

IMMANUEL KANT THE CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT (1790)

BOOK I: ANALYTIC OF THE BEAUTIFUL

First Moment: Of the Judgment of Taste, According to Quality

I. The Judgment of Taste is Aesthetical:

To “distinguish whether anything is beautiful or not” (376), Kant argues, we depend not on that part of the mind, the “understanding” (376) which is responsible for “cognition” (376) (the conceptualisation of things) but the “imagination” (376) which deals with the “feeling of pleasure and pain” (376). The “judgment of taste” (376) is not a “judgment of cognition” (376). Taste has more to do with the feelings of pleasure and pain, the “sensation of satisfaction” (376) or not, inspired “in the subject as it is affected by the representation” (376), than it does with the object which inspires such feelings. In short, judgments about the object per se are “logical” (376) but judgments about the effect which an object has on us are judgments of taste and, thus, “aesthetical” (376).

2. The Satisfaction Which Determines the Judgment of Taste is Disinterested:

When our focus is on the “existence of an object” (376), the “satisfaction” (376) produced thereby “is called ‘interest’” (376), in other words, bound up with the use to which the existence of an object may be put. This form of satisfaction caters to our “faculty of desire” (376), our wants and needs. However, when we judge whether the object is beautiful, we engage in “mere observation (intuition or reflection)” (376). This is the realm of pure sensation. The satisfaction which it provokes in me on this score has nothing to do “with that in which I depend on the existence of the object, but with that which I make out of this representation in myself” (376). Kant argues that a

judgment about beauty, in which the least interest mingles, is very partial and is not a pure judgment of taste. We must not be in the least prejudiced in favour of the existence of the things, but be quite indifferent in this respect, in order to play the judge in things of taste. (376)

Judgments of taste are based on “pure disinterested satisfaction” (377).

3. The Satisfaction in the Good is Bound Up with Interest:

Kant contends that that “which pleases only as a means we call good *for something* (the useful), but that which pleases for itself is *good in itself*” (377). Involved in both objects that are useful and those that are good is a “purpose” (377). The satisfaction produced in the case of such objects is derived from the “*presence* of an object or action, i.e. some kind of interest” (377). To find goodness in an object, “I must always know what sort of thing the object ought to be” (377), but “there is no need of this to find a thing beautiful” (377). The beautiful must be distinguished from the “pleasant” (377) which “rests merely upon sensation” (377).

4. Comparison of the Three Specifically Different Kinds of Satisfaction:

The pleasant and the good both cater to the “faculty of desire” (377). The former provokes a “satisfaction pathologically conditioned (by impulses, stimuli)” (377), the latter a “pure practical satisfaction” (377) derived from the “represented connection of the subject with the existence of the object” (377). On the other hand, the judgment of taste is “merely *contemplative*, i.e. it is a judgment which, indifferent as regards the existence of the object, compares its character with the feeling of pleasure and pain” (377). It is “not a cognitive judgment . . . and thus is not *based* on concepts” (377). The pleasant, the beautiful and the good represent “three different relations of representations to the feeling of pleasure and pain” (377). The “expressions corresponding to each” (377) are also different: “That which *gratifies* a man is called *pleasant*; that which merely *pleases* him is *beautiful*; that which is *esteemed* or *approved* by him, i.e. that to which he accords an objective worth, is *good*” (377). The satisfaction produced by the pleasant he equates with “*inclination*” (377), the beautiful “*favour*” (377), and the good “*respect*” (377). He contends:

of all these three kinds of satisfaction, that of taste in the beautiful is alone a

disinterested and free satisfaction; for no interest, either of sense or reason, here forces our assent. . . . Now *favour* is the only free satisfaction. An object of inclination and one that is proposed to our desire by a law of reason leave us no freedom in forming for ourselves anywhere an object of pleasure. All interest presupposes or generates a want, and, as the determining ground of assent, it leaves the judgment about the object no longer free. (377)

One proof of this, Kant argues, is, when it comes to the inclination to which the pleasant caters, arises from hunger: “hunger is the best sauce” (377), the saying goes, as a result of which a “satisfaction of this sort shows no choice directed by taste” (377). Similarly, “where the moral law speaks there is no longer, objectively, a free choice as regards what is to be done” (377).

Explanation of the Beautiful resulting from the First Moment:

Taste, Kant summarises, is the “faculty of judging of an object or a method of representing it by an *entirely disinterested* satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called *beautiful*” (378).

Second Moment: Of the Judgment of Taste, According to Quantity

6. The Beautiful is That Which Apart from Concepts is Represented as the Object of a Universal Satisfaction:

Judgments that something is beautiful, Kant argues, a “ground of satisfaction for all men” (378): since it does not rest on any inclination of the subject (nor upon any premeditated interest), . . . [and] since the person who judges feels himself quite *free* as regards the satisfaction which he attaches to the object, he cannot find the ground of his satisfaction in any private conditions connected with his own subject, and hence it must be grounded on what he can presuppose in every other person. (378)

He will therefore, Kant argues, “speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a characteristic of the object and the judgment logical . . . although it is only aesthetical” (378). It is similar to logical judgments in that “we can presuppose its validity for all men. But this universality cannot arise from concepts; for from concepts there is no transition to the feeling of pleasure or pain” (378).

7. Comparison of the Beautiful with the Pleasant and the Good by Means of the Above Characteristics:

Judgments concerning the pleasant are entirely subjective, based upon “private feeling” (378). As regards the pleasant, “*everyone has his own taste*” (378). This is not the case with the beautiful which is not at all subjective in that sense:

Many things may have for him charm and pleasantness . . . but if he gives out anything as beautiful, he supposes in others the same satisfaction; he judges not merely for himself, but for everyone, and speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things. (378)

When he says that something is beautiful, he “*demands*” (378) the agreement of others, blaming them if they choose otherwise, denying such people taste.

8. The Universality of the Satisfaction is Represented in a Judgment of Taste Only as Subjective:

All judgments are “*singular* judgments” (379). Because “I must refer the object immediately to my feeling of pleasure and pain, and that not by means of concepts, they cannot have the quantity of objectively valid judgments” (379). I may say that a given rose is beautiful (this is a singular *aesthetical* judgment) but when I say ‘roses in general are beautiful,’ this is a logical judgment derived from several singular *aesthetical* judgments. If I say that the rose pleases me, this is “not a judgment of taste but of sense” (379) from which it is distinguished by the fact that the latter “carries with it an “*aesthetic quantity* of universality, i.e. validity for everyone, which cannot be found in a judgment about the good” (378). Judgments about the good have *logical* universality. “If we judge objects merely according to concepts, then the representation of beauty is lost” (379). There can be “no rule according to which anyone is forced to recognise anything as beautiful” (379). If we call an object beautiful, we believe that “we speak

with a universal voice" (379) and "claim the assent of everyone" (379). A person offering judgments of taste "*imputes* this agreement to everyone" (379), but "not confirmation by concepts" (379).

9. Investigation of the Question Whether in the Judgment of Taste the Feeling of Pleasure Precedes or Follows the Judging of the Object:

Here, Kant argues that if, in making a judgment of taste, understanding and imagination were united to form a "cognition of the object, the consciousness of this relation would be intellectual. . . . But then the judgment would not be laid down in reference to pleasure and pain, and consequently would not be a judgment of taste" (379). This is because the "judgment of taste, independently of concepts, determines the object in respect of satisfaction and of the predicate of beauty" (379). The beautiful "can only make itself known by means of sensation" (379). The act of recognising something as beautiful and postulating that everyone everywhere can agree on this (a "sensation whose universal communicability is postulated by the judgment of taste" [380]), Kant argues, brings the two mental faculties, the imagination and the understanding, together in the "harmonious activity" (380) of "cognition" (380). An "objective relation can only be thought, but yet, so far as it is subjective . . . , can be felt in its effect on its mind" (380). As Kant puts it,

A representation which, as individual and apart from comparison with others, yet has an agreement with others, yet has an agreement with the conditions of universality which it is the business of the understanding to supply. brings the cognitive faculties into that proportionate accord which we require for all cognition. (380)

Explanation of the Beautiful Resulting from the Second Moment:

"The Beautiful is that which pleases universally without requiring a concept" (380).

Third Moment: Of Judgments of Taste, According to the Relation of the Purposes Which are Brought Into Consideration in Them

11. The Judgment of Taste Has Nothing At its Basis But the Form of the Purposiveness of an Object (or of its Mode of Representation):

Arguing that every "purpose . . . always carries with it an interest" (380), Kant argues that judgments of taste can cater to no subjective purpose (pleasure) or objective purpose ("no concept of the good" [380]). Judgments of taste are aesthetical, not cognitive judgments and as such have "to do with no *concept* of the character and the internal or external possibility of the object by means of this or that cause, but merely with the relation of the representative powers to one another" (380). He distinguishes the "determination if an object as beautiful" (380) from "pleasantness merely accompanying the representation" (380) and the "representation of the perfection of the object" (380). The "determining ground of the judgment of taste" (380) is, rather, the "mere form of purposiveness in the representation of an object without any purpose (either objective or subjective), and thus it is the mere form of purposiveness in the representation by which an object is *given* to us . . . which constitutes the satisfaction that we without a concept judge to be universally communicable" (380).

13. The Pure Judgment of Taste is Independent of Charm and Emotion:

Kant argues here that every "interest spoils the judgment of taste and takes from the impartiality" (380), especially if this purposiveness is "grounded on" (380) pleasure. Judgments "so affected can lay no claim at all to a universally valid satisfaction" (380). That taste, he contends, "is always barbaric which needs a mixture of *charms* and *emotions* in order that there may be satisfaction" (380). The charms of an object are too often taken into account in discussions of its beauty (the latter "properly speaking ought merely to be concerned with form" [380]) and are often even mistaken for beauty. This is a "misconception" (380): a "*pure judgment of taste*" (381) has "as its determining ground merely the purposiveness of form" (380-381).

14. Elucidation by Means of Examples (13 Continued):

There are, Kant argues here, two kinds of aesthetical judgments: "empirical and pure" (381). The former

“assert pleasantness or unpleasantness” (381) and are “judgments of sense (material aesthetic judgments)” (381). The latter “assert the beauty of an object or the manner of representing it” (381) and “as formal are alone strictly judgments of taste” (381). A judgment of taste is pure “only so far as no merely empirical satisfaction is mingled with its determining ground” (381) which occurs when charm and emotion become intermingled with judgments of taste. It is fallacious, Kant argues, to see charm “not merely as a necessary ingredient of beauty, but as alone sufficient to justify a thing’s being called beautiful” (381). Colours and tones are not “beautiful in themselves” (381) for they “have at their basis merely the matter of representations, viz. simply sensations, and therefore only deserve to be called pleasant” (381). Colours and tones are beautiful only in terms of their “form” (381): because the mind “not only perceives by sense . . . but also perceives by reflection the regular play of impressions (and thus the form of the combination of the different representations)” (381), colours and tone “cannot be reckoned as mere sensations, but as the formal determination of the unity of a manifold of sensations, and thus as beauties” (381). The purity of a “simple mode of sensation is troubled and interrupted by no foreign sensation” (381). As a result, “all simple colours, so far as they are pure, are regarded as beautiful” (381), but this does not apply to “composite colours” (381). Kant rejects the notion that the beauty of an object can be augmented through its charms. This view is “very prejudicial to genuine, uncorrupted, well-founded taste” (381). He agrees that charms can be added to beauty but “do injury to taste if they draw attention to themselves as the grounds for the judging of beauty” (381) to which are in fact “aliens” (381).

What is important in the beauty of an object is the form. In “painting, sculpture, and in all the formative arts – in architecture and horticulture, so far as they are beautiful arts – the *delineation* is the essential thing” (381). Here, he argues, “it is not what gratifies in sensation but what pleases by means of its form that fundamental for taste” (381). The colours “which light up a sketch . . . may indeed enliven the object for sensation, but they cannot make it worthy of contemplation and beautiful” (381). In pantomime and dancing, there occurs a “play of figures . . . in space” (381) while in music there occurs a “play of sensations . . . in time” (381). To these the “*charm* of colours or of the pleasant tones of an instrument may be added, but the *delineation* in the first case and the composition in the second constitute the proper object of the pure judgment of taste” (381). Charms of this sort “make the form exactly, definitely, and completely, intuitible, and . . . by their charm excite the representation, while they awaken and fix our attention on the object itself” (381). Even “ornaments’ [parerga], i.e. those things which do not belong to the complete representation of the object internally as elements, but only externally as complements, and which augment the satisfaction of taste, do so only by their form; as, for example, the frames of pictures of the draperies of statues or the colonnades of palaces” (381). Sometimes, though, such ornaments do not themselves “consist in beautiful form” (382) and are merely “*finery*” (382) that “injures genuine beauty” (382).

Emotion, which is a “sensation in which pleasantness is produced by means of a momentary checking and a consequent more powerful outflow of the vital force, does not belong at all to beauty” (382). Sublimity, with which the feeling of emotion is bound up, “requires a different standard of judgment from that which is at the foundation of taste” (382). A judgment of taste has for its determining ground neither charm nor emotion, that is, “no sensation as the material of aesthetical judgment” (382).

15. The Judgment of Taste is Quite Independent of the Concept of Perfection:

The objective purposiveness of an object “can only be cognised . . . through a concept” (382). The beautiful, the “judging of which has as its basis a merely formal purposiveness, i.e., a purposiveness without purpose, is quite independent of the concept of the good” (382) which “presupposes an objective purposiveness, i.e. the reference of the object to a definite purpose” (382). Objective purposiveness takes two forms: “external, i.e. the *utility*, or internal, i.e. the *perfection* of the object” (382). Satisfaction in an object, “on account of which we call it beautiful” (382), has nothing to do with its utility, as argued above. However, “objective internal purposiveness, i.e. perfection” (382) “comes nearer to the predicate of beauty” (382) with which it is often confused. The question arises: are these the same thing? To judge perfection implies a “concept of internal purpose which shall contain the ground of the internal possibility of the object” (382). The purpose of anything is linked to the “possibility of the object itself” (382). To “represent objective purposiveness in a thing, the concept of *what sort of thing it is* must come first” (382). The “*qualitative perfection*” (382) of a thing is to be differentiated from its “*quantitative*

perfection” (382), the latter being the “completeness of a thing after its kind, which is a mere concept of magnitude (of totality). In this *what the thing ought to be* is conceived as already determined, and it is only asked if it has *all* its requisites” (382). The judgment of something as beautiful has nothing to do with concepts of the perfection, qualitative or quantitative, of the object, that is, a cognitive grasp of the objects. Judgments concerning the latter are cognitive ones that have to do with concepts which are not involved in aesthetical judgments. The latter provide

absolutely no cognition . . . of the object; this is only supplied by a logical judgment. On the contrary, it simply refers the representation, by which an object is given, to the subject, and brings to our notice no characteristic of the object, but only the purposive form. . . . The judgment is called aesthetical just because its determining ground is not a concept, but the feeling (of internal sense) of that harmony in the play of the mental powers, so far as it can be felt in sensation. (383)

The “faculty of concepts . . . is the understanding” (383). Although understanding is involved in aesthetical judgments (as with all judgments), it is involved “not as a faculty by which an object is cognised, but as the faculty which determines the judgment and its representation (without any concept) in accordance with its relation to the subject and the subject’s internal feeling” (383),

16. The Judgment of Taste, by Which an Object is Declared to be Beautiful Under the Condition of a Concept, is Not Pure:

Kant argues here that there are two kinds of beauty: “free beauty” (383) and “dependent beauty” (383). The former “presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be” (383) and is called the “(self-subsistent) beauty of this or that thing” (383). The second, by contrast, “does presuppose such a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance therewith” (383) and is “dependent upon a concept of (conditioned) beauty” (383). Flowers, birds and seashells are examples of “free natural beauties” (383), that is, they “please freely and in themselves” (383). So too are “delineations à la grecque, foliage for borders or wall papers” (383), musical fantasies and all wordless music, all of which “mean nothing in themselves, they represent nothing – no object under a definite concept” (383). In the “judging of a free beauty (according to the mere form), the judgment of taste is pure. There is presupposed no concept of any purpose which the manifold of the given object is to serve” (383). If such a concept were present, the “freedom of the imagination which disports itself in the contemplation of the figure” (383) would be impaired. However, the beauty of a human, horse or building “presupposes a concept of the purpose which determines what a thing is to be, and consequently a concept of its perfection; it is therefore adherent [or dependent] beauty” (383). In the case, such as these, of dependent beauty, i.e. where one “looks to the purpose of the object” (384), the judgment is “applied” (384). The purity of the judgment of taste is hindered as much by the confusion of the pleasant with beauty as combining beauty with good. The “satisfaction in beauty . . . presupposes no concept, but is immediately bound up with the representation through which the object is given (not through which it is thought)” (383). Aesthetical judgments are no longer “free and pure” (383) if they are linked to intellectual judgments of the purpose of a thing.

Alluding to the views of people like Pope, Kant argues that it is possible to unify aesthetical and intellectual judgments by uniting a concern for the formal beauty of an object with a concern for its utility. It is possible in such cases “to prescribe rules” (384) for some such objects. These, however, are not rules of taste but “rules for the unification of taste with reason, i.e. of the beautiful with the good, by which the former becomes available as an instrument of design in respect of the latter” (384).

17. Of the Ideal of Beauty:

Here Kant argues that there “can be no objective rule of taste which shall determine by means of concept what is beautiful. For every judgment from this source is aesthetical; i.e. the feeling of the subject, and not a concept of the object, is its determining ground” (384). It is “fruitless trouble” (384) to “seek for a principle of taste which shall furnish, by means of definite concepts, a universal criterion of the beautiful” (384). The “universal communicability of sensation (satisfaction or dissatisfaction)” (384) is the “empirical criterion” (384), that is, “confirmed by examples, from the deep-lying general grounds of agreement in judging of the forms under which objects are given” (384). Taste, though, cannot “be acquired by imitating others, for it must be an original faculty” (384). Imitation requires at best “skill”

(384) but “only shows taste in so far as he can judge of this model itself” (384). The “highest model, the archetype of taste, is a mere idea . . . according to which he must judge every object of taste, every example of judgment by taste, and even the taste of everyone” (384). (By ‘idea,’ he means a “rational concept” [384] and by ‘ideal,’ the “representation of an individual being . . . as adequate to an idea” [284].) The archetype of taste “which cannot be represented by concepts but only in an individual presentation, is better called the ideal of the beautiful” (384). This is an “ideal of the imagination, because it rests on a presentation and not on concepts, and the imagination is the faculty of presentation” (384).

The question is, how do we arrive at such an ideal of beauty – “empirically or a priori” (384)? And, who is “susceptible” (384) of such an ideal? To answer the second question first, man is “alone of all objects in the world, susceptible of an ideal of *beauty*, as it is only *humanity* in his person, as intelligence, that is susceptible of the ideal of *perfection*” (385). Kant distinguishes two kinds of ideas in this regard. The “normal idea” (385) is an “individual intuition (of the imagination), representing the standard of our judgment upon man as a thing belonging to a particular animal species” (385). The “rational idea” (385) makes the “purposes of humanity . . . the principle for judging of a figure through which, as their phenomenal effect, those purposes are revealed” (385). Normal ideas are derived from “experience” (385) and are, thus, empirical. The latter “lies merely in the idea of the judging subject” (385). It is a special faculty of the human being who is responsible for synthesising and collating different impressions: the “imagination cannot only recall on occasion the signs for concepts long past, but can also reproduce the image of the figure of the object out of an unspeakable number of objects of different kinds or even of the same kind” (385). The imagination can “let one image glide into another; and thus, by the concurrence of several of the same kind, come by an average, which serves as the common measure of all” (385). It is our imagination which allows us to arrive at a sense of what makes for a beautiful human being. We could arrive at the same conclusions “mechanically by adding together all thousand magnitudes, heights, breadths, and thicknesses, and dividing the sum by a thousand” (384), but the imagination “does this by means of a dynamical effect, which arises from the various impressions of such figures on the organ of internal sense” (385). Different races have different conceptions of the “beauty of a human figure” (384). The normal idea of human beauty does not consist in rules derived from experience: rather, “in accordance with its rules for judging become in the first instance possible” (385). It is the “image for the whole race, which floats among all the variously different intuitions of individuals, which nature takes as archetype in her productions of the same species, but which appears not to be fully reached in an individual case” (385). This is the “form constituting the indispensable condition of all beauty” (385). “Its presentation pleases, not by its beauty, but merely because it contradicts no condition under which alone a thing of this kind can be beautiful” (385).

The normal idea of beauty is to be distinguished from the “ideal” (385) of beauty. The Ideal “consists in the expression of the *moral*, without which the object would not please universally” (385). The

visible expression of moral ideas that rule men inwardly can indeed only be gotten from experience; but to make its connection with all which our reason unites with the morally good in the idea of the highest purposiveness – goodness of heart, purity, strength, peace, etc. – visible as it were in bodily manifestation (as the effect of that which is internal) requires a union of reason with great imaginative power even in him who wishes to judge of it, still more in him who wishes to present it. (385-386)

Explanation of the Beautiful Derived from the Third Moment:

Beauty is the “form of the *purposiveness* of an object, so far as this is perceived in it *without any representation of a purpose*” (386).