Kant and the Aesthetic Imagination
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> ~~this representation in turn go beyond itself and acquire objective significance in addition to the subjective significance that is proper to it as a determination of the state of mind? If we investigate what new characteristic is given to our representations by the *relation to the object*, and what is the dignity that they thereby receive, we find that it does nothing beyond making the combination of representations necessary in a certain way. . . . (A 197 B 242)~~

~~Given that we are situated in the world as we are and that we *do* gain knowledge of what lies about us, we must assume a mind capable of bringing this about. "The impressions of the senses supplying the first stimulus, the whole faculty of knowledge opens out to them, and experience is brought into existence" (A 86 B 118). The whole faculty of knowledge, that is, lies in readiness to be brought into play by the senses. (This thought still underlies perceptual psychology: however it comes about that we have this capacity – we would now say through evolution – the mind *unscrambles* sense impressions, positing objects in a consistent space to give us a model of the world.) Kant did not know how the mind did this, and even said that it lay in some unfathomable capacity, but *that* it did it was assumed. Whether our overall view of the world, including its structure of space and time, was in some ultimate sense true to whatever it was that lay outside the to scope of our knowledge was for him an ill-formed question. The only world we could talk about intelligibly was one which appeared in our experience, and this assumed that sensory stimulation had been gathered together in a spatio-temporal order and presented objects as independent of our perceiving them.~~

Aesthetic Judgment: Reflective and Reflexive

The question raised for Kant by aesthetic judgment was how, within this view of the mind, there could be not only objective judgments about the external world but judgments in which the imagination became engaged in introspectable reflection. He gave a summery answer in his First Introduction:

> By the designation "an aesthetic judgement about an object" it is therefore immediately indicated that a given representation is certainly related to an object, but what is understood in the judgement is not the determination of the object but of the subject and its feeling. For in the power of judgement understanding and imagination are considered in relation to each other, and this can, to be sure, first be considered objectively, as belonging to cognition . . . but one can also consider the relation of the two faculties of cognition merely subjectively, insofar as one helps or hinders the other in the very same representation and thereby effects the *state of mind*, and [is] therefore a relation which is *sensitive* (which is not the case in the separate use of any other faculty of cognition). (First Introduction, AA XX:223)

The internal dynamics of such judging cannot be captured in the description of the object itself nor of the impact of the object on the subjective state of the perceiver, nor in the mere addition of one to the other. It is a mode of mental activity directed upon the object in which we apprehend "a regular, purposive building with one's cognitive capacities . . . this forms the basis of a very special capacity of discriminating and judging" (204). The judgment has an ineliminable subjective reference as well as a reference to the object being assessed. One way of putting this is to say that it is not a judgment about the object but a procedure for reflecting upon an object which at the same time takes within its scope its own engagement.[6] The aesthetic judgment is "subjectively, object to itself as well as law to itself" (288). It is a reflective judgment, in that it does not simply identify what is objectively present by placing it under an empirical concept, but entertains the possibility of different ways of seeing it and it is also reflexive in that it returns recursively to its own making. The satisfaction it yields is in the functioning of our cognitive capacities; more specifically the interplay between sensibility and understanding, or – as Kant prefers to put it – between the imagination and understanding.

We should here dispose of a significant inconsistency in Kant's use of terms. He talks not only of the relation of sensibility and imagination but sensibility and understanding, which seems to leave imagination out of the picture. But the relation between sensibility and understanding is functionally equivalent to the relation between imagination and understanding. When he talks about the latter, sensibility is included in the domain of the imagination; when he talks about the former, imagination is included in the domain of the understanding. Kant himself says at one point in a footnote in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "It is one and the same spontaneity that, there under the name of imagination and here under the name of understanding, brings combination into the manifold of intuition" (B 162). His theory is fundamentally a relation between two basic factors: the externally precipitated manifold of sensation encountered by the spontaneous ordering processes of the mind. The imagination functions for Kant as the mediating term between order and the matter which it orders; it is the aspect of mental life through which elements or subcomponents are integrated. In perception, the imagination manifests itself, for Kant, in two contexts: in our ordinary recognition and understanding of the perceived world, where we take its operation for granted – it functions blindly – and in contrast to this where we reflect on perceived objects seeking order or pattern within them. What the two functions of the imagination have in common is that in each the mind goes beyond what is posited as initially present to it: in one case a sensory manifold which by virtue of the imagination we come to see as coordinated and yielding the perception of objects and, in the other, an object to which by virtue of the imagination we adjust and explore. The imagination is the capacity to elaborate what we see or think into some more extensive awareness.

Aesthetic judgments are elaborations. "In order to judge whether something is beautiful or not, we do not relate the representation by means of the understanding to the object for cognition, but rather relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure" (203). What is meant by referring to the subject is establishing the relation between the object and the subjective conditions of its perception. Whereas in the case of cognition the understanding dominates our relation to the object, drawing the object under a concept in making a judgment about it, in aesthetic judgment it is the imagination which dominates in the sense that the mind's concern is with an object in its particularity, prompting the understanding to find a way of making it intelligible, finding some unity or gestalt within it. Kant talks obscurely here of the harmony of imagination and understanding. The thought has its root in an earlier, pre-critical assumption of Kant's thought which distinguished intuition from understanding, and we can clarify the notion of the priority of the imagination and the harmony between imagination and understanding by reference to that earlier opposition.

Intuition and Understanding

Our intuitive relation to an object registers a characteristic of its appearance. A conceptual relation to an object is one in which the characteristic is not only attended to in perception but is taken up in a discursive judgment; that is, the object is attended to in such a way that its characteristic is thought – or thought of – in its universality, i.e. as substitutable by other instances; our thinking of that object is in discourse, i.e. in language. It is true that our intuitions, insofar as they already register a characteristic (*Merkmal*), must involve the use of concepts in a broad sense but that does not mean there is no distinction.[7] For the understanding's specific manifestation is discursive thought, whereas the imagination's specific manifestation is intuition.

In the published *Logic*, which was based on his lecture course given over many years, he wrote: "Logical distinctness rests on the objective, aesthetic distinctness on the subjective clarity of characteristics. The former is clarity through *concepts*, the latter through *intuition*. The latter kind of distinctness therefore consists in a mere *vividness* and *intelligibility*, that is, a mere clarity through examples *in concreto* . . . Not seldom, objective distinctness is therefore possible only at the expense of aesthetic distinctness, and conversely, aesthetic distinctness – through examples and similies that do not exactly fit but are taken only after some analogy – often harms logical distinctness (*Logic*, Introd. VIII, trans., p. 68).

Admittedly, Kant never makes the transition between characteristics present in intuition and their being taken up in conceptual or discursive thought very clear; that is primarily because in this context he gives no account of language as a spontaneous social activity interacting with the perceived world; without this it is hard to see how you could relate characteristics in intuition and in discourse to each other.[8] Kant had a conception of such linguistic activity but it does not form part of his central theory of mental mechanisms in the Critiques. It is introduced only as a parallel to such mechanisms in his discussion of poetry. To this I shall return at the end of this essay.

The gap between intuition and understanding – perceptual and conceptual cognition – becomes clearer if we ask about the difference between developing awareness in the two cases. An intuition might develop or extend itself, extend its awareness of the object, by differentiating what is at first indistinct: "Sensible distinctness . . . consists in consciousness of the manifold of intuition. I see the Milky Way as a white band; the rays from the individual stars in it must necessarily have entered my eye. But the presentation thereof was only clear; it becomes distinct through the telescope, because now I see the individual stars comprised in the milky band" (*Logic*, p. 39); the point is not materially altered because he uses a telescope rather than alters the mode or focus of attention; an intuition may be developed by differentiating or by coordinating the initially observed characteristic with others in that intuition; put a little differently, the characteristic of an object which enters our awareness in intuition is essentially permeable to and transformable by its sensory context; e.g. tones in music. In contrast to this, the conceptual thought of the object is developed by linking the initial (abstracted) characteristic with other concepts in language, i.e. discursively. In intuition our initial awareness is developed by being merged with or differentiated from others and in the process losing its identity in the new gestalt; whereas our conceptual awareness is developed by relating our initial concept to further concepts. The distinction is adumbrated in a Reflexion probably dating from twenty years earlier, but nevertheless suggestive for his later thought.

"Reason [later he would say 'understanding'] represents only the relation of concepts, but in intuition the absolute and inner character of the object is thought. As far as clarity is concerned, it is thoroughly compatible with intuition. For *clarity comes from the differentiation* of the manifold in a whole representation. Insofar as these pieces of cognition are thought through general concepts, the clarity is an effect of the understanding; if it happens through [component] individuals, it is a form of sensibility. The first occurs through subordination, the second through co-ordination. In music one has no concepts of the tones, but only sensations, without cognizing their relations by number; that is, according to general rules" (R 643 AA 15.2; my emphasis). Beautiful objects, Kant will go on to say, are those that please by virtue of being unified according to the laws of intuition, "Schöne Gegenstände sind, deren Zusammenordnung nach den Gesetzen des *intuitus* gefällt" (R 646 AA 15.2).

But how does Kant's earlier intuitive/cognitive distinction relate to his later distinction between aesthetic and cognitive *modes* of judgment in the *Critique of Judgement*? How does the distinction between perceptual attention to the particular and discursive thought get turned into that later distinction between objective judgment and aesthetic adjustment – the harmony between imagination and understanding? The first part of the answer is that both pairs (the intuitive/cognitive and the aesthetic/cognitive distinction) represent alternative kinds of attention, alternative ways of summating our experience which are in potential conflict. Kant's point in the third critique is that if exploring a particular object is to yield satisfaction – and it is assumed that this is what occurs in aesthetic judgment – and if that satisfaction lies not in mere sensory stimulus or gratification – which is also assumed, then it requires our understanding, our capacity for synthesis, to be directed upon the object and it requires that the *relation* between the object and that reflective synthesis yields satisfaction. What the earlier account of aesthetic responsiveness lacked was any ground for attributing a reflective satisfaction to intuition; for once intuition had been separated from the use of concepts it was unclear what the satisfaction could be beyond sensuous gratification. What is crucially new in the *Critique of Judgement* is that the understanding's pursuit of unity ("the general lawfulness of the understanding") is separated from the discursive use of concepts; the synthesis achieved by the imagination could then be seen as in harmony with – as *fulfilling* – the understanding's concern for that unity even if it did not place the manifold under a concept; it yielded a configuration which had cohesion and was not merely a set of unrelated impressions. But what would the working of the imagination have to be like to satisfy that search for unity beyond or beside the normal fit between the receptive and cognitive capacities of the mind, beyond or beside the fit which our ordinary cognition of the world would assume?

Non-discursive Reflection

In Kant's account of the matter, when the understanding and the imagination are in free play, the mind has a certain "independence" in relation to the material objects to which it directs itself. The sense of independence lies first of all in our being able to accomplish something with regard to our perception of the object rather than something accomplished by the object in fulfilling a need. I do not have a prior need or want which the object alleviates beyond, perhaps, the need to engage with the perceivable world. "We can easily see that, in order for me to say that an object is *beautiful*, and to prove that I have taste, what matters is *what I do with this presentation within myself*, and not the sense in which I depend on the object's existence" (205; the latter emphasis is mine). If we ask why this registers our independence and not some inner *compulsion* like an appetite, an appetite to unify the sensory experience into an ordered manifold, the answer is that the notion of reflection itself implies independence, for only a creature with independence could be reflective. Because we are aware of our own reflectiveness in aesthetic judgment it offers evidence to us of that independence. (We might see this sense of independence anticipated in Rousseau's conception of what is distinctive about human language as opposed to the pre-set patterns of animal response.[9] The sense of independence has a later analogue in Wittgenstein's notion of seeing an object in different ways, when such alteration is under the dominion of the will; that is, where we try to see things under the guidance of different thoughts about it or within different contexts; or perhaps simply changing the focus of attention to see how the object might reconfigure itself.[10]) But *how* – for Kant – is reflectiveness experienced so that it yields a sense of satisfaction in its exercise? Will any flexibility of attention serve?

In the "General Remark on the First Division of the Analytic" of *Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*, the part in which he has laid out the basis of pure aesthetic judgment, Kant summarizes his position briskly: "If we take stock of the above analyses, we find everything comes down to the concept of taste, as a faculty of judging an object in relation to the free lawfulness of the imagination" (240). What Kant means by the free lawfulness of the imagination is the kind of imaginativeness which does not merely associate – on the basis of past experiences – round a given focus of perception, drawing it under a concept, but connects one aspect of an array with another, so subjecting it to a further level of integration; this is found satisfying because it is an inherent purpose of the mind to integrate its contents. Kant assumes that in aesthetic judgment we are pursuing this kind of satisfaction, which he distinguishes from other kinds of satisfaction which in the past had been confused with it, in particular satisfaction in the "perfection" of an object, in the object's fulfilling a criterion of what it should be. What is found satisfying is not the link between the object and some concept which we recognize it as instantiating but the way the object brings into play the relation between the ordering capacity of the mind and its receptivity to sensory impressions.

But how, we must now ask, can our imagination be free while at the same time it is restricted to what is presented to it? Kant answers: "although in apprehending a given object of sense it [the imagination] is tied to a determinate form of this object and to that extent does not have free play (as it does in composing poetry [*Dichten*]), it is still conceivable that the object may provide it with a form that contains precisely such a composition of the manifold as the imagination, if it were left to itself, would freely design in harmony with the *lawfulness of the understanding* in general" (241). The mind that would be producing forms out of itself would not be, in this account, a blank abstract mind, but one already engaged with the perception of the array before it; the object would be prompting the mind to observe some aspect of itself in the light of others, finding continuities or symmetries; it would do so – in Kant's account – because it was assumed to seek the integration of its contents; in aesthetic judgments we become aware of a reciprocity between our imagining and the objective world; and even further, that what lies outside us appears to us as expressive of our own thought, the object offering the imagination "just the sort of form in the combination of its manifold as the imagination, if it were left to itself, would freely design . . . "

The experience in aesthetic judgment is necessarily double: it is of a form which is perceived and then re-realized as fulfilling an anticipation that it had itself set up. But this is problematic: for surely what Kant means here could not be that what the imagination finds is the fulfillment of a clear anticipation which subsequent perception confirms (I expect to find a lily in this Annunciation, and lo and behold – there it is), because our anticipation cannot be assumed to be so precise or itemizable. We must rather assume a feedback mechanism by virtue of which anticipation becomes sharpened by what we actually find to be available to us. But once we have acknowledged this, we need to explain why it is not simply a matter of our perception becoming more replete, as when we observe a tree or a person in greater detail, or see the features of an object as part of a larger gestalt. What is it that is distinctive about the phenomenology of aesthetic judgment? We should surely read Kant's answer to this not as a matter of the real time sequence of our perceiving, but of something in the perceived structure of the object as we finally resolve it. To take the simplest case, we perceive two aspects which are discrete but each as modifying how the other is seen; within the object one form or configuration is seen as the response to another or as issuing out of another or as the analogue or the completion of another. What is perceptually necessary for aesthetic judgment is that there must be (a) a discontinuity between aspects such that one can enter and impinge on the other *without* removing either their separateness or the need on the viewer or reader's part for adjustment between them, and (b) that sense of the separate aspects and of our adjusting between them remaining constitutive of our interest in making our judgment (as it doesn't when the judgment is cognitive in purpose). But, of course, when we set out to regard an object – centrally a work of art – in that way aspects of the object might not be amenable to this kind of interplay, or not to any significant degree, with the result that when the object is amenable we have a sense of good fortune, of the fit between our mind and the world.

Kant's thought here runs parallel with his account of scientific discovery in which he says "it is contingent, as far as we can see, that the order of nature in terms of its particular laws should actually be commensurate with our ability to grasp it"(187) so that new extensions and unifications of knowledge bring with them a confirmation of the fit between the mind and the world. When we find the world amenable to the construction and unification of our theories we are encouraged to think that our mind and the world are in their underlying purpose adapted to each other. In this way an aesthetic judgment provides an analogue or model of an underlying fit between world and mind. It presents itself as evidence, a symbol or even a confirmation that the world of appearance is one which is compatible with the exercise of our freedom. (And beyond this the intimation that we may conceive the world as purposive for our cognition of it.)

Constraints on Non-discursive Reflection

We gain a clearer insight into Kant's sense of the mind's independence at a phenomenological level when we see what it is contrasted with, what it excludes. "In the estimate of free beauty (according to mere form) we have the pure judgement of taste. No concept is here pre-supposed of any end for which the manifold should serve the given object, and which the latter therefore should represent – an incumbrance which would only restrict the freedom of the imagination that, as it were is at play in contemplating the outward form" (230). Kant's thought here assumes a distinction between two ways in which the manifold is synthesised: one where we generate or re-apply a concept to which that earlier experience had given rise; the other where we take up relations internal to the object that s present.

He would seem to make the two functions of the imagination incompatible rather than just distinct. In some passages he writes as if placing omething under a concept and *also* finding satisfaction in it would turn our judgment into a judgment of perfection; it would become a matter of atisfaction in the fit between the manifold and a concept. But to apply a oncept and to take satisfaction in something to which it is applied is not ecessarily or even probably to take satisfaction in applying the concept. Nor does seeing something under a concept entail judging it as a perfect nstance of that concept. His point here is that, insofar as we regard judgments as registering satisfaction, the satisfaction of an aesthetic judgment s never in the fulfilment of a prior criterion or purpose, or the adequacy f an object to a presupposed design. For Kant's all our mental activity is

purposive and its products correspondingly are fulfilling in different ways (242). We must therefore distinguish between different purposes within cognition broadly understood, and so different kinds of completion. If our purpose is to judge by some prior criterion that will be incompatible with fulfilment being aesthetic.

A further kind of constraint on the freedom of the imagination arises from the limitations of the object we address: "Everything that shows stiff regularity (close to mathematical regularity) runs counter to taste: the consideration of it because it does not allow us to be entertained for long . . . it induces boredom . . ." There are several components in Kant's thought here: there is first a psychological observation: regularity leaves no surplus in the manifold for our understanding to synthesize; in geometrical figures our perception and our conceptualization come locked together. Geometric regularity has an authority over our perception which would leave no room for the harmony of the faculties; it would pre-empt seeking out and finding unity because its gestalt would compel a particular set toward itself: "these are called regular precisely because the *only* way we can present them is by regarding them as the *mere exhibition* of a determinate concept that prescribes the rule for the figure (the rule under which alone that figure is possible)" (241). (In the first critique he had said that mathematic forms are constructed by the mind according to a priori principles (CPR B 221) and this would seem to apply to geometric relations.) This would, for instance, disallow geometric patterns as in mosaic pavements from sustaining aesthetic judgment, but one must take Kant's psychological point here as applying to single shapes and more generally to forms that may be *too simple or obvious* to make aesthetic satisfaction possible. When he takes up the issue in the discussion of fine art he writes: "although the two cognitive powers, sensibility and understanding, are indispensible to one another, still it is difficult to combine them without constraint and without their impairing one another; and yet their combination and harmony must appear unintentional and spontaneous; otherwise it is not *beautiful* art. Hence anything contrived and painstaking must be avoided . . ." (321). So, on the one hand the possibility of exercising aesthetic judgment depends on whether the object or array is of the kind – complex enough – to stimulate and satisfy aesthetic judgment, and on the other whether our minds are purposed to exercise such judgment.

Kant's primary purpose has been less to exclude the use of concepts than to indicate that alternative mode of perceptual fulfillment; for this alternative he adduces the examples of abstract pattern, designs on wallpaper and *foliage à la grèque* as paradigmatic objects for aesthetic judgment, configurations which elude the application of empirical concepts. In these examples of overall pattern, so we must take Kant to imply, we respond to repetitions and continuities which override spatially consistent reading or separation between objects. Kant would not have to make the two modes of synthesis completely efface each other; for, first of all we might apply empirical concepts without making a cognitive judgment, as when we see a tree in its shadow or in a picture; and secondly such recognitions of – say – trees or foliage might be subsumed in an overall sense of pattern. He will himself make a similar point when later he talks about painting, landscape gardening and decoration. "In painting in the broad sense I would also include the decoration of rooms with tapestries, bric-à-brac, and all beautiful furnishings whose sole function is to be *looked at* . . . paintings properly so called (those that are not intended to *teach* us, e.g. history or natural science) are there merely to be looked at, using ideas to entertain the imagination in free play, and occupying the aesthetic power of judgement without a determinate purpose." Kant is surely right (231) that there are different mental sets, two different ways of addressing the objects of perception, that they are in tension and one has to dominate the other.[11] (In another discussion of poetry, in his lectures on Anthropology, he insists that although both understanding and the senses are involved, priority must always be given to one or the other. [XXV.2 p. 987f].) Thus a sense of freedom in aesthetic judgment lies not only in its spontaneity and its symbolization of freedom but also in allowing the laws of intuition to sustain themselves without the responsibility of conceptual judgment. But why, we must ask, in the Kantian frame of things should understanding be constraining? The thought that is adumbrated (to be more fully developed by Schiller) is that what we value in reflective life cannot be limited to our determinate thought; that our reflective life has sensitivities which are not summated in cognition – for instance, our responsiveness to the beauty of plants as opposed to our understanding of botanical structures. (We can legitimately call on this distinction whether or even if we reject Kant's making natural beauty rather than works of art the focus of aesthetic judgment.)

To summarize so far: to the question of why the exercise of the imagination should yield a sense of freedom, Kantian answers would be (i) that our sense of our own independence, the pleasure in the constructive power of our minds, as we connect and transform the material of perception, is something we experience ourselves as doing; it is not the objective nature of things in the world that completely determine our experience but something which we bring about and which transforms what is offered in perception, whereas to reside within our cognitive conceptualizing judgments is to experience the world as determinate. (ii) We allow intuitive movements or configurations to sustain themselves beyond the scope empirical understanding, not as mere sensory stimulation but as representations which the mind can sustain reflectively without the duty of cognition. The implication here is not only of freedom from the constraint of natural appetite but from the constraint of understanding. (iii) We become aware of a reciprocity between the external object and our own projecting or imagining, so that we can experience one as corresponding to the other; and this attunement between ourselves and the world in which we find ourselves, for Kant, can symbolize – if it does not actually exemplify – the compatibility between nature, the world of causally structured appearances, and our freedom as rational beings

Imagination's Freedom, the Larger Sense

These three aspects of imaginative freedom – the sense of independence toward its object, the sense of being relieved of certain constraints, and the sense of fit between the mind and its object are extended in a further sense of imaginative freedom: the imagining of transcendent ideas in the light of which the immanent and cognizable world might be seen. Kant develops this in his discussion of fine art. "Among all the arts *poetry* holds the highest rank . . . It expands the mind; for it sets the imagination free, and offers us from among the unlimited variety of possible forms that harmonize with a given concept . . . that form which links the exhibition of the concept with a wealth of thought to which no linguistic expression is completely adequate, so poetry rises aesthetically to ideas . . . it lets the mind feel its ability – free, spontaneous, independent of natural determination – to contemplate and judge phenomenal nature as having aspects that nature does not on its own offer in experience, either to sense or to the understanding, and hence poetry lets the mind feel its ability to use nature on behalf of and, as it were, as a schema of the supersensible" (326). Kant continues: "Poetry plays with mere appearance [*Schein*], which it produces at will, yet without using mere appearance to deceive us, for poetry tells us itself that its pursuit is only play, though this play can be used purposively by the understanding for its own business" (327). So the freedom of the mind in poetry, unconstrained either by the literal character of nature or – in language – by the logical stringency of consistency of meaning serves as a symbol of the mind's freedom. "In this process we feel our freedom from the law of association (which attaches to the empirical use of the imagination [i.e. the imagination which enables us to re-deploy empirical concepts developed in earlier experience]); 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" (314).

In this further and grander sense of freedom, artists and their audiences utilize such independence toward their borrowings from nature to entertain transcendent ideas, ideas of what lies beyond the bounds of sense, centrally the ideas of human freedom, of God, immortality and the immeasurability of creation. This is not only a matter of representing specific notions which can only be intimated and not realized in perception, but more generally of art reaching beyond the the limits of our cognitive range. Such transcendence is an extention of the independence of the imagination in the following sense: that we imagine how the world might look from a more comprehensive perspective than we ourselves can ever obtain, because of the necessary limitations of knowledge. (This in turn is linked to Kant's conception of the sublime which I shall not discuss in depth here. Briefly, in the sublime we are led to reflect on two kinds of human inadequacy: on our physical vulnerability before the power of nature and on our intellectual limitation before its infinity. The effect of sublimity arises from our sense that there is something within us which is not limited by these inadequacies: our rational and moral being.)

Intuition and Language

Kant's sense of the unliteral use of language readily aligns itself with Diderot's conception of poetic language in the "Lettre sur les sourds et muets." Kant wrote: "if we wish to divide the fine arts, we can choose for this, at least tentatively, no more convenient principle than the analogy between the arts and the way people express themselves in speech so as to communicate with one another as perfectly as possible; namely, not merely as regards their concepts but also as regards their sensations. Such expression consists in *word, gesture,* and *tone* (articulation, gesticulation, and modulation). Only when these three ways of expressing himself are combined does the speaker communicate completely. For in this way thought, intuition and sensation are conveyed to others simultaneously and in unison" (320). (This conception of primitive language games can be found not only in Diderot's "Lettre sur les sourds et muets" but in Rousseau's *Origine des Langues.*)

But are his sense of the expressiveness of language and his theory of the harmonious play of the faculties logically related or integrated, beyond both involving communicability? More interestingly, can the consideration of expressive language throw any light on Kant's initial account of aesthetic judgment? Despite uncertainty about how the individual terms of the two respective triads might be thought to correspond (thought, intuition, and sensation: word, gesture, tone), what links the pure judgment of taste and the account of expressive language is that each spans the gap between sensibility and thought. What, first of all, we should correlate are not individual items – word, gesture, tone, and so forth – but the relation running through each triad: the conception of language as initially a matter of communicative gesture linking the sensible world and the utterer's thought, as intuition or imagination linked sensibilty and understanding. Gesture, like intuition or imagination, is a means by which we attach the sensible world to our communicable thought about it. Ironically, the sense of language was precisely what was missing when Kant had discussed the relation of intuitions and concepts. This suggests that there was a latent thought on Kant's part, inaccessible to the main lines of the Critiques, that intuition – or imagination – might be seen on analogy with a primitive language game, one like that of Diderot or Rousseau, closely engaged with the sensible material world to which it directed attention, and not only on analogy with some unfathomable perceptual mechanism.

Beyond a putative exegesis of Kant it seems fruitful to pursue the analogy between pure aesthetic judgment and expressive gesture. For aesthetic judgment – beyond its intersubjective communicability – exhibits an internal communicative structure, something like the pattern of utterance and response. It does so because, from the perspective of the viewer/reader the work must – as we have seen – elicit and satisfy expectations which it has itself set up. A dialogue is thus enacted within the viewer's awareness of the work; in Kant's words discussed earlier: "the object may offer to it [the imagination] just the sort of form . . . as the imagination, if it were left to itself, would freely design . . ." The experience in aesthetic judgment is, as we have seen, necessarily double: it is of a form fulfilling some anticipation that it had itself gestured toward, in the light of which it is to be re-understood. What links the proto-linguistic sense of intuition and aesthetic judgment more closely is that the linguistic gesture is made in anticipation of others taking up its import, of their attending to what it directs their attention toward, as one aspect of a painting directs attention toward another, the viewer following the movement within herself. Merleau-Ponty wrote: "The accomplished work is thus not the work which exists in itself like a thing, but the work which reaches its viewer and invites him to take up the gesture that created it and leaping over the intermediate steps to rejoin, without any guide other than the movement of the invented line, an almost incorporeal trace; the silent world of the painter, now proffered and accessible."[12] In this way we might conceive of the work of art itself as made up of gestures and the context into which they are directed; the form that serves as a gesture will itself also serve as the context or object to which other gestures are directed. Put another way, the forms within a work of art may be seen as inviting us to see each other in particular ways without those ways being definitive.[13] In this we may identify the distinctive imaginativeness of an art.

Notes

1 References to Kant in the text to the *Critique of Judgement* are given by the page numbers of the standard Deutsche Akademie Ausgabe of *Kants Gesammelte Schriften* which are shown as running numbers in most translations. References to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are prefaced by A or B, representing the first and second editions. Other references to Kant preceded by AA indicate the volume and page numbers in the Akademie Ausgabe. The most recent translations of Kant's works into English are in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge University Press. 1998); *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge University Press, 2000). I have generally used these for the sake of their greater accuracy but occasionally used my own phrasing or that of earlier translators. References to Kant's *Logic* are to the translation by Robert S. Hartman and Wolfgang Schwarz (New York: Dover, 1988). Now standard commentaries in English are Paul Guyer, *The Claims of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1979) and the translation and commentary of the *Critique of Judgement* by Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987). I am indebted to Fiona Hughes *The Role of the Concepts of* Reflexion *and* Harmonie *in Kant's Critical Philosophy* (Ph.D.

Dissertation, Oxford, 1993); I have also benefited greatly from discussions with her on the third critique.

2 See Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom. Essays on Aesthtics and Morality* (Cambridge University Press, 1993); Dieter Henrich, *Aesthetic Judgement and the Moral Image of the World* (Stanford University Press, 1992).

3 D. Diderot, "L'Origine et la nature du beau," *Oeuvres esthétiques*, ed. Paul Vernière (Paris: Garnier, 1965), pp. 387–436.

4 D. Diderot, "Lettre sur les sourds et muets" ed. Paul Hugo Meyer, *Diderot Studies VII* (Geneva: Droz, 1965).

5 See P. F. Strawson, "Imagination and Perception" in his *"Freedom and Resentment" and Other Essays* (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 46–65 and J. Michael Young, "Kant's View of the Imagination," *Kantstudien*, 1988 pp. 140–64.

6 The conception of aesthetic judgment as irreducible to a single proposition raises questions discussed by Paul Guyer 1979, p. 84 and the same author's "Pleasure and Society in Kant's Theory of Taste," *Essays in Kant's Aesthetics*, ed. Ted Cohen and Paul Guyer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 22: "the justification for a judgement of taste requires a duplex process of reflection, involving both a direct reflection on or estimation of an object, and a further act of reflection on one's experience of the object, which issues is an aesthetic judgement of taste. These two forms of reflection are logically distinct, in that the latter both presupposes the former and is also subject to a condition – an express consideration of communicability or intersubjectivity of the experience – to which the latter is not." For a contrary view Hannah Ginsborg "Reflective Judgement and Taste," *Noûs* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), pp. 63–78. On the reading of Kant that I am suggesting there is no proposition which constitutes the aesthetic judgment but an exercise of the mind which has the sense of the mind's independence toward the object presupposed and constitutive of it. It is not as if we have the pleasure, then have to check up that it was caused in the right way, and then issue the judgment. Guyer's two processes of reflection would, I believe, be called for only as a subsequent argument in justification of the original judgment being indeed an aesthetic reflective judgment.

7 See Houston Smit, "Kant on Marks and the Immediacy of Intuition," *Philosophical Review*, vol. 109 (2000), pp. 235–66.

8 Nevertheless, Kant was clear that the distinction between intuitions and concepts was crucial, holding that while Leibniz had treated perceptions as though they were already concepts, Locke had treated concepts as if they were perceptions (A 271/B 327).

9 J. J. Rousseau, "Essai sur l'origine des langues" *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), vol. V, pp. 378–409.

10 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), pp. 199–200.