CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT

Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (1790) generally regarded as foundational treatise in modern philosophical aesthetics
go integration of aesthetic theory into a complete philosophical system predates Kant’s third *Critique*

until 1780’s Kant did not consider what we now know as aesthetics to be a legitimate subject for
哲学
he denied the principles of taste
holding that our judgments about beauty are based simply on pleasure
and thus entirely subjective
a fit study for empirical studies only (anthropology or history)

did not regard aesthetic perception as related to cognitive judgment, understanding, and ideas
but his drive for philosophical systematicity led him to reconsider
would a critical examination of our faculty of feeling pleasure lead to a third branch of

philosophy?

that would join theoretical philosophy (metaphysics) and practical philosophy (ethics)?

he hoped to provide a theory of the aesthetic judgment that would justify its apparent claim to
intersubjective validity, and escape the temptations of skepticism and relativism
believed this could be accomplished only by giving a deeper interpretation of art and its values
and by establishing for it a more intimate connection with the basic cognitive faculties of the

mind

*Critique of Pure Reason* uncovered a priori conditions [mind software] for making objective,
universally valid empirical judgments, both ordinary and scientific [the mind imposes space,
time, and causality on experience]
space and time are the *a priori* conditions of our being affected by things (Sensibility)
the categories are the *a priori* conditions of making judgments (Understanding)

*Critique of Practical Reason* discovered *a priori* conditions of making objective, universally
valid moral judgments

*Critique of Judgment*: are there *a priori* conditions for making judgments based on pleasure?
Kant takes as his paradigm the type of judgment everyone believes is based on feeling
pleasure—the judgment that something is beautiful

his epistemology and metaphysics based on division between
*Sensibility*—the ability to be affected by things by receiving sensations; this is not yet at the
level of thought, or even experience in any meaningful sense
*Understanding*—the faculty of producing thoughts; it is non-sensible, discursive, works with
general concepts, not individual intuitions
Ordinary experience comes about through the synthesis of these two powers: the Understanding takes the material of sensation and organizes it into a concept resulting in a thought or judgment. By ‘judgment’ Kant simply means experience that results in a claim or assertion about something. The judgment that something is beautiful he calls a ‘judgment of taste’.

**THE ANALYTIC OF THE BEAUTIFUL**

an analysis of “what is required in order to call an object beautiful”

*The Four Moments*

is divided into four “Moments” corresponding to heading of the table of judgments in the first *Critique*: quantity, quality, relation, modality

**First Moment (Quality)**

*Disinterested Pleasure*

concludes that in order to call an object beautiful one must judge it to be

“the object of an entirely disinterested satisfaction or dissatisfaction”

aesthetic pleasure comes only to those who attend to the object disinterestedly

how does Kant reach this conclusion:

begins with the observation that the judgment of taste is an aesthetic judgment thus not a cognitive judgment

in a cognitive judgment I use a concept to connect my experience to an object

in an aesthetic judgment, I don’t use a concept, but my own subjective state (sentiment)

when judging something to be beautiful, one is relating the object (one’s awareness of the object)

“back to the subject and to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure”

judgments of taste are thus subjective rather than objective

then Kant differentiates pleasure in the beautiful from other pleasures

what is unique about pleasure in the beautiful is that it is

“a disinterested and free satisfaction; for no interest, either of sense or of reason, here forces our assent”

the pleasure in the beautiful is not in an object’s gratifying our senses: like sweetness of candy

nor is it based on finding some practical use (the mediately good or the useful)

nor based on fulfilling moral requirements (the morally good)

the pleasure in the beautiful is “merely contemplative”

a kind of free contemplation and reflection

this disinterestedness is what is unique about the judgment of taste

for contemplation and reflection are absent in what pleases through sensation and contemplation and reflection in the practical concerns (the useful or moral) are not free but constrained by definite concepts
SECOND MOMENT (QUANTITY)

Universal Pleasure

concludes that “the beautiful is that which pleases universally without [requiring] a concept”

this conclusion is badly put since it is plainly false: a beautiful thing does not please everyone
what he means is better put earlier

“the beautiful is that which apart from concepts is represented as the object of a universal
satisfaction”

aesthetic judgments thus behave universally

they involve an expectation or claim upon the agreement of others
we make the judgment that something is beautiful ‘as if’ beauty where a real property of the
object—in this sense the pleasure in the beautiful is not wholly subjective

we think that others should find the object beautiful as well, while fully recognizing that not
everyone will in fact agree

“the judgment of taste itself does not postulate the agreement of everyone”

we tend to see disagreements over judgment of the beautiful as involving error

an agreement as more than coincidence

Kant calls this feature of judgments of taste their “subjective universality”

argues for this in two ways

1) through the concept of disinterestedness

if the pleasure in finding something beautiful does not lie in any interest
then one can conclude that it doesn’t depend on private conditions

“must be regarded as grounded on what he can presuppose in every other person . . .
Consequently the judgment of taste, accompanied with the consciousness of separation from
all interest, must claim validity for everyone”

2) to say that something is beautiful is (linguistically) to claim universality for one’s judgment

Judgments of taste are not objective but only subjectively universal
they cannot be proved

“there can be no rule according to which anyone is to be forced to recognize anything as
beautiful”

At this point Kant’s explication of the judgment of taste seems to lead to an insoluble problem:
the judgment of taste is based on feeling of pleasure but also claims universal validity
yet judgments of taste cannot be proved since they do not rest on concepts or rules

the crucial question, which Kant says “is the key to the critique of taste”

How is it that the feeling of pleasure in the beautiful is universally communicable?
The answer is that the pleasure is universally communicable only if it is based not on mere sensation but on a state of mind that is universally communicable since the only universally communicable states of mind are cognitive states somehow the pleasure in the beautiful must be based on cognition but he has already determined that a judgment of taste is not cognitive in that there is no referring to a concept but rather to a feeling thus his answer is that the pleasure underlying the judgment of taste is not based on a particular cognitive state of mind, but only on "cognition in general"

judgment of taste is based on the free play of the cognitive faculties

*imagination:* that which gathers together the stuff of our experience into definite images or representations
*understanding:* forms definite concepts from these representations

in aesthetic experience the same two faculties operate together however the end result is not a definite concept instead the two faculties interact in free play: the imagination forms a representation of the object but unlike the case of cognition the understanding does not form a definite concept for in aesthetic experience no definite concept could adequately capture what we observe in aesthetic experience the two faculties do not come to a definite conclusion but they work back and forth in a free play between imagination and understanding

take the case of the experience of a flower in the case of cognition, the imagination presents to the understanding a representation of the flower the understanding then determines the appropriate concept (e.g., a petunia) completing the process of cognition

but in aesthetic experience this process does not come to a completion but works back and forth the understanding still seeks understanding but the imagination is continually reworking its representations thus in aesthetic experience there is more than understanding can grasp the understanding also stimulates the imagination into further reformulations

the aesthetic experience thus enhances our experience of the object’s particularity while cognition seeks generically classifiable features

**Third Moment (relation)**

*The Form of Purposiveness*

purports to explain what is being related to in the judgment that something is beautiful the content of the judgment of taste
Kant concludes it is the form of the purposiveness or finality of an object, insofar as this is perceived without any representation of a purpose
“purposiveness without purpose”

the straightforward (easier) part of the third moment is that the pleasure in the beautiful is based on the perceived form of the object
Kant argues that a pure judgment of taste cannot be based on pleasures of charm or emotion nor simply on empirical sensations such as charming colors nor on a definite concept
but only on formal properties
these formal properties are essentially spatial and temporal relations
manifested in the spatial delineation or design of figures
temporal composition of tones

ornamentation or elements of charm or emotion may attract us to beautiful objects but in order to make an aesthetic judgment we must abstract from these elements reflect only on the form

the harder part of the third moment concerns the concept of “purposiveness without purpose”

to say that an object (say a knife) has a purpose is to say that the concept of its being the way it is, having the form it has, came first and is the cause of its existence the knife’s form makes sense because we know its purpose
to appreciate the beauty of the knife to attend to the knife aesthetically is to recognize the object to be purposiveness in its form without conceptualizing a definite purpose

FOURTH MOMENT (MODALITY)

Necessary Pleasure
“the beautiful is that which without any concept is cognized as the object of a necessary satisfaction”

when we find something beautiful we think that everyone ought to give their approval and also describe it as beautiful as we cannot prove that everyone will find the same object beautiful this necessity is not theoretical, objective nor can it be a practical necessity

Kant calls the necessity “exemplary” “subjective” “conditioned” based on a “ground that is common to all”
describes this as “common sense”
“A subjective principle which determines what pleases or displeases only by feeling and not
by concepts, but yet with universal validity”

it is a common sense that is exemplary—an ideal or norm—but is presupposed by all aesthetic
judgment

The Deduction of the Judgments of Taste

strictly speaking the “Analytic of the Beautiful” was only supposed to show what is required to
call an object beautiful—to give an explanation of what a judgment of taste means

but Kant also begins to discuss the problem of whether one can ‘provide a deduction’ (show the
legitimacy) of a class of judgment “which imputes the same satisfaction necessarily to everyone”

this is what he thinks subsumes the Critique of Judgment under transcendental philosophy

the key question of philosophical aesthetics:

is it legitimate to make a judgment based merely on the pleasure experienced in perceptually
apprehending something, while implying that everyone ought to agree?

Kant believes he has established a link to “the general problem of transcendental philosophy:
how are synthetical a priori judgments possible?”

His answer:
claims that the pleasure in the beautiful must be based on “cognition in general,” which is
described as the harmony of the cognitive faculties (imagination and understanding) in free play
that is, not determined by concepts

harmony is characterized as the representation of the mere form of purposiveness by which an
object is given to us

determining ground of the judgment is the feeling of that harmony in the play of the mental
powers

the judgment of taste presupposes the universal capacity to experience this feeling, which Kant
refers to as a “common sense”

how to justify the implied universality and necessity of the judgment of taste?

The conclusion of the Deduction:
it is legitimate to impute to everyone the pleasure we experience in the beautiful because
1) we are claiming it rests on the subjective element that we rightly presuppose in everyone to be
necessary for cognition
for otherwise we would not be able to communicate with one another at all
2) we are assuming that our judgment of taste is pure—not affected by charm, emotion, the mere
pleasantness of sensation, or even concepts

experiencing beauty is thus a doubly reflective process:
1) we reflect on the spatial and temporal form of the object
   by exercising our powers of judgment (imagination & understanding)

2) we judge the beauty of an object when we come to be aware
   through the feeling of pleasure we get
   of this harmony that is the free play between imagination & understanding
   which we become aware of by reflecting upon our own mental states

*The Sublime*

the experience of the sublime seems to directly contradict the principle of the purposiveness of
the nature of our judgment

solution: the real object of the sublime is not storm, the chasm, the building, etc
what is properly sublime are the ideas of reason

*Fine Art and Artistic Genius*

turns from main argument to more discursive reflection on a number of topics
art and nature, the classification of the arts, genius, humor

through genius “Nature gives the rule to art”
“Genius is the talent (or natural gift) which gives the rule to art”

genius has a talent for producing that for which no rule can be given

genius does not imitate

originality is his essential property

argues that art can be tasteful (that is, agree with aesthetic judgment)
and yet also be ‘soulless’
lacking that certain something
what provides soul in fine art is an aesthetic idea
and it is the talent of genius to generate aesthetic ideas

influence of Kant’s theory of genius:
radical separation of the aesthetic genius from the scientific mind (129)
emphasis on the near miraculous expression of the ineffable, excited states of mind (132)
the link of fine art to a ‘metaphysical’ content (133)
the requirement of radical originality (128)
the raising of poetry to the head of all arts
all of these were a commonplace for well over a century after Kant
when modernists protested against the concept of the artist by using ‘automatic writing’ or ‘found
objects’ it is, for the most part, this concept of the artist-genius that they are reacting against