

## CHAPTER III

### Kant's Theory of Reflective Judgment (Based on the first and the published Introductions to the Critique of Judgment)

In the Introduction to the Critique of Judgment and its first half, Analytic of the Beautiful, Kant places the problem of aesthetic judgment in a new context. It is no longer the problem of the universal validity of judgments of taste. In his letter to K.L. Reinhold (dated December 28, 1787; Zweig, Kant : Philosophical Correspondence) Kant treated the judgment of taste as a species of the more general class of what he called "reflective" judgments. In this context, the problem of taste is not formulated as a problem about judgments on works of art, but is instead treated as part of a general problem about a class of judgments on nature which are not completely grounded by the principles of understanding established in the Critique of Pure Reason. This association between aesthetic and reflective judgment is crucial for the interpretation of Kant's theory of taste.

Kant's Introduction to the third Critique begins with an architectonic consideration. It is meant to establish both a connection between our faculty of judgment and our ability to feel pleasure and displeasure and the existence of an a priori principle for judgment to use in this connection.

Kant divides the cognitive faculty of the mind into three parts. First, the capacity for knowledge of the universal - understanding. Second, the capacity for subsumption of the particular under the universal-judgment. And third, the capacity for the determination of the particular through the universal - reason<sup>1</sup>. Understanding and reason furnish a priori principles, the laws of nature and freedom. There remains the question of a priori laws for the faculty of subsumption, or judgment. This question is raised in the Preface to the third Critique, when Kant asks if judgment has a priori principles, and, if so, whether they are constitutive or regulative, and whether they give a rule a priori to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. Kant suggests in the opening move of the first Introduction that if understanding and reason both furnish a priori laws, then by analogy, judgment, which mediates between the other two faculties, will likewise afford its special a priori principles<sup>2</sup>.

Judgment must contain in itself an a priori principle, for otherwise it would not be a cognitive faculty.

Kant has defined judgment as the faculty of subsuming particulars under universals, or of applying concepts to intuitions. But places a qualification of his view, and says that whatever the principle of judgment is, it cannot be objective, that is, offer determinate concepts of objects. The understanding

furnishes concepts of objects, while the principles of judgment are not objective, or furnish "cognition of a thing". They do not specify qualities the presence or absence of which in a particular object may entail the predication of a determinate concept of it. The principles of judgement are to be some other sort of rule. They are regulative rather than constitutive. Only understanding is constitutive or capable of providing determinate concepts of objects. Only understanding has a "realm" of objects over which it exercises "legislative authority". The principles of judgment may have at best a "territory", a field of objects to which they apply without being legislative<sup>3</sup>.

Kant, in both versions of the Introduction to the third Critique associates the faculty of judgment with the feeling of pleasure by an argument by analogy. All the powers of the human mind, just as the cognitive faculty, may be, he says, divided into three : the faculty of knowledge, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire<sup>4</sup>. The legislative principles for the faculty of knowledge are derived in general from the understanding, and the principle which is legislative for desire (the moral law) from reason. Since both these parts of the cognitive faculty contain a priori principles, Kant states that we may assume that judgment likewise contains an a priori principle of its own<sup>5</sup>.

Kant points out that feeling of pleasure is independent of determination by the faculty of desire, and this feeling of pleasure rests not on merely empirical grounds but on an a priori principle. That is, there are cases of pleasure which are fundamental states of mind, and they cannot be explained by reference to understanding or desire. There are of course pleasures that are connected to the existence of an object in an "empirically knowable" way, and thus involve no a priori principle. Again, some pleasures are connected to the representation of objects a priori, their objects are seen under the concept of freedom. In this case, the pleasure follows immediately from the determination of the will. But the feeling of pleasure which is both connected to the representation of an object a priori and does not depend upon any practical law recommending the willing of such an object can be neither explained nor justified by reference to understanding or desire alone. It thus demands its own principle. And Kant adds that "judgment is always relative to the subject and produces no concepts of objects for itself alone". Alternatively he says that "the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is only sensitivity to the state of the subject".

What Kant has been attempting is a deduction of the existence of an a priori principle of pleasure from the bare outlines of a model of mind. He of course does not show that pleasure or displeasure is the only form of sensitivity to the

state of the subject. But by introducing the idea of a judgment about the state of the subject he does point the way to the deeper theory of an a priori judgment of taste which he ultimately offers.

In the two Introductions Kant expands on the definition of judgment (as the faculty of subsuming particulars under concepts given to it by the understanding) given in the first Critique. He now gives judgment a more general concern with matching particulars and universals. He describes two different ways in which judgment can operate : depending upon whether it is first furnished with a universal or a particular, judgment may be "determinant" or "reflective".

"If the universal (the rule, principle, or law) is given, then the judgment which subsumes the particular under it is determinant"<sup>6</sup>, Kant writes in the published Introduction. In the earlier version, he defines determinant judgment as the "capacity for making determinate a basic concept by means of a given empirical representation", suggesting that judgment in this form of its exercise supplies Schemata for concepts furnished by the understanding. On either definition, the faculty of determinant judgment is merely the capacity to apply concepts already given, particularly pure concepts, to appropriate particulars.

There is, however, a second possible relation between particulars and universals : that obtaining when the particular is given, but a universal has to be found for it. The capacity to respond to the situation defined by this relation is reflective judgment<sup>7</sup>, and the products of such response, presumably, are reflective judgments. This, at least, is how Kant defines reflective judgment in the published Introduction. The first Introduction offers a more illuminating account. Here, Kant defines reflective judgment as "a capacity for reflecting on a given representation according to a certain principle, to produce a possible concept. But Kant goes on to intimate a broader interpretation. To reflect, he says, "is to compare and combine a given representation either with other representations or with one's cognitive faculties, with respect to a concept thereby made possible".

Reflective judgment still seems to be concerned with the search for a concept. But he now suggests two alternatives to the direct application of an already given concept rather than one. Reflective judgment may be concerned with certain relations among objects which are not immediately evident in the pure or empirical concepts individually applicable to them, but which obtain only among groups of such concepts; or it may be concerned with aspects of the relation between an individual object and a subject of cognition which are not represented by any given concepts at all. The latter possibility is Kant's ground for

treating aesthetic judgment as a species of reflective judgment. Kant ultimately uses the notion of a "possible concept" to connote the harmony between imagination and understanding, the general condition for the application of concepts. It may be noted in this connection that what it is for reflective judgment to compare and combine a given representation with one's own cognitive faculties is not immediately apparent, nor does Kant explain his suggestion. Instead he turns to give an account of the first form of reflective judgment as our capacity for detecting systematic connections among the diversity of our empirical concepts of nature. Even though Kant takes the problem of the gap between the categories and a systematically organized or interconnected body of empirical laws or concepts very seriously, we should not consider the matter, since it has very little or any obvious linkage with his theory of taste. The principle of systematicity is actually irrelevant to that theory. The problematic ascription of the property of systematicity to nature is not mirrored in the case of aesthetic judgment. The principle of taste makes no claim about either natural or artificial objects of taste, but concerns ourselves as the makers of such judgments.

We may note in passing that Kant presents the concept of "purposiveness" or "finality" as the characteristic concept

of the reflective judgment<sup>8</sup>. It is intended as a concept which can be directly predicated of objects, either individually or collectively. Thus the concept of finality is grammatically analogous to substantial and causal concepts. Kant defines an "end" of "purpose" as a concept of an object which "contains the ground of the actuality of this object", that is, which is causally responsible for the existence of the object<sup>9</sup>. "Finality" is defined as "the agreement of a thing with that constitution of things which is only possible according to ends". So, Kant implies, an object of a kind which possesses finality could come into existence only through action involving the representation of a concept, or through the agency of a being capable of being guided by concepts.

Then Kant introduces the special concept of the "finality of nature". Through this concept "nature is represented as if an understanding contained the ground of the unity of the manifold of its empirical laws". To say that nature is final is to refer to the ground of its systematicity. The concept refers only to the fact that even in its multiplicity nature is subsumable under a system of empirical laws. Finality is a concept of reflective judgment. Adaptation of nature to our cognitive faculties is presupposed a priori by judgment. It is contingent by the standards of the understanding. We ascribe to nature a transcendental purposiveness in respect of the subject's faculty of cognition without finding any actual reference to ends in the

products of nature. The first Introduction asserts that in judgment's presupposition of finality the end is posited not in the object but in the subject, and in fact in the latter's capacity for reflection<sup>10</sup>.

We are just now at the point where we can begin to consider how the topic of aesthetic judgment is introduced into the general theory of reflective judgment. Kant's two Introductions open with a direct approach to the topic of aesthetic judgment, the attempt to link pleasure and judgment by means of their analogous positions in the trichotomies of the higher cognitive faculty on the one hand and the faculties of mind as a whole on the other. Kant begins his consideration of reflective judgment by maintaining that it might take either of two forms - to reflect is to compare and combine given representations either with other representations or with one's cognitive powers. The principle of systematicity is intended as the principle of the first form only of reflective judgment. It is the second kind of reflective judgment that is concerned with aesthetic judgment. Kant adds that reflective judgment can be applied to the representation of the individual object<sup>11</sup>. The second form of reflective judgment compares and combines a given representation with one's own cognitive faculties also leads to a perception of finality in the representation of individual objects. This is how Kant introduces aesthetic judgment into his theory : the basis of aesthetic response, the harmony of imagination and understanding,

is the result of the exercise of the second variety of reflective judgment, and beauty is the finality of an object in virtue of which it can occasion this response.

Kant contrasts reflection on the systematicity of a collection of empirical concepts with "simple reflection on a perception"<sup>12</sup>, where it is not a matter of reflecting on a determinate concept but in general only a matter of reflecting on the rule of a perception in behalf of the understanding as a faculty of concepts. In this form of reflective judgment, one considers the comparison of the relationship in which imagination and understanding stand to each other in the faculty of judgment with that in which they actually stand in the case of a given representation. And such a comparison may lead to an aesthetic judgment, or a reflective judgment on the finality of an individual form.

If the comparison of an object with our own faculties in reflective judgment can produce pleasure in its beauty, what would then be the objects of aesthetic judgments of reflection? Is the apprehension involved in the aesthetic judgment of reflection directed toward natural objects alone, or to non-natural because it may sometimes appear that it is objects of nature rather than of art which are primary for aesthetic judgment. Such an impression may and often does arise, but it is certainly

misleading. It arises contextually, that is, from Kant's sub-  
sumption of taste under reflective judgment. But a careful read-  
ing of Section VIII of the first Introduction or Section VII  
of the published Introduction should settle the matter. We may  
now turn to that direction.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Kant wrote two Introductions for the Critique of Judgment. The original introduction, now called the First Introduction (translated by James Haden, The Library of Liberal Arts, New York, 1965) was written 1789, while Kant was preparing the third Critique for publication. He seems to have come to the opinion that it was too long : hence he laid it aside and wrote a shorter version, which is the one now found prefaced to that Critique. In the First Introduction Kant's aim was to bring into focus the central concept, that of judgment in its several forms, and to show the overall unity of the entire critical philosophy.

Both the first and the published Introductions make important contributions to our understanding of the internal structure of Kant's Theory of aesthetic judgment.

We shall abbreviate the First Introduction as FI.

1. FI. II
2. Ibid., II
3. CJ III
4. FI III.

5. CJ III
6. Ibid., III
7. Ibid., IV
8. FI V. Bernard has "purposiveness", while Meredith has "finality".
9. CJ IV.
10. FI V.
11. Ibid., VII
12. Ibid., VII.