simply, Kant is quite skeptical of fine art, leading him to focus on the experience of natural beauty for much of his third *Critique*. When he does engage fine art, he sets the standards high:

beautiful art must be free art in a double sense: it must not be a matter of remuneration, a labor whose magnitude can be judged, enforced, or paid for in accordance with a determinate standard; but also, while the mind is certainly occupied, it must feel itself to be satisfied and stimulated (independently of remuneration) without looking beyond to another end (CPJ, §51, pp. 198–199 [Ak. V, p. 321]).

Art cannot be created for a specific purpose on this account, or it compromises its autonomy and the autonomy of the response it evokes in attending audiences. Paul Guyer captures this worry quite accurately when he writes, “our *response* to the beauty and sublimity of nature stands in more intimate connection, both as it were theoretical and practical, to our freedom than does our response to art” (Guyer 1996, p. 251). When Kant incorporates fine art into his account, Guyer notes that even then Kant worries that

a work of art may either be taken for a natural beauty, in which case it defrauds us and is thereby obviously disqualified from even symbolic moral significance by its own immorality, or else that it is explicitly recognized as the product of the intentional activity of another person, in which case it can hardly symbolize our own autonomy (Guyer 1996, p. 268).



Art must be connected to nature – as Kant does in his theory of genius and aesthetic ideas – but it cannot be saturated with ends and purposes, as this would compromise the autonomy of auditor response. This line of reasoning is what is at issue when Kant discusses an example of a pleasing song of a nightingale that we later discover is merely a deceptive ploy of a landlord attempting to please paying guests (CPJ, §42, pp. 181–182 [Ak. V, p. 302]). We rebel against our initial reaction, Kant thinks, as it is reframed as being a desired response that some human agent aimed at achieving for their own idiosyncratic ends. It was not an immediate experience of our autonomy through the means of the beautiful object. Instead, it counts as *deception for a specific end* (viz., pleasing paying customers). This worry about end-based manipulation through the means of immediate experience is what leads Kant to castigate certain oratorical practices as manipulation:

The orator [Redner] thus announces a matter of business and carries it out as if it were merely a *play* with ideas in order to entertain the audience. The *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 (CPJ, §51, p. 198 [Ak. V, p. 321]).

While one can see a form of rhetoric in Kant's work that does not transgress the moral bounds of respecting autonomy (Stroud 2014 and 2015; Ercolini 2016), the worry with hidden manipulation is there, and it even infects art. The poet, if not truly concerned with playing with aesthetic ideas, could easily become a manipulator of audience emotions, actions, and thoughts.

Thus, for Kant, aesthetic experience ideally internalizes ends to the means of experience. The experience of the beautiful is a symbol of moral willing because it is an experience of our autonomy, if only in reflective judgment. This tight interlinking of ends and means can also be identified in Dewey's aesthetics. In his earlier work, Dewey was concerned with the problems that conceptually separating ends and means caused:

For the Greek community was marked by a sharp separation of servile workers and free men of leisure, which meant a division between acquaintance with matters of fact and contemplative appreciation, between unintelligent practice and unpractical intelligence, between affairs of change and efficiency – or instrumentality – and of rest and enclosure – finality (Dewey 1988, p. 80).

Dewey consistently sought a way to retheorize activity such that ends and means are experienced as unified. He found the primary ground for such meliorative accounts in his *Art as Experience*. In his account of fine art – objects that were the product of an aesthetic experience involving an artist and that provoked similar



experiences in its audience – Dewey emphasized an interconnection of ends and means in consummatory experience. Aesthetic experience was rewarding and unified precisely because its parts were tightly and meaningfully interlinked; the experience itself had no means that led to some remote end. Instead, the means were guided by what Dewey would call an “end-in-view”, a provisional sort of anticipation that shaped the course of experience, guided it, and rendered it meaningful in the present. This end-in-view was internal to the process of experience, and not separate or ideal in some remote fashion. As he puts it in his *Art as Experience*, “In a work of art there is no such single self-sufficient deposit. The end, the terminus, is significant not by itself but as the integration of the parts. It has no other existence” (AE, p. 61).

In discussing fine art, Dewey further relies on the integration of means and ends in the concept of “media”. “Means” are “the middle, the intervening, the things through which something now remote is brought to pass” (AE, p. 201). But not all means are media. Many means are *external* to some experience or experienced object, separated from the consequences that they are intended to create in future experience. This external sort of means represents merely a way of achieving an end; achieving this end means simply a cessation of activity. These means are replaceable, since their value lies in achieving a future state only: they are “usually of such a sort that others can be substituted for them; the particular ones employed are determined by some extraneous consideration, like cheapness” (AE, p. 201). This cheapness has its cost. As Dewey puts it in his 1916 *Democracy and Education*, “Every divorce of end from means diminishes by that much the significance of the activity and tends to reduce it to a drudgery from which one would escape if he could” (Dewey 1985, p. 113). This externalization of means accounts for drudgery in activities ranging from work to education (Stroud 2011).

Art, however, ideally incorporates “media”. For Dewey, these are means *internal* to the end they attempt to reach: “Esthetic effects belong intrinsically to their medium” (Dewey 1985, p. 201). The paint used to achieve a painting is the painting, bricks *are* the house. This is Dewey’s internalized account of artistic means in the concept of *media*. The experience of art therefore foregrounds the sort of absorption that is immediately focused on the present, with funding from connected past events and anticipations of artistic ends in the immediate future. This comprises the spontaneity of art in our response, for Dewey, since there is “complete absorption in an orderly development” (Dewey 1985, p. 285). It is at this point that we see an area of conceptual overlap between Kant’s approach and Dewey’s. Even though Dewey’s moral theory does not have any room for a universal moral law, or his aesthetic theory for universally valid judgments or responses, he still prizes the immediacy of reaction that is apparent in optimal

aesthetic experiences. Our experience of fine art could be distracted by external ends – we could see our experience of a play as drudgery, or as a mere means to impress interlocutors next week – but such experience is not truly the experience of artistic means *as* media. If we are absorbed in the art object, Dewey believes, we are truly experiencing the object in the unified, emotionally alive, and rhythmically meaningful fashion that captures the naturalistic category of the aesthetic. Similar to Kant, the aesthetic experience is an accomplishment, and it can be rendered mechanical or manipulative by the intrusion of external ends or goals outside of the experience of its constituent parts.

Perhaps Dewey was too focused on his disagreements with Kant's supposed transcendentalism (taken here to exclude a meaningful naturalism that Dewey was intent on advocating) to see this common emphasis on the value of the *experience* of those aesthetic objects and scenes that move us to absorption in their details. Clearly, Dewey had a different project in mind than Kant's – Dewey did not intend on making the aesthetic a sort of experiential proof of our moral commands from our practical reason. But we can see a connection between Dewey's notion of ethics as attending to conflicts *in* problematic situations and his focus on aesthetic experience as absorption in a consummatory experience; both involve a tight and useful interlinking of a creature with an environment that matters deeply to its problem-solving activities. Beyond this, however, we see that Dewey also perceived that this absorption was central to the *feeling* of power in a living creature; indeed, it seemed that the creature was most alive at these moments of aesthetic focus. This is the "aesthetic ideal" discussed in *Art as Experience* that involves a creature "being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive". Art creates and "celebrates with peculiar intensity the moments in which the past reinforces the present and in which the future is a quickening of what now is" (AE, p. 24). This is what leads some commentators to read Dewey's aesthetics as proffering an engaged "art of living" that incorporates absorption and end-seeking activity (Sartwell 1995; Shusterman 2008; Stroud 2011). But the area of overlap with Kant is clear. Like Kant, Dewey saw a role for our experience of aesthetic phenomena to be invigorating and encouraging to humans; the difference comes in the range and conceptual span of the experience in question. For Kant, the aesthetic experience was mostly separate from active, end-seeking practical activity. For Dewey, aesthetic experience appeared in this end-seeking realm, but was signaled by the presence of an absorptive state in the experiencing organism. Artworks, for Dewey, are embraced as a way to create such integrated experience and to "restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience" (AE, p. 9). For Kant, however similar the experiential merging

of ends and means would be, art remained a point of skeptical worry that our distant and idiosyncratic ends would compromise the quality and value of our immediate engagement. Their hopes differed, but to some important degree, we can see a common emphasis on the quality of immediate experience that is prized in Kant and Dewey when we think about how means and ends can be integrated in present experience.

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Diarmuid Costello

# Retrieving Kant's Aesthetics for Art Theory After Greenberg

Some Remarks on Arthur C. Danto and Thierry de Duve

## 1 The Fate of Aesthetics in Contemporary Art Theory

In art theory since the early 1980s the discourse of aesthetics has been notable by its absence. This suggests that the majority of art theorists believe that the historical or conceptual limits of aesthetic theory have been breached by the internal development of art after modernism. Why might art theorists believe this?

In answer to this question I suggest, I take it non-controversially, that the widespread marginalization of aesthetics in postmodern art theory may be attributed to the success of the art critic and theorist Clement Greenberg (1909–1994). In co-opting the discourse of aesthetics, and in particular Kantian aesthetics, to underwrite modernist theory, Greenberg mediated the art world's subsequent rejection of both aesthetics in general and Immanuel Kant's aesthetics in particular. But one need only reflect on the centrality for postmodern theory of anti-aesthetic figures such as Marcel Duchamp, or of movements like Surrealism marginalized in Greenberg's account of "the best modern art", to see that for all their antipathy to Greenberg, many postmodernist art theorists continue to operate with a broadly Greenbergian view of aesthetics – which is why they are forced to reject it. What Greenberg valued is of course now roundly devalued, but the theoretical framework underwriting those valuations is taken up into postmodern theory largely unremarked.

What I mean by this is not that terms like "medium-specificity" weren't central to such debates, but rather that it was largely taken on trust that such ideas were coherent. Rather than interrogating the very idea of a "specific" medium, theorists valorized non- or anti- or post-medium-specific art over its supposedly "specific" competitors. Something similar holds for many of the key terms in the Greenbergian lexicon: One need only think of the what happened to ideas like

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“opticality” or “formalism” in later debate to see this pattern played out.<sup>1</sup> While the normative dimension of modernist aesthetics was frequently inverted, its underlying theoretical framework was just as often taken over.

But I also want to argue – I take it equally non-controversially – that Greenberg’s appeal to Kant was ill-founded. This is something that the work of Thierry de Duve (1944) in particular brought out. If both claims are true, not only did many anti-Greenbergian theorists presuppose a broadly Greenbergian view of aesthetic theory, which is why the latter tended to be equated with “formalism” and dismissed in the face of art after modernism’s increasing conceptual complexity, but they also rejected Kant largely on the basis of Greenberg’s contentious claim on the latter.

Indeed, Greenberg’s focus on Kant’s theory of taste, at the expense of his theory of art, has long-overshadowed art world receptions of Kant. Not only was it true of those, like Arthur Danto (1924–2013), who took their Kant at Greenberg’s word and were broadly unsympathetic to Kant; it was equally true of those broadly sympathetic to Kant, like de Duve – to whom the acceptance of several of the criticisms above may be attributed. Given this, what I do in this paper is straightforward. First, I survey Greenberg’s recourse to Kant, pointing up where it is tendentious or controversial. I then consider Danto’s and de Duve’s readings of Kant and the latter’s relevance – if any – for art theory after modernism. I conclude by indicating some resources in Kant’s theory of art, as opposed to his theory of taste, for retrieving aesthetics for contemporary debates about art.

## 2 Grounding Modernist Aesthetics: Greenberg’s Appeal to Kant

Greenberg famously dubbed Kant the “first real modernist”, in “Modernist Painting” (1960), because he used reason to criticize reason and thereby entrench it more firmly in its “area of competence” (Greenberg 1993, pp. 85–86). But Greenberg’s appeals to Kant are both more wide-ranging and more foundational than this well-known remark suggests. I shall argue that misreadings of Kant underwrite both Greenberg’s modernism and his formalism.

Greenberg’s modernism, his characterization of the “best” modern art as a gradual reduction to, and foregrounding of, the “unique and irreducible” fea-

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<sup>1</sup> See Rosalind Krauss’s relation to Greenberg in Krauss 1993 and Krauss/Bois 1997. On this, see Costello 2007.

tures of its medium, was compromised by various assumptions about the individual senses and their relation to individual arts built into his theory from the outset. From “Towards a Newer Laocoon” (1940) onward, Greenberg sought to align specific arts, under the influence of music, with specific senses (Greenberg 1940). But in order to do so he was forced to conceive the intuition of artworks in terms of discrete sensory inputs. Like his psychologizing of Kant, this is essentially a product of Greenberg’s deep-seated empiricism. As a result, he conflates judgments of taste, properly so-called, with what Kant would have concurred were aesthetic judgments, albeit of sense rather than reflection.<sup>2</sup> That is, judgments grounded (like judgments of taste) in feeling, albeit (unlike judgments of taste) in feeling occasioned by objects impacting causally on the sense organs: what Kant would have characterized as judgments rooted in sensation rather than in reflection upon a perceptual manifold’s “subjective purposiveness” or “finality” for cognition in general.<sup>3</sup> That is, its suitability for engaging our cognitive faculties in an (optimally) enlivening way. As such, Greenberg’s conception of medium-specificity attempts to align a broadly empiricist notion of cognitively uninflected sensation with specific artistic media, as though the sensory impression made by a work of art were a simple correlate of the intrinsic material properties of its medium, from which it could therefore be directly read off.

If this explains why Greenberg sought to differentiate the arts in terms of media, the question it provokes is analogous to that provoked by his view of the senses: namely, can the arts be so easily parsed? That this happened to be feasible during the height of Greenberg’s authority as a critic clearly does not make this a necessary feature of art’s – or even of good art’s – identity. Had Greenberg’s alleged Kantianism stretched as far as the “Transcendental Aesthetic” of the first *Critique* he could have avoided this impasse. For on Kant’s account of space and time as a priori forms of intuition, our perception of artworks, like perception in general, is grounded in an originary unity of sensibility.<sup>4</sup> Not only is it phenomenologically unpersuasive to construe intuitions as mere aggregates

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2 “The agreeable is that which pleases the senses in sensation”; “The satisfaction in the beautiful must depend upon reflection on an object [...] and is thereby also distinguished from the agreeable, which rests entirely on sensation” (CPI, §3, p. 91 [Ak. V, p. 206], and §4, p. 93 [Ak. V, p. 207], respectively).

3 “Pleasure in the aesthetic judgment [...] is merely contemplative [...] The consciousness of the merely formal purposiveness in the play of the cognitive powers of the subject in the case of a representation [...] is the pleasure itself” (CPI, §12, p. 107 [Ak. V, p. 222]).

4 For Kant, space is the form of all outer sensibility, hence a condition of perceiving anything as located outside us in the external world, while time, as the form of inner sensibility is a condition of perceiving anything whatsoever (CPR, A34/B50, pp. 180–181 [Ak. III, p. 77]).



of the senses – the more so when it comes to such culturally and historically freighted entities as works of art – it is also alien to Kant’s epistemology.

Greenberg’s formalism, his theoretical self-understanding of his activity as a critic in a Kantian mold, is similarly problematic. At the most general level, it suffers from his failure to distinguish between “free” and “dependent” beauty in the third *Critique*. Greenberg applies Kant’s account of pure aesthetic judgment, a judgment about the aesthetic feeling aroused by free (or conceptually unconstrained) beauty, to artworks. In doing so, he ignores Kant’s more apposite remarks on fine art, genius, and aesthetic ideas, in favor of an account that takes natural beauty and decorative motifs (“designs *à la grecque*, the foliage for borders or on wallpaper”) as its paradigm (CPJ, §16, p. 114 [Ak. V, p. 229]). Above all it is Greenberg’s recourse to Kant’s account of pure judgments of taste to underwrite a theory of artistic value, as though Kant himself had had nothing to say about fine art, that is responsible for the rejection of Kantian aesthetics in subsequent art theory.

As a result, Greenberg misses two conceptual complexities that attach to artworks, even for Kant, and that ought to trouble the standard perception of Kant as an arch formalist in art theory. These are the constraints that the concept a work of art is meant to fulfill imposes on artistic beauty, and the distinctive cognitive function that conceiving works of art as expressions of aesthetic ideas adds to Kant’s conception of fine art. Hence, even if Greenberg’s primary focus on “all over” abstract painting – with a tendency towards pattern and, arguably, decoration – goes some way to explaining his appeal to Kant’s formalism, it does not justify it. Since even an abstract work of art would have to be brought under the concept it is meant to fulfill, in submitting its beauty *as art* to aesthetic judgment – at least for Kant.

Moreover, Greenberg routinely empiricizes and psychologizes Kant’s theory of aesthetic judgment. Greenberg’s hope that he could demonstrate the “objectivity” of taste by appealing to the record of past taste, when induction could not possibly provide the necessity required to support his argument, is evidence of his empiricization of Kant’s account; in this case, the claim to validity over all judging subjects (Greenberg 1973a, p. 23).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Greenberg’s psychologization of Kant is evidenced by his tendency to conflate the Kantian criterion of “disinterest” as one necessary condition on an aesthetic judgment counting as pure, with his own, psychologistic, conception of “aesthetic distance”.<sup>6</sup> As a re-

5 Reprinted in Greenberg 1999, pp. 23–30. For a critique, see de Duve 1996a, pp. 107–110.

6 Greenberg’s identification of Kantian “disinterestedness” with “aesthetic distance” is often explicit (Greenberg 1999, p. 74). Greenberg attributes his own psychologistic notion of aesthetic distance to Edward Bullough’s account in “Psychical Distance” (1912) (Bullough 1995).

sult, Greenberg runs together a transcendental theory that aims to account for how aesthetic judgments are possible with a psychological description of a particular state of mind. Ironically, this robs his theory of what is perhaps most persuasive about it, its attention to the specificity of its artistic object. For if aesthetic experience were really as voluntaristic as this implies, that is, a matter of merely adopting a distancing frame of mind toward a given object, the nature of that object itself would fall away as a significant determinant on aesthetic judgment. For one can adopt such an attitude toward anything, at least in principle.<sup>7</sup>

These criticisms show that rejecting Kant's aesthetic theory on the basis of Greenberg's appeal is ill advised. The irony of art world hostility to Greenberg since the 1960s is that art theorists have generally deferred to Greenberg's presentation of aesthetics, notably his invocation of Kant, even if they have taken this as a basis for rejecting both aesthetics in general and Kant's aesthetics in particular. But if Greenberg's claims on a Kantian provenance for modernist theory are unwarranted, it follows that rejecting Kant as part and parcel of rejecting modernism results from a distortion. This was most apparent during the high years of anti-aesthetic postmodernism, but it was always true. Rather than make the argument there, however, I want to focus on two of the most sustained responses to Greenberg's appeal to Kant to date.

### 3 “This Is Art” Not “This Is Beautiful:” Thierry de Duve's Kant After Greenberg

So far this account has much in common with de Duve's. But I want to add that not only has the art world inherited a distorted picture of Kant's aesthetics from Greenberg, it has also inherited an extremely partial one. Thus, despite the fact that in art theory Kant's account of aesthetic judgment is routinely dismissed for its formalism, one rarely finds reference to what Kant himself had to say about how his account of aesthetic judgment applies to works of art. This is as true of sympathetic theorists, such as de Duve, as it has been of Kant's detractors.

De Duve is one of the few art theorists who refuses the standard options of an anti-aesthetic postmodernism or a late modernist aestheticism by seeking to do justice to both Greenberg and Duchamp – which, as anyone familiar with how such debates typically break down will be aware, is a highly original under-

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<sup>7</sup> Greenberg acknowledges this himself in his article “Seminar One” (Greenberg 1973b, p. 44), reprinted as “Intuition and the Esthetic Experience” in Greenberg 1999, pp. 3–9.

taking. But despite his desire to make Kant's aesthetics "actual" (i. e., productive) for a contemporary art audience, de Duve displays his deeper debt to Greenberg by predicating his own position solely on a reformulation of Kant's account of pure aesthetic judgment. That this aspect of the "Kant after Duchamp" approach remained consistent to de Duve's method is apparent from later papers such as "Kant's 'Free Play' in the Light of Minimal Art" (de Duve 2009). Here de Duve brings Kant's reflections on whether the pleasure felt in a judgment of taste "precedes" the judgment (or vice versa) to bear on Robert Morris's *Untitled (Three L-Beams)* of 1965, but he does so without thematizing how Kant's own understanding of artworks as vehicles of "aesthetic ideas" or his account of dependent beauty as a conceptually conditioned (and hence "impure") form of aesthetic judgment might complicate this analysis (CPJ, §9, pp. 102–104 [Ak. V, pp. 217–219]; §49, pp. 191–196 [Ak. V, pp. 313–319]). And while the focus on pure aesthetic judgment has at least some prima facie warrant in the case of Greenberg's desire to defend abstract art on purely formal grounds, it is much more of a stretch in the case of de Duve's concern with the historically reflexive, and conceptually complex, art of the "post-Duchamp" tradition. So it is surprising that de Duve should want to take this route, given his own critique of Greenberg's reading of Kant.

Hence, while de Duve departs from Greenberg in seeing Duchamp as the pivot for a contemporary understanding of aesthetics, he nonetheless follows Greenberg in focusing on pure aesthetic judgment. De Duve's central claim is that bringing Kant "up to date" involves substituting the judgment "this is art" for the judgment "this is beautiful", thereby capturing the transformation in the nature of art embodied by Duchamp's Readymades. On the face of it, this might look like a category mistake, since the judgment "this is art" is a determinative judgment that subsumes a particular under a concept (namely, the concept "art"), so is neither a reflective nor an aesthetic judgment in Kant's sense. Nonetheless, de Duve maintains that the judgment "this is art" is aesthetic – if only liminally – because it is singular and based on feeling alone (de Duve 1996b, chap. 5). Preserving the fundamental Kantian commitment that aesthetic judgment is non-cognitive, because it refers an intuition to the feeling it occasions rather than predicates a concept of an object, de Duve maintains that the judgment "this is art" does not subsume an object under a concept ("art") but, rather, confers the name "art" on any object judged accordingly.

On de Duve's account, the judgment "this is art" is akin to that original baptism through which a person acquires a proper name. Just as all persons called "Tom" need have no properties in common in virtue of which they are so called – Tom is not a concept under which persons are subsumed in virtue of possessing the relevant traits – so artworks need have no properties in common in virtue of

which they are called “art”. On the contrary, they need only sustain comparison with exemplary works of past art. But this account of what such baptism involves undermines de Duve’s own argument – both that art is a proper name and that the judgment “this is art” remains aesthetic in Kant’s sense. De Duve claims that the judgment “this is art” is aesthetic because in making it one holds a candidate work up to previous recipients of that status in one’s personal canon to judge whether it is worthy of inclusion by consulting one’s faculty of feeling, in this case the feelings past works have occasioned. Like reflective judgment in Kant, this is based on an act of comparison, though what is compared, according to de Duve, is either the works themselves or the feelings they have occasioned. But once the judgment becomes a comparison between examples, rather than between a given intuition and the “free play” of the faculties to which it gives rise, as sensed in feeling, it can be neither non-cognitive nor aesthetic after all, at least not in Kant’s sense.<sup>8</sup> Even taken on its own terms, it is difficult to see by what criteria past feelings, as non-cognitive and private, could be reliably reidentified over time for the purpose of such comparison. Moreover, given that what distinguishes proper names from concepts is that they are conferred without regard to other bearers of the name, it is hard to see how art can be a proper name when the judgment that confers it is essentially comparative.

The emphasis on proper names aside, de Duve’s reading of Kant shares Greenberg’s tendency to marginalize the reflective dimension of aesthetic judgment for Kant. That is, de Duve underplays the necessity to reflect critically on the grounds of the pleasure in aesthetic judgment and hence on its warrant for imputing – even demanding – such pleasure of others. But such reflection is a minimal requirement for laying claim to the agreement of others. By echoing Greenberg’s stress on the “immediate” and “involuntary” nature of such judgment, de Duve deprives himself of the most obvious criterion for distinguishing in principle between judgments of the beautiful and judgments of the agreeable. Granted, this will remain a moot point in practice, since one can never know whether one has succeeded in abstracting from every contingent or pathological basis for one’s pleasure in an object. That is, from anything that would render the object of one’s judgment merely “agreeable” in Kant’s sense. Nonetheless, if aesthetic judgments were really as “automatic” as de Duve claims (by appeal, like Greenberg, to his own experience) what basis could one have for contesting

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**8** “Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of live, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition but only *holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation*, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state” (CP), §1, p. 90 [Ak. V, p. 204]; my emphasis).

the skeptical rejoinder that all claims to universal validity mask the subjective preferences of their utterer?

Introspection cannot help us here, as de Duve is clearly aware, because the feelings occasioned by the agreeable and the beautiful need not be distinguishable in experience. But de Duve fails to grasp the full implications of this insight for his own view that it is the claim to universality itself that serves as our best indication of a judgment's disinterestedness – and hence of its being a bona fide judgment of taste – and not vice versa.<sup>9</sup> For this appears to beg the question as to how anyone could know that their claim to universality is warranted and, hence, that their judgment is disinterested. I concur with de Duve that we do feel strongly about the apparent “objectivity” of our judgments of taste and that it is therefore not a matter of indifference to us whether those whose judgments matter to us concur. In this respect the pleasure we take in the agreeable and the beautiful does appear to be distinct, and the phenomenology of their respective judgments correspondingly different. Nonetheless, the fact that I feel sufficiently passionate or convinced about some of my judgments to declare their universality could have any number of contingent causes to which I am blind. So the fact that I feel moved to demand assent from others concerning some feelings of pleasure but not others does nothing to mitigate the fact that all such claims to universality are equally vulnerable to corruption in principle and hence defeasible.

## 4 Artistic Versus Natural Beauty: Arthur C. Danto's Greenbergian Kant

In direct contrast to de Duve, until very late in life Danto tended to reject Kantian aesthetics entirely as an adequate basis for the theory of art, often on the basis of Greenberg's appeals to Kant.<sup>10</sup> Danto discerns what he calls two “Kantian tenets” grounding Greenberg's writings. First, just as genius must be unconstrained by rules if it is to produce something original, so too must critical judgment operate

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<sup>9</sup> Of Kant's claims, “All [this deduction] asserts is that we are justified in presupposing universally in all people the same subjective conditions of the power of judgment that we find in ourselves”, de Duve remarks, “I read this passage as the best indication that it is the claim to universality that signals disinterestedness, the free play of the faculties, or purposiveness without purpose, and not vice-versa. This finds confirmation in experience [...] in the fact that we feel strongly about the so-called objectivity – the claim to shareability – of our aesthetic judgments” (de Duve 2008, p. 143).

<sup>10</sup> In several late texts Danto did reconsider and partially revise his relation to Kant. See, for example, Danto 2003 and 2007.

in the absence of rules if it is to be adequate to the resultant object. Second, the critic's "practised eye" is at home everywhere. That is, it can tell the good from the bad throughout the world of art, irrespective of whether or not it is informed by knowledge of the tradition to which a given work belongs.

The second is rather uncharitable to Greenberg. For not only was Greenberg much better informed about the constraints on the creation of art within a given tradition than Kant, he stressed that the best taste develops under the pressure of the best art and vice versa. And this implies that the critic requires an intimate familiarity with developments in the tradition that she aspires to judge. But Danto is right to call the first a Kantian tenet, albeit an inverted one, since for Kant the entailment runs in the opposite direction, from an analysis of aesthetic judgment to the nature of works of art as possible objects of such judgment. Nonetheless, what Danto neglects throughout his account of Greenberg's debt to Kant is the additional constraint that Kant imposes on artistic beauty. Namely, that in addition to being beautiful, the beauty of art must be appropriate to the concept governing its production as a work of art. In Kant's own example, a beautiful church must not only be beautiful, its beauty must be fitting to its purpose as a house of worship. Much that might otherwise please freely in aesthetic judgment would fall foul of this constraint. Thus the idea of dependent beauty, that is, beauty dependent upon (or "adherent to") a concept of what the work is meant to be, places a restriction on the scope of free beauty rather than negating it altogether. Ironically, this is reminiscent of Danto's own claim that works of art, as "embodied meanings", should be judged for the appropriateness or "fit" of their form of presentation to the content thereby presented. Indeed, were this not so, judgments of dependent beauty would fail to conform to one of the most basic requirements of Kant's account of aesthetic judgment in general. For if works of art fulfilled the concept guiding their production at the expense of being pleasing freely, judgments of dependent beauty would reduce to judgments of perfection. They would judge the degree to which a work of art fulfilled the concept guiding its production, hence its perfection as an instance of a kind (CPJ, §15, pp. 112–113 [Ak. V, p. 228]).

As regards Greenberg's second supposedly "Kantian" tenet, Greenberg's conception of the "practised eye", like Danto's account of it, owes more to David Hume's description of the true judge than it does to Kant, who never addressed himself to the kinds of disputes that arise when trying to make fine-grained discriminations in taste. Indeed, many of the disputes that Hume recounts (such as the famous one arising from the deleterious effects on taste of a leather-thonged key submerged, unknown to the judges, in a barrel of wine) would not count as

differences of taste or instances of reflective aesthetic judgment in Kant's sense.<sup>11</sup> From a Kantian perspective, Hume's account, like Greenberg's, pertains to judgments of sense rather than reflection. Hence Danto's claim that this is a Kantian tenet is tendentious.

I have already argued that Greenberg fails to recognize the complexity that Kant's distinction between free and dependent beauty and his notion of aesthetic ideas adds to his account of artistic value. Danto however argues from Greenberg's alleged "Kantian tenets" that Kant himself conflates natural and artistic beauty. In support of this claim, Danto cites Kant's remark that "Nature was beautiful [*schön*], if at the same time it looked like art; and art can only be called beautiful [*schön*] if we are aware that it is art and yet it looks to us like nature" (CPJ, §45, p. 185 [Ak. V, p. 306]). For Danto this demonstrates the inadequacy of Kant's aesthetics as a basis for the theory of art. But when Kant claims that fine art must "look like" nature, he does not mean what Danto seems to take him to mean, namely, that fine art must resemble nature; he means that it must appear as unwilling as nature. Despite being aware that we are judging art rather than nature, Kant holds that "the purposiveness in its form must still seem to be as free from all constraint by arbitrary rules *as if* it were a mere product of nature" (CPJ, §45, p. 185 [Ak. V, p. 306]; my emphasis). Kant is clearly not claiming that works of art must be indistinguishable from nature, but that they must appear as free of any laboriousness that would impede their free appreciation as nature. As Kant puts it: "without the academic form showing through, i. e. without showing any sign that the rule has hovered the eyes of the artist and fettered his mental powers" (CPJ, §45, p. 186 [Ak. V, p. 307]). This neither lays down any substantive prescriptions on how works of art must look, nor entails that the beauty of art must resemble that of nature. *Pace* Danto, art need not look anything like beautiful nature in order to be aesthetically pleasing as art, even for Kant.

To my mind, these criticisms of Greenberg and Kant reflect the implausibly thin conception of aesthetics that Danto has held throughout his work, as essentially whatever pleases the eye. I have set out my reservations about Danto's way of conceiving "aesthetic" as opposed to "artistic" qualities elsewhere (Costello 2004 and 2007). All I want to note here is that, despite deepening his reading of Kant's third *Critique* in *The Abuse of Beauty*, introducing his distinction between beauty that is, or is not, "internal" to a work's appreciation (because it is, or is not, mobilized in the service of the work's meaning), and contesting

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<sup>11</sup> "Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste" (Hume 1995, p. 260).



the overly narrow focus of traditional aesthetics on a limited range of predicates and properties – all of which is to be welcomed – Danto's underlying conception of aesthetics remains remarkably consistent from *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Danto 1981) right through to *The Abuse of Beauty* (Danto 2003).

Indeed, this is apparent from “The Future of Aesthetics”, one of Danto's last papers on aesthetics, in which he defines aesthetics as “the way things show themselves, together with the reasons for preferring one way of showing itself to another” and goes on to remark that “as long as there are *visible* differences in how things look, *aesthetics* is inescapable” (Danto 2009, pp. 103–104; my emphasis). Danto's remarks on Duchamp here – according to which “retinal” would function as a synonym for the aesthetic – suggest that little had changed in his understanding of aesthetics since he sought, in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, to uncouple art and aesthetics on the grounds that it cannot explain why Duchamp's urinal is a work of art while all its (notionally) indiscernible counterparts are not. Although Danto may have been willing, late in life, to grant aesthetic properties a greater rhetorical role in “coloring” or “inflecting” our attitude toward the meaning of the work of art, such properties remained as irrelevant, ontologically speaking, as ever. While they may be a feature of some works of art, they are not a necessary feature of all works of art, and so have no place in art's definition. If I remain unconvinced that this conclusion follows from Danto's own premises, it is because it appears to entail that there can be works of art that express no point of view onto their own content, and hence have no recourse to aesthetic properties understood as inflectors of said content.

To see why this ought to be a problem for Danto, recall his ontology of art from *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Exhibiting “aboutness” is self-evidently definitional of artworks conceived as “embodied meanings”, since for a work to possess meaning requires, minimally, that it is about something or other. Recall also that expressing an attitude, or point of view, toward whatever they are about is what was said to distinguish artworks from “mere representations” such as maps or diagrams, which are also about what they represent, yet not art. But if expressing an attitude or point of view toward their own meanings is a necessary feature of works of art – required to distinguish works of art from mere representations, as Danto maintains – then aesthetic properties must be so too, given his later understanding of such properties as what enables works of art to express an attitude toward the meanings they embody.

According to Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty* asks whether, on a suitably enriched conception of aesthetic qualities as inflectors of meaning, the possession of some aesthetic property might prove to be a necessary condition of works of art after all. If so, aesthetic properties would need to be added to the two necessary conditions on arthood that his later works claim *The Transfiguration of the*



*Commonplace* adduced, namely, that artworks are about something and embody what they are about. Danto concluded that they should not (Danto 2007, p. 125). But this conclusion cannot be supported, given the interaction between Danto's conception of aesthetics and his ontology of art. Irrespective of whether he is right that beauty or any other aesthetic quality that is "external" to a work's meaning is irrelevant to it as art, it remains the case that expressing some attitude or point of view toward whatever it is about is supposed to distinguish works of art from "mere representations", according to his own theory; and that requires that a work possess some aesthetic qualities to inflect its meaning accordingly. This is a problem that Danto has yet to address.

## 5 Retrieving Kant's Aesthetics for Art Theory After Greenberg

So far, the results of this paper have been largely negative. If the argument is sound it brings out various infelicities in Greenberg, Danto, and de Duve's remarks about Kant. Beyond that, it shows that art theory goes astray to the extent that it perceives Kant's third *Critique* through the distorting optic of Greenberg's claims on it. This leads to a marginalization of Kant's theory of art in favor of an exclusive focus on his theory of aesthetic judgment – regardless of whether this is taken to be essentially isomorphic with art (as in de Duve) or essentially orthogonal to art (as in Danto). Of course, even if one grants both, this still only shows that Kant's aesthetics has been marginalized on the basis of various misreadings; it does not yet show that the art world may not have been right to reject Kantian aesthetics all along, even if for the wrong reasons. That is, it does not show that Kant's aesthetics can be applied to art after modernism. Given this, I want to conclude by pointing out some resources in Kant's theory of art that remain curiously neglected in art theory to this day.

For Kant, works of art are expressions of "aesthetic ideas". Put simply, an aesthetic idea is what is distinctive about either the content of a work of art or the way in which a work of presents that content. What is distinctive about the content of a work of art is either that it presents some concept that may be encountered in experience, but with a completeness that experience itself never affords, or that it communicates an idea that cannot, in principle, be exhibited in experience.<sup>21</sup> What is distinctive about the way in which works of art present such content is that they imaginatively "expand" the ideas presented in virtue of the indirect means through which they are required to embody them in sensible form. For rather than seeking to present the idea itself, which would

be impossible – ideas being by definition what cannot be exhibited in experience for Kant – an aesthetic idea presents the “aesthetic attributes” of its object, thereby expressing an idea’s “implications” and “kinship with other concepts” (CPJ, §49, pp. 192–193 [Ak. V, p. 314]). In effect, aesthetic ideas indirectly present what cannot be presented directly.

Take Kant’s own example: “Jupiter’s eagle with the lightning in its claws” expands the idea of God’s majesty by presenting it aesthetically. What Kant calls the “logical” attributes of an object, in this case God, would be those in virtue of which it fulfills a concept, in this case majesty. Jupiter’s eagle with the lightning in its claws, by contrast, is a metaphorical expression of those same attributes, through which we are encouraged to envisage God’s majesty in light of the thoughts provoked by Jupiter’s eagle, thereby opening up a rich seam of further possible associations. Roughly: envisage a being that it is powerful and awe-inspiring enough to grip lightning in its talons, and you are on your way to thinking about God’s majesty. In this way, works of art are able to indirectly present ideas that would otherwise remain unavailable to intuition and, in doing so, use their aesthetic attributes to provoke more thought than a conceptual elaboration of the idea could hope to facilitate, thereby “enlarging” the idea (CPJ, §49, p. 193 [Ak. V, p. 315]).

In doing so, aesthetic ideas might be thought to achieve the impossible: They allow works of art to present rational ideas in determinate sensuous form. Consider Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) as an example of the sensible embodiment of an idea, in this case freedom, that would have been comprehensible to Kant, had he lived to see it. The aesthetic attributes through which freedom is personified in the guise of “Liberty” and shown leading her people to victory – fearlessness, spontaneity, resoluteness, leadership, all attributes of an active self-determining will – while holding aloft a flag, symbol of freedom from oppression, in one hand and clutching a musket, redolent of a willingness to fight for one’s principles, in the other, serve to “aesthetically expand” the idea of freedom itself. By presenting freedom in the figure of “Liberty”, freedom is depicted concretely as something worth fighting for – indeed, as something requiring courage and fortitude to attain. This is what Kant means when he claims that artworks “animate” [*beleben*] the mind, by freeing imagination from the mechanical task of schematizing concepts of the understanding. No longer constrained to present concepts of the understanding in sensible form, as it is in determinate judgment, aesthetic ideas free the imagination to move swiftly over an array of related thoughts. By doing so, aesthetic ideas stimulate the mind, albeit in a less structured way than determinate thought, enabling us to think through the ideas presented in a new light.

Now, it might be objected that the forgoing account only works because it takes a representational painting as its object, and that this will be of little use to art in its expanded contemporary context of non-traditional media and forms. To show that this is not the case, I conclude by considering a very different kind of example: Art & Language's *Index 01*, also known as *Documenta Index*, after the exhibition in which it was first shown in 1972. My choice of a work by Art & Language is far from innocent, given that their work from this period might be thought to show, as well as any individual body of work might, the inapplicability of Kant's aesthetics – as mediated by Greenberg – to art after modernism. Against this perception, I suggest that this work may be understood as a sensible, though necessarily indirect, embodiment of the *idea* of an exhaustive catalog – necessarily indirect because a truly exhaustive catalog could not be a possible object of experience in Kantian terms.

*Documenta Index* consists of a cross-referenced index of the group's writings on art to that date and of the relations between them. Though it had various later incarnations, it originally took the form of eight small metal filing cabinets, displayed on four gray plinths, consisting of six tray-like drawers each, containing both published writings and unpublished writings, some of which raised the question of their own status as artworks. These were hinged one on top of the other in a series of nested sequences determined alphabetically and sub-alphabetically in terms of their order and degree of completion. The cabinets and their contents were displayed together with an index listing their contents in terms of three logical relations (of compatibility, incompatibility, and incomparability) believed to obtain between them.<sup>12</sup> The latter was papered directly onto the walls of the room in which the cabinets were displayed, as if in an attempt to provide an "external" vantage that would render the work's internal relations perspicuous.

At least in terms of its rhetoric of display and address, this work seems to propose an exhaustive catalog not only of the group's writings to that date, which is feasible, being finite, but also, and for my purposes more importantly, it aspires to document a set of logical relations between those writings. But the latter is something that can only exist as an idea, in Kant's sense, given that there are in principle always further relations to be mapped were we acute enough to spot them and had we infinite time and patience at our disposal. Moreover, by embodying the idea of a self-reflexive catalog, the production of

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<sup>12</sup> On the index itself these relations were symbolized, respectively, by "+" "–" and "T". The latter stood for "transformation", indicating that these documents did not occupy the same logical or ethical space and hence were incomparable (Harrison 2001, p. 65).

the index itself creates a further layer of relations to be mapped, between the index and what it indexes, which would then have to be mapped in turn, and so on ad infinitum. Hence, the very undertaking of the work itself makes its goal unrealizable. Nonetheless, by bringing all this together in sensible form, this apparently austere work of art opens up a potentially limitless array of imaginative associations: to lists, taxonomies, and typologies; to attempts at self-documentation, self-reflexivity and, ultimately, to ideals of complete self-knowledge or transparency; to conversation, collaboration, interaction, study, and learning; and, of course, to various regimes of archiving, cataloging, and the like. As such this work “expands” the idea it embodies in ways consonant with Kant’s presentation of aesthetic ideas.

On Kant’s account, the expression of ideas in this way gives rise to a feeling of mental vitality – or what he calls a “feeling of life” (*Lebensgefühl*) – in the work’s recipient, a feeling of the enhancement, or furtherance, of the subject’s cognitive powers. Works of art achieve this, not by giving rise to determinate thought, but because they give rise to a feeling of vitality in the free play of the subject’s cognitive powers (CPJ, §1, pp. 89–90 [Ak. V, p. 204]). The little Kant says about what such “free play” might consist in, suggests a kind of free-wheeling, associative play in which the imagination moves freely and swiftly from one partial presentation of a concept of the understanding to another; hence his claim that aesthetic ideas encourage the imagination to “spread itself over a multitude of related representations, which let one think more than one can express in a concept determined by words” (CPJ, §49, p. 193 [Ak. V, p. 315]). It is this imaginative engagement with indirectly presented, sensibly embodied ideas, far removed from the astringent formalism typically attributed outside Kant scholarship to the third *Critique* in art theory and mainstream philosophy of art that I want to draw attention to, and thereby retrieve, for contemporary debates about art.

Moreover, although Kant no doubt thought, for historical reasons, of visual art in representational terms, there is nothing in his account of aesthetic ideas that requires art be representational, in a narrow sense, as my second example is intended to show. All Kant’s account requires is that artworks expand ideas in imaginatively complex ways, and there does not seem to be anything wrong with that thought in the light of more recent art that Kant could not have envisaged. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that many, if not most, works of art typically regarded as anti-aesthetic according to the formalist conception of aesthetics that the art world inherits from Greenberg nonetheless engage the mind in ways that may be thought of as aesthetic in Kant’s sense. This includes conceptual art, despite the fact that conceptual art is routinely claimed to shipwreck both aesthetic theory in general and Kant’s aesthetic in particular. What most

art regarded as unsuited to, or even incompatible with, aesthetic analysis actually shows is not the limit of aesthetic theory per se, nor the limit of Kant's aesthetics in particular, but the limit of formalist aesthetics as mediated by Greenberg in coming to terms with the cognitive aspects of art after modernism. That formalism is not coextensive with aesthetic theory should not need saying. That Kant's aesthetics is not narrowly – that is, *restrictively* – formalist is what I hope I have begun to demonstrate here. If I have succeeded, commentators on contemporary art might want to give the third *Critique* a second look.

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Thomas Teufel

# Stanley Cavell and the Critique of the Linguistic Power of Judgment

## 1 Introduction

Throughout his philosophical career, Stanley Cavell (1928–2018) appeals with frequency and admiration to themes from Kant’s theoretical and practical philosophy, as well as, less frequently, but with no less admiration, to ideas from the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Cavell’s implicit and explicit invocations of Kant do not amount to systematic readings of Kantian texts or add up to a fully developed scholarly “take” on critical philosophy. It would be more fitting to say that Kant is a constant presence in the background of Cavell’s work, a philosophical companion in the wings, occasionally brought to the fore, and – when so brought – to great effect. More than anything else, Cavell’s appeals to Kant and critical philosophy seem indicative of a certain kindredness of spirit, a philosophical sympathy that runs deep and wide, despite differences in philosophical method, orientation, and style.

To say that Cavell’s appeals to Kant emanate from a “kindredness of spirit” is not intended as a veiled way of saying that Cavell’s readings of Kant are somehow less trenchant or less influential than those of others. Certainly with respect to the third *Critique*, which is the topic here, the contrary appears to be the case. To address the matter of influence first, Cavell’s sympathetic appropriations have been enormously consequential in the area of third *Critique* scholarship – arguably opening up a perspective on the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* from which it can first be seen as the legitimate target of readings that display the kind of methodological sophistication and philosophical rigor that have long characterized the study of other areas of Kant’s *oeuvre*. One need only turn to Paul Guyer’s work – who got his start on Kant under Cavell with a dissertation that became one of the founding texts of modern third-*Critique* scholarship (Gruyer 1997) – in order to appreciate the point. Here as elsewhere, Cavell helped expand the sense of what properly belongs within the purview of philosophical reflection. And even though the object of philosophical attention is, in this case, itself a philosophical classic – and not, say, a classic movie – it is characteristically a classic concerned with interstitial matters that Kant himself had for a long time deemed too ephemeral to be brought into the critical fold.

Even more important than Cavell’s place in the lineage of recent Kant and third *Critique* scholarship is, I think, the circumstance that the noted kindredness

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of spirit, unencumbered by a focus on scholarly minutiae, at times let him see deeper, even, than some of the interpreters that went through the exegetical door he helped open. It is a tale of this depth of vision that I would like to tell in the present chapter. The text I will focus on is Cavell's "Aesthetic Problems in Modern Philosophy" (1965),<sup>1</sup> the second half of which contains Cavell's most explicit and sustained engagement with Kantian Aesthetics.

## 2 "A Slight Shift of Accent"

Cavell appeals to Kant's account of the nature of aesthetic judgment – and especially to Kant's account of the impossibility of dispositive resolution of aesthetic disagreement – in order to illuminate (and perhaps resolve dispositively) a philosophical disagreement (Cavell 1969, p. 95 fn. 10). The trouble at issue stems from Cavell's discussion of the mode of inquiry of ordinary language philosophy in "Must We Mean What We Say?" (1958)<sup>2</sup> as well as in his "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy" (1962).<sup>3</sup> Cavell's aim in these texts is to show that, while the linguist's study of natural languages (their phonetics, phonologies, morphologies, and histories) undeniably appeals to – and ineliminably relies on – empirical facts about speakers' practices and conventions, the ordinary language philosopher's syntactic and pragmatic inquiries into "what we say" and "what we do not say", and particularly her semantic inquiries into "what we mean" when we say what we say – do not similarly rely on empirical evidence.

Cavell begins by noting that the ordinary language philosopher is concerned with a native speaker's self-description of her linguistic community's practices and conventions and, hence, with *meta*-linguistic statements *in* and *of* (or about) a given language. Crucially, as in the cases of Ryle and Austin that Cavell discusses, the ordinary language philosopher *investigating* and the native speaker *investigated* often are the same person. Cavell thinks that in such meta-linguistic *self*-reportings, the ordinary language philosopher *cum* native speaker expresses truths of an altogether different sort from those of the linguist. In a nod to Kant, he considers these truths to be of a transcendental character (Cavell 1969, p. 90). Statements of this kind, expressing truths of this character, are more revealing of an ordinary language philosopher's (transcendental?) self than of facts about her linguistic community.

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<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in Cavell 1969, chap. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted in Cavell 1969, chap. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Reprinted in Cavell 1969, chap. 2.

Cavell's answer to the question posed in the title of his 1958 article – which, in expanded form, became the title essay of the eponymous collection of essays: *Must We Mean What We Say?* of 1969 – is that, yes, indeed, we *must* mean what we say. Or, more pedantically, we *must* say what we say we say, and we *must* mean what we say we mean; and we must say and mean it as a matter of transcendental necessity.

Accordingly, disagreement at this meta-linguistic level of discourse (say, disagreement between two ordinary language philosophers *cum* native speakers on the meaning of a word like “voluntary” [Cavell 1969, p. 3]) is also not subject to empirical constraints in quite the same way in which disagreement about phonemes might be – nor, for that matter, open to the same kind of empirical resolution. Loosely borrowing from Kant's account of aesthetic disagreement, we might say that while we can certainly *argue* about such claims or come into conflict about them, we nevertheless cannot *dispute* about them in hopes of dispositive resolution (CPJ, §56, p. 214 [Ak. V, p. 338]).

This conception of the matter and method of ordinary language philosophy became the subject of a scathing critique by Jerry Fodor and Jerry Katz, cleverly joining their wits and Cavell's titles in “The Availability of What We Say” (1963). Their response to Cavell is that what we say and, more importantly, what we *mean* when we say what we say, is actually *quite* (namely: fully!) empirically available; Cavell's appeals to truths of an inscrutable transcendental kind notwithstanding.

Looked at in one way, their highly effective piece can be read as one of the great take-downs in twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophy, alleging a series of *non-sequiturs*, contradictions, misperceptions, and all around philosophical obtuseness about matters that are ultimately (and obviously!) empirical in import and justification (Fodor/Katz 1963, p. 63ff. Considered from a different perspective, however, Cavell, I think, may be right to suspect that the obtuseness lies with the opposing party, and that Fodor and Katz, in arguing their side with gusto and delightful analytical precision, are missing something fundamental about Cavell's non-empiricist or “post-positivist” (Cavell 1969, p. 90) outlook that is not easily integrated into their “positivist” (Cavell 1969, p. 90) scheme.

In order to articulate what that ineffable something might be, Cavell, in “Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy”, turns to Kant's account of aesthetic judgment and aesthetic disagreement in the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment”, which forms the first part of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (§§1–60). Cavell's rejoinder to Fodor and Katz's critique is that the kind of meta-linguistic statement about “what we mean when we say what we say” is analogous to what Kant calls a pure judgment of taste, whose claim similarly resists empirical verification and dispositive adjudication (Cavell 1969, p. 94).

This is an astute move on Cavell's part. Kant's pure judgments of taste are indeed partially formally analogous to the sort of claim Cavell finds meta-linguistic statements to be, since they are non-empirical, non-constitutive, non-analytic, but not therefore non-cognitive claims that are, moreover, backed by transcendental principle. Accordingly, the sort of disagreement pure judgments of taste give rise to cannot be resolved by pointing to perceptually discernible facts of the matter.

Cavell centers his account around Kant's idea that in the absence of empirical verification, the judge of taste nevertheless speaks with a "universal voice" (CPJ, §8, p. 101 [Ak. V, p. 216]), which compensates for the lack of empirical grounding by revealing transcendental warrant for her judgment. Cavell finds a similar universal voice present in ordinary language philosophy's meta-linguistic pronouncements. Just as in the aesthetic case, where my judgment does not look to nor depend upon the judgment of others, but instead (and nevertheless!) "lays claim to the consent of everyone" (CPJ, §8, p. 101 [Ak. V, p. 216]), Cavell insists that in the meta-linguistic case, my claim is neither supported by nor in need of support from practices of the linguistic community, but instead (and nevertheless!) ascribes practices to that community.

Cavell's strategic aim in appealing to Kant is obvious. If both the aesthetic and the semantic judge speak with a relevantly similar "air of dogmatism" (Cavell 1969, p. 96) then, if the normative force and worldly import of our aesthetic judgments are legitimate, the force and import of our claims about "what we say" and "what we mean" might be so as well.

This looks like a promising start, made even more so if one considers the fact, not explicitly pursued by Cavell, that aesthetic judgments are, of course, the manifestation of an exercise of the "reflecting power of judgment" (CPJ, §IV, p. 67 [Ak. V, p. 180], *passim*); a cognitive power that is governed by an overarching *non*-aesthetic principle: the transcendental "principle of the formal purposiveness of nature" (CPJ, §V, p. 68 [Ak. V, p. 181]). The suggestion would be that the self-reportings of ordinary language philosophy are similarly "reflecting"; much like our estimations, also, of living organisms, which Kant discusses in the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment" in the second half of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (§§61–91). Indeed, to consider such claims "reflecting" appears particularly apt. As Fodor and Katz observe, they are "the meta-linguistic comments [a native speaker] makes when a *reflective* mood is upon him" (Fodor/Katz 1963, p. 60; my emphasis). Taking this line of thought to the next level, one might say that Kant's third *Critique* could have contained a third part on reflecting judgments of (ordinary?) language – a "Critique of the Linguistic Power of Judgment", say. At the very least, it would appear that the

form of reflection around which Kant organizes his final *Critique* might be more pervasive than even Kant realized.

I think there is something to that line of thought, but Cavell's strategic reliance on Kant also faces considerable difficulties. To begin with, reflecting aesthetic judgments and reflecting teleological judgments address phenomena that are, according to Kant, impossible to capture by means of conceptual determination. This means that reflecting judgments are neither empirically, let alone transcendently, *constitutive* of their objects – not even from the perspective of the judge of taste herself. While this does not make them non-cognitive (they *are* judgments, after all), or *a*-conceptual, it does mean that concepts play a peculiarly attenuated – one is tempted to say non-conceptual – role in them. Now, whatever a native speaker's particular license for a meta-linguistic claim may be, it is hard to see how a claim about “what we mean” can similarly fail to be a form of conceptual determination.

Another observation arises from the fact that reflecting aesthetic judgments and reflecting teleological judgments are logically singular judgments. However non-determining and non-empirical they may be, they nevertheless are judgments of otherwise perceptually given, spatio-temporal *individuals*. This constellation of epistemic and logical characteristics is, of course, extremely strange. To explain the non-empirical (namely *a priori*) nature of logically singular judgments is, decidedly, the circle Kant needs to square if he hopes to make his final *Critique* work. Cavell's task, by contrast, is to show that the meta-linguistic statements he has in mind, statements of the form “‘When we say [...] we imply (suggest, say)–’; ‘We don't say [...] unless we mean–’” (Cavell 1969, p. 3), are in fact relevantly similar to Kant's epistemically *a priori* and logically singular reflecting judgments. Again, it is hard to see how they could be, given that these meta-linguistic statements range over a plurality of first-order phenomena (the set – or family? – of linguistic objects captured by expressions like “When we say ...”), and thus have a built-in generality that no reflecting aesthetic judgment or reflecting teleological judgment admits of.

The two points are, moreover, related. It is precisely because of the logical singularity of Kant's reflecting judgments that they can *be* non-determining: once we traffic in logically particular or logically universal forms of judgment, we operate firmly within the realm of conceptual determination.

Cavell does not address these aspects of the analogy he summons. Instead, he leaves the matter at the level of his tantalizing suggestion of a similarity between the ordinary language philosopher's “air of dogmatism” (Cavell 1969, p. 96) and the peculiar form of normativity or “subjective universal validity” (CPJ, §8, p. 100 [Ak. V, p. 215]) Kant describes in the “Second Moment of the judgment of taste” (CPJ, §6, p. 96 [Ak. V, p. 211]). Cavell puts the point like this: “Kant's

‘universal voice’ is, *with perhaps a slight shift of accent*, what we hear recorded in the philosopher’s claims about “what we say” (Cavell 1969, p. 94; my emphasis).

Philosophers, of course, are prone to dogmatisms. Kant himself knew this all too well. For, he turns his own critique of dogmatism in the *Critique of Pure Reason* into a meta-critique (or a critique of the critique) of dogmatism in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Revisiting a foundational distinction the reader may be excused for thinking had been settled in the first *Critique*, Kant, in the “Dialectic of the Power of Judgment” of the third *Critique*, contrasts dogmatic and critical uses of concepts. Kant explains that “we deal with a concept dogmatically (even if it is supposed to be empirically conditioned), if we consider it as contained under another concept of the object, which is a principle of reason, and determine it in accordance with the latter” (CPJ, §74, p. 266 [Ak. V, p. 395]). This is consistent with Kant’s account of dogmatism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, according to which determining judgments governed by rational ideas (such as “The Soul”, “The World”, “God”) prove to be the source of contradictions of which reason can only rid itself by means of critique.

But Kant now seemingly expands the point, noting that “the dogmatic treatment of a concept is thus that which is lawful for the determining [...] power of judgment” (CPJ, §74, p. 266 [Ak. V, p. 395]). Taken as a simple conditional, the claim is innocuous: the dogmatic employment of concepts belongs to the determining power of judgment (or, in terms of a judgment: if it is dogmatic, then it is determining). The problem is that Kant here seems to give the idea definitional (i. e., bi-conditional) import: dogmatic uses of concepts are determining uses; determining uses of concepts are dogmatic. Does Kant now mean to call “dogmatic” even uses of concepts that are contained under principles of *critically chastened* reason, including categorial principles, since those, of course, are “lawful for the determining power of judgment” as well?

The worry briefly recedes as Kant notes that the duly *critical* treatment of a concept, by contrast, “consider[s] it only in relation to our cognitive faculties, hence, in relation to the subjective conditions for thinking it” (CPJ, §74, p. 266 [Ak. V, p. 395]). This notion of the non-dogmatic treatment of a concept is reassuringly consistent with Kant’s conception of critical philosophy in the first *Critique*, and, in particular, with his definition of the term “transcendental”: “I call all cognition *transcendental* that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our mode of cognition of objects in general, insofar as this is to be possible *a priori*” (CPR, A11–12/B25, p. 149 [Ak. III, p. 43]).

But the suspicion returns in force when Kant explains what he now *means* by “considering a concept in relation to the subjective conditions for thinking it”. In one of the more momentous statements of the third *Critique*, Kant declares that the critical treatment of a concept “is lawful merely for the reflecting power

of judgment” (CPJ, §74, p. 266 [Ak. V, p. 395]). Kant’s point is that we use a concept critically, if it either (a) governs the reflecting power of judgment, or (b) is among the principles by means of which the reflecting power of judgment governs. Only such a concept can be the proper subject of a “Critique”. All non-reflecting, determining uses of concepts are *eo ipso* dogmatic.

And just like that, Kant appears to cast the pure concepts of the understanding of the *Critique of Pure Reason* – his foremost example of concepts considered “lawful for the determining power of judgment”, but, at least in 1781–87, also his foremost example of the duly critical treatment of concepts – as symptomatic of a form of dogmatism!

Fortunately, Kant’s claim in the “Dialectic of the Reflecting Power of Judgment” is less (auto-) iconoclastic than it appears. Kant does not mean to suggest that the *Critique of Pure Reason* is non-critical. His point is that the reflecting power of judgment already played an unacknowledged role in his theoretical philosophy of the 1780s – as indeed it must have, if the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is to be the proper terminal point (CPJ, pp. 57–58 [Ak. V, p. 170]) and not the poison pill, of the critical system. The “critical dogmatism” of the first *Critique*, as we may accordingly correctly – if slightly paradoxically – call it, proves innocuous once the role that reflection plays in determination is fully understood.

But if some dogmatisms can thus be up to critical snuff, this hardly means *all* are. Whether the air of dogmatism evinced by ordinary language philosophy’s claims is, in the first place, not simply a philosopher’s misperception (as Fodor and Katz allege it is) because it is, in the second place, relevantly similar to the universal voice that accompanies our pure judgments of taste, is the question to which Cavell owes us an answer. In the absence of further argument, Cavell’s appeal to Kant in response to Fodor and Katz remains inconclusive. Cavell, I think, was aware of it. His curious (double) hedging on the central point – “with perhaps a slight shift of accent” (Cavell 1969, p. 94) – suggests as much.

### 3 “A Sense of Necessity”

Even if Cavell’s appeal to Kant is thus not obviously successful as a response to Fodor and Katz, what Cavell finds in Kant – presumably because his own argumentative needs sensitize him to it – is a dimension of the pure judgment of taste that is at the heart of Kant’s critical efforts in the third *Critique*, but that is often given short shrift in the literature: its transcendental necessity. Attention to this feature, and to Kant’s attempt to explain it, in turn illuminates a perhaps deeper affinity than at first appears between Cavell’s conception of the logic of meta-lin-

guistic statements and Kant's conception of the power of judgment in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

The point is this. By focusing on the “universal voice” that is characteristic of the judge of taste's expression of her estimation of (the beauty of) an object, Cavell focuses on a surface phenomenon of a particular form of reflecting judgment – namely, on one of the four “moments” Kant discusses in his phenomenological analysis of the pure judgment of taste in the “Analytic of the Beautiful”. The deeper connection between Cavell's conception of the meta-linguistic claims of ordinary language philosophy and Kant's conception of judgment in the third *Critique* lies in the *structural features* of Kant's account of the reflecting power of judgment and its principle, which help *justify* that “moment” of subjective universality in reflecting aesthetic judgments, as well as related peculiarities in reflecting teleological judgments.

As Kant himself emphasizes, the difficulty in accounting for the judgment of taste's transcendental necessity and its attendant apriority (CPJ, pp. 79–80, 103, 169 [Ak. V, pp. 194, 218, 289]) stems from the fact that this necessity can, in the context of the third *Critique*, only derive from the principle governing the new reflecting power of judgment: the transcendental principle of nature's purposiveness (CPJ, §36, p. 168 [Ak. V, p. 288]; Allison 2001, p. 173). This means that the question of the necessity of the pure judgment of taste – and, *a fortiori*, the question of the legitimacy of the accompanying “universal voice” which registers that necessity – is tied up with a set of *non*-aesthetic questions concerning the structure, content, normative status, and justification (specifically: the transcendental deduction) of the new principle of the reflecting power of judgment that Kant introduces in the third *Critique*. Commentators often treat Kant's aesthetics as if it dwelled in splendid isolation from these systematic concerns relating to the reflecting power of judgment. But Kant's aesthetics stands or falls by them. And Cavell, by insisting on the transcendental necessity and apriority of these judgments, puts his finger right on that fact.

Now, as noted, the idea that a logically singular judgment of a spatio-temporally localized object presented in intuition – even a judgment that does not determine this object conceptually but instead registers it as the source of a certain kind of harmonious engagement of our cognitive faculties – could somehow be anything other than an *a posteriori*, empirical judgment (albeit suitably backed, like all empirical judgments, by *a priori* principle), has struck Kant's readers as no less odd than Cavell's claim that meta-linguistic statements are non-empirical struck Fodor and Katz.

Kant's own explanation of how the transcendental principle of purposiveness is “involved” (Allison 2001, p. 173) in pure judgments of taste centers around the observation that in those judgments the power of judgment “is for



itself, subjectively, both object as well as law” (CPJ, §36, p. 168 [Ak. V, p. 395]). This may sound cryptic at first, but it highlights a feature of the transcendental principle of nature’s purposiveness central to its cognitive role and justification and one that, consequently, is found in the reflecting power of judgment’s aesthetic and teleological manifestations as well. This feature is the peculiar form of self-legislation that marks the principle of the reflecting power of judgment – or its “heautonomy”, to use Kant’s term of art.

If the use of a concept is duly critical if (and only if) it is legislative for the reflecting power of judgment, and if this conception of criticism is already implicitly at work in Kant’s account of object-cognition in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (lest that towering achievement of critical philosophy fail to be duly critical), then we should expect to find a strand of self-governance and an attendant sense of necessity in all exercises of the power of judgment, reflecting and otherwise. I propose that Cavell discerns such a strand – a “sense of necessity” (Cavell 1969, p. 93) – in ordinary language philosophy’s meta-linguistic statements and, hence, fully appropriately turns to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* for philosophical support.

## 4 Heautonomy

Upon first encounter, Kant’s doctrine, in §V of the Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, of the self-legislating nature of the principle of nature’s purposiveness raises the obvious worry that Kant’s latest transcendental principle may be doomed, from the start, by reliance on illicit bootstrapping. Kant presents the characteristic in question as follows: “The power of judgment thus also has in itself an *a priori* principle for the possibility of nature, though only in a subjective respect, by means of which it prescribes a law, not to nature (as autonomy), but to itself (as heautonomy) for reflection on nature” (CPJ, §V, p. 72 [Ak. V, p. 159]; cf. also pp. 56–57 [p. 169]). The problem, of course, is that the notion of a cognitive faculty that prescribes its own law to itself appears to involve a transparent and possibly fatal form of circularity: the prescription itself must be governed by the principle to be prescribed.

A closer look at the principle in question helps assuage the worry. There is a form of bootstrapping at work, but not one that involves *petitio principii*. Kant’s basic idea is that our human form of conceptual (“discursive”) cognition presupposes – *qua* conceptual cognition – that nature be cognizable through concepts. Kant’s introduction of the principle of nature’s purposiveness in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* makes this foundational presupposition of nature’s conceptualizability explicit for critical philosophy. The presupposition itself does



not, of course, *make* nature conceptualizable. Nor is the presupposition itself a conceptual *determination* of nature, or of anything else for that matter. If it were, the problem of circularity would surely arise (the presupposition in question *cannot* be a determination precisely because all determination already presupposes it).

Kant's admittedly largely implicit argument for a foundational presupposition of nature's conceptualizability is that *synthesis*, or the capacity to register similarities and differences among constituent elements of the sensible manifold, has the logical form of a multi-place relation (Teufel 2012, p. 314 ff.). The logical structure of synthesis *presupposes* that discrete *relata* be available for cognitive uptake to begin with – hence, that the sensible manifold *be* a manifold. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant realizes that, however sensible (and, indeed, inevitable) the structural presupposition of a metaphysics of discrete sensibilia may be for intellects like ours, it is, nevertheless – and in the first place – a presupposition.

More importantly and more to the point, Kant now realizes that it is a presupposition to which we are not, without further argument, entitled! Kant's analysis in the *Critique of Pure Reason* had established that an as yet utterly un-synthesized sensible manifold, one not already subject to any form of spatial, temporal, and conceptual processing, can never “be anything other than *absolute unity*” (CPR, A99, p. 229) [Ak. IV, p. 77]) for us. Even if, metaphysically speaking, it were *in fact* a manifold and, so, *in fact* composed of discrete constituent elements, we would not, antecedent to our syntheses, be entitled to *represent* it as such. And yet, we do just that: an antecedent representation of the sensible manifold *as* manifold is built into the very structure of our spontaneous syntheses!

While he was famously occupied with *quaestiones iuris* with regard to higher order cognitive capacities (e.g. concerning the causal ordering of nature), Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, was principally interested in the *quaestio facti* of this ground-level of cognitive processing. In the long run, of course, the problem takes care of itself, as our spontaneous syntheses encounter whatever constituent elements there in fact are in the sensible manifold. Kant's point in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is that, even so, this leaves the *quaestio iuris* untouched. We make the presupposition – but what justifies our making it?

Once the presupposition and the *quaestio iuris* it raises have been identified, Kant's argument for the presupposition's transcendental necessity is exceedingly simple: if the presupposition did not govern our cognitive syntheses, there would then be no cognitive syntheses and, so, no cognition at all. That our power of judgment antecedently represents the sensible manifold *as* manifold is thus a transcendently necessary albeit *non*-determining (and, instead, merely reflect-

ing) as well as *non*-constitutive (and, instead, merely regulative), condition of the possibility of any synthesis, and *a fortiori* of any cognition, at all.

Now, this structural presupposition, namely, that sensibility contains a manifold of identifiable and *re*-identifiable elements which can be considered in light of their similarities and differences – and, hence, cognized – might be glossed as the assumption that nature exhibits at least a ground-level of orderability and, *a fortiori*, a minimum of order required for being orderable in the first place. For Kant, this is an assumption of nature’s “purposiveness”, because he believes that the only way in which we can conceive of even a minimum of order as residing, metaphysically speaking, *within* nature, is on the model of artifactual causality.

This feature of Kant’s account has caused a considerable amount of confusion in the literature, as scholars tend to be drawn to the teleological dimension of the model of artifactual causality. But it is, of course, only a model, and for the purposes of the transcendental justification of the principle of nature’s purposiveness, the part of the model of artifactual causality that is of relevance is the idea of what we might call a “structuring concept” – as Kant himself is at pains to emphasize in his official definition of the notion of purposiveness “in accordance with its transcendental determinations” (CP, §10, p. 105 [Ak. V, p. 220]).

The idea of a structuring concept is the idea of a concept that is causally efficacious in bringing its object into existence; whatever that object may be, and regardless of whatever aims, goals, or purposes may be pursued in its production. Accordingly, the transcendental principle of nature’s purposiveness is not a principle that nature is somehow in a teleological sense (Teufel 2011, p. 232 fn. 2) – let alone in a theological sense (Goy 2017, p. 188 ff.) – purposive “for us”. Instead it is the principle that we must approach nature as if it harbored a minimum of synthesizable (hence, determinable, conceptualizable) order. Of course, that this, in turn, proves to be a tremendously useful assumption to (have to) make, almost goes without saying and is, at any rate, evident from its transcendental justification, which invokes the alternative of the lights being permanently off. However, the *utility* (for us) of the presupposition made is emphatically not part of the *content* of the principle that makes it!

What the power of judgment thus heautonomously prescribes to itself is that it must, of transcendental necessity, approach nature (namely, the deliveries of sensibility) as if conceptual order resided within it. The route by which this heautonomous prescription assumes an exalted role in both aesthetic and biological contexts, cannot be mapped here. Suffice it to say that the power of judgment’s typically sub-personal orderability assumption – known to the transcendental philosopher by dint of its downstream cognitive effects – here finds direct man-

ifestation in cognitive agents' phenomenal consciousness. This is notably so in aesthetic contexts, where, Kant believes, the orderability assumption comes to be phenomenally manifest in the presence of – whence we find ourselves attributing it to – otherwise fully spatio-temporally and conceptually determined individuals. In order to account for these *non*-determining attributions, Kant describes the aesthetic power of judgment as a “special faculty for judging things in accordance with a [transcendental] rule but not in accordance with [empirical] concepts” (CPJ, §VIII, p. 80 [Ak. V, p. 194]). Thus registering the transcendental principle of purposiveness' heautonomous claim, the reflecting judgments of the aesthetic power of judgment are transcendently necessary, *a priori* judgments that attribute purposiveness to an object, but without thereby conceptually determining the object as purposive. They are, accordingly, attributions of a “[transcendental] purposiveness of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it without representation of [an empirical] purpose” (CPJ, §17, p. 120 [Ak. V, p. 236]). Since the defining structural feature of the transcendental principle of nature's purposiveness is its self-legislating character, the outstanding structural feature of pure judgments of taste – and the feature to which Kant must point in order to establish their connection to the principle of nature's purposiveness and solve the “difficulty” (CPJ, §36, pp. 168–169 [Ak. V, p. 288]) of the deduction of their universal claim – is that here, too, the power of judgment “is for itself, subjectively, both object as well as law” (CPJ, §36, p. 168 [Ak. V, p. 288]).

When Cavell suggests that the “universal voice” of judgments of taste is characteristic, also, of the meta-linguistic statements of the ordinary language philosopher, he accordingly ties his boat to Kant's view that the source and legitimacy of that voice traces to the heautonomy of the principle of nature's purposiveness present in reflecting aesthetic judgments. The consequent connection between, on the one hand, the *a priori* and transcendently necessary orderability assumption of the heautonomous principle of nature's purposiveness – on which, according to Kant, all pure and empirical syntheses depend – and, on the other hand, the ordinary language philosopher's *cum* native speaker's self-reportings of her linguistic world-making, may not be entirely witting on Cavell's part, but it is, I think, consistent with the aforementioned sympathy and, so, hardly accidental.

## 5 “Authority”

Elaborating on the picture of language he began to paint in his earlier articles, Cavell, in *The Claim of Reason* (1979), observes that “Perhaps we feel the foundations of language to be shaky when we look for, and miss, foundations of a

particular sort, and look upon our shared commitments and responses [...] as more like particular agreements than they are” (Cavell 1979, p. 179). But, if the foundations of language are not, or not exactly, like agreements, then what are they like? Cavell begins his answer by noting that in meta-linguistic statements the ordinary language philosopher *cum* native speaker “is not claiming something as true of the world for which he is prepared to offer a basis – such statements are not synthetic” (Cavell 1979, p. 179). Cavell’s point here is, I take it, that there is no *empirical* basis for these claims, no foundation in agreed upon facts – for what could the terms of our agreement be if agreement itself is to first underwrite the meaning of our terms? Accordingly, the statements in question are not synthetic *a posteriori*. Instead, Cavell notes that the ordinary language philosopher *cum* native speaker is here “claiming something as true of himself [...] for which he is offering himself, the details of his feeling and conduct, as *authority*” (Cavell 1979, p. 179; my emphasis).

Now, in the spirit of the *quaestio iuris* of critical philosophy, we may feel compelled to press on: “whence this authority”? I think that Kant, confronting a similar concern that our cognitions may be but “a thin net over an abyss” (Cavell 1979, p. 178), not only found the requisite foundational and spontaneous agency – hence, “autonomy” (CPJ, §V, p. 72 [Ak. V, p. 185]) – in us, but found this spontaneous autonomy justified in its transcendently necessary self-giveness. Cavell on language thus rightly turns to Kant on judgment because only spontaneous synthesizing (autonomy) duly backed by a presumption of order (heautonomy) can yield the authority to bridge the abyss.

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Alessandro Bertinetto and Stefano Marino

# Kant's Concept of Power of Judgment and the Logic of Artistic Improvisation

## 1 Philosophy and Improvisation: Preliminary Remarks

In this contribution we will argue that Immanuel Kant's concept of *Urteilkraft* can give us a clue, and can be indeed of great help, in order to try to grasp what we would like to call here "the logic of artistic improvisation". Our specific focus, in investigating this topic, will be in particular on the way in which improvisation is practiced in artistic practices, such as jazz, improvised dance, improvised theater, but in non-performing arts as well. In other words, although simply conceiving of this original development in terms of "application" could be problematic and to some extent misleading, we will try to "apply" Kant's concepts of power of judgment and genius to artistic improvisation. Elsewhere it has been proposed to "solve the puzzle" concerning improvisation with Wittgenstein and Derrida, with a particular emphasis on the role of mistakes as surprising experiences of creativity, and the capacity to face the unknown and freely decide how to proceed, in jazz (see Bertinetto 2016b, p. 95 ff.), or also with Shusterman, with a particular emphasis on the role of bodily practices and "somatic styles" in jazz (see Marino 2019). Here we would like to add Kant to the list, on the basis of certain affinities between the idea that in improvisation the application of a rule in human practice is always referred to, and dependent from, specific situations (that can also produce changes in the rules and eventually lead to the foundation or negotiation of different rules), and the idea of the "inventive" or even "interpretive" nature of the reflective power of judgment<sup>1</sup> with its autonomous normativity in the application of rules/subsumption under rules without

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**Note:** The first part of this article (§§1–2) was written by Stefano Marino; the second part (§§3–5) was written by Alessandro Bertinetto. The general structure and contents of the article, however, have been planned, discussed and conceived together by both authors.

**1** We freely follow here a suggestion from Claudio La Rocca (2003, p. 266), who defines the power of judgment as a peculiar faculty "that interprets", that "works by crossing and making communicable various dimensions", and that, "with its 'reflecting' inclination and its nature of *Mittelglied* [...] legitimates in principle the perspective of a plurality of senses and the articulation of different codes".

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mechanical norms to refer to. As has been noted, “the power of judgment must base its judgment on the subjective conditions of its use. That is, in the absence of any externally imposed rule or sensation as the basis of the judgment, we must simply allow the power of judgment to function on its own” (Dobe 2010, p. 55). The particular normativity of improvisation develops in the course of a performance, and improvisation, understood as a process of self-regulatory organization, is constantly exposed to emergency, contingency and change.

Now, in order to immediately prevent some possible misunderstandings, we can surely admit that, at first glance, an interpretation of this kind, and an application of Kant’s concept of power of judgment (and also of genius) to such a different field as that of artistic improvisational practices, might appear strange or bizarre. Although it can be interesting to notice that, among the few musical examples that can be found in his third *Critique*, one can mention “music fantasias (without a theme), indeed all music without a text”, and “the table-music [...] at big parties” (CPJ, §§16 and 44, pp. 114 and 184 [Ak. V, pp. 229 and 305]) which also included some elements and aspects of improvisation, the aim of this contribution is *not* to demonstrate that improvisation plays some kind of explicit role in Kant’s aesthetic theorization as such. Rather, taking advantage of a few interesting conceptual connections between Kant, Wittgenstein on rule-following, Arendt on action and freedom, and Gadamer on dialogue and *phronesis*,<sup>2</sup> our contribution aims to show that Kant’s concepts of reflecting power of judgment and genius can really shed light on at least some of the creative processes at work in improvisation. Conversely, artistic improvisation, understood in light of the key notions of Kant’s aesthetics can appear as paradigmatic for aesthetic experience and artistic creativity as such.

Our reading of Kant’s third *Critique* in this contribution is not strictly philological, but rather interpretive and aims at providing an original development of some motifs that, however, are actually present in the text. Due to space and also methodological reasons, we will not go into detail about some subtle and indeed

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<sup>2</sup> Musical improvisation, “and especially interactive improvisation, is like a *conversation*”, and “the performance shows not only that acquired skills – not only in terms of technical expertise, but also and above all of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) – allow to find, invent, and offer a (different, unexpected, or new) sense for unforeseen situations [...], but also that skills are acquired through the practice itself” (Bertinetto 2018a, p. 120). For Gadamer, as is well-known, the essence of language as such is dialogue, *Gespräch* (Gadamer 2004, p. 385 ff.), and one of the fundamental capacities that make a conversation (and, more in general, action and experience) possible is what Gadamer, reinterpreting Aristotle’s ethics, calls *phronesis*, that in some contributions he explicitly compares to Kant’s concept of *Urteilskraft* as connected to the *sensus communis* (see, for instance, Gadamer 1971 and 1995, pp. 278–279).

important distinctions introduced by Kant in his treatment of the power of judgment in some of the different works in which he deals with it.<sup>3</sup> For example, we will not take into account Kant's distinction between the power of judgment as a natural talent in its empirical-pragmatic use and its properly transcendental function,<sup>4</sup> or the affinity between the reflective power of judgment (*reflektierende Urteilskraft*) and the cognitive function of provisional judgments (*vorläufige Urteile*),<sup>5</sup> or finally the presence in it of both a logical and a psychological aspect.<sup>6</sup> From this point of view, the present interpretation of the third *Critique* is surely a free interpretation, to a certain degree, but not an arbitrary or "unfaithful" one – just like a good improvisation in jazz music is surely free but at the same time not arbitrary or "unfaithful" in re-interpreting in a new way an old piece. In our view, it is the particular nature of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* itself that guarantees, at least to some extent, an interpretive freedom of this kind, and thus allows scholars to derive new developments from it.

As noted by Emilio Garroni, the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* can also appear as "a hardly determinable work as far as its overall project and its salient objectives are concerned, sprinkled with ambiguities and obscurities as it is"; a work that is "perhaps here and there also a bit disorganized and not entirely finished" (Garroni 2003, p. 3). Also in Derrida's words, "the [third] *Critique* presents itself as a work with several sides" (Derrida 1987, p. 63). Of course, as Garroni adds, this does not imply that the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* is an "arbitrarily interpretable" work, but rather that, inasmuch as it is perhaps a "thematically and theoretically non-compact" book (Garroni 2003, p. 4), this makes it possible to develop different interpretations of it, also starting from one or another of its guiding concepts. From a hermeneutic perspective of the "history

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3 A general reconstruction and interpretation of the role played by the *Urteilskraft* in the whole of Kant's criticism, and so not only in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, is provided by Baruschat 1972 (in particular, pp. 23–78).

4 In the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* entitled "On the Transcendental Power of Judgment in General" Kant distinguishes between the use of this faculty in "general logic" and in "transcendental logic", and also talks about a "natural power of judgment" as a "special talent" and a "natural gift" (CPR, A133/B172, pp. 268–269). As is well-known, this section serves as Introduction to the "Analytic of Principles" (or "Transcendental Doctrine of the Power of Judgment") and, notwithstanding its importance, is quite short and may appear as somehow interrupted, as if "in the first *Critique* it was still not possible to provide an effective transcendental foundation to the power of judgment", as observed by Silvestro Marcucci (1999, p. 96).

5 This affinity is thematized and documented on the basis of a great quantity of detailed references to Kantian writings by Claudio La Rocca (2003, pp. 79–82, 87–93, 108–119).

6 We owe this remark to Menegoni 2008, p. 36 (who, in turn, relies on, and quotes from, Marc-Wogau 1938, p. 1).



of effects” (Gadamer 2004, pp. 299–306), this may also amount to an enrichment, a refinement and a renovation of the work itself: sometimes also little misunderstandings can be fruitful and enriching, and as noted by Otfried Höffe (1983, p. 281) the whole history of the reception of Kant’s philosophy “might appear to a rigorous Kantian as the history of productive misunderstandings”.

Beside the manifold, different ways in which the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* has been interpreted in the twentieth century by the philosophers taken into examination in the previous chapters of this volume, it is worth noticing that in more recent times Kant’s book has been originally interpreted (just to mention two examples among the many that one could refer to) as a prolegomenon to an analytic aesthetics (Schaeffer 2000, pp. 17–64) or even as a forerunner of certain developments in Marxist philosophy about reification and commodity fetishism (Wayne 2016, pp. 27–166). Hence, on the basis of recent interpretations of Kant’s third *Critique* that, although free and not philologically adherent to the text, have developed new interpretive paths and opened new debates, our attempt to connect Kant’s concepts of power of judgment and genius to the logic of improvisational artistic practices will probably appear less provocative and strange than it would seem *prima facie*.

One of the main questions (or perhaps, in a more emphatic fashion, even *the* main question) in the practice and in the theory of improvisation (especially in music, but not only) concerns the status of rules and the different ways of rule-following in absence of the explicit norms or criteria that are typical, for instance, of classical music based on scores, on prescriptive instructions about how to play the piece,<sup>7</sup> and on the so-called *Werktreue* ideal (Goehr 1992, p. 205 ff.). Precisely the question of rules is also one of the main questions (or perhaps even *the* basic question) in Kant’s treatment of the power of judgment and, although in a different way, also of genius: where the latter concepts are respectively understood by Kant as that particular faculty or capacity of our mind that “can only give itself [a] principle as a law, and cannot derive it from anywhere else”, but precisely in doing so is fundamental for us to find an orientation in a realm “that is in this regard entirely contingent” (just like contingent and not at all necessary, stable, fixed or even fixable is an artistic improvised performance by its very nature<sup>8</sup>), and as that particular “*talent* for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given” (CPI, §§ IV and 46, pp. 67 and 186 [Ak. V, pp. 180 and 307]).

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7 On improvisation and the question of rules-following see Tomasi/Plebani 2016.

8 On the dialectical relation between the fixed and the unfixed in improvisation, see Peters 2017.

## 2 Reflective Judgment, Rule-Following and Performance

As noted by Paul Guyer (2000, pp. xxii, xxx), in that particular function of our mind called “‘reflecting judgment’ [...] we are not given a concept under which to subsume a particular but are instead given a particular for which we must seek to find [a] rule of some kind that we are not immediately given”; “in aesthetic judgment upon nature and art but also in the production of works of art”, namely in the case of both faculties or capacities examined in the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment” (reflective power of judgment and genius) “we do not have *rules* that we can mechanically follow”. And yet we have to do with rules, or better with a kind of self-development or self-regulation of this faculties, and with an autonomous, “non-mechanical”, and thus to some extent “free” or “artistic” application of rules/subsumption under rules<sup>9</sup> – just like it happens in artistic improvisation, by the way. If “the application of a word [...] is not everywhere bounded by rules” (Wittgenstein 2009, §84, p. 44), and if “interpretation – like the application of rules as such – requires powers of judgment which cannot be secured through rules alone” (Gadamer 2007, p. 49), so, more in general, the decision on how to act, how to perform, what to play or, in music, how to perform a certain note or a certain sound in a certain passage of a certain song, often requires facing the risk of the unknown and contingency without having a precise, explicit and conscious rule to follow, or sometimes having a rule but, in turn, not knowing a principle that can unequivocally tell us where, when and how to apply it. In Gadamer’s words, “[t]here are no rules governing the reasonable use of rules, as Kant stated so rightly in his *Critique of Judgment*. [...] The idea that the universality of the rule is in need of application, but for the application of rules no rule exists, one could have learned from Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* and from its successors, especially from Hegel, or even from one’s own insight” (Gadamer 2007, pp. 253, 334). In Wittgenstein’s words:

If you demand a rule from which it follows that there can’t have been a miscalculation here, the answer is that we did not learn this through a rule, but by learning to calculate. [...] [T]he game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules. [...] We use judgments as principles of judgment. [...] Not only rules, but also examples are needed for

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<sup>9</sup> In using the word “mechanical” in this context we especially have in mind the so-called “First Introduction” to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, where Kant explains that “the reflecting power of judgment” can also proceed “not schematically, but *technically*, not as it were merely mechanically, like an instrument, but *artistically*” (CPJ, p. 17 [Ak. XX, p. 214]).

establishing a practice. Our rules leave loop-holes open, and the practice has to speak for itself. [...] We do not learn the practice of making empirical judgments by learning rules: we are taught *judgments* and their connection with other judgments. A *totality* of judgments is made plausible to us (Wittgenstein 1975, §§44, 95, 124, 139, 140, pp. 8, 15, 18, 21).

The hint, provided by these quotations from Wittgenstein and Gadamer, at the problem of a kind of application or use of rules (like, for example, those learned at a school or seminar for jazz musicians) which is in turn not bounded by rules (like in an effective jazz performance on stage where you have to improvise and develop a “conversation” with other musicians through free but at the same time regulated interplay practices), and thus the hint at the problem of finding an appropriate faculty or capacity that can guide us in doing this without relying for its part on other rules (unless we want to fall into a sort of *regressus ad infinitum*), is important in connection to Kant’s treatment of the power of judgment. This is testified, for example, by a famous passage from the *Critique of Pure Reason* that reads: “if we wanted to show generally how one ought to subsume under these rules” (namely, those of the understanding, famously defined by Kant “the faculty of rules”) “this could not happen except once again through a rule. But just because this is a rule, it would demand another instruction for the power of judgment, and so it becomes clear that although the understanding is certainly capable of being instructed and equipped through rules, *the power of judgment is a special talent*” (similarly to genius, to some extent) “*that cannot be taught but only practiced*. Thus this is also what is specific to so-called mother-wit” (the German word is: *Mutterwitz*), “the lack of which cannot be made good by any school; for, although such a school can provide a limited understanding with *plenty of rules* borrowed from the insight of others and as it were graft these onto it, nevertheless *the faculty for making use of them correctly* must belong to the student himself, and *in the absence of such a natural gift*” (again, similarly to genius) “*no rule that one might prescribe to him for this aim is safe from misuse*” (CPR, A 133/B 172, p. 268; my emphasis).

As is well-known, Kant’s discovery of the *Urteilkraft* precedes the composition of a work specifically dedicated to it, namely the third *Critique*, as testified by the role of this faculty already in the first *Critique*. But some texts preceding the first *Critique* itself show that this faculty or power of the human mind had already been explored by Kant in 1769–71 (*Reflexion* n. 472) and 1775–76 (lectures on anthropology) and actually associated to wit, *Witz* (Ak. XV/1, pp. 194–195 and XXV/1, pp. 515–520).<sup>10</sup> Quite interestingly, also improvisation,

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**10** We borrow these references from La Rocca 2003, p. 91 n.

or more precisely the capacity that makes it possible for an artist to freely improvise, is sometimes associated or compared to wit:

the celebration of spontaneous and quick humor, the appreciation of wit has some resemblance to the appreciation of artistic improvisation in general, and perhaps particularly in the case of jazz. A member of an improvising jazz group responds to another member who has just played an improvised solo and now the new member, on the spot, produces a solo that both recalls the original theme and acknowledges the improvisation just heard. It is likely that all the music played be notated and then the entire sequence played from a score, but there seems no doubt that there is a special appreciation of the music created, as it were, on the spot and without any aid. So it may be with displays of wit (Cohen 2005, p. 469).

The value and significance of the abovementioned long quotation from the *Critique of Pure Reason* can also be stressed and strengthened by referring to a passage from Kant's *Anthropology*, where we read:

Natural understanding can be enriched through instruction with many concepts and furnished with rules. But the second intellectual faculty, namely that of discerning whether something is an instance of the rule or not – the *power of judgment (iudicium)* – cannot be *instructed*, but only exercised. That is why its growth is called *maturity*, and its understanding that which comes only with years. It is also easy to see that this could not be otherwise; because instruction takes place only by means of communication of rules. Therefore, if there were to be doctrines for the power of judgment, then there would have to be general rules according to which one could decide whether something was an instance of the rule or not, which would generate a further inquiry on into infinity. Thus the power of judgment is, as we say, the understanding that comes only with years; it is based on one's long experience (AP, §42, p. 93 [Ak. VII, p. 199]).

From this point of view, what Schelling wrote about the particular and much discussed function of the schematism (to which, not by chance, the first chapter of the “Analytic of Principles”, or “Transcendental Doctrine of the Power of Judgment”, is devoted) can be applied to the power of judgment in general: as “an intuition of the rule”, the schematism can be learned “only from [one's] own inner experience” and “can only be described and separated from everything else that resembles it”, but cannot be known and above all taught or instilled in a mechanical way (Schelling 1978, p. 136; Meo 2004, pp. 97–100).

Generally speaking, the guiding concepts of Kant's “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment” profitably accommodate an understanding of the cognitive capacities at work in this “particular sort of action” and the (relatively) free play with “demands and constraints” that these capacities make it possible to establish. Among the many outstanding interpreters of Kant's third *Critique* in the twentieth century, Hannah Arendt probably belongs to the group of those who

have mostly stressed the autonomy and the self-regulatory character of the *Urteilkraft* (“this faculty of judgment, one of the most mysterious faculties of the human mind”, and for Arendt “the most political of man’s mental abilities”: “a third mental capacity”, not by chance investigated *ad hoc* in a third *Critique* [Arendt 2003, pp. 131, 188]). According to Arendt, the *Urteilkraft* is an autonomous faculty or capacity that is of fundamental importance for the possibility of human action as such. As she writes,

what happens to the human faculty of judgment when it is faced with occurrences that spell the breakdown of all customary standards and hence are unprecedented in the sense that they are not foreseen in the general rules, not even as exceptions from such rules? A valid answer to these questions would have to start with an analysis of the still very mysterious nature of human judgment, of what it can and what it cannot achieve. For only if we assume that there exists a human faculty which enables us to judge rationally without being carried away by either emotion or self-interest, and which at the same time functions spontaneously, that is to say, is not bound by standards and rules under which particular cases are simply subsumed, but on the contrary, produces its own principles by virtue of the judging activity itself; only under this assumption can we risk ourselves on this very slippery moral ground with some hope of finding a firm footing. [...] [Kant] defined judgment as the faculty which always comes into play when we are confronted with particular: judgment decides about the relation between a particular instance and the general, be the general a rule or a standard or an ideal or some other kind of measurement. In all instances of reason and knowledge, judgment subsumes the particular under its appropriate general rule. Even this apparently simple operation has its difficulties, for since there are no rules for the subsumption, this must be decided freely (Arendt 2003, pp. 26–27, 137).

We argue that, at least to some extent, the way Arendt applies this framework to the interpretation of ethical and especially political action can be compared to the way we propose to apply the Kantian conception of the power of judgment to that particular kind of action that is improvisation and, in particular, artistic improvisation. As has been noted, “the faculty of judgment [...] must be operative in the actor, whom Arendt likened to a performer” (Kohn 2003, p. xxviii); and a performer is by definition at least to some extent an improviser, performing and acting as such always entailing a component of improvisation.

Hence, at this point some introductory observations and clarifications about the concept of improvisation itself are in order. Improvisation must be understood as a human practice by no means limited to art. Rather, improvisation can be broadly understood as an aspect (and, indeed, a fundamental and unavoidable one) of human experience in general, i.e. as specific trait of human practices, often linked to expertise or competence, that displays itself at various levels in all dimensions of life. To some extent we improvise at work, in our personal relationships, during a conversation, while having sex, when taking an

exam, when driving our bicycle or car, in many aspects of our everyday life in general, and in performance arts like music and theater: that is, there is a degree of improvisation in most everything we do: “the performance of any action involves elements of improvisation” (Bertinetto 2018a, p. 131). For this reason, it surely makes sense to distinguish between everyday improvisation and artistic improvisation, but at the same time the link between them must be recognized.

Now, if improvisation is a genuinely human practice, a genuine component of human experience in general and not only of art, we nevertheless argue that it is in art, and particularly in performing arts like music, dance and theater – in which improvisation is intentionally practiced as a means for producing art –, that the specific features of improvisation manifest themselves in the perhaps clearest way and become fully explicit, thus facilitating also a philosophical understanding of this capacity or faculty. “Within the artistic field, improvisation [is] the development of creativity in real-time”, “the creative rearrangement not only of materials, [...] but also of forms, styles, conventions, techniques, and habits” (Bertinetto 2018a, pp. 131–132). In this way, artistic improvisation highlights, emphasizes, strengthens and increases in value the characteristics of improvisation in general, and thus makes it easier for theorists to grasp its essence, to identify its basic features and distinctive characters. If “improvisation in the performing arts shows at a micro level what happens, at a macro level, in artistic practices in general” (Bertinetto 2018a, p. 129), the latter, in turn, shows what happens (at a still greater macro level) in life in general, so that “art may be a particular way to look at and to develop human practices and [...] the link between human practices and art is provided by improvisation” (Bertinetto 2018a, p. 119).

What we will focus on in the following sections of this contribution is thus improvisational art as the practice in which creation and performance are not two distinct moments, but intentionally coincide and merge into one process, so that the action and its norm are not severed: the action is self-regulating. This self-regulatory and recursive structure represents in our view the clear link between improvisational practice and Kant's key aesthetic notions in the third *Critique*: the reflective power of judgment and genius.

### 3 Improvisation: The Enactment of Aesthetic Judgment

In this regard, in a recent book on philosophy and improvisation Gary Peters has highlighted the conceptual link between improvisation and aesthetic judgment.

Improvisation, he writes, is “exemplification of aesthetic judgment in action here and now”: it is “the live enactment of aesthetic judgment” (Peters 2017, pp. 35, 40). We consider this as a very promising suggestion. But how can we make sense of the link between improvisation and aesthetic judgment? The question at issue is the one of aesthetic normativity and the main point is that aesthetic normativity, developed in virtue of the use of aesthetic (reflective) power of judgment, is improvisatory.

At least at first sight, technical practices are ruled by established and pre-given norms that work as kinds of algorithms having the inferential form “if ... then”. You have a goal and you know the rules (the steps) for achieving it. In other words, there is a plan, or a norm, or a general concept: *if* you stick to the plan, *then* you will reach your goal, you will be successful. Of course there may be degrees of success: you may stick to the plan in a better or worse way, you may be more or less precise, more or less effective in reaching your goal. Thus you can evaluate the realization of the plan (the norm, the concept) accordingly.

Yet, artworks are not products that come out of the application of algorithmic rules. And, generally speaking, when we judge something aesthetically we do not apply algorithmic rules to the target of our judgment. Aesthetic judgment does not work by measuring the degree to which the achievement of a goal, like the realization of a product, followed a prefixed plan.

At this point coming back to Kant is in order. According to Kant, the determining judgment, valid in the realms of knowledge, morality and technical praxis, is distinct from reflective judgment, valid in the realm of aesthetic experience (CPJ, §§IV–V, pp. 66–73 [Ak. V, pp. 179–186]). The first kind of judgment is activated in order to determine the features of a given thing, object or concept while attributing to it certain predicates. The second kind of judgment, instead, is used when we have to *make* sense of something in absence of pre-established criteria. Aesthetic judgment is a kind of reflective judgment: it does not work by means of correlating a concrete individual item to an abstract and general norm or concept. It is productive, or performative, in that it invents the norm or the concept that a concrete object, for example an artwork, concretely exemplifies. So the object we judge is an example of a rule (a concept) that is not given, but is inventively produced for the single case. So, while determining judgment works in such a way that can be compared to the uncreative and classificatory execution of an algorithm, reflective judgment is productive in that it generates something new accordingly to the situation of its exercise.

Thus, the question concerning the criteria for judging aesthetically something (for instance, an artwork) cannot be completely satisfied by correlating the features of the object (or the performance) to the right norms in terms of in-



herited and pre-established artistic categories, artistic genres, artistic styles, aesthetic properties and concepts, and the like. Answering in such a way the question of artistic value would not amount to judging in an aesthetic way. Aesthetic judgment is indeed the understanding of the productive quality of artistic normativity. The application of an aesthetic concept (like an aesthetic attribute) in a concrete situation feedbacks the concept and elaborates it further. In this sense, the application of the aesthetic concept or norm always makes the aesthetic concept, or norm, anew. So, each artistic outcome is a contribution to the formation and transformation of artistic normativity.

According to Kant, artistic norms and aesthetic concepts are not like prefixed plans and abstract concepts that rule a procedure in an algorithmic way, i.e. guiding the inferential connection between preset goals and the means for achieving them, simply by implementing or concretely tokening pre-existing abstract types of action routines. Artistic norms and aesthetic concepts are rather generated in a transformative way through the concrete artistic and aesthetic practices.

Consequently, aesthetic judgment is not the evaluation of the extent to which a concrete artwork realizes the standard qualities that are responsible for the success of a certain artistic class, category, or type. Aesthetic judgment, as a specific kind of reflective judgment, productively clarifies the contribution of a single aesthetic experience (for example, the experience of an artwork) to the ongoing generation of artistic normativity and, in so doing, it is itself a contribution to the transformation of aesthetic normativity. It is not a classificatory description of the relation between the object of judgment (for instance, a natural object or an artwork) and aesthetic/artistic categories, but a participatory performance that contributes to the generation of the standards of taste. The standards of success that establish the correlation between general aesthetic and artistic norms and an aesthetic object like an artwork, are not pre-given, are not determined before being applied to their target. Rather, the specific standards of success are generated through the aesthetic experience, and through each single artwork.

We can now apply this line of reasoning to the aesthetics of improvisation. According to a formalist and Platonist idea of perfection, the judgment of taste consists in measuring the compliance degree between the object taken into consideration and the pre-established aesthetic ideal. Hence, something (a natural object or an artwork) is aesthetically successful, if it fully complies with pre-established criteria of perfection, i.e. with standards of perfection that are not elements of the aesthetic negotiation at stake in an aesthetic experience (as well as, as we shall see, in artistic creativity), but are taken as external rules to assess the validity of the aesthetic judgment. Following this line of reasoning, the object of



the experience is perfect when it complies with the pre-established and, while perfect, unchangeable criteria; and an artwork is judged as perfect (i. e. finished), when spectators judge the adaptation of the material execution to the ideal structural planning as completely accomplished. Similarly, according to musical Platonism (Kivy 2002; Dodd 2007), a performance of a musical work is perfect when it is a realization that is completely faithful to the work as an ideal and immutable structure. Consequently, when it comes to improvisation, some scholars (let's label them the "imperfectionists") maintain that improvisation, being a spontaneous process of invention on the fly, which does not realize a predetermined structure but is rather characterized by the invention in the moment, cannot be perfect, and is therefore characterized by an essential imperfection (Gioia 1988; Hamilton 2000; Brown 2000).

Precisely a look into Kant's view of aesthetic judgment can explain that and why this view is misguided. As it can be argued by taking up the conceptual structure of Kantian origin that we have previously outlined, the main point is that aesthetic normativity does not rely on the presupposition of pre-established objective formal criteria of an abstractly intellectualistic kind (for instance: proportion, uniformity, clarity, equilibrium between the parts, etc.), on the basis of which to judge the aesthetic qualities of an experience, an aesthetic object, or an artwork. The various aesthetic criteria, summed up by the criterion of perfection, are not warranted before the concrete aesthetic experience. In other words, perfection is not established outside the practice, but it is itself transformed or re-shaped by each aesthetic experience, which, paraphrasing Kant, exemplifies a rule (a meaning, a norm) that is not pre-defined and assumed as valid in an abstract way, but emerges out of the single aesthetic experience.

Taking another step forward, we can then say that aesthetic normativity is recursive. What concretely happens within the sphere of aesthetic practices retroacts on the normative background of aesthetic practices and experiences, feeding back and re-shaping it. In other words, aesthetic normativity is reflective or recursive, in that, in the aesthetic experience (as well as in the production and in the interpretation of artworks), it is engendered by the aesthetic exercise of reflective judgment.

Now, what is interesting for us is that recursivity is the way improvisational processes shape normativity. Improvisers interact with each other, with their instruments and tools, and with the performance environment. Generally speaking, they interact with the performance situation. Each single event of the performance is not neutral in respect to the other events: it is an evaluative response to other events, that retroactively reshapes the sense (the meaning and the direction) of previous moments, thereby potentially generating changes in the performing process. Improvisation is an autopoietic open system: outputs (the out-

comes of the performances: sounds, gestures, actions, etc.) are re-integrated as inputs that feedback the process, becoming parts of the normative background of the improvisation. Consequently, also due to the specificity and specific indeterminacy of the performance situation, improvisers have to deal with the constitutive contingency of the process. The sense, i.e. the normativity or the plan of the process, emerges out of this confrontation with contingencies. The meaning of each event is not predetermined by prefixed criteria, but is negotiated through interactions with the other events of the process: it emerges through all the performative interactions that feedback the process.

This happens continuously in aesthetic experience. Each single act of evaluation, although depending on a normative background, retroacts on that background, re-generating normativity each time anew. That is why, far from being subject to an alleged aesthetics of imperfection, improvisation paradigmatically exemplifies the way the success of aesthetic practices is contingently negotiated through the practices themselves. For, as nicely explained by Menegoni (2008, pp. 34, 37, 123–124), the “logic” of the reflective power of judgment at work in the aesthetic realm, is precisely a “logic” of contingency (CPJ, §§76–77, pp. 271–279 [Ak. V, pp. 401–410]). Hence, we can now return to Gary Peters’ suggestion, according to which improvisation is “the live enactment of aesthetic judgment” (Peters 2017, p. 40). Improvisation, we now understand, enacts aesthetic judgment live, in a specific performing situation, in that each single event of the improvised performance is a contribution to the aesthetic normativity specific for *that* concrete situation. Improvisation, in other words, *makes* sense (in the performative meaning of the word) the same way aesthetic (reflective) judgment invents general norms out of the single case.

Therefore, we may say, on the one hand, that improvisation is the *performance of aesthetic judgment*, or *aesthetic judgment as performance*. But, on the other hand, this is so, because aesthetic judgment itself works in an improvisatory way, in that it invents *abductively* the norms valid for the single case (Bertinetto 2013). Not only that: improvisation epitomizes the constitutive link between aesthetic judgment and artistic creative achievement. We will explain this point soon; but before doing that, it is useful to clarify another quite important structural analogy between improvisation and aesthetic judgment. We will do it by investigating the intersubjective dimension of aesthetic experience that Kant conceptually explores under the label of *sensus communis*.

## 4 Improvisational Interaction and *Sensus Communis*

The picture offered so far is committed, in an obvious way, to the Kantian idea that, while assessing the aesthetic value of a natural object or an artwork or an artistic performance, you are not merely relating the particular object to a general abstract norm: you are shaping the norm, in that you are establishing what does it mean, for this concrete object, to perfectly apply the norm. Therefore, since perfection is negotiated each time anew, it cannot be the last criterion of artistic success. On the contrary, success, felicitous achievement in concrete situations, is the notion proper for understanding the specificity of aesthetic judgment, and, as we shall see in the next section, it is the criterion for *artistic* perfection as well.

Things being so, improvisation is not a particular artistic practice for the reason that it is ruled by ideals other than perfection. In fact, perfection is not the aesthetic ideal of non-improvised artistic practices either. The specific trait of improvisation is rather that it shows or displays the dynamics of aesthetic normativity, according to which each concrete experience retroacts on aesthetic norms and develops them further.

Improvisation (as epitome of aesthetic/artistic creativity *überhaupt*) intuitively displays normativity as (trans)formation, since improvisers are constantly engaged in the (tentative, contingent and fallible) process of making sense of emergent and unforeseen situations, showing the generation of the norms that bind together performers' actions through their practice, and emerge themselves out of their practice (see Bertinetto and Bertram 2020). In this way, improvisation displays, and performs, another important aspect of aesthetic judgment: the formation of sociability.

In the improvisational interaction, values, meanings, and goals of the process are continuously intersubjectively negotiated and (trans)formed through the performing process. Those (potentially conflictive) negotiations are not only internal to single performances: generally speaking, they are what shape aesthetic practices as interpretive interactions based on reflective aesthetic judgment.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as philosophers like Arendt, Lyotard and Vattimo (to name just a few) have argued, reflective judgment is the basis of intersubjectivity, because communities are generated when communication is made possible through

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<sup>11</sup> For a similar understanding of artistic practices, see Bertram 2014.

the (inventive) development of a common normativity in the practice (which does not rule out contrasts, disagreements and conflicts).

Being an exercise in the formation and transformation of normativity in the so-called real-time, improvisational interactivity is about the generation and the development of shared values and meanings through artistic production. This amounts to saying that improvisation is about the generation of possibilities of communication. Communicability plays a key-role as condition for the artistic value of the performance, for the aesthetic appreciation of an improvisation involves the need of finding criteria for assigning aesthetic and artistic sense to what is artistically happening in the performance. This sense should be communicable, and indeed this sense is the very condition of communicability, that is, the condition of possibility of forming a community. In other words, the aesthetic dimension of the experience of improvisation is not detached from its communicational, communitarian and social significance. Improvisational practices make sense as they build a sense for the community, thereby showing the constitutive reciprocal connection between aesthetic experience and sociability at work, that is, as it is being developed (Bertinetto 2017; 2018b).

This can be understood resorting to a well-known Kantian argument (CPJ, §§20–22 and 40, pp. 122–124 and 173–176 [Ak. V, pp. 238–240 and 293–296]). The judgment of taste about beauty is not universal, because, as we have already seen, it does not depend upon prefixed and objective criteria. However, this judgment must be generalizable: otherwise, it would only be a private opinion on what appeals to each of us. Yet, being not objectively grounded, the universalizability of this judgment is intersubjective in character. I make sense of my aesthetic evaluation, if my evaluation can aspire to be shared by others, i.e. if my aesthetic evaluation *makes* (in a performative way) sense for others too.<sup>12</sup> In other words, only when others acknowledge the sense of my evaluation I can

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<sup>12</sup> Following Rudolf A. Makkreel (1990, p. 157), what characterizes “Kant’s transcendental theory of common sense” is precisely the fact that “the aesthetic judgment [is] intersubjective as well as subjective”. As also noted by Garroni and Hohenegger (1999, p. xxvi), the *Urteilkraft* in Kant is a “strange and peculiar faculty, on the one hand merely subjective, on the other hand more originary than other faculties from a critical point of view; on the one hand theorized only for the aim of completing the system of faculties, on the other hand even provided with the task of founding this system and making it possible” (in the Kantian sense of the conditions of possibility). As to the *Urteilkraft*’s particular kind of universality, Kant famously says: “there must be attached to the judgment of taste, with the consciousness of an abstraction in it from all interest, a claim to validity for everyone without the universality that pertains to objects, i.e., it must be combined with a claim to subjective universality” (CPJ, §6, p. 97 [Ak. V, p. 212]); from which it also derives his famous definition: “That is *beautiful* which pleases universally without a concept” (CPJ, §9, p. 104 [Ak. V, p. 219]).

be aware of the sense of my taste, of my sense for aesthetic value. That's why Kant defines taste as *sensus communis* (common sense) and identifies in the *sensus communis* the condition for the communicability of the aesthetic experience that is the object of the aesthetic judgment. Aesthetic judgment, although subjective, *must* aspire to be intersubjectively shared; or better: aesthetic judgment is this very search for the possibility of sharing.

In this regard, it is interesting what was once observed by Gianni Vattimo (1979, p. 9): “the judgment of taste is exercised while aiming at a kind of ideal community that [in practice] is always *in fieri*” (and similar remarks can also be found in Jean-François Lyotard's and Hanna Arendt's interpretations of Kant's third *Critique*). Aesthetic experience, Vattimo continues, is in itself an “exercise of sociability” and, accordingly, aesthetic pleasure is what “derives from finding the belonging of the self to a group” (Vattimo 1980, p. 18), to *communities*, including communities of taste, that are continuous processes of negotiation and shaping of a “common sense”.

So, *if* aesthetic appreciation requires and promotes the shaping of a common sense, i.e. of intersubjectively sharable meanings and values, and produces intersubjective acknowledgment (or, if you prefer, the acknowledgment of intersubjectivity), *then* the aesthetic dimension of art requires sociability. But socializing through interaction, in order to make aesthetically successful art, means interacting in order to generate possibilities of intersubjective communication, i.e. sociability. Consequently, improvisational interaction is exemplary of aesthetic experience as a whole, because in an improvisational performance Kant's aesthetic “common sense” (or meaning, or value) is potentially always under construction, always *in fieri*, since it is intersubjectively negotiated during the performance itself (and even after its end). In other words, again, improvisation shows the “common sense” at play, and “common sense”, we may add, is, conversely, the ongoing production and re-production of the sociability which improvisational interactions produce on stage.

## 5 Improvisation and Kantian Genius

As we have seen, improvisation enacts aesthetic judgment, in that the (if implicit) evaluation of what is going on in the performance is a constitutive aspect of the performance itself. Each event of the performance embodies (rather implicit) judgments about what has been done until that point, shaping the normative frame of what will follow, which, in turn, will feedback the process, retroacting on the previous elements (sounds, gestures, actions, but also brushstrokes etc.) of the artistic process. Hence, improvisational artistic production is character-

alized by shaping its plan during the concrete performance. This makes improvisation paradigmatic of artistic practices. Indeed, artworks, as outcomes of artistic creativity, do not simply result as direct applications of plans: they are not mere determinations or concretizations of abstract and fixed norms. Artworks are creative achievements: they do not realize a pre-established goal by following the right means in the proper ways. Artworks do differently and do more. They are creative achievements in that they generate the norms that regulate their making and they are the applications of, by means of applying them. Artworks, as aesthetic objects and performances, *embody* the way reflective judgment is in play in the aesthetic experience. Their enterprise is improvisatory in nature. Artworks perform, in other words, their own normativity.

So the success of the artistic practice cannot be taken for granted. Artistic practices are undetermined and insecure practices, because there are not fixed and immutable rules one must follow in order to produce a successful artistic work or performance (see Bertram 2014). Indeed, the criteria themselves for the aesthetic evaluation are produced through the artistic practice, which encompasses the artist's work and the interpretive practices of recipients. This point is nicely captured by the Kantian notion of *genius*, which we propose to reinterpret and refashion in connection to the artistic practice of improvisation.

The idea of geniality, deprived of its romantic connotations, can be understood as the key for opening up an *aesthetics of success* (German: *Gelungenheits-aesthetik*; Italian: *estetica della riuscita*). Historically, this kind of aesthetics has been *de facto* developed by Luigi Pareyson (once again, inspired by Kant among others) in his pioneering work *Estetica. Teoria della formatività* (Pareyson 2010) and by his pupil Umberto Eco in his book *Opera aperta* (Eco 1989). The core idea is that, as it is increasingly, and increasingly explicitly, accepted by concrete artistic practices and movement from the end of the eighteenth century onwards, successful artworks are not applications of pre-given norms and concepts, but the outcomes of the acceptance and incorporation of contingency into the creative process. Art, according to Pareyson, is a (per)formative making, a kind of making that, while making, invents the way of making, i.e. invents the norms and the standards of its success: thus artworks shape, by their concrete existence as the artworks they are, their own specific and situational normativity. Hence, artistic norms are not merely assumed as valid before the concrete artistic production: they rather emerge through the performance the work of art consists of. Each artwork, in this sense, is a concrete negotiation of the criteria of its success in the *hic et nunc* of its specific contingent circumstances. Artistic success, then, is not secured and cannot be taken for granted. And it is, in an interesting sense, unexpected, even for their makers. For, as Gadamer would have it (1986, p. 33), “there is a leap between the planning and the executing on the one hand

and the successful achievement on the other”. Success emerges out of planning and making, it cannot be reductively traced back to them.

Kant famously conceives of genius as the nature that gives rule to art (CPJ, §46, p. 186 [Ak. V, p. 307]) and as the faculty of aesthetic ideas (CPJ, §49, pp. 191–196 [Ak. V, pp. 313–319]). This means that genius does not know exactly what to do and how to proceed while and for making an artwork. The genius is therefore in an analogous situation of the ones that judge aesthetically, but, differently from aesthetic judges, the genius is *producing* an artwork – that in turn will feedback artistic normativity – and is not only evaluating something aesthetically. Yet, the point is precisely that, while producing an artwork, the genius does not control the process of creative production. In our perspective, this should not be seen as a mystical view of artistic creation. On the contrary, it is part of the conditions of artistic achievements that there are no pre-established procedures (like recipes or instructions) to be mechanically followed in order for something to be a creative achievement. For, as Hanna Arendt pointed out, elaborating precisely on Kant’s view of artistic geniality, creativity is not a kind of fabrication. While pre-established rules and production plans must be followed in order to fabricate plural instantiations of an already designed artifact, creative activity requires that the invention of the project does not precede the construction of the object but is part of it. Hence, the creative outcome emerges out of the activities (and their technical, material and cultural conditions) in a somehow unexpected way.

This means that creators, like artistic genius, are in the conditions of improvisers, who, on the one hand, *know how* to perform and, on the other hand, *don’t know what* exactly they are doing (Bertinetto 2016a, chap. 2). This situation may be framed out in terms of an epistemic paradox. Improvisers – improvising musicians, for instance – know, to different degrees, how to play music, how to deal with musical instruments, how to interact with other performers; they are also acquainted with musical traditions and genres, formal and social conventions, artistic styles, technical skills, behavioral habits; their practice is fed, as it were, by this background. On the other hand, however, this background is not simply assimilated by improvisers once as for all. It is developed, formed and transformed by improvisers through the same practice that is made possible by that background. We may sum up this situation by saying that, while “competence makes performance possible”, “performance concretely generates competence”. Hence, the conditions of possibility of the practice are continuously re-elaborated within and through the practice itself. The same goes for the performers’ intentions and plans: they are continuously surprised and fed back by the contingent events of the performance. Shortly: what improvisers do retroacts on the preconditions of what they do and on their intentions (or performance



plans). Preconditions are not as algorithmic instructions that work independently from their outcomes and plans are not established before the action. Outcomes feedback their preconditions and actions feedback the plans, so that the material and normative preconditions of possibility of the practice as well as plans for action emerge out of the practice itself.

Normative conditions as well as performers' competences, intentions and plans are involved in the improvisational process not as external guides and rules, but as part of the process reshaped by the process itself. Performance is unforeseen in that it outstrips preconditions, plans, and previsions. Obviously: *certain* preconditions, *certain* plans, *certain* previsions. Improvisation is not *creatio ex nihilo*, and the quality of its unexpectedness (of its being a "beginning": Jankélévitch 1953) is measured in relation to the way it is expected (as a, if transformative, continuation of habits, styles, conventions, techniques, etc.): improvisation, like freedom, is not (and cannot be) absolute (and by the way Derrida is right in stating that improvisation, in this sense, is impossible: see Derrida 1982).<sup>13</sup>

So understood, improvisers epitomize the Kantian Genius. As a consequence from the previous discussion of artistic normativity and the just presented view of the recursive dynamics of improvisational processes, improvisation is not simply and trivially opposed to the aesthetics of the artwork. On the contrary, as a practice of performative invention through the confrontation with contingency, improvisation turns out to be paradigmatic of the aesthetics of success that characterizes the specificity of artistic "genial" creativity. In other words, our thesis is that improvisation paradigmatically exemplifies the way artistic practices are normed by what may be labeled the aesthetics of success which is implicitly entailed in Kant's theories of aesthetic judgment and of artistic creativity: criteria of success and failure are performatively negotiated in and through each single case. More precisely, each work of art (including performances) is an event indeterminable by pre-established norms and unforeseeable even for their makers, that feedbacks artistic normativity. Like in improvisational processes, artistic normativity emerges out of concrete interactions, of different kinds, within the

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**13** Indeed, as Edgar Landgraf rightly argues (2009, p. 189), we "need to assume a second-order perspective and observe the unity of the distinction between contingent and planned actions. In improvisation, these are supplemental terms – that is, each side of the distinction defines and preconditions the other. After all, one can improvise – that is, successfully act in unplanned, unforeseen, and unprepared ways – only when one knows what one cannot do because it is already known or expected or foreseeable. Such expertise is also expected from the audience. It is one's experience and hence one's expectations for a particular art form and for art in general that will determine what one is able to identify and appreciate as art".



practice, in an autonomous and *autopoietic* way. Art is not required anymore to result from the imitation of natural shapes and of old artistic models. The qualities required by an artwork in order to achieving success are indeed rather newness, originality, and authenticity. These qualities, that are usually seen as specific traits of improvisational practices, do not contrast with the demand of artistic normativity, since they are rather compatible with the *exemplariness* (CPJ, §46, pp. 186–187 [Ak. V, pp. 307–308]) of the successful artwork that, while felicitously succeeding, establishes new artistic and aesthetic standards: in this way it contributes to (trans)forming artistic and aesthetic normativity. However, these qualities prevent the resulting artwork from being (fully) anticipated, planned and controlled by the artist. The artistic norm or plan is part of the artwork itself, it emerges through it. As explained by Luigi Pareyson (2010), the artist follows formal and material cues (“*spunti*”), that he/she is able to find and interact with, grasping them as contingent *affordances* for his/her creative enterprise. As in improvisational performances, the normative plan emerges out of its application in a particular and concrete situation: the artwork.

Moreover, the same way improvisers do not have full and rigid control of what is happening, genius is not in control of what and how is making, since s/he is inventing by doing. And the same way improvisers are exposed to the contingency of the process, and presents contingency as art (as Edgar Landgraf suggests [2018, p. 186]), genial artists are exposed to the contingency of their interactive encounters with forms and materials: with the concrete and unforeseeable situation of their artistic practice. At the end, like improvisation, the artistic creative enterprise succeeds if it transforms contingency into necessity. Yet, necessity must be conceived of not in terms of logical necessity, but in the Kantian sense of *exemplary necessity* (CPJ, §18, p. 121 [Ak. V, pp. 236–237]): the idea is that the single case (the single moment of an improvisation as well as the single concrete artwork) displays a normativity that does not precede, but follows the single case, emerging out of it. The Kantian Genius, in other words, is an improviser.

Conceiving the creational activity of the Kantian genius along the lines of improvisational performances also allows to make better sense of the paradoxes Kant was involved in when he explicitly framed out the art question in terms of autonomy (Landgraf 2009, pp. 184–185): (1) the artificial must be seen as natural; (2) the artwork is something purposeful, but appears as if without purpose; (3) the genius’ act is intentional but does not seem intentional (CPJ, §45, pp. 185–186 [Ak. V, pp. 306–307]). On closer inspection these paradoxes are all summarized in the idea that we have understood above under the label of the epistemic paradox and that we may now explain as resulting from the conception of artistic creation as spontaneous: self-regulated, should be. Not following a pre-established plan, not aiming at a prefixed goal, not depending from prepared

rules and inventing unforeseeable results, even for their makers. Artworks are, in a way, the concretizations of the “free play” of imagination and understanding that describe the proper dimension of the aesthetic experience, according to Kant. Improvisation, resorting to Stefan Nachmanovitch's famous book *Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art* (1990), performs this “free play”, in which aesthetic experience consists, directly in front of an audience.

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Thomas W. Leddy

# Kant and Everyday Aesthetics

## 1 Introduction

It should be made clear from the start that everyday aesthetics takes its origins from the philosophy not of Kant but of Dewey, not from a transcendental philosophy but from one that is naturalist and pragmatist (Dewey 1934). Within everyday aesthetics, as a contemporary subdiscipline, Kantian dualism is not popular. The distinction between man and animal does not hold for the Deweyan aesthetician. For Dewey, it is fundamental that man is a live creature interacting with his environment. Nor will the Deweyan feel comfortable with any rigid distinction between a purely personal taste and one that is universal, or agree with Kant that there is such a thing as “rightly [making] claim to the assent of everyone else” (CPJ, §VII, p. 77 [Ak. V, p. 191]) when it comes to taste.

However, there are places in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* where Kant leaves room for a pragmatist approach.<sup>1</sup> First, Kant shares with Dewey an emphasis on experience, although his main concern is with its transcendental grounds. Second, we are talking about feelings of pleasure and displeasure in response to an object, a feeling felt within the subject. So it looks like we are talking about something personal, unrelated to realms controlled by experts or by the purely rational side of the self. Third, feelings of pleasure and displeasure are things we share with animals. So, even though Kant stresses a strong distinction between humans and animals it is harder to do this where the focus is on pleasure and pain rather than on human cognitive powers. Moreover, the very idea that there is a faculty for discriminating and judging that has nothing to do with knowledge seems to challenge at least conventional forms of dualism, although, of course, Kant still relies on an appeal to self-consciousness that humans have and animals do not.

## 2 The Agreeable and the Beautiful

It is natural to think of everyday aesthetics as falling into the category of what Kant calls “the agreeable”. But there are problems with this. In discussing the agreeable Kant sets it aside from both aesthetic judgment and the good. He as-

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<sup>1</sup> For an introduction to everyday aesthetics see Leddy 2011.

sociates it with impressions of sense that determine inclination, and thus with terms like “graceful”, “lovely”, “enchanting”, and “enjoyable” (CPJ, §3, p. 44, 91 [Ak. V, p. 206]). The agreeableness of the green color of a meadow is subjective and involves no cognition (CPJ, §3, p. 92 [Ak. V, p. 206]).<sup>2</sup> But, whereas aesthetic judgment is disinterested, the agreeable indicates interest in the object (CPJ, §3, p. 92 [Ak. V, p. 207]). This means that, as with the good, we are here concerned with the existence of the object. In addition, the agreeable not only pleases but gratifies. For Kant, those who always pursue the agreeable in the sense of enjoyment (or “intensity of gratification”) have no need for aesthetic judgment (CPJ, §3, p. 92 [Ak. V, p. 207]).

Kant distinguishes between two senses of “sensation”. In the first sense it refers to delight generally. The second, narrower sense, favored by Kant, distinguishes the agreeable, as associated with sensation, from both the beautiful and the good. If everything that pleases were agreeable we would not be able to distinguish between the pleasures that arise out of “impressions of the senses, which determine inclination”, “principles of reason, which determine the will” and “merely reflected forms of intuition, which determine the power of judgment”: i.e. between the agreeable, the moral and the beautiful. Further, we would only be able to estimate the value of things in terms of the gratification they promise (CPJ, §3, p. 92 [Ak. V, p. 206]).

One sense of “sensation” refers to a “determination of the feeling of pleasure or pain” (which is subjective), whereas the other refers to a “representation of a thing” (which is objective). For example, the pleasantness of a green color of a meadow is a subjective sensation, whereas the greenness itself is objective. If it is agreeable it is an object of desire, the desire directed to “objects of the same sort” (CPJ, §3, p. 92 [Ak. V, p. 207]). In finding something agreeable, I am not merely judging it or assenting to it (as I would be for beauty). Rather, my inclination is aroused by it.

The beautiful (the beauty of a flower, for example) does not depend on a definite concept (as would be the case in morality or when talking about something that is good because it is useful), and yet it does “depend upon the reflection on an object” (CPJ, §4, p. 93 [Ak. V, p. 207]), i.e. in relation to an *indefinite* concept. This distinguishes it from pleasures of mere sensation (i.e. the agreeable.) Kant admits that the agreeable often seems the same as the good, especially for hedonists, but he rejects this identity since the agreeable only represents objects in relation to sense, and not under “principles of reason”, which are required

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<sup>2</sup> Kant refers again to the “mere color, e.g., the green of a lawn” in §14 (CPJ, p. 108 [Ak. V, p. 224]).

to call them good. And in everyday speech we distinguish between the agreeable and the good, for

Of a dish that stimulates the taste through spices and other flavorings one may say without hesitation that it is agreeable and yet at the same time concede that it is not good; because while it immediately *appeals to* the senses, considered mediately, i.e., by reason, which looks beyond to the consequences, it displeases (CPJ, §4, p. 93 [Ak. V, p. 208]).

Spicy food, on this account, might be agreeable, but we know we should not enjoy it, and it displeases us intellectually because it is unhealthy (or at least, so Kant's readers presumably thought).

Yet the entire project of a radical separation between the agreeable and the beautiful, and even the distinction between three kinds of pleasure, is, I believe, implausible. At best, we can say that some pleasures are prompted immediately by sensation, some are mediated by reflection while using an indeterminate concept of some sort, and some are mediated by the thought that something is good, i.e. as useful or as morally good.

There is a distinction between the agreeable and the beautiful, but it is not as rigid as Kant would like. First, the agreeable often involves reflection. One can contemplate a good shower and distinguish between elements of the experience. Second, although Kant insists that there is no disputing about taste with respect to the agreeable, we *often* disagree about these things. For example, we argue over which dish or restaurant is best. Kant refers to Canary wine as agreeable, but as Hume saw, there can be subtle discrimination in evaluating wine (CPJ, §7, p. 97 [Ak. V, p. 212]). Kant thinks that if someone says that Canary wine is agreeable another can demand he say "It is agreeable *to me*". But why assume this demand is appropriate? And when he says: "Concerning the interest of inclination in the case of the agreeable, everyone says that hunger is the best cook, and people with a healthy appetite relish everything that is edible at all" (CPJ, §5, pp. 95–96 [Ak. V, p. 210]) this misses the whole point of the art of cooking. For, although a healthy appetite can make something taste better, even a hungry person can distinguish between good and bad food.<sup>3</sup> And as Hume taught us, a person of taste can do this even more accurately. A starving person, on the other hand, makes no distinctions at all, and so Kant's reference to level of hunger does not even seem *relevant* to evaluation of the quality of food. It is not hunger, but the trained or perhaps the genius chef who is the best cook.

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<sup>3</sup> See Sweeney 2012. Sweeney observes that Brillat-Savarin had argued (implicitly against Kant) that taste and smell have equal right to be objects of reflective hedonic experience as sight and hearing.



Moreover, there would be a contradiction in the very notion of everyday aesthetics if it were tied to the agreeable as Kant defines it. If we are going to use the concept of “the agreeable” for everyday aesthetics we need something more like what we mean by it today, recognizing that the agreeable without any element of reflection or possibility of judgment is rare. Nor are judgments of agreeableness completely subjective. When I say that something is agreeable I expect at least some to agree.

### 3 The Agreeable in General

In §7 Kant speaks of the “agreeable in general” (CPJ, p. 98 [Ak. V, p. 213]), an idea that undercuts the very distinction he wishes to maintain between the agreeable and the beautiful. The last paragraph of §7, in which the phrase “agreeable in general” appears, comes right after his condemnation of the notion that every man has his own taste (CPJ, p. 98 [Ak. V, p. 213]). He wishes to force a choice between the radical relativism implied by that statement and his own universalism. And yet he weakens this move in the next paragraph by allowing for an intermediate possibility. As he puts it, “Nevertheless, one also finds with regard to the agreeable that unanimity in their judging of it may be encountered among people, in view of which taste is denied of some of them but conceded to others [...] as a faculty for judging with regard to the agreeable in general” (CPJ, p. 98 [Ak. V, p. 213]). When we find something agreeable in this sense we have a “judgment in relation to sociability insofar as it rests on empirical rules” (CPJ, p. 98 [Ak. V, p. 213]). Such a judgment is not *a priori* or transcendental, but is the kind of thing an empiricist like Hume or a pragmatist like Dewey would sanction. Perhaps Kant thought that this phenomenon supports his universalism through opposing relativism. But it could equally offer a third option, one that does not carry with it the metaphysical baggage of universalism.

Relevant to our topic Kant speaks of “taste” here as having a connection with “the everyday” (that is, in this case, with the domestic art of entertaining). For he says, “Thus one says of someone who knows how to entertain his guests with agreeable things (of enjoyment through all the senses), so that they are all pleased, that he has taste” (CPJ, §7, p. 98 [Ak. V, p. 213]). Of course this, for Kant, is only a relative and sense-based taste, not one based on reflection. (Normally, when he speaks of “taste” he is speaking of the latter). But, contra Kant, it is a false dilemma that *either* enjoyment is entirely through the senses *or* entirely through the mind. And in response to Kant’s claim that the universality here is only comparative, and that it follows empirical rules that are only “general”, one could argue that, after the Darwinian revolution the distinction between the

beautiful and the agreeable is softened, that taste (as we see it today) involves both sense and reflection, and that the idea of a *general* taste is sufficient bulwark against the relativist view that everyone has his or her own *equally justified* taste.

Of course, everyone *has* his or her own taste in the sense that everyone judges differently. But this is true throughout the realm of taste, as is also the (only apparently) competing idea that some judgments are better than others. We can still say that some taste is *more* sensual and some is *more* reflective. And we can even agree that saying that something is beautiful puts it on a pedestal, although we could not seriously “demand” (CPJ, p. 98 [Ak. V, p. 213]), as Kant does, that all others have the same sense of beauty we do. When we put something on a pedestal we expect and hope that others will agree, particularly those we respect and admire. Nor do we particularly care that those we do not respect do not agree. In sum, much of what Kant says here can be made useful for everyday aesthetics, but only if we reject, or at least soften, the dichotomy between sensuous and reflective taste.

## 4 Disinterestedness Opening the Door

However, in everyday aesthetics the most *common* point of debate over Kant concerns the notion of disinterestedness. Aesthetic attitude theorists of the mid-twentieth century in general agreed with Kant’s idea that disinterested perception is necessary for aesthetic experience. And this led Jerome Stolnitz to argue that we could take an aesthetic attitude towards anything (Stolnitz 1960, pp. 32–42) and Paul Ziff to argue that anything can be viewed aesthetically (Ziff 1997). This implied a wider range of aesthetics than hitherto: it could now include not only art and nature but also such everyday things as a well-cooked meal or a well-tended garden, and even everyday phenomena that do not show skill, for example torn posters on a wall. The idea was that anything may be viewed in a disinterested way. Kant himself might have agreed since he speaks of what he calls “favor” as unlike inclination in allowing us the freedom to turn anything into an object of pleasure (CPJ, §5, p. 95 [Ak. V, p. 210]). If Kant, Stolnitz and Ziff are right, then everyday aesthetic phenomena should be included in the realm of aesthetics, but only when perceived in a disinterested way.

However, if one brings in the everyday by way of disinterestedness (and “beauty” defined in terms of that) many things that we might consider to fall within everyday aesthetics would be excluded. We would lose the things that Kant calls “generally agreeable” and we would lose whatever is agreeable but also has some element of reflection and judgment.

Nonetheless, there is considerable overlap between what we today would include in everyday aesthetics and what Kant would subsume under the category of the beautiful. For example, Kant talks about wallpaper as an example of free beauty, and surely wallpaper is part of our everyday lives (or at least was in earlier times). Similarly, when he speaks of the *à la grecque* style in women's fashion as a pure beauty he is not talking about fashion as fine art, but rather of a pattern that imitates something found on Greek vases, one that gives pleasure through its intricate design (CPJ, §16, p. 115 [Ak. V, p. 229]). The existence of such things blocks identifying the everyday with the agreeable.

However, much of what Kant would have included under the agreeable would also find itself in the realm of the everyday. The smell of a rose or of perfume would be two examples. Indeed, everyday aestheticians have often championed the “lower senses”, for example touch and smell, which Kant associates with the agreeable.<sup>4</sup> The problem might be resolved by admitting into everyday aesthetics not only things that are beautiful found in everyday life but also at least some things that are agreeable, such as a fine bath or scratching an itch, as described by Sherri Irvin (Irvin 2008). On this view, one part of everyday aesthetics is disinterested and the other is not. Although many would exclude such things as a fine bath I would argue that they *should* be allowed as long as there is *some* reflective element; that is, as long as they are not just purely sensuous pleasures. But if we keep Kant's agreeable/beautiful dichotomy in this way the category of everyday aesthetics ends up being made up of two very different things.

Moreover, the distinction just does not work if it is simply a matter of classifying things, i. e. as agreeable or as beautiful. Kant's saying that Canary wine is agreeable to some (CPJ, §7, p. 97 [Ak. V, p. 212]), whereas roses are pure beauties implies that roses are *classified* as beauties. However, he also says that the judgment “The rose is agreeable” (to smell) is an aesthetic judgment, although not one of taste (CPJ, §7, p. 100 [Ak. V, p. 215]). So it seems that the rose could be approached either as something agreeable or as something beautiful.<sup>5</sup>

Earlier I suggested that the disinterestedness condition of pure beauty allowed for anything to be considered beautiful, and that this opened up aesthetics to include everyday phenomena. However, many everyday aestheticians as well as aestheticians of nature have been critical of the concept of disinterestedness. Arnold Berleant is a key example, as also Yuriko Saito (Berleant 2003; Saito

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<sup>4</sup> Functionalists like Allen Carlson and Glen Parsons reject the aesthetic value of these senses. Jane Forsey takes a similar line.

<sup>5</sup> Rogerson mentions how the flower can be approached as an aesthetic idea as well (Rogerson 2008, pp. 45–47).

2007). Saito thinks that Kant believes that free beauty is “more legitimate” than dependent beauty, and that he requires us to “surgically remove” functional value in order to appreciate the everyday (Saito 2007, p. 26). This is not an uncommon interpretation. Yet Kant does not explicitly say that dependent beauty is less legitimate, and he can be seen as, at least later in the text, during the discussion of fine art, giving it considerable legitimacy.

## 5 Dependent Beauty and Everyday Aesthetics

Kant distinguishes dependent from free beauty in the context of his discussion of the form of finality in §16 of the “Third Moment”.<sup>6</sup> Dependent beauty presupposes a concept of the perfection of the object. (What makes a knife perfect? It cuts well. “Perfection of the object” here stands for performing its function perfectly). It is here that Kant gives his examples of free beauty: viz, designs *à la grecque*, foliage, wallpaper, music without words, and, of course, flowers. And he here gives examples of dependent beauty: a church, a horse, a man and a woman.

But is this a matter of classification of objects or of attitude? Kant *appears* to be classifying objects when he says that “flowers are free natural beauties” (CPJ, §16, p. 114 [Ak. V, p. 229]) and also when he says that beauty is “ascribed to objects that stand under the concept of a particular end” (CPJ, §16, p. 114; Ak. V, p. 229). But a flower can be classified in either way.<sup>7</sup> His point is that when one judges a flower as beautiful one “pays no attention” to its natural end. Still, if one did pay attention to its natural end, perhaps it *would* be a dependent beauty, or rather, would be seen in terms of dependent beauty. Whether it is a free beauty or a dependent beauty seems, then, to depend on attitude.

No one doubts that dependent beauty falls within the realm of everyday aesthetics, at least some of the time. But does it cover the entire field? Glenn Parsons and Allen Carlson think it does. That is, they see everyday aesthetics entire-

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<sup>6</sup> Guyer uses “adherent” beauty in his translation whereas Meredith uses “dependent”. I prefer “dependent” which Guyer himself has used (1979, pp. 246–249). The meaning of “dependent” is clear: i. e. depends on a concept. “Adherent” means “stuck to” which implies either that dependent beauty is just added onto pure beauty or that it adheres to or is stuck to the concept upon which it is dependent. The only reason for using “adherent” is that Kant gives a Latin equivalent for *anhängende* (attaching) beauty which is “*pulchritudo adhaerens*” which is commonly translated as adhering beauty. But in §16 he does not talk about being stuck on a concept or the vague “being attached to” a concept. He only talks about presupposing a concept.

<sup>7</sup> Admittedly, one could say that the flower as object of smell is agreeable and as object of sight is beautiful.

ly in terms of functional beauty, a concept very close to that of dependent beauty (Parsons/Carlson 2008, pp. 21–24).<sup>8</sup> For them, a thing’s function is integral to its aesthetic character, its aesthetic qualities emerging from its function. In short: something that is functionally beautiful looks fit for its function. They (unfairly, I think) see Kant’s theory as involving a decline in the idea of functional beauty (a turn away from previous theories of beauty) since he holds that a pure judgment of taste, which he favors, is independent of any application of a concept. They observe that the dominant current interpretations of Kant do not allow the idea of beauty as fitness. For example, Paul Guyer argues that, for Kant, the dependent beauty of a church means not that its fitness for worship makes it beautiful but that its function constrains what we can appreciate as beautiful (Guyer 1997, pp. 219–220).<sup>9</sup> Fitness for function is not considered here a source of beauty but rather only serves to restrict aesthetic pleasure.

My interpretation is somewhat different. When Kant argues that combining the good (i.e. dependent beauty) with beauty (in the sense of pure beauty) *mars* the purity of the good he is not privileging pure beauty over functional fit. The reverse might even be the case. This can be seen in his key examples. Something intended to be a church has its own beauty based on its fit for function, and this would be marred by adding much that would “be pleasing in the intuition of it” (CPJ, §16, p. 115 [Ak. V, p. 230]), for example the decorative elements that would be found in Catholic churches of the time. Similarly, the figure of a human being is distorted by the addition of the “light but regular lines” of Maori tattoos, although these lines would be quite beautiful if taken independently from the bodies they decorate. Finally, a warrior is only beautiful when fit for function, having a warlike appearance, not beautified by way of a softening of lines (CPJ, §16, p. 115 [Ak. V, p. 230]).<sup>10</sup> In these cases fitness for function makes something beautiful. When *purely* beautiful features are added in a non-functional way they can only detract from that beauty.

Kant further thinks that taste “gains” by a combination of intellectual and aesthetic delight in that rules can then be ascribed to it. These, however, are not rules of taste, but “merely rules for the unification of taste with reason, i.e., of the beautiful with the good [...]” (CPJ, §16, p. 74 [Ak. V, p. 230]). Such rules allow taste to be used by reason to bring about a mental state that is self-sustaining, probably a harmony of the imagination and understanding. Also, the *subjective* universality of taste can be used to support a mode of

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<sup>8</sup> See Jane Forsey as another philosopher who stresses function (Forsey 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Guyer modifies his view in Guyer 2002. See also Tuna 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Kant did not seem to consider that the Maori tattoos might in fact be intended to enhance the wearer’s warlike character.

thought which has *objective* universal validity (for example, moral truth, or accurate definition of universals), which could only otherwise be supported with great difficulty. So, here, taste is helping out reason.

But, Kant adds: “Strictly speaking [...], perfection does not gain by beauty, nor does beauty gain by perfection” (CPJ, §16, p. 115 [Ak. V, p. 231]). Strictly speaking, dependent beauty is not a matter of combination of perfection and taste (contrary to what some contemporary commentators seem to believe). What *gains* is our mind as a whole, for when we compare the representation to the object (what it is meant to be) “we cannot avoid at the same time holding it together with the subject”, and the result is that “the entire faculty of the powers of representation gains if both states of mind are in agreement” (CPJ, §16, p. 115 [Ak. V, p. 231]). Also, in matters of dependent beauty we are compelled to look to the subjective side of our experience, and our minds thereby gain in representative power through the harmony between the two sides, i.e. the Objective and the Subjective, or Understanding and Imagination, depending on how this is interpreted.<sup>11</sup>

In the last paragraph of §16 Kant argues that a judgment of taste of an object with a “definite internal end” would only be pure if the judge has no concept of the end, or abstracts from it. Such a person would be giving a correct judgment of taste but could be accused by another, who is thinking of the purpose and the concept of the judged thing, as having false taste. Nonetheless, both would be judging correctly, one according to what is present to his/her senses and the other according to what is present to these thoughts. Many critical debates can be resolved, Kant believes, by recognizing this legitimate difference. Similarly, in the domain of everyday aesthetics, dependent and pure beauty may be reconciled although not, strictly, combined, and it is therefore problematic simply to identify everyday aesthetics with the functional.

## 6 The Ideal of Beauty and Everyday Aesthetics

Paragraph 17, “The Ideal of Beauty”, provides additional resources for our exploration of Kant and everyday aesthetics. This section is most notable for its distinction between the normal and the rational idea of beauty. The first is purely mechanical, and almost comical in its identification of beauty with the average

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**11** As Tuna observes there are two dominant interpretations of Kant on adherent beauty: the conjunctive view and incorporation view (incorporating a judgment of perfection into a judgment of taste) (Tuna 2018). Based on my analysis here I believe that Kant holds neither of these views.

in all things. The second seems to overcome the first in stressing the *inner* nature of beauty, a notion that anticipates Kant's later discussion of aesthetic ideas in relation to fine art. §17 elaborates on the perception that, when it comes to humans, inner beauty (the way they visibly express moral ideas) is more important than external beauty.

The section begins by reiterating that there can be no objective rule of taste, and yet the sensation of satisfaction or dissatisfaction attending the object considered beautiful or ugly is universally communicable in the sense that we can expect, or even demand, that everyone experience it as being beautiful or as having the same attendant sensation. The universal communicability of this feeling provides an empirical criterion of taste confirmed by examples based on deep-seated grounds which underlie the agreement in judging the forms of the objects given (CPJ, §17, p. 116 [Ak. V, pp. 231–232])

Kant then says that we consider some products of taste “exemplary”, a term also found in the section on fine art relating to products of genius (CPJ, §17, p. 116 [Ak. V, p. 232]). Also, as with the genius later, it turns out that taste cannot be acquired by imitating others, but must be original (CPJ, §17, p. 116 [Ak. V, p. 232]). Further, the highest model, which is also “the archetype of taste”, is “a mere idea”, one that we all must create in our own minds and which we use to judge objects of taste (CPJ, §17, p. 116 [Ak. V, p. 232]). Or rather, it is not so much an idea as an ideal which represents something as adequate to an idea (CPJ, §17, p. 117 [Ak. V, p. 232]). Again, we find a parallel here with his later discussion of fine art, and as I will argue later, I see this section as preliminary to or even practicing for that later discussion. Creating the internal model of beauty is interestingly like creating a work of genius, one that exhibits what Kant calls “aesthetic ideas” as discussed in §49, although here the ideal is based not on art but on other humans through whose physical features shines moral beauty. Note that this applies only to the “rational idea” as developed later in §17, and not to the “normal idea”. Here, the creation of the ideal of beauty is a matter not of art aesthetics but of everyday aesthetics, and yet the aesthetics of fine art, the art of genius, strangely operates in a very similar way. However, as we shall see when discussing fine art and everyday aesthetics, it is not so strange.

Kant then tells us that the beauty “for which an idea is to be sought” must be “fixed by a concept of objective purposiveness” (CPJ, §17, p. 117 [Ak. V, p. 232]). As a result, it is not aesthetic as ordinarily understood. He had already undercut or modified his original idea of the aesthetic as pure by introducing the notion of dependent beauty. Now he indicates that the ideal of beauty “must not belong to the object of an entirely pure judgment of taste” as it is “partly intellectualized” (CPJ, §17, p. 117 [Ak. V, pp. 232–233]). For the ideal of beauty to form grounds for judgment there has to be an idea of reason (for example “God” or “immortality”)



that can provide the basis for these grounds (CPJ, §17, p. 117 [Ak. V, p. 233]). And this idea determines its internal possibility *a priori*. Hence, he argues, there cannot be an ideal of beautiful flowers, furniture or views. There cannot even be an ideal of a beauty “dependent on definite ends” as in a beautiful house, tree or garden, since their concepts are not sufficiently defined. The ideal of beauty must be related to something that has the purpose of its existence in itself. And this can only be “man” in the sense of “humans”, since only man can “determine his ends himself through reason” (CPJ, §17, p. 117 [Ak. V, p. 233]). Man alone admits “of an ideal of beauty” since his intelligence alone “is capable of the ideal of *perfection*” (CPJ, §17, p. 117 [Ak. V, p. 233]).

Several of the inferences here are, of course, open to question. Why introduce the notion of humanity as the ideal of beauty at this point? The reason seems to be that only humans are connected in this way to the supersensible realm, i.e. the realm of soul, God and immortality, the realm that needs to be supposed to explain our freedom and responsibility, but which cannot be proved to exist. But, again, since we contemporary anti-dualists cannot accept this, there must be another path to usefulness of the notion for us, to which I will return.

Now there are two “factors” in all of this, one being the “*normal idea*” and the other “the *rational idea*”. Kant spends a lot of time on the “*normal idea*”, but what he is really interested in (i.e. as explanation of the ideal of beauty) is the *rational idea*, to which he devotes a short paragraph at the end of the section. I take the “*normal idea*” to be a highly limited empirical approach to the ideal of beauty. Kant defines it as “an individual intuition (of the imagination)” representing “the standard for judging it as a thing belonging to a particular species of animal” (CPJ, §17, p. 118 [Ak. V, p. 233]). The “*rational idea*”, by contrast, is one that focuses on the “ends of humanity” (CPJ, §17, p. 118 [Ak. V, p. 233]) insofar as capable of sensuous representation (CPJ, §17, p. 118 [Ak. V, p. 233]), and translates this into a principle for judging man’s outward form.

The *normal idea* is taken from experience. It is the universal norm that serves as the basis for estimating each individual of a species having its basis in the judging subject. It is a concrete image that serves as a model. How is it brought about? Kant turns to a psychological explanation. Here he describes the imagination as reproducing “the image and shape of an object” (CPJ, §17, p. 118 [Ak. V, p. 234]) from a great number of objects of different kinds or even the same kind, and, by comparison, unconsciously letting one image be superimposed onto another thus coming up with an average which can serve as a common standard. For example, we see a thousand full-grown men (as all adults have seen at least), compare their sizes, and judge a “*normal size*” by way of letting the images of these “be superimposed on one another” (CPJ, §17, p. 118 [Ak.



V, p. 234]) to creature “the stature for a beautiful man” (CPJ, §17, p. 118 [Ak. V, p. 234]). What Kant calls the “dynamic effect [...] on the organ of inner sense” produces the norm (CPJ, §17, p. 119 [Ak. V, p. 234]). As he admits, the same result can be arrived at mechanically by adding together a thousand noses, for example, and dividing the sum by a thousand, and then doing the same for the eyes, mouth, etc.

Yet how can anyone take seriously the idea that a mere combination of average-shaped organs makes a man or woman beautiful? Kant himself does not see this as determining true beauty but only as indicating an empirical process that gives us a relatively shallow notion of beauty, which, as he observes, works differently in different countries. The normal idea is relative to the country or region in which the comparison is made. Thus, Kant notes, the “European” and the “Chinese person” would have a different normal idea of beauty (CPJ, §17, p. 118 [Ak. V, p. 234]).

Kant turns briefly from this relativism to talk of an “image for the whole species, [...] which nature used as the archetype underlying her productions” (CPJ, §17, p. 118 [Ak. V, p. 234]). But he is still talking in terms of the normal idea. The point of this move is that the issue of normal vs. rational ideal is not just one of relativism: nature itself operates according to a normal idea. Yet, Kant argues, the normal idea is “by no means the entire *archetype* of *beauty* in this species” (CPJ, §17, p. 119 [Ak. V, p. 235]). It is only a necessary condition for correctness in the mental presentation of humanity.

He gives the *Doryphorus* of Polycleitus as an example of such (merely) correct representation of man, one which does not reach beyond the normal idea. Yet a presentation of this sort “is merely academically correct” (CPJ, §17, p. 119 [Ak. V, p. 235]). It does not please by its beauty but simply by not violating the condition of correctness necessary for beauty. Moreover, it fails to give us anything “characteristic”. I take this to mean that it fails to get at something essential to a particular being, as one does get in a portrait by Rembrandt. So, for Kant, we need to move beyond that which is merely considered correct to find the true ideal of beauty. Interestingly, in relation to my previous comments, our examples here come from fine art, even though the subject matter is everyday life.

The last paragraph contains the key to §17. As Kant previously observed, we can only expect the ideal in the human figure (as opposed to any other part of nature or in the human artefactual world which could be represented), and this ideal “consists in the expression of the *moral*” (CPJ, §17, p. 120 [Ak. V, p. 235]) which provides the basis for the object itself pleasing universally, and not just for it being correct. What we are looking for is “The visible expression of moral ideas, which inwardly govern human beings” (CPJ, §17, p. 120 [Ak. V,

p. 235]). Although we can get this from experience, “the idea of the highest purposiveness” in man found in such virtues as “goodness of soul, or purity, or strength, or repose”, is only visible in the body (or portrait, for that matter) through a union of “pure ideas of reason” with “great force of imagination” (CPJ, §17, p. 120 [Ak. V, p. 235]). This is interestingly like what we find later (in §49) when we see what the genius artist is able to accomplish with his or her aesthetic ideas. This further step away from the empirical is required not only in the object itself but in the perceiving subject and, Kant insists, in the creator of the work. We know, finally, that this ideal of beauty escapes the realm of the merely sensible if the satisfaction is not infected by “sensible charm”. (Pragmatists, of course, cannot go along with this dualist move.) Kant also holds that this judgment is not “purely aesthetic” since we take a “great interest” in it because of its connection with morality, although this is not a bad thing for him.

§17 is immediately followed by the moral of the entire Third Moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful, i. e. the “Definition of the beautiful inferred from this third moment”, which is that “*Beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it without representation of an end*” (CPJ, §17, p. 120 [Ak. V, p. 235]) This is ironic since the ideal of beauty *does* involve representation of an end, as does dependent beauty. However the representation here is not what Kant would call a “logical” one. That is, it does not involve application of a definable concept. Rather, it is the way that the moral qualities, or inner spirit, shines through some person or persons or, as I am suggesting, through some great portraits or historical paintings. Think of David’s *Oath of the Horatii* (1785) where the virtue of courage shines through action, but also, perhaps more appropriately (as suggested earlier), the portraits of Rembrandt, where an inner light of personal character, sometimes of tragic sadness, as well as deep humanity, seems to shine through.<sup>12</sup>

I want now to apply the notion of the ideal of beauty to a portion of everyday aesthetics, i. e. our appreciation of the face of another. Human beauty is one of the most important forms of beauty that we encounter on an everyday basis. One might say of course that human beauty is rare. But this is only so if one accepts some mathematical standard of objective or universal beauty. It is not rare at all if we look at our own lives. We see beauty in humans every day, for example in the face of a beloved child or in that of a lover. In his recent book on the soul, Roger Scruton focuses on faces and, in doing so, he makes us aware of the interpersonal dimension of everyday aesthetics. As I look into the face of another

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**12** Roger Scruton brings up Rembrandt in *The Soul of the World* (Scruton 2014).

whom I love (and who is awake) she in turn looks into mine. Her beauty is enhanced by her look, especially her look as I perceive it.

As with so many other things, everyday aesthetics is illuminated here by focusing on fine art. Scruton asks, when I face myself in a mirror, how can I know that this is me? He thinks, this the same question Rembrandt explored in his self-portraits. Similarly, turning to the everyday life experience of looking into the face of a lover or friend, one confronts an “individual center of consciousness, [a] free being who reveals herself in the face as another like me” (Scruton 2014, p. 97).

Surprisingly, Scruton does not mention beauty or aesthetics in this regard.<sup>13</sup> However, it is easy to see that really seeing the beloved in her face, or really seeing the face of the beloved, which is the same thing, is aesthetically charged: it is seeing her as if she were a self-portrait of the sort Rembrandt produced.

## 7 The Irregular Aesthetics of the English Garden

“The General Remark on the First Section of the Analytic”, which comes right after the Fourth Moment and at the end of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, also raises some questions in relation to everyday aesthetics. Some might think, perhaps based on Pythagorean or Platonic assumptions, that the most beautiful things in everyday life are simple geometrical forms and objects that are designed based on these. However, Kant observes, taste is not needed to appreciate such things. If we are figuring the size of a plot of land, we need the simplest kinds of regular figures. But whatever delight we get here does not depend on how the figure strikes the eye. Rather it rests on the general usefulness of the figure. On the other hand, a judgment of taste combines delight with “mere *consideration* of the object” regardless of the purpose (CPJ, p. 125 [Ak. V, p. 242]).

Regularity allows us to have a concept of the object and also is needed to grasp it as a single representation with determinate form, which is useful for knowledge. Apprehending such regularity does bring delight, although not the free entertainment of the mental powers characteristic of beauty. Now, “in a thing that is possible only through an intention [e. g. a building] [...] the regularity that consists in symmetry must express the unity of the intuition, which accompanies the concept of the end” (CPJ, p. 126 [Ak. V, p. 242]). This seems at first

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<sup>13</sup> This is surprising since Scruton is such a major figure not only in aesthetics but in everyday aesthetics. He may have assumed that this point is obvious or that this is not the best place to develop the thought.

just to be a return to the concept of dependent beauty. But here the focus is on a regularity consisting of symmetry and easily cognized (for example, mathematically) and not the purpose the building serves.

Kant then, surprisingly, says,

But where only a free play of the powers of representation (although under the condition that the understanding does not thereby suffer any offense) is to be maintained, in pleasure gardens, in the decoration of rooms, in all sorts of tasteful utensils and the like, regularity that comes across as constraint is to be avoided as far as possible (CPJ, p. 126 [Ak. V, p. 242]).

So the overall theme of this section is the disadvantage of regularity, and particularly of symmetry, for the purpose of taste in everyday life. From this, Kant goes on to advocate English taste in gardens (which at that time were much less “regular” than French or German gardens) as well as “baroque taste in furniture” (CPJ, p. 126 [Ak. V, p. 242]). He prefers these even where imagination is pushed almost to the “grotesque”. For, here, “taste can demonstrate its greatest perfection in projects of the imagination”. Indeed, he finds stiff regularity “of itself contrary to taste” since it cannot provide lasting entertainment. By contrast, if imagination gets ample play it is “always new to us” (CPJ, p. 126 [Ak. V, pp. 242–243]).

Marsden, an explorer of Sumatra, thought that the lack of beauty of an irregular jungle can be seen when it is contrasted to the delight that comes with arriving at a regular-rowed pepper garden, and that irregular beauty is only pleasing as a change to those whose eyes have had too much of regular beauty (CPJ, p. 126 [Ak. V, p. 243]). But, for Kant, to spend a day in a pepper garden, once the understanding “has been disposed by means of the regularity to the order that it always requires” overly constrains the imagination (CPJ, p. 126 [Ak. V, p. 243]). It becomes boring. By contrast, nature, which has no artificial rules, supplies “lasting nourishment” for taste. Similarly, he argued, we cannot reduce bird song to a musical rule. It contains “more that is entertaining for taste” than a human voice that does follow such rules, and we grow tired more quickly of repetitions in the human case than in that of the bird (CPJ, p. 126 [Ak. V, p. 243]).

## 8 Leaving the Everyday Delights of Civilization for Nature: Intellectual Interest in the Beautiful

Kant argues that virtuosi in taste are not necessarily moral, and there is no inner connection between feeling for the beautiful *in art* and morality, although there is with regard to feeling for beauty in nature if there is an immediate interest in

that beauty (the forms, not the charms) and not just taste in judging it (CPJ, §42, p. 178 [Ak. V, p. 298]). In a manner much like Rousseau, he imagines a man of taste with respect to judgment of art who “gladly leaves the room in which are to be found those beauties that sustain vanity and at best social joys and turns to the beautiful in nature, in order as it were to find here an ecstasy for his spirit in a line of thought that he can never fully develop [...]” (CPJ, §42, p. 179 [Ak. V, pp. 299–300]). He considers such a person to have a beautiful soul.

What exactly is Kant thinking of when he speaks here of turning away from everyday delights of beauty that sustain vanity to the beautiful in nature? Notice that this move allows for appreciation of everyday life aesthetics insofar as it is not devoted to the delights of vanity and is closer to the delights of nature. However, he is probably thinking about relatively pristine nature, for he speaks of the nature lover as regarding “the beautiful shape of a wildflower, a bird, an insect, etc.” (CPJ, §42, p. 178 [Ak. V, p. 299]). He clearly insists that whomever uses natural beauties for personal adornment does not show a habit of mind conducive to morality. Nor does he have much to say for room decoration (CPJ, §42, pp. 178–179 [Ak. V, p. 299]), although this seems inconsistent with his advocacy of nearly grotesque furniture a few pages earlier.

Along these lines, he tells a story of a trick played on the nature lover: planting artificial flowers in the ground. Once the dupe finds out they are artificial he can no longer take an “immediate” aesthetic interest in them. All of this would incline one to think Kant has little positive to say about everyday aesthetics, especially when he grudgingly allows “another [interest], namely the interest of vanity in decorating his room with [artificial flowers and artfully carved birds] for the eyes of others” (CPJ, §42, p. 179 [Ak. V, p. 299]). “Vanity” is not used as a term of praise here.

Nonetheless, Kant is not always so negative about the everyday, as we saw with the English garden and the near-grotesque furniture. Also, as we shall see, personal adornment and room decoration can fall under what he later calls agreeable arts.

It is striking that there is a development here from a thin to a thicker form of everyday aesthetics. The thin sort is oriented simply towards the delights of the agreeable. The generally agreeable is thicker. Functional beauty is even thicker. The ideal of beauty is thicker again in that it brings in human virtue. Once we see the beauties of everyday life in terms of intellectual interest in the beautiful there is a very thick relationship between aesthetics of everyday life and morality. The thickest form of all will be found in the mediation of everyday aesthetics through the aesthetic idea generated by fine art.

## 9 Agreeable Arts

In §44 Kant distinguishes between agreeable and beautiful art. Agreeable art entails that the accompanying pleasure be entirely sensuous. By contrast, in fine art, the representations are considered as modes of cognition. Under the agreeable arts is included “all those charms that can gratify the company at a table, such as telling entertaining stories, getting the company talking in an open and lively manner, creating by means of jokes and laughter a certain tone of merriment” (CPJ, §44, p. 184 [Ak. V, p. 305]). So this, at the level of art, directly parallels the sense of “taste” associated with the generally agreeable, previously mentioned. The art here is in achieving “momentary entertainment” and not anything subject for reflection (CPJ, §44, p. 184 [Ak. V, p. 305]). Kant adds to this category first the art of table arrangement, and second, music intended merely as “agreeable noise” that fosters both “the mood of joyfulness” and free-flowing conversation, i.e. what we would call “background music” (CPJ, §44, pp. 184–185 [Ak. V, p. 305]).

He adds to his list of agreeable arts the kind of play (he must have been thinking of party games) whose only interest is to make time pass. He then contrasts all of this with beautiful art which, he says, unlike agreeable art, “promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication” (CPJ, §44, p. 185 [Ak. V, p. 306]). In fine art the enjoyment comes from reflection, not sensation.<sup>14</sup>

But just as we should not be tempted to simply subsume everyday aesthetics under the agreeable or under dependent beauty we should also not simply subsume it under the agreeable arts. Its place in the world is a bit more complicated than that, as we saw when discussing the ideal of beauty.

## 10 Everyday Aesthetics and Fine Art

This leads us finally to the relation between everyday aesthetics and Kant’s notion of fine art. At first it would seem that these would be unrelated. However, as I have indicated, the fine artist, the “genius”, is someone who is able to look at

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**14** One wonders why a well-produced dinner party of the sort Kant describes would not itself advance the culture of the mental powers in the interests of social communication. I suspect he was looking for a more serious form of social communication: maybe a good seminar rather than good dinner table conversation. But, again, wouldn’t a continuum work better here than a rigid distinction?

the world with a certain attitude, one that aestheticizes even the most ordinary of objects. Think, for instance, of Chardin, one of the greatest painters of daily life. The notion of “aesthetic ideas” is of particular importance here. Whereas fine art itself is outside the domain of everyday aesthetics, the world as perceived, and appropriated, by the artist is not. Kant argues that “The imagination (as a productive faculty of cognition) is, namely, very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it” (CPJ, §49, p. 192 [Ak. V, p. 314]). The material supplied to the imagination by actual nature is the material of everyday life, for example street scenes, domestic arrangements of fruit, and rural landscapes.

The imagination enhances the boringly ordinary: or, as Kant puts it, “We entertain ourselves with it when experience seems too mundane to us” (CPJ, §49, p. 192 [Ak. V, p. 314]). He speaks of a “remodeling” of experience based both on analogical as well as rational principals, these being “as natural to us as those in accordance with which the understanding apprehends empirical nature” (CPJ, §49, p. 192 [Ak. V, p. 314]). This is a use of the imagination quite different from the empirical use. In using imagination in this creative way we feel free from “the law of association” insofar as the material of life is “transformed by us” into something that “steps beyond nature” (CPJ, §49, p. 192 [Ak. V, p. 314]). The representations in the mind that result are called “ideas” since they strive for something beyond the bounds of experience and seek to present “rational concepts”. That is, to repeat the title of my book on everyday aesthetics, the ordinary is perceived as extraordinary.

## 11 Conclusion

Kant provides resources for understanding everyday aesthetics which go beyond classification of the everyday within the domain of the agreeable, with coralling a realm of the everyday within the beautiful and the disinterested, or with identifying everyday aesthetics with dependent beauty. We end up instead with a multifarious usage of Kant for everyday aesthetics. Of course all of this needs some modification to work in the non-dualist pragmatist framework typical of contemporary everyday aesthetics. We find that the everyday includes not only aspects of the agreeable (especially the generally agreeable) but also instances both of pure and of dependent beauty. We also find the everyday in the concept of the ideal of beauty, especially in regard to our finding faces of others beautiful. Other areas of application are in the rejection of stiff regularity and in the notion of agreeable arts. The aesthete who leaves the salon and goes out into nature may reject not only fine art but also artifice and decoration, and if these are

not devoted to vanity they can function as nature. These objects and practices also play a role in the agreeable arts. Moreover, the genius artist looks at the world, i.e. at nature and everyday life, and what he sees and makes are treated as expressing aesthetic ideas, especially in the process of creating a work of art which represents those things. Rembrandt does this, for example, when observing and painting his beloved wife, which refers us back to the ideal of beauty. Surprisingly, it turns out that in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* everyday aesthetics develops from the primitive to the more sophisticated, and, as I have suggested above, from the thin to the very thick, as we move from the agreeable to pure beauty to dependent beauty to the ideal of beauty to intellectual interest in beauty and finally to the expression of aesthetic ideas based on the materials of nature and everyday life. The best use of Kant's ideas for everyday aesthetics would move beyond a narrow focus on one of these ways to recognize a complex layering of ways based on these various dimensions.

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