§ 32 First peculiarity of a judgment of taste

A judgment of taste determines its object in respect of our liking (beauty) [but] makes a claim to everyone’s assent, as if it were an objective judgment.

To say, This flower is beautiful, is tantamount to a mere repetition of the flower’s own claim to everyone’s liking. The agreeableness of its smell, on the other hand, gives it no claim whatever: its smell delights [ergötzen] one person, it makes another dizzy. In view of this [difference], must we not suppose that beauty has to be considered a property of the flower itself, which does not adapt itself to differences in people’s heads and all their senses, but to which they must adapt themselves if they wish to pass judgment on it? Yet beauty is not a property of the flower itself. For a judgment of taste consists precisely in this, that it calls a thing beautiful only by virtue of that characteristic in which it adapts itself to the way we apprehend it.

Moreover, whenever a subject offers a judgment as proof of his taste [concerning some object], we demand that he judge for himself: he should not have to grope about among other people’s judgments by means of experience, to gain instruction in advance from whether they like or dislike that object; so we demand that he pronounce his judgment a priori, that he not make it [by way of] imitation, (say) on the ground that a thing is actually liked universally. One would think, however, that an a priori judgment must contain a concept of the object, this concept containing the principle for cognizing the object. But a judgment of taste is not based on concepts at all, and is not at all a cognition but only an aesthetic judgment.

That is why a young poet cannot be brought to abandon his persuasion that his poem is beautiful, neither by the judgment of his audience nor by that of his friends; and if he listens to them, it is not because he now judges the poem differently, but because, even if (at least with regard to him) the whole audience were to have wrong taste, his desire for approval still causes him to accommodate himself (even against his judgment) to the common delusion. Only later on, when his power of judgment has
been sharpened by practice, will he voluntarily depart from his earlier judgment, just as he does with those of his judgments which rest wholly on reason. Taste lays claim merely to autonomy; but to make other people's judgments the basis determining one's own would be heteronomy.

It is true that we extol, and rightly so, the works of the ancients as models, and call their authors classical, as if they form a certain noble class among writers which gives laws to people by the precedent it sets. This seems to point to a posteriori sources of taste and to refute the autonomy of every subject's taste. But we might just as well say: the fact that the ancient mathematicians are to this day considered to be virtually indispensable models of supreme thoroughness and elegance in the synthetic method proves that our reason [only] imitates and is unable on its own to produce rigorous and highly intuitive proofs by constructing concepts. The same holds for all uses, no matter how free, of our powers, including even reason (which must draw all its judgments from the common a priori source): if each subject always had to start from nothing but the crude predisposition given him by nature, [many] of his attempts would fail, if other people before him had not failed in theirs; they did not make these attempts in order to turn their successors into mere imitators, but so that, by their procedure, they might put others on a track whereby they could search for the principles within themselves and so adopt their own and often better course. In religion, everyone must surely find the rule for his conduct within himself, since he is also the one who remains responsible for his conduct and cannot put the blame for his offenses on others on the ground that they were his teachers and predecessors; yet even here an example of virtue and holiness will always accomplish more than any universal precepts we have received from priests or philosophers, or for that matter found within ourselves. Such an example, set for us in history, does not make dispensable the autonomy of virtue that arises from our own and original (a priori) idea of morality, nor does it transform this idea into a mechanism of imitation. Following by reference to a precedent, rather than imitating, is the right term for any influence that products of an exemplary author may have on others; and this means no more than drawing on the same sources from which the predecessor himself drew, and learning from him only how to go about doing so. Among all our abilities and talents, taste is precisely what stands most in need of examples regarding what has enjoyed the longest-lasting approval in the course of cultural progress, in order that it will not become uncouth again and relapse into thecrudeness of its first attempts; and taste needs this because its judgment cannot be determined by concepts and precepts.

§ 33 Second peculiarity of a judgment of taste

A judgment of taste, just as if it were merely subjective, cannot be determined by bases of proof.

If someone does not find a building, a view, or a poem beautiful, then, first, he will refuse to let even a hundred voices, all praising it highly, prod him into approving of it inwardly. He may of course act as if he liked it too, so that people will not think that he lacks taste. He may even begin to doubt whether he has in fact done enough to mold his taste, by familiarizing himself with a sufficient number of objects of a certain kind (just as someone who thinks he recognizes a forest in some distant object that everyone else regards as a town will doubt the judgment of his own eyes). And yet he realizes
clearly that other people’s approval in no way provides him with a valid proof by which
to judge beauty; even though others may perhaps see and observe for him, and even
though what many have seen the same way may serve him, who believes he saw it
differently, as a sufficient basis of proof for a theoretical and hence logical judgment,
yet the fact that others have liked something can never serve him as a basis for an
aesthetic judgment. If others make a judgment that is unfavorable to us, this may
rightly make us wonder about our own judgment, but it can never convince us that
ours is incorrect. Hence there is no empirical basis of proof that could compel anyone
to make [some] judgment of taste.

Second, still less can a judgment about beauty be determined by an a priori proof, in
accordance with determinate rules. If someone reads me his poem, or takes me to a
play that in the end I simply cannot find to my taste, then let him adduce Batteux or
Lessing to prove that his poem is beautiful, or [bring in] still older and more famous
critics of taste with all the rules they have laid down; moreover, let certain passages that
I happen to dislike conform quite well to rules of beauty (as laid down by these critics
and universally recognized): I shall stop my ears, shall refuse to listen to reasons
and arguments, and shall sooner assume that those rules of the critics are false, or at
least do not apply in the present case, than allow my judgment to be determined by a
priori bases of proof; for it is meant to be a judgment of taste, and not one of the
understanding or of reason.

It seems that this is one of the main reasons why this aesthetic power of judging was
given that very name: taste. For even if someone lists all the ingredients of a dish,
pointing out that I have always found each of them agreeable, and goes on to praise
this food – and rightly so – as wholesome, I shall be deaf to all these reasons: I shall try
the dish on my tongue and palate, and thereby (and not by universal principles) make
my judgment.

It is a fact that any judgment of taste we make is always a singular judgment about
the object. The understanding can, by comparing the object with other people’s
judgment about their liking of it, make a universal judgment, e.g.: All tulips are
beautiful. But such a judgment is then not a judgment of taste; it is a logical judg-
ment, which turns an object’s reference to taste into a predicate of things of a certain
general kind. Only a judgment by which I find a singular given tulip beautiful, i.e., in
which I find that my liking for the tulip is universally valid, is a judgment of taste. Its
peculiarity, however, consists in the fact that, even though it has merely subjective
validity, it yet extends its claim to all subjects, just as it always could if it were an
objective judgment that rested on cognitive bases and that [we] could be compelled [to
make] by a proof.

§ 34 An objective principle of taste is impossible
By a principle of taste would be meant a principle under which, as condition, we could
subsume the concept of an object and then infer that the object is beautiful. That,
however, is absolutely impossible. For I must feel the pleasure directly in my presenta-
tion of the object, and I cannot be talked into that pleasure by means of any bases of
proof. Hence, although, as Hume says, critics can reason more plausibly than cooks, they still share the same fate. They cannot expect the determining basis of their judgment [to come] from the force of the bases of proof, but only from the subject’s
reflection on his own state (of pleasure or displeasure), all precepts and rules being rejected.

There is, however, something about which critics nonetheless can and should reason, since doing so may serve to correct and broaden our judgments of taste. I do not mean that they should set forth the determining basis of this kind of aesthetic judgments in a universal formula that we could [then] use. What they should do is investigate our cognitive powers and what task these powers perform in these judgments, and they should clarify by examples the reciprocal subjective purposiveness about which it was shown above that its form in a given presentation is the beauty of the object of this presentation. Hence the critique of taste is itself only subjective as regards the presentation by which an object is given us: it is the art, or science, of finding rules for the reciprocal relation that understanding and imagination have in the given presentation (without reference to prior sensation or concept), and hence for their accordance or discordance, and of determining them as regards their conditions. The critique of taste is an art if it shows this only through examples; it is a science if it derives the possibility of such judging from the nature of these powers as cognitive powers as such. It is with the latter alone, with a transcendental critique, that we are here concerned throughout. Its aim is to set forth and justify the subjective principle of taste as an a priori principle of the power of judgment. The critique that is an art merely takes the physiological (in this case psychological) and hence empirical rules by which taste actually proceeds, and (without thinking about [how] they are possible) seeks to apply them to our judging of objects of taste; and it criticizes the products of fine art, just as the transcendental critique criticizes our very ability to judge them.

§ 35 The principle of taste is the subjective principle of the power of judgment as such

A judgment of taste differs from a logical one in that a logical judgment subsumes a presentation under concepts of the object, whereas a judgment of taste does not subsume it under any concept at all, since otherwise the necessary universal approval could be [obtained] by compelling [people to give it]. But a judgment of taste does resemble a logical judgment inasmuch as it alleges a universality and necessity, though a universality and necessity that is not governed by concepts of the object and hence is merely subjective. Now since the concepts in a judgment constitute its content (what belongs to the cognition of the object), while a judgment of taste cannot be determined by concepts, its basis is only the subjective formal condition of a judgment as such. The subjective condition of all judgments is our very ability to judge, i.e., the power of judgment. When we use this power of judgment in regard to a presentation by which an object is given, then it requires that there be a harmony between two presentational powers, imagination (for the intuition and the combination of its manifold) and understanding (for the concept that is the presentation of the unity of this combination). Now since a judgment of taste is not based on a concept of the object (in the case of a presentation by which an object is given), it can consist only in the subsumption of the very imagination under the condition [which must be met] for the understanding to proceed in general from intuition to concepts. In other words, since the imagination’s freedom consists precisely in its schematizing without a concept, a judgment of taste must rest upon a mere sensation, namely, our sensation of both the imagination in its
freedom and the understanding with its lawfulness, as they reciprocally quicken each other; i.e., it must rest on a feeling that allows us to judge the object by the purposiveness that the presentation (by which an object is given) has insofar as it furthers the cognitive powers in their free play. Hence taste, as a subjective power of judgment, contains a principle of subsumption; however, this subsumption is not one of intuitions under concepts, but, rather, one of the power of intuitions or exhibitions (the imagination) under the power of concepts (the understanding), insofar as the imagination in its freedom harmonizes with the understanding in its lawfulness.

In attempting to discover this legitimating basis by means of a deduction of judgments of taste, we can use as our guide only the formal peculiarities of this kind of judgments, i.e., we must consider merely their logical form.

§ 36 On the problem of a deduction of judgments of taste

With the perception of an object we can directly connect the concept of an object as such, for which it contains the empirical predicates, in order to give rise to a cognitive judgment. This is how an empirical judgment is produced. Now this judgment is based on a priori concepts of the systematic unity of the manifold of intuition; hence we can think this manifold as the determination of an object. These concepts (the categories) require a deduction, and this was indeed provided in the Critique of Pure Reason, which thus made it possible to solve the problem: How are synthetic cognitive judgments possible a priori? That problem, then, concerned the pure understanding’s a priori principles and theoretical judgments.

But we can also directly connect with a perception a feeling of pleasure (or displeasure) and a liking that accompanies the object’s presentation and serves it in the place of a predicate. This is how an aesthetic judgment arises, which is not a cognitive judgment. Now if an aesthetic judgment is not a mere judgment of sensation, but a formal judgment of reflection that requires this liking from everyone as necessary, then it must be based on something as its a priori principle. This principle may well be merely subjective (in case an objective one were to be impossible for judgments of this kind), but even then it requires a deduction, in order that we may grasp how an aesthetic judgment can lay claim to necessity. And that is the basis of the problem with which we are now dealing: How are judgments of taste possible? So this problem concerns the a priori principles that the pure power of judgment uses when it makes aesthetic judgments, i.e., judgments where it does not (as it does in theoretical judgments) merely have to subsume under objective concepts of the understanding, but where it is, subjectively, object to itself as well as law to itself.

We can also think of this problem as follows: How is a judgment possible in which the subject, merely on the basis of his own feeling of pleasure in an object, independently of the object’s concept, judges this pleasure as one attaching to the presentation of that same object in all other subjects, and does so a priori, i.e., without being allowed to wait for other people’s assent?

We can readily see that judgments of taste are synthetic; for they go beyond the concept of the object, and even beyond the intuition of the object, and add as a predicate to this intuition something that is not even cognition: namely [a] feeling of pleasure (or displeasure). And yet, that these judgments are, or want to be considered,
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a priori judgments as regards the demand that everyone assent, a demand they make despite the fact that their predicate (of one’s own pleasure [as] connected with the presentation) is empirical, is also already implicit in the expressions used to make that claim. Hence this problem of the critique of judgment is part of the general problem of transcendental philosophy: How are synthetic judgments possible a priori?10

§ 37 What is actually asserted a priori about an object in a judgment of taste?

That the presentation of an object is directly connected with a pleasure can only be perceived inwardly, and if we wished to indicate no more than this, the result would be a merely empirical judgment. For I cannot connect a priori a definite feeling (of pleasure or displeasure) with any presentation, except in the case where an underlying a priori principle in reason determines the will; but in that case the pleasure (in moral feeling) is the consequence of that principle, and that is precisely why it is not at all comparable to the pleasure in taste: for it requires a determinate concept of a law, whereas the pleasure in taste is to be connected directly with our mere judging, prior to any concept. That is also why all judgments of taste are singular judgments, because they do not connect their predicate, the liking, with a concept but connect it with a singular empirical presentation that is given.

Hence it is not the pleasure, but the universal validity of this pleasure, perceived as connected in the mind with our mere judging of an object, that we present a priori as [a] universal rule for the power of judgment, valid for everyone. That I am perceiving and judging an object with pleasure is an empirical judgment. But that I find the object beautiful, i.e., that I am entitled to require that liking from everyone as necessary, is an a priori judgment.

§ 38 Deduction of judgments of taste11

If it is granted that in a pure judgment of taste our liking for the object is connected with our mere judging of the form of the object, then this liking is nothing but [our consciousness of] the form’s subjective purposiveness for the power of judgment, which we feel as connected in the mind with the presentation of the object. Now, as far as the formal rules of judging [as such] are concerned, apart from any matter (whether sensation or concept), the power of judgment can be directed only to the subjective conditions for our employment of the power of judgment as such (where it is confined neither to the particular kind of sense involved nor to a[ny] particular concept of the understanding), and hence can be directed only to that subjective [condition] which we may presuppose in all people (as required for possible cognition as such). It follows that we must be entitled to assume a priori that a presentation’s harmony with these conditions of the power of judgment is valid for everyone. In other words, it seems that when, in judging an object of sense in general, we feel this pleasure, or subjective purposiveness of the presentation for the relation between our cognitive powers, we must be entitled to require this pleasure from everyone.12
Comment

What makes this deduction so easy is that it does not need to justify the objective reality of a concept; for beauty is not a concept of an object, and a judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment. All it asserts is that we are justified in presupposing universally in all people the same subjective conditions of the power of judgment that we find in ourselves; apart from this it asserts only that we have subsumed the given object correctly under these conditions. It is true that this latter assertion involves unavoidable difficulties that do not attach to the logical power of judgment (since there we subsume under concepts, whereas in the aesthetic power of judgment we subsume under a relation of imagination and understanding, as they harmonize with each other in the presented form of an object, that can only be sensed, so that the subsumption may easily be illusory). But this does not in any way detract from the legitimacy of the power of judgment’s claim in counting on universal assent, a claim that amounts to no more than this: that the principle of judging validly for everyone from subjective bases is correct. For as far as the difficulty and doubt concerning the correctness of the subsumption under that principle is concerned, no more doubt is cast on the legitimacy of the claim that aesthetic judgments as such have this validity, and hence is cast on the principle itself, than the principle of the logical power of judgment, a principle that is objective, is made doubtful by the fact that [sometimes] (though not so often and so easily) this power’s subsumption under its principle is faulty as well. But if the question were, How is it possible to assume a priori that nature is a sum of objects of taste? that problem would have to do with teleology. For if nature offered forms that are purposive for our power of judgment, then this would have to be regarded as a purpose of nature belonging essentially to its concept. But whether this assumption is correct is as yet very doubtful, while the actuality of natural beauties is patent to experience.

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§ 44 On fine art

There is no science of the beautiful [das Schöne], but only critique; and there is no fine [schön] science, but only fine art. For in a science of the beautiful, whether or not something should be considered beautiful would have to be decided scientifically, i.e., through bases of proof, so that if a judgment about beauty belonged to science then it would not be a judgment of taste. As for a fine science: a science that as a science is to be fine is an absurdity; for if, [treating it] as a science, we asked for reasons and proofs, we would be put off with tasteful phrases (bons mots). What has given rise to the familiar expression, fine science, is doubtless nothing more than the realization, which is quite correct, that fine art in its full perfection requires much science: e.g., we must know ancient languages, we must have read the authors considered classical, we must know history and be familiar with the antiquities, etc.; and this is why these historical sciences have, through a confusion of words, themselves come to be called fine sciences, because they constitute the foundation and preparation needed for fine art, and in part also because they have come to include even a familiarity with the products of fine art (as in oratory or poetry).

If art merely performs the acts that are required to make a possible object actual,
adequately to our cognition of that object, then it is mechanical art; but if what it
intends directly is [to arouse] the feeling of pleasure, then it is called aesthetic art. The
latter is either agreeable or fine art. It is agreeable art if its purpose is that the pleasure
should accompany presentations that are mere sensations; it is fine art if its purpose is
that the pleasure should accompany presentations that are ways of cognizing.

Agreeable arts are those whose purpose is merely enjoyment. They include [the art
of providing] all those charms that can gratify a party at table, such as telling stories
entertainingly, animating the group to open and lively conversation, or using jest and
laughter to induce a certain cheerful tone among them16 – a tone such that, as is said,
there may be a lot of loose talk over the feast, and no one wants to be held responsible
for what he says, because the whole point is the entertainment of the moment, not
any material for future meditation or quotation. (Such arts also include the art of
furnishing a table so that people will enjoy themselves, or include, at large banquets,
presumably even the table-music – a strange thing which is meant to be only an agree-
able noise serving to keep the minds in a cheerful mood, and which fosters the free flow
of conversation between each person and his neighbor, without anyone’s paying the
slightest attention to the music’s composition.) Also included in these arts are any
games that involve no further interest than that of making time go by unnoticed.

Fine art, on the other hand, is a way of presenting that is purposive on its own and
that furthers, even though without a purpose, the culture of our mental powers to
[facilitate] social communication.

The very concept of the universal communicability of a pleasure carries with it [the
requirement] that this pleasure must be a pleasure of reflection rather than one of
enjoyment arising from mere sensation. Hence aesthetic art that is also fine art is one
whose standard is the reflective power of judgment, rather than sensation proper.17

§ 45 Fine art is an art insofar as it seems at the same time
to be nature

In [dealing with] a product of fine art we must become conscious that it is art rather
than nature, and yet the purposiveness in its form must seem as free from all constraint
of chosen rules as if it were a product of mere nature. It is this feeling of freedom in the
play of our cognitive powers, a play that yet must also be purposive, which underlies
that pleasure which alone is universally communicable although not based on concepts.
Nature, we say, is beautiful [schön] if it also looks like art; and art can be called fine
[schön] art only if we are conscious that it is art while yet it looks to us like nature.

For we may say universally, whether it concerns beauty in nature or in art: beautiful
is what we like in merely judging it (rather than either in sensation proper or through a
concept). Now art always has a determinate intention to produce something. But if
this something were mere sensation (something merely subjective), to be accompanied
by pleasure, then we would [indeed] like this product in judging it, [but] only by means
of the feeling of sense. If the intention were directed at producing a determinate object
and were achieved by the art, then we would like the object only through concepts. In
neither case, then, would we like the art in merely judging it, i.e., we would like it not as
fine but only as mechanical art.

Therefore, even though the purposiveness in a product of fine art is intentional, it
must still not seem intentional; i.e., fine art must have the look of nature even though
we are conscious of it as art. And a product of art appears like nature if, though we find it to agree quite punctiliously with the rules that have to be followed for the product to become what it is intended to be, it does not do so painstakingly. In other words, the academic form must not show; there must be no hint that the rule was hovering before the artist’s eyes and putting fetters on his mental powers.

§ 46 Fine art is the art of genius

Genius is the talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art. Since talent is an innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature, we could also put it this way: Genius is the innate mental predisposition (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art.

Whatever the status of this definition may be, and whether or not it is merely arbitrary, or rather adequate to the concept that we usually connect with the word genius . . . still we can prove even now that, in terms of the meaning of the word genius adopted here, fine arts must necessarily be considered arts of genius.

For every art presupposes rules, which serve as the foundation on which a product, if it is to be called artistic, is thought of as possible in the first place. On the other hand, the concept of fine art does not permit a judgment about the beauty of its product to be derived from any rule whatsoever that has a concept as its determining basis, i.e., the judgment must not be based on a concept of the way in which the product is possible. Hence fine art cannot itself devise the rule by which it is to bring about its product. Since, however, a product can never be called art unless it is preceded by a rule, it must be nature in the subject (and through the attunement of his powers) that gives the rule to art; in other words, fine art is possible only as the product of genius.

What this shows is the following: (1) Genius is a talent for producing something for which no determinate rule can be given, not a predisposition consisting of a skill for something that can be learned by following some rule or other; hence the foremost property of genius must be originality. (2) Since nonsense too can be original, the products of genius must also be models, i.e., they must be exemplary; hence, though they do not themselves arise through imitation, still they must serve others for this, i.e., as a standard or rule by which to judge. (3) Genius itself cannot describe or indicate scientifically how it brings about its products, and it is rather as nature that it gives the rule. That is why, if an author owes a product to his genius, he himself does not know how he came by the ideas for it; nor is it in his power [Gewalt] to devise such products at his pleasure, or by following a plan, and to communicate [his procedure] to others in precepts that would enable them to bring about like products. (Indeed, that is presumably why the word genius is derived from [Latin] genius, [which means] the guardian and guiding spirit that each person is given as his own at birth, and to whose inspiration [Eingebung] those original ideas are due.) (4) Nature, through genius, prescribes the rule not to science but to art, and this also only insofar as the art is to be fine art.

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§49 On the powers of the mind which constitute genius

Of certain products that are expected to reveal themselves at least in part to be fine art, we say that they have no spirit, even though we find nothing to censure in them as far as taste is concerned. A poem may be quite nice and elegant and yet have no spirit. A story may be precise and orderly and yet have no spirit. An oration may be both thorough and graceful and yet have no spirit. Many conversations are entertaining, but they have no spirit. Even about some woman we will say that she is pretty, communicative, and polite, but that she has no spirit. Well, what do we mean here by spirit?

Spirit [Geist] in an aesthetic sense is the animating principle in the mind. But what this principle uses to animate [or quicken] the soul, the material it employs for this, is what imparts to the mental powers a purposive momentum, i.e., imparts to them a play which is such that it sustains itself on its own and even strengthens the powers for such play.

Now I maintain that this principle is nothing but the ability to exhibit aesthetic ideas; and by an aesthetic idea I mean a presentation of the imagination which 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, which is, conversely, a concept to which no intuition (presentation of the imagination) can be adequate.

For the imagination (in its role as a productive cognitive power) is very mighty when it creates, as it were, another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it. We use it to entertain ourselves when experience strikes us as overly routine. We may even restructure experience; and though in doing so we continue to follow analogical laws, yet we also follow principles which reside higher up, namely, in reason (and which are just as natural to us as those which the understanding follows in apprehending empirical nature). In this process we feel our freedom from the law of association (which attaches to the empirical use of the imagination); for although it is under that law that nature lends us material, yet we can process that material into something quite different, namely, into something that surpasses nature.

Such presentations of the imagination we may call ideas. One reason for this is that they do at least strive toward something that lies beyond the bounds of experience, and hence try to approach an exhibition of rational concepts (intellectual ideas), and thus [these concepts] are given a semblance of objective reality. Another reason, indeed the main reason, for calling those presentations ideas is that they are inner intuitions to which no concept can be completely adequate. A poet ventures to give sensible expression to rational ideas of invisible beings, the realm of the blessed, the realm of hell, eternity, creation, and so on. Or, again, he takes [things] that are indeed exemplified in experience, such as death, envy, and all the other vices, as well as love, fame, and so on; but then, by means of an imagination that emulates the example of reason in reaching [for] a maximum, he ventures to give these sensible expression in a way that goes beyond the limits of experience, namely, with a completeness for which no example can be found in nature. And it is actually in the art of poetry that the power [i.e., faculty] of aesthetic ideas can manifest itself to full extent. Considered by itself, however, this power is actually only a talent (of the imagination).

Now if a concept is provided with [unterlegen] 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 (i.e., reason) in motion: it makes reason think more, when prompted by a [certain] presentation, than what can be apprehended and made distinct in the presentation (though the thought does pertain to the concept of the object [presented]).

If forms do not constitute the exhibition of a given concept itself, but are only supplementary [Neben-] presentations of the imagination, expressing the concept’s implications and its kinship with other concepts, then they are called (aesthetic) attributes of an object, of an object whose concept is a rational idea and hence cannot be exhibited adequately. Thus Jupiter’s eagle with the lightning in its claws is an attribute of the mighty king of heaven, and the peacock is an attribute of heaven’s stately queen. [Through] these attributes, unlike [through] logical attributes, [we] do not present the content of our concepts of the sublimity and majesty of creation, but present something different, something that prompts the imagination to spread over a multitude of kindred presentations that arouse more thought than can be expressed in a concept determined by words. These aesthetic attributes yield an aesthetic idea, which serves the mentioned rational idea as a substitute for a logical exhibition, but its proper function is to quicken [beleben] the mind by opening up for it a view into an immense realm of kindred presentations. Fine art does this not only in painting or sculpture (where we usually speak of attributes); but poetry and oratory also take the spirit that animates [beleben] their works solely from the aesthetic attributes of the objects, attributes that accompany the logical ones and that give the imagination a momentum which makes it think more in response to these objects [dabei], though in an undeveloped way, than can be comprehended within one concept and hence in one determinate linguistic expression. Here are some examples, though for the sake of brevity I must confine myself to only a few.

The great king, in one of his poems, expresses himself thus:

Let us part from life without grumbling or regrets,
Leaving the world behind filled with our good deeds.
Thus the sun, his daily course completed,
Spreads one more soft light over the sky;
And the last rays that he sends through the air
Are the last sighs he gives the world for its well-being.22

The king is here animating his rational idea of a cosmopolitan attitude, even at the end of life, by means of an attribute which the imagination (in remembering all the pleasures of a completed beautiful summer day, which a serene evening calls to mind) conjoins with that presentation, and which arouses a multitude of sensations and supplementary presentations for which no expression can be found. On the other hand, even an intellectual concept may serve, conversely, as an attribute of a presentation of sense and thus animate that presentation by the idea of the supersensible; but [we] may use for this only the aesthetic [element] that attaches subjectively to our consciousness of the supersensible. Thus, for example, a certain poet, in describing a beautiful
morning, says: ‘The sun flowed forth, as serenity flows from virtue.’ The consciousness of virtue, even if we only think of ourselves as in the position of a virtuous person, spreads in the mind a multitude of sublime and calming feelings and a boundless outlook toward a joyful future, such as no expression commensurate with a determinate concept completely attains.

In a word, an aesthetic idea is a presentation of the imagination which is conjoined with a given concept and is connected, when we use imagination in its freedom, with such a multiplicity of partial presentations that no expression that stands for a determinate concept can be found for it. Hence it is a presentation that makes us add to a concept the thoughts of much that is ineffable, but the feeling of which quickens our cognitive powers and connects language, which otherwise would be mere letters, with spirit.

So the mental powers whose combination (in a certain relation) constitutes genius are imagination and understanding. One qualification is needed, however. When the imagination is used for cognition, then it is under the constraint of the understanding and is subject to the restriction of adequacy to the understanding’s concept. But when the aim is aesthetic, then the imagination is free, so that, over and above that harmony with the concept, it may supply, in an unstudied way, a wealth of undeveloped material for the understanding which the latter disregarded in its concept. But the understanding employs this material not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, namely, to quicken the cognitive powers, though indirectly this does serve cognition too. Hence genius actually consists in the happy relation – one that no science can teach and that cannot be learned by any diligence – allowing us, first, to discover ideas for a given concept, and, second, to hit upon a way of expressing these ideas that enables us to communicate to others, as accompanying a concept, the mental attunement that those ideas produce. The second talent is properly the one we call spirit. For in order to express what is ineffable in the mental state accompanying a certain presentation and to make it universally communicable – whether the expression consists in language or painting or plastic art – we need an ability [viz., spirit] to apprehend the imagination’s rapidly passing play and to unite it in a concept that can be communicated without the constraint of rules (a concept that on that very account is original, while at the same time it reveals a new rule that could not have been inferred from any earlier principles or examples).

§56 Presentation of the antinomy of taste

There are two commonplaces about taste. The following proposition contains the first of these and is used by everyone who lacks taste but tries to escape censure: Everyone has his own taste. That amounts to saying that the basis determining a judgment of taste is merely subjective (gratification or pain), and that such judgments have no right to other people’s necessary assent.

The second commonplace about taste, which is used even by those who grant judgments of taste the right to speak validly for everyone, is this: There is no disputing about taste. That amounts to saying that, even though the basis determining a judgment of taste may be objective, that basis still cannot be brought to determinate
concepts; and hence even proofs do not allow us to decide anything about such a judgment, although we can certainly quarrel about it, and rightly so. For though disputing and quarreling are alike in that [we] try to produce agreement between judgments by means of the mutual resistance between them, disputing is different inasmuch as here we hope to produce this agreement according to determinate concepts, by basing a proof on them, so that we assume that the judgment is based on objective concepts; and in cases where we think that this cannot be done, we judge that disputing also is impossible.

It is easy to see that between these two commonplaces a proposition is missing. This proposition is not in common use as a proverb, but everyone still has it in mind. It is this: One can quarrel about taste (though one cannot dispute about it). This proposition, however, implies the opposite of the first proposition above [Everyone has his own taste]. For if it is granted that we can quarrel about something, then there must be some hope for us to arrive at agreement about it, and so we must be able to count on the judgment’s having bases that do not have merely private validity and hence are not merely subjective. But the above principle, Everyone has his own taste, says the direct opposite.

Hence the following antinomy emerges concerning the principle of taste:

1. **Thesis**: A judgment of taste is not based on concepts; for otherwise one could dispute about it (decide by means of proofs).

2. **Antithesis**: A judgment of taste is based on concepts; for otherwise, regardless of the variation among [such judgments], one could not even so much as quarrel about them (lay claim to other people’s necessary assent to one’s judgment).

### § 57 Solution of the antinomy of taste

There is only one way for us to eliminate the conflict between the mentioned principles, on which we base all our judgments of taste (and which are nothing but the two peculiarities of a judgment of taste that were set out in the analytic): We must show that the concept to which we refer the object in such judgments is understood in different senses in those two maxims [or principles] of the aesthetic power of judgment, and show that it is necessary for our transcendental power of judgment to adopt both these senses (or points of view in judging) but that even the illusion arising from our confusion of the two is natural and hence unavoidable.

A judgment of taste must refer to some concept or other, for otherwise it could not possibly lay claim to necessary validity for everyone. And yet it must not be provable from a concept, because, while some concepts can be determined, others cannot, but are intrinsically both indeterminate and indeterminable. Concepts of the understanding are of the first kind: for them there can be a corresponding sensible intuition whose predicates determine them. On the other hand, reason has a concept of the second kind: the transcendental concept of the supersensible underlying all that intuition, so that we cannot determine this concept any further theoretically.

Now, on the other hand, a judgment of taste does deal with objects of sense – though not so as to determine a concept of these objects for the understanding, since it is not a cognitive judgment. Rather, this judgment is a singular intuitive presentation referred to the feeling of pleasure, and hence is only a private judgment; and to this
The object is an object of liking for me; the same may not apply to others: Everyone has his own taste.

And yet there can be no doubt that in a judgment of taste the presentation of the object (and at the same time of the subject as well) is referred more broadly [i.e., beyond ourselves], and this broader reference is our basis for extending such judgments [and treating them] as necessary for everyone. Hence this extension must be based on some concept or other; but this concept must be one that no intuition can determine, that does not permit us to cognize anything and hence does not permit us to prove a judgment of taste; such a mere concept is reason’s pure concept of the supersensible underlying the object (as well as underlying the judging subject) as an object of sense and hence as appearance. For unless we assumed that a judgment of taste relies on some concept or other, we could not save its claim to universal validity. Alternatively, if a judgment of taste were based on a concept of the understanding, such as that of perfection, even though merely a confused concept of perfection, to which we could add the sensible intuition of the beautiful as corresponding to it, then it would be possible at least intrinsically to base a judgment of taste on proofs; but that contradicts the thesis.

However, all contradiction disappears if I say this: A judgment of taste is based on a concept (the concept of a general basis of nature’s subjective purposiveness for our power of judgment), but this concept does not allow us to cognize and prove anything concerning the object because it is intrinsically indeterminable and inadequate for cognition; and yet this same concept does make the judgment of taste valid for everyone, because (though each person’s judgment is singular and directly accompanies his intuition) the basis that determines the judgment lies, perhaps, in the concept of what may be considered the supersensible substrate of humanity.

What is needed to solve an antinomy is only the possibility that two seemingly conflicting propositions are in fact not contradictory but are consistent, even though it would surpass our cognitive power to explain how the concept involved [i.e., how what the concept stands for] is possible. Showing this [consistency] will also allow us to grasp [the fact] that and [the reason] why this illusion [Schein] 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.

For what gives rise to this antinomy is [the fact] that we treat the concept presupposed by the universal validity of a judgment as if that concept had the same meaning in the two conflicting judgments, and yet two opposed predicates are asserted of it. Hence the thesis should instead read: A judgment of taste is not based on determinate concepts; but the antithesis should read: A judgment of taste is indeed based on a concept, but on an indeterminate one (namely, that of the supersensible substrate of appearances); and then there would be no conflict between the two.

Eliminating this conflict between the claims and counterclaims of taste is the best we can do. It is absolutely impossible to provide a determinate, objective principle of taste that would allow us to guide, to test, and to prove its judgments, because then they would not be judgments of taste. As for the subjective principle – i.e., the indeterminate idea of the supersensible in us – as the sole key for solving the mystery of this ability [i.e., taste] concealed from us even as to its sources, we can do no more than point to it; but there is nothing we can do that would allow us to grasp it any further.

The antinomy I have set forth and settled here is based on the concept of taste in the
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proper sense, i.e., as an aesthetic power of judgment that merely reflects; and I reconciled the two seemingly conflicting principles [by showing] that they may both be true, and that is all we need. If, on the other hand, we assumed, as some do, that the basis determining taste is agreeableness (because the presentation underlying a judgment of taste is singular), or, as others would have it, that it is the principle of perfection (because the judgment is universally valid), with the definition of taste formulated accordingly, then the result would be an antinomy that we could not possibly settle except by showing that the two opposed (but opposed [as contraries,] not as mere contradictories) propositions are both false; and that would prove the concept underlying both of them to be self-contradictory. So we see that the elimination of the antinomy of aesthetic judgment proceeds along lines similar to the solution of the antinomies of pure theoretical reason in the Critique [of Pure Reason], and we see here too – as well as in the Critique of Practical Reason – that 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, since that is the only alternative left to us for bringing reason into harmony with itself.

Comment I

Since we so frequently find occasion in transcendental philosophy to distinguish ideas from concepts of the understanding, it may be useful to introduce technical terms to mark the difference. I think there will be no objection if I propose a few. Ideas, in the broadest sense, are presentations referred to an object according to a certain principle (subjective or objective) but are such that they can still never become cognition of an object. There are two kinds of ideas. One of these is referred to an intuition, according to a merely subjective principle of the mutual harmony of the cognitive powers (imagination and understanding); and these ideas are called aesthetic. The other kind is referred to a concept, according to an objective principle, but these ideas still can never yield cognition of the object; they are called rational ideas. Rational ideas are transcendent concepts; they differ from concepts of the understanding, which are called immanent because they can always be supplied with an experience that adequately corresponds to them.

An aesthetic idea cannot become cognition because it is an intuition (of the imagination) for which an adequate concept can never be found. A rational idea can never become cognition because it contains a concept (of the supersensible) for which no adequate intuition can ever be given.

I think we may call aesthetic ideas unexpoundable presentations of the imagination, and rational ideas indemonstrable concepts of reason. [But in saying this] I am presupposing that certainly neither of them lacks a basis, but that (as I said above in explicating ideas generally) they are produced according to certain principles of the cognitive powers to which they belong (aesthetic ideas according to subjective principles, rational ideas according to objective ones).

Concepts of the understanding must, as such, always be demonstrable (if by demonstrating we mean merely exhibiting, as we do in anatomy [for example]; i.e., it must always be possible for the object corresponding to such concepts to be given in intuition (pure or empirical), because only in this way can they become cognitions. The concept of magnitude can be given in the a priori intuition of space, such as that of a
straight line, and so on; the concept of cause can be given in [an intuition of] impenetrability, or [of] the impact of bodies, etc. Hence both these concepts can be supported by an empirical intuition, i.e., the thought of them can be illustrated (demonstrated, displayed) in an example; and this possibility must [always] be there, since otherwise we cannot be certain that the thought is not empty, i.e., devoid of any object.36

In logic the terms demonstrable and indemonstrable are usually applied only to propositions. But it would be better if there we talked instead about propositions that are only indirectly certain and propositions that are directly certain. For pure philosophy also has propositions of both kinds, if we understand by them true propositions that can be proved, or that cannot.37 For, as philosophy, it can indeed prove [propositions] from a priori grounds, but cannot demonstrate them, unless we totally abandon the meaning of the word demonstrate (ostendere, exhibere), which means the same as to exhibit one’s concept [not only discursively but] in intuition as well (whether in proving or merely in defining something). If this intuition is a priori, [the exhibition43] is called the construction of the concept;39 but even if the intuition is empirical, [the exhibition] is still a display of the object, which serves to assure us that the concept has objective reality. For example, if an anatomist has set forth the concept of the human eye discursively and goes on to dissect the eye to make the concept intuitable, we say that he demonstrates this organ.

Accordingly, the rational concept of the supersensible substrate of all appearances generally, or the rational concept of the supersensible that must be regarded as underlying our power of choice in relation to moral laws, i.e., the rational concept of transcendental freedom, is an indemonstrable concept and a rational idea, simply because of the type of concept it is; virtue too is such a concept, but [only] in degree. For in the case of the concept of the supersensible, there is not even an intrinsic possibility for anything corresponding to it in quality to be given in experience, whereas in the case of virtue no empirical product of our causality of freedom reaches the degree that the rational idea of virtue prescribes to us as the rule.

Just as in the case of a rational idea the imagination with its intuitions does not reach the given concept, so in the case of an aesthetic idea the understanding with its concepts never reaches the entire inner intuition that the imagination has and connects with a given presentation. And since bringing a presentation of the imagination to concepts is the same as expounding it, aesthetic ideas may be called unexpoundable presentations of the imagination (in its free play). Later on I shall have occasion to make some further points about aesthetic ideas.40 Here I shall merely point out that both kinds of ideas, rational as well as aesthetic, must have their principles, and both must have them in reason: the principles of rational ideas must be objective principles of reason’s employment, those of aesthetic ideas subjective ones.

Hence GENIUS can also be explicated as the ability to [exhibit] aesthetic ideas.41 This [explication] indicates at the same time why it is that, in products of genius, art (i.e., production of the beautiful) receives its rule from nature (the nature of the subject) rather than from a deliberate purpose. For we must judge the beautiful not according to concepts, but according to the purposive attunement of the imagination that brings it into harmony with the power of concepts as such. Hence the subjective standard for that aesthetic but unconditioned purposiveness in fine art that is to lay rightful claim to everyone’s necessary liking cannot be supplied by any rule or precept, but can be
supplied only by that which is merely nature in the subject but which cannot be encompassed by rules or concepts – namely, the supersensible substrate (unattainable by any concept of the understanding) of all his powers; and hence the mentioned standard can be supplied only by [means of] that by reference to which we are to make all our cognitive powers harmonize, [doing] which is the ultimate purpose given us by the intelligible [element] of our nature. It is in this way alone, too, that this purposiveness, for which we cannot prescribe an objective principle, can be based a priori on a principle that is subjective and yet universally valid.

Translated by Werner S. Pluhar

Notes

1 The synthetic method proceeds from principles to their consequences, the analytic method the other way. Cf. the Logic, Ak. IX, 149, and the Prolegomena, Ak. IV, 263, 275, 276n, 279, and 365. [Editor: numbers refer to the pagination of the original Akademie edition, reproduced here in the margins.]

2 Cf. Ak. 232 br. n. 51.

3 Charles Batteux (1713–80), French philosopher and, in particular, aesthetician, and author of several works; Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81), German dramatist and aesthetician.


There is something approaching to principles in mental taste, and critics can reason and dispute more plausibly than cooks or perfumers. We may observe, however, that this uniformity among human kind hinders not, but that there is a considerable diversity in the sentiments of beauty and worth, and that education, custom, prejudice, caprice, and humour frequently vary our taste of this kind. You will never convince a man who is not accustomed to Italian music and has not an ear to follow its intricacies that a Scots tune is not preferable. You have not even any single argument beyond your own taste which you can employ in your behalf; and to your antagonist his particular taste will always appear a more convincing argument to the contrary. If you be wise, each of you will allow that the other may be in the right, and, having many other instances of this diversity of taste, you will both confess that beauty and worth are merely of a relative nature and consist in an agreeable sentiment, produced by an object in a particular mind, according to the peculiar structure and constitution of that mind.

5 I.e., creating a schema; cf. Ak. 253 br. n. 17. Kant is about to say that in a judgment of taste the imagination as such is subsumed under the understanding as such. Strictly speaking, however, the imagination is subsumed under the (indeterminate) schema of the understanding as such; and this indeterminate schema is the ‘condition’ which Kant has just mentioned.

6 In the sense of feeling, in this case.

7 As far as empirical judgments have universal validity they are judgments of experience; but those that are valid only subjectively I call mere judgments of perception. The latter require no pure concept of the understanding, but only the logical connection of the perceptions in a thinking subject. Judgments of experience, on the other hand, require, in addition to the presentations of sensible intuition, special concepts produced originally in the understanding, and it is these concepts that make the judgment of experience valid objectively.

(Prolegomena, Ak. IV, 298. Cf. the Critique of Pure Reason, A 120, A 374, B 422n.)

8 The metaphysical deduction (for this name, see B 159), A 65–83 = B 90–116, is to show what categories there are (in the understanding), the transcendental deduction, A 84–130 and B 116–69, is to prove that these categories are objectively valid.


10 Cf. ibid., B 19. ‘A priori’ has here been construed adverbially, as modifying ‘possible’. It can
also be read as an adjective modifying ‘judgments,’ so that Kant’s question reads, ‘How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?’ Either reading can be supported by quotes in which the ambiguity does not arise, since Kant switches frequently between these two ways of talking. See, e.g., the passage immediately following the question Kant just quoted, B 20.

11 On the problem as to where the deduction ends (specifically, the problem as to whether the link of beauty to morality is still part of the deduction), see the Translator’s Introduction [in the Pluhar translation of the Critique], lxi–lvi.

12 To be justified in laying claim to universal assent to a judgment of the aesthetic power of judgment, which rests merely on subjective bases, one need grant only the following: (1) that in all people the subjective conditions of this power are the same as concerns the relations required for cognition as such between the cognitive powers that are activated in the power of judgment; and this must be true, for otherwise people could not communicate their presentations to one another, indeed they could not even communicate cognition; (2) that the judgment has taken into consideration merely this relation (and hence the formal condition of the power of judgment) and is pure, i.e., mingled neither with concepts of the object nor with sensations as the judgment’s determining bases. But even if a mistake be made on the latter point, this amounts to nothing but an incorrect application, in a particular case, of an authority given to us by a law, and in no way annuls the authority [itself].

13 Cf. Ak. 216 incl. br. n. 30, as well as the Comment Kant is about to make, but esp. §39, Ak. 293, and §40, Ak. 293–94.

14 Cf. just above, n. 15 and br. n. 16. [Editor: here, nn. 12 and 13.]

15 Or ‘beautiful’ science: Kant is responding, above all, to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten and Georg Friedrich Meier.

16 Cf. the Anthropology. Ak. VII, 280.

17 Sinnesempfindung; see §39, Ak. 291 incl. br. n. 19.

18 Cf. the Anthropology. Ak. VII, 225.

19 Cf. ibid., Ak. VII, 225 and 246. Cf. also above, §46, Ak. 308.

20 Cf. §57, Comment I, Ak. 341–44.

21 On the ‘productive’ imagination, see Ak. 240 br. n. 66; and cf. Ak. 243 br. n. 73, where Kant tells us in what sense the imagination is not creative.

22 Kant is giving a German translation (probably his own) of the following lines written in French by Frederick the Great (Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand, 1846ff., x, 203):

Oui, finissons sans trouble, et mourons sans regrets,
En laissant l’Univers comblé de nos bienfaits.
Ainsi l’Astre du jour, au bout de sa carrière,
Répand sur l’horizon une douce lumière,
Et les derniers rayons qu’il darde dans les airs
Sont ses derniers soupirs qu’il donne à l’Univers.

23 From Akademische Gedichte (Academic Poems) (1782), vol. i, p. 70, by J.Ph.L. Withof (1725–89), professor of morals, oratory, and medicine at Duisburg, Germany. The original poem had ‘goodness’ instead of ‘virtue.’

24 Perhaps nothing more sublime has ever been said, or a thought ever been expressed more sublime, than in that inscription above the temple of Isis (Mother Nature): ‘I am all that is, that was, and that will be, and no mortal has lifted my veil.’ Segner made use of this idea in an ingenious vignette prefixed to his Naturlehre [Natural Science], so as first to imbue the pupil, whom he was about to lead into this temple, with the sacred thrill that is meant to attune the mind to solemn attentiveness.

25 Johann Andreas von Segner (1704–77), German physicist and mathematician at Jena, Göttingen, and Halle. He is the author of several significant scientific works. He introduced the concept of the surface tension of liquids.

26 The thesis and antithesis.


29 On Kant’s mysterious switch from the indeterminate concept of nature’s purposiveness (Ak.
180–92 and the third Moment, Ak. 219–36) to the (indeterminate) concept of the *supersensible* (specifically the supersensible as basis of that same purposiveness of nature), see ‘Problem I’ in the Translator’s Introduction [to the Pluhar translation], lxii–lxiii and xciv–xcviii.

30 Cf. §34, Ak. 285–86.
31 Cf. the *Logic*, Ak. IX, 71.
32 For these antinomies and their solution, see A 405–567 = B 432–595.
34 Or ‘ideas of reason.’ Emphasis added.
35 Constructing a (pure) concept is also included. Cf. Ak. 232 br. n. 51.
36 Cf. the *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 291–93.
37 Cf. the *Logic*, Ak. IX, 71 and 110.
38 Correcting ‘welche’ to ‘welcher,’ as Windelband rightly recommends: Ak. V, 529.
39 Cf. Ak. 232 br. n. 51, and Ak. 351 br. n. 31.
40 See §58, Ak. 350–51, and §60, Ak. 355.
41 Cf. §49, Ak. 313–14.