

THE COMPASS OF REASON: INTELLECTUAL INTEREST IN THE BEAUTIFUL
AS A MODE OF ORIENTATION

By

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Philosophy

December, 2004

Nashville, Tennessee

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To my family and friends

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I commend many individuals for their support on this project, especially since this dissertation has evolved in Tennessee, Maine, Arizona, California and Washington D.C. Primarily, I would like to thank Dr. Gregg Horowitz, for supporting my writing through an odyssey of jobs and states; he taught me the practice of pushing my thinking beyond its outermost boundaries.

I thank Vanderbilt Philosophy faculty for allowing PhD candidates to pursue their calling, giving us liberty to explore dissertation topics that build upon our prior work, and engaging us as comrades in scholarship. At Vanderbilt, I was thankful to have a number of mentors who taught me -- with excruciating attention to detail -- Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, among others. I thank Dr. John Compton, Dr. Lenn Goodman, Dr. John Lachs, Dr. John Sallis, Dr. Charles Scott, Dr. Henry Teloh and Dr. David Wood for their inspiration. I thank Judy Thompson, whose warm, prompting emails regarding all sorts of business kept me on task. Stella Thompson must also be recognized for her encouraging and supportive presence throughout my coursework.

Certainly, throughout preliminary exams, coursework, as well as the dissertation process, I have depended on my friendship with Jennifer K. Thompson and Daniel Hargrove. Their quick wits were a welcome antidote to the challenges of graduate school. I thank Valerie and Andrew Fiala for their deep friendship, in Ultimate and philosophy.

In the intervening years, a number of experiences contributed directly to my thinking on Kant. These communities shared powerful, engaging and creative intellects. Some of these individuals include the 1997 Belmont University Philosophy Department (Dr. Shannon French, Dr. Ronnie Littlejohn and Dr. Mike Awalt), Vanderbilt's Rousseau Reading Group (Dr. Ann O'Byrne, Bob Richardson and Chris Helminski), the 1998 University of Maine Philosophy Department (Dr. Christa Acampora, Dr. Mike Howard, Dr. Roger King, and Dr. Jeff White), 1996-8 Phillips Academy Summer Sessions (specifically, Phyllis Pottle), 2004 staff of The American Academy for Liberal Education (Dr. William Rice, Meghan Cotter, Dr. Jeff Wallin and Laura Wallin), and The Oxbow School (Stephen Thomas, Amy King, Maria DePina, Anne Milne, Sean Wood, and Gwyn Welles). I make special mention of The Oxbow School. Developing the

Oxbow program in conjunction with founders, trustees, faculty, visiting artists and staff, contributed importantly to my evolving position on art, education and aesthetics.

During my graduate work, subsequent teaching and administrative positions, I have maintained sanity by playing Ultimate Frisbee. Ultimate players bring competitive edge, humor and spirit of the game to all aspects of their lives. I recognize the players on the following teams for inspiring me: Nashville FLO, U Maine Blackfly, That's What She Said, Hot Valley of Love and Solid Gold. I especially thank members of the 2002, 2003 and 2004 Solid Gold teams for inspiring me to balance hard work with intense play.

I shared four of these teams with Rick Ziegler. I am extremely thankful for his support and encouragement through my PhD process. Rick made the final years of the journey more rewarding and entertaining than I expected.

This dissertation would never have emerged without the questions, curiosity and determination placed in me by my parents, John and Belinda Cunningham. Their engaging and jovial dialogue about serious issues in education and the arts has instilled in me an appreciation for thinking as an end in itself. There is no better gift than this. My parents have given me a confidence that my endeavors will succeed even if through trial and error. I take this opportunity to thank them for everything that they have done in order to support me. I also recognize that the subject matter herein links to my father's intellectual and sculptural works. How is it that aesthetics may allow one to realize scientific formulas or relationships as yet unidentified? While this question has preoccupied me, my father's contributions to engineering have provided me with a tangible example of the link between aesthetic thinking and scientific discovery. Finally, I am inspired by my mother's professional dedication, as she provides challenging intellectual opportunities for the many young people who move through her classroom.

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That it is not a productive science is also clear from those who began to philosophize, for it is because of wondering that men began to philosophize and do so now. First, they wondered at the difficulties close at hand; then, advancing little by little, they discussed difficulties also about greater matters, for example, about the changing attributes of the Moon and of the Sun and of the stars, and about the generation of the universe. Now a man who is perplexed and wonders considers himself ignorant (whence a lover of myth, too, is in a sense a philosopher, for a myth is composed of wonders), so if indeed they philosophized in order to avoid ignorance, it is evident that they pursued science in order to understand and not in order to use it for something else. This is confirmed by what happened; for it was when almost all the necessities of life were supplied, both for comfort and activity, that such thinking began to be sought. Clearly, then, we do not seek this science for any other need; but just as man is said to be free if he exists for his own sake and not for the sake of somebody else, so this alone of all the sciences is free, for only this science exists for its own sake.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book A 982b12

For what right has anyone who himself admits that reason has enjoyed great success in the area in question [its need and insight] to prohibit it from going further in the same direction? And where is the boundary at which it must stop?

Immanuel Kant, *What is Orientation in Thinking?*

I think that somewhere in Walt Whitman the idea can be found: the idea of reasons being unconvincing. I think he says somewhere that he finds the night air, the large few stars, for more convincing than mere arguments.

Jorge Luis Borges, *This Craft of Verse*

...I understand a remark in Plato to the effect that Hermes invented language. In the *Cratylus* Plato discusses the origins of certain words, especially the names of the gods. At one point he says, "I should imagine that the name of Hermes has to do with speech, and signifies that he is the interpreter [*hermeneus*], or messenger, or thief or liar, or bargainer; all that sort of thing has a great deal to do with language..." He goes on to propose that the two Greek words meaning "to tell" and "to contrive" were combined to form "the name of the god who invented language and speech," because Hermes is "the contriver of tales or speeches...The idea that Hermes invented language seems in accord with the earlier suggestion that duplicity is the precondition of signification.

Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous approaches to reading Kant's third *Critique*. In a general sense, most readings reflect a division that Kant himself recognized within the *Critiques*: the division between reflective and determinative judgment. As a result, interpretations of Kant's final *Critique* approach the text from either an analytical, determinative compartment, or a reflective, aesthetic compartment. While I will examine the views of a number of thinkers according to this distinction, my ultimate intention is to explore a singular dimension of reflective judgment: intellectual interest. Therefore, after situating this essay in the general discourse on aesthetic judgment, we will look at how intellectual interest provides an orienteering force in the aftermath of aesthetic judgments. This allows us to examine Kant's relation to freedom and representation in addition to his relation to language and poetry. This notion calls attention to the distinction between reflection and determination, insofar as intellectual interest – an aesthetic event – may link together such separate faculties.

Kant's complex phrasings and inconsistent, sometimes lofty examples provide innumerable obstacles to the arguments at hand, contradicting the project to "find the secure path of science."¹ Read reflectively, however, Kant's peculiar phrasings, the necessity of architectural and navigational forms, become constitutive and necessary to a discourse that links to figurative synthesis at the root of cognition. While Paul Guyer and Henry Allison choose to read Kant's *Critique of Judgment* determinatively – as a cognitively and a morally respectively, Dieter Henrich and Jean-François Lyotard choose to read Kant reflectively. Finally, there are some thinkers that work at the borderlines of reflective and determinative discourse. Gregg

Horowitz provides an example of a thinking on Kant at play with reflective and determinative stances.² Ultimately, this study calls attention to the reflective/determinative distinction and strives to demonstrate that reflective thinking, thinking at work in Kant's illustrative material, draws on figurative relationships taking place within language. Kant's illustrative arguments, therefore, cannot be dismissed as supplemental, arbitrary additions to his argumentation. Rather, they occasion a reflective element, allowing the very architecture for the critical faculties to emerge as a result of the play of language. The play of language, aesthetic judgment and the tripartite faculties allow us to identify orientation as a founding moment of the subject.

The term "orientation" already has a symbolic history that extends beyond the subject's self-reflection and self-determination. The English term "orientation" derives from the Latin *oriens*, simply meaning "east" but related to the term *oriri* meaning "to rise" and referring to "the part of the sky where the sun rises." According to some sources this term refers to the global practice, dating back to ancient Greek and Egyptian cultures, of constructing churches or sacred buildings to face east in order that the light may shine either on the priest or the sculpture of the patron saint of the church, sometimes only on the precise name-day of the patron saint. In 1870, in English, the term begins to signify "to determine bearings" although not with an explicit reference to the subject's condition as in the modern phrasing of "political, religious or sexual orientation." The German term *orientieren* does not radically vary in connotations or history, although Kant uses of this term in 1786 as a "guide for thinking" within the subject, allowing the subject to gain his/her bearings when *disoriented*. The orientation of a church signified the divine for an audience of worshippers. Orientation merged, at a singular point in time (whether a

¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 20 (hereafter cited in text as *CPuR*).

² This division roughly distinguishes analytical and continental thinkers from one another, where analytical interpretations tend toward determinative arguments and continental interpretations tend toward literary, reflective interpretations.

specific time of day or a specific time of year), sculpture, nature's light, architecture, the priest's divine mediation and the viewer. Although not addressed directly in this essay, the orientation of the subject according to reason provides an instance of the shift away from the theologically-centered subject as the subject comes to orient herself according to reason. This shift moves toward the existential thinking characteristic of later thinkers, even though Kant's teleological writings resume the question of an intelligent first cause put forth by Aristotle.³ Such existential predilections are also apparent in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, in a moment when a revealed trick causes one to lose all capacity to find beauty in the world and, thereby, lose the capacity for reflective (or aesthetic-based) orientation. Normally, however, orientation yields to intellectual interest. This essay explicates intellectual interest as an orienteering capacity that conditions reflections and allows for something I will call "aesthetic thinking." The essay concludes by examining the implications of the loss of an ability to make aesthetic judgments, encounter intellectual interest and orient oneself according one's critical faculties.

This work on Kant's *Critique of Judgment* depicts intellectual interest as a mode of thinking that orients the subject to nature and freedom by means of the beauty encountered in nature and/or art. Classically, the oriented architecture designed a moment of harmony and revelation for the worshippers. Intellectual interest, one of many cognitive moments in the Aesthetic, provides a mode of orientation that, like the divine orientation of the church, is a brief but defining moment of a complete (and dare we say ideal) discourse of the faculties of understanding, practical reason and reflective judgment. Regardless of the intentional design, the worshippers feel the voice of divinity through the light cast onto a priest or sculpture at a

³ In the *Critique of Judgment* (hereafter cited as *CJ*) Kant explains: "For human reason it is absolutely impossible, from a theoretical point of view, to prove the existence of the original being as a deity, or of the soul as an immortal spirit, and to produce even the slightest degree of assent...we are left with nothing more than the concept of a

predetermined moment in time. Similarly, aesthetic thinking cognizes and re-cognizes the confluence of imagination, apperception and synthesis: the root powers of cognition. We will have to address whether or not intentionally designed aesthetic experiences could possibly have the same force in generating intellectual interest and whether they might lead us into discourse with our root powers in the same way as aesthetic experiences founded solely on nature.⁴

Kant's use of this term in his 1786 essay *What is Orientation in Thinking?* implicitly questions whether or not reason can establish a more divine placement and, thereby, establish a more enlightened practice, perhaps allowing the divine light to pierce through human constructs which conceal proper, non-dogmatic reasoning. Explicitly, he describes an orientation that guides thinking by means of "one's conviction of truth, by a subjective principle of reason where objective principles are inadequate."⁵ In this essay, Kant speaks of orientation as a "compass of reason."

The "compass of reason" does rely on representation to mediate its projects, just as the church mediates the light (and, symbolically, the divine) by casting it deliberately on the priest. As Kant recognizes, matters would be much easier if the supersensible were presented to us immediately in an intellectual intuition. In "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy," Kant explains:

If there were knowledge of the supersensible (from a theoretical view this alone is a true secret) that is indeed possible to reveal to human understanding...such knowledge drawn from the understanding, as the faculty of knowledge by means of *concepts*, would nevertheless be far inferior to the knowledge that, as a faculty of *intuition*, could be immediately perceived by the understanding. For, by means of the first procedure, the discursive understanding must expend a great amount of labor to analyze its concepts and

nonsensible something that contains the ultimate basis of the world of sense, and that concept does not yet amount to cognition...of that thing's intrinsic constitution," 359.

⁴ The orientation of the church may be considered to be founded on nature, insofar as the design holds strictly to the orientation of the earth and sun at particular moments of the year. As a result, the oriented church presents design founded on nature, rather than design that simply changes the form of nature's products.

⁵ Reiss, *Political Writings*, 239.

then arrange them according to principles, and it must climb many difficult steps in order to make progress in knowledge; instead of this labor, an *intellectual intuition* would immediately present the object and grasp it all at once.⁶

Kant's response⁷ focuses heavily on the work required in order to do philosophy, in order to demonstrate that philosophy done through leisure or inspiration cannot yield works of reason. The work of reason, a work of labor and endurance, requires conceptual wrangling (originating in Plato and Pythagoras' use of mathematical representations) to unlock higher knowledge. This reasoning, Kant argues, cannot be divine and immediate. He explains in a footnote:

But every understanding with which I am familiar is a faculty of *thinking*, that is, a discursive capacity to have representations, or an understanding that operates by characteristics that several things have in common (from whose *differences* I therefore must abstract in thought) and, hence, is impossible without the subject being *limited*. Consequently, a divine understanding is not to be assumed from a faculty of thinking.⁸

Thus, even in matters where “objective principles are inadequate,” work must take place in order to determine the subjective principle of reason. This essay will explore how aesthetic, reflective judgment and intellectual interest do the work of founding an orienting capacity within the subject, also taking heed of the significance of authentic and inauthentic orientation.

On occasion, the Kantian experience of beauty sounds like this desired “intellectual intuition,” especially when beauty “provides a voluptuousness for the mind in a train of thought that [one] can never fully unravel.”⁹ Kant's 1796 remarks remind us that aesthetic experience that affords view of the supersensible, while appearing to be immediate (through *Lebensgefühl*) is more likely a mode of thinking where the conceptual wrangling or work may only *appear* to

⁶ Fenes, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 51.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 72. Kant writes in response to J.G. Schlosser's writing on Plato, *Plato's letters on the revolution in Syracuse with a historical introduction and notes*. Kant's essay on tone is followed by a letter from Schlosser and another essay by Kant “Announcement of the Near Conclusion of a Treaty for Eternal Peace in Philosophy”, directed toward Schlosser. Schlosser, Goethe's brother-in-law, is also debunked by contemporaries, Schiller, Schelling, Schlegel and even Goethe himself.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁹ Kant, *CJ*, 167.

fall away. Rich, felt-experience of aesthetic thinking is not, therefore, immediate, divine inspiration. While the genius may provide a misleading indication of divine inspiration, aesthetic experience must wrestle with the mediated quality of thinking as constitutive of the aesthetic moment or experience of beauty.¹⁰ This takes place just as the light cast on the priest or sculpted saint in the oriented church requires deliberate design and construction in order to deliver a moment of apparently effortless revelation that the priest or the sculpted saint is the voice of God or just as beauty appears as the voice of nature. The role of our representations (and representing faculties) must be closely examined a consequence of the event of aesthetic immediacy whose very specific cognitive confluence actually allows for the possibility of the work of thinking to take place.

The nature of aesthetic mediation (and subsequent representation) within the Aesthetic of the *Critique of Judgment* brings to attention the surface of thinking by playing on representational, linguistic devices of metaphor and analogy. In Kant's aesthetic, we must deal, therefore, with the stylistic explanation of reflection, intellectual interest and beauty in addition to an illusion of immediacy. While the experience of beauty comes as an exhilarating surprise, the presentation (or representation) of beauty is bound intimately to the problem providing figures for the immediate cognitive experience, leading to metaphorical explanations and analogical definition and drawing out the role of imagination. Metaphors and analogies provide visual, aural and, therefore, sensible intuitions. When successful, such representations succeed in concealing their mediated quality providing a sense of immediate communication. Meanwhile, as understanding comprehends and orders pure and empirical intuitions¹¹ by concepts, aesthetic

¹⁰ Thus, when Kant says "*Geist* in an aesthetic sense is the animating principle in the mind [for the genius]," he does not mean to sacrifice cognitive complexity but, rather, call attention to cognitive complexity. Kant, *CJ*, 181-2.

¹¹ *Anschauung* or apprehension.

judgments make concepts sensible through reflection.¹² Thus, such linguistic devices engage in reflection that is making concepts sensible.

One of the challenges of this essay will be to address why linguistic devices “susceptible of more than one reading that by no means come to the same thing, and where the communication achieved by the use of the metaphor results from a complex interplay between meanings,”¹³ can lend intelligibility to intellectual interest as a mode of orientation and, in so doing, lend intelligibility to the third *Critique*. Certainly, many distinguished thinkers have found quite the opposite: that the third *Critique* lacks intelligibility precisely because of the linguistic devices that appear so frequently throughout the text.

There is yet one more observation to make before embarking on this essay. Somehow, the series of events surrounding the experience of beauty, the attempt to conceptualize beauty, and the attempt to communicate this experience, draws the subject into social relations. Not only does the subject engage in social relations through an interest in making art and, thereby, generating civilization. The speechlessness of aesthetic judgment *demand*s that the subject make art, as a manner of engaging in the discourse on beauty with other subjects. Our speechlessness in the face of beauty reflects the failure of representations to adequately present the aesthetic experience of the subject. This indicates that the subject must resort to other means (art-making) in order to communicate (after the fact) such an experience to other subjects. The challenge for this person will be to maintain the powerful force of the experience of beauty while overtly crafting a representation of this experience. In other words, this person is challenged to create the immediacy of “voluptuousness” by erasing his or her own mediating acts. This is especially the case insofar as Kant’s analysis expects the subject’s experience of nature to yield

¹² See Kant, *CPuR*, A51/B75: “Thoughts [concepts] without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind.”

the “voluptuous” experience. Thus, not only must the artist (for our purposes an individual struggling with speechlessness), erase his or her mediating acts, but he/she must conceal or erase his/her subjectivity in order to appear to be acting as an agent of nature, not as a self-willed, freely intending agent overtly crafting an experience for the viewer or listener. However, this also suggests that indirect devices, devices able to capture multiple possible meanings, may also capture the feeling, realization or conditions occasioning speechlessness. Speechlessness (in the face of beauty) may *necessitate* art, and the ensuing economy of erasure and presentation. We must also recognize that the universal subjectivity of aesthetic judgments implies that the need to re-enact or reiterate one’s judgment of beauty must come, not from the sense that others would not experience such beauty given the same conditions, but from another impulse or need to communicate with other subjects after the fact.

Let us look a bit more closely at the nature of the experience of beauty by examining another instance of speechlessness in Kant’s writings. In 1781, Kant eloquently presents this speechlessness in the first *Critique*’s “physicotheological proof”. The physicotheological denotes a “determinate experience – hence the experience of the things of the present world, their character and arrangement” which provides us with a “conviction of the existence of a supreme being.”¹⁴ This is an experience, Kant tells us, that has no adequate idea. Kant details the experience:

The present world discloses to us a vast arena of manifoldness, order, purposiveness, and beauty – whether we pursue these in the infinity of space or in space’s unlimited division. Such is this arena – even by what little acquaintance with it our feeble understanding has been able to gain – that vis-à-vis so many and such immensely great marvels all speech [*Sprache*] loses [*vermissen*] its force, all numbers lose their power to measure, and even our thoughts lose any boundary; and thus our judgment of the whole must dissolve into a speechlessness, but all the more eloquent amazement...anything always points further

¹³ White, *The Structure of Metaphor*, 14.

¹⁴ Kant, *CPuR*, A620/B648.

toward another thing as its cause; and this cause in turn necessitates precisely the same further inquiry.¹⁵

Such an experience mimics the occasion of aesthetic judgment: “We linger in our contemplation of the beautiful because this contemplation reinforces and reproduces itself.”¹⁶ In the first *Critique*, Kant suggests that this experience provides the basis for what is often called the “teleological argument” or the “argument by design” in proving the existence of God. While the proof itself does not satisfy Kant as presenting certain evidence simply by connecting the determinate concept of a supreme being with an enchanted experience of the world, he takes this moment very seriously:

This proof always deserves to be mentioned with respect. It is the proof that is oldest, clearest, and most commensurate with common human reason. It enlivens the study of nature, just as the proof itself has its existence from and acquires ever new force through this study. It brings purposes and aims to things where our observation would not have discovered them on its own, and it expands our acquaintance with nature through the guidance by special unity whose principle is outside nature... Hence any attempt to detract from the authority of this proof would not only be hopeless, but also entirely futile. For reason is lifted up unceasingly by bases of proof that, although only empirical, are very powerful and are forever increasing under reason’s very eyes [hands]. And thus no doubts arising from subtle abstract speculation can weigh reason down so much that it would not quickly recover. For casting one glance upon the marvels of nature and upon the majesty of the world edifice would tear reason out of any brooding indecision, as out of a dream; and reason would lift itself up from one magnitude to the next until reaching the most supreme, and would lift itself up from the conditioned to the condition until reaching the highest and unconditioned originator [of the world].¹⁷

Although the first *Critique* has not yet formulated this distinction, Kant will later determine this experience to present an aesthetic idea: “an *intuition* (of the imagination) for which an adequate concept can never be found.”¹⁸ The aesthetic experience, therefore, presents one with the aesthetic idea. However, such experience cannot be interpreted as divine inspiration and must be regarded as part of the complex economy of the cognitive faculties.

¹⁵ Kant, *CPuR*, A622/B650.

¹⁶ Kant, *CJ*, 68.

¹⁷ Kant, *CPuR*. A624/B652.

At the culmination of such an experience, Kant says, “the entire universe would in this way have to sink into an abyss of nothingness, unless one assumed something that...subsists on its own originally and independently.”¹⁹ In the first *Critique*, reason is inspired to generate new inroads in the shadow of a specific dilemma: irrationally accepting this proof of a supreme being or rationally facing the possibility of nothingness. Kant’s antinomies demonstrate that such dilemmas are not simple ‘either/or’ conditions. Nonetheless, in the physicotheological proof, reason seems to be engaged in the tension between these two choices.

The object of this study is to examine how intellectual interest, as a mode of orientation, is a cognitive potency of spontaneity, receptivity and synthesis that founds aesthetic thinking. Such a mode of orientation is explored in Kant’s essay *What is Orientation in Thinking?* and within Section 42 of the *Critique of Judgment*. These two works will provide the foundation for developing a theory of intellectual interest as a mode of orientation. Intellectual interest works, does the work, to extend and expand thinking. This cognitive activity:

...enlivens the study of nature...It brings purposes and aims to things where our observation would not have discovered them on its own, and it expands our acquaintance with nature through the guidance by special unity whose principle is outside nature...²⁰

Intellectual interest, a direct aesthetic interest, is bound within an economy that seeks a supreme being while fleeing the abyss, engaging in this dilemma by providing the conditions for the possibility of self-cognition, by means of the aesthetic exhibition. The exhibition made possible in aesthetic thinking concerns the unconditioned cause of the subject: her freedom.

Grappling with the subject’s freedom requires Kant to grapple with self-deception as an obstacle to realizing one’s moral and cognitive potency. As a result, this essay closes with an assessment of the trauma following from a revelation of one’s cognitive impotence. With regard

¹⁸ Kant, *CJ*, 215.

¹⁹ Kant, *CPuR*, A622/B650.

to the church's orientation, it is as if the young child in the church pew gazing on the (literally) enlightened priest falters in her faith when she discovers that this moment of divine illumination has been cleverly orchestrated by witty, devout and astronomically educated architects. The child can no longer use this event as evidence for his/her beliefs and may be cast into doubt about his/her beliefs. In these cases, we are tricked or deceived to believe that a constructed phenomenon is actually a work of nature and, by extension, a work of God. Hopefully, the child has matured to the extent that the fabulist notion of God yields to a more reasoned notion of God, a notion that does not require architecture. In this spirit, we will have to determine whether or not deceptive art can contribute or produce the aesthetic thinking which allows for an intellectual crescendo. Similarly, Kant's hope that "casting one glance upon the marvels of nature and upon the majesty of the world edifice would tear reason out of any brooding indecision, as out of a dream" is tempered after his physicotheological proof of 1781. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant implies that a revealed deceit prevents us from encountering "marvels of nature" in order to "tear reason out of brooding indecision." Reason must struggle with a wonderless world, a world lacking in beauty, charm and aesthetic surprise. As a result, the subject must confront disorientation.

This drama, like the work of reason, is multifaceted. Subjective orientation, dependent on a compass of reason, draws the subject toward establishing subjective principles where objective principles are inadequate. Primarily an aesthetic movement, this thinking seeks concepts adequate to intuitions by engaging in a reflection that taps into our fundamental moral and cognitive elements. Reflection is distinguished from determinative thinking specifically by allowing for self-cognition rather than cognition of objects, the world and other subjects.

²⁰ Kant, *CPuR*. A624/B652.

However, aesthetic thinking also requires linguistic devices such as analogies and metaphors to do the work of the figurative synthesis of the productive imagination.

Intellectual interest contributes to orientation by fostering aesthetic thinking. This thinking discovers the subject's moral vocation by encountering freedom. The encounter with one's freedom involves representation, but freedom as the un-representable foundation of the subject, gestured at symbolically. Further, however, the aesthetic site offers the opportunity for the discovery of freedom through wonder and one's power as an artist (an individual struggling with speechlessness) while threatening one's freedom by transforming one's naïve openness (or desire for beauty) into an opportunity for manipulation and deceit.²¹ And, when Kant speaks (in "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy") of acknowledging the work required in order to do philosophy, we begin to see that such work will allow us -- to the best of our ability -- to establish our own freedom by preventing deceit. While we have been discussing aesthetics, such deceit can be extended to include metaphysics, ethics and politics. As Kant will recognize in the Mendelssohn-Jacobi debate, our ability to differentiate between genuine experience and manipulation of facts will determine whether we are able to establish a community of free individuals or a community of individuals under an illusion of freedom created by tricksters. These matters lead directly to Kant's confrontation with peace and the French Revolution.

²¹ Readers familiar with Adorno may herein recognize a sympathetic link to the impossibility of art after Aushwitz.

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW OF JUDGMENT

Although Baumgarten provides a definitive notion of “aesthetics,” as Kant acknowledges in a footnote to the Introduction of the *Critique of Pure Reason*,²² the empirical aspects of Baumgarten’s aesthetics do not interest Kant. Kant cares about how we can present to ourselves a coherent picture of the world through reason and, in this text, observes “that endeavor [to bring our critical judging of the beautiful under rational principles] is futile.”²³ Nevertheless, Kant still holds the transcendental value of aesthetic judgment, a faculty that allows the subject to relate understanding and practical reason.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant delimits aesthetics in terms of transcendental aesthetic, an ability to order one’s experience as framed by space and marked by time.²⁴ The transcendental aesthetic provides us with rational orientation from which to make claims or judgments about the world. Judgment, in the first *Critique*, remains limited to categorical, determinate judgments. Categorical, determinate judgments identify quantities, qualities, modalities and relations in the objects or concepts before us. The determinate judgment carefully outlined in the first *Critique*, bears little resemblance to the aesthetic judgment of the third *Critique*. Determinative judgments apply concepts to particulars; aesthetic judgments begin by reflecting upon particulars and seeking concepts beyond the concrete appearances of particulars. While the transcendental aesthetic provides the condition for the possibility of

²² Kant, *CPuR*, A22/B36.

²³ *Ibid.*

making determinative judgments, Kant sees no remote link to aesthetics involving a theory of taste.

In a work that predates the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant reflects on beauty and sublimity. In *Observations on the Beautiful and Sublime*, Kant begins to explore reflective judgment by considering how our aesthetic sensibilities function. In response to contemporary debate surrounding Hume's empiricism, however, Kant turns instead to the work that debunks dogmatism, rather than following through on these initial aesthetic concerns. Only after detailing the path of reason, could Kant return to the more esoteric project on aesthetics. Kant's interest in debunking dogmatism and wild speculation, however, may be directly connected to a critical receptivity, a receptivity cultivated in aesthetic judgment. As Kant's engagement with Jacobi may suggest, aesthetics might yet prove to be a kind of antidote to dogmatism and fanaticism. Kant would not be able to discover this, however, until he had tackled a scientific attempt to define and describe the function of reason in human understanding.

The first two critiques, *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of Practical Reason*, lay the ground for a work on aesthetics. Without a painstaking account of nature (*Critique of Pure Reason*) and freedom (*Critique of Practical Reason*), the relevance of aesthetic judgment would be more difficult to assess. As it is, even now, the first two *Critiques* are considered more canonical, whereas the *Critique of Judgment* remains perennially troubling, often considered of only supplemental value for the critical project as a whole. Still, the detail of the first two *Critiques* allows us to more deeply explore how reflective judgment might mediate pure and practical reason. As Kant asks in the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*: "Does judgment give the rule a priori to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, the mediating link

²⁴ Kant, *CPuR*, A19/B33.

between the cognitive power [in general] (reason) and the power of desire (practical reason)?”

In the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant writes:

Reason legislates a priori for freedom and for freedom’s own causality, in other words, for the supersensible in the subject, in order to give rise to unconditioned practical cognition. The great gulf that separates the supersensible from appearances completely cuts off the domain of the concept of nature under the one legislation, and the domain of the concept of freedom under the other legislation, from any influence that each (according to its own basic laws) might have had on the other. The concept of freedom determines nothing with regard to the practical laws of freedom; and to this extent it is not possible to throw a bridge from one domain to the other.²⁵

However, Kant concludes: “judgment makes possible the transition from the domain of the concept of nature to that of the concept of freedom.”²⁶

Aesthetic judgment divides into four moments. Kant’s relatively brief explanation of each of these moments has led to a variety of philosophical interpretations for each moment. In accordance with the categories outlined in the first *Critique*, the four moments correspond to quality, quantity, modality and relation. Kant remarks about this order: “I have examined the moment of quality first, because an aesthetic judgment about the beautiful is concerned with it first”.²⁷ As Kant progresses through the four moments, the phenomenon of aesthetic judgment builds in complexity. It seems that the first moment provides the foundation for all others and, by so doing, is first in time as well as importance.

The four moments of aesthetic judgments unfold as follows:

1. Quality: Liking Devoid of Interest, in light of our interest in the agreeable and the good.²⁸
2. Quantity: Presented without concepts, beauty is the object of a universal liking.²⁹
3. Relation: Relation of purposiveness demonstrated, making the judgment independent of charm and emotion.³⁰

²⁵ Kant, *CJ*, 35-6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 203.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 211.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

4. Modality: The mode in which we judge the object concerns our common sense, a universal subjectivity, a subjective necessity presented as objective in common sense.³¹

The first moment eliminates interest as a condition for taste, while detailing the parameters of disinterest. Kant defines interest broadly as a “bias in favor of the thing’s existence”.³² A desire for enjoyment, or a concern for the good, biases our judgments. Disinterest, Kant says in this section, allows us to give existence “absolute value.”³³ While we still enjoy beauty and experience pleasure as a consequence of our encounter with beauty, a liking through disinterest preserves the freedom and an appreciation of existence that is abandoned in other kinds of interests.

The second moment of aesthetic judgment, *The Beautiful Is What Is Presented Without Concepts as the Object of a Universal Liking*, recognizes that the outcome of a judgment without interest, absent of particular prejudice and desire, demands agreement. In other words, if I my judgment is made without interest, then it is likely that all other disinterested judges would have the same (or a similar) judgment. After all, the color, inclination and contingency of subjective bias have been stripped away in the first moment of disinterest. As a result, my affiliated pleasure reflects a very different degree of attachment to objects and nature, than pleasures laden with interest. Clearly, then, we would have a tendency to speak about this experience exactly as if it was a logical, objective judgment even though it is not such a determinative judgment. At the same time, this judgment comes to appear as objective due to the absence of interest. What is prompted by these events is a “consciousness that all interest is kept out of [the feeling of pleasure], it must also involve a claim to being valid for everyone, but without having

³¹ Ibid., 236.

³² Ibid., 205.

universality based on concepts.”³⁴ In this way, Kant articulates the notion of “subjective universality.” Note, however, that this event serves to “[reveal] to him a property of our cognitive power which without this analysis would have remained unknown.”³⁵ This new awareness reminds us that these judgments are subjective, by highlighting the “object’s presentation merely to the subject”³⁶ without providing us with any information regarding the object itself.

The third moment examines how purpose emerges in aesthetic judgment. Much like disinterest, aesthetic judgments contain purposiveness: the form of a purpose without the corresponding content. Liking can be founded on a purpose which includes interest. As we know, however, from the first moment, no interest can be associated with judgments of taste. As a result, Kant reasons, “subjective purpose” (essentially subjective interest) could not result in a judgment of taste. Could this mean that judgments have an objective purpose? Yet, objective purpose requires concepts and the extension of a concept throughout a causal chain. It does appear that the artist creates an object with objective purpose that, yet, appears to have no objective purpose. Earlier, in the second moment, we discovered that no concept adheres to aesthetic judgments. Hence, aesthetic judgments could not contain objective purpose. What is left for judgment? In aesthetic judgment, we present to ourselves the “form of purposiveness” without the subsequent purpose. For example, at the top of a mountain we encounter the beauty of the unfolding landscape below, finding purpose associated with this emotion (purposiveness) without needing to know the determinate purpose or initial cause of the landscape. In nature, we

³³ Ibid., 208: “Only by what he does without concern for enjoyment, in complete freedom and independently of whatever he could receive passively from nature, does he give existence [Dasein] an absolute value, as the existence [Existenz] of a person.”

³⁴ Ibid., 54.

³⁵ Ibid., 57.

³⁶ Ibid., 211.

encounter a serendipity of events that allows us to experience purposiveness. In art, we encounter an economy of intentions that create the experience of purposiveness. In nature, we associate the intentional cause with God or the natural order. In art, we attribute the cause to conscious (or unconscious) activities of the artists (possibly a genius), who is practiced in the presentation of purposiveness.

Finally, what is the mode of our liking/pleasure when we make judgments about beauty? As with the other moments, the fourth moment concerns the final perplexing characteristic of judgment. The fourth moment explains the aftermath of an aesthetic judgment, requiring “assent” after the judgment of taste. For instance, once I have described the landscape as beautiful, I consider that all others “ought,” given the same conditions, to have the same judgment. Peculiar to this moment, my judgment becomes an example from which other judgments might be supposed. After all, according to the second moment, I can expect universal liking in a judgment that takes place through disinterest. Therefore, I can assume that others would similarly “assent” to my own judgment. At the same time, without concept or purpose, I cannot objectively present or explain this process as a necessary and objective rule of cognition. Kant explains:

As a necessity that is thought in an aesthetic judgment, it can only be called *exemplary*, i.e., a necessity of the assent of *everyone* to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule that *we are unable to state*.³⁷

Thus, aesthetic judgments appear indirectly, not as self-evident universal rules but, rather, as a judgment exemplary of aesthetic judgments. This condition results from the loss of concept in aesthetic thinking. As long as we cannot identify an objective concept at the heart of a judgment, the judgment appears only as an example for other, future judgments. Indeed, an education in

³⁷ Ibid., 237, italics mine.

judgment cannot be guided by familiarity with concepts – even the concepts of aesthetic judgments – but, rather, must be guided by examples.

The fourth moment has gained recognition through Hannah Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. In this work, Arendt explores the assent known as "common sense" but different from the "sensus communis" denoting common understanding. Common sense, Kant argues, depends on the disinterested liking of our existence, rather than some kind of practical, conceptual or determinate attachment to existence. When we draw out the demand for assent, aesthetic judgments appear "attuned" and "universally communicable." Arendt extends Kant's idea of common sense into the realm of politics, following the implications of this theory of cognitive activity to discover the political future implied by such communicability. Arendt paraphrases Kant:

Communicability obviously depends on the enlarged mentality; one can communicate only if one is able to think from the other person's standpoint; otherwise one will never meet him; never speak in such a way that he understands... At this point, the *Critique of Judgment* joins effortlessly Kant's deliberation about a united mankind, living in eternal peace.³⁸

Kant uses the language of 'thinking from another's standpoint' as he explains common sense. While we may not literally think another's thoughts, our ability to execute aesthetic judgments provides us with an exercise that forces us to relinquish self-interest to favor or recognize disinterest, interrupting our determinations by reflective engagement with other subjects. A subject that cannot be rendered in objective, conceptual terms makes this communicability possible. In other words, the absence of conceptual determination prevents us from designating a human subject according to a pre-existing category or determination. The loss of concept, purpose and interest in aesthetic judgment, therefore, enables us to encounter other subjects according to their "absolute value" and, therefore, with robust existential appreciation.

To summarize the outline of the Aesthetic, after diagnoses of the moments of judgment, Kant goes on to explain the mathematically and dynamically sublime. He then attempts to deduce pure aesthetic judgments and explore many aspects of judgment, including judgments about fine art and genius. The division on aesthetic judgment closes as Kant outlines the antinomies of taste, by describing how “beauty is a symbol of morality” and, finally, how aesthetic judgment and a degree of communication may impact future generations.

Before looking at twentieth century readings of Kant, we need to establish a common vocabulary defining determinative judgments and reflective judgments. A determinate judgment takes a concept and applies the concept to create the world of perceptual experience. A reflective judgment, stimulated by particulars in the world, seeks a concept for the particulars of one’s experience. According to Kant, determinative judgments order and exhibit nature via understanding while reflective judgments realize the power of freedom through imagination while bridging understanding (pure reason) and practical reason. Understanding lays hold of the world by means of concept-application through categories of quality, quantity, modality and relation. Reflection, or taste, lays hold of the world as understanding recedes and imagination brings forth a feeling of pleasure coupled with perceptual richness. In reflection, one’s encounters with particulars (emotions, experiences, intuitions) compel one to associate concepts with such particulars. In other words, one’s reflective engagement with the world is in part characterized by an absence of a concept. Concepts are indispensable to reflection, even though they are provoked from an experience of particulars. In reflection, one seeks to present the appropriate concept for the particular.

A presentation of reflective judgment that analyzes logical relations and conceptual efficacy will reveal some machinery of reflective judgment, especially in relation to other

³⁸ Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, 74.

faculties. However, assessing the conceptual efficacy without attributing value to the non-conceptual dimensions of reflection would fail to recognize the attachment to particulars characteristic of judgments of taste. In other words, determinative representations of reflection fail to acknowledge the problem of representation inherent in reflective judgment, insofar as determinative judgment do not seem to encounter such difficulty. I have alluded to this problem, which emerges as speechlessness, in the Introduction.

The challenge of representation can be exemplified by the use of the term beauty. Beauty can be a conceptual attribution or an embodied, although intellectual, experience in response to nature. In determinative readings, beauty is viewed as a conceptual identification of natural and artificial objects within the world. In reflection, while beauty appears within nature, beauty refers to a condition of the subject: an intellectually voluptuous speechlessness. Thus, understanding and determination tend toward the identification and classification of objects by means of concepts, while reflection tends toward identification of states of the subject prior to concept-identification.

Take this distinction and, instead of using it as a tool to understand our experience and the possibility of knowledge, consider how arguments must be made in order to represent such variant judgments. Determinative judgments make claims about objects while aesthetic judgments evidence the condition or nature of the subject. As a result, the argument defending Kant's position in terms of the nature of beautiful objects or, even, the nature of our judgment concerning objects, misses the point. The object of aesthetic study is, precisely, the subject temporarily isolated from the understanding's capacity to comprehend and identify characteristics of objects.

This reflective judgment approaches or reads nature “as if made possible by art.”³⁹ As Kant explains in the first introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*: “...but this [concept of the technic of nature] does not enrich our knowledge of nature with a special objective law, but only serves judgment as the basis for a maxim by which we observe nature and to which we hold up [and compare] nature’s forms.”⁴⁰ As a result, reflective thinking seeks to expand our knowledge, not as understanding does by observing or discovering objective laws but by examining nature *as if* the forms presented have been intentionally or artistically constructed. Thus, the space for orientation, if aesthetic, must also be a space within which the subject approaches nature as a product of art. In other words, this space of thinking assumes that the object/matter to be thought, perhaps the darkness to-be-navigated, must function in a manner similar to the technic required in making art and, therefore, in making objects or making meaningful objects. Kant continues: “it gives us only a principle by which we [can] proceed in terms of empirical laws, which makes it possible for us to investigate nature”⁴¹ and “for our presentation of nature as art is a mere idea that serves as a principle for our investigation of nature.”⁴² While Kant’s Second Introduction (written for the 1790 publication of the *Critique of Judgment*) does not explain the “technic” (or art) of nature in depth, this First Introduction reveals Kant’s interest in demonstrating how aesthetic judgment aids our investigations into nature without functioning theoretically to determine objective laws of the concept of nature. In the very least, *some* kind of distinctive investigation seems to be facilitated by aesthetic judgments.

This distinctive investigation, however, does not abide by concepts of the understanding, in which universal rules determine particulars. As Kant points out, the regulative concept for

³⁹ Ibid., 390.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 394.

⁴¹ Ibid., 393.

⁴² Ibid., 394.

aesthetic understanding, therefore, is “special.” As a result, in aesthetic judgment, we do not merely judge nature as artful or as if artistically constructed. It is not as if, in the midst of our experiences, we are faced with a coherent, stable structure that we conceive of as ‘nature’ and we choose to judge either aesthetically or rationally. Rather, in aesthetic judgment, we are presented with an “aggregate” of empirical laws. Aesthetic judgment and the investigation spurred by such judgment attempts to draw together the aggregate presented by nature. The “aggregate of empirical laws” is made coherent by the possible “systematicity” of such laws, a possibility presented by the concept of the technic of nature. Indeed, according to the First Introduction, aesthetic judgment is responsible for the very architectural nature of cognition itself by allowing for possibility of intention and structure itself and the possibility of unity, systematicity and, even, an unseen yet necessary ground. As a result of such reflective thinking, Kant himself sees such ground and has named it the “supersensible substrate.” To recap, whenever we approach the multiplicity of “nature” with the assumption that we are approaching something intentionally or artfully constructed, especially when approaching new matter for thought, we exercise aesthetic judgment. In this process, we have not yet *determined* the elements at work within this object or phenomenon but, rather, require the aesthetic experience in order to move forward with determinative judgments.

Within this structure, however, actual art objects *do differ dramatically* from natural objects. In Section 42 of *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant makes clear that when we are tricked into believing an artifact is a natural phenomenon, we lose all ability to judge things beautiful. Therefore, the proper judge must have insight into the distinction between natural and artificial objects and, moreover, must understand that aesthetic judgment functions as a tool to investigate nature not, as some would have it, a tool to determine nature and nature’s objects. This kind of

investigation, however, is not exactly the investigation of the scientist. Similarly, Kant's many comments regarding how a work may seem "too studied" suggest the absence of aesthetic judgment and the product of exclusively determinative judgment. Thus arises the distinction, noted in discussions of genius, regarding fine and mechanical art. Fine art cannot be copied, nor can the artist fully explain the work. He explains: "models of fine art are the only means of transmitting these ideas to posterity. Mere descriptions could not accomplish this..."⁴³ This discussion of genius, however, sheds light on the aesthetic investigation of nature. For in this passage, Kant clarifies that "there is no fine art that does not have as its essential condition, something mechanical which can be encompassed by rules and complied with...directing the work to a purpose requires determinate rules that one is not permitted to renounce."⁴⁴ He clarifies by indicating that only "shallow minds" believe genius to function without any rules at all. As a result, the conditions of the investigation of nature, conditions that include an "aggregate of empirical laws" are similar to the conditions for the genius. The distinction between the scientist and the artist-genius illuminates how each expert explores and refines a different area of cognition:

For the scientist's talent lies in continuing to increase the perfection of our cognitions and of all the benefits that depend [on these], as well as imparting that same knowledge to others; and in these respects they are far superior to those who merit the honor of being called geniuses. For the latter's art stops at some point, because a boundary is set for it beyond which it cannot go and which probably has long since been reached and cannot be extended further.⁴⁵

While the genius must be mechanically savvy, the limits of aesthetic thinking prevent him/her from moving their models toward a 'perfecting of cognition that may be taught.' Using genius as a model, our investigations that employ aesthetic judgment acknowledge mechanical necessity

⁴³ Ibid., 177-178.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 178.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 177.

while bringing to light “something for which no determinate rule can be given,” something exemplary, something that “cannot be described scientifically.”⁴⁶ We must remind ourselves that the talent of genius, according to Kant and his eighteenth century peers, derives from nature itself. Therefore, when we talk about nature appearing *as if* art, we must remind ourselves that the rule of genius comes from nature itself. As a result, approaching nature as art invokes a reversal, where suddenly the subject’s mode of aesthetic production (art) provides the temporary rule for nature. At the same time, according to Kant’s depiction of genius, art itself, the modeling of unspeakable but exemplary ideas, derives essentially from nature. Fine art, therefore, appears as nature and nature appears as fine art.⁴⁷ The subject finds its aesthetic subjectivity reflected in nature’s beauty and also finds nature’s aesthetic voluptuousness reflected in fine art. How do we make sense of this shadow play of appearances?

Aesthetic judgment presents nature as art. In orientation, we are not necessarily faced with a coherent phenomenon that we might identify as natural or unnatural. Indeed, reason demands orientation precisely when we are baffled at the next possible determination. Yet, this is key to the aesthetic investigation. This special investigation does not suddenly perceive the object for thought as artful or as an artwork. Rather, this investigation uses the concept of technic found within the subject, as the principle of aesthetic judgment, as a key to begin thinking about the unthinkable. As such, the aesthetic thinker begins by considering the possible artful purposes within the perplexing presentation. Through these considerations, this thinker may later reject such initial reflections as presumptive or rash. At the same time, the aesthetic judgment allows the thinker to begin to put together the aggregate as if the separate parts are justifiably linked to an underlying architecture shared throughout nature. While this architecture

⁴⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 174.

(the supersensible substrate) may not be presentable, our ability to project architecture and artistry on the complex web of nature does allow for investigations into nature.

More specifically, an aesthetic experience presents the viewer with an idea of nature that, according to Kant's division of the faculties, could not emerge for understanding as it functions to legislate the concept of nature. As Pluhar explains in a footnote to the First Introduction: "...though understanding asserts *that there is* (this system in terms of) such a principle, it *does not know* this principle, i.e., it does not know what sort of thorough connection there is among all appearances. It is judgment which fills this gap by presupposing a principle of its own."⁴⁸

Examining the function of both types of judgments already requires us to identify our methodology. In other words, are certain objects, phenomena and/or subjects best evaluated, perceived or thought by determinative thinking? Are other objects, phenomena and/or subjects best evaluated, perceived or thought by reflective thinking? If the world must be divided according to two realms (perhaps three realms if we included practical reason), how are we to divide these objects and phenomena so as to know if we are using the proper faculty? Does nature require reflection in a manner that knowledge about space and time do not? Or, further, do all judgments combine reflection and determination in a sort of balance – or imbalance? As a result, could some judgments be predominantly determinate while others may be predominantly reflective? Finally, when turning to reason itself as the object of our discussion, which method is most appropriate as the abacus for the inventory of reason's multiplicity? Before addressing such questions in terms of intellectual interest, let us first look at readings of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* according to five noted scholars.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 397.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Potentially, the scope of this project could extend throughout Kant's work, acknowledging the relation between the critical faculties (understanding, practical reason and reflective judgment) as well as exploring his ideas of ethics, freedom and political community. This work, however, is based in a close examination of the *Critique of Judgment*. I will, therefore, examine literature that struggles directly with Kant's concepts of reflection and aesthetic judgment. For, it is only by establishing a reading of aesthetic judgment, that I am able to extrapolate the meaning of intellectual interest as a mode of orientation in order to make further conclusions. By wrangling with Section 42, we are forced to confront the role of language (and its failures) and poetry in aesthetic thinking. Finally, Section 42 depicts the trickery threatening our interest and our experience of the beautiful, disorienting the subject. As a result, it is the aesthetic that binds together a variety of concepts already present and articulated within Kant's other works.

The works relevant to intellectual interest might be classified into three categories: reflective analyses, determinative analyses, and analyses that integrate both approaches. While this simplifies Kantian scholarship by referring to the style or approach of the commentators, one's choice in reading Kant reflectively or determinatively must be recognized as one develops a response to *The Critique of Judgment*. As we examine these works, however, we must keep in mind the fact the text requires each thinker to create her own path through the materials and thus,

develop her own synthesis of the elements of reflection. As Henrich explains, the *Critique of Judgment*:

...clearly challenges the interpreter to exercise both exegetical and philosophical skills. He cannot hope to find passages in Kant by means of which to clarify the philosopher's thoughts and intentions decisively...Kant by no means gives him permission just to repeat or vary his own phrases. An argumentative analysis is not only welcome but definitely required – an analysis that explores the theoretical and argumentative potentials at Kant's disposal. Only thus can one come up with a reading of the basic theorem in Kant's aesthetics that is both Kantian in nature and an improvement upon Kant's own expositions, which he himself admitted to be unsatisfactory.⁴⁹

Should the “inventory” of reason proceed in categorical determination of concepts, objects and experience or should the work of reason proceed through reflective engagement with the subject's own faculties? Indeed, one's assumptions regarding the proper use of reason underlie one's critical assessments of Kant's corpus. Kant's work on aesthetics implicitly acknowledges the possibility that reason can work reflectively or determinatively, by presenting a way of thinking and philosophizing that differs from the work of the first *Critique* by more thoroughly embracing illustrative material. Even though Kant's aesthetic might be viewed according to the dyad of reflection and determinative thinking, reflections always already include determination, insofar as reflection mediates understanding (pure reason) and practical reason. Certainly, philosophers have tended to embrace Kant's thinking by leaning more toward one or the other. This phenomenon plays out in the work that addresses intellectual interest and aesthetic judgment and brings to our attention the paradoxical task of executing an “inventory of reason” by means of reason itself. John Sallis discusses this problem in *Spacings – Of Reason and Imagination* as the problem of reason's self-knowledge. Sallis questions whether self-ignorance and distortion are functions implicit or necessary to reason, especially in reason's self-

⁴⁹ Henrich, *Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World*, 41.

inventory.⁵⁰ Similarly, my exclusive focus on the reflective richness of taste should not mislead in terms of advocating some kind of science of reflection in place of determinative thinking outlined in the first *Critique*. This would amount to embracing only one aspect of one's cognitive faculties, and creating some kind of self-willed state of mental deficiency. Reflective judgment should not pre-empt, replace or dispose of determinative judgment. However, in an attempt to distinguish the issues related to interpreting Kant and comprehending the characteristics of reflective judgment, I make distinctions between the two modes of thinking in order to isolate them for better understanding. As is evident by several interpretations of Kant's third *Critique*, a reading of determinative/reflective and object/subject is required in order to develop a position on taste.

Can a cognitive faculty that is in its very nature reflective and does not rely on concepts, be demonstrated, exhibited or represented in and through conceptual work? The answer may be two-fold. Conceptual, determinate readings may inform us where Kant succeeds and fails to present analytical proofs of aspects of pure judgments of taste. However, readings that acknowledge how reflection impacts the proof of aesthetic judgment may allow for an explanation of why the conceptual reading fails and why, in so many places, Kant resorts to stories and descriptive examples rather than theoretical, technical explanations.

Guyer and Allison determinatively approach Kant's claims in the *Critique of Judgment*. Guyer draws predominantly on his familiarity with the first *Critique* in order to come to terms with the ambiguities of the third *Critique*. Hence, we find in Guyer's work a distinctively cognitivist determinative reading. In contrast, even though Henry Allison has done extensive work on both the first and second *Critiques* before turning his scholarship to the *Critique of Judgment*, Allison draws pointedly on the themes of the second *Critique*. As a result, he

⁵⁰ Sallis, *Spacings of Reason and Imagination in Texts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel*, 11.

provides us with a determinative reading founded in moral principles. Meanwhile, Henrich takes Kant's work as a provision for the moral image of the world, while Lyotard and Horowitz provide readings of art deeply and directly influenced by the *Critique of Judgment*. Lyotard and Horowitz develop reflective readings, further broadening the ideas presented in Kant's third *Critique*. Their work on art and genius links reflection to freedom and to expanded possibility.

Guyer

Paul Guyer observes that, when working with Kant's aesthetics, the subject matter seems to "slip away." The exposition of taste appears to succeed only in demonstrating the unending difficulties in proving and exhibiting the a priori nature of taste as well as the relation of taste to morality. Approaching reflection from a determinative position, as Guyer does, exacerbates such slippage.

Guyer and Kant both confront the problem of the representation of an aspect of subjectivity that seeks to make judgments without categories and concepts. The faculty of taste demonstrates and exhibits the limits of the understanding by suggesting a form of judgment that serves as a reflective activity as well as reflection of the subject's condition. As the aesthetic subject matter "slips away," Kant depends on metaphor, analogy and symbolism to remain attentive, to present and bring forth the characteristics of aesthetic experience. As I will explain in detail later in this text, such devices are not accidents of an obscure subject matter. Reflective judgment *requires* such literary devices in order to be exhibited precisely because such judgments are not accessible via the tools of the understanding. Such judgments are accessible via the tools of the imagination found within metaphor, analogy and symbol.

Guyer often acknowledges the importance of analogy and symbolism. However, he does not question why these devices may be the appropriate medium for the representation of

morality. Rather, he, like many others, develops arguments for why beauty is a symbol for morality, as Kant states in §59 of *The Critique of Judgment*. In other words, intent on developing a coherent analysis of Kant's work, Guyer does not look at the usefulness of literary techniques but, rather, looks only at the subject matter referenced by such techniques. If, according to Kant, "if we judge objects merely in terms of concepts, then we lose all presentation of beauty"⁵¹, then Guyer's approach (and others like him) to understanding taste - by understanding beauty as a characteristic of objects - "loses all presentation of beauty."

In the second edition of *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, Guyer acknowledges some of the weaknesses of his original work. He explains: "In *Kant and the Claims of Taste* I no doubt failed to see how much further one would have to go to appreciate the full complexity of Kant's thought about aesthetic experience and its connections to art, nature, and morality."⁵² In this text, Guyer makes three basic claims. First, he is not at all satisfied with Kant's explanation of disinterest. His criticism is based partially on Kant's failure to present a coherent picture of interest. Guyer, like many others, is also dissatisfied with Kant's claim that taste may give rise to pleasure but not to interest, a co-relative of the desire to continue pleasure. Second, for Guyer, purposiveness cannot lead us to understand beauty "grounded in the perceptual form of objects."⁵³ Third, Kant does not establish a satisfactory ground for subjective universality. I will respond to Guyer's first and last claims, saving a discussion of purposiveness for another time. By so doing, I will criticize Guyer's claims in order to highlight my reading of Kant and bring attention to the literary argument for reflection. I am not, however, creating a defense of Kant against Guyer. Guyer does take Kant to task on the basis of determinative reasoning. As a

⁵¹ Kant, *CJ*, 59.

⁵² Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, xiv. (hereafter cited in text as *KCT*).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, xviii.

result, Guyer makes it easier to present alternative approaches and thereby furthers Kant scholarship by fleshing out the determinative approach.

Guyer's third claim concerns subjective universality and remains too strictly limited by his determinative method, applying the concept of taste with objective universality. Guyer explains that Kant:

...does not establish that this special disposition of the cognitive faculties must occur in every human subject under exactly the same conditions and thus he fails to show that sufficient conditions for the reasonableness of aesthetic judgment and argument are really sufficient conditions for the rationality of expecting full agreement in particular judgments of taste even under ideal circumstances.⁵⁴

By articulating the problem in this way, Guyer uses a standard of objective universality and, therefore, begs the question. If agreement is established by 'every human subject under exactly the same conditions,' then such an agreement is objectively established. Therefore, Guyer's own expectations for Kant's failure or success are skewed. The representational dilemma appears again: can subjective universality be presented by means of judgments intended to determine objective universality and validity? Or, do the claims of subjective universality only mimic objective claims due to the lack of interest?

Guyer's assumption that pure judgments of taste must occur under "exactly the same conditions" fails to recognize the fact that no two individuals are confronted with "exactly the same conditions." At no time does Kant require "exactly the same conditions" and thus, he cannot "fail to establish" this point. Kant, instead, says that once we have the experience, we "require everyone to like the object, yet without this liking's being based on a concept."⁵⁵ He continues to explain, "...we conceive of judgments that can demand such an agreement."⁵⁶ Thus, Kant discusses what we do with the judgment once we've made the judgment without

⁵⁴ Ibid., xix.

⁵⁵ Kant, *CJ*, 57.

comparing whether or not the same experience, at the same time, with the same cognition, produces the same judgment of taste. Kant never offers us a chart of optimal conditions for encountering beauty. This is part of the puzzle: we cannot provide an objective recipe for beauty. As a result, subjective universality reflects *how* we take up the judgment of taste *after* we have made the judgment. In Kant's words, "general validity" of taste refers more to a hypothetical suggestion: if you were in my shoes, emboldened by disinterest, you would have the same feeling, experience and cognitive exuberance that I experienced by my recent encounter with beauty. Moreover, Kant's actual subjective universality clearly warns against applying conceptual standards to beauty and mistaking beauty for an objective judgment: "no one can use reasons or principles to talk us into a judgment on whether some garment, house or flower is beautiful."⁵⁷ We have to, he argues, experience the beauty for ourselves.

Meanwhile, the judgment of taste that provokes a feeling of subjective universality also imparts a "universal voice". This voice emerges by means of the "liking unmediated by concepts."⁵⁸ While Guyer may be right in suggesting that Kant does not provide adequate *proof* of subjectivity, Guyer cannot deny that Kant does not expect the unmediated liking to be available by means of mediated, or conceptual, tools. As Kant explains, "this is only an idea that there is a possibility that "a judgment that is aesthetic can be considered valid for everyone."⁵⁹ Therefore, subjective universality remains an idea – albeit an idea with causal significance – and not, as Guyer implies, a fact of existence. As the critique develops, it is this idea that may allow us to cultivate our 'universal human sympathy' and, therefore, it is this idea that has implications for culture and politics.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 58.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 59.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 60.

What about Guyer's critique of interest? He explains "Kant's own presentation of the first moment is distorted by a misleading conception of what the argument for its requirement of disinterestedness really is, and by what will turn out to be an inadequate definition of the central concept of interest itself."⁶⁰ Kant does not, as he rightly attests, define interest clearly. To ascertain the meaning of interest, Guyer struggles with the relationship between pleasure, desire and interest, wondering how Kant means to distinguish the three experiences. Kant's definition of interest, curiously, brings us back to concerns of representation. Kant's quick definition, "delight which we connect with the representation of the existence of an object," leads him to claim that interest is a "kind of pleasure...not a ground of pleasure."⁶¹ Guyer also finds problems in Kant's vague reference to the delight in a "representation". In other places, he observes Kant has explained that this delight is in existences, not their representations. In seeking to clarify some of these problems, Guyer differentiates between pleasure in existences and pleasure in representations. He embarks on an in-depth study of the relation between interest, pleasure, existences, and representations of existence concluding "the thesis that judgment of beauty creates no interest in its object is certainly implausible."⁶² After making this assessment, Guyer continues: "Without a more informative concept of interest, Kant's theory of disinterestedness threatens to collapse."⁶³ And, after a detailed reflection on "interests and concepts," he explains "since no classification of an object under determinate empirical concept is involved in its production of the harmony of the faculties, no inference to beauty may be drawn from particular conceptualization of it."⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Guyer, *KCT*, 150-1.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 162.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.

When it comes to Kant's definition of interest, Guyer is clear that "pleasure in the beautiful cannot produce an interest in a determinate class of objects."⁶⁵ As a result, we must observe Kant's more limited conception of interest according to "objects of determinate concepts, rather than allowing interest in particulars or in the objects of indeterminate concepts, such as the concept of beauty itself."⁶⁶ While Guyer has reconciled the difficulties presented by Kant, he has done so by limiting the definition of interest to a very narrow scope. Guyer concludes: "His argument simply provides no reason to believe that our response to the beautiful not only is independent of antecedent determination by concepts of desire but also has no effect on the faculty of desire."⁶⁷ Yet his concern with the relationship between interests and concepts fails to recognize two points. First, disinterest is a kind of interest, even if it is a detached interest. Second, there may be an interest borne of indeterminate concepts. As such, disinterest may establish peculiar kinds of attachments to objects and, therefore, should not be assumed to be a direct lack of or loss of interest but, rather, the fostering of intellectual interests. Meanwhile, referring to discussions of interest in the second *Critique*, Guyer presents interest as pleasure in objective existences, whether this regards prolonging certain objective existences for continued delight, or conceptual fascination with the determinative characteristics of a fantastic object. In this explanation, he does not allow interest to be related to "particulars or objects of indeterminate concepts." And, yet, intellectual interest, as I will argue, is the second unusual interest (the first being disinterest), where the subject remains at home in the face of "indeterminate concepts."

When Guyer goes on to contemplate the complex relationship between interests and existences, he formulates his question accordingly: "How can a judgment of taste have an

⁶⁵ Ibid., 169.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

ordinary empirical object or event – a rose, a statue, a musical performance – as its object, and yet be indifferent to its existence?”⁶⁸ The formulation of this question reflects Guyer’s tendency to evaluate the relationship between the judgment and the object before examining how this judgment reflects the disposition or condition of the subject. Guyer is still conceiving of judgments of taste as objectively functioning, determinate judgments. The mere fact of reflective judgment is a fact *about the subject*, not a fact of accuracy regarding the subject’s assessment of objects.

When Guyer counters Kant’s discussion of existence by addressing Kant’s well known claim that existence “is not a mere property or predicate of objects,” Guyer fails again to recognize that taste regards the subject. In other words, the enchantment with existence brought by judgments of taste is simply a fascination with the subject’s own ability to encounter such “objects.” The *Lebensgefühl* of taste leading to pleasure in existences “does not contribute anything to cognition”⁶⁹ and, hence, does not allow us to make any claims about the existences of objects. We only make claims about our *feeling* about the existences of objects. Thus, claims regarding pleasure in the existence of an object relate to us the condition of the subject not, as Guyer holds, our relationship to the object’s existence.

In order to address the link between the subject and the ‘existence of an object,’ Guyer looks back to Kant’s discussion of existence in the first *Critique* in order to refute existence as a predicate. Guyer does not allow that Kant’s view of the predicate may not apply to the conditions of aesthetic judgment. Guyer also does not reflect on whether Kant’s view of existence (as a predicate) has changed in the intervening years between 1781 and 1790. Yet, even if Kant’s view remained the same, taste regards essentially what is predicated of the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 170.

subject, not what is predicated of the object. But when Kant talks about existence as a predicate, even within the first *Critique*, he is discussing concepts: “A thing’s character of existence can never be found in the thing’s mere concept.”⁷⁰ Indeed, Kant’s earlier writing confirms his later claims: “Existence has to do only with the question as to whether such a thing is given to us in such a way that the things perception at least can precede the concept.”⁷¹

The failure to recognize that taste reflects how “the mind feels its own state,” will continue to send Kantians into debates about the objective claims of aesthetic judgments. Here, we find ourselves at the heart of the third *Critique*, where Kant, in fact, explicates the possibility of cognitive experiences that “precede the concept.” Indeed, reflective judgment requires existences that precede concepts. Guyer does not consider these facts. Even so, what follows from Kant’s explication of existence in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is a consideration of Descartes’ thesis that “the mere consciousness of my own existence proves the existence of objects in space outside me.”⁷² This follows precisely because the questions regarding objective existence are not separate from the claims regarding the existence and nature of the subject. After all, the subject coherently draws together perceptions in order to present even the image, idea or concept of an object. As Kant concludes in that section: “all principles of pure understanding are nothing more than a priori principles of the possibility of experience.”⁷³ Even here, Kant speaks about “the way in which the concept is connected with the cognitive power.” He does not speak of the nature of objects.⁷⁴ Guyer overlooks the role of the subject in favor of

⁶⁹ Kant, *CJ*, 44.

⁷⁰ Kant, *CPuR*, A225/B272.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, B275.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, B293.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, A235/B287.

determining whether these judgments about objects could possibly be reasonable and supportable.

Guyer reminds us that “Kant’s concern...sometimes leads him to write as if aesthetic response were free of any sensation of objects, his customary examples of aesthetic objects – flowers, foliage, and the like – are clearly empirical, perceptual objects.”⁷⁵ While it appears that Kant may feel that taste is “free of sensation of objects,” Kant does not deny that perception and sensibility play a role in allowing us to experience beauty. We can all agree that these examples are “empirical, perceptual objects.” The precise perceptual cause of judgment, however, is less important than the series of events that have been stimulated by the flower, the foliage and the like. The conditions for the possibility of reflection are not located within the object but, rather, the conditions for the possibility of reflection are located within the subject’s cognitive horizons. In these examples, the natural world provides occasions of reflection where the free play and harmony of one’s faculties allow one to find the flower beautiful. The objective qualities of the flower do not cause the pure judgment of taste. Judgments of beauty based on deception demonstrate the fact that beauty is not necessarily based on the conditions of the object but, again, the condition of the subject.

Guyer footnotes his reminder that flowers and foliage are empirical objects by offering the following explanation:

This simple fact is enough to refute any interpretation of Kant’s distinction between the mere representation and real existence as meaning that he thinks that the objects of taste are something other than ordinary empirical objects, and to require us to find some other interpretation of the distinction.⁷⁶

We are at the heart of Guyer’s attempt to redeem the object in aesthetic judgment and his failure to comprehend the primary role of the subject in reflective judgments. Guyer’s object-

⁷⁵ Guyer, *KCT*, 171.

mindedness is a by-product of his determinative engagement with the material. Guyer is, of course, correct that objects of taste are empirical objects. However, he does not allow that taste is *not about objects*. Rather, he continues to attempt to defend the aesthetic objects as the source from which our judgments develop their complexity.⁷⁷

Finally, Guyer concludes his discussion on existence and interest by deciding “indifference to real existence is...a condition for the judgment of beauty.”⁷⁸ These claims are misleading. They suggest that the life-feeling experience in beauty is an “indifference to real existence.” It seems, tuning our universal voice by means of beauty would allow for a sensibility to the existences not of other objects (to which Guyer is extremely attached) but rather, to the existence of my own subjectivity and, by realizing the freedom of my own subjectivity, allowing me to recognize the freedom and value of other subjective existences. We wouldn’t therefore be indifferent to existence: quite the opposite. We would realize that we have more than one attached manner of relating to the existences of the world. We find ourselves attached to the value of our own existence and somewhat inattentive to objects themselves as a result of our inward reflection. This turn toward the subject *is* an occasion of disinterest, a *detachment* from empirical interests and, importantly, a *detachment* from our determinative comportment toward experience and, by extension, the objects that inhabit our experience. The subjective value of reflection allows us to attach to others and, by means of this deep reflection, may allow us to re-attach to the world in a new or renewed way and, even, attach to ourselves as thinking subjects. Indeed, this is the main thesis of this essay: intellectual interest, a re-newed attachment to

⁷⁶ Guyer, *KCT*, 395.

⁷⁷ Guyer explains that “beautiful objects exist and are perceived in the same way as any other objects, although the empirical laws that explain their perception cannot explain why they dispose the imagination and understanding to the harmonious state of free play.” (*KCT*, 171) Guyer’s phrase “beautiful objects exist” is wildly misleading. Beautiful objects only exist by virtue of human judgment. In other words, beautiful objects are only antecedently classified as beautiful, a term that in social discourse fails to mean anything characteristic of the object, but serves as a reference to the fact that one individual once responded to the object with a pure judgment of taste.

existences, follows from a disinterest which is not indifferent. By virtue of an understanding of intellectual interest, we come to discover that disinterest can be considered a *kind* of attachment, a very special kind of attachment indeed, which allows for and fertilizes our other attachments to the world.

At the same time, Guyer separates beauty from real existence. Beauty becomes an aspect of appearance of an object distant from an object's existence rather than an aspect or dimension of the "real existence" or actuality of the object. Guyer makes it sound as if beauty, detaching us from real existence, distorts our relation to real existence rather than providing connections to "real existence". He claims that existences fuel interests and, as such, cannot found the disinterest in beauty. As in the case of the subject and object, Guyer appeals to traditional dualities and further maintains these rigid categories. In this case, beauty remains a phenomenon of surfaces of existence and not existences themselves. This, however, defies Kant's argument that experience remains a cognitive organization of appearances whose original sources, the things in themselves, cannot be accessed. To maintain the boundaries between subject and object, appearance and existence, Guyer sacrifices a main tenet of Kant's critical system. Guyer offers another reflection:

Truly aesthetic appreciation of an object concerns the character of its representation rather than the uniqueness of its existence. For this reason, considering whether one could obtain the same pleasure from a perfect representation of an object as from the object itself might indeed be a useful criterion for the judgment of taste.⁷⁹

Even though Guyer is beginning to address the nature of the artistic object, 'true aesthetic appreciation' derives from the subject. While it does concern the representation of the object in the subject's imagination, applying a criterion that compares representation to the real object fails to appreciate the subtleties of Kant's understanding of representation. These problems

⁷⁸ Ibid., 178.

cannot be reduced to objective qualities of objects, allowing representations to derive their efficacy and authority from their ability to adequate the object. As I read Kant, the representations (especially those of space and time) provide the conditions for the possibility of experience and coherent cognition. Here, it appears that for Guyer, empirical objects provide the grounds from which to measure and evaluate representations.

Guyer's arguments concerning interest and universal subjectivity do not evaluate the unmediated character of pure judgments of taste. In his first book, Guyer essentially ignores the link between problem of representation in the third *Critique* and the distinction between determinative claims and reflective claims. As he concludes his discussion of interest, attempting to find a more detailed definition, he decides "the experience of beauty depends on the perception rather than mere conception of objects." This continues Guyer's either/or: taste concerns either the conception of an object or the perception of an object. Guyer cannot conceive of a reflective cognition that draws partially from perception and partially from imagination, reason and freedom as a demonstration of the nature of the subject.

This, however, is precisely the problem with Guyer's early work. He does not consider the value of the particular as an impetus for reflective judgments. He is more preoccupied with the validity of the argument and the nature of cognition. As a result, he implies that we may encounter "exactly the same conditions" without recognizing the fact that the diversity of human experience insures that our presence in the same location, at the same time, still may yield vastly different experiences. For example, the lover of the beautiful is tricked to believe that a fake flower is natural. While the lover of the beautiful and the tricksters may approach the flower at the same time, in the same location, their experience of this flower will be completely different.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 179.

In *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, Guyer recognizes that both he and the respondents critical of his earlier reading (in *Kant and the Claims of Taste*) fail to properly assess the relation between morality and aesthetics. Indeed, Guyer excludes morality from his discussion of taste in the early work:

It has been assumed that Kant meant the appeal to morality to solve an outstanding problem within his theory of taste...our fundamental error has been in supposing that Kant ever intended the moral significance or content of aesthetic experience and objects to solve a problem within his aesthetic theory – a problem which in any case he did not recognize, for he thought his deduction of aesthetic judgments was successful. In fact, Kant did not look to moral theory to solve a problem in aesthetic theory; instead, he looked to aesthetics to solve what he had come to recognize as crucial problems *for morality*: how the rational ideal of autonomy that underlies morality – that is, the idea of self-governance by the free choice always to act in accordance with the universal law of pure reason – cannot merely be understood by disembodied agents like ourselves, and how this ideal of pure reason can nevertheless lead to a set of duties that do not just ignore the sensuous aspect of our being but include it.⁸⁰

Therefore, Guyer's tack in this second text is to demonstrate - quite contrary to the first - that "taste can serve moral autonomy only if morality can also recognize aesthetic autonomy."⁸¹ The implications of such theory is to present an ideal of political community that is not unjustly coercive but, rather, functions to preserve diversity and individuality by seeking to maintain one's right to freedom without legislating the content of noble feeling. Further, in *Kant and the Experience of Freedom*, Guyer claims to "show how Kant tried to make these two beliefs [aesthetic and moral beliefs] not merely compatible but interdependent."⁸² Curiously, Guyer is exchanging his cognitive determinative reading for a moralist determinative reading.

In the later work, Guyer refers fleetingly to aesthetic experience although he does acknowledge the importance of mediating one's animal nature with one's rational abilities. As

⁸⁰ Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality*, 19 (hereafter cited in text as *KEF*).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2.

Guyer discusses how a “belief or idea can be psychologically effective,”⁸³ he refers to the *Doctrine of Virtue* in the *Metaphysics of Morals* where Kant briefly recaps aesthetic experience in order to stress that we have the duty to, according to Guyer, “protect and cultivate” a sensibility that allows us to experience particular feelings in response to the world. In this case, Guyer wants to recognize that we need to cultivate the faculty or sensibility that allows us to recognize moral feelings, which may be put to work. Either way, he suggests, Kant values the sensibility that may be made use of by reason.⁸⁴ By examining the role of sensibility, as well as acknowledging the problematic relationship between morality and aesthetics, Guyer’s later work recognizes a deeper complexity within Kant’s third *Critique* as well as the difficulty of relating the third Critique to the other concepts in the critical project.

Guyer’s last work, *Freedom, Law and Happiness*, explains: “Kant’s moral philosophy must be founded on the recognition of the fundamental value of human freedom and not merely on the supposed fact of human freedom.”⁸⁵ Guyer’s work on freedom reveals much about Kant’s conception of freedom outside of his aesthetic. Critical to Guyer’s thinking is the “recognition” of the value of human freedom in order to achieve a society with shared ends. In Chapters 4 and 6, Guyer discusses the recognition of our freedom:

But what Kant eventually came to argue is that, although purely theoretical philosophy can and indeed must make conceptual space for the possibility of the freedom of the human will, we can only infer the *actuality* of the freedom of our will from our consciousness of our obligation under the moral law, as the necessary presupposition, as the necessary presupposition of our ability to fulfill that obligation.⁸⁶

While Guyer does not develop an explicit link between this discussion of the “actuality of freedom” and taste, we might infer that if aesthetics provides some solution to problems of

⁸³ Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law and Happiness*, 369 (hereafter cited in text as *FLH*).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 371.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

morality (as noted in Guyer's second text), then the aesthetic must play a role in illuminating our "consciousness of our obligation under the moral law" and, therefore, our freedom.

Guyer's work, taken as a whole, may shed light on the third *Critique* due to its more global scope. That is, his very detailed reflections on the aesthetic arguments have yielded to concerns with freedom, morality and autonomy. These discussions include acknowledgement of an interest in the moral law.

Guyer's corpus has assisted us in moving toward a knowledge of pure taste. Perhaps we can make the following conclusions. Aesthetic judgment allows for the recognition of the existence of freedom within the subject as one encounters the *Lebensgefühl* associated with pure judgments. Such recognition does not cash out all the important implications in relation to moral law, duty and the categorical imperative. However, aesthetic recognition of freedom in pure judgments does allow an encounter with the multiple possibilities that, by nature or art, have been ideally (perhaps lawfully) arranged in order to cause a response in the viewer. As such, the aesthetic experience of beauty may be said to initiate a realization of the supreme value of the subject (freedom) through the following steps:

1. I sensibly experience natural beauty.
2. I have a feeling of fullness.
3. This feeling of fullness is an encounter with impossible possibilities which allows me to open my own reflection, contemplation and thinking further. Such experience includes encounter with the sublime.
4. With the help of Guyer's discussion, this pure judgment is not a pell-mell experience of freedom but is an experience of freedom precisely because unlimited possibilities *have been delimited* by means of the lawful, purposeful arrangement.
5. This physico-cognitive experience presents me to myself as a human subject, as a distinctive being that allows for representation of my moral vocation in the experience of beauty and capacity to be a moral being.
6. Such aesthetic judgments symbolize freedom. While the content fluctuates (and Guyer talks about the form/matter distinction) the form of such judgments will always simulate the form of freedom in human experience.
7. I cognize the experience of natural beauty.

Guyer's early work on aesthetics has ultimately led him to questions of freedom, law and happiness. While his ambitious first work, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* overlooks the subjective character of reflection; his ongoing work suggests that aesthetic questions lead directly to discourse on freedom, law and politics. Even if his discussions on freedom might reference aesthetics, he is not ultimately satisfied that Kant's indirect and ambiguous argumentation will lead us toward increased clarity.

Allison

Henry Allison has only recently turned his attention to taste. In his prior works, Allison addressed the first two *Critiques* by examining transcendental idealism and freedom. I will touch briefly on Allison's 2001 analysis *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, in order to present his views on intellectual and empirical interest. To gain insight on intellectual interest, I will present a synopsis of Chapter 10, *Beauty, Duty and Interest: The Moral Significance of Natural Beauty*. While I am concerned with examining Allison's view of interest at this time, a longer study would look more closely at his rendering of representation, aesthetic object and pleasure, taking into account the entirety of his valuable reflections on taste.

Allison recognizes that a judgment of taste, although disinterested, may link to other interests and, in fact, "must" link to other interests. Curiously, Allison assumes that this link invokes duty. He explains: "Clearly the underlying assumption is that only such a connection is capable of accounting for a putative duty, as it were, to take an interest in the existence of beautiful objects and, by extension, to develop the capacity to appreciate their beauty in the first place." He continues this reading by assuming that a proof of interest related to duty requires us to develop the link between interest and morality. Again, he explains: "Equally clearly, to

establish such a duty, as it were, requires showing that the development of the latter interest contributes significantly to morality or more specifically, to the transition from nature to freedom.”⁸⁷ Thus, for Allison, intellectual interest reflects an aesthetic duty, a duty that “contributes” to morality.

While we can imagine how any aspect of aesthetic judgment may assist in the transition from nature to freedom, an aesthetic duty based on judgment transforms judgment into an activity based on concepts. While Guyer’s presentation depended on the concepts of the understanding, Allison’s reading of judgment depends on the concept of the good or moral. As a result, as he moves from the event of taste into the insuring interests, moral interest colors the outcome of aesthetic experience. It is almost as if aesthetic experience results in a sense of duty (albeit aesthetic) that will lead us to our moral vocation. To this end, Allison conflates intellectual and moral interest.

First, however, let us look at his conception of empirical interest. For Allison:

Kant’s strategy is to offer what he takes to be the strongest case for an empirically based interest in the existence of beautiful objects, the implication being that the demonstration of its inadequacy suffices to eliminate the entire class of such interests.⁸⁸

Such a circuitous approach does not reflect Kant’s systematic, architectural style. While empirical interest, as I will argue, is not the interest that follows taste, it is an activity of cognition relevant to taste precisely due to the ease with which one might confuse an empirical interest, an intellectual interest and a disinterest. Still, Allison recognizes that empirical interest regards social attachments and the desire to communicate with others. The end of these reflections should lead, accordingly, to a demonstration of how disinterest is connected with moral interest. Since empirical interest does not contribute to this connection – since it does not

⁸⁷ Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Taste*, 223.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 224.

include universality and necessity – Allison (and Kant) can dismiss its relevance to taste. Finally, we can also dismiss empirical interest due to the “potentially morally corrosive effects of its unbridled development.”⁸⁹ As a result, empirical interests are not legislated by a moral barometer, drawn toward the good. Rather, their attachments to existences reflect the fickle desires of that particular subject at that particular time. As a result, they cannot contribute to our understanding of the subject’s cognitive foundation. Now, Allison turns to the exposition of intellectual interest in Section 42, with an examination into why an interest in beauty appears to reflect a morally refined character.

In this section, Allison does recognize that any subsequent realization that one’s taste was based on artificial beauty would cause our interest “to disappear.” Allison parenthetically suggests that even though interest may disappear, aesthetic judgment may still be possible. However, this discussion is colored not by the cognitive fruitfulness of the subject (which I will highlight in this dissertation), but by the moral implications of taste and interest. As such, Allison delineates artful beauty and natural beauty in terms of the moral “superiority” of the latter. While Allison’s detailed attention to the text cannot be faulted, his reading begins to present aesthetic judgment through the lens of practical reason. Thus, while Allison does not demand (or presume) that aesthetic objects obey the rules of understanding, it appears that his reading invokes the idea of the good from the *Critique of Practical Reason*. One might question whether this would actually allow for the transition between nature and freedom or, if such a reading is simply an exposition of taste by means of the concept of freedom. If we adhere to Kant’s claims that aesthetic judgments are without concept, then we must consider how an aesthetic judgment might relate to freedom without being legislated by the concept of freedom, duty or the law.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 226.

Allison examines Kant's remarks that nature implies a trace of a disinterested harmony. He argues that our moral nature compels us to regard moral ends. As a result, moral individuals will be interested in the possible moral ends within the beautiful. In other words, the only way the harmony between our understanding, practical reason and judgment takes place is to associate with this experience our moral vocation. Allison's reading differs fundamentally from a number of views that regard the harmony of the faculties to include a retreat (though not absolute) of practical reason. Further, in this reading, universal communicability is simply more evidence of "nature's moral purposiveness."⁹⁰

Nature's moral purposiveness, however, is never considered in light of the fact that taste may reflect the subject cognitive richness and, therefore, that in an event of taste, nature too may appear to reflect the subject. As a result, Allison does not regard how nature itself comes to be presented and represented in aesthetic judgment. For Allison, this event is a fact of experience that implies an engagement with nature. For others, this may be a fact of experience that implies an engagement with one's own capacities or, in this case, with one's own moral vocation. However, Allison retreats by acknowledging that, even if taste grounds interest, "it does not follow that we have anything like a duty to develop taste."⁹¹ He hopes that intellectual interest will allow Kant to draw the link from the "sense-enjoyment of beauty to moral feeling."⁹²

Kant's analysis of intellectual interest lacks structure and detail, referring frequently to examples. As a result, Allison must provide us with a reading of intellectual interest in order to establish the connection to moral feeling. As a result, Kant's text becomes a springboard for Allison's thinking on taste. Specifically, Kant's indication that beauty provides a hint of harmony between the subject and nature provides a foundation for Allison's reading.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 228.

⁹¹ Ibid., 229

Rather than explore the possibilities of this accord of nature and subject, Allison questions its “practical significance.” As a result, it appears that Allison sees this accord as a useful director of moral sensibility. In this view, taste serves the ends of morality, instrumental to achieving the ends of practical reason. This leads, naturally, to a concern for the autonomous subject, a subject who can freely determine her/his will, in order to make proper decisions in the advent of moral ambiguity. In other words, we are led to the question, how am I to fulfill my moral duty?

It is not unusual that Allison should recognize the role of the will. Although he does not make this point directly, an interest reflects a direction, focus or attachment of desire and an inclination of the will. As a result, different interests are simply modifications of our desires. Curiously, Allison is led to Kant’s doctrine of radical evil and our inevitable weakness to temptation. He reminds us that radical evil regards the root evil based in the freedom that allows us to choose the good. A cultivation of taste, promising to edify morality, may provide ballast against such radical evil. Finally, Allison explains that a sympathy that cannot be cultivated by a rational application of moral duty, “lengthens our moral antennae” in order to assist in ethical decision-making.

This translation of taste through the concepts of practical reason gives a false picture of taste as a mediating faculty. Allison, at this point, has imported the concepts of radical evil, sympathy, autonomy and duty in order to ground the discussion of intellectual interest. As a result, Allison concludes the reading of interest by reference to Kant’s three works on ethics, *The Groundwork*, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, and the *Critique of Practical Reason* by referring to the necessity to “ward off temptation.” We learn, from taste and interest, that “nature is on our

⁹² Ibid.

side and, therefore, that our moral efforts will not be in vain.”⁹³ Thus, an ability to recognize beauty reflects a receptive sympathy that, in turn, allows us to cultivate and edifying our ethical conduct. Disinterest, therefore, cultivates our morality in the service of founding this moral interest that defers radical evil and uses receptivity to expand our sympathy.

Allison’s very interesting reading of interest reveals his commitment to Kant’s ethics, using concepts from practical reason in order to unlock a few of the mysteries of the third *Critique*. Allison reads the moments of aesthetic experience as facts that lead toward our engagement with our moral vocation. In this reading, he fails to recognize that a bridge between reason and ethics cannot be based solely in practical reason. His conception of aesthetic duty draws intellectual interest away from a mediating capacity related to exhibition and art.

Henrich

Dieter Henrich provides another reading that plays off the significant role of morality, while taking heed of the powerful exhibiting elements of aesthetic judgment. While Kant’s moral image of the world and freedom are facilitated in aesthetic judgment, the moral image is formal foundation or representation, distinguished the activity of cultivating the will through duty and aversion to radical evil.

In *Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World*, Henrich appeals to the reflective / determinative distinction in order to develop his conception of the play of the harmonies. In this short text, Henrich looks closely at the relationship between imagination and understanding in order to ascertain how the harmonious play might take place in concert with the faculties described in *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Henrich’s reading of aesthetic judgment respects the nature of reflection as a judgment that moves from particulars toward concepts by

⁹³ Ibid., 233.

valuing the role of “play” in aesthetic judgment. Dieter Henrich reads Kant’s work on taste more reflectively than Allison and Guyer by interpreting the entire critical project as a general reflective movement. As he explains: “the system has to be arrived at through an ascent – not by means of a logical derivation from a set of possibly intuitive convincing premises.”⁹⁴ The system is determined by means of using the reflective faculty of ascending from the specific toward rule-based thinking. Unlike Allison Guyer, Henrich considers the broad relationships between all three *Critiques* with attention to the moral image of the world presented in Kant’s work. Henrich recognizes that the rational domain and the moral domain function separately and, yet, demand to be reconciled. It is the moral image of the world *and* aesthetic judgment that bridge the rational and the moral.

Henrich reminds us that philosophy has long attempted to establish justifications for moral action on the basis of a “moral image of the world,” an abstract construct that validates and grounds moral action. Establishing a valid image of the world helps to defend against claims that moral systems may be illusory, ungrounded and indefensible. As a result, Henrich is determined to demonstrate not only that Kant presents a moral image of the world but that this image, a performative representation, draws together otherwise disparate aspects of human experience around the free will.

As Henrich reflects on the moral image of the world, he explains that “morality is the only manifestation and actualization of the freedom of the will”⁹⁵ by acknowledging that there can be no proper proof of the belief in freedom:

We lack any means of providing proof of this particular kind of freedom, hence it can only manifest itself by itself. Consequently, the need for a defense of the belief in freedom cannot be met in any direct way. One can only show that this belief connects perfectly well with all proofs reason can provide and with all other convictions reason

⁹⁴ Henrich, *Aesthetic Judgment and the Moral Image of the World*, 7.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

supports in one way or another. Taken together with the result that we cannot even expect that a proof of freedom might be possible, this way of arguing provides us with the only imaginable and thus satisfactory defense.⁹⁶

This leads him to return to the method of developing the philosophical systems that heeds morality. The method Henrich describes embraces a reflective positioning:

Philosophy cannot derive theorems from highest and self-evident premises. It must advance by investigating the connections between relatively independent domains of discourse. A comprehensive moral philosophy constitutes the conclusion of a system of philosophy.⁹⁷

This reflective positioning emerges in the investigation of different “domains of discourse” which cannot restrict themselves to transcendental claims regarding “self-evident premises.” As Henrich observes, Kant presents two worlds as he explicates pure and practical reason. In the first, Kant is concerned with the constitution of objects. In the second, Kant is concerned with the nature and grounding of ethical conduct. A “moral image of the world” must present a conception that draws together the theory of ethics with the theory of objects and knowledge. If the worlds of objects and ethics cannot be reconciled, as part of a coherent whole, then our experience remains chaotic: understanding would not accord with acting in the world. For Henrich, therefore, the moral image of the world solves the problem of experience by providing an underlying framework upon which understanding and practical reason function.

How does reason relate, then, to moral experience, given a moral image of the world? The *Critique of Judgment* tries to answer this question by acknowledging judgments that “do not express knowledge”⁹⁸ but derive from the same cognitive faculties while allowing for a

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 30.

consciousness of freedom.⁹⁹ Specifically, the emergence of imagination in the play of the faculties provides an explanation for how an image of the world may be expanded to include reason as well as morality.

Even though Henrich is eager to demonstrate how the moral image emerges, he still values the cognitive conditions that allow for the emergence of the moral image. The synthetic possibilities -- outlined by understanding and extended by the play of the faculties -- provide the conditions for the possibility of the moral image. In other words, reflection provides the conditions for the possibility of drawing together the two, distinct but necessary human discourses on ethics and knowledge. As Henrich explains:

Reflection belongs (together with attention) to the most elementary employments of the intellect. It is a form of knowledge that intrinsically accompanies the operations of the mind and helps to keep them within their distinctive boundaries. This results in the possibility of a *comparison* of the states and accomplishments of operations that are connected to and entangled with one another. Reflection and comparison so conceived can take place (and must take place in many cases) independent of any explicit awareness.¹⁰⁰

Even our ability to distinguish practical and pure reason is born from our ability to reflect and therefore, from the operations explored in the third *Critique*.

Henrich acknowledges that Kant's solution remains "obscure" and goes on to explore the precise nature of the harmonious play of reflection. Henrich explicitly states, "judgment that is reflective is in search of empirical concepts."¹⁰¹ To emphasize this point, Henrich stresses

Until he arrived at this conception, Kant could not possibly have conceived of a CJ. The book as a whole is shaped as a partial discipline within philosophy as an ascent. The very notion of a reflective judgment is the notion of an ascending power of the mind. And its other key term, the notion of purposefulness, is applied in an ascending manner, too: the CJ begins

⁹⁹ Ibid., 31. See Makreel's *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*. While Henrich explores the moral image of the world, Rudolph Makreel expands on how an image of the world may be possible through reflective judgment.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 45.

with particular kinds of purposefulness, like the beautiful and the organism; it proceeds to nature as a teleological system and arrives at the moral image of the world.¹⁰²

Regarding Guyer, I suggested that the “idea” of subjective universality is not the fact of existence Guyer was trying to establish. Rather, Guyer is interested in the objective universality of existence. According to Dieter Henrich, subjective universality may be a component of a larger idea, the moral image of the world. One aspect of the moral image of the world entails the sympathetic possibility that others, faced with the same situation and experience as myself, would arrive at the same judgments, whether our conclusive judgments are aesthetic or determinative. Aesthetic judgments, however, establish the link between understanding, practical reason and reflection that lends coherence to these social aspects of the moral image of the world.

Henrich finds the key to the harmonious play of the faculty within *darstellung* or the nature of exhibition within judgment. He explains the difference between the exhibition of an idea or abstract concept and an empirical concept. His strategy is to further demonstrate the reflective character of aesthetic judgment by claiming that Kant’s use of *darstellung* demonstrates that reflection concerns an engagement with our faculty of exhibition, abstracted from any content. While he shows that reflective judgment’s exhibition cannot be that of empirical concepts, he establishes how the free use of imagination holds forth a contemplation that may strengthen and extend understanding. For Henrich, the crux of aesthetic judgment lies in the harmonious play of the faculties. *If* he can explain and establish this play for Kant in a manner that legitimates *darstellung* as the formal exercise of judgment, he will be able to validate one aspect of Kant’s thought while showing how Kant’s moral image of the world includes aesthetic judgment. After all, the moral image of the world is a kind of formal structure, an exhibition of our empirical

¹⁰² Ibid., 23-4.

experiences with morality. Further, aesthetic judgment is a site for the emergence of freedom and, as such, is a site for the emergence of morality. However, according to Henrich, morality is the site for the emergence of freedom, *not as a proof of freedom* but as an instance of freedom. Henrich concedes that the proof of freedom is impossible.

Henrich's essays on Kant provide numerous qualifications to prevent us from assuming that aesthetic judgments or reflection concern objects. He shows how a free imagination provides the ground for aesthetic experience, and how the function of imagination in judgment differs from the function of imagination in understanding. All the while, Henrich recognizes that Kant's exegesis of aesthetics could be more detailed. Still Henrich provides a ground for understanding intellectual interest, insofar as he identified formal exhibition as critical to aesthetic reflection as well as a foundation for future determinative judgments. To this end, Henrich clearly explicates the distinction between reflective and determinative judgments as critical to Kant's project. As this dissertation unfolds, I will return to the discussion of *darstellung*, the distinction between reflective and determinative judgments and the moral aspects of aesthetic judgment.

Lyotard

While Kant's phrasings and arguments in the *Critique of Judgment* may be puzzling combinations of argument and style, Lyotard writings are events that attempt to reopen discourse by defying reason. According to Lyotard, reason invokes a totalizing discourse that presumes to include all elements within its whole. As a result, Lyotard's theorizing can be dizzying insofar as he considers multiple, opposing "phrasings" to be equally legitimate, thus undermining the possibility of a master narrative. In contrast to Guyer or Allison's commentary, Lyotard cannot break free of the knowledge that his mode of discourse always already appeals to meta-narratives

involved in politics, ethics and philosophy. Lyotard's work examines the underlying desire for primacy within any discourse. More specifically, the enactment of a discourse necessarily includes the hope that such discourse establishes its own authority. The view that (as a result of the postmodern condition) one discourse cannot be authorized over another remains essential to Lyotard's thinking. Therefore, multiple idioms provide equally legitimate witness to objects and events and naturally represent the multiplicity of human possibility caught within the battle for primacy.

While Lyotard's work on "phrases in dispute" or "the differend" often deals directly with discourse production and language-use, two works provide the best insight to these reflections on Kant: *Just Gaming*, a 1979 conversation between Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud; and "On What is 'Art'" originally appearing in 1991 as "Désordre: Valéry" in *Lectures d'enfance*. Since Lyotard frequently appeals to Kant throughout his writings – especially in *The Inhuman*, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, and *The Differend* – it would be inappropriate, in an introduction, to evaluate how all sources relate to intellectual interest as a mode of orientation. This problem is made more complex by the fact, according to one commentator, "since his earliest writing, Lyotard has argued that art, and aesthetic ideals, constitute the foundation for any critical thought, indeed for formulating critical alternatives."¹⁰³ These three, more limited texts demonstrate Lyotard's reading of Kant, including specific attention to the nature of language and the performative dimension of reflection. These texts show that Lyotard's "differend" is made possible by Kant's initial characterization of reflective thinking. Specifically, identification of the "differend" is made possible by a mode of philosophical discourse that establishes multiple simultaneous meanings -- a discourse possible through art and metaphor -- as well as a discourse

¹⁰³ Stivale, C.J. *French Review*. (March 1990), 63:722.

that embraces the activity of the thinking subject rather than the categorization and classification of objects.

In the essay “On What is ‘Art,’” Lyotard establishes that the sentence “this is art” cannot be cognitively consistent in the sense that it classifies objects within the set of “what is art.” In order to undertake his analysis, Lyotard acknowledges, in the tradition of Davidson and Kripke, that meaningful sentences make claims to truth or falsity, by drawing together (synthetically) different categories or objects and by indicating that there are cases of objects to which this sentence applies. In a sentence such as “this is art,” our utterance links directly to the place and time, the current circumstances, within which we are speaking.

Lyotard is fascinated, in cases like “this is art,” by the fact that the sentence gains meaning from the temporal conditions. As a result, uttered at a different time “this is art” may indicate an entirely different meaning. If, Lyotard suggests, “this is art” refers to a class of “art” objects that can be clearly defined and identified, then it may be that this brief sentence may prove to be consistent in different scenarios. However, in the case of art, we cannot consistently establish the “this” to which such a sentence refers. In Kantian terms, we cannot simply apply the concept “art” to a series of objects before us as we apply concepts like number, weight or color. And, while Lyotard does not explicitly state this in the essay, the concept “art” appears to be something of a non-concept. In other words, the concept of art simply refers, as in the Kantian aesthetic idea, to the reflective practice of seeking concepts or rules for particular phenomena. As a result, the utterance “this is art” becomes linked to reflection as a striving toward a concept rather than a direct application of the concept of art to the object before one. In other words, the term “art” itself defies determinative judgments and, thereby, enacts poetic or reflective meanings rather than determinative, cognitive meanings.

Liotard articulates this phenomenon by using Valéry's discussion of disorder in his *Introduction to Poetics*. Valéry holds, according to Liotard, that "this" cannot be known in cases in which the "this" is something produced by the mind, specifically, in cases in which "this" is art and/or writing.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, while the sentence "this is art" cannot have cognitive meaning in the traditional sense of establishing a truth based on a classificatory system in which categories or concepts (art) can be attached to empirical cases, "this is art" can establish "poetic meaning" or poetic consistency. In this way, Liotard acknowledges two types of sentence meaning: cognitive and poetic. Poetic consistency, inspired by Valéry, is "an act of the mind...circumscribed at the outset as what is not the artwork as object or thing."¹⁰⁵ We can begin to see how the work of Liotard will diverge distinctively from Guyer's analysis of Kant. Not only is Liotard concerned with "poetic consistency," which Guyer's object-oriented aesthetic cannot recognize, but such a consistency, we will discover, allows Liotard more "artistic" leeway in his own philosophical writing.¹⁰⁶

Because the poetic mind does not maintain a consistent identity, poetic consistency cannot be established by a prescribed set of characteristics. Rather, indeterminate utterances or moments of discontinuity are more likely to establish this poetic consistency. Liotard talks of poetic consistency as an event, a "decision one waits for." He explains, "it is a sort of spasm in

¹⁰⁴ Valéry's view suggests that artworks cannot be considered as traditional objects. Objects, in this reading, are indicators of the mind of the artist. Therefore, objects made art become place-holders for the mind or thinking and always refer back to the abundance of organized and disorganized cognitive activities rather than becoming simple containers for a series of limited concepts addressed by the artist. While the art-object may contain specific references to concepts – as Barnett Newman references the "now" in his series of Here I, Here II, and Here III. While contemplating the "now," regardless of this concept, the work simultaneously exhibits the mind's struggle or play with itself.

¹⁰⁵ Liotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, 169.

¹⁰⁶ In this sense, the artistic leeway that Liotard achieves is the able to be responsive and reflective in order to await the "decision", "judgment" or "freedom" enabled by utterance that are not cognitively consistent but, rather cognitively inconsistent and poetically consistent. We must remember, however, that the tremor or, as Liotard says the "spasm" of inconsistency may be precisely what provides the fruitfulness of the poetic moment.

which what has been done does not govern what is yet to be done.”¹⁰⁷ Thus, the poetic moment made possible in an utterance such as “this is art” regards the break with meaning, the spasm, which allows for many imagined (if not unlimited) possibilities. For our purposes, Lyotard provides us with two revelations. First, that many utterances, utterances that are cognitively meaningful, move us swiftly from link to link, establishing connections between concepts and cases to which these concepts apply. Poetic meaning draws our attention to the typically hidden connectivity of language and thinking by providing a moment of disconnect or discontinuity. Second, the poetically meaningful provides the listener, reader or speaker with the opportunity to “make” (or await) a decision as to the next connection. This opportunity to await a decision provides an openness or receptivity for additional possibilities. This awaiting-decision is precisely an orientation. The act or event of awaiting-decision in the moment of discontinuity is the poetic orientation of the subject.

In Kantian terms, there is a synthesis to be made in the poetic moment, a synthesis that has not been prescribed by the utterance or sentence. Lyotard says, “at each moment, there is a “decision” to be made as to how to create linkages.”¹⁰⁸ He continues: “In the uncertainty in which the disconnection of moments throws the mind – a disconnection that is, thus, a proliferation of possible linkages between one moment and the next – the mind waits for a decision. A decision one waits for is not a decision one makes.”¹⁰⁹ This poetic moment, the spasm and the recognition of spasm, yields a “being-there” or “availability” to the subject. Lyotard reiterates “it is assuredly not a manner of being with respect to the object (even a future,

¹⁰⁷ Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, 170. I will argue that disinterest can be conceived as a moment of attachment as unattachment. Lyotard’s spasm shares the same characteristics as the disinterest which attaches us to the world by mean of unattachment.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

anticipated or projected object): there is no object in this *exis* or *ethos*.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, we cannot mistake the poetic for a disposition toward objects that somehow ultimately leads to our relationship with objects or series of objects. As in Kant, the poetic meaning derives from the subject’s revelation of his/her own situatedness or availability. In this case, the poetic emerges when the subject experiences a spasm of discontinuity which brings to attention the habit of linking precisely by disconnecting one from our natural and unending series of postulations about objects, the world and experience.

Thus, as Lyotard recognizes, the *Lebensgefühl* of aesthetic judgment emerges. In Kant’s words: “only by what he does without concern for enjoyment in complete freedom and independently of whatever he could also receive passively from nature, does he give his existence [*Dasein*] an absolute value, as the existence [*Existenz*] of a person.”¹¹¹ Similarly, for Lyotard, in recognizing that poetic meaning is not simply temporal but relates to *exis* or “being-there” which allows us to posit our freedom through the very disorder of events that allows us to wait for a moment of “decision.” Lyotard concludes: “This disorder is also the mind’s freedom.”¹¹² Such disorder, while it may prove exhausting to remain open for the decision – as the characters in *Waiting for Godot* await a decision – Lyotard acknowledges a “that good disorder does not fatigue.”¹¹³ Poetic meaning cannot, he says, be established by means of the “endless rule- and constraint-making” which feeds a sterilizing fatigue of the mind. In other words, an attempt to eliminate disorder by means of rule making would serve to eliminate the productive disorder of the mind. Such a productive disorder is not a “making” in the traditional sense but a fertile “waiting” for the “this is” of the “this is art” to be established in some manner

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Kant, *CJ*, 50.

¹¹² Lyotard, *Toward the Postmodern*, 171.

¹¹³ Ibid., 172.

outside of the realm of the object. As Lyotard recognizes, the recalcitrant moment of poetic meaning (or of art in general) takes hold when an artist's assertion "this is art" encounters indeterminacy within its own framework, but also when the viewer/listener must re-establish his or her own decisive determination for the meaning of "this is art." According to Lyotard, the "this is art" becomes an "occasion for reiterating the same conflict (which may be sweet or furious) in the said "consumer.""¹¹⁴

Lyotard concludes this essay by returning to Kantian reflection. He reiterates that rules of signification are relevant when "determining objects" while reflection has yet to establish the rule relevant to the particular phenomenon at hand and, thus, has yet to establish rules of signification. Therefore, reading Kant, Lyotard acknowledges that the object is "the occasion" for the aesthetic event and not significant in terms of its own categorical specificity.¹¹⁵ But he translates the moment of reflection to be a moment where we "wait for" the rule of signification. He is yet more specific. In reflection, we do not wait for a rule but, rather, "the form imagination might take."¹¹⁶ In a spasm, disorder and discontinuity (the absence of order or familiar connectivity) come to call on the imagination in order to establish a form not yet established by the objects or sentences ("this is art") occasioning our thought. The judging of the *Critique of Judgment*, the judging-without-concept, is an occasion in which "nothing occurs but the senseless flow of every linkage possible"¹¹⁷ and requires a poetic orientation that establishes receptivity appropriate to the moment.

We will see, later in this work, that Kant speaks about reason's indispensable supplement, suggesting that, within reason, there exists an additional aspect to be considered, something

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 173.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 174.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

crucial but supplementary to reason. So, too, Lyotard embraces a metaphor that finds thought in an almost inexplicable tension with an “inside”:

We see that this reflection is...a bending within thought of something that seems not to be itself since thought cannot determine it. Yet it is the bending of something that is possibly more “inside” thought than itself...This further inside is nothing other than feeling... We are indeed speaking of the same thing, of a “this” that is in no way a thing, but rather an occasion for a “pure” feeling in the Kantian sense, pure in that it is not motivated by anything.¹¹⁸

Therefore, for Lyotard, the supplement “more inside thought than itself” is the feeling that can be realized, identified and presented only by means of poetic orientation and the absence of the object or an object of desire. The pure feeling, “not motivated by anything”, is simply the aesthetic feeling associated with the moment of disinterest or detachment from one’s usual interests.

While Lyotard suggests that poetic meaning can equally inspire the artist and the audience, he does imply that the artist provides the possibility for poetic meaning to the viewer, without prescribing the poetic moment. As in Kant, Lyotard’s poetic meaning cannot be established definitively by a set of objects or things or by a predetermined conditioning of the subject. As a result, the poetic meaning is established in and through the dynamic, disordered but cognitively playful subject, just as Kant’s aesthetic judgment reflects the cognitive conditions of the judging subject more than yielding information about a specific object, whether natural or artistic.

Lyotard has attempted to establish “this is art” as cognitively inconsistent but poetically consistent. Cognitive consistence, he argues, determines whether or not a sentence is true or false. Our sentence, “this is art,” however, cannot establish truth or falsity insofar as it has different meanings on different occasions. Similarly, as long as “this” refers to an act of the

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

mind, there can be no conceptual determination of the meaning of the sentence. Playing off Valéry, Lyotard holds that an act of the mind cannot be known and, therefore, “this” cannot be known. This allows Lyotard to identify the sentence “this is art” as poetically consistent and cognitively inconsistent. The poetic meaning reflects the elements of the work not related to the object or thingness of the art by honoring the moment of discontinuity, a moment in which our concepts do not succeed in yielding determinate definitions of objects. In so doing, the poetic moment provides the viewer/listener with a moment of waiting, a moment awaiting decision or, in Kant’s terms, a moment of receptivity. This moment is rather pregnant as the voluptuousness of possibility expects a decision or limitation to be presented by the imagination. Further, however, poetic meaning suggests a “being-there” of freedom, by allowing the subject to await decision, by allowing the subject to complete the incomplete form presented in “this is art.” The “pure feeling” described by Kant’s aesthetic, indeed the feeling of freedom itself, guides thought in establishing poetic meaning, in waiting for decision, and “bending within thought something that seems not to be itself since thought cannot determine it.”

And while Lyotard does not further explore “this is art,” artwork attends to the claim “this is art” by presenting itself to the public and, therefore, by presenting the statement “this is art” to a group of interlocutors. As a result, Lyotard’s observations about this specific statement can be applied to art objects in general, especially art objects presented to the “consumer”, in order to engage the audience, not only in the poetic meaning made possible by the assertion, but to engage the audience in the tension established between cognitive or determinative meanings and poetic or reflective meanings. While Lyotard does not muse on the juxtaposition of cognitive and poetic meaning, he concludes by claiming: “Such is the resistance of art – a

resistance in which all of its consistency consists: determination should never exhaust birth.”¹¹⁹

As suggested by Kant’s physicotheological proof, Lyotard’s poetic meaning may indeed “tear reason out of any brooding indecision, as out of a dream” in a very specific manner. For, the “sterility” promised by rule making and rule-following, by mental action that lacks imagination, might yield to a receptive reason that awaits new formations without always already determining the next connection.

Lyotard’s poetic meaning does not orient the subject toward the object, the art or the commerce between the subject and such external stimulus. Rather, poetic meaning orients the subject toward the “inside of thought” and, thereby, toward freedom. This orientation, an inner orientation, allows thought to engage “this is art” in a renewed manner, insofar as thought *must* renew, reconnect or re-establish a continuity with “art” and, therefore, the object that occasions such reflection by deciding what form “this is art” takes. While poetic meaning requires such reflective orientation, imagination responds to the desire for form (or completion) made urgent by disorder. This desire (or interest) is a purely intellectual interest, an interest in re-establishing the broken continuity, overcoming the discrete moment of poetic meaning to encounter a connectedness. The interest is not the decision or form taken by “this is art”; it is only the cognitive engagement that urges the poetic meaning to re-connect with the vast grid of meanings and experiences that can be determined. In other words, Lyotard’s analysis exhibits the intellectual interest within Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* by demonstrating the intellectual fertility of discontinuous cognition. Such discontinuous cognition emerges in Kant’s moment of disinterest, moments required in judgments of the beautiful.

Like Henrich, Lyotard confronts the possibility of impossible definitions in his dialogue with Jean-Loup Thébaud in *Just Gaming* in 1979. While Henrich contemplates the possibility

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 175.

that there is no proof for freedom, Lyotard claims: “There is no knowledge in matters of ethics. And therefore there will be no knowledge in matters of politics...In other words, there is no knowledge of practice.”¹²⁰ This dialogue begins with a quote from Aristotle: “The rule of the undetermined is itself undetermined,”¹²¹ already suggesting that we are entering reflective territory or a thinking that includes indeterminacy as a fundamental element of a complex series of events.

Lyotard brings to our attention this problem of knowledge by isolating reflective thinking from conceptual thinking. Reflective thinking does not legislate or prescribe and, therefore, cannot determine our conduct. Political and ethical matters founded in reflective thinking include a negotiation between opinions. For, if they are not reflective, they become mere prescriptions for action.

Lyotard considers this to be a Kantian position drawn from the second and third *Critiques*. He arrives at this conclusion precisely by considering the role that language plays in knowledge: “It is quite apparent what Kant is attempting to bring out in the second *Critique*: it is a language game that would be completely independent of that of knowledge.”¹²² For Lyotard, Kant’s distinction between the concept and the Idea (of a suprasensible nature) must be maintained in order to appreciate Kant’s work. As I have distinguished between determinative and reflective judgment, in order to recognize that the use of concepts in determinative and reflective judgments differ, Lyotard acknowledges that the use of concept does not include a reflective thinking essential to Kant’s work. He explains:

...this notion of Idea must never be confused with the notion of concept. It is always reflective use of judgment, that is, maximization of concepts outside any knowledge of reality...the Idea is an almost unlimited use of the concept: one has concepts, then one

¹²⁰ Lyotard, *Just Gaming*, 73.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 73.

maximizes them...It presupposes time for research, I would say. A sort of field where one can run and let oneself go to see how far one can reach with a given concept.¹²³

Maximization of concepts refers to all the possible outcomes in a particular situation or in the application of a particular concept, to think even impractical possibilities in order to determine whether all aspects of a concept have been exhausted. This maximization requires use of the imagination.¹²⁴ This idea, something that Lyotard will later refute as totalizing, attempts to apply a particular concept to vast and varied phenomena or include all phenomena within this idea. Lyotard observes: “it is the reasonable idea that produces what Aristotle calls the in verisimilar, the unlikely.”¹²⁵ Lyotard continues: “[the Idea] rests upon something like the future of further inquiry: there is a free field left open to the reflective judgment’s capability to go beyond the boundaries of sensible experience.”¹²⁶

Although Lyotard does not address reason directly in these reflections, reason remains the object of his dialogue, both the hegemony of reason and the character of the idea of reason to be (purportedly) all-inclusive. Within a certain field and within certain research, we are allowed the luxury to “run and let oneself go to see how far one can reach with a given concept.” As Lyotard observes, this concept need not relate to reality but can unfold what is unlikely and likely according to the particular logic being exercised at the time (depending on what science or methodology one uses.)

For Lyotard, the realm of politics and ethics is the realm of opinion. This presents a problem, however, in determining how to establish knowledge and, therefore, how to establish judgments in order to make decisions and, therefore, in order to act. Kant’s antinomies are an example of how the Idea can produce two opposing yet equally justifiable conclusions. When

¹²³ Ibid., 75.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 78.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

faced with such paradoxes, however, how is one to decide for one or the other? Lyotard explains:

... he decides by guiding himself by means of a sort of horizon, a horizon of justice. But then the question is: What is it that such a horizon allows us to discern? Can one say what is the idea off the totality of reasonable beings? Can it be given a “content,” even if be purely a formal one, that would let us say: this conduct or that utterance, is not just, whereas this one is?... what allows us to decide is not that which has been attained, but that which remains to be attained; it is ahead of us, like an Idea. But we must not lose sight of the essential: even if we admit that the paradoxes of the Sophists, or of the rhetoricians, or those of the Megaratics, imply a use of the Idea, that is of time, and the localization of a horizon of things to be done in order to judge things already done, the problem of knowing how this horizon is to be defined remains whole, since there is no possible knowledge of it.¹²⁷

This question, “what is it that such a horizon allows us to discern” might be preceded by another question that concerns – what allows us to recognize and identify a horizon? This question is answered by orientation and intellectual interest as capacities that make possible a discerning horizon.

In conclusion, Lyotard provides a ground for thinking about art, the impossibility of knowledge in certain areas, and expansive possibilities resulting from a “spasm” or discontinuity. Finally, Lyotard recognizes that Kant’s thinking on the faculty of reflective judgment allows for a consistent poetics, resulting from discontinuous conceptuality. In contrast to Guyer and Allison, Kant’s philosophy provides Lyotard with a springboard for his own philosophical practice. As a result, Lyotard does not challenge, correct, improve and supplement Kant’s explanations of taste. Rather, for better or worse, Lyotard’s reading results in a new thinking, a new narrative on Kant.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 76.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 83.

Horowitz

Gregg Horowitz allows us to continue to examine the relation between the concept and the aesthetic judgment. In “Art History and Autonomy,” published in *The Semblance of Subjectivity: Essays on Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory*, Horowitz attempts to retrieve the autonomy of art reduced, by Hegelian analysis, to an object of history. Thus, not only must we consider whether or not beauty refers to an object or a subject and whether this is done determinatively or reflectively, we must consider the historical context of beauty, art and aesthetic judgment. Second, in a 2003 lecture titled “On the Concept of the Arts” presented at the Berkeley Museum of Art and Pacific Film Archive, Horowitz directly addresses the character of communicability in Kant’s aesthetics, by examining the role of a normative concept of “art” in relation to the “arts.” Horowitz’s lecture forces us to re-consider elements that have already emerged in Lyotard’s reflection on the sentence “This is Art” by exploring the “deficit in communication” at work in Kant’s aesthetics and contemporary art theory.

In “Art History and Autonomy,” Horowitz explains, “Art’s self-presentation as autonomous is thus seen to generate a need for non-reductive history of “apparent underdetermination” by, precisely, history itself.”¹²⁸ This under determination hearkens back to Lyotard’s “On What is Art.” While Lyotard does not invoke Hegel (or history), he observes that the sentence “this is art” cannot be determined. To some extent, Lyotard is only further identifying the “apparent under determination” that Horowitz goes on to analyze in historical terms. Horowitz’s argument rereads Kant in order to respond to Adorno’s dialectic between reason’s desire to “grasp the nature of social determination and the administered social world that blunts that impulse at every step.”¹²⁹ Thus, Horowitz recognizes the tension between

¹²⁸ Huhn and Zuidervaart, *The Semblance of Subjectivity*, 262.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

reason's exploits and the restrictions presented by and for reason. This study appeals to Adorno's view that art "stands opposed to society," an opposition made possible by the already established fact of art's autonomy. As Horowitz explains, "autonomous art criticizes society just by being there because the "there" where it is is no "proper" place." He places his study in context: "I will proceed as if one of the central tasks of philosophical aesthetics is to preserve this contradiction in as much of its richness as the spirit of our age permits."¹³⁰

Turning to Kant, Horowitz asks:

If an artifact is distinguished from a natural object in having a determinate purpose, and a work of art is an artifact made to be the object of a judgment of taste, then a work of art is an artifact made with the purpose of not seeming to have a purpose, of not seeming to be an artifact.¹³¹

As noted earlier, this is the case of the oriented church: an aspect of the church is intentionally constructed to appear unintentional, as if the light naturally and properly falls on the priest or sculpted saint, as if the church had not been laid out with such intention.

While Guyer speaks of objects without stressing the distinction between natural objects and artifacts, Horowitz finds this distinction to be essential to determining what Kant means to establish in the third *Critique* and how this grounding provides a foundation for Hegel and Adorno's analyses. Horowitz recognizes "The object must be made through a rational choice but that choice, must be, so to speak, made invisible."¹³² Horowitz recognizes that the mediated quality of the artifact must appear unmediated and, therefore, unintentional. He extends this observation to acknowledge that such trickery is "all the more deviously purposive the more successfully achieved."¹³³

¹³⁰ Ibid., 264.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid, 265.

¹³³ Ibid.

At this point, Horowitz is interpreting Section 42 and referring to the event of trickery explained within the section on intellectual interest. This trickery describes a young “rogue” whistling in the bushes while some visitors at a country inn gasp at the beauty of the lovely birdsong, the song sung by the boy hiding in the bushes. Horowitz suggests that the boy in the bush must be equally lacking in purpose in order to provoke the disinterested judgments of taste in the audience at the country inn. He describes this as a “real absence of determinate invention.”¹³⁴ He wants to determine how this is possible but, in so doing, does not appear to consider other possible purposes within the Kantian example. While the apparently innocent boy whistles happily, the jovial innkeeper constructs the deception upon which the example rests. Therefore, while the lively boy might lack intention or purpose, the purpose that stimulates the act is once removed, in another subject intent on benefiting from the delightful atmosphere encountered at his country inn.

However, before proceeding, Horowitz concedes that Kant does not solve the problem presented by the seemingly unintentional artifacts created by the whistling boy and the jovial innkeeper. The rule for these artifacts, reiterating Kant, is that there is no rule, academic or otherwise. Horowitz finds this dilemma to be solved by Kant’s conception of genius: the artist who is able creates works of nature without appeal to rules. The genius creates unintentional works that, at the same time, establish rules or standards for what art can be. So, Horowitz moves on to examine the question of the appearance of the intentionality by examining Kant’s characterization of genius and how the genius executes this charade without undermining aesthetic authority.

Horowitz’s considerations regarding the appearance of a work of art may help expose the nature of appearance and trick in Section 42, as well as shed light on how the aesthetic allows for

¹³⁴ Ibid.

an appearance of freedom within judgments of taste that appear to be free and reflective. As noted in “A Newly Arisen Superior Tone of Philosophy,” Kant wants to establish a high standard for philosophical argumentation and, therefore, prevent baseless speculation by acknowledging the *work* required to establish sound philosophical claims. Similarly, Kant’s genius, Horowitz reads, must engage in aesthetic work: “genius appears not instead of purposive activity but by means of it.”¹³⁵ He decides to read this aspect of Kant’s aesthetic, when the genius creates apparently purposeless work as a result of purposive activity, as an “under determination of the artifact by any specific purpose.” At this point, Horowitz is most interested, not in resolving the dilemma presented by the genius, but in establishing the (irresolvable) tension created by this aesthetic theory. To do this, Horowitz must preserve the image of the genius as a conduit for natural purpose, a purpose that the genius himself/herself cannot fully comprehend, articulate or identify by a set of rules. Horowitz implies that intentionally designed unintentionation may suggest the *over* determination of the work and transform the genius from the supreme, inspired figure to a figure more like the clever but troublesome Hermes.

In order to understand this dilemma, Horowitz argues, we must examine the concept of mechanism in relation to genius. In Kant’s explication of genius, mechanism emerges as a constraint of the will, over and above its function as providing principles for natural phenomena. To this degree, the genius-artist, Horowitz explains, “seek[s] to make the work come into existence as the product of another principle: the principle of freedom.”¹³⁶ He continues:

...an artifact is a work of art not when mechanism is absent but when the mechanicity of mechanism, its determinative power, is visibly absent...the free spirit appears in the transformation of mechanism from constraint into raw materials for art.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Ibid., 267.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 269.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

The apparent absence of visible mechanicity has been made possible, therefore, by means of the activity of the free spirit. What does it mean, however to suggest that, put in another way, visible mechanicity is absent? Does Horowitz mean that the artwork leaves no trace of the work required in order to set the artifact into motion or establish its significance? The loss of mechanicity concerns the appearance of a non-mechanical principle, the principle of freedom. Loss of mechanicity yields an artifact that appears to defy physical principles that must (in some temporarily hidden manner) constrain the artifact, as they constrain all physical objects. For example, the sculpture that appears to defy gravity succeeds by using the very force of gravity to achieve the apparent opposite. In this case, a visibly absent mechanicity does not necessitate an absolutely absent mechanicity.

To this degree, Horowitz's discussion hinges on the relation between the genius-artist and the viewer. What Horowitz does not point out is that the 'absent-mechanicity' can only be established through a carefully constructed object that must be digested as an object of sight. A viewer allowed to deconstruct or handle the anti-gravitational sculpture may recognize the actual mechanicity simply by discovering the physics behind the piece. Nonetheless, this does not undermine either the ability for genius to conceal mechanicity in addition to our original experience of the apparent freedom of the work. By exploring the mechanicity, Horowitz proposes the underlying principle of the artifact does not concern physics (in the case of sculpture) but, rather, the "non-mechanical principle" underlying the work of genius is the "principle of freedom."¹³⁸ The claim made by Kant can also be extrapolated from Horowitz's analysis. That is, while the subject is constrained by physical principles and guided by intentionality (whether heteronomous or autonomous), the principle of freedom underlies these more familiar factors determining the subject. As in *The Critique of Judgment*, the unusual

condition of genius provides an occasion for the subject to realize this principle doubly: as the viewer engages in an “underdetermined” work and as the genius provides the exemplar of the practice or work of “under-determination.” The shift made, as the viewer considers a supra-mechanical principle, is radical. The viewer’s attention moves from the nature of the object toward the nature of the subject, indeed, to the nature of all human subjects in general. The work becomes a reflection of the nature of human subjects both in the ability to reveal freedom in the creator as well as the ability to vicariously indicate freedom in the viewer, as a human subject.

Such a principle is based on the viewer’s position (or belief) derived from what is seen and considered visible in conjunction with what is considered invisible about the piece. While Horowitz does not explore the viewer’s position regarding visible/invisible aspects of the work at length, he does presume that the loss of mechanicity *makes visible* the principle of freedom. Perhaps, however, this tension emerges not as a product of vision but as a product of forgetfulness insofar as an artifact might succeed in encouraging the audience to forget the vulgar and basic elements of the piece in favor of another order, an order based on freedom. While Horowitz does not discuss this, his reflections may suggest that the aesthetic depends on a sort of double vision: an ability to see beyond the material aspects of an artifact in order to make visible (in active viewing) the immaterial aspects (or principles) of the work.

In other words, such double vision requires an ability to recognize the principle of freedom bound within an object, a principle typically bound within the subject. One encounters the exhibition of freedom, not in another subject, but by means of an object. We can see how aesthetic experience, insofar as it witnesses freedom, depends on a sublimation in which the object appears as a reflection of the subject. Art, therefore, would be the occasion of the appearance of freedom in the material, inanimate object that emerges as a vehicle for the

¹³⁸ Ibid., 269.

appearance of the fundamental principle of the subject in addition to concealing mechanicity. Horowitz links this discussion to Michelangelo's *Captives* in order to further illuminate the nature of this dynamic.

Horowitz identifies the artist as 'producing something non-necessitated' (freedom) and then examines Michelangelo's *Captives* as an example of this phenomenon of genius. As Horowitz explains the captives, we discover a principle familiar to many artists: one must make the media appear to defy the natural laws that bind it.

At the same time, we should question the assumption as to whether or not Michelangelo's figures actually can be considered human and do not appear as stone. While they are skilled carvings of marble, no onlooker would mistake these statues as a thing of nature – the mistake that Kant explores in Section 42. Horowitz explains, "we are witnessing the effort of the stone itself to be human."¹³⁹ In viewing art, Horowitz implies, we must recognize another order of vision, an order that Horowitz invokes in such a proclamation. This order imparts characteristics of the subject to the object. In this case, the stone's struggle to be human suggests an economy of desire that includes the impossibility of desire: the stone entertains an impossible desire. Is Michelangelo's role to convince the viewer that this desire might be realized against all odds? Is this the nature of the Kantian genius-artist? Is the encounter with impossibility complementary to the encounter with freedom?

There are two expressions of freedom, however, in Horowitz's example. The first example of freedom reflects the relationship between the artist, the hand and the material. The second example of freedom reflects the relationship between the viewer and the object, depending only contingently (due to the under-determination of intention) on the artist. Thus, "witnessing the effort of the stone to be human," requires witness of the effort of the artist to

subvert purposeful intentions and over-determination in favor of developing a relationship of ‘free play’ between her, the material, and the aesthetic idea that might initially guide the work.

In the *Captives*, Michelangelo’s hand emerges powerfully because the human figure has only been partially carved from the rough marble. The work, therefore, explicitly bears witness to the artist’s struggle for domination over the marble. Horowitz’s example is helpful by linking the dilemma of Kant’s genius to a real artist. By choosing the *Captives*, he provides an example filled with intention and the mark of human intervention. This example is far different than the concealed whistler at the inn, where the audience either has no knowledge of birdsong and, therefore, cannot identify the trick, they cannot see or hear the remnant of human artifice required to whistle the tune or evaluate the innkeeper’s influence on the scene. Indeed, the guests at the inn have no clue that the artifact *is an artifact*. Michelangelo’s *Captives* differs from Kant’s example insofar as we encounter this work *as an artifact* initially. We do not assume this marble status to be a “work of nature,” even though the stone expresses the desire to be human.

The *Captives* (for the viewer) exceeds what might be intentionally possible through the individual human artist. The excessive quality of the work – the work under-determined by the genius, the aspect of the work *not under his explicit control or mechanism* – invokes the order of nature which the genius un-academically embraces. The invocation of nature is not simply my believing these are real humans before me, as the guests at the inn hear the apparent birdsong. The invocation to nature, made by works like Michelangelo’s, draws out an element of nature even *within the constraint of the intended artifact*. In other words, nature’s beauty presses in upon the artist regardless of his or her intention to control the work. Indeed, we often speak of the aspects of a work that an artist does not control but lend coherency, depth and meaning to the

¹³⁹ Ibid., 272.

work nonetheless. While an artist can develop this excessive element of the work to some extent, this aspect of their work (for the most part) remains out of their control. In Kant's terms, nature controls the will of the genius and can be evidenced in the artifact. Genius, therefore, works (wittingly or unwittingly) at establishing the conjunction between nature external to the subject and the nature within or of the subject. Now we can express Horowitz's principle of visibly absent mechanicity as a freedom that expresses or establishes the conjunction of nature outside the subject and nature within the subject despite the intention of the artist.

While this analysis of genius adapts Kant's reading, it allows one to consider how an artifact that does not deceive us might still embody the "under-determination" typical of the Kantian aesthetic. In other words, it allows us to consider Michelangelo's *Captives*, a work a viewer may identify as an artifact, still may capture nature by linking to a world beyond the artist, by invoking the nature within the subject and by allowing viewers to identify the shared subjective possibility of under-determination or freedom. In modern terms, the artifact eclipses cult of personality or intentionality that threatens to dominate the meaning of the artifact. Thus, when Horowitz explains, "we are witnessing the effort of the stone itself to be human,"¹⁴⁰ we are witnessing a driving, natural force, an exhibition of under-determination, a falling away of the intentionality of the maker in the face of a work and a working that, in its complex practice, provides an exhibition of freedom. The stone makes an effort to be human because, in our enchantment with the artifact (even though we comprehend it as an artifact), the intentionality and interests of the maker have receded as unimportant. In other words, the interests of the maker appear to no longer determine the artifact.

We have come full circle insofar as what situates Horowitz's reading of the object differs significantly from what situates Guyer's reading of the object. Horowitz conceives of the

aesthetic object as an opportunity for the appearance of the subject's freedom. Thus, while Horowitz acknowledges that the natural principles that bind the object are deterministic and immutable, his reading seeks to present aesthetic reflection as the occasion in which the determinative reading of the object falls away in favor of the appearance of the subject within the object. As a result, Horowitz evaluates the aesthetic object by recognizing both terms of Kantian analysis: while he acknowledges the determinative qualities of the artifact, he seeks to illuminate how these qualities provide a ground upon which the principle of freedom might appear as the non-mechanical principle which orders or authorizes the object. While Horowitz does not use this language, his conception of the non-mechanical principle and under-determination suggests the element of disinterest so important to Kant's aesthetic. Perhaps Horowitz's conception provides an example of the exhibition of freedom (sometimes unwittingly, sometimes instinctively) as a function of the disinterest actualized in the genius and witnessed by the viewer.

Whether or not Michelangelo's *Captives* exactly reflect a Kantian object, Horowitz still establishes an argument for art's autonomy. As he concludes: "the work of art is the visible transformation of mechanical necessitation into incompleteness of determination and so is the manufacturing of freedom."¹⁴¹ Horowitz continues: "Art is the labor of remaking the world of mechanism as a world that need not be the realm of necessity."¹⁴² As a result, Kant's view of genius and art allows Horowitz to present and acknowledge the significance of the mechanicity of nature while recognizing and exploring the tension created when the artist presents a work that transforms the mechanicity of nature, a work in which the artist's will does not over-determine the product but, rather, works purposively without purpose. As I have attempted to argue, part of

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 272.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 273.

this dynamic includes a broad gesture made (by the object) toward the subject. Inserting subjective necessitation or presence, i.e., the appearance of freedom, where objective presence normally reigns, thereby interrupts the objective necessitation. As a result, the work appears as “an internally complete system” and, therefore, appears to be autonomous.

Horowitz’s goal reaches far broader than a reading of Kant’s concept of genius; he wants to situate art’s autonomy in relation to Hegel’s historical proclamations as well as Adorno’s conception of art as bound within irresolvable tensions. A reading of Kant provides Horowitz with a foundation to establish claims regarding the failure of freedom and, the “non-reconciliation between freedom and nature in art.” “Art’s inability to attain freedom” requires us to see art as the historical unfolding of the battle to establish freedom in light of the artifact that emerges as a loss of freedom that evidences freedom. In the Kantian structure, we can see the loss of the intentional freedom of the genius as an opportunity for free spirit. However, the emergence of free spirit invokes the necessity of nature and not, as it would seem, an occasion for freedom itself. The appearance of freedom, therefore, coincides with the loss of freedom and the inability of freedom to transcend nature’s grasp. This tension or problematic founds a history of art as an attempt to resolve this tension, taken up by Hegel’s engagement with the death of art and, as Horowitz says, “the first moment when it became thinkable that art might be impossible.”¹⁴³

Finally, in his more recent lecture at Berkeley, Horowitz re-examines Kant’s reflections on art by turning to whether or not we should regard “art” or “the arts.” He turns to Kant’s *Division of the Arts* which I will examine in Chapter VII, acknowledging how this division must make assumptions about the function and scope of art and representation. He argues “there can

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 280.

be no system of the arts” precisely because “there is no concept that will permit us to cognize the totality of the arts.” Reminiscent of his earlier essay, the arts cannot be mechanically translated into a system, as they always already include a demand for translation regardless of the most recent rendering of “art”. He explains, “there is a deficit of communication implicit in conceptual clarification, but to identify the unspecificity of that deficit with its incommunicability would be dogmatically to collapse specificity into conceptuality.”¹⁴⁴ In other words, we destroy the specific character of “the arts” even when we recognize its resistance to conceptuality and communicability as a general principle. As a result, Horowitz recognizes the tensions arising from representation, the need to represent and the loss of concept in the arts. This reading can only be developed from a comportment that regards representation and exhibition as a fundamental and unending question for reflective judgment and the arts.

Thus, Horowitz’s analysis (an example of a general critical theory approach) embraces reflective thinking by reading the concept itself in terms of an aesthetic idea. Rather than resolving the tensions created by the concept of autonomous art, Horowitz is content to engage the failure of this concept and, by so doing, reads the legacy of the Kantian artifact reflectively. Horowitz writes: “autonomous art looks like the failure of freedom.”¹⁴⁵ Moreover, as long as Horowitz concerns himself with how “freedom shows itself” or “looks,” he engages in the aesthetic of the concept of freedom. This discourse engages in the exhibition or appearance of freedom. In other words, the concept of freedom becomes an aesthetic idea rather than a rational idea, something hinted at in the failure of representation characteristic of “the arts.” Freedom becomes something that appears in and through imagination, an intuition, rather than a

¹⁴⁴ Horowitz, “On the Concept of the Arts,” Presentation to Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, February 1, 2003, www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/bca/horowitz.pdf.

¹⁴⁵ Huhn and Zuidevaart, *The Semblance of Subjectivity*, 274.

concept (or rational idea) that is simply indemonstrable.¹⁴⁶ Further, the failure of freedom in art creates a historical imagination, realized through Hegel, which tames and rationalizes this impossible concept by means of the rational progression of the dialectic of history. In other words, the ascendancy of freedom as an aesthetic idea emerges in Hegel by transforming or becoming entwined within the expoundable (or rational) idea of history. Again, while Horowitz highlights this genealogy in his article, his own acknowledgement of the irrationality of the concept of freedom in art binds with recognition of the complex unfolding of how freedom “looks” embraces the more contemporary positioning that speaks of freedom as an aesthetic rather than a rational idea.

Conclusion

Guyer demonstrates the difficulty/challenge in expecting Kant’s theory of aesthetic to provide us with truth-claims regarding beautiful objects. His later work explores how Kant’s more global claims regarding morality and freedom provide more conclusive insights into the subject. This moves us closer to looking at aesthetic experience in terms of the subject rather than the object. Alternatively, Allison’s reading of interest reflects a commitment to practical reason by depicting intellectual interest as an aesthetic duty which cultivates sympathy to ward off radical evil. Henrich’s reading of Kant extends Guyer’s shift toward the global and Allison respect for the moral, in order to identify the “moral image of the world” as a fundamental representation for the human subject, required for moral action. This image follows from the exhibition made possible by aesthetic experience, founding a thinking based on the impossible

¹⁴⁶ We might say that freedom becomes an aesthetic idea doubly. First, in the shift between Kantian and Hegelian aesthetics. Second, in the wake of critical theorists like Benjamin, Horkheimer and Adorno, the twentieth century hastens this conceptual shift significantly. As a result, Horowitz writes directly through this genealogy and, therefore, his work reflects the ascendancy of freedom as an aesthetic idea. Later work on community (Jean-Luc

proof of freedom. While Henrich pursues the link between aesthetics and morality, Lyotard helps us recognize the role of language in aesthetics. Lyotard studies the peculiar circumstances of the sentence “this is art” to identify its dual possibilities: as a truth-claim or a performative break with meaning. To this end, Lyotard provides a framework for thinking about the implications of sentence-meanings, in direct relation to aesthetics and reflection. Further, he draws out language-events to provide a definition of justice directly related to breaks with meaning. As a whole, Lyotard’s thinking re-works the concept of Kantian disinterest. This provides further ground for thinking about the concept of intellectual interest, in addition to considering the inherent relation between language and politics. Finally, Horowitz addresses an element of this discourse overlooked by the other thinkers: the concealed, forgotten or erased intentionality at place in those artworks that found aesthetic judgments, an intentionality brought to light by historical considerations. Importantly, this urges us to qualify our understanding of Lyotard, by forcing us to consider whether the “break” that requires us to await justice, might itself be a well-crafted occasion of un-intentionality provided to us by the genius. While most thinkers recognize that freedom plays some role in aesthetic judgment, especially insofar as aesthetic judgment defines our moral vocation, Horowitz discusses the work of art as a product of the principle of freedom. Finally, Horowitz argues for the impossibility of a totalizing system of the arts that leads to an impossibility of the concept of “art.” This reading, drawn directly from Kant’s aesthetic, demonstrates the impossibility of the concept of art, resulting from the nature of aesthetic communication. While Guyer and Allison attempt to ground the conceptual authority of Kant’s aesthetic by activating the role of understanding or practical reason in taste, Henrich, Lyotard and Horowitz identify impossibility at the heart of the Kantian project – and

Nancy and Alphonso Lingus) builds freedom as an aesthetic idea into determinations of postmodern political communities.

are able to do this by appeal to the character of reflective judgment. Each thinker draws us closer to an understanding of the role of orientation and intellectual interest.

Let us now look at Kant's essay *What is Orientation in Thinking?* in order to begin to consider the notion of orientation in relation to Kant's aesthetic and to develop a reading that draws on many elements noted above.

CHAPTER IV

ORIENTATION: THE COMPASS OF REASON

If intellectual interest is involved in some stretching forth made possible by cognition "at play" -- discovering through this process an encounter with freedom -- could it be that intellectual interest realizes such stretching forth in and through aesthetic judgment?

Kant's short essay *What is Orientation in Thinking?* sheds light on these discussions of intellectual interest. Kant's motives for writing this essay seem mixed, as he writes partially in response to public urging and partially to fulfill his duty to refute fanatical arguments. In this essay, Kant uses a thought experiment to erase the world to observe reason's navigational powers. Through this thought experiment, Kant links the theoretical ideas from the *Critique of Pure Reason* to the practical use of reason demonstrated in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. As such, the essay lends insight into matters of judgment by addressing the mediation of pure and practical reason without yet referring to the role of reflective judgment.

The essay is written in October of 1786, two years prior to the first edition of the *Critique of Judgment*, and does more to reflect Kant's ideas than to refute the Mendelsohn-Jacobi debate.

As Kant observes in a letter to Marcus Herz on April 7, 1786:

The Jacobi controversy is nothing serious; it is only an affectation of inspired fanatics trying to make a name for themselves and is hardly worth serious refutation. It is possible that I shall publish something in the *Berliner Monatsschrift* to expose this fraud.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Zweig, *Kant: Philosophical Correspondence 1759-99*, 123.

Later, writing to Jacobi, Kant concedes, “I was requested by various people to cleanse myself of the suspicion of Spinozism, and therefore, contrary to my inclination, I wrote this essay.”¹⁴⁸

After Kant publishes the article, a later letter to Jacobi returns to the themes of orientation as being at the heart of our ability to reason and acquire knowledge. On August 30, 1789, during the time he was completing the third *Critique*, Kant is still gently counseling Jacobi against fanaticism:

For the newest edition of your handsome book on Spinoza’s theory, my warmest thanks. You have earned distinction, first of all for having clearly presented the difficulties of the teleological road to theology, the road that Spinoza seems to have chosen. To dash with hasty, enterprising steps toward a far away goal has always been injurious to a thorough insight. He who shows us the cliffs has not necessarily set them up, and even if someone maintains that it is impossible to pass through them *with full sails* (of dogmatism), he has not on that account denied *every* possibility of getting through. I think that you will not find the compass of reason to be unnecessary or misleading in this venture.¹⁴⁹

Kant holds out the possibility of navigating through difficult territory while counseling Jacobi not to jump to conclusions. Even in 1789, he continues to appeal to navigational metaphors – metaphors at work in the first *Critique* - in order to grasp reason’s work at its own outermost boundaries, i.e., the limits of reason’s own comprehension or understanding.

Kant implies that the dogmatic navigator has not considered all options even though he/she believes to have considered all options. To this degree the dogmatic navigator may heed (more seriously) the “compass of reason.” Since we know that Kant considers Jacobi an ‘inspired fanatic infected by the genius-disease’ (as noted in Kant’s letter to Herz), we can see Kant guiding Jacobi to be more critical about his claims in order to open up more fruitful possibilities for thinking.

In the letter to Jacobi, Kant’s gentle advice concludes with a comment on how such impossible possibilities may be held out for reason by freedom. In this passage, Kant does not

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 158.

comment on dogmatism as much as provide insight to the heart of the “compass of reason.” He writes:

The indispensable supplement to reason is something that, though not part of speculative knowledge, lies only in reason itself, something that we can name (viz., freedom, a supersensible power of causality within us) but that we cannot grasp.¹⁵⁰

While the dogmatist may need help executing critical, reasoned judgments, whether analytic or synthetic, Kant seems to be speaking about a supplement over and against the typical labor of understanding. So, presumably, the dogmatist must appeal to understanding as well as this “indispensable supplement.”

Freedom, therefore, as suggested by this letter, is involved at the juncture of thinking where no path seems possible or, likewise, the dogmatist’s juncture, where only one path seems possible (even though other paths may be available). Freedom appears to provide reason with an opportunity, a renewed path, a causality which, at first glance, appears illogical and, therefore, impossible. Kant describes the encounter with the ‘cliffs impossible to pass with full sails’ only to urge us on to consider again how such obstacles may be overcome. Freedom might facilitate reason by urging reason to move beyond the apparent logical and/or real impossibility of its present endeavor, while releasing reason from its dogmatic tendencies. Meanwhile, but importantly, in this brief letter (as well as in the *Critique of Practical Reason*) freedom lies *in reason itself*.

These matters are complicated by the fact that the very tool that presents the impossible possibilities is a tool that “we cannot grasp.” Therefore, freedom appears to be an essential capacity of reason that reason itself cannot grasp. If this is so, reason (lacking the proper tool in the toolbox) must depend on freedom itself in order to intuit the causality of events grounded in

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

freedom. A determinative reason (understanding) abiding by logical rules will, at the outposts of thinking, find further exploration or propositions to be absurd or illogical, determining a number of paths to be impossible. This is what Kant means when he refers to the ‘cliffs impossible to pass with full sails.’ How can reason, in seeking self-knowledge, consider the unreasonable? Further, how might the unreasonable be precisely what allows for the un-recognized opportunity for thought, in addition to allowing for the emergence of freedom as the “indispensable supplement?”

In order to get beyond the ‘cliffs’ we need an ‘indispensable supplement.’ Though reason is faced with impossibility, its ‘indispensable supplement’ does not rely on superstitious or illogical procedures in order to open another possibility. Rather, a specific function of reason, a thinking with and through freedom, opens the impossible possibility that allows us to, so to speak, sail beyond the ‘impossible’ cliff.

We cannot talk about these matters without referring to the role of imagination. As the seafarer with full sails encounters the cliffs, the ability to present what is absent facilitates her/his ability to sail beyond. What is absent, in this case, is a clear path for reason. If freedom provides the opening, perhaps imagination acts in order to present the possibility that seems absent. In other words, imagination does not have to provide the contents of the possibility – reason may do that. Imagination only needs to engage reason by the prospect of the concealed or un-present possibility. Reason can then embrace such possibility and pursue the outcomes of this new, formerly unimagined, possibility.

Reason, however, demonstrates its own pathology by requiring, when at its limits, a supplement in order to further thinking. Would this supplement provide impossible possibilities without the imagination? How can a supplement be indispensable? How can something within

“reason itself” be something that we can name and not something we can grasp? Let us now turn to the essay itself, in order to see whether or not Kant’s discussion of orientation may shed light on these matters.

What is Orientation in Thinking? explores a mind left to navigate through unknown territory. This is exactly what is happening as one makes aesthetic judgments. Rather than hypothesizing and testing conclusions about some unexplained experience, phenomena or event, aesthetic judgment reflects upon the particularities. One may begin to navigate these particularities intellectually by means of intellectual interest. And while Kant does not name the movement of "orientation" intellectual interest, intellectual interest includes a desire to navigate while drawing out reason. As a result, *What is Orientation* provides insight to an intellectual interest that furthers understanding by allowing it to determine paths where no path seems possible or likely.

In the article, Kant defends Mendelssohn's idea of common sense, an idea criticized by Jacobi. Orientation is a word chosen by Mendelssohn and defended by Kant. "To orientate oneself," Kant says, "means to use a given direction."¹⁵¹ My orientation allows me to distinguish between my right and left, to acknowledge the difference between north, south, east and west. I can do this, he says, even without cues from my environment and the objects in that environment. However, even when our environment tricks us into believing nothing has changed in our orientation and, indeed, something *has* changed, Kant claims we notice some distortion through a certain kind of feeling of disorientation. In darkness, he continues, without the aid of touch, we can still orientate ourselves by appealing to our right and left sides.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Reiss, *Kant's Political Writings*, 238.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 239.

Kant extends the physical metaphor to logical thought: I can orientate myself logically.

How do I do this? Kant explains:

Pure reason regulates its use when, taking leave of known objects of experience, it seeks to extend its sphere beyond the frontiers of experience and no longer encounters any objects of intuition whatsoever, but *merely a space for the latter to operate in*. It will no longer be in a position, in determining its own faculty of judgment, to subsume its judgments under a specific maxim with the help of objective criteria of knowledge, but only with the help of a subjective distinction. (Footnote: Thus, to orientate oneself in thought means to be guided, in one's conviction of truth, by a subjective principle of reason where objective principles of reason are inadequate.)¹⁵³

How is it possible that pure reason 'takes leave of known objects of experience to extend its sphere beyond the frontiers of experience?' By what faculty does reason separate itself from the tingling of experiences crowding in my eyes, skin, ears and nose? Kant tells us that 'reason takes leave of known objects' and seeks a self-portrait.¹⁵⁴ Reason can only take leave, however, by losing interest in a world that bombards our thought from every angle. Would this require attention to the realm of appearance on the surface of thought, rather than the appearances in nature and experience? Further, how can one draw one's observations and way of thinking toward the surface of thinking itself (without the presencing of thought in and through judgments that recognize and categorize objects and phenomenon)? Does one look to the surface of thinking – examining how we reason, not what we reason about -- to discover the 'indispensable supplement' as well as the freedom that 'we cannot grasp'?

Reason takes leave of known objects through disinterest. Through intellectual interest, aesthetic judgment gains directionality so as to "extend reason's sphere beyond," by means of the reflection caused by an aesthetic judgment. While aesthetic reflection and receptivity "take leave" through disinterest and intellectual interest "extends," reason is still left with the task of assessing what remains to be seen. Coupled with intellectual interest, aesthetic judgment creates

¹⁵³ Ibid., italics mine.

the "space for intuition to operate in." Opening this space by means of a break with interest, aesthetic judgments create a place for reason's self-contemplation, fostering the possibility for the extension of knowledge as well as self-knowledge, i.e., culture.¹⁵⁵

Kant's footnote, indicating that we are guided by a subjective principle of reason, further suggests that orientating one's reason may relate in some form to the aesthetic judgment we have been discussing. For if "to orientate oneself in thought means to be guided...by a subjective principle of reason where objective principles are inadequate," we certainly seem to be explaining something like aesthetic judgment. In the Preface to the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant suggests something similar: "Judgment itself must provide a concept, a concept through which we do not actually cognize anything but which only serves as a rule for the power of judgment itself - but not as an objective rule."¹⁵⁶ In *What is Orientation in Thinking?*, it is aesthetic thinking that allows us to "take leave" of objects of experience, by executing a judgment which does not automatically 'cognize anything' but, alternatively, allows reason to look to itself, to draw its self-portrait and to embark on a self-assessment. The dogmatist and 'genius-infected fanatic' would do well to employ this function of judgment in order to determine not only the matter to be thought but to recognize the *manner* in which the matter is properly put before thought *to be thought*.

Thus, although Kant's systematic aesthetic theory has not been published yet, aesthetic thinking logically orients us, even without legislating reason. Aesthetic judgment allows us to decipher a space for extending reason and, within this space, suggests how we might continue to

¹⁵⁴ John Sallis discusses reason's self-presentation in *Spacings – Of Reason and Imagination*.

¹⁵⁵ Aesthetic judgments may provide cultivation for future aesthetic judgments, precisely because once the space for intuition has been encountered on the surface of one's thought, one may be able to entertain and welcome another such encounter. In other words, one might cultivate one's ability to "take leave of objects." At the same time, too frequent "taking leave" may have negative consequences. Extended "taking leave" would result in lunacy, which can be a natural condition or one 'induced by opium or other artificial stimulation.' See Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 113-14.

navigate forward.¹⁵⁷ What, however, necessitates this orientation? And what casts forth a darkness so that we might recognize this orientation?

Kant says there is a "need of reason" that orientates us "in thought" so that we might navigate the "supra-sensory realm" of thought and, to avoid becoming replete in fantasies of reason, attach these adventures to the world, so as to be thinking rather than purely imagining. Such need reflects judgment's faculty as the "power of desire".¹⁵⁸ These matters, however, are determined by the nature of our attachments or interests. The language of attachment allows us to understand interest and disinterest. Intellectual interest may be involved in navigating cognition while attaching our cognitive splendor to the actuality of existences surrounding us, especially as the "darkness" cast upon reason consists in an impossible obstacle or, logically speaking, an occasion that befuddles the understanding.¹⁵⁹ The need of reason accompanied by reflective judgment as a power of desire, then, necessitates orientation. More simply, if disorientation necessitates orientation, is there a difference between a genuine disorientation and a false disorientation? It seems that, in many cases, we can *propose* an imagined disorientation or an imagined disinterest, in order to change our course of thinking or renew our thinking on a particular subject matter. Either way, orientation includes the power of desire that motivates navigation into the unknown by means of a detachment that can then engender further possibilities (i.e., attachments or interests).¹⁶⁰ In other words, in cases when we are determined to establish particular goals or interests, we do not need to appeal to orientation.

¹⁵⁶ Kant, *CJ*, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Kant employs forward-moving metaphors within his writing. Perhaps part of the spirit of the times, Kant's critical project, after all, attempts to move thinking forward from its 'dogmatic slumber.'

¹⁵⁸ Kant, *CJ*, 16.

¹⁵⁹ Kant's writing in the third *Critique* tends toward speaking of reason as including need and feeling, just as in the Orientation essay. This is not too surprising considering that Kant may have been working on both simultaneously.

¹⁶⁰ This is essentially the nature of critical thinking. Critical thinking detaches in order to form new attachments. In other words, I give up my bias in favor of Japanese literature in order to provide the possibility of a favorable attachment to American literature. Sometimes I do this in bad faith, thinking I could not possibly form an

Let us take the distinction between authentic and inauthentic disorientation (darkness) more seriously. Here, we begin to see that the capacity to attune oneself to orientation may, in fact, reflect one's cognitive potency rather than, as we might superficially surmise, reflecting one's cognitive impotence. In this case, the orienting subject must move beyond a charade of disinterest, to develop a genuine aesthetic engagement. Such "darkness" is *in fact* the retreat of reason's interests – even the rather noble interest in the charade of disinterest. Therefore, it is reason's very quality as *interested* that makes possible a fruitful darkness or disorientation. The idea of a right of reason hints at reason's need. Reason's interested force necessarily draws along a disorienting darkness, a metaphysical neediness. This need is not, as some would have it, our responses to unanswerable (antinomic) questions. Such responses show reason's interest by striving for coherence, continuity, logic and consistency and, therefore, are always already determinatively oriented. Rather, it is the metaphysical *condition of being haunted by disorienting questions in a manner that gives rise to reflection*. In other words, speculation is born of the disorientation that reason's interests unwittingly bring to play. Because this moment captures reason as unwitting (or unknowing), it is rich territory to allow for the emergence of faculties less anchored to interests: spontaneity, receptivity and the imagination. Thus, one who is inauthentically disoriented does not attune oneself to the possibilities made evident by the invocation of spontaneity, receptivity and imagination. While one might attempt to cultivate such powers by pretending at disorientation, an encounter with genuine disorientation is not only further engagement with other powers, it is a heightened opportunity to re-engage with the force of interest at work in reason's daily toil.

attachment to American literature. And yet, even the pro-active, bad faith detachment may lead me closer to the the possible attachment, i.e., interest, in American literature. Thus, a practice and culture of detachment may allow me to encounter possibilities as yet unimagined by my own limited experience. This is the character of education: to familiarize yourself with knowing what you do not know so as to become educated rather than ignorant.

The need of reason and the desire to make judgments can only arise in an absence of understanding. One might say that we are always already surrounded by a relative “darkness” to which all intellectual disciplines respond - in different manners. The dogmatist symbolizes an unconscious absence of understanding, while the Socratic philosopher symbolizes the conscious absence of understanding. Need and desire arise in cases in which the subject encounters some sort of indeterminacy.¹⁶¹ Such “darkness” may be encountered in the realm of the subject, in the realm of the world or in the realm of other subjects. The need of orientation, therefore, arises on occasions when we encounter new and unfamiliar territory to be thought.¹⁶²

Consider, now, that the language of attachment explains interest, empirical interest, intellectual interest and disinterest. If orientation “takes leave” of objects in order to extend reason, then orientation participates in the negative attachment characterized by disinterest and pursued by intellectual interest. Intellectual interest, thus, may be involved in navigating cognition by responding to the “need of reason.” Intellectual interest may attach to the existences surrounding us, in response to occasions when “darkness” is cast upon reason, as a manner of navigating that remains open to possibility.¹⁶³

Later in the essay on orientation, Kant suggests the ultimate example of reason's need is the demand for an intelligent first cause or creator. Kant says, “reason needs to presuppose

¹⁶¹ Of course, the aesthetic comes to appreciate such indeterminacy as part of the ground that allows for the possibility of the harmony of the faculties as well as a possible harmonic relation between human reason and the world in and through aesthetic judgments, whether these are judgments of sublimity or judgments of beauty. At the same time, our relation to nature in the 18th century is the site of indeterminacy and wonder. Hence, reveries of Rousseau provide the ground upon which Rousseau might encounter or satisfy the need of reason and the power of desire laden in judgments to be had about the world.

¹⁶² The need of orientation may also emerge when I sense – but cannot identify – that I (or others around me) are disoriented. Even when I have no evidence of distorted environment, I can still sense a logical disorientation, according to Kant’s metaphor. With no clear basis for this judgment, I guide my reasoning in response to this disorientation. This serves to explain occasions when thinkers concede “things aren’t right,” even when outward evidence suggests otherwise.

¹⁶³ This language of the need and feeling of reason is not found in the prior works. We can see Kant's own tendency - fulfilled in the Aesthetic - to depict a more inclusive image of reason, not only as the taker of inventories but also endowed with need and feeling.

something that it can understand, for nothing else to which it can attach a concept is able to remedy this need."¹⁶⁴ Kant addresses how the "concept of the unlimited" becomes "the basis of the concept of everything limited,"¹⁶⁵ turning for explanation, in this case, not to the outside world but to the work of reason within the mind. Prior to this discussion, Kant observes that there is not only a *need* of reason but, in stronger language, a *right of the need of reason*.¹⁶⁶ The "right of the need of reason" authorizes one's subjective principles where "objective principles are inadequate."¹⁶⁷ Thus, the concept of the creator -- a concept that includes absolute intelligence and highest good -- can be derived from allowing the 'right of the need of reason' to present and authorize a subjective ground when and where objective principles fail. Kant finds this need to be an "insight" or an indicator of God's existence and the foundation of worldly things.¹⁶⁸

Orientation, therefore, may be established by awakening one's thought to the demands that reason places on itself, demands which provide the "insight" that allows us to navigate in darkness. Kant's commitment to this idea is only further highlighted by the 'right' of the subject to express and follow 'the need of reason,' especially as this right may allow, in cases of extreme navigational success, the possibility of providing the subjective grounding for God's existence.

Here, not just the attachment but the need for attachment emerges in Kant's discourse. While the Aesthetic speaks of our attachment to objective existences (in empirical interest) and praises the value of our *detachment* in disinterest, intellectual interest describes our extending-

¹⁶⁴ Reiss, *Kant's Political Writings* 242.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 241.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 240.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Kant concludes "for without this assumption, our reason can find no satisfactory basis for the contingent existence of worldly things, let alone the purposiveness and order which are evident to such a remarkable degree in everything," 241.

toward-attachment through reflection. In this essay, orientation explains our need for attachment in terms of reason, rather than the self-interest noted in *The Critique of Practical Reason*.

This feeling of orientation, Kant clarifies, is not a feeling but reason's own "deficiency producing a feeling of need through cognitive impulse."¹⁶⁹ A cognitive impulse highlights enigmatic situations by "producing a feeling of need." Kant describes this deficiency as reason's interest. In other words, reason's interest emerges when an encounter with indeterminacy or "darkness" requires navigation and reason realizes both that it is presently deficient and, hubristically, that it may overcome its deficiencies. According to *What is Orientation in Thinking?* reason also has a *right* to embark on this rather confusing drama to confront uncertainty and indeterminacy. Reason's interest, therefore, as a matter of a relation between acknowledged deficiency and need, cannot be far removed from the intellectual interest which extends-toward-attachment by means of reflection.

When Kant describes the objective reality given to morality and God through reason's need, he acknowledges that reason wants to supply an objective reality in order to prove the highest good and supreme intelligence. Kant also makes note of reason's interest in objective reality when talking of intellectual interest. I have already remarked on this passage in "Reason, Objective Reality and Intellectual Interest." After explaining the judgment that takes place without concepts, Kant writes:

But reason also has an interest in the objective reality of the ideas (for which, in moral feeling, it bring about a direct interest), i.e., an interest that nature should at least show a trace to give a hint that it contains some basis or other for us to assume in its products a lawful harmony with that liking of ours which is independent of all interest (a liking we recognize a priori as a law for everyone, though we cannot base this law on proofs.)¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 243.

¹⁷⁰ Kant, *CJ*, 167.

Reason's interest, discussed in *Orientation*, emerges within the *Critique of Judgment* in terms of our relationship to nature and our own playful faculties. Kant continues this paragraph:

Hence reason must take an interest in any manifestation in nature of a harmony that resembles the mentioned [kind of] harmony, and hence the mind cannot meditate about the beauty of *nature* without at the same time finding its interest aroused.¹⁷¹

Thus, just as reason's need provides the highest good and first cause of a supreme being as explained in *Orientation* so, too, in the Aesthetic, reason presents morality in order to satisfy the need for or interest in the "objective reality of the ideas." To a certain extent, morality appears in the aesthetic by following reason's interest. Further, the connection between beauty and morality is legislated by reason, precisely because of the reason's felt-need in the realm of the aesthetic. This suggests that the connection between beauty and morality may be more contingent than necessary, a contingency Kant acknowledges regarding reason's interest: "its use as a means of orientation is purely contingent."¹⁷²

Kant acknowledges this dynamic again when discussing the antinomy of taste. The antinomy of taste regards the two opposing claims that we have been struggling with throughout this essay: (1.) "A judgment of taste is not based on concepts; for otherwise one could dispute about it (decide by means of proof); (2.) A judgment of taste is based on concepts; for otherwise...one could not even so much as quarrel about them (lay claim to other people's necessary assent to one's judgment."¹⁷³ In the discussion of the antinomies, there arises a "spontaneous point" that relates to orientation, need and objective reality. Reason resolves the antinomy of judgment by positing a supersensible substrate as the unconditioned ground upon which both conditions are possible and reconcilable with one another. Although Kant has

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Reiss, *Kant's Political Writings*, 243.

¹⁷³ Kant, *CJ*, 211.

resolved the conflict of judgment with the substrate, a curious characteristic of antinomies sustains the awkwardness of the conflict:

Showing this consistency will also allow us to grasp the fact that and the reason why this illusion is natural and unavoidable for human reason, and why this illusion remains so even though it ceases to deceive us once we have resolved the seeming contradiction.¹⁷⁴

The illusion of contradiction remains even in resolution. While reason remains disoriented when dealing with antinomies, its interest allows it to keep the resolution, the supersensible substrate, in view. The substrate, therefore, responds to the logical need of reason described above. The unsettling character of an antinomy, however, mimics the thought experiment of the essay on orientation. To this extent, antinomies force reason to look farther. Kant says "the antinomies compel us *against our will* to look beyond the sensible to the supersensible as the point [where] all our a priori powers are reconciled."¹⁷⁵

Therefore, the orienting force described in 1786 while defending Mendelssohn allows us to recognize the function of need and interest within Kant's discussion of intellectual interest and objective reality, posing morality as the resolution to the dilemma of objective reality in aesthetic judgment. This might lead us to reexamine Kant's discussion of beauty as the symbol of morality, inasmuch as morality comes to be linked to the aesthetic through the need or deficiency of reason. Finally, however, antinomies -- conditions in which reason is 'in the dark' -- generate logical worry forceful enough to make us act "against our will." Again, reason's interest responds to indeterminacy by positing "against our will" the supersensible substrate, an underlying condition that will continue to be haunted by the illusion of the conflict between opposing claims.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 213.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 214, italics mine.

What is Orientation in Thinking? addresses the movement of reason's need, identifying freedom of thought as intrinsically related to the possibility that reason might be endowed with an indispensable supplement that does not legislate according to the rules of determinate understanding. The reason that acts according to need extends itself through desire, reflecting upon whether these extensions are consistent with its own law or not. The possibility that reason might "compel against our will" or extend itself beyond apparent boundaries, inventories or questions, is precisely what liberates it. Ironically, self-determining reason can only encounter itself through something that cannot be grasped. In the Aesthetic, the play between understanding, imagination and judgment engages reason's interest by presenting scenarios that cannot be resolved by resorting to objective reality or concepts. An eclipse or challenge to determinative reason fertilizes our subsequent use of reason by requiring us to 'open a space' for reflection and determination by providing an "indispensable supplement."¹⁷⁶

These claims are supported by turning to the *Critique of Pure Reason* and Kant's discussion *On the Interest of Reason in This Its Conflict*, referring to the four antinomies. As we turn to the first Critique, we are drawn into the question of whether or not it is precisely the interest of reason that leads it beyond experience. That is, as reason solves antinomies it "expands its domain beyond all bounds of experience."¹⁷⁷ Could the experience of beauty provide impetus to lead us beyond experience? Or, rather, does reason's interest lead away from reason back toward experience? As he continues, Kant explains that there are several interests that draw reason along in order to settle conundrums.

¹⁷⁶ Samuel Beckett might provide an example of a thinker whose work attempts to fertilize reflection by means of subverting determinative reasoning by calling attention to the forms of our existence that include boredom and death.

¹⁷⁷ Kant, *CPuR*, A462/B490.

The interest of reason (and perhaps intellectual interest experienced in beauty) can be brought to bear on the four cosmological conundrums that befuddle our existence:

...whether the world has a beginning and some boundary to its extension in space; whether, somewhere, and perhaps in my thinking self, there is an indivisible and indestructible unity - or nothing but what is divisible and passes away; whether in my actions I am free or, like other beings, led along the course of nature and fate; whether, finally, there is a supreme cause of the world, or whether the things of nature and their order amount to the ultimate object, at which we must stop in all our contemplations.¹⁷⁸

What are the interests involved in settling such disputes? Kant explains practical interest, speculative interest and popularity. Such interests remain separated just as, in the early stages of his thought, the faculties of practical and pure reason remained distinct and separate. Regarding a dogmatic cosmology, practical interest advocates those ideas that continue to support our morals and religion. Our speculative interest, on the other hand, seeks an unconditioned (such as the supersensible substrate) that resolves further questioning regarding an original cause. An empirical cosmology, on the other hand, cannot support morality and religion by virtue of the fact that it solves speculative interest in a refusal to make claims beyond the bounds of experience.

Reason's interest, therefore, rests at the boundary between the dogmatic (transcendentally speculative) and the critically conservative (demonstrated in empiricism.) As Kant explains: "For reason may, mistaking its true vocation, boast of insight and knowledge where in fact insight and knowledge might cease."¹⁷⁹ Anyone (the empiricist or the dogmatist) may fall prey to such hubristic error, thinking oneself enlightened without recognizing the inherent ignorance of such an enlightened view. Such is the condition of ignorance. The third interest in Kant's discussion, reminiscent of empirical interest, is the interest of popularity. Because, Kant

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., A463/B491.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., A470/B498.

explains, the most studied person can neither prove nor disprove these cosmological claims, the common, “popular” understanding remains just as empowered to resolve these matters.

There is yet another interest of reason: architectonic interest. This interest gives rise to the critical project itself, seeking out the system of our thinking and requiring that all cognitions "stand together" or remain consistent with one another. In the case of the antinomies, reason favors the thesis that allows for continued “completion of an edifice.”¹⁸⁰ Comically, Kant suggests that an individual without reason's interest "would be in a state of unceasing vacillation."¹⁸¹

This brings the philosophical project into a new light, different from that cast by Descartes. The project of objectivity, Kant explains, requires interests to move thought forward. A loss of interest, disinterest or 'objectivity' might obtain when examining the tool of reason itself, but could not be maintained without ceasing to carry claims forward. Further, this may suggest that disinterest itself plays a role in our thinking not as simply a break with interests, as this would provoke vacillation, but as something else which succeeds in doing the opposite: confirming one's moral vocation and furthering one's thinking. Could disinterest be *the* privileged moment of suspended interest without vacillation? Or does disinterest initiate a productive vacillation? Could this disinterest have a serious impact on our reasoning in all areas of human experience, not simply the Aesthetic? Could disinterest provide the break (Lyotard's spasm) that allows Kant to embark on the critical project, not simply as pursuing reason's interest, but by creating or discovering a new philosophical space to chart? Further, can architectonic structures be built in conjunction with a force that seeks to break with the ongoing interests at hand?

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., A474/B502.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., A475/B503.

When Kant speaks of this architectonic interest, his remarks take place in the context of ‘reason in conflict’ in the antinomies. This is not unlike the conditions that provoke Kant to write the essay on orientation: the debate between Jacobi and Mendelssohn. Thus, Kant presents us with the metaphor of navigating through darkness, depicting the need, deficiency, interest and right of reason in order to settle the dispute between Jacobi and Mendelssohn and in order to qualify the extreme, “zealot” positions resulting from the debate. Kant means to modify Mendelssohn’s position in order to present a more reasonable, effective thesis. Thus follows the discussion that we have explored at length.

While the essay begins with a critique of zealotry, it also ends with a critique of zealotry. The first passages situate the extreme positions of both thinkers and their adherents and the final passages confront the matter of whether this philosophical debate supports or denies freedom of thought. Kant indirectly suggests that this debate has disintegrated to the extent that the mode of discourse prevents freedom of thought. Kant, thereby, completes the essay by enumerating the manner in which freedom of thought may be destroyed and, by implication, calls the public to engage in responsible philosophical debate, rather than destructive, unreflective debate. By so doing, Kant is combating ‘inspired fanatics...infected with genius-disease’¹⁸² by attempting to orient these thinkers more properly toward their endeavors. In so doing, he reasserts that *how* we reason impacts *what* reason may discover. The basis of the critical project emerges: to discover how reason functions in order to have self-knowledge regarding reason’s processes and the manner in which experience and the world is presented as a unified totality of appearances.

Kant attempts to redeem philosophical work by reclaiming the freedom of thought required to engage in authentic discourse. Kant concludes the essay with his reflections on the freedom of thought by explaining that one fails to safeguard freedom of thought when making

lawless judgments, when submitting to others' authority, when legislating superstition or when prohibiting individual exploration.¹⁸³ He concludes by imploring his audience to 'think for themselves,' to use reason lawfully to prevent 'freedom of thought from eventually destroying itself.'¹⁸⁴

While somewhat removed from the need of reason, Kant's return to freedom of thought suggests that reason "has the right to make initial pronouncements in matters relating to supra-sensory objects."¹⁸⁵ Not allowing reason to "make initial pronouncements" is precisely what robs this discourse of freedom of thought. Hence, the right of reason and freedom of thought are the same: engaging in the right of reason is the enactment of freedom of thought. This freedom, our right of reason, demands us to 'think for ourselves' and, according to the laws set forth by our faculties, allows us to hope to become enlightened. However, we also remain in danger of reasoning haphazardly by positing claims too freely or limiting ourselves by too strictly obeying the rules of reason. Each claim, each exercise of thought, thereby, must seek the appropriate degree of freedom necessary for thought to remain both accurate and free. Finally, as philosophers often remind us, freedom of thought does not imply arbitrary thinking but a grasping of freedom by means of cognitive faculties, faculties bound by certain sets of rules.

What if, however, the opening of a "space for [reason] to operate in," includes a sighting of freedom? In other words, the moment of orientation and the seed of intellectual interest is precisely the occasion where freedom comes to appear in the guise of freedom of thought. This occurs not simply as reason's interest creates multiple possible determinations but as the determinations pursued are pursued according to the laws of reason and not arbitrarily or

¹⁸² Zweig, *Kant: Philosophical Correspondence 1759-99*, 123.

¹⁸³ Reiss, *Kant's Political Writings* 247.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 246.

contingently. We are obliged, therefore, to exercise the right of the need of reason “to make initial pronouncements,’ to realize reason’s interest, to extend ourselves and, upon these interests, extensions and pronouncements, to develop logical attachments that follow the laws of reason.

Already I have made some unusual suggestions. First, that Kant’s thinking about Jacobi’s fanaticism allowed him to ponder freedom of thought as well as whether or not freedom is an “indispensable supplement” to reason. In addition, *What is Orientation in Thinking?* allows us to consider the kinship between Kant’s notion of orientation and Kant’s notion of intellectual interest. Specifically, the essay allows us to examine Kant’s perception of reason’s need, interest, deficiency and right as well as explore the metaphor of reason’s ‘darkness’. Intellectual interest, it appears, may take seed at the site of reason’s deficiency and reason’s subsequent interest. Second, the separation of practical interest and speculative interest in the first Critique suggests that Kant has not yet been fully entangled in the question of the unity of the faculties, but does foreshadow the question of the unity of the faculties that emerges in the third Critique. Such a division, however, might be read to imply that the division of faculties directly concerns the division of interests. Third, in light of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the disinterest of the Aesthetic emerges as a signature moment of suspended interest, suggesting that disinterest and intellectual interest may play a more important role in the entire dynamic of our cognition. We depend, however, on interest not only because we are faced with a dilemma, but also because our dilemma presents us with a problematic idea.¹⁸⁶ Even Kant’s resolution to ask the thinker to look more closely at the origin of such problematic ideas employs the intellectual interest that we have been studying. For Kant pushes these questions regarding interest, asking us to look again at the idea, the principles, the processes that cause one to reason so and by so doing, to entertain

darkness and open up a space for thinking. Kant continues "the solution of these problems can itself never occur in experience,"¹⁸⁷ because one would never encounter freedom, nor the supreme being, nor the origin of the world solely within experience. Thus, freedom emerges as the indispensable supplement precisely because as it opens such a space, such opening does not coincide with the self-presentation of freedom. While freedom is required (and therefore indispensable), it is also not the central object of such activities, and therefore supplemental. Solutions to dilemmas depend on reason's patience with multiple possible resolutions, with the ability to rest in the presence of indeterminacy, the ability to encounter voluptuousness without always already determining what is to come from this voluptuousness, as well as the urgency to pursue such reflection lawfully. Finally, intellectual interest functions as an orientation, allowing us to ponder conflicting matters in order that our determinations remain reflective exercises of free thought, rather than events that court zealotry and undermine our capacity to be free in thought.

As described in the four moments of aesthetic judgment, interest plays a very limited role in aesthetic judgments. Kant's discussion of interest appears to be included only to provide the more familiar counterpart to disinterest and assist in clarification. However, interest has already appeared in the first *Critique* as the "interest of reason." Even the interest of reason in this first text reminds us that reason has a right: "the glamorous pretensions that reason has in expanding its domain beyond all bounds of experience have been presented by us only in dry formulas that contain merely the basis of reason's claims of its right."¹⁸⁸ Of course, this is precisely the moment where we might bring philosophy to honor. Kant continues:

¹⁸⁶ Kant, *CPuR*, A482/B510.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, A484/B512.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, A463/B491.

In this application (in combination with the empirical), however, and in the progressive expansion of reason's use by starting from the realm of experiences and gradually soaring up to these sublime ideas, philosophy shows a dignity that, if philosophy could only maintain its pretensions, would far surpass the value of all human science. For philosophy promises to us the foundation of our greatest expectations and outlooks concerning the ultimate purposes wherein all endeavors of reason must be in the end united...Unfortunately for speculation, reason finds itself – in the midst of its greatest expectations – quite disconcerted in a throng of arguments and counterarguments. Yet because of reason's honor and even security, neither withdrawing from the quarrel nor watching it indifferently as a mere mock combat is feasible, and even less feasible is simply commanding peace; for the objective of the dispute is of great interest. Thus nothing is left for reason but to reflect on the origin of this disunity with itself, in order to see whether the disunity is not perhaps to be blamed on a mere misunderstanding.¹⁸⁹

The discussion of interest in the first *Critique* brings us to the heart of the debate surrounding empiricism, in addition to the architectonic image of reason. Hence, reason's interest is precisely in the architectonic form that entertains complete systematicity. Claims that lead away from systematicity, or “make the completion of an edifice of cognitions entirely impossible,”¹⁹⁰ are not recommended by reason's interest. As a result, reason's interest limits the projects of reason according to the architectonic while, in addition, attempting to complete systems that have been rendered incomplete or lack unity. When confronted with a throng of arguments and counterarguments, Kant is suggesting that reason's interest guides us in to explore one thesis or the antithesis. However, could aesthetic training provide assistance in these moments, moments when reason is in greatest need of direction or orientation? If aesthetics can orient reason's interest, would it then play a pivotal role in orienting practical or moral interest as well?

In the Aesthetic, Kant's describes two forms of interest: empirical interest and intellectual interest. The brief, rich exploration of interest allows us to reflect further on the phenomenon of reason's navigation, orientation and the role of aesthetic judgment in thinking.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., A463/B491.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., A475/B503.

CHAPTER V

INTEREST

Introduction

Orientation is an aesthetic phenomenon. As part of a complex process of intellectual discovery, we search in the dark and follow reason's "right" to navigate through difficult material. Within this navigational, architecturally building process, we open up spaces for thinking by means of reflection and begin to make distinctions, such as the distinction between appearance and non-appearance. Such spaces or architectural groundings produce discovery and renewed thinking as a result of the distinct character of aesthetic judgment, a judgment that contrasts decisively with our more frequent determinative judgment. It is possible, based on Kant's systematic cognitive framework, to develop a technical understanding of the idea of an intellectual interest. Thanks to the third *Critique*, we can explore how Kantian interest might shed light on reflective activity and orientation.

Orientation calls to attention the "compass of reason" and, as a result, invokes reason's interests, whether popular, architectonic, practical or speculative. Kant's enumeration of reason's interests, however, does not yet take into consideration interests related to aesthetic thinking. The four interests are divided rather clearly within the bounds of the first two *Critiques*. Speculative and architectonic interest relate to the concept of nature outlined in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, while practical interest seeks resolution according to moral and religious concepts. The unity, grounding and coherence demanded by understanding reflect the activity of speculative and architectonic interests. The causality of freedom and the nature of the subject's moral vocation (with their subsequent theological implications) reflect the governance

of practical interest. Finally, popular interest provides the less-favorable default in cases where the concept of freedom or the concept of nature fail to recommend a particular navigational tack in a moment of orientation. Clearly, determinations made on the basis of popular interest lack the argumentative legitimacy or coherent structure provided by the concepts of nature or freedom.

Kant's early articulations of interest direct us toward the possible outcomes of the "compass of reason." Just as a ship can only choose to move north, south, east or west (or some combination therewith), reason's horizons remain limited to the directionality allowed by means of our cognitive capacity. Indeed, up until the third *Critique*, further discussion of such directionality might have been concluded with this list of interests. In our concern to remain free from fanaticism, we might attempt to engage in critical reflection that allows us to recognize how and why we may invoke specific interests in response to specific conditions. In such critical engagement, we might even use these interests to arrive at new determinations for our dilemmas concerning understanding and morality. In other words, limitation to certain latitudes and longitudes of thinking does not preclude the possibility of discovery. This is precisely the critical project: to discover by means of definitively delimiting the character of cognition.

When Kant proposes reflective judgment as the mediating faculty for understanding and practical reason, we have an occasion for the emergence of two new interests: empirical interest and intellectual interest. These two new interests now supplement our navigational possibilities. As reflective interests, empirical and intellectual interests are not necessarily legislated by concepts of nature or freedom, but take up interest in the ability of taste to allow the subject's cognitive potency to come to appear by means of beauty. As we will see, the concepts of nature and freedom relentlessly impede on a critique of aesthetic thinking and an explication of

aesthetic interests. At the same time, aesthetic interests do not invoke reason's agenda. Further, the retreat of the legislative concepts (or the failure to invoke the interests of pure or practical reason) engenders the play of the faculties in judgment. The aesthetic interests come to be characterized more by their ability to highlight the retreat of reason's interests and thereby highlight reason's activity.

Empirical interest follows a judgment of taste. Kant's characterization suggests that the empirically interested judge vehemently seeks the benefits of aesthetic judgments. He even implies the possibility that the empirically interested subject does not necessarily engage in pure aesthetic judgments. An empirically interested judge comically and tragically searches for pure judgments of taste in attempt legislate the spontaneous phenomenon of aesthetic judgment. However, the rarity of pure judgment and beauty relies on our *inability* to legislate such judgment coupled with a desire for beauty. By pointing out such an inability, empirical interest provides a more valuable reflection of the subject that one might surmise at first glance. Indeed, as I will explore in this chapter, empirical interests may provide an occasion for the subject's unforeseen rendezvous with sociability, civilization and history.

Intellectual interest, however, is another matter altogether. Intellectual interest necessarily follows an engagement with disinterest, a prerequisite for a pure judgment of taste. As such, intellectual interest remains founded on a break with interest. This interest does not necessarily further *determine* the path of our thinking but, rather, encounters a number of rich ambiguities that allow us to set upon a path for thinking. Intellectual interest is a cognitive ability that emerges out of aesthetic judgment and incites aesthetic thinking. Aesthetic thinking engages with figurative notions in order to eventually push forward determinative thinking. However, this engagement first requires a momentary full stop to determination in and through

other interests. This full stop (reflection) is not simply disinterest, but the suspended contemplation that follows disinterest, made possible by the detachment of disinterest, an engagement with the “voluptuousness for the mind in a train of thought that [one] can never fully unravel.”¹⁹¹ Intellectual interest constitutes this active, engaged pause in the directionality of our thinking, the luff in the sails that takes place before we change direction, the luff that gets us nearer to the wind that will speed us forward.¹⁹² Finally, a break with interest allows intellectual interest to take heed of the very conditions for the possibility of thinking itself.

Empirical Interest

Aesthetic judgments are necessarily linked to pleasure and, Kant explains, pleasure in an object’s existence:

We must think of taste as first of all connected with something else, so that with the liking of mere reflection on an object there can [then] be connected, in addition, a pleasure in the existence of the object (and all interest consists in the pleasure in the existence of an object).¹⁹³

Interest has not provided the foundation for a judgment of taste. Rather taste leads indirectly to the development of empirical interests. Taste produces an appreciation for the existence of an object. More specifically, taste produces a pleasure in the existence of object – an experience in which we find pleasure in something “on its own account.”¹⁹⁴ This pleasure may lead to a variety of other, very specific, interests. Such pleasure – as a product of aesthetic judgment – is originally borne of disinterest, not interest.

¹⁹¹ Kant, *CJ*, 167.

¹⁹² Luff is a technical sailing term that refers to turning the boat toward the wind, in order to angle oneself correctly to catch the wind.

¹⁹³ Kant, *CJ*, 163.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Remember, the series of events provoking interest include recognition of beauty in the pure judgment of taste. However, beauty becomes empirically interesting when placing these cognitive events in a social context. In this way, taste urges us to engage our social abilities, if only to communicate (and reminisce about) the feeling, the *Lebensgefühl*, encountered in an aesthetic judgment. This empirical interest in beauty has a way of tapping into our propensity for communication:

...then we must also inevitably regard taste as an ability to judge whatever allows us to communicate even our *feeling* to everyone else, and hence regard taste as a means of furthering something that everyone's natural inclination demands...¹⁹⁵

As such, empirical interest cannot be simply construed as a vulgar interest, but must be understood as constitutive of communicative events, even if it is simply an outcome of pure judgment. For Kant, this is a provocation to our very humanity, insofar as “humanity...means the ability to engage universally in a very intimate communication.”¹⁹⁶

As a result, empirical interest contributes directly to the formation of civilization. Kant explains the character of communication in the final section of the Aesthetic of the *Critique of Judgment*. Civilization, he suggests, emerges from the combination of freedom and restraint. The foundation for such possibility remains communicative: “A people in such an age had to begin by discovering the art of reciprocal communication of ideas between its most educated and its cruder segments...”¹⁹⁷ The “beginning of civilization” emerges out of the desire to decorate oneself for others and, in so doing, communicate by means of acknowledging, praising or recognizing what might be considered beautiful and, subsequently, what might provide pleasure.

Thus, civilization derives from the desire to be able to share one's pleasure and the presumption that others have an interest in learning about this pleasure, the source of the pleasure

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 231.

or the effect of the pleasure on the subject. More simply, the desire to communicate (highlighted by empirical interest in the beautiful) gestures toward the shared assumption (realized in the pure judgment of taste): that ‘universal communicability might demanded from everyone’¹⁹⁸ and that most agree that an association with beauty is a favorable circumstance. In other words, even if our association with beauty takes place through charms and ornaments (an association that will always be indirect), we will still prefer such ornament, a form that grasps at beauty, then forsake this attempt to claim or reclaim beauty.

To reiterate, Kant is not referring to literal linguistic models as a means to achieve such communication. Any form of representation, from fashion, to ornament, to the structures of canoes, might serve to link one subject to another.¹⁹⁹ Such an interest is necessarily attached to specific objects, but the value of this interest lays in the sheer possibility that ornaments, charms and certain forms potentially hint at the idea of the universally communicable, the moment when we fully sense the possibility of an ideal accord with the judgment of others. Such forms indirectly link us the primary experience of subjective universality found in the beautiful, most often a cognitive encounter with nature rather than art. As a result, when Kant suggests that the value and impetus to civilization rest in the activity of attempting to preserve an indirect link to the beautiful, we see that this is also an attempt to preserve the possibility of the validity of subjective universality. In other words, subjective universality promises the accord that we earnestly seek as we communicate, especially as we communicate with others who hold opposing belief systems. Thus, the impulse to sociability may be more than simply a desire to communicate. The impulse to sociability, accentuated by empirical interest, may reflect our

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 164.

¹⁹⁹ Indeed, one might begin to contemplate whether re-presentation itself emerges out of the impulse to attach to beauty: an urge to reclaim the beauty that has past and to achieve a sense of universal communicability.

hope to adjudicate opposing positions by means of communication. Such adjudication, according to this framework, would include a (most likely hidden) reference to the ideal (harmonic) conditions presented by beauty. Our empirical interest becomes a microcosm of civil society, in the search to determine how to “[preserve] the limits of freedom in order that [members] can co-exist with the freedom of others.”²⁰⁰ In *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View*, Kant puts this in another way: “All the culture and art which adorn mankind and the finest social order that man creates are fruits of his unsociability.”²⁰¹ Thus, empirical interest draws out the positive possibility in human nature, rather than viewing culture as a simply a negative reflection of the inability to communicate. This indirect aesthetic interest demands us to bridge the distance between beauty and our non-beautiful present circumstances by linking our desire for taste to (and establishing communication by means of) objects, existences and (consequently) other subjects. Thus, whether such interest follows pure judgments or provides a substitute for the absence of pure judgments, the attempt to communicate ‘animates the arts’ and in so doing animates civilization.

A desire for an originary, socially empowering experience of the beautiful turns empirical at it links to objects in the service of sociability, rather than further engaging in a free play that illuminates one’s faculties. As a result, while empirical interest demonstrates the birth of conventional sociability, empirical interest’s hearty attachments mourn the absence of pure aesthetic judgments and the past appearance of beauty. One’s specific “refined” interests thus result from one’s attempt to claim or reclaim the seamless communicability made manifest in the subjective universality of pure judgments of taste, a universality promised by the aesthetic judgment. Empirical interest cannot provide a tool to recognize, delimit or stimulate our

²⁰⁰ Reiss, *Kant’s Political Writings* 45.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

cognitive potency because it refers to one's attachment, desire for or inclination toward particular objects. It only indirectly refers to the reflective activity of orientation and aesthetic thinking, a thinking that thoroughly engages the relationships of one's faculties. Even if charming forms communicate to others (or proceed to engage and therefore endorse the possibility of universal communicability), they are not constitutive of aesthetic judgment, the play of the faculties or, in a larger context, participating in engaging the concept of nature and/or the concept of freedom. While this impetus to empirical interest might be shared by a number of subjects, the focus of one's empirically interested desire still reflects one's inclinations and, therefore, remains arbitrary. As a result, the contingency of empirical interest cannot assist in the deduction of the a priori nature of pure aesthetic judgments. Kant turns to intellectual interest to consider whether aesthetic interest might be linked to our a priori powers. Finally, an orientation that listens to reason's need and right to navigate in darkness, situating of the subject by means of reflection, can be driven forward by the general feature of empirical interest: a desire for beauty. However, the concrete empirical existences to which the civilized subject attaches as a consequence of this desire, existences that contribute to and foster sociability, do not provide a tool or directionality for the subject navigating in darkness.

I would like to make one more observation regarding empirical interest before turning to intellectual interest. The story of empirical interest holds rich historical implications. Kant makes no mention of historical interest, although it emerges elsewhere for him.²⁰² Let us first review the salient characteristics of indirect, aesthetic interest. Empirical interest first appears to be a less valuable product of taste: it has an indirect link to pure judgments, it is colored by inclination and its link to objects does not provide information about the a priori character of the

²⁰² See the essays "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," "Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History" and "The Contest of the Faculties" in *Kant's Political Writings*.

subject. In the realm of aesthetic experience, empirical interest is a last resort interest, an interest that intercedes only when we fail to engage the direct (intellectual) interest predicated of pure judgments. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that empirical interest highlights our impetus to sociability. A public commerce in charms suggests that we recognize (and hope for) the possibility of successful communication. Through such hopeful use of charms, we contribute to building civilization. However, through art and culture, such interest cultivates a historical sensibility by dreaming of past pure aesthetic judgments and seeking future pure judgments. The attachment to objects becomes nostalgia for the beautiful. This nostalgia situates the subject in a historical moment. While this interest initially has little or nothing to contribute to the reflection of cognitive richness that characterizes aesthetic judgment, the aspect of empirical interest that allows us to recognize our historical condition (as we build culture in a search for beauty) further enhances sociability by engaging the subject in an “attempt to discover a purpose in nature behind [the] senseless course of human events.”²⁰³ Empirical interest’s attachment to beauty implies (and does no more than imply) that, based on a possible encounter with purposiveness, it *is* rational to assume that nature is, in part and as a whole, purposive. In other words, we get a quick glimpse of a purpose beyond our own, a possible historical purpose. Paul Ricoeur, in describing Arendt’s approach to Kant’s reflective judgment, provides an analogous picture of history. In *The Just*, he explains “it is the detached regard of [the] spectator that opens the way of hope to the despairing witnesses of the horrors of history.”²⁰⁴ While Ricoeur approaches these questions by means of the relation between hope and retrospection, they continue to contribute to the “broadened way of thinking” characteristic of reflection. In this sense, empirical interest embraces an optimism that responds to the question “whether it is rational to

²⁰³ Reiss, *Kant’s Political Writings*, 42.

²⁰⁴ Ricoeur, *The Just*, 106.

assume that the order of nature is purposive in its parts but purposeless as a whole”²⁰⁵ by creating copies of purposive engagement through art and culture. It is empirical interest’s *failure* to provide a direct link to beauty that spurs on civilization, moving history forward, through art, to discover our “moral destiny”: a moment when “art, when it reaches perfection, once more becomes nature.”²⁰⁶ Even so, as Kant notes in the *Anthropology*: “Opulence, nevertheless, is still related to the advancing culture of a nation...[and] still offers the advantage of animating the arts, thereby returning to the commonwealth those expenses which such luxuries may have incurred.”²⁰⁷ A drive toward beauty, a drive toward pure judgments, and a drive to publicly communicate regarding beauty characterize the ‘civilized nation’ and lead us to engage in a sense of historical purposiveness.

Intellectual Interest

We can see two ways in which Kant encounters a luff in the sails: first, as an encounter with ruins that demand reconstruction; second, as an encounter with “countless multitudes of worlds.” If we look back at the close of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, we find Kant encountering such a moment, as he reflects on the work completed in this first volume: “This would indeed present edifices to my eye, but only in ruins.”²⁰⁸ This juncture, however, is pregnant with possibility and, as Kant exclaims, may lead to ultimate satisfaction of reason’s desires:

The critical path alone is still open. If the reader has had the kindness and the patience to travel along this path in my company, and if it pleases him to contribute his share toward turning this path into a highway, then he may now judge whether what many centuries have been unable to accomplish might not still be achieved before the end of the present

²⁰⁵ Reiss, *Kant’s Political Writings*, 48.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 228.

²⁰⁷ Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 153-54.

²⁰⁸ Kant, *CPuR*, A852/B880.

one: namely, to bring human reason to complete satisfaction in what has always – although thus far in vain – engaged its desire to know.²⁰⁹

Thus ends the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

The *Critique of Practical Reason* closes with a moment of expansion. This time, Kant does not indicate ruins in need of reconstruction. Rather, at the end of his discussion of practical reason, his expansive state of mind forces him to reflect on himself in relation to the universe:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me. I do not merely conjecture them and seek them as though obscured in darkness or in the transcendent region beyond my horizon: I see them before me, and I associate them directly with the consciousness of my own existence. The heavens begin at the place I occupy in the external world of sense, and broaden the connection in which I stand into an unbounded magnitude of worlds beyond worlds and systems of systems and into the limitless time of their periodic motion, their beginning and their duration. The latter begins at my invisible self, my personality, and exhibits me in a world which has true infinity but which is comprehensible only to the understanding – a world which I recognize myself as existing in a universal and necessary...connection, and thereby also in connection with all those visible worlds.²¹⁰

Kant's closing exhibits an expansive condition in which one 'seeks beyond one's horizon.' It is aesthetic judgment that grounds and cultivates this intellectual interest, an interest that can then be exercised in conjunction with other faculties: to clear the way for a new path for understanding or to provide fodder for an encounter with a consciousness of one's faculties and, in the last example, an encounter with one's moral capacity that broadens our connections.

Intellectual interest participates in the activity of reflection by taking interest in suspended interest (disinterest) and, thereby calling attention to the subject (and the tendency to present the world according to certain interests). This interest commits to the break, acknowledging the moment that fails to invoke other interests. At this moment, cognition does not provide a series of resolving concepts (as in determinative judgments.) Direct interest

²⁰⁹ Ibid., A856/B884.

²¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 170 (hereafter cited in text as *CPrR*).

fertilizes receptivity by residing in the break. Consequently, it fosters an aesthetic thinking that values the figurative and the particular as provocation toward the general. In such contemplation, concrete particulars are freshly encountered in order that a “voluptuousness of the mind” may take place. Let us examine the description of such interest in *Critique of Judgment*, in order to the turn to some of its broader implications.

According to the third *Critique*, a direct interest in natural beauty (not merely to have the taste needed to judge it) signals a “good soul”. Habitual interest of this sort “readily associates itself with contemplation of nature.”²¹¹ The encounter with beautiful forms in nature has led to this interest. Subsequently, the lover of nature contemplates, in solitude, the forms presented to her by natural phenomena such as the shape of a flower. Even if harmed by these phenomena, the lover of nature desires the existence of such forms. Hence, the contemplative observer unconditionally favors the form and existence in nature. Such compulsion toward form and existence leads to a new attachment by means of a recognition of formal appearance. In this case, I recognize and favor the appearances of existences, not the existences themselves.²¹² (My favorable attitude toward existences themselves is already reflected by empirical interest.)

In one example, a successful trick, a planted and constructed “natural beauty,” causes direct interest in existence and form to vanish. We are left only with the empirical aesthetic interest. This trick provides evidence that the observer must consider the form and existence (encountered and brought to the fore through beauty) to be produced by nature: “the thought that beauty was

²¹¹ Kant, *CJ*, 165-66.

²¹² Unfortunately, Kant is not more specific about his use of *Existenz* in this section and others. In Section 4, he does observe that “only by what he does without concern for enjoyment, in complete freedom and independently of whatever he could also receive passively from nature, does he give his existence (*Dasein*) an absolute value, as the existence (*Existenz*) of a person.” Kant, *CJ*, 50. However, this does not suffice in unpacking his use of the term in relation to judgment.

produced by nature must accompany the intuition and the reflection.”²¹³ Nature, in this instance, should not be taken to refer to the mass of biological objects. Rather, “we consider it as a dynamical whole and take account, not of the aggregation in space or time in order to bring this aggregation about as a magnitude, but of the unity in the existence of appearances.”²¹⁴ My encounter with the appearance – an encounter made possible through recognition of form – is an encounter with the thought of an underlying unity, a unity that may link discrete appearances. The unity of appearances comes to the fore in *both* the intuition and the reflection. The unity is given as a result of receptivity (in intuition) in addition to being spontaneously presented for thought (in reflection).²¹⁵ Whereas reason links intuition to concepts in order to generate understanding, judgment provides spontaneous thought *without* the subsequent introduction of the concept. Such spontaneous thought without concepts forces us to pay attention to the activity of receptivity and spontaneity at work in reflection, in addition to the unity required as a ground for thinking. This is how we begin to attend to the conditions for the possibility of thinking itself. Thus, it appears that Kant has amended the position put forth in the first *Critique*: “thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind.”²¹⁶ In judgments of taste, the suspension of conceptual determination (and our ability to recognize and reflect on this suspension) fosters further receptivity and spontaneity of thought while drawing out the idea of nature. It may be that such aesthetic thinking forces the subject to turn to pure, a priori concepts. This thinking would not necessarily determine these concepts, but only make the subject aware of the possibility of another concept, one distinctive from the empirical concepts at work in daily comprehension of the world.

²¹³ Kant, *CJ*, 168.

²¹⁴ Kant, *CPuR*, A419/B447.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, A50/B74.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, A51/B75.

Because intellectual interest brings attention to the “unity in the existence of appearances” by highlighting form and existence, for the moment after our pure judgment, appearance comes to the surface of our thinking *as appearance (Erscheinung)*. The reflection of judgment, therefore, is not simply the series of events surrounding a pure judgment of taste that leads us to contemplate the world, nature and ourselves. The reflection necessitates specific recognition of the mind’s capacity to intuit unified appearances. While beauty apparently provides a sensible experience of nature, beauty (as an appearance of the subject’s cognitive wealth) also hints at the fundamental capacities that allow for coherent thinking about the world and, therefore, the capacities that ground experience. Specifically, intellectual interest not only delights in possibilities emerging through enhanced receptivity and spontaneity, intellectual interest points toward the very basis of thinking itself: apperception, imagination and synthesis.

In his first *Critique*, Kant explains that apperception is the original unity of consciousness. In fact, in the second edition of this *Critique*, he explains “I think” as a spontaneous act, unrelated to sensibility. He continues:

I call it original apperception; for it is the self-consciousness which, because it produces the presentation *I think* that must be capable of accompanying all other presentations, and [because it] is one and the same in all consciousness, cannot be accompanied by any further presentation. I also call the unity of this apperception the *transcendental* unity of self-consciousness, in order to indicate that a priori cognition can be obtained from it.²¹⁷

In the first edition, Kant has called this apperception the “root power of all our cognition”.²¹⁸ In this edition, he more readily links apperception to our ability to see nature as a unity, highlighting the manner in which appearances “conform to the conditions of the thoroughgoing unity of self-consciousness.”²¹⁹ In the latter edition, Kant more clearly highlights the synthetic quality of this apperception, rather than describing nature’s role. The ability to combine

²¹⁷ Ibid., B132-3.

²¹⁸ Ibid., A114.

presentations, an ability provided by the underlying “I think” is the synthetic power of the intellect. More specifically, when I ‘add one presentation to another and am conscious of their synthesis,’²²⁰ I come to realize my identity in and through these combined presentations. In a footnote, he explains,

...only by virtue of a possible synthetic unity that I think beforehand can I present the analytic unity...the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point, to which we must attach all use of the understanding, even the whole of logic, and in accordance with it transcendental philosophy.²²¹

Enlivened aesthetic feeling shocks us into an awareness of our cognitive powers, providing us with a sensible engagement with apperception. This sensible engagement with one’s “root power” avails us of our synthetic potency not just as receptive and spontaneous thinkers, but as a being that maintains identity (“I think”) throughout the numerous appearances that emerge before us. Direct, aesthetic interest is an occasion in which “I think” surfaces for the subject from the form of beauty.

Let us look at one more aspect of the first *Critique* before moving on to develop other elements of this interest. In the both editions, imagination plays a significant role in the synthetic apperception. In the first edition, pure imagination coheres sensibility and understanding. Moreover, apperception requires imagination in order to have intellectual force. In the second edition, imagination engages in a figurative synthesis and, with regard to the synthetic unity of apperception, imagination allows for “understanding’s first application (and at the same time the basis of all its other applications) to objects of the intuition that is possible for us.”²²²

Imagination is the spontaneous power which Kant also names “productive imagination.”

He writes:

²¹⁹ Ibid., A112.

²²⁰ Ibid., B133.

²²¹ Ibid., B134.

Determinate intuition is possible only through the consciousness of the manifold's determination by the transcendental act of imagination (i.e., by the synthetic influence of understanding on inner sense) – the act that I have called figurative synthesis. This need for figurative synthesis, moreover, we always perceive in ourselves. We cannot think a line without *drawing* it in thought.²²³

The spontaneity of imagination and an active figurative synthesis come forth in judgment's play of the faculties. Indeed, aesthetic ideas 'function to quicken the mind by opening up for it a view into an immense realm of kindred presentations.'²²⁴ This imagination may "[create] another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it" or "may even restructure experience."²²⁵ In extreme cases, imagination may produce something that "surpasses nature."²²⁶ Imagination is not lawless. Though it may venture toward new horizons, even changing the nature of our experience, its formulations still attempt to present an "objective reality." Finally, expanded thinking is made possible because no concept attenuates the aesthetic ideas brought about by the imagination:

Now if a concept is provided with a presentation of the imagination such that, even though this presentation belongs to the exhibition of the concept, yet it prompts even by itself, so much thought as can never be comprehended within a determinate concept and thereby the presentation aesthetically expands the concept itself in an unlimited way, then the imagination is creative in all of this and sets the power of intellectual ideas in motion: it makes reason think more, when prompted by a certain presentation, than what can be apprehended and made distinct in the presentation.²²⁷

Thus, beauty and art draw out the figurative, synthetic function of the imagination both by allowing the subject to realize the "I think" while, at the same time, presenting a figure that "aesthetically expands" thinking. On these occasions, to reiterate, "reason thinks more than what can be apprehended in the presentation."

²²² Ibid., B151.

²²³ Ibid., B154.

²²⁴ Kant, *CJ*, 183-4.

²²⁵ Ibid., 182.

²²⁶ We would be correct to be reminded of the genius. While her cognitive potency might not allow her to "surpass nature," she certainly is endowed with the imaginative ability to mimic (if not surpass) nature.

In the first *Critique's* discussion of imagination and apperception, Kant is concerned with the question: "how can I be an object to myself at all?"²²⁸ Indeed, direct aesthetic interest denotes the moment within which beauty has allowed the subject to be "an object to myself" and, therefore, open the possibility for (if not recognizing) activating the root elements by means of aesthetic ideas that draw out productive imagination. Reflection (aesthetic thinking) can now be defined as the aftermath of the aesthetic judgment in which the subject realizes "I think" and engages the productive imagination. Insofar as this forces reason to "think more," reflection fortifies the determinative thinking that will follow. Now, I believe, it is quite clear how the desire to engage with the subjective potency of pure judgment is a desire (a direct interest) that necessitates a reflection drawing directly on the "root powers" of receptivity, imagination and synthetic apperception, each contributing to the unity perceived as "nature."

We can now see that reflection in judgment is two-fold. First, it is quite literally a reflection of the subject insofar as beauty is the appearance of cognitive potency. As I have been claiming, the appearance of cognitive potency is a specific instantiation of our "root powers." Second, it is an intellectual activity made possible by an intellectual interest or intellectual desire that "thinks more" by engaging in the appearance of productive imagination and pursuing the aesthetic ideas brought forth by productive imagination.

While the illusion (*schein*) of beauty may suffice to generate intellectual interest, the revealed illusion will remind us of our fallibility in distinguishing an *actual* appearance of cognitive potency from an illusion of cognitive potency. Unwittingly, intellectual interest may embrace an inauthentic reflection of the mind's capacity. Inauthentic reflection takes place when we are duped. This confusion between nature and art is an instance of believing a beauty to be a

²²⁷ Kant, *CJ*, 183.

²²⁸ Kant, *CPuR*, B154.

moment of our own potency, rather than the moment of someone else's cognitive potency (as evidenced by the genius' or artists' successful manipulation of appearances). There is a clear distinction between the effect of natural beauty and the effect of artistic beauty masquerading as nature. This judge reads the event of beauty with the same direct interest as the authentic judge. The deceived judge – a cognitively impotent judge – unwittingly substitutes another's cognitive potency for one's own. While this judge may seem to have the experience of the beautiful, it is an encounter with a reproduction of the elements of nature's unity, form and existence. Further, while the deceived judge might be enlivened by this experience, it is a rather vicarious intellectual engagement. We might surmise that the deceived judge is provided a glimpse into the root powers precisely because the artist provides such a window for the judge. The judge, therefore, has not "become an object to myself" but must depend on the insights of the artist to guide her way. However, the artist has become a window through which the judge may be trained to later have an authentic encounter with beauty and the root powers and, thus, become an object to herself: recognizing reason's limits in genuine reflection. The cognitive impotence of the deceived judge is dramatically highlighted as soon as the artifact is revealed:

...our interest vanishes completely as soon as we notice we have been deceived...it vanishes so completely that at that point even taste can no longer find anything beautiful, nor sight anything charming.²²⁹

Our ability to exercise judgments of taste may be destroyed by the disclosure of artistry. We will, therefore, no longer be able to take up indirect (empirical) or direct (intellectual) interest in aesthetic experience. Indeed, we will fail to have the aesthetic experience that founds our interest. However, let us also consider that the deceived judge may have never acquired authentic taste and therefore could not *lose* the ability to find beauty. Such a judge has not yet acquired the ability to judge authentic beauties, but still may be under the impression that – with

the assistance of a masterful trickster or genius – she *does* have such ability. When she discovers the trick, she begins to understand that she did not execute a judgment of taste. Thus, while this disclosure is traumatic, this judge may come closer to the cognitive potency of authentic taste by recognizing the occasion of masked potency. In other words, this judge, surrounded by the ruins of her former thinking, is set on a new path. While this path may lead to additional confusions, this fallen judge is now driven to remain more attuned to the causality of the beautiful so as to avoid this tragic deception. Meanwhile, the dilemma between authentic and inauthentic cognitive potency draws us back in our discussion of the Jacobi-Mendelssohn debate: Are we fanatically infected with the genius-disease or are we truly contemplating the affinity between our inner sense and the world of experience, an affinity brought to light by beauty?

Intellectual interest now appears to be an activity closely associated with pure reason: engaged in examining the inner sense that provides the conditions for the possibility of appearance and coherent experience. However, when Kant describes nature as a unity in the existence of appearances, he is reviewing causality:

Now here the condition of what occurs is called the cause and the cause's unconditioned causality in the [realm of] appearance is called freedom, whereas the conditioned causality is called natural cause – in the narrower meaning.²³⁰

Thus, it is not surprising that nature, as the ‘thought that must accompany intuition,’ must also hint at the “unconditioned causality of appearance” or freedom. So it is that the direct aesthetic interest also appears to be similar to “moral feeling.” While intellectual interest is not moral interest or moral feeling, the drawing out of cognitive potency naturally directs us to this unconditioned causality. We can now unpack the following statement: “it is only beauty that arouses direct interest, agrees with a refined and solid way of thinking of all people who have

²²⁹ Kant, *CJ*, 169.

²³⁰ Kant, *CPuR*, A419/B447.

cultivated moral feeling.”²³¹ Our direct interest in beauty is an interest in the appearance of freedom, insofar as authentic, sustained reflection on beauty may lead to an appearance (*Erscheinung*) of freedom. As a witness to another, we presume that one’s love of beauty can only suggest that they have the opportunity to glimpse freedom as the unconditioned cause in the subject. However, we cannot assume that the pure judgment has led to this end. Indeed, it is the sustained attention of intellectual interest that might indicate the subject has begun to cash out the implications of judgment. The reflection necessitated by intellectual interest is a confluence of freedom and nature. As a result, while pure judgments may require the mediation of the faculties, intellectual interest allows the subject to engage in the mediation by recognizing the appearance of nature and the appearance of freedom that has happened rather spontaneously and simultaneously in the pure judgment.

We can now show how reason’s interest intervenes on direct interest and aesthetic judgment. The moment of aesthetic judgment (and our witness to others’ judgments) suggests an affinity to moral feeling. At the same time, the moment of aesthetic judgment demands a subsequent “thought of nature.” Interest is precisely aroused by the implication that there is a harmony (a unique unity) between engagement with appearances (nature) and our inner nature (freedom.) As Kant explains, “the mind cannot meditate about the beauty of nature without at the same time finding its interest aroused.”²³² He continues by suggesting that one would not take interest if one was not already attuned to one’s moral capacity. It would not be surprising that one’s current moral capacity or attunement would allow one more success in cashing out the moral value of pure judgment. For example, as a morally attuned individual, I may be more likely to acknowledge the evidence of freedom in a judgment of taste and, thus, to fortify my position as a

²³¹ Ibid., 166.

²³² Ibid., 167.

moral agent. An amoral individual may not recognize the opportunity afforded in the pure judgment. As a result, we make the assumption – although it remains an assumption – that the tasteful subject likely holds a “good moral attitude.” As Kant points out this “kinship with moral feeling looks rather too studied to be considered as the true interpretation of that cipher through which nature speaks to us figuratively in beautiful forms.”²³³ Rightly so, for aesthetic experience translated as moral experience (through moral interest) ceases to provide mediation of the faculties and thereby ceases to reflect a pure judgment of taste or found future judgments. This translation of aesthetic experience would absolutely fail to allow for an engagement with our root powers, which is a fundamental aspect of reflection. In a moral translation of taste, in other words, the interest is no longer a “free” interest but an interest directed by “objective laws.”

Thus, not only do we encounter the forms of the beauties of nature (such as the shape of a flower), we have seen how the forms of nature and freedom arise in intellectual interest. The encounter with such forms may also be understood as an outcome of the encounter with the purposiveness in aesthetic judgment. The purposiveness provokes us. We first look for purpose in nature and, after failing to discover purpose we look for purpose within ourselves. Thus, in face of the absence of purpose in beauty, we resort to the purpose of the subject: “our moral vocation.” Our direct interest is not satisfied with the appearance of moral vocation as the purpose that responds to purposiveness. Direct interest is drawn forward by *affinity*: by the very possibility that beauty – an event without purpose – would come to be associated with the fundamental purpose of the subject. Kant explains: “beauty’s own characteristic of qualifying for such a link [to an accompanying moral idea]”²³⁴ arouses our direct interest by virtue of the fact that beauty qualifies *but does not actualize* a direct link to moral interest. Put another way,

²³³ Ibid., 168.

²³⁴ Ibid., 169.

the powerlessness of concept in the realm of taste creates conditions for affinities. In terms of our root powers, reflection engages with the wondrous affinity (between one's apperception and nature) that allows for coherent experience and provides the possibility for the 'restructuring' of experience. In the moral realm, reflection engages with the affinity between the appearance of our cognitive potency and the appearance of our moral potency (in Kantian language). In the vernacular, we are struck by the affinity between nature and morality. This may suggest that in the moral realm, reflection on such affinities may fortify ethical action by means of providing the possibility of recognizing coherent moral experience in addition to the possibility of 'restructuring' experience (made possible by judgment's access to imagination) according to a moral order.

While Kant suggests that the event of beauty directs us toward our moral vocation and stimulates interest in moral feeling, he also suggests that harmony in nature (as evidenced by beauty) stimulates reason's interest by means of one's cognitive engagement with nature. I have attempted to argue that our direct, aesthetic interest engages with the foundations of pure and practical reason and necessitates reflection. In other words, the significance of aesthetic thinking is brought forth by direct, aesthetic interest. In addition to the harmony and pleasure of beauty, the *signs* (or affinities) of aesthetic judgment (and the fact that beauty seems to be signaling us to something else) already demonstrate a figurative synthesis at work. As a break from experience colored by reason's interests, authentic judgment redirects our attention to the richness of appearances (experience) framed by nature and founded in freedom, fortifying reflection with the assistance of a purposiveness that resists purpose in favor of form. Aesthetic judgment (and its subsequent interests) provides the condition for the possibility for the critical project by allowing us to ask, not "what is the purpose and goals of reason?" but the rather allowing us to frame the

formal question, “how does reason proceed so as to found coherent experience?” Further, reflection on cognitive and moral affinities speaks to the very core of the conditions for the possibility of experience.

Finally, it is aesthetic thinking that allows reason to “take on once again the most difficult of all its tasks – viz. that of self-cognition – to set up a tribunal that will make reason secure in its rightful claims and will dismiss all baseless pretensions.”²³⁵ The event of beauty presents a break with general interests that founds (through intellectual interest) reflection or self-cognition precisely by thwarting the interests of pure and practical reason. We are led back to the beginning of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the relationship between self-cognition and metaphysics:

Metaphysics is not actual as a science, yet it is actual as a natural predisposition... For human reason, impelled by its own need rather than moved by the mere vanity of gaining a lot of knowledge, proceeds irresistibly to such questions as cannot be answered by the experiential use of reason and any principles taken from such use. And thus all human beings, once their reason has expanded [to the point where it can] speculate, actually have always had in them, and always will have in them, some metaphysics.²³⁶

I have suggested earlier that aesthetic thinking focuses on our “root powers” and realizes the “unconditioned causality” or freedom of the subject. Metaphysics impelled by need *is* intellectual interest. In other words, it is a desire for speculation, for the production of the imagination, a desire to “think more” than what experience provides, especially in conditions that resist immediate, conceptual resolution (determinative judgment). Kant continues this passage by questioning:

How is metaphysics as a natural predisposition possible?, i.e., how, from the nature of universal reason, do the questions arise that pure reason poses to itself and is impelled, by its own need, to answer as best it can?²³⁷

²³⁵ Kant, *CPuR*, Axii.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, B21.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

As we have seen in the following analysis, direct aesthetic interest – by allowing for a break with interest and by sustaining this break with interest – is impelled precisely by the metaphysical predisposition to “expand reason in a reliable way”. Critique is founded by means of this metaphysical predisposition, in order to validate metaphysics as a science by interrogating and delimiting reason’s own nature. Kant writes, “Once it has become completely acquainted with its own ability regarding the objects that it may encounter in experience, reason must find it easy to determine, completely and safely, the range and bounds of its use [when] attempted beyond all bounds of experience.”²³⁸ Such is the luff in the sail, a moment of suspended forward progress, when reason begins to take inventory precisely resulting from a break with interest, as a necessary adjustment to forward motion, to catching the wind. Reflection opens the space to encounter our metaphysical predisposition, to encounter the parameters of this ability. Direct interest reveals the actual cognitive potency by forcing us to reflect, by forcing us to create a space to examine self-cognition. This can only be made possible by the momentary withdrawal of determinatively legislated concepts of nature and freedom and, thus, this can only be made possible through aesthetic thinking. Such an interest embodies the definitive mediation of aesthetic judgment: by beginning to draw reflection into the realm of determination and, with the assistance of pure judgments, drawing determination into the realm of reflection. Finally, training in this aesthetic judging and thinking, experiences of beauty, reading ciphers, engaging disinterest and, even, recovering from vanished interest, will necessarily (as a by-product of cognitive potency) reinforce our intellectual work in other areas.

Now the compass of reason in orientation might be further defined. If reason casts a darkness through which we might navigate by right, need or interest, our orientation toward a particular direction as the ‘proper’ direction or the best possibility is informed by a shadow game

²³⁸ Ibid., B23.

of traces and ciphers that begin to direct one's thinking, that tap into our "root powers."

Orientation requires aesthetic thinking to make some sense of the clues provided in "darkness."

However, making sense of such clues demands figurative synthesis and, thereby, calls attention to apperception. Indeed, disorientation (or disconnected appearances that necessitate orientation) is one way in which one might encounter the "I think" as the only unified characteristic in a series. In aesthetic thinking, we combine the force of pure judgment with the power of intellectual interest in order to begin deciphering what is to be thought. At the same time, reflection requires us to contemplate the subject's moral potency, in addition to her cognitive potency. Insofar as our aesthetic judgment fosters aesthetic interests, we are drawn into discourse with civilization, nature and freedom.

CHAPTER VI

DISINTEREST, FREEDOM AND NEGATIVE DARSTELLUNG

A judgment of taste creates conditions for the recognition of affinities that emerge most obviously between the moral and the aesthetic. Such affinities address nature's representation in terms of a 'beauty as a cipher through which nature speaks', 'charms that contain a language which seems to have a higher meaning' and a 'universal rule we are unable to state.' In this scenario, aesthetic experience presents nature as foundation or backdrop that provides the possibility for the appearance of an aesthetic subject, a moral subject and subject led by reason's interest. A transparent representation of nature *to* the subject, based on linguistic grasping, repeatedly fails. This failure also allows for the emergence of the subject, by allowing the subject to attempt to solve the linguistic puzzle initiated (but never resolved) by affinities captured by beauties of nature.

If nature is truly a foundation for the possibility of the subject's self-representation, the linguistic puzzle, ciphers, traces, languages of charms and un-state-ability of the universal rule do not reflect information about the concept of nature, or a founding concept of nature required for taste. Linguistic conundrums that force us to orient ourselves by seeking transparent and accessible languages of nature continue to reflect the subject. Returning to earlier discussions, we might find that this reflects the slippage (according to Guyer) or spasm (according to Lyotard) preventing us from (the rather absurd project of) determinatively translating ourselves through nature's beautiful works and driving us toward reflection.

This failure, however, directs us back to Kant's remarks concerning the "indispensable supplement." When considering Kant's response to the Jacobi-Mendelssohn debate and Kant's

later letter to Jacobi, we are urged to examine an “indispensable supplement” that directs us toward our freedom. Such an indispensable supplement provides us with an orientation on occasions when reason does not appear to prevail, and when disorientation may not appear to be fruitful. Even here, Kant hints at some doubt as to whether the indispensable supplement actually is our freedom, by saying ‘we name this supplement freedom.’ While naming lays hold of such an indispensable faculty, our naming itself does not appear to fully grasp the supplement.

If we turn back to the essay on orientation, we found a picture of how reason may encounter its own deficiency but a suggestion that this encounter with deficiency may be an encounter the right of reason to initiate orientation on occasions when the logical path remains unclear. The essay depicts a ‘space opened for thinking’ and the reason’s right to ‘make initial pronouncements.’ Darkness – seen as a metaphor for antinomies and/or irresolvable, conflicting claims – provides the conditions for the emergence of such a space as well as reason’s right. Further, however, these events invite intellectual interest as an extending-toward-attachment through reflection. Other interests, speculative or practical, may establish effective attachments by providing explanations in relation to supra-sensory or sensible objects respectively.

An encounter with the suspicion of an order to which the thinker may not be privy is not unlike our moment of orienting ourselves in darkness. This encounter, however, leaves the judge with a suspicion of richness, of possible complexity, of a beginning. In *The Aesthetic*, Kant talks about the “language in which nature speaks.” This language, an apparent pattern on the surface of our experience of nature, communicates incompletely. The language arouses suspicion, curiosity and a desire to understand more fully.²³⁹ While the ‘language of nature’ appears to point toward “higher meaning,” such meaning remains hidden from us, and such language is

always already incomplete. As a result, our translations and determination of the meaning of this language continue to be speculative. Yet, at the same time, the recognition of the presence of a possible system of meaning, coupled with the demand that we look to a ‘higher meaning,’ also contributes to the reflective act: the embrace of particulars in a perceptual moment directed toward establishing concepts rather than directly applying them.

Traces, recognition of incomplete meaning, and pointing toward morality, characterize this moment. Kant also explains that aesthetic judgment provides us with information that we are “unable to state.” Thus, in aesthetic judgment, we have an initial sense-experience of language (as the language of nature which includes implications such as subjective universality) followed by a failure to use our own language. Such stumbling explanation or muddled speech regarding an experience of beauty, and/or meaning, is familiar. This speechlessness occurs within the moment of judgment while also following the moment of judgment.

The failure of language, however, provides evidence for the failure of determinative judgment and the crescendo of reflective judgment. At this moment, perhaps superficially or initially, categorical definitions appear to fail to capture a particular experience. There are two levels in which language fails: we fail to fully understand nature’s language while also failing to exercise our own language. In other words, this crisis of language is internal and external. However, loss of linguistic accessibility does not imply loss of meaning, in the case of beauty. Curiously, even without our linguistic medium, meaning is communicated. This is precisely the nature of aesthetic judgment: an apparently unmediated, meaningful encounter of the subject with the world. Put another way, by calling attention to the encounter of the subject with the world, this event bears a meaning (without specifying the content of such meaning).

²³⁹ Curiously, because of this, aesthetic judgment places us before the world as if we are children again: our perceptions are rich beyond our comprehension, languages that surround us are not fully comprehended and ultimate

Aesthetic experience becomes a success and a failure: the failures of a coherent pattern of meaning (or language of nature) accompany the conditions for the possibility of unmediated meaning. Failure of linguistic patterns of meaning will be an occasion for the exhibition of the freedom we have been talking about and, thereby, an occasion for the sensible recognition of the freedom of the human subject (or the indispensable supplement). It may also be possible, as suggested in Section 42, to read the ciphers of nature incorrectly (by finding art to be nature) and yet continue to have an experience of the higher meaning of nature. Without the intellectual interest that follows judgment, however, I would have no patience, no receptivity, and no *interest* in translating nature's works. Aesthetic judgment and interest allow me to sustain thinking even in cases when I encounter something incompletely represented, such as hints of languages and meanings. On such occasions, reason's architectonic interests allow one to recognize "incomplete" which compelling the subject to seek the completion of this language.

When "reading" nature, we look for systematic relationships between natural phenomena, presuming that these relationships subsist beneath appearances. The project of the Critique of Pure Reason explains the human epistemological mechanics behind such systematicity and contemplates the more difficult consequences of expecting such consistency. Specifically, Kant must address the antinomies of reason (the contradictory tendencies of reason)²⁴⁰, as well as the more clearly logical structure of our thinking. The *Critique of Pure Reason* explains to us precisely how we go about applying our concepts or categories (quantity, quality, modality, relation)²⁴¹ to the world.

meaning escapes us.

²⁴⁰ Kant, *CPuR*, A406-A567. This section has special interest for us with regard to "the interest of reason in this conflict." See also A462-A476.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, A80/B106.

“Reading” nature accounts for most of our activities detailed in Kant’s critical structure. In contrast to dogmatic philosophers before him – who failed to explain the method and madness behind reason²⁴² – (conservatively) Kant’s critical work addresses the framework for the possibility of reading nature. Hence, while reading nature requires an understanding of how to use our reading glasses (reason) in order to assess experience external to us, reading nature also requires – as a conversation on intellectual interest indicates – appreciation of the mediated relationship between the judge or thinker and the world. This suggests that the possibility of pursuing a project like the *Critique of Pure Reason* rests in an aesthetic origin, yielding a potent intellectual interest in the ciphers and hidden languages implied by nature and reflective of the condition of the subject.

It is worth pausing here to briefly consider that Kant’s final work, his *Opus postumum*, attempts a transition from his work on cognition to the laws of physics, completing the critical project precisely by delineating nature’s forces for the scientific community. In depicting the necessity of principles of reflective judgment to this transition, Eckart Förster writes:

[The experience of natural beauty] “expands” our concept of nature, although not our knowledge of the objects of nature. It expands the concept of nature from that of a blind mechanism – the concept of nature of the first *Critique* and the *Metaphysical Foundations* – to nature as art, hence to a nature that is *in itself* systematic.²⁴³

In other words, the purposiveness emerging in taste provides a ground for assuming organization in nature but does not yet provide details of this independent system.

²⁴² See the Preface to the First Edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: “And it is a call to reason to take on once again the most difficult of all its tasks – viz., that of self-cognition – and to set up a tribunal that will make reason secure in its rightful claims and will dismiss all baseless pretensions, not by fiat but in accordance with reason’s eternal and immutable laws.” (Axii.) As a product of the 1781 edition of the first *Critique*, Kant has not yet arrived at the conclusion of aesthetic judgment that holds that the glue of reason, judgment, depends on a certain amount of lawlessness and spontaneity. There is much to be said about the preface and introduction to the first *Critique* in regard to aesthetic judgment and even the use of the term aesthetic. I hope to address this in the future within this text.

²⁴³ Förster, *Kant’s Final Synthesis*, 11.

If our experience is mediated in and through our cognitive complexity, and the failure of representation is a direct indication of such mediation, there must be occasions in which we might suspend our link, interests, mediated connection to the world in order to reflect on this complexity. As explained earlier, disinterest contributes to this complexity by suspending interest.

Disinterest portends the possibility of objectivity, in addition to fostering a non-intentional comportment toward the world²⁴⁴ and, seen through the lens of intellectual interest, is a sort of attachment.²⁴⁵ Explained early in the text of the third *Critique*, disinterest separates us from our “power of desire” associated with an object’s existence.²⁴⁶ It is only because our struggle with desire predominates our thinking (about morality and reason) that we neglect to ascertain that the separation from desire may allow us attachment to something else. Desire infuses an object with an empirical interest and instrumentality. I want to look good or impress others as I decorate my rooms. This isn’t only hubris, Kant acknowledges; I do get some (superficial) pleasure out of decoration.²⁴⁷ I do not, in these cases, re-inhabit the world in

²⁴⁴ Lewis Hyde’s *The Trickster Makes this World: Mischief, Myth and Art* points out the practice of “non-intention” exemplified by John Cage’s work: “It is especially by our likes and dislikes, Cage says, that we cut ourselves off from the wider mind (and the wider world). Likes and dislikes are the lapdogs and guard dogs of the ego, busy all the time, panting and barking at the gates of attachment and aversion, thereby narrowing perception and experience...we therefore need a practice or discipline of *non-intention*,” 142.

²⁴⁵ In *On Beauty and Being Just*, Elaine Scarry observes: “it is much more difficult to say what “Beauty” unattached to any object is.” In fact, Scarry finds this prospect daunting: “At no point will there be any aspiration to speak in these pages of unattached Beauty, or of the attributes of unattached Beauty,” 9.

²⁴⁶ Kant, *CJ*, 46.

²⁴⁷ This is why Kant later refers in the *CJ* to empirical charms contained within objects that are judged as beautiful, but not constituting the aspect of beauty: “the charms in beautiful nature, which we so often find fused, as it were, with beautiful form, belong either to the modifications of light or of sound,” 169. For the record, some works need to be done on the significance of ornamentation in the Enlightenment, drawing a picture of why ornamentation and charms are such a threat to human well-being.

relation to valuing absolute existence, for example. I simply inhabit a world by means of my interests.²⁴⁸

Kant footnotes his conclusion to the passage of *The Liking that Determines a Judgment of Taste is Devoid of Interest*²⁴⁹ with the following statement:

A judgment we make about an object of our liking may be wholly *disinterested* but still very *interesting*, i.e., it is not based on any interest but gives rise to an interest; all pure moral judgments are of this sort. But judgments of taste, of themselves, do not even give rise to any interest. Only in society does it become interesting to have taste; the reason for this will be indicated later.²⁵⁰

Still, in the footnote, Kant continues to refer to empirical interest (that which is ‘later indicated’), an interest concerning one’s relationship to others in society. This interest does not concern some fundamental mediation between our imaginative and reasoned activities. Empirical interest does not indicate a contemplative stance that holds open a ‘voluptuousness for the mind to unravel.’ Indeed, confusing contemplative wonder with an impressive social trait (i.e., as being of empirical interest) would make for foolish social behavior. How can the practice of preoccupying oneself with the complex construction of a flower petal improve one’s standing in society or communication with others? As a self-conscious gesture toward public acceptance, this would not work. One would be mimicking the aesthetic judge. On a solitary and personal level, however, contemplation works only as an event of aesthetic judgment, an event of joinery – an event that links one to the world precisely by means of a detached attachment.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸ The concept of home has recently seen a revival in the works of 20th century thinkers. Not only has Ed Casey identified a theory of place, many visual artists have revitalized ideas of home in our global, web economy (see earlier footnote), but Lukacs, Bachelard and Heidegger make home a significant aspect of their work.

²⁴⁹ Kant, in *CJ*, writes “There is no better way to elucidate this proposition, which is of prime importance, than by contrasting the pure disinterested liking that occurs in a judgment of taste with a liking connected with interest, especially if we can also be certain that the kinds of interest I am about to mention are the only ones there are,” 46.

²⁵⁰ Kant, *CJ*, 47.

²⁵¹ The beginning of Section 42 is all about the outsider’s stance and her ability to distinguish the charlatan from the aesthetic judge.

As he unfolds the theory, intellectual interest emerges as a peculiar by-product of the discussion of empirical interest and disinterest. Intellectual interest explains disinterest's *attachment*: an attachment to the *form* of the object before us. Beauty forces us to recognize the form of the object (and not its empirical and/or social value). Intellectual interest holds open the moment of contemplation, one's gaze on the form, and the momentary feeling of freedom from the desire²⁵² that legislates our usual, empirical interest. As Kant says in *A Judgment of Taste Rests on A Priori Bases*:

Yet [the contemplative pleasure] does have a causality in it, namely to *keep* [us in] the state [of having] the presentation itself. We *linger* in our contemplation of the beautiful, because this contemplation reinforces and reproduces itself. This is analogous to (though not the same as) the way in which we linger over something charming that, as we present an object, repeatedly arouses our attention [though here] the mind is passive.²⁵³

We see this again when Kant says, "What counts in judging beauty is not what nature is, nor even what purpose it has for us, but how we receive it."²⁵⁴ The attachment is peculiar: we suspend or linger over a presentation given to us, not by our active interpretation of a series of phenomena before us, but by a receptivity, a lingering, which draws out forms and images in the series of phenomena before us.²⁵⁵ We are contemplating the fit of one thing to another; we are contemplating the 'jointedness' of the world. Add to this, however, the aspect of aesthetic judging that alights on particulars: when I draw out the form I am not enacting abstraction as a step in a logical order of intuiting and conceptualizing the world. My recent photograph of an insect that grazes the edges of a petal looking for pollen, a petal that glows with mid afternoon

²⁵² Kant has implied that it is a mixture of desire for social recognition and a desire to obtain objects. Hence, our perception of objects cannot be objective when mixed with such a determinative desire.

²⁵³ Kant, *CJ*, 48.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 224.

²⁵⁵ Kant also explains form: "But what we call pure in a simple kind of sensation is its uniformity undisturbed and uninterrupted by any alien sensation. It pertains only to form, because there we can abstract from the quality of the kind of sensation in question," *CJ*, 71. Kant goes on to note that while charm may draw our attention to beautiful things, charm is not the cause for our aesthetic valuation of beauty.

light, the blur of transparent wings frozen in my image, the particular relationship between the floating creature and the symmetry of the leaves: all these relationships form a indelible impression. While the photograph helps me remember this moment, the power of the symmetry impresses on my mind an image I am not likely to forget. In this example, the form is not simply part of an object, but some characteristic of a whole series of happenings that are jointed together in time: leaves, insect, light. My experience, as Kant explains, has less to do with concern for that particular insect. My experience involves my freedom, in this case, a freedom to encounter the world unfettered by interests, to encounter the world *on its own account, in disinterest*. From this point we might be able to make the claim: such form, rather than a categorical abstraction, *is the freedom* that Kant talks about in his letter to Jacobi. The convergence of disinterest, the hint at an incomplete language and intellectual interest allow freedom to emerge as the form of the subject. This empowers the subject. First, the subject, in the space of reflection, a space provided by an independence from interests, may be open to recognize new or renewed languages, patterns or maxims of nature, so as to follow the trace into order to complete the incomplete architecture. Second, a new or renewed language by which one strives to represent what cannot be represented in order to overcome speechlessness made be made possible by such freedom.

What does this mean to say that such form is freedom? Am I simply being obedient to Kant's claim that beauty is, in fact, an appearance of the subject? In the second preface to the first *Critique*, Kant explains, "I cannot in this way cognize my freedom, I can still think freedom."²⁵⁶ It now appears that in aesthetic thinking I might cognize freedom. This dialogue on freedom is more than simply an anthropomorphic encounter of myself by means of the world before me. Writers, poets and artists don't merely give us samples of thick particularity, striving

toward the difficult task of representing such form and particularity at once. Writers and poets, painters and sculptors provide sites for the occasion of cultivating not only our aesthetic judgment, but for cultivating freedom that we might now understand as including a fundamental openness courting the systematic character of the world by means of a purposiveness of natural beauties which simply reflects the purposiveness (or form) of the subject.

Such a characterization of freedom does not refer to choice or simply possibility but does harken back to the autonomy of the will. After all, as Kant writes in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, “Heteronomy of choice...not only does not establish any obligation but is opposed to the principle of obligation and to the morality of the will.”²⁵⁷ In this passage, Kant explains the nature of the relationship between the autonomous will and freedom, by reminding us that our autonomy refers to our “independence from all material of the law.”

The sole principle of morality consists in independence from all material of the law (i.e., a desired object) and in the accompanying determination of choice by the mere form of giving universal law which a maxim must be capable of having.²⁵⁸

These conditions are established and fostered by the force of the aesthetic experience of beauty, which separates us from desired objects by means of disinterest, and call attention to (against our will) the form of the subject. Beauty compels us away toward autonomy, toward the ability to determine choice by means of “the mere form of giving universal law.” Finally, according to the second *Critique*, our ability to establish a will independent from desired objects or the “material of the law” not only provides for the autonomy of the will, but such independence characterizes freedom in the “negative sense.” On the other hand, freedom’s positive instantiation is the “intrinsic legislation of pure and thus practical reason.”²⁵⁹ Therefore, the beautiful that opens the

²⁵⁶ Kant, *CPuR*, Bxxxviii.

²⁵⁷ Kant, *CPrR*, 33.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

space for reflection, whether for orientation or as a course thinking in a new or renewed manner, is an encounter with the impetus toward the legislation of pure and practical reason. The appearance of the *form* of the subject hearkens not only to our autonomous will but also to negative and positive senses of freedom: independence and legislation.

In relation to aesthetics, the independence characteristic of such freedom includes the possibility, not only that we may determine our choices by universal law (as outlined in *The Critique of Practical Reason*) where we counsel our desires toward higher goals, but that we might encounter that which is entirely other to our typical mode of thinking through and with interests. We appreciate the particularities of other existences and the depths of an intellect that allows us the possibility of getting out of ourselves and establishing a non-dogmatic existence. Not only, then, does beauty draw us into the possibility of making connections or legislating as a result of an independence from all material or desired objects, beauty exercises jointedness, the flexing of the human subject, the odd contradiction of 'getting out of ourselves' that allows us to recognize ourselves²⁶⁰ (and our freedom). Indeed, according to the second *Critique*, the autonomy of freedom is the “formal condition of all maxims.” And so it is that we may encounter beauty as a compulsion toward acknowledging our freedom, acknowledging independence and the “intrinsic legislation of pure and practical reason.” Intellectual interest captures the negative sense of freedom insofar as it follows disinterest, while utilizing the positive sense of freedom by provoking or engaging our legislative capacities.

As Kant writes, “only beauty that arouses direct interest, agrees with the refined and solid way of thinking of all people who have cultivated their moral feeling.”²⁶¹ In this way, intellectual interest concerns a moment free from the desires associated with empirical interest,

²⁶⁰ The flexing of the human subject, although it sounds crude, requires imagination to be able to cross such boundaries in order to re-cognize oneself.

providing that person with opportunities for reflection. Aesthetic judgment (with the addition of intellectual interest) indicates an encounter with one's intellectual freedom and potency (in contemplation) with regard to the experience of the form of the object before one. As such, while beauty reflects the experience of the subject (an experience in which sense and mind meet), the contemplative mind gains pleasure from the surprising form brought to it, *apparently*, from the outside.

That is, the contemplative activity that I have been discussing could not be an unfettered imagination impressing itself upon a series of objects that appear before us, until we happen to find ourselves encountering beauty. The contemplative activity of aesthetic judgment requires the presentation of a determinate form, at a distance from one's desire, including a distance from reason's desire to legislate presentations (and experience). This contemplative activity also requires a determinate form that courts the imagination, linking the imagination to multiple conceptual possibilities inherent in such form, allowing the human being to feel one's *Lebensgefühl*.²⁶²

Liberation from empirical interests, coupled with some determinate form, creates the different kind of interest I have been exploring. The attachment that is a kind of absence of attachment exhilarates the subject. Disinterest refers to this attaching-absence-of-attachment. Later, with too much brevity, intellectual interest describes the implications of such absence-of-attachment-attachment. In other words, disinterest clears the worktable in order for the joinery to at least be observed, if not constructed with the help of intellectual interest.

²⁶¹ Kant, *CJ*, 166.

²⁶² Kant writes "This power does not contribute anything to cognition, but merely compares the given presentation in the subject with the entire presentational, of which the mind becomes conscious when it feels its own state," *CJ*, 44. *Lebensgefühl* might also be regarded as the so-called flexing (as in reflection) of the cognitive muscle.

Language itself provides the analogy to this quilt of nature. Representations, metaphors, symbols and analogies present determinate forms to the imagination, just as nature presents determinate forms to the imagination. Within the third *Critique*, metaphor serves as a tool for intellectual interest, holding open a world for contemplation by disjunctive, disjointed comparison, by productive friction of two dissimilar aspects of our experience. While this productive friction can produce and sustain intellectual interest, this productive friction also remains at work within the *Critique of Judgment*. This productive friction may provide a lesson in thinking on nature, a primer for experiencing beauty through contextualized riddles.

If the contemplative characterizes intellectual interest by opening the imagination toward conceptual possibility, and by bringing reason and sense into rhythm, Kant's use of stories, metaphors and analogies in the third *Critique* can be used as evidence for the presence of a vital intellectual interest, an attempt to hold open the space that fosters the possibility for beauty. While this might be an obvious pedagogical tool, holding open such a space may be a kind of moral activism necessary for an idealist who will later advocate world peace. In other words, holding open such a space - the work of the artist - may provide a site for the audience to encounter their own freedom, requiring them to construct their own languages, their own translation of the world. In fact, Kant's "essential question" in the essay *Perpetual Peace* concerns precisely these matters. As he explains:

We now come to the essential question regarding the prospect of perpetual peace. What does nature do in relation to the end which man's own reason prescribes to him as a duty, i.e., *how does nature help to promote his moral purpose?* (Italics mine)²⁶³

²⁶³ Reiss, *Kant's Political Writings*, 112.

Nature 'helps promote moral purposes' as it manifests freedom in the subject through aesthetic thinking that hints at the presentation of freedom, ushering the subject into receptive response and/or renewed thinking about the world.

A discussion of language and disinterest, further allows us to explore freedom in relation to intellectual interest in relation to nature's presentation. Once freedom has emerged, we can begin to place a connection (or joint) between the character of language and morality. More specifically, we can examine not only how nature might be read, but also how symbols, examples and analogies draw out the reading process, engaging us in an intellectual interest as well as, surprisingly, linking to morality through freedom.

Kant acknowledges the fact that there are certain ideas and concepts for which "absolutely no intuition can be given that would be adequate to them."²⁶⁴ As a result, we depend on symbol, metaphor, example and analogy to serve as guideposts for a supersensible item. Each linguistic tool attempts to mediate the impossibility of representation; indeed, each tool attempts to overcome the lack of sensible, immediate communicability of our cognitive horizons. As such, metaphor, example, analogy and symbol are exhibits. As noted in the German, they are *Darstellungen* (exhibitiones).

As Martha Helfer describes in her text *The Retreat of Representation: The Concept of Darstellung in German Critical Discourse*, "As a classical rhetorical term [*darstellung*] refers to "making visible via words" and Kant incorporates this visual dimension into his critical philosophy."²⁶⁵ But, as Helfer stresses in her exploration of Kant, the third *Critique* refers uniquely to a "negative *Darstellung*." A negative *Darstellung* coincides with our discussion of the burden and impossibility of representation in aesthetic judgment. How is it that the subject

²⁶⁴ Kant, *CJ*, 226.

²⁶⁵ Helfer, *The Retreat of Representation*, 48.

can appear to it if its essence, freedom, is supersensible? In other words, instead of simply discussing the formal relationships between indeterminacy, reflection and a search for concepts appropriate to a luxurious series of particulars in nature or art, Helfer's attention rests on the single aspect of human freedom. Further, if representation remains a problem, how is it that some devices are used to sensibly "hold" or "hold out" freedom? After all, to be thought, thought about and, even, communicated, freedom must be exhibited or held out in some manner.

Helfer refers to section 59, *On Beauty as the Symbol of Morality* and explains, "the beautiful as a symbol of the moral good represents a mediation between pure and practical reason, the bridge between understanding and reason that Kant had announced in the Introduction to the third *Critique*."²⁶⁶ But beauty, Helfer argues, requires "boundaries and limits" in a way that sublimity courts boundlessness. Sublimity, moreover, dictates a negative *Darstellung* that "forces the subject to think the supersensible – the idea – without actually producing an objective presentation of this idea."²⁶⁷ Quoting Kant, Helfer continues:

...For the uninvestigability of the idea of freedom completely cuts it off from any positive presentation, but the moral law in itself is sufficiently and originally determinant in us, so that it does not permit us to look around at any ground of determination external to itself.²⁶⁸

She summarizes: "negative *Darstellung*, grounded in a moral law that does not allow us to question its validity, safeguards against fanaticism and keeps reason from running amok by not letting it disregard the limits of sensibility."²⁶⁹ Without getting into an explication of the sublime, consider the fact that this one aspect of aesthetic judgment captures the impossibility of the exhibition of freedom. Yet the profundity of the experience of negative *Darstellung* leaves a trace and appreciation known as respect. Finally, we can attempt weak presentations (of

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 37.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 45.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

freedom) through our other rhetorical devices but these devices can't seamlessly present the unrepresentable.

Darstellungen, however we choose to understand the technical representations in German critical discourse, are the exhibits (*ex + habere = out of + to hold*) that may be conceived as the place in which an idea is held. Metaphors, analogies and symbols are holding places for concepts insofar as they are effective, mimic the idea with a similar yet dissimilar structure or logic. Also, however, they are places where the idea might be *had* by the thinker. In other words, *Darstellung* are not containers for our thinking, but active vehicles for our thinking. In this sense, the metaphor locates the potential for a cognitive event. This cognitive event is an event of aesthetic judgment. As such, metaphors and other representational devices invite the human mind to an event of aesthetic judgment and, in so doing, cultivate the imagination toward the experience of the beautiful, i.e., cultivate a play of the imagination.

Helfer's wonderfully detailed study of *Darstellung* explains the limits characteristic of representation. In the case of beauty, Kant is concerned with limits or boundaries. Helfer places more weight on the significance of negative *Darstellung* in the sublime, stressing the impossibility of presentation itself. Aesthetic judgment provides, in beauty, a presentation loaded with perplexities or limits. Re-presentations in art and trickery reinscribe the limits of each faculty while allowing one faculty to spill over or play with another.²⁷⁰

Metaphors, analogies and symbols necessarily require a dance with limits. As poet and writer Wendell Berry explains, "the legitimacy of a metaphor depends upon our understanding of

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 46.

²⁷⁰ The morality play emerging in The Aesthetic might be read as the performative moment of the spill over of practical reason into reflective judgment. As such, morality *must* appear somewhere. And while the relation between pure reason and reflection seems easier to bear, perhaps many questions might be dispelled when considering 'beauty as a symbol of morality' in this light.

its limits.”²⁷¹ The *Darstellung* so useful in aesthetic judgment, a movement that thrives in particulars with no corresponding concepts, maintains no strict identity between experience or empirical events and theoretical groundings. All the same, there are limits imposed, by the particulars of the metaphors, on what is to be had for thought. In this sense, metaphors come to us like the embodied stroll in the woods brings to us an aesthetic experience. We revel in their curiosities, their possible relationship to other thoughts and ideas, their possible relationship to other experiences, empirical events and things. We encounter them with receptivity reminiscent of our most relaxed and open perceiving. Finally, we encounter them as a possible site for the emergence of our freedom: just as a walk allows for the encounter with beauty and, thereby, some experience of moral vocation, so, too, a mental stroll, one’s reading of a novel, one’s listening to a story, occasions in us the opportunity (not necessity) for a sighting of our freedom.²⁷²

But, with the prior discussion of the adequation of ideas to *Darstellung*, and Helfer’s useful explication of these issues, we must not mistake the fact that aesthetic judgment does not discover a concept adequate to the particular stimulus. While it is useful to describe metaphor, symbol and analogy in relation to ideas and, in fact, the sublime concerns itself with reason’s ideas, the judgment that I have been discussing cannot be characterized by a corresponding idea. The lack brings a distinct richness and voluptuousness to our mind and, in fact, to our bodies as a sensible pleasure. Indeed, this is precisely why Kant must present the concept of the aesthetic idea. Kant writes:

An aesthetic idea cannot become cognition because it is an intuition (of the imagination) for which an adequate concept can never be found...I think we may call aesthetic ideas unexpoundable presentations of the imagination...the understanding with its concepts

²⁷¹ Berry, *Life is A Miracle: An Essay Against Modern Superstition*, 46.

²⁷² See Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice* and Octavio Paz, *The Other Voice* for further discussion of literature and poetry as morally cultivating forces in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

never reaches the entire inner intuition that the imagination has and connects with a given presentation.²⁷³

Keeping this in mind, we can come to a notion of metaphor, symbol and example used aesthetically as a holding out, a stretching forth. This holding out extends imagination without closure or resolution in a rational idea or concept. The absence of rational idea or concept, does not mean, however, that such holding-out is formless, without the cognitive work or application. Holding out²⁷⁴ details the specific receptivity that is part of aesthetic judgment (with its political ramifications) as well as remaining the site in which a creative and ethical thinking might be born. The aesthetically judged metaphor presents a site where one might begin to take up an intellectual interest in the world, a site where one begins to appreciate the jointedness of experience as well as the joinery of human cognition as a whole.

For our purposes, however, we should step back to recognize that an argument regarding beauty and morality, and for that matter the *Critique of Judgment* itself, places far more weight on the nature of rhetorical devices, than it does the inherent character of either beauty or morality. In other words, language opens the space for thought about the idea or supersensible, precisely because it only traces a hazy image of the object that we seek. Much like any resourceful thought alternation, we push examples and metaphors as far as possible until they collapse or cease to provide clues for our understanding. Often, these metaphors do gain us renewed insight. Often, we must invent new metaphors in order to shed light on aspects of an idea that were blacked out by the limits of the first, older metaphor. Occasionally, as Jose Luis

²⁷³ Kant, *CJ*, 215-17.

²⁷⁴ When I say “holding out” I only mean to remain consistent with the original Latin. I don’t mean to imply colloquial versions of this phrase that might refer to one’s patience at a point of sale, as in “hold out for the highest bidder.” Although, at the same time, the modern phrase resembles the idea of sustaining an activity that might otherwise be resolved.

Borges argues regarding the novel, certain metaphors of adventure and home are unlimited in their ability to allow us opportunities to understand ourselves:

It might be said that for many centuries those three stories – the tale of Troy, the tale of Ulysses, and the tale of Jesus – have been sufficient for mankind. People have been telling and retelling them over and over again; they have been set to music; they have been painted. People have told them many times over, yet the stories are still there, illimitable.²⁷⁵

Language, in the form of metaphor as well as the extended form of the story or epic opens a space for thinking where one might encounter one's freedom if the conditions for an aesthetic judgment are right. Kant executes the third *Critique* through rhetorical devices that not only clarify the text but also perform so as to bring imagination to the surface. The *Critique* places a demand on the reader and, thereby, draws imagination to the fore through speech.²⁷⁶

As I have explicated, intellectual and empirical interests reveal to us authentic and inauthentic links to morality respectively. But, because interest regards the dialogue on beauty, we must remind ourselves that beauty signifies an enlarged feeling of humanity that includes the natural world as an aspect of the moral realm. In other words, in the moment of reflection we encounter our freedom while cogitating on nature: we draw together the discrete elements of subjectivity. We could not encounter the relation between beauty and morality if such reflection consisted in a response to human invention, artwork or other subjective constructs. The authentic encounter with the subject, the negative *Darstellung*, allows the subject to see itself and her/his freedom.

Intellectual interest, a direct interest, may be our only *direct* relationship to beauty. All other relationships are mediated by symbols, examples and traces that gesture toward the “essences” of existences (our own and others.) Such essences might be our freedom, our rational

²⁷⁵ Borges, *This Craft of Verse*, 47.

²⁷⁶ By this means the *Critique* becomes performative.

exercises. Shimmering on the surface of nature we conjecture at what lies beneath and, from moment to moment, enjoy the pleasure and contemplation brought by the lighted surface and the connections it promises as we set to work joining the aggregate of appearance to ideas.

Meanwhile, an encounter with form may prove to be an encounter with the authentic form of the subject (rather than form in nature), the form of freedom.

CHAPTER VII

POETIC LANGUAGE: GIVING LIFE TO CONCEPTS

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told

That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;

Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

John Keats
On first looking into Chapman's Homer

Keats' poem provides us with a curious example of the inspiration drawn from the poet. Chapman and Homer expand the poet's possibilities. According to Keats, Chapman (rather literally) breathes life into Homer's work. In turn, Keats writes his first distinguished poem, *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*, a poem will also live beyond its author. As a result, Keats 'felt like a watcher of the skies / When a new planet swims into his ken.' Kant explains: "through these figures the artist's spirit gives corporeal expression to what and how he has thought, and makes the thing itself speak, as it were by mime."²⁷⁷ Indeed, as Homer speaks to Chapman, Keats may speak to us. Moreover, Keats' sensibility as a 'watcher of the skies with a new planet' exhibits the expanding features of intellectual interest.

²⁷⁷ Kant, *CJ*, 191.

While intellectual interest may play a role in drawing us out – drawing us out and beyond our disinterested moments, our moments of genius and beauty – Kant’s depiction of intellectual interest depends on the metaphor of the innkeeper as a vehicle to convey what happens when judgments arise through deceit. Kant never presents to us a strategic explanation of language or language use in relation to the faculties or the *Critiques*. In the Aesthetic, however, he does explain poetry. Is it possible to examine Kant’s view of poetry to shed light on aesthetic judgments and the use of metaphor in Kant’s final critique? Further, if we examine his account of poetry, will this shed light on his dependence, not only in this section but in others, on figures to map the landscape of reflective judgment?

Before exploring Kant’s writing on poetry, however, let us step back to gather a general perspective regarding language-use and the reflective activity of aesthetic judgment. The first *Critique* exploits the language of determinative judgment: the judgment of understanding that abides by concepts, judgment that determines experience according to these concepts. The third *Critique*, however, abides by the language of reflective judgment. How do these languages differ? The first *Critique* avoids examples, but uses them as a necessary evil to communicate with a larger audience. The third *Critique* frequently depends on concrete examples and narratives to illustrate the material of reflection. A language inappropriate for the first *Critique*, somehow, becomes appropriate for the third *Critique*. As the glue or medium of understanding and practical reason, aesthetic judgment concerns reason’s eclipse and imagination’s crescendo as the force that binds together our experience or perceptions. As a result, our account of such activity must be riddled with imaginative examples, rather than deterministically presented in the language of understanding. Let us first examine Kant’s presentation of language in the Aesthetic in order to more specifically determine *what* goes on in the third *Critique* and, only then look at

the significance of poetry to reflective thinking. Afterwards, we might be able to determine how these conversations may shed light on the innkeeper metaphor in Kant's section on intellectual interest.

After Kant describes intellectual interest, he moves on to a general description of fine art and follows this description with a detailed account of genius (Sections 46-50). In a rather romantic manner, just as in the case where Kant described judgment as an authentic encounter with the value of an existence, free of any interests, Kant expects that artwork of genius has *Geist*. Kant describes *Geist* as the "animating principle in the mind."²⁷⁸ Such *Geist*, further, provides cognition with "purposive momentum", otherwise known as the play of the faculties in reflective judgment. What draws reflection into the realm of metaphor and poetry is precisely the fact that poetry (a formal metaphoric practice) studies aesthetic ideas. Aesthetic ideas, further, found healthy intellectual interest by providing material to be thought that has no easy or quick resolution and, on the contrary, beckons one into the play of the faculties. More specifically, Kant defines the aesthetic idea in the following paragraph:

I maintain this principle is nothing but the ability to exhibit aesthetic ideas: and by an aesthetic idea I mean a presentation of the imagination that prompts much thought, but to which no determinate thought whatsoever, i.e., no determinate *concept*, can be adequate, so that no language can express it completely and allow us to grasp it. It is easy to see that an aesthetic idea is the counterpart (pendant) of a *rational idea* that is, conversely, a concept to which no intuition (presentation of the imagination) can be adequate.²⁷⁹

In this statement, Kant comes close to admitting that the language of aesthetics cannot be a language that utilizes determinate concepts. How does the language that demonstrates an aesthetics be bound to aesthetic ideas as a language that can never "express it completely and allow us to grasp it?"

²⁷⁸ Kant, *CJ*, 182.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

This is not the first time we have encountered the question of language. Even early, in the description of the fourth moment, in an attempt to delineate the causality of aesthetic experience, Kant realized that aesthetic judgment is “exemplary” and “regarded as an example of a universal rule that *we are unable to state*.”²⁸⁰ Aesthetic judgment, therefore, induces the rational, determinate mind to speechlessness. We are unable to state its rules, we are bound to example, and, when deceived, we are at a loss to make any judgment at all. Speechlessness may be a more natural condition, however, when we acknowledge that it is only genius that connects “letters with spirit” and that dexterity with language reflects mastery of aesthetic ideas.

Genius plays a large role in this discourse, however, as *the moment* of the exemplary within the human imagination. To this extent, examples come to be linked not merely with a particular style of Kant’s writing peculiar to his late work but as the demonstrative force of the imagination during reflection. As such, the artist works through example and nature works through the artist – without necessarily comprehending the thread of theory or coherency required of her work. Each work presents a step toward creating a new language for whatever the genius may be addressing or for the human spirit (*Geist*) in general.

The failure of literal language hovers at the edges of these discussions. Kant notes, “mere descriptions could not accomplish this (especially not in the area of the arts of speech)”²⁸¹ acknowledging the impossibility of full linguistic translation/representation of the successful aesthetic ideas. Does this mean that aesthetic ideas are unspeakable, unless their medium is a language as in poetry? It appears so. Therefore, while we can talk about the function of the aesthetic idea as a concept, we cannot verbally identify a particular aesthetic idea by direct reference but must rely on other methods. Therefore, a discursive example of an aesthetic idea

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 85.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 178.

fails insofar as it presumes no difficulty or obstacle in representing its object. A discursive example would still be stating the aesthetic idea. This suggests that there are two kinds of examples: discursive and figurative, suggesting that figurative examples succeed where discursive examples fail to capture the aesthetic idea encountered by the subject. These figures appear in Kant's text. Navigation, architecture and play are figurative notions essential to the critical project. I have left a detailed inventory and analysis of these figures for another time. However, Willi Goetschel recognizes the role these figures play and provides an invaluable analysis of Kant's writing in his work, *Constituting Critique*. After a lengthy examination of the metaphors in Kant's work, Goetschel concludes:

By connecting the concept of a system with the architectonic, and by equipping this connection with a metaphor that provides it with a richly geographical and cosmological background, Kant explodes the traditional concept of a system. In its place, he presents an expanded concept that describes the very dynamics of systemization in general.²⁸²

Goetschel's conclusion reflects the expanded thinking characteristic of intellectual interest based on aesthetic judgments. Thus, even though the *Critique of Judgment* provides an analysis of reflective judgment, we can see the necessity of reflective work in Kant's representations of cognition.

We often encounter Kant's own speechlessness in the face of the aesthetic moment in terms of the examples he chooses. From the outset, the first discussion of disinterest invokes several examples concerning a palace, an Iroquois sachem, a Parisian eating-house and a comfortable island hut.²⁸³ At this point, he is appealing to presentations of beauty and must invoke vivid, sample presentations. He must play with vivid re-presentations and use these re-presentations in order to delve into the question of pleasure associated with beauty and pure judgments of taste. It is, therefore, a study in discerning the affect of presentations on and within

²⁸² Goetschel, *Constituting Critique*, 138.

the subject rather, as in the first *Critique*, a study of how any possible presentation must be constructed by our faculty of understanding. As the text unfolds, however, Kant's dependence on examples like the innkeeper indicate that aesthetic experience cannot be presented discursively (through argumentation). While discursive examples or explanations refer to the language philosophy uses to make Kantian determinative judgments (such as claims about the categories of judgment or understanding), discursive argumentation remains a specific kind of representation that presumes representational transparency and unburdened with the allusions and implied or ambiguous references. This mode representation often denies the problem of representation as an issue impacting its practice. In other words, discursive argumentation explicitly avoids questions of representation as part of the discourse. Indeed, discursive presentation, while often attempting to clarify terms, does not distinguish the use of language from its performative potentialities.

While explaining aesthetic ideas, Kant's turn to examples have the added impact of provoking aesthetic judgments from the reader. When given an example, the reader is left to imagine how the example provides a rule for, say, disinterest. This imagining engages reflective judgment. Hence, the analysis of reflection demands the practice of aesthetic judgment in order to provide some account of pure aesthetic judgment based on aesthetic ideas. Further, an attempt to merely describe the events that require aesthetic judgment would fail to capture their most characteristic element: the indeterminacy of a language that coherently unfolds through exemplary events that provide the subject with aesthetic experiences. In Kant's language, the rule or concept presented by a body of works is only "abstracted from the product"²⁸⁴ and is not

²⁸³ Kant, *CJ*, 45-46.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

neatly presented by the genius for the viewer as one might write a report or verbally relay a non-aesthetic idea.

Thus, when Kant explains that “it is actually in the art of poetry that the power [i.e., faculty] of aesthetic ideas can manifest itself to full extent,”²⁸⁵ we already have the sense that manifesting aesthetic ideas in words is, perhaps, a difficult manner of expression precisely because words and letters lend themselves more often to determinative, misleadingly transparent statements. Aesthetic ideas, just as in the moment of contemplation in intellectual interest, are rich beyond translation; these ideas contain more than can be presented determinatively. These ideas, further, “expands the concept itself [whatever concept may be addressed in the work] in an unlimited way, then the imagination is creative in [all of] this and set the power of intellectual ideas in motion.”²⁸⁶

For the viewer/listener/reader, what is the link between the work of art and the moment that one’s concepts are expanded by a mere presentation? Does this suggest, further, that our presentations are equally powerful as the underlying manifold that organizes them? For example, rather than the series of cognitive moments providing the possibility for cognition and the presentation of experience, what if the presentation of experience has an effect so as to turn back and expand, change and affect cognition itself? While, according to Kant, such presentations of cognition are given by the rational mind, an aesthetic imagination might intercede to allow the presentation to have a decisive influence on what is to be thought and the boundaries and possibilities for conceptualized thought.²⁸⁷ Aesthetic judgment expands the horizon of our possible conceptions as a consequence of imagination through intellectual interest and provoking, figurative language.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 183.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

To return to intellectual interest: the very point I am targeting regards the moment when the “power of intellectual ideas is set into motion.” While aesthetic judgment forces us to heed the concrete beauties of experience (even concrete experience itself), perhaps precisely because our cognition fails to pin them down to conceptual anchors, intellectual interest both draws us toward the curiosity of aesthetic ideas as well as pursuing imaginative outcomes, when a concept does not emerge for us. An intellectual interest allows us to exploit the experience of judgment and keeps our attention, even after we realize the futility in *determining* either the event that has happened or the particular language an artist may be speaking through another medium. We continue to contemplate a presentation that offers no immediate clarity or specified information, but offers some certainty, because of an interest or a liking understood as a pleasure.²⁸⁸ Could it be that one aspect of the pleasure of aesthetic judgment is precisely the intellectual interest about which we have been talking?

We respond with pleasure to the aesthetic judgment while, at the same time, pleasure draws us though an experience of cognitive dissonance or perplexity. This pleasure, however, perpetuates our desire or interest, not for the object per say, but for the presentation of the object. As a result, we are intellectually interested, we take pleasure in our own presentations: both as we present something beautiful as observers as well as how we craft presentations as artists. Certainly, this would be considered a ‘higher pleasure,’ insofar as it is not legislated primarily by empirical interests, desires or needs. The desire associated with pleasure, in the case of aesthetic judgment and taste, may be an intellectual interest in (or complex attachment to) the cognitive

²⁸⁷ See Heidegger’s essay “What is thinking?” in *Basic Writings*.

²⁸⁸ Note Lewis Hyde’s experience of John Cage: “I first heard Cage himself in 1989 when he gave Harvard’s Norton Lectures, offering a collage of text fragments – drawn from Thoreau, Emerson, *The Wall Street Journal*, older lectures of his own – assembled and ordered through a series of chance operations. I found the lectures somewhat amusing but mostly boring; I walked out of the first one before it was over. But then a funny thing happened. I couldn’t get the experience out of my head; the readings had cocked my ear, as it were, so that situation after situation recalled them to me,” 144.

phenomenon of the human subject: in the mere possibility of presenting and the ability to craft such presentations and take pleasure in such presentations, presentations that include morality, freedom, and nature as well as beauty.

While poetry highlights the cognitive activity at work in aesthetic judgment, we cannot assume that poetic language will always suffice to capture our aesthetic subjectivity. Indeed, our appeal to poetry is, in part, a response to speechlessness in the face of beauty. To explain the broad voluptuousness of aesthetic experience, Kant depends on appealing to a speechlessness that accompanies the experience of spirit, life-feeling and encounter with authentic existences. He says, “these presentations arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words.”²⁸⁹ As I have noted earlier, in distinguishing discursive and figurative thinking, the failure to articulate aesthetic judgment *without* metaphor or example demands reflection. As a result, appeal to example and metaphor further justifies the theory on its own terms, rather than undermining the theory with popular language.

As Kant mentions in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, “examples are the go-cart of the imagination.” In the same Introduction, however, Kant acknowledges that examples and popular language are required to make his work accessible to a larger audience. By the time of the third *Critique* examples and metaphors can no longer be regarded as simply tools for the understanding, but artful leaps, drawing imagination into dialogue with the understanding so as to extend understanding beyond its self-imposed limits.

Such is the case, I would claim, with the architectonic of the first *Critique*. Two primary metaphors dominate Kant’s text on understanding: navigational and architectural. These metaphors allow Kant to draw his thought beyond its natural limits: at moments when rational ideas fail to emerge analytically, their spirit is held forth by means of figurative language. As a

result, Kant's imaginative forces are drawn through even the long and analysis of understanding with the help of poetic language and devices.²⁹⁰

This interpretation of aesthetic judgment coheres with Kant's depiction of poetry. We can see the authority of language in the manner in which Kant divides the arts. He chooses an analogy to language to discern the different arts. He does this, admittedly, 'as a possible division and not a theory.'²⁹¹ At the same time, Kant identifies speech as the manner in which people "communicate with one another as perfectly as possible."²⁹² The tri-partite division of the arts (visual, speech, play of sensation) is based in language and succeeds in revealing to us the modes in which we understand our aesthetic thinking and products.

Communicating with one another 'as perfectly as possible' should not be construed as a claim that we *do* communicate perfectly. Rather, threaded with gestures, assumptions, indirections, our communication often fails to relay precisely what we intend, are thinking or hope to convey. At this point, we cannot assume how Kant might play out the intentional structure of language. The structure of language comes to the surface in the discourse on aesthetics and that, perhaps, our essential relation to language remains aesthetic: we move from word to meaning first through a reflection, rather than determination. Only after comprehending the multiplicity of possibilities in language, could it be possible to seek determination and the sophisticated grouping or structure of a concept through language. That is, some movement toward abstraction must first take place before one is able to make the conceptual movements: taking an abstraction and applying it to concrete objects (and/or presentations).

²⁸⁹ Kant, *CJ*, 183.

²⁹⁰ See Goetschel's *Constituting Critique* for specific readings of the first *Critique* and the art of this earlier work.

²⁹¹ Kant, *CJ*, 190.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 189.

Thus, reflection might be conceived not only as a moment at the heart of the possibility of thought itself, but a moment at the heart of the possibility of using language effectively. We strive toward perfection in language and communication, only insofar as we might reflect, to expand on the possibilities of our conceptions and to expand our “languages” to include forms such as sculpture, painting, music, architecture and landscape gardening, in order to expand our abilities to more perfectly present or re/present what lies before us.

Although Kant is open to other divisions of the arts, he rejects a division based on intentionality or express-ability of thoughts and intuitions. Art would then be divided into works dealing with form and sensation. Kant decides that this division is “too abstract.” He is right to make this judgment, for a division according to thought and intuition only proceeds along conceptual lines: mapping out a representational structure by means of the categories of the understanding. Art objects, however, are more dynamic: they enact cognitive fruitfulness as well as acting upon our thought itself. Forced by an external presentation (whether that of nature or art), our internal, cognitive workings are compelled to move in directions that could not be formulated beforehand. In other words, we cannot formulate an aesthetic experience by planning an encounter with beauty.²⁹³ The experience of beauty happens *to us* not because we will it to be so but because a series of conditions are satisfied *despite* our intentions or will. The representational structure Kant has been describing in the Aesthetic dynamically responds to the world (or a presentation of the world) by telling us something about ourselves (both intellectually and morally) and draws us into further relation to the world as we think through our experience of the beautiful, as we seek other pleasures of beauty and as our relationship to others is revealed (through the lesson in communicability and common sense).

²⁹³ Or, according to Lyotard, we cannot anticipate the spasm or prescribe a constant meaning for “this is art.”

Why then, does speech satisfy Kant as a method of dividing the arts? Speech more exactly reflects the dynamism of aesthetic judgment: composed of word, gesture and tone, speech comes from the world, responds to the world, and returns to another. An utterance, even when fully planned (as in a speech), contains a degree of spontaneity: one doesn't always know the tone and gesture contained in one's words. One cannot always predict the response of the audience or listener. One cannot predict one's own response to the audience/listener's response. Utterance as well as listening contains a risk: we enter into a dynamic relationship that may change us, alter our ideas, create in ourselves a self-realization, allowing us to make discoveries about ourselves and others. Language as speaking carries risks as well as the potential for beauty: a discovery of harmony of faculties. Accordingly, beauty might be discovered in simple and intimate dialogues that bring with them contemplative revelation.

The poet, however, assists us in conceptualizing “invisible beings, the realm of the blessed, the realm of hell, eternity, creation and so on.”²⁹⁴ Reason (as understanding) is not far behind and will attempt to provide “completeness” to these invisible beings that are significant yet “beyond experience.” As a work of art, however, poetry must not be too studied but provide intellectual stimulus “without looking for some other purpose.”²⁹⁵ As intellectual interest demonstrates how aesthetic judgment might provide ‘food for understanding,’ to further our thinking, to encourage new or renewed conceptualizing, so, too poetry “announces a mere play with ideas; but accomplishes something worthy of a task, for in playing he provides food for the understanding and gives life to its concept by means of his imagination.”²⁹⁶ As a result, the poet gives life to the concepts of the understanding.

²⁹⁴ Kant, *CJ*, 183.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 190.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 191.

Unfortunately, Kant goes no farther in depicting the mechanisms by which the poet “gives life” to concepts and what it means to “give life.” From our knowledge of genius, we may suppose that the poet not only “gives life” to concept but gives “spirit” to concepts.²⁹⁷ As such, poetry would “animate” or provide an “animating principle” to the concepts of the understanding. Kant implies that concepts of the understanding require an animating principle, which “link[s] the exhibition of a concept with a wealth of thought.”²⁹⁸ Apparently, poetry can animate concepts so as to bring them into discourse with both the world and concrete experience or particulars (which is their essential function), as well as bring the concepts into discourse with other concepts. The latter may be drawn from the ‘play of ideas’ taking place in a poem, drawing together concepts that are not necessarily related in our already structured conceptual determinations. A poem sometimes provides a symbol for an idea allowing us to extend and push this idea into new direction, new relations, as well as revealing the limits of the idea: where it cannot be pushed or applied.²⁹⁹ Similarly, Kant’s appeal to architecture and navigation (even orientation) aid him in extending his conception of the understanding in the first *Critique*.

Although Kant does not detail how concepts are “given life” in poetry, he does proclaim its superiority to other arts. The following passage may be the best description provided to delimit the relation between poetry and the life of the mind.

Among all arts poetry holds the highest rank... It expands the mind: for it sets the imagination free, and offers us, from among the unlimited variety of possible forms that harmonize with a given concept, though within that concept’s limits, that form which links the exhibition of the concept with a wealth of thought to which no linguistic expression is completely adequate, and so poetry rises aesthetically to ideas. Poetry fortifies the mind: for it lets the mind feel its ability – free, spontaneous, and independent of natural determination – to contemplate and judge phenomenal nature as having aspects

²⁹⁷ The relation between concept and spirit noted here foreshadows Hegel.

²⁹⁸ Kant, *CJ*, 196.

²⁹⁹ Humor emerges out of pushing concepts into other environments. Kant acknowledges that laughter may be involved in the aesthetic. He says “Laughter is an affect that arises if a tense expectation is transformed into nothing,” Kant, *CJ*, 203.

that nature does not on its own offer in experience either to sense or understanding, and hence poetry lets the mind feel its ability to use nature of behalf of and, as it were, as a schema of the supersensible. Poetry plays with illusion, which it produces at will, and yet without using illusion to deceive us, for poetry tells us itself that its pursuit is mere play, though this play can still be used purposively by the understanding for its own business.³⁰⁰

Poetry includes the speechlessness mentioned earlier: in ‘expanding the mind’ we encounter an intellectual ‘voluptuousness’ “to which no linguistic expression is completely adequate.”

Ironically, an experience of good poetry coincides with an experience of the limits of linguistic expression. Somehow, poetry hovers on the boundary that utilizes linguistic expression in order to heed and demonstrate the limits of linguistic expression. At these borderlands, imagination takes over, stimulated by a particular exhibition, to find a variety of possible relationships, ideas exhibitions or associated concepts, otherwise known as a ‘wealth of thought’. More important to thought, however, is the manner in which we link nature (or understanding as concerned with the concept of nature) and nature’s wealth to what is not already apparent in nature’s phenomenal appearances. Really, the impulse to poetry appears to coincide deeply with the impulse to science, insofar as science unfolds the intricacies behind nature’s appearances and insofar as poetry provides a glimpse of the schema of the supersensible.

In this dialogue concerning poetry, we find ourselves at the heart of the distinction between what appears in nature or as nature and what can be determined about nature, for example, through science. In other words, we are at the interstices of appearance and its underlying phenomena. We discern aspects of nature not obvious to us through pure or practical reason. As a result, we experience nature as a ‘schema of the supersensible’. In layman’s terms, we experience nature as having some framework beyond our senses yet grounding our senses. This is not a framework than can yet be determined as the Transcendental Aesthetic of Space and

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 196-7.

Time. This framework ‘rises to aesthetic ideas’ rather than mapping the precise ground for the possibility both of appearances as well as the possibility of the supersensible (as in the first *Critique*). After all, we are only ‘feeling the ability to use nature’ rather than feeling or recognizing the schema for the supersensible substrate itself. This feeling enlightens us to cultivate the faculties of the understanding once we recognize moments of potency given through aesthetic experiences such as poetry. In other words, the cultivation of our aesthetic sensibility trains and renders potent one’s other abilities: not only one’s imaginative efficacy but the efficacy of one’s understanding and practical reason. Consider the Greek notion of potential or potency as a *dunamos*, as a power held within ready to be actualized. Aesthetic thinking tunes in to the *dunamos* of human cognition. The benefit of realizing one’s intellectual *dunamos* allows one to draw together the separate realms of human cognition in order to see how each area of knowledge might shed light on the other. *Dunamos* may refer not only to the potential contained within our faculties realized within aesthetic judgment, but the *dynamic* relations of tripartite cognition. The relation between imagination, understanding and reason requires an essentially dynamic play whose products we cannot direct or fully predict. Nor can we directly predict the effect that such products – sculpture, music, and poetry – may have upon these faculties.³⁰¹

In poetry, moreover, we also find a dimension of illusion (as we found in intellectual interest). Thus, the creation of aesthetic visual or linguistic languages incorporates a manipulation of appearance or bald presentation. In so doing, the arts again highlight the series of presentations required for us to make sense of the world: both intuitively and idealistically. On occasion, art manipulates our presentations and capacity for presentation by creating

³⁰¹ As a result, the freedom inherent in a culture is built in by the arts. The arts become the site for interpretation that allows citizens to enact their freedom of thought by assessing both the pleasure and intellectual significance of works of art. The space created in a polity that gives one time to encounter the arts, that give one the opportunity to freedom would, even on Kant’s terms I believe, suggest an inherent intellectual health.

seamless illusions. We observed this in the case of the lover of nature as well as the guests at the inn. The lover of nature found a fake bird to be real while the guests at the inn found the bird's song to be natural instead of the crafty sounds of a young boy. Hence, an ethical dimension emerges in any decision made to use the power of appearances in the interest of politics or self-promotion. The ethical significance of Kant's Aesthetic is no longer limited to the universal communicability based on a common sense that ground politics and should foster political progress.

As a result, Kant critiques oratory as a mode of exploiting language to persuade citizens toward a certain point of view. He explains "for it is not enough that we do what is right, but we must also perform it solely on the ground that it is right." In other words, oratorical persuasion should not be the basis upon which I decide my own action. I decide my own action as a consequence of my own moral grounding. However, the element of illusion contained in oratory suggests that any art can be dangerous. The illusion in a well-executed speech concerns not simply the beneficial aspects of what is being discussed, but such speeches convince the listener that such beliefs are well-grounded and should be adopted. Technically, these speeches may create an illusion of a supersensible substrate, an inviting illusion to settle our antinomic queries regarding the big questions: is there a beginning and bounded space to the world?; are composite substances simple parts or are there no simple parts?; is there a causality through freedom or do the laws of nature reign?; and, finally, is there an absolutely necessary being or not?³⁰²

We have returned to Kant's abiding worry about fanaticism and his counseling Jacobi to be wary of dogmatism and heed the compass of reason. The compass of reason, we can now see, utilizes aesthetic thinking even while it can be endangered by the reflective potency of artful expression. More simply, the listener needs to ground his/her own beliefs on his/her own

rational thought and convictions. Aesthetic experience and thinking can help this person by presenting to them their moral vocation, a vocation produced by self-discovery and not, as it would seem, through the presentation to one, of one's duties, by another. Tricky territory, the listener must be able to make the distinction between the genuine appearance of one's moral vocation through aesthetic experience and the appearance of moral vocation as legislated by another through the work of art. Moreover, before one has *had* aesthetic experience, according to these statements, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to make a distinction between what one "should do" and what one "ought to do." For example, I can know through others what I should do; only I can determine what I ought to do and what, according to my own moral vocation, is my proper duty. Ethical action depends on the distinction between these two compartments: a distinction brought to the surface of our experience only through the personal (yet universal) aesthetic revelation of moral vocation or the rational application of reason. Indeed, this is precisely the distinction between autonomy and heteronomy outlined in the second *Critique*.³⁰² Pure judgments of taste assist in grounding ethical judgments thereafter, especially ethical judgments impacted or influenced by appearances that exploit powerful tools of persuasion.³⁰⁴

Poetry has brought us to the heart of several important elements of Kant's thought. In respect to nature, we considered how the poetic gives life to concepts and works the understanding. In respect to illusion, oratory regards an exploitation of the fallibility of practical reason. Kant explains: "this art can...be made reprehensible by the fact that [by dealing with

³⁰² Kant, *CPuR*, A426/B454-A461/B489.

³⁰³ Kant, *CPrR*, 33.

³⁰⁴ See Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, depicting Eichmann's perception that he was following a Kantian imperative by obeying the instructions of his superiors. Perhaps with more developed aesthetic sense, Eichmann would have been able to distinguish between orders for the sake of morality and orders contradicting ethical norms consistent with the principle of human freedom.

issues] in this way [it] corrupts the maxims and attitudes of the subjects, even if objectively the action [they are persuaded to perform] is lawful.”³⁰⁵ Poetry, however, transcends the dastardly aspects of oration: “In poetry everything proceeds with honesty and sincerity.”³⁰⁶ Not surprisingly, Kant does not explore what he means by honesty and sincerity, how it is to be achieved through poetry, and why poetry becomes the ‘sincere and honest’ art. Music and visual art, in the passages that follow, do not threaten the subject as oratory does. As a result, music and visual art do not give rise to an antidotal art form like poetry. Does poetry play a role in cultivating sincerity and honesty as well as providing an appearance without manipulation? Should poetry be the medium that conveys authentic aesthetic experience so as to ground one’s judgment in early experiences of one’s moral vocation? Kant will never answer these questions for us.

From what we know, poetry may be more sincere and honest precisely because the resulting determinations of the flurry of ideas presented in the poem can be left to the reader or audience without the harm of misunderstanding or error. Whereas oratory has determined the conclusions of its persuasive argumentation, poetry opens thought to the world. Presumably, a “reading” of the world through subsequent ideas and/or concepts cannot be legislated through the poem but only through the extended contemplation of the listener. Thus, as one generates a response to the poem (and a response to the play of ideas contained within the poem), one generates a response to these ideas surfacing in the world by means of the poem. At the same time, a poem might also work as an oration: advocating the poet’s political affiliations rather than presenting an unfiltered play of ideas. In these cases, the reader may be vulnerable to the same trickery executed in oration. However, as in the case with the ‘lover of nature’, a poem

³⁰⁵ Kant, *CJ*, 197.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

that begins in political interest may still arouse one's pleasure in beauty, as long as the reader remains ignorant of this political interest or duplicitous origin. To add to the scenario of the lover of nature, the reader of poetry may take the play of language in a variety of directions, simply because the poet cannot legislate the conclusive impact of the poem as long as the poem exhibits an aesthetic idea. More specifically, the poem maintains an interest and instrumental value only as it strives toward play and seeks non-instrumental thinking, cultivating an attachment-without-attachment and thereby a disinterested engagement.

The aesthetic experience outlined by poetry draws us into the seams or boundaries of thinking, reflecting and critique. Presumably, critique cannot be executed without some firm grounding from which to assess a series of statements or claims about the world. The critic might make sense of a work of art, tying its indeterminate elements and visual/poetic/musical language into some conceptual attire. With regard to oration, the audience must execute critical assessment to liberate them from possible trickery. From what ground, however, can one find one's critical footing? The exercise required of poetry – aesthetic judgment – may cultivate a world-view that allows for the critique of presentation and appearance so as to prevent trickery and its possible disorientation.

The “wealth of thought” or voluptuousness so often described as the consequence of aesthetic judgment suggests that a play of ideas creates multiple possible determinations. The fluency with which imagination translates experience (or appearance) into multiplicity creates surprise and pleasure. At the same time, were we creatures without such imaginative resources, our thinking might remain unfree: rendering an experience organized by the rules of understanding, by concepts determining experience unable to be overturned or surprised by new developments. While our freedom might be rendered in (irrational) action, our conceptual

finesse and exactitude would not leave space for imaginative developments. Yet we are creatures who flourish through our imaginative adventures. And as Kant has implied in his discussion of poetry, our imagination may be that power of giving “life to concepts of the understanding.”

Imagination draws concepts into dialogue with other concepts and ideas. At the same time, we may bring concepts into dialogue with those elements that appear completely other: for example, drawing space and time in relation to thought. Often a difficult leap for students of Kant, thinking time and space, not as external traits of the world but as internal constructs that ground the possibility of coherent experience, is unimaginable: beyond any ideas they ever considered for thinking about the coherency of world. Yet, once grasped the “invisible” presence of space and time present compelling arguments for the foundations of experience. Heidegger will provide another example by exploring time in relation to thinking and being. A thought forgotten in Western philosophy, Heidegger reclaims the validity of this connection and attempts to demonstrate how it is not only a presentation of imagination (that these connections be made) but that the very (forgotten) being that grounds human existence may be conceptually demonstrated. In other words, in Heidegger’s work something absent is made present – exactly the action of the imagination. As Heidegger draws *Being and Time* into the present, as he represents these ideas, he draws his aesthetic sensibilities into conceptual determinations.³⁰⁷ Of course, for critical readers, Heidegger’s work fails to draw his aesthetic reflection into accessible and appropriate conceptual determinations.

³⁰⁷ I might have chosen any thinker. However, there are many post-Kantian scholars who could have sufficed: who imagine and idea and the multiple possibilities of a particular idea and then move it into a discrete representable theory.

As imagination draws unlikely connections – connecting as it happens pure reason and practical reason in aesthetics – we begin to exercise our critical capacities. Critique is made possible in the space left open for judgment in reflection. As in the case of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, questioning is possible as one realizes that some element is missing, something is absent from thought until the present. In Kant’s case, the structure of reason has been wholly neglected. Only in the space left open, allowing for the presentation of what is absent, allowing for the presentation of a fundamental question leading toward a renewed linking together of familiar concepts or ideas from a play of ideas do we gain a new footing. This new footing allows us to strategically question what is put before us to be thought or acted upon. For example, a particular authentic individual footing is required in order to see through the orator.³⁰⁸ Similarly, a particular footing, gained through the aesthetic practice of moving from particular to general as the ‘rising toward aesthetic ideas,’ allows one to reassess the horizon according to this new or renewed perspective. This footing, essential both for the moral and intellectual efficacy of the subject, is first generated by one’s authentic encounter with oneself and the world (in an aesthetic judgment). Only by determining one’s own position in the world, can one turn to assess and critically evaluate other claims about the world. As has come to light in this chapter, one’s aesthetic positioning will either reveal one’s moral vocation and assist in ethical positioning, or will reveal the need for a positioning in attempting to respond to aesthetic presentations crafted to deceptively determine the listener’s positioning. Because the practice of poetry utilizes the productive ambiguity of language, it leaves a reading open for the audience, requiring one to move from aesthetic pleasure and feeling, toward individual determination of existence. The pleasure in the perplexities of aesthetic experience is a version of intellectual interest that can tolerate ambiguity and, in fact, loves ambiguity for the possibilities it presents for the individual

³⁰⁸ See Plato’s dialogue, *Lysis*, on the difference between oratory and poetry.

intellect and individual action. Critique, therefore, requires both multiplicity of possibility, in order to liberate one from conventional structures and determinations, as well as self-determination. Active thinking and determination eclipse our speechlessness in the wonder of possibility. Further, this active thinking is not necessarily (or already) the work of the understanding but the work of the imagination as it draws together (as yet) unrelated aspects of our existence. The imagination might first present a schema to be filled in by later determinations. Finally, we can understand that when we come to glimpse the wealth of thought in aesthetic judgment, we don't just glimpse multiple possibilities, but we also glimpse the grand structures of multiple logical comprehensions of the world as they may play out with the help of our other faculties (understanding and practical reason).

Once we have engaged in such play, moving this play toward a resolution in creating our own ideas about the world, we begin to present and represent what has been brought to us through aesthetic judgment. Does it matter that aesthetic objects might be brought to us through deception? Aesthetic objects may be intentionally legislated at their origin: a fake bird, a fake birdsong, and a persuasive speech. Prior to developing a critical stance, we are likely to be hoodwinked by such trickery. However, as we develop our own footing, we develop a grounding from which we might question the persuasive speech, for example. At the same time, to consider the individual grounding as singular and unquestionable, as a manner to interpret the critical eye developed through poetry, would be a mistake. Our grounding, more like the agitation experienced through changing yet relational tones in music, remains in play. We are constantly reassessing our own positions based on our more recent experiences and judgments. We are constantly in need of aesthetic judgment to remind us of our moral efficacy, what it means to realize a moral vocation, and the potency of our intellect. As a result, our ground is

constantly shifting and we must dance between realizing imaginative ideas that demonstrate important conceptual clarity and certainty and choosing between a new, refreshed version of our views, by bringing into the present a new but still only imagined relation. Poetry, an “honest and sincere” art, enables us to “give concepts life” and exploits the duplicity of language to train aesthetic judgment and to temporarily ground the subject in reflection.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION: THE TRICK

This conclusion returns to the discussion of Section 42, picking up on the themes reviewed in the chapter on *Interest*. Specifically, while we have examined empirical interest and the specific details of intellectual interest, we have not yet reviewed Kant's innkeeper example. The innkeeper example has implications for aesthetic judgment and, as a result, poetry, representation and freedom. As a reminder, intellectual interest identifies an orienting force within the subject, a force that engages in the poetic and allows for a sighting of freedom. Further, if our grounding is dynamic, the force of intellectual interest provides directionality and coherence to a thinking-in-motion. Beauty, however, may be disorienting. A revealed deception may result in a fatal disorientation that prevents any form of interest. In these terms, disorientation is a kind of disenchantment, insofar as one becomes disconnected from the *sensus communis* or universal subjectivity, one can no longer encounter voluptuousness in thinking or discover interests.

The questioning openness required in aesthetic receptivity appears to include a fatal vulnerability, vulnerability toward disorientation or disenchantment. Kant's innkeeper example, which closes Section 42, explains a loss of interest. The qualifier is essential: we must *believe* that the form we are contemplating is provided by nature. To foreshadow Kant's teleology, such judgments and interests require faith in the natural world. Faith in the natural world, i.e., faith that goings-on of nature unfold in some systematic "language,"³⁰⁹ whether aesthetic or scientific,

³⁰⁹ This is a systematic language accessible to us through reason in science and through the senses in beauty,

also requires intellectual interest or focused curiosity that the natural world might yield some result.³¹⁰

Since the language of charms, the thought of nature and the cipher through which nature speaks provoke our curiosity, it is not surprising that we might be duped, when a trickster takes advantage of our naïve reflections:

And yet we have some cases where some jovial innkeeper, unable to find such a songster, played a trick – received with the greatest satisfaction [initially] – on the guests staying at his inn to enjoy the country air, by hiding in a bush some roguish youngster who (with a reed or rush in his mouth) knew how to copy that song in a way very similar to nature's. But as soon as one realizes that it was all a deception, no one will long endure listening to this song.³¹¹

Kant had earlier noted that art might imitate nature so deceptively that our judge may not notice. Only in such cases may we attach a liking on the order of intellectual interest to a work of art rather than a natural beauty. In all other cases, the work of art is accompanied by a purpose that interrupts our ability to either have a genuine aesthetic judgment or attach direct interest to this judgment. In such cases, we are fully aware that the object is colored by the purpose of the artist. Kant accentuates this claim by now suggesting that the revelation of this deceptive event causes interest to "completely vanish" along with charm. He follows this comment with a story that exemplifies this deception. Kant explains:

But in order for us to take interest in beauty, this beauty must always be that of nature: our interest vanishes completely as soon as we notice that we have been deceived, that only art was involved: it vanishes so completely that at that point even taste can no longer find anything beautiful, nor sight anything charming.³¹²

Remember our tricksters, planting fake flowers in the trees to nag our naïve naturalist? These tricksters hold a power greater than a simple mockery; the tricksters may be responsible for annihilating the experience of the beautiful from individual human cognition. What would it

³¹⁰ See also Kant's discussion of rational belief in *CPrR*.

³¹¹ Kant, *CJ*, 169.

mean to say that we are vulnerable enough to lose our own capacity for aesthetic judgments, to become fatally disenchanting? Are the other faculties of reason subject to such effacing events? Or, would the loss of the celebrated harmony of aesthetic judgment – a harmony of imagination and understanding – degrade the conditions for the possibility of critique itself?

Kant's example draws from the figure of rooms that echoes throughout his other works. While the poets preserve natural delights and splendid encounters with fantastic existences: the sea, the woods, birds, moonlight; the innkeeper provides the counter-example, bringing artists and naturalists down to earth by annihilating such enchantment.

But as soon as one realizes that it was all deception, no one will long endure listening to this song that before he had considered so charming... In order for us to take a direct interest in the beautiful as such, it must be nature or we must consider it so.³¹³

We do not know whether the jovial innkeeper is a comedian or a rogue himself, although his relationship to his guests appears to be instrumental: he desires to entertain them to succeed in business. This innkeeper, nonetheless, holds a special knowledge by comprehending the guests' desire to encounter nature in some authentic, energizing fashion. This story highlights a desire to interact with the natural world on some authentic level: the guests arrive with an explicit intention to "enjoy the country air."

The guests are not like the naturalist who makes a habit of walking in the woods. Indeed, the naturalist makes a habit of enjoying freedom from culture and human edifice. The guests, on the other hand, are just that: guests. They have come as outsiders to "the country" to enjoy the air. They are on the prowl for the aesthetic experience. We might surmise that they are on the prowl for the aesthetic experience precisely because they have failed to encounter it in their familiar haunts – rooms self-consciously decorated.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

Our discussions of empirical interest suggest that if the guests seek purposively to encounter nature they, in fact, trouble their experience with instrumental, empirical desire: they are attached to the idea of nature through a particular interest. This does not take into account whether or not the guest arrives with the intention of becoming “civilized” or impressing others. If they have an idea of aesthetic judgment and the experience of beauty as a goal for their visit, they immediately violate the purposive nature of the aesthetic experience by already imposing a purpose on their view of nature. In other words, a search for beauty based on intention will fail to realize an aesthetic judgment.

Meanwhile, even though we may be well versed in aesthetic judgment, scholarly logic or intention does not suffice in ushering the experience of freedom and play into the subject. The guests could only prepare themselves by practicing an openness and liberation from the kind of intention that colors the rest of their lives. They must even free themselves of the intention, not simply to legislate experience according to desire, but even of the intention to realize the good (however much beauty and morality may be analogous and associated). As such, genuine aesthetic judgment creates a space for thinking and being apart from the conditions of our practical and pure reasoning. Aesthetic judgment creates a space for thinking that allows the subject to retreat in the face of his/her experience of the world. The interruption of intention (whether the subject’s own intention or the intention implied in nature or art) succeeds in allowing uncalculated elements to enter into dialogue with the subject. Such revelations as occur in the experience of beauty are then taken up and pursued by intellectual interest, so as to bring them into the commerce of our always already established systems of understanding and reasoning.

In this example, the open comportment of the guests makes them vulnerable. We practice the same receptivity when we arrive at the theater, when we are sympathetic to one another and when we engage our imagination with works of art. Perhaps most importantly, all these activities are ways of becoming educated, of engaging thought and, thereby, engaging in critique. Indeed, exploring our ability to be receptive through our aesthetic sensibilities and through the conventions of art, music and poetry enables and perpetuates our education. We educate ourselves in remaining open, in refining objective judgments. A desire to encounter nature 'on its own terms' also reflects the possibility of engaging in an experience that allows self-assessment and observation precisely as a result of the eclipse of certain dominant interests within the subject.³¹⁴ This is precisely why the guests are vulnerable to the tricksters.

The guests receive the roguish youngster's bird imitation "with the greatest satisfaction." Once the guests understand that the source of their pleasure was human artifice, whether nuanced or not, the guests "can no longer endure listening." As Kant has indicated, it is not only that we tire of the song because it is intentionally produced or succeeded in deceiving us but also because revealing the trickery effaces our ability to find anything beautiful or charming.

For such an extreme position, it is surprising that Kant does not return to reflect on such a loss. Perhaps this erasure is momentary, regarding the immediate instance of the immediate deception. For example, we may no longer enjoy a youngster whistling, but we might, conceivably, go for a walk later that day to find yet another beauty. Why, then, does Kant choose to say that "interest vanishes so completely" and that we "no longer find anything beautiful?" Why does he choose to say that not only interest (and therefore beauty) vanishes but charm vanishes as well? It would seem that the loss of beauty would usher in the ascendancy of

³¹⁴ The authentic encounter that the subject allows in this openness is the actual encounter with the subject on her/his own terms. This encounter is essential in order to allow the subject to encounter itself non-dogmatically, that

empirical interest in charms and ornamentation. Not so. When beauty vanishes, there too goes empirical charm and social interest in decoration. As a result, the loss of beauty includes the loss of non-instrumental (aesthetic) *and* instrumental (empirical) relations to nature and other subjects.³¹⁵ This event is truly radical and bears many implications for the structures and harmonies of reason that reveal to us our ethical potency, reflective creativity (on the order of genius) and commonality.

As I have tried to present out in previous sections, if we understand the nature of interest, we may begin to more fully understand the implications of the loss of interest coupled with the loss of beauty. Consider the presencing of morality in aesthetic judgment. We are unlikely to encounter our moral vocation and the potential universal communicability with others without beauty. Our intellectual interest may be truncated. We would be prevented from renewed conceptualizing, from engaging in an attachment-without-attachment, from linking the figures of nature with moral implications. As a result, our discoveries of pure and practical reason would be negatively impacted. We would not have the aesthetic sensibility that allows for charms to appear as a language, nor would we have the opportunity for the play of the faculties or the resulting *Lebensgefühl*. Finally, we may find ourselves bereft of *sensus communis*, and lacking in a sense of universal subjectivity, a loss that would surely impact our political and social relations.

For Kant's political and ethical theories the loss would indeed be tragic. We could no longer feel our living identity with the world outside of us, the world that cares for us if only by drawing us out, drawing our interests upon the palette of the world and offering us a self-portrait of who we are. Losing our sensible identity with the forms of the world would seem to predict

is, without the interest of an architecturally mad reason legislating the experience.

the loss of the form within ourselves: a total and utter loss of a *Lebensgefühl* that designates moral vocation or freedom.

Thus, Kant's inclusion of the examples within Section 42 drives us to the heart of tragedy. By perceiving art as nature, our lovers of nature (and beauty) could be Aristotle's classic tragic character: 'good men who have made significant mistakes'. In this case, the tragedy multiplies. As long as reflection remains linked to the appearance of one's "moral vocation" as well as the mediation of one's cognitive faculties, and (in poetry) the ability to "give concepts life," then the loss of an ability to find things beautiful implies a loss of ethical self-knowledge, an inability to link understanding to ethics, a loss of the skill of disinterest and, finally, a free-floating imagination, detached from the elements of understanding that make it productive and valuable.

Finally, the tragedy of the trickster unhinges the subject, resulting in a loss of the ability to orient oneself. Indeed, Kant's categories of madness suggest that the subject may become unhinged in a number of ways. Specifically, we may begin to entertain one of the four disorders of reason: madness ("the inability to bring ideas into mere coherence necessary for the possibility of experience"), insanity ("everything [even self-concocted ideas]..is in accordance with experience"), delirium ("disordered faculty of judgment in which the mind is deceived by analogies...so that the imagination offers dissimilar objects as similar") and lunacy ("the sickness of a disordered reason").³¹⁶ If, as Kant explains, reflection and taste serve to link one to universal communicability and one's "common sense," then we may also be at a loss to step into the shoes of others, becoming unfeeling toward our universal humanity.

³¹⁵ See Dostoyevsky's *Notes from Underground*. In this novella, Dostoyevsky's character (acknowledged in a footnote on the first page as the new, modern man) may reflect such a fatally disenchanting individual.

³¹⁶ Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 112.

There remains, due to such clear danger, an increased temptation to be enchanted by something that may be fatally disenchanting, to come upon the possibility of an encounter with the tragic by indulging in an opportunity to be deceived. This temptation, of course, is somewhat irrational. At the same time, enchanted judgments, judgments protected from such dangers, become all the more precious.

In the introduction to this work, I appealed to Kant's physicotheological proof by noting that we would have to make a decision as to whether we remain enchanted with the world (even if deceived) or encounter the possibility of a loss of God. I wrote, "in the first *Critique*, reason is inspired to generate new inroads in the shadow of a specific dilemma: irrationally accepting this proof of a supreme being or rationally facing the possibility of nothingness." In Section 42 of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, we find the implications of cognitive and moral disorientation. Unfortunately, since pure judgments of taste bridge practical and pure reason, creating the conditions for the possibility of a sighting of our root powers, our freedom and our moral vocation (as I have already noted), damage to aesthetic thinking implies damage to the whole of one's critical faculties. At the same time, an orientation in thinking founded in intellectual interest engages us with the possibility of bringing concepts to life, contributing new figures to our determinative thinking and providing practical reason with evidence for freedom.

The series of events surrounding the loss of beauty – and a training in orientation – can be captured in literary protagonists like Shakespeare's Hamlet, Kafka's K., Dostoyevsky's Underground Man or Ellison's Invisible Man. Another example, Poe's narrator in *The Raven* (a trickster creature) also provides a terrific example of such a loss. The man, mourning for the lost Lenore, attempts to read into the sounds from inside and outside the chamber. The only message the mourner can read in these patterns, no matter what they are, is the lost Lenore. As such, the

poem ends: “And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor. Shall be lifted -- nevermore!”³¹⁷ These figures are characterized by defeat and a paralyzing loss of beauty or enchantment. Here, then, we find ourselves moving beyond Kant. It is not only that Kant foreshadows the tragic loss of beauty which strikes deeply at human cognition and experience; he also foreshadows the Romantic enchantment with beauty, an enchantment that deafeningly attempts to recover beauty from the morally haunting conditions of the French Revolution.

Let us examine this disorientation, however, from another point of view. Based on our discussion of empirical interest, a disorienting loss of beauty would not stop civilization. Indeed, civilization may be even more driven by such a loss. Similarly, we may cultivate virtue by means of our own moral drama, without depending on the appearance of our moral vocation. In fact, in the *Anthropology*, Kant describes a training in virtue that requires self-deception:

Nature has wisely implanted in man the propensity to easy self-deception in order to save, or at least lead, man to virtue. Good and honorable formal behavior is an external appearance which instills respect in others...In general, everything we call decency is of the same sort; it is just a beautiful illusion.³¹⁸

Further, the “more civilized men are, the more they are actors.”³¹⁹ Kant explains that an individual imitation of virtues “though originally empty, gradually, lead to genuine dispositions of this sort.”³²⁰ Even if we have lost our link to morality and cognition through beauty, we can play-act the aesthetic judge, pretending to realize our common sense, to feel our expansive cognitive potential and to encounter an appearance of the subject.

By providing us with rather harmless events of deception and instances of disorientation, art might come to educate us in deception and familiarize us with our own vulnerabilities. Art may prepare the subject for an impoverished condition in which she play-acts virtue. It is

³¹⁷ Poe, 74.

³¹⁸ Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, 38-9.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

unlikely that we could prevent an occasion of deception that will, as with Sophocles' Oedipus, insure our own demise. Rather, our own desire to be enchanted by art or nature may inform our moral vocation, even without pure judgments of taste. While this would suggest an empirical interest in art, we may be drawn to artworks precisely in order to reflect on disorientation in attempt to protect ourselves from ultimate and absolute disorientation. By being able to recognize the possible loss of moral vocation, through a myriad of examples where our deceived, enchanted condition has been revealed to us, we can attempt to prevent the final deception regarding nature's beauty. We might heed less powerful moments of disorientation as opportunities to tune into our own power of orienteering. This would only be possible if such examples did not result in the fatal disorientation implied in Section 42, but provided some pedagogical challenges to fortify one's moral disposition. The poet/orator might contain a bit of the trickster: giving life to concepts of the understanding by exploring duplicitous significations that either deceive or clarify our understanding. Finally, even if the artist's work did not suffice in calling attention to our orienteering potential, the exercise of the artist-genius may suffice as an attempt to practice orientation and, in so doing, to preserve freedom.

Rather than a burden, therefore, the duplicity of the artist (and subsequently of nature) appears to be a kind of gift to awaken one to orientation. To the Greeks, duplicity is a gift from Hermes that allows for commerce between gods and mortals. The climactic loss of beauty in aesthetic judgment, the visit by the rogue in the bushes, is not a complete loss. The erasure of intellectual interest awakens the guests to a notion of beauty that, at this time, escapes from their grasp. The awakening itself, however, has similar effects as an authentic judgment: the audience or guests at the inn are drawn into a larger sphere of discourse, forced to orient themselves. They

³²⁰ Ibid, 39.

are made aware of the possibility of disinterested judgment that has been 'stolen' from them as the "rogue" emerges. They are also made aware of the promise held out by cognition at play.

The conflict, however, does not deteriorate into a denunciation of the playful rogue (or the innkeeper for that matter) as terribly immoral. In Hermes' case, he lies to Apollo and Zeus about stealing Apollo's cattle; he boldly claims complete innocence (such is his facility with language).³²¹ When commanded by Zeus to lead Apollo to the cattle, Hermes does so. At the same time, he reveals his turtle-lyre, his first inspired invention, to Apollo. Apollo, good sort (sun-god) that he is, recognizes that the value of Hermes' contributions - his music, his cunning - make up for his theft. Hermes gifts his lyre to Apollo and, as a result, Apollo and Hermes become fast friends. The hymn to Hermes concludes:

Apollo, son of Leto, swore he would be Hermes' friend and companion. Of all the immortals - be they gods or human children of Zeus - he vowed to love none better than he loved Hermes.³²²

For Hermes, Apollo translates a series of cunning events into a friendship. Apollo does not heed the trick as much as he respects the potential innovations (and friendship) resulting from the trick.

Returning to Kant, the trick's disorientation may expedite the making of new meaning. We may then have more success renovating our thinking and actions according to this enlightened viewpoint, including developing social relations that transcend convention. In this dynamic, the transgression and loss yields to renewed and invigorated understanding, intellectually and ethically. While aesthetic judgment reflects the *Lebensgefühl* of our presentational powers, revealed trickery reflects the susceptibility to error within our

³²¹ According to Plato's *Cratylus*, Hermes invented language: "I should imagine that the name of Hermes has to do with speech, and signifies that he is an interpreter [*hermeneus*], or messenger, or thief or liar, or bargainer; all that sort of thing has a great deal to do with language...." Cited in Hyde, *Trickster Makes this World*, 75.

³²² *Ibid.*, 330.

presentational powers. Disorientation, however, does not simply truncate the efficacy of an aesthetic thinking. Such disorientation spurs thinking onward (against our will), continuing to reveal the subject, furthering the cause of reason engaged, if only in a deceived, subjectively indulgent moment, in the play of the faculties.

Aesthetic thinking emerges at the joint of a thinking that attempts to embrace and move beyond disorientation. At this juncture, in the face of loss, thinking can set about the activity of orienting itself in the darkness, embracing the fruits of error, driven forward by an aesthetic, imaginative force that will lead reason into new territories. The beginning of *The Critique of Pure Reason* presents such a juncture. To cast the path of reason afresh, the first *Critique* begins in aesthetic thinking (a poetic enlivening of concepts) by considering metaphysics, the queen of sciences, reigning despotically, 'degenerating into anarchy'. In the face of such lawlessness, Kant issues a call to arms for reason to take on the task of 'self-cognition'. The battle cry, however, issues forth from a seat of error:

Now, this is the path - the only one that remained - which I have pursued, and I flatter myself to have found it on the elimination of all the errors that had thus far set reason, as used independently of experience, at variance with itself. I have certainly not evaded reason's questions, by pleading the incapacity of human reason. Rather, I have made a complete specification of them according to principles, and, upon discovering the locus of reason's disagreement with itself, have resolved them to its full satisfaction.³²³

The drawing out of intellectual interest, an aesthetic thinking, thrives at the juncture where the imagination remains at play with reason. In the face of disorientation, imagination emerges in the metaphors that launch such thinking, allowing reason to be buoyed along waging war, navigating seas, taking inventory of rooms, until it again can sustain its own weight. Meanwhile, imagination can embrace what reason cannot: using aesthetic judgment (and

³²³ Kant, *CPuR*, Axiii.

thinking) to follow the ciphers that lead human subjectivity *against its will* (or dominating interest) toward different, renewed or remembered horizons.

APPENDIX A

SECTION 42: ON INTELLECTUAL INTEREST

It has been with the best intentions that those who love to see in the ultimate end of humanity, namely the morally good, the goal of all activities to which men are impelled by the inner bent of their nature, have regarded it as a mark of a good moral character to take an interest in the beautiful generally. But they have, not without reason, been contradicted, by others, who appeal to the fact of experience, that virtuosi in matters of taste being not alone often, but one might say as a general rule, vain, capricious, and addicted to injurious passions, could perhaps more rarely than others lay claim to any pre-eminent attachment to moral principles. And so it would seem, not only that the feeling for the beautiful is specifically different from the moral feeling (which as a matter of fact is the case), but also that the interest which we may combine with it will hardly consort with the moral, and certainly not on grounds of inner affinity.

Now I willingly admit that the interest in the beautiful of art (including under this heading the artificial use of natural beauties for personal adornment, and so from vanity) gives no evidence at all of a habit of mind attached to the morally good, or even inclined that way. But, on the other hand, I do maintain that to take an immediate interest in the beauty of nature (not merely to have taste in estimating it) is always a mark of a good soul; and that, where this interest is habitual, it is at least indicative of a temper of mind favorable to the moral feeling that it should readily associate itself with the contemplation of nature. It must, however, be borne in mind that I mean to refer strictly to the beautiful forms of nature, and to put to one side the charms which she is wont so lavishly to combine with them; because, though the interest in these is no doubt immediate, it is nevertheless empirical.

One who alone (and without any intention of communicating his observations to others) regards the beautiful form of a wild flower, a bird, an insect, or the like, out of admiration and love of them, and being loath to let them escape him in nature, even at the risk of some misadventure to himself-so far from there being any prospect of advantage to him-such a one takes an immediate, and in fact intellectual, interest in the beauty of nature. This means that he is not alone pleased with nature's product in respect of its form, but is also pleased at its existence, and is so without any charm of sense having a share in the matter, or without his associating with it any end whatsoever.

In this connection, however, it is of note that were we to play a trick on our lover of the beautiful, and plant in the ground artificial flowers (which can be made so as to look just like natural ones), and perch artfully carved birds on the branches of trees, and he were to find out how he had been taken in, the immediate interest which these things previously had for him would at once vanish-though, perhaps, a different interest might intervene in its stead, that, namely, of vanity in decorating his room with them for the eyes of others. The fact is that our intuition and reflection must have as their concomitant the thought that the beauty in question is nature's handiwork; and this is the sole basis of the immediate interest that is taken in it. Failing this, we are either left with a bare judgment of taste void of all interest whatever, or else only with one that is combined with an interest that is mediate, involving, namely, a reference to society; which latter affords no reliable indication of morally good habits of thought.

The superiority which natural beauty has over that of art, even where it is excelled by the latter in point of form, in yet being alone able to awaken an immediate interest, accords with the refined and well-grounded habits of thought of all men who have cultivated their moral feeling. If a man with taste enough to judge of works of fine art with the greatest correctness and refinement readily quits the room in which he meets with those beauties that minister to vanity or, at least, social joys, and betakes himself to the beautiful in nature, so that he may there find as it were a feast for his soul in a train of thought which he can never completely evolve, we will then regard this his choice even with veneration, and give him credit for a beautiful soul, to which no connoisseur or art collector can lay claim on the score of the interest which his objects have for him. Here, now, are two kinds of objects that in the judgment of mere taste could scarcely contend with one another for superiority. What then, is the distinction that makes us hold them in such different esteem?

We have a faculty of judgment which is merely aesthetic—a faculty of judging of forms without the aid of concepts, and of finding, in the mere estimate of them, a delight that we at the same time make into a rule for every one, without this judgment being founded on an interest, or yet producing one. On the other hand, we have also a faculty of intellectual judgment for the mere forms of practical maxims (so far as they are of themselves qualified for universal legislation)—a faculty of determining an a priori delight, which we make into a law for everyone, without our judgment being founded on any interest, though here it produces one. The pleasure or displeasure in the former judgment is called that of taste; the latter is called that of the moral feeling.

But, now, reason is further interested in ideas (for which in our moral feeling it brings about an immediate interest), having also objective reality. That is to say, it is of interest to reason that nature should at least show a trace or give a hint that it contains in itself some ground or other for assuming a uniform accordance of its products with our wholly disinterested delight (a delight which we cognize a priori as a law for every one without being able to ground it upon proofs). That being so, reason must take an interest in every manifestation on the part of nature of some such accordance. Hence the mind cannot reflect on the beauty of nature without at the same time finding its interest engaged. But this interest is akin to the moral. One, then, who takes such an interest in the beautiful in nature can only do so in so far as he has previously set his interest deep in the foundations of the morally good. On these grounds we have reason for presuming the presence of at least the germ of a good moral disposition in the case of a man to whom the beauty of nature is a matter of immediate interest.

It will be said that this interpretation of aesthetic judgments on the basis of kinship with our moral feeling has far too studied an appearance to be accepted as the true construction of the cipher in which nature speaks to us figuratively in its beautiful forms. But, first of all, this immediate interest in the beauty of nature is not in fact common. It is peculiar to those whose habits of thought are already trained to the good or else are eminently susceptible of such training; and under the circumstances the analogy in which the pure judgment of taste that, without relying upon any interest, gives us a feeling of delight, and at the same time represents it a priori as proper to mankind in general, stands to the moral judgment that does just the same from concepts, is one which, without any clear, subtle, and deliberate reflection, conduces to a like immediate interest being taken in the objects of the former judgment as in those of the latter—with this one difference, that the interest in the first case is free, while in the latter it is one founded on objective laws. In addition to this, there is our admiration of Nature, which in her beautiful products displays herself as art, not as mere matter of chance, but, as it were,

designedly, according to a law-directed arrangement, and as finality apart from any end. As we never meet with such an end outside ourselves, we naturally look for it in ourselves, and, in fact, in that which constitutes the ultimate end of our existence-the moral side of our being. (The inquiry into the ground of the possibility of such a natural finality will, however, first come under discussion in the Teleology.)

The fact that the delight in beautiful art does not, in the pure judgment of taste, involve an immediate interest, as does that in beautiful nature, may be readily explained. For the former is either such an imitation of the latter as goes the length of deceiving us, in which case it acts upon us in the character of a natural beauty, which we take it to be; or else it is an intentional art obviously directed to our delight. In the latter case, however, the delight in the product would, it is true, be brought about immediately by taste, but there would be nothing but a mediate interest in the cause that lay beneath-an interest, namely, in an art only capable of interesting by its end, and never in itself. It will, perhaps, be said that this is also the case where an object of nature only interests by its beauty so far as a moral idea is brought into partnership therewith. But it is not the object that is of immediate interest, but rather the inherent character of the beauty qualifying it for such a partnership-a character, therefore, that belongs to the very essence of beauty.

The charms in natural beauty, which are to be found blended, as it were, so frequently with beauty of form, belong either to the modifications of light (in coloring) or of sound (in tones). For these are the only sensations that permit not merely of a feeling of the senses, but also of reflection upon the form of these modifications of sense, and so embody as it were a language in which nature speaks to us and which has the semblance of a higher meaning. Thus the white colour of the lily seems to dispose the mind to ideas of innocence, and the other seven colours, following the series from the red to the violet, similarly to ideas of (1) sublimity, (2) courage, (3) candour, (4) amiability, (5) modesty, (6) constancy, (7) tenderness. The bird's song tells of joyousness and contentment with its existence. At least so we interpret nature-whether such be its purpose or not. But it is the indispensable requisite of the interest which we here take in beauty, that the beauty should be that of nature, and it vanishes completely as soon as we are conscious of having been deceived, and that it is only the work of art-so completely that even taste can then no longer find in it anything beautiful nor sight anything attractive. What do poets set more store on than the nightingale's bewitching and beautiful note, in a lonely thicket on a still summer evening by the soft light of the moon? And yet we have instances of how, where no such songster was to be found, a jovial host has played a trick on the guests with him on a visit to enjoy the country air, and has done so to their huge satisfaction, by bidding in a thicket a rogue of a youth who (with a reed or rush in his mouth) knew how to reproduce this note so as to hit off nature to perfection. But the instant one realizes that it is all a fraud no one will long endure listening to this song that before was regarded as so attractive. And it is just the same with the song of any other bird. It must be nature, or be mistaken by us for nature, to enable us to take an immediate interest in the beautiful as such; and this is all the more so if we can even call upon others to take a similar interest. And such a demand we do in fact make, since we regard as coarse and low the habits of thought of those who have no feeling for beautiful nature (for this is the word we use for susceptibility to an interest in the contemplation of beautiful nature), and who devote themselves to the mere enjoyments of sense found in eating and drinking.³²⁴

³²⁴ Kant, *CJ*, 165-170.

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