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Donald W. Crawford

Immanuel Kant's seminal work, the *Critique of Judgement* (*Kritik der Urteilkraft*), published in 1790 (Kant 1951 [1790]), is generally regarded as the foundational treatise in modern philosophical aesthetics. Plato's *Ion* and *Republic*, along with Aristotle's *Poetics*, were the major writings of the ancients; and there were earlier eighteenth-century writings both on the European continent (Leibnitz, Baumgarten) and in England (such as Shaftesbury, Addison, Burke and Hume). But no integration of aesthetic theory into a complete philosophical system predates Kant's third *Critique*, and its importance and influence is as evident today as in the decades following its publication.

Kant directed his attention to aesthetics relatively late in his philosophical career, having already completed most of his major works, such as the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (1783), *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), and the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). During his pre-critical period, he had written a minor essay, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764), which consisted almost entirely of socio-anthropological speculations.

Until the late 1780's, Kant did not consider what we know today as aesthetics to be a legitimate subject for philosophy. He denied the possibility of principles of taste, holding that our judgements about beauty are based simply on pleasure, and being entirely subjective are only a fit topic for empirical studies (anthropology or history). Nor did he regard aesthetic perception as related to the realm of cognitive judgement, understanding and ideas. But Kant's drive for philosophical systematicity led him to reconsider whether a critical examination of our faculty of feeling pleasure might discover a third branch of philosophy that would join theoretical philosophy (metaphysics) and practical philosophy (ethics) in being based on a priori principles. The *Critique of Pure Reason* had uncovered a priori conditions for

making objective, universally valid empirical judgements, both ordinary and scientific. Space and time are the a priori conditions of our being affected by things (Sensibility) and the categories are the a priori conditions of making judgements (Understanding). The *Critique of Practical Reason* had discovered a priori conditions for making objective, universally valid moral judgements. The question for the *Critique of Judgement*, then, was whether there are a priori conditions for making judgements based on pleasure, with Kant taking as his paradigm the type of judgement everyone believes is based on feeling pleasure, namely the judgement that something is beautiful.

Kant's epistemology and metaphysics are based on a division between Sensibility and Understanding. Sensibility is the passive ability to be affected by things by receiving sensations, but this is not yet at the level of thought or even experience in any meaningful sense. Understanding, on the other hand, is non-sensible; it is discursive and works with general concepts, not individual intuitions; it is the active faculty of producing thoughts. Ordinary experience comes about through the synthesis of these two powers of the mind: the material of sensation coming to be grasped as ordered under a concept, thus resulting in a thought (or judgement), such as 'This [what I am looking at and is giving me visual sensations] is a book.' By 'judgement' Kant simply means experience that results in a claim or assertion about something or, even more generally, an awareness that something is the case. The judgement that something is beautiful he calls a 'judgement of taste.'

The analytic of the beautiful

The beginning section of the *Critique of Judgement* is titled the "Analytic of the Beautiful," which Kant says consists in an analysis of "what is required in order to call an object beautiful" (Kant 1951: §1n). It is divided into four "Moments," corresponding to the headings of the table of judgements in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A70 = B95): quantity, quality, relation and modality. The fit of the judgement of taste to this table is strained, but the structure serves Kant's purpose of systematic elucidations of the formal properties of judgements of taste, and these elucidations – rather than the architectonic structure – are the heart of his aesthetic theory. They consist in detailed analyses of that to which we are committing ourselves in making a judgement of taste. At the same time, parts of these sections go beyond mere analysis, anticipating and overlapping the content of later sections.

Disinterested pleasure

The judgement of taste is the judgement that something is or is not beautiful. The First Moment (Quality) of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" concludes that in order to call an object beautiful one must judge it to be "the object of an *entirely disinterested*

[*ohne alles Interesse*] satisfaction or dissatisfaction” (§1). Thus when beauty is affirmed of the object there is additional content to this affirmation, namely the ability of the object to provide satisfaction to those who judge it disinterestedly.

How does Kant reach this conclusion? He begins with the observation that the judgement of taste is an aesthetic judgement, which he contrasts with a cognitive judgement. In making a cognitive judgement I refer my experiential content to an object by means of a concept: for example, I judge that this (what I am aware of) is print on paper. When I make an aesthetic judgement, on the other hand, I refer the experiential content back to my own subjective state. In judging something to be beautiful, what one is aware of (a painting, a building, a flower) is referred “back to the subject and to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure” (Kant 1951: §1). Thus, generically, judgements of taste are a subset of that type of judgement that says that something is pleasing to apprehend; they are therefore subjective rather than objective judgements.

Kant then differentiates the pleasure in the beautiful from other pleasures, by claiming that it is not based on any interest, but is “a disinterested and *free* satisfaction; for no interest, either of sense or of reason, here forces our assent” (Kant 1951: §2). The pleasure we feel in finding something beautiful is not a pleasure based on any interest we have in an object’s simply gratifying our senses, such as candy satisfying a craving for sweetness. Nor is it a pleasure based on finding that an object serves a desired practical use (this is the mediately good or the useful). Nor is it a pleasure based on finding that it fulfills moral requirements (this is the morally good). The pleasure in the beautiful, in contrast to the above, is not based on any interest in the *existence* of an object; it is “merely *contemplative*” (ibid.: §5).

Although this explanation of the pleasure in the beautiful as a disinterested pleasure seems merely negative, the notions of *free* contemplation and reflection anticipate Kant’s attempt to show the legitimacy of the judgement of taste as a unique type of judgement. For contemplation and reflection are absent in the case of what pleases merely through sensation, and in judging what is useful or moral, the acts of reflection and contemplation are not free but constrained by definite concepts.

Universal pleasure

The Second Moment (Quantity, §§6–9), begins to make this clearer, although the compact text is difficult because Kant goes far beyond merely analyzing the judgement of taste, and anticipates justifying its legitimacy as a class of judgement based on an a priori principle. Its conclusion, that “the *beautiful* is that which pleases universally without [requiring] a concept” (Kant 1951: §9), is badly put, since it is plainly false: a beautiful thing does not please everyone.

The more warranted conclusion is the title given to §6: “the beautiful is that which apart from concepts is represented [*vorgestellt wird*] as the object of a universal satisfaction.”

Just as the First Moment encapsulates the common sense notion that one judges something to be beautiful based on the pleasure one feels in apprehending it, so the Second Moment enshrines our belief that the pleasure in the beautiful is not wholly subjective but has some basis that justifies our thinking that others should find the object beautiful as well, while fully recognizing that not everyone will in fact agree with us. Hence Kant says “the judgement of taste itself does not *postulate* the agreement of everyone” (ibid.: §8). Rather, in saying that something is beautiful we think that others should agree with us, which is not the case if we simply say that something is pleasing to us (like the smell of garlic). Kant calls this feature of judgements of taste their “subjective universality” (ibid.: §6).

Kant argues for this universality thesis in two ways, first through the concept of disinterestedness. If one believes the pleasure in finding something beautiful is not owing to any interest, then one naturally concludes that the pleasure does not depend on any private conditions but “must be regarded as grounded on what he can presuppose in every other person Consequently the judgement of taste, accompanied with the consciousness of separation from all interest, must claim validity for everyone” (Kant 1951: §6). Secondly, Kant appeals to semantic considerations:

to say “This object is beautiful *for me*” is laughable, while it makes perfect sense to say “It is pleasant *to me*” . . . not only as regards the taste of the tongue, the palate, and the throat, but for whatever is pleasant to anyone’s eyes and ears.

(Kant 1951: §7)

Thus to say that something is beautiful is (linguistically) to claim universality for one’s judgement.

An additional conclusion of the Second Moment is that this implied universality “does not rest on concepts of objects (not even on empirical ones)” (Kant 1951: §8), and hence is not objective but only subjective universality. Kant thinks this follows from that fact that judgements of taste cannot be proved: “there can be no rule according to which anyone is to be forced to recognize anything as beautiful” (ibid.: §8). This theme recurs in Section 34, where Kant emphasizes that no syllogism can force one’s assent to a judgement of taste, but that judging something to be beautiful requires that one must *immediately* feel pleasure in experiencing the object. Later this same theme forms the ‘thesis’ of the “Antinomy of Taste” (ibid.: §56).

At this point Kant's explication of judgements of taste leads to what looks like an insoluble problem. The judgement of taste is based on the feeling of pleasure but also claims universal validity; yet judgements of taste cannot be proved since they do not rest on concepts or rules. Hence it must be the feeling of pleasure itself that one postulates is universally communicable. How can that be? Kant faces this crucial question in §9, which he says "is the key to the critique of taste." The brief answer is that a pleasure can be universally communicable only if it is based not on mere sensation but rather on a state of mind that is universally communicable. And since the only universally communicable states of mind are cognitive states, somehow the pleasure in the beautiful must be based on cognition. Since the judgement of taste is not cognitive in the defining sense of making reference to a concept, though, the pleasure underlying the judgement of taste cannot be based on a particular (or determinate) cognitive state of mind, but only on "*cognition in general*" (Kant 1951: §9). Kant identifies this with the free play of the cognitive faculties – imagination and understanding – in harmony with one another, a harmony we are aware of only through the feeling of pleasure. So the pleasure in the beautiful is dependent on judging (estimating, appraising) the object, which activity is the free play of the cognitive faculties, and the pleasure comes about when the faculties are felt to be in harmony, attaining "that proportionate accord [*Stimmung*] which we require for all cognition" (ibid.: §9). It is as if cognition had successfully occurred, only the result is not the determinate cognition of a conceptual judgement. Nonetheless, the judgement takes the *form* of a conceptual judgement, since we speak of beauty "as if it were a property of things" and say "the *thing* is beautiful" (ibid.: §7).

The form of purposiveness

The Third Moment (Relation) purports to explain what is being related to in the judgement that something is beautiful, the *content* of the judgement of taste. Kant concludes that it is the form of the purposiveness or finality [*Zweckmässigkeit*] of an object, insofar far as this is perceived in it without any representation of a purpose or end [*Zweck*] (Kant 1951: §17). This claim is complex. The straightforward part is that pleasure in the beautiful is owing to the perceived *form* of the object, in contrast to sensations or concepts of it.

Kant argues that a *pure* judgement of taste cannot be based on pleasures of charm or emotion (Kant 1951: §13), nor simply on empirical sensations such as charming colors or pleasing tones (ibid.: §14), nor on a definite concept (ibid.: §16), but only on formal properties. These are essentially spatial and temporal relations, as manifested in the spatial delineation or design (*Zeichnung*) of figures and the temporal composition, (*Komposition*) of tones

(*ibid.*: §14). Ornamentation or elements of charm or emotion may attract us to beautiful objects, but judging them purely in terms of beauty requires us to abstract from these elements and reflect only on their form. To this extent Kant advances a formalist aesthetics.

The more difficult part of the Third Moment concerns Kant's concept (or perhaps multiple concepts) of "purposiveness without purpose" (Kant 1951: §10), "the mere form of purposiveness," "subjective purposiveness" (*ibid.*: §11), "formal purposiveness" (*ibid.*: §12), "formal subjective purposiveness" (*ibid.*: §12), and "purposive form" (*ibid.*: §15). The key here is the concept of purpose, which Kant defines in general as "that whose *concept* can be regarded as the ground of the possibility of the object itself" (*ibid.*: §15). 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. It was intended to be the way it is: we "place the cause of this form in a will" (*ibid.*: §10). The knife's form makes sense because we understand what it is supposed to be; it has a purpose. But experiencing a thing's beauty must be different from apprehending its form as reflecting a *definite* purpose. For this would be to consider it either as something that gratifies us through sensation (thus serving only our individual, subjective purposes), or as serving an objective, useful purpose; and neither of these would satisfy the condition that a judgement of taste not be based on interest or concepts. Kant's fundamental claim is that we can find an object to be *purposive in its form* even though we do not conceptualize a definite purpose; and this harmony in its form belies a harmony in our cognitive powers (imagination and understanding) in our reflection on the object, which harmony is itself the pleasure we experience when we find an object beautiful (*ibid.*: §12).

Necessary pleasure

The final Moment of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" is that of Modality (§§18–22). Kant concludes that "the *beautiful* is that which without any concept is cognized as the object of a *necessary* satisfaction" (Kant 1951: §22). The beautiful has a necessary reference to satisfaction (*ibid.*: §18), since when we find something beautiful we think that everyone ought to give their approval and also describe it as beautiful. This cannot be a theoretical, objective necessity, since we cannot prove that everyone will feel the same pleasure; nor can it be a practical necessity, since we cannot prove that everyone ought to act in a specific way. Rather, Kant says, the necessity is "exemplary" (*ibid.*: §18), "subjective" and "conditioned", based on a "ground that is common to all" (*ibid.*: §19). He describes this as a "*common sense*" (*ibid.*: §20) – "a subjective principle which determines [viz. necessari-

tates] what pleases or displeases only by feeling and not by concepts, but yet with universal validity” (ibid.: §20). This common sense is exemplary – an ideal or norm – but is presupposed by us in making judgements of taste.

The deduction of judgements of taste

Strictly speaking, the “Analytic of the Beautiful” was only supposed to “show what is required in order to call an object beautiful” (Kant 1951: §1n): that is, to give an explanation of what a judgement of taste means. In fact in this division Kant also begins to discuss the problem that he later says subsumes the *Critique of Judgement* under transcendental philosophy: whether one can provide a ‘deduction’ (show the legitimacy) of a class of judgement “which imputes the same satisfaction necessarily to everyone” (ibid.: §36). This is the key question of philosophical aesthetics: is it legitimate to make a judgement based merely on the pleasure experienced in perceptually apprehending something, while implying that everyone ought to agree? By insisting that the implied universality and necessity of judgements of taste require philosophical legitimization (deduction), Kant believes he has established a link to “the general problem of transcendental philosophy: how are synthetical *a priori* judgements possible?” (ibid.: §36).

The path to an answer is initiated in the “Analytic of the Beautiful.” In Section 9, Kant claims 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. In §11, this harmony is characterized as the representation of the mere form of purposiveness by which an object is given to us. In §15, the determining ground of the judgement is “the feeling (or internal sense) of that harmony in the play of the mental powers, so far as it can be felt in sensation.” And finally in §21 the harmony is described as “a subjective condition of cognition,” an “accordance [*Stimmung*] of the cognitive powers” that is “only determined by feeling (not according to concepts).” Thus the judgement of taste presupposes or postulates the universal capacity to experience this feeling, which Kant refers to as a “common sense” (ibid.: §§20–22).

The section of the *Critique of Judgement* actually titled “Deduction of [Pure] Aesthetical Judgements” (Kant 1951: §§30–40) sets up the key issue in the same way posed by the “Analytic of the Beautiful”: the need to justify the implied universality and necessity of the judgement of taste, a judgement based on perceptual pleasure and not susceptible of proof through appeal to definite rules or principles. This justification can only succeed by reference to cognition, and specifically to the subjective conditions for making judgements in general. Kant thus claims that “the judgement of taste must rest on a mere sensation of

the reciprocal activity of the imagination in its *freedom* and the understanding with its *conformity to law*" (ibid.: §35). The conclusion of the Deduction is clearly stated in §38: it is legitimate to impute to everyone the pleasure we experience in the beautiful because, first, we are claiming that it rests on that subjective element that we rightly can presuppose in everyone as requisite for cognition in general, because otherwise we would not be able to communicate with one another, and second, we are also assuming that our judgement of taste is pure: that is, not affected by charm, emotion, the mere pleasantness of sensation, or even concepts.

Experiencing beauty is thus, for Kant, a doubly reflective process. We reflect on the spatial and temporal form of the object by exercising our powers of judgement (imagination and understanding), and we acknowledge the beauty of an object when we come to be aware through the feeling of pleasure of the harmony of these faculties, which awareness comes by reflecting on our own mental states. In §40 Kant again takes up the idea of a 'common sense,' first introduced in §20, and characterizes it as "an effect of mere reflection upon the mind," which we experience "not as a thought, but as an internal feeling of a purposive state of the mind" (Kant 1951: §40).

The sublime

Kant's examples of the sublime in nature are similar to those used by English theorists and found in the geography and travel books of the time, of which he was an avid reader. He refers to the wide ocean disturbed by a storm, the starry heavens, mountain peaks rising to great heights, and deep chasms with raging torrents. By confining his attention to the sublime in nature, he almost completely ignores the sublime in art. The basic components of Kant's theory of the sublime are not original, but rather are a synthesis of various British and German doctrines. Kant's uniqueness lies in his thoroughly secular treatment and the integrating of the sublime into his philosophical system.

In the "Analytic of the Sublime," Kant develops a twofold division into the mathematically sublime and the dynamically sublime, which relate respectively to nature's vastness and power. Both divisions relate to formlessness, our inability to apprehend nature in definite spatio-temporal measures.

We experience the *mathematically sublime* in encountering and reflecting upon natural objects of great magnitude, such as the sea, huge mountains, vast deserts, the night sky. By selecting some unit of measure (such as a meter) and working logically according to a rule, we can estimate the size of such natural objects. This process of estimating vast magnitudes can continue indefinitely. There is nothing surprising in this, nor anything sublime. The sublime occurs, Kant says, when in this process of logical estimation "the mind listens to the

voice of reason” (Kant 1951: §26), which demands a totality and urges us to comprehend the vastness in one intuition, a single presentation for all the members of the progressively increasing series. At some point we realize we cannot do this, that no standard of sense apprehension is adequate to the idea of the infinite. This frustrating realization of the inherent limitations of our powers leads to a feeling of displeasure. And yet our ability *to think* of that which is great beyond all comparison must mean we have a supersensible ability, “a faculty of the mind that surpasses every standard of sense” (ibid.: §26): a faculty which exercises dominion over our own sensible powers (that is, nature in us), always directing us toward a more adequate sensible representation of our ideas, as we strive for a greater and greater totality of systematic knowledge.

The initial displeasure or frustration felt in trying to apprehend that which is too great even for our imagination arises from an apparent conflict between our faculties (sense intuition versus comprehension by reason). But it yields a pleasure if, through this very conflict, we are made aware of the power of our reason to direct sensibility and judgement. Kant says that our feeling of respect for the extensive natural object (such as the vast ocean) in the experience of the sublime is a subreption: a “conversion of respect for the idea of humanity in our own subject into respect for the object” that occasions this idea of our own power of reason over our sensibility (nature in us) (Kant 1951: §27).

We experience the *dynamically sublime* in reflecting upon extremely powerful natural objects and phenomena that are capable of exciting fear:

bold, overhanging, and as it were threatening rocks; clouds piled up in the sky, moving with lightning flashes and thunder peals; volcanoes in all their violence of destruction; hurricanes with their track of devastation; the boundless ocean in a state of tumult; the lofty waterfall of a mighty river, and such like.

(Kant 1951: §28)

Once again, according to Kant, we experience a displeasure, this time caused by the realization of the inadequacy of our physical powers of resistance to nature’s might. Although we are literally helpless in the face of the forces of nature, Kant argues that “we can regard an object as *fearful* without being afraid of it” (ibid.: §28), as we notice when we feel secure from actual danger in the presence of such forces. Nature’s might makes us recognize our own physical impotence, considered as beings of nature, but at the same time nature discloses to us our unique power of a different kind of resistance. We can come to realize that nature has no dominion over us, even over our physical and sensory responses, since we have the ability, through the use of our reason, to

direct our sensible faculties not to feel fear in fearful circumstances. On Kant's view, the awareness of this power of reason over sensibility produces the pleasure marking the feeling of the dynamically sublime.

Kant insists that we speak imprecisely in saying that a natural object is sublime. Sublimity, he maintains, is not really a characteristic of nature; it is a property of the human mind. "Thus the wide ocean, disturbed by the storm, cannot be called sublime. Its aspect is horrible" (Kant 1951: §23). This sublimity in the mind is a form of human self-awareness, *through feeling*, of a transcendental power of the human mind. In Kant's language, it is the consciousness that we are superior to nature within us and therefore also superior to nature without us, insofar as it influences us (*ibid.*: §28). What is it within us that Kant believes is "superior to nature"? Kant's metaphysics surfaces here, as he refers to his *Critique of Pure Reason* doctrine that behind the empirical, causally-determined self of the empirical world there lies a supersensible, noumenal self possessing free will. The mathematically and dynamically sublime thus are two modes of our supersensible freedom revealing itself and thus providing pleasure in the realization of our nature and destiny.

Judgements on the sublime are aesthetic judgements since they are based on pleasure, although the pleasure arises indirectly. Kant maintains that they exactly parallel judgements of taste in claiming to be universally valid, devoid of interest, subjectively purposive, and necessary (Kant 1951: §24). However he claims that the universality and necessity claimed by judgements on the sublime, unlike judgements of taste, do not require a deduction separate from their analysis, because they make no reference to an object judged in terms of its form (recall reference to nature's formlessness), but only to a state of mind.

Natural beauty

Kant's first characterization of natural beauty in the *Critique of Judgement* begins with the remark: "natural beauty . . . brings with it a purposiveness in its form by which the object seems to be, as it were, preadapted to our judgement, and thus constitutes in itself an object of satisfaction" (Kant 1951: §23). Here Kant seems to think that natural beauty is the exemplar of the 'purposiveness of form' that he earlier (*ibid.*: §14) claimed was the basis of pleasure underlying the judgement of taste.

The second discussion of natural beauty is reflected in Kant's doctrine of free and dependent beauty (*ibid.*: §16). Kant says that flowers are "free natural beauties" (§16) in that we do not consider their (reproductive) purpose in viewing them merely as to their form. When they please in themselves, our judgements of their beauty are pure. This contrasts with judgements that

attribute beauty based on an object's realization of "a concept of its perfection," how good a thing is of its kind, for example "human beauty . . . the beauty of a horse, or a building (be it church, palace, arsenal, or summer house)" (ibid.: §16). Kant implies that in judging a building to be a beautiful church, we consider its form as dependent on the purpose a church serves, whereas in judging it as free beauty, we either do not know or do not consider its purpose. Nature provides us with the most accessible examples of free beauty.

Kant's third discussion of natural beauty explores whether "the mere universal communicability of feelings must carry in itself an interest for us with it" (Kant 1951: §40). He denies this with respect to art, but concludes that if beautiful forms of nature interest someone immediately, "we have reason for attributing to him at least the basis for a good moral disposition" (ibid.: §42). Kant's reasoning is contorted, but relates to his view that we are intent on finding whether our ideas have objective reality. We have an interest in nature being suitable for our powers of judgement, and experience pleasure when we find it so. Kant says this interest is akin to the moral. For morality is only possible if there is an accord between nature and our exercise of free will, if the ends proposed by reason can be actualized in the natural world. However, this purposiveness of natural beauty for our faculties cannot be shown to be real; it is only ideal (ibid.: §58). When nature appears beautiful, it is *as if* it were designed for our reflective powers of judgement. The beautiful in nature gives us an indication that natural laws and our mental powers are in harmony, a harmony which is necessary if we are to create a moral world: a kingdom of ends.

Fine art and artistic genius

"Nature is beautiful because it looks like art, and art can only be called beautiful if we are conscious of it as art while yet it looks like nature" (Kant 1951: §45). The beautiful in nature appears as if it were designed, made in accordance with rules of art. Fine art [*schöne Kunst*] differs from nature since it is the product of human freedom; it must appear spontaneous although rules may be followed precisely in producing it. Art differs from science in requiring skill in addition to knowledge; it differs from handicraft since its production requires more than following rules (ibid.: §43).

Kant's doctrine of artistic creativity became the cornerstone of Romanticism. Fine art is the art of the artistic genius, who has "a *talent* for producing that for which no definite rule can be given" (ibid.: §46) – something original and exemplary which serves as a model for others. Genius is an innate talent that cannot be taught, and the creative process is ineffable, even to the artist (ibid.:

§§47, 49). Genius requires *creative* imagination, “creating another nature, as it were, out of the material that actual nature gives it,” working that material “into something different which surpasses nature” (ibid.: §49). The animating principle of the mind behind such creative activity is spirit [*Geist*], which Kant characterizes as “the faculty of presenting *aesthetical ideas*” (ibid.: §49). Aesthetic ideas are the content of works of art; they are linked to concepts, but not determined by them. In art they are the symbolic presentations of rational ideas (such as love, death, envy) through sensible intuitions (such as images in representational painting or poetry).

Success in presenting aesthetical ideas in works of fine art requires more than creative imagination, however. In particular it requires judgement or taste. “Genius can only furnish rich *material* for the products of fine art; its execution and its *form* require talent cultivated in the schools, in order to make such a use of this material as will stand examination by the judgement” (Kant 1951: §47). Genius must be trained and cultivated, “for all the abundance of the [imagination] produces in lawless freedom nothing but nonsense” (ibid.: §50). In fact, Kant suggests that if imagination and judgement conflict in the creation of art, imagination should be limited by judgement and understanding, otherwise communication in the expression of aesthetic ideas – the ultimate aim of art – will not succeed (ibid.: §50).

Kant’s treatment of the fine arts concludes with cursory analyses of the individual arts, an attempt to classify the fine arts in terms of their similarities and differences (ibid.: §51), and a brief comparison of their relative worth in terms of ability to express aesthetic ideas, stimulate mental activity, and promote culture (ibid.: §53).

Aesthetics and morality

Kant discusses the relation between aesthetics and morality in three different places. The first is the “General Remark” following §29, in which he says that both the beautiful and the sublime are purposive in reference to moral feeling: “The beautiful prepares us to love disinterestedly something, even nature itself; the sublime prepares us to esteem something highly even in opposition to our own (sensible) interest.”

Then in §42 Kant maintains “that to take an *immediate interest* in the beauty of *nature* (not merely to have taste in judging it) is always the mark of a good soul.” It is an interest akin to moral interest, because the latter requires an interest in nature conforming to our faculties. But Kant denies an analogous relationship between an immediate interest in fine art and the moral.

Kant’s final discussion of the relationship between beauty and morality occurs in “Of Beauty as the Symbol of Morality” (Kant 1951: §59) and “Of

the Method of Taste”(ibid.: §60). The meaning and significance of these sections and their relevance to Kant’s ‘deduction’ of judgements of taste have been variously interpreted, but at a minimum Kant seems to think there is an analogy between the two realms. The pleasure in apprehending and judging beauty (and perhaps the sublime as well) is ultimately based on an awareness of (and pleasure in) our faculty of judgement itself exercising a power over sensibility, which is required if morality is to have a point. Based on this analogy, it is possible for an individual’s exercise of taste to transfer to the moral realm, the realm requiring the exercise of our freedom (in judgement, above all) to direct our actions in the empirical world.

Kant’s heritage

Kant’s aesthetic theory is systematic and comprehensive, relating our experience and judgement of natural beauty and art to basic epistemological, metaphysical and ethical concepts. That heritage is evident in the aesthetic theories after him: by Schiller, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, as well as many twentieth-century writers. Kant’s theory encompasses many of the issues in aesthetics still discussed energetically today. His everlasting importance to aesthetics is best revealed through careful reading of the *Critique of Judgement*; however difficult that may seem at first, it repays the effort many times over.

See also Beauty, The aesthetic, Taste, Aesthetic universals, Environmental aesthetics.

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Further reading

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- Cohen, T. and Guyer, P. (eds) (1982) *Essays in Kant's Aesthetics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (A useful collection of articles by leading scholars.)
- Crawford, D. W. (1974) *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. (An introduction to Kant's aesthetics.)
- Crowther, P. (1989) *The Kantian Sublime: From Morality to Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. (A discussion of the sublime in Kant's aesthetics.)
- Guyer, P. (1997) *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd edn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (A detailed discussion by a leading scholar.)
- (1993) *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Essays on several elements of Kant's aesthetics.)
- Kant, I. (1987) *Critique of Judgement*, trans. W. S. Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett. (A recent translation.)
- Kemal, S. (1986) *Kant and Fine Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. (A discussion of Kant on fine art and culture.)
- (1992) *Kant's Aesthetic Theory*, New York: St. Martin's Press. (A useful introduction.)
- Lyotard, J-F. (1994) *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. (A discussion from the perspective of literary theory.)
- Makkreel, R. (1990) *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (A hermeneutical perspective.)
- Saville, A. (1993) *Kantian Aesthetics Pursued*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. (An elaboration of Kant's aesthetics.)
- Zammito, J. H. (1992) *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgement*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (An historical perspective.)