

CHAPTER VI

Aesthetic Judgment And Its Criteria

The two Introductions of the Critique of Judgment have presented a complex picture of the relations between pleasure and reflection in the judgment of taste. Kant sought to establish a connection between our ability to feel pleasure or pain and our faculty of judgment; and the argument claimed a general connection between pleasure and judgment. Then Kant introduces the notion of reflective judgment as an ability to compare given representations with each other, and also with our own faculties. The theory of reflective judgment led to Kant's thesis that the pleasure we take in beautiful objects is a product of the contingent harmony between imagination and understanding which results from "simple reflection" on such objects.

Kant's view is that in making an aesthetic judgment, in calling an object beautiful one is not merely reporting an experience of pleasure. One is claiming that the pleasure one has felt is intersubjectively valid, or reasonably imputed to others. The analysis of the judgment of taste's claim to intersubjective validity remains to be defended in the Analytic of the Beautiful, the first major division of the text of the Critique of Judgment itself.

The criteria of universal and necessary validity is mentioned in the first Introduction. They state the content of the claim of aesthetic judgment, or are criteria by which this form of judgment may be distinguished from a mere report of one's response to any object. They do not justify the claim. Rather it is factors of disinterestedness and the form of finality which play required role. That a given feeling of pleasure is disinterested, and that it has been occasioned by the perception of the purposiveness of a given object's form are facts about it which may be used to assign it to the harmony of the faculties, and may be used to justify the claim of intersubjective validity for that pleasure. Universality and necessity, we might say, are defining criteria for the judgment of taste, and disinterestedness and the form of finality are justificatory criteria.

Universality and necessity are Kant's second and fourth "moments" of the judgment of taste. Disinterestedness and the form of finality are his first and third moments. The second and fourth moments are derived from an analysis of the form of a judgment of taste, while the first and third moments are derived from the explanation of aesthetic response. It may be noted that Kant does not suggest that the four moments could be divided into two groups of differently functioning criteria. He simply offers a sequential discussion of four moments of the judgment of taste, each resulting in a "definition" or "explanation" (Erklärung)¹ of the beautiful. The discussion is organized

on the basis of an analogy to the fourfold division of judgments employed in the Critique of Pure Reason². It seems that whole Analytic constitutes a single argument, beginning with disinterestedness, to be followed by subsequent stages.

There is a disanalogy between the analyses of cognitive judgments and aesthetic judgments. The term "moment" is not used in the first Critique, and does not seem to have a clear architectonic or methodological significance. The logical functions of cognitive judgment and the moments of aesthetic judgment do not describe analogous properties of judgments. The logical functions of judgment characterize differences in the content of judgments, or differences that may obtain between various judgments. The moments of aesthetic judgment, by contrast, do not describe differences in the possible contents of particular aesthetic judgments. The moments describe features of epistemological status common to all aesthetic judgments, the acceptability they claim to enjoy, the kinds of evidence on which they may be based, the positions from which they must be made³. Employing the categories of quantity, quality, relation and modality as logical functions of judgment, we can formulate a large number of formally different judgment types. According to Kant's analysis, only the modal categories have anything to do with the epistemological status of judgments. They do not enlarge the concept to which they are attached as predicates,

only express the relation of the concept to the faculty of knowledge⁴.

The situation is quite different in the case of aesthetic judgment. Kant insists that all aesthetic judgments have the same logical form. They all have the same quality, relation, and modality. "In their logical quantity all judgments of taste are singular judgments"⁵. Every aesthetic judgment makes the same assertion about its object, every aesthetic judgment is an assertoric singular affirmative categorical judgment. The four moments of aesthetic judgment do not characterize differences in the way in which the predicate "beautiful" may be attached to its subject. They characterize the epistemological status of such judgments. Only the moments of quantity and modality can be said to determine the content or meaning of aesthetic judgment's claim; quality and relation concern the evidence for making such a claim.

There is another point of notice. It appears that there is no intimate connection between Kant's final conviction that aesthetic judgment is no form of cognitive judgment and the division of four moments. The division was, for Kant, a long standing habit of thought, and he employed it inspite of the disanalogies between aesthetic judgment and cognitive judgment. Hence Kant's exposition need not be taken literally, and it may be misleading as well. For example, Kant begins his analysis of

aesthetic judgment with the feature of disinterestedness, and then proceeds to say that the second moment, i.e. the feature of universality can be deduced from the first. Now this is somewhat uneasy and invalid. From the fact that a delight is not caused by any interest or desire, it does not follow that it is valid for everyone. It might be accidental. Universality cannot be deduced from disinterestedness alone, nor does it follow that in requiring disinterestedness of a pleasure one is requiring that it be universal. One may be simply requiring a source other than interest, quite apart from any consideration of intersubjectivity validity at all. Disinterestedness provided evidence for a claim to universality in the actual practice of aesthetic judgment.

We now propose to make brief statements about universality, singularity and necessity of aesthetic judgment, and postpone our remarks about disinterestedness for the sake of a fuller discussion in the following chapter.

Universality of aesthetic judgment : For Kant, aesthetic judgment is always a reflective judgment. In the first introduction Kant defines an aesthetic judgment as one based on the feeling of pleasure, and points out that two different kinds of aesthetic judgments are possible : an aesthetic judgment of sense and an aesthetic judgment of reflection. The former is the mere report or expression of a feeling of pleasure produced

"directly by the empirical intuition" of an object, or by purely physiological response to it. The aesthetic judgment of reflection is the judgment of taste, which "belongs to the higher faculty of cognition" and makes the "universal claim"⁶. In the case of the latter, since there can be "no definite concept of its determining ground, this ground can only be given by the feeling of pleasure so that aesthetic judgment is always a reflective judgment". That is, since two different kinds of judgment may be licensed by feelings of pleasure produced in different ways, reflection is needed to decide, in the case of a given feeling of pleasure, which form of judgment is actually in order.

The second moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful starts with the claim that "the beautiful is that which, without concepts, must be represented as the object of a universal delight"⁷. It goes so far as to assert that to speak of taste without assuming the possibility universal agreement" would be to say as much as that there is no such thing as taste"⁸. The second moment also introduces the concept of the harmony of the faculties into the body of the Analytic.

From an ontological point of view the object of aesthetic judgment is something subjective. Yet why do we use the grammar of objectivity? We adopt a grammatically objective mode of expression because we are in fact willing to claim the status of intersubjective validity for some of our feelings about

objects. Taking the use of the predicate "beautiful" for granted, Kant argues that, because there is a claim to intersubjective validity implicit in the predicate form itself, there must be a justifiable claim to intersubjectivity at the basis of judgments of taste. This is so even while beauty "is only aesthetic, and contains merely a relation of the representation of the object to the subject".

Kant supports the criterial role of the claim to universality on an appeal to linguistic usage. There is, he says, a difference in our linguistic expectations about the objects of such judgments, the agreeable and the beautiful.

According to Kant's analysis, the term "agreeable" allows indexing the term to particular users, or allows for expecting purely private validity. Correct usage of "agreeable" involves no claim on the agreement of others, for it permits the explicit denial of any such claim by the addition of the words "to me". With the term "beautiful", however, our linguistic expectations are quite different. There can be no object which is beautiful for me. If it merely pleases me, I must not call it beautiful. When someone "proclaims something beautiful, he imputes the same delight to others; he judges not merely for himself but for everyone, and then speaks of beauty as if it were a property of things"⁹. The claim to intersubjective validity

is a condition of the meaningful use of "beautiful". The universality of an aesthetic judgment is concerned with the epistemological fact of universal acceptability. And we may recall that in the first Introduction Kant said that universality, along of course with necessity, for distinguishing between aesthetic judgments of sense and reflection.

The claim to intersubjective validity is a condition on the meaningful use of "beautiful". Such a claim is what distinguishes the use of this term from a mere report of the occurrence of a feeling of pleasure in oneself. In calling an object agreeable, one merely reports the occurrence of such a feeling. In calling it beautiful, one goes beyond that to "impute" the pleasure to others as well, although on the basis of its occurrence in oneself. The permissibility of adding the index "to me" to "agreeable" shows that it is essentially private. Publicity is inherent in the meaning of "beautiful". It may also be noted that the distinction between private validity and intersubjective validity of response is analogous to that between subjective and objective sequences of representations in the first Critique. The latter is what judging of objects is all about, the former is what taste is all about.

The terms with which Kant expresses the criterion of universal validity suggest demanding or requiring something from someone, or imposing some kind of obligation on another.

Aesthetic judgment involves "a demand for validity from everyone", "a demand for subjective universality"¹⁰. It is also interesting to note that in passages outside of the second moment Kant uses apparently moral language to state the claim of taste. He raises the question of "how the feeling in the judgment of taste is attributed to everyone as a sort of duty", or "as if it were a duty"¹¹. Again, we find that in declaring an object beautiful one intends that "everyone ought to give the object concerned his approval"¹². Some commentators have argued that, for Kant, aesthetic judgment's demand for agreement is a moral claim, and requires a foundation in a moral justification¹³. Without disputing the argument that Kant has introduced a moral element into his analysis of the second moment, we may say that Kant may be asking moral language to convey the importance of finding a reason for making claims about the responses of others.

What is really the case? Does Kant describe the requirement of rationality or that of morality? Kant himself derives the second moment from the first. Does it mean that he means to support a moral demand on a requirement of disinterestedness? The disinterestedness of aesthetic judgment appears to separate it from morality. It should be unexceptionable to say that disinterestedness is the aesthetic analogue of the epistemological notion of objectivity. If that be the case, then Kant's intentions should concern epistemological grounds for a title of universality.

Again, Kant uses terms with cognitive rather than practical connotations in describing the claim of taste. For example, he says that aesthetic judgment is similar to logical judgment in that one can presuppose its validity for everyone. The judgment is presupposed valid for others. This means that its ground for determination may be presupposed to obtain for others as well. In other words, aesthetic judgment "presupposes" the feeling of pleasure in others, or attributes it to others.

To say that the feeling of pleasure can be attributed to others means that it is assumed to be communicable. What sort of claim is it? In sections 7 and 8 Kant makes it clear that the judgment of taste is a claim about the responses of others but not a prediction based on induction or deduction. It expects its confirmation from the accession of others, but is not defeated by evidence that others do not in fact agree. Kant introduces the metaphor of "universal voice" in the final paragraphs of section 8. The figure implies that one's feeling pleasure is a condition of concurrence in another's judgment of taste.

There is also the notion of "postulate" that Kant uses. He says that in judgment of taste "a universal voice in respect of delight without mediation by concepts"¹⁴ is postulated. What is thus postulated is a possibility of an aesthetic judgment? One usage of "postulate" is to describe the principles of modality¹⁵. Another sense of the term is drawn from mathematics.

A third sense is employed in the second Critique in Kant's discussion of the idea of God, freedom and immortality¹⁷. A judgment of taste is not a postulate in neither of the three senses of the term. An imputation of pleasure or agreement in pleasure is an "idea"¹⁸, i.e., a concept of objective but indeterminate validity. Its validity is indeterminate because it rests on two conditions the fulfilment of which is uncertain : (a) one's knowledge of both oneself and others, and (b) the indeterminate concept of the harmony of the faculties as the ground of aesthetic response. A person may say that an object x is beautiful only if he takes pleasure in x and believes that his pleasure in x is due to the harmony to which the perception of x disposes his imagination and understanding. The ascription of one's own pleasure in the harmony of the faculties can ground an imputation of it to others, or function as evidence for the assertion of a judgment of taste.

The Singularity of Aesthetic Judgment

Kant begins the Analytic with the definition of aesthetic judgment as "one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective"¹⁹, or one which is made on the basis of the experience of pleasure itself. Further we are told, both in Section 1 and the Introductions, that pleasure denotes nothing in the object, but is a feeling which the subject has of itself, as it is affected by the object"²⁰. If this is so, then none of the ordinary concepts predicated of an object can express the fact

of its pleasurable-ness. And so "from concepts there can be no transition to the feeling of pleasure or pain"²¹. But then aesthetic judgment cannot be based on the subsumption of an object under a determinate concept. A fortiori, its claim to universal validity cannot depend on such a subsumption.

In Section 8 of the *Analytic Kant* has contrasted the universality of aesthetic judgment and ordinary logical universality. Aesthetic judgment is said to be independent of concepts: "a universality which does not rest on concepts of objects ... is aesthetic"²². Logical universality is simply the formal property of universal quantification. Objective universal validity is the quantity manifested in the propositional form "All Fs are G", and characterizes the content of a given proposition apart from its truth or acceptability. The universality of an aesthetic judgment, by contrast, is not an internal or formal feature of its content, but is its epistemological status, its imputability to or acceptability for all judges of subjects. This is why Kant calls it "subjective universal validity".

A logically universal judgment connects a predicate-concept to a subject-concept in such a way that the former is valid of any object falling in the extension of the latter. The extension of a subjectively universal judgment, by contrast, is not a class of objects, but the class of possible human judges.

Aesthetic universality does not connect a predicate with the concept of an object, rather it "extends [the predicate of beauty] over the whole sphere of the judging [subjects]"²³.

Aesthetic universality is not identical with logical universality because the judgment of an object's pleurability is made independently of its subsumption under any concept, and cannot be implied by its subsumption under a concept. If the judgment that a given rose is beautiful cannot be inferred from the object's being a rose, then it is obviously not derived from a proposition of the form "All roses are beautiful". Nor need it be taken to offer support for such a proposition. Kant expresses this by saying that "with respect to logical quantity all judgments of taste are singular judgments". They are always of the form "This rose is beautiful". The referring expression "this rose" may serve to pick out the object of attention, but does not provide the basis for calling it beautiful.

The universality claimed by aesthetic judgment is the imputability of delight, and thus the validity of the judgment, for all subjects. Because aesthetic response is independent of the synthesis of manifolds under concepts, this validity cannot be inferred from the classification of an object under a concept. An aesthetic judgment is thus logically singular but subjectively universally valid. It asserts of a given object, and that object

only, that it may be expected to occasion pleasure in every subject responding to it.

Feelings of pleasure are not produced by the subsumption of objects under concepts, except in the special case of moral feeling. This is not to say that the content of aesthetic judgment does not involve any concepts. The concept of other persons will be already there. Again, the concept of beauty itself is employed in the expression of the judgment. All that Kant is arguing is that the subsumption of an object under a classificatory concept is not a basis for responding to it pleasurably or for validly imputing that response to another person.

The Necessity of Aesthetic Judgment : Ordinarily, universality and necessity are neither identical nor inseparable. True universal statements need not be necessarily true, for example, "All ravens are black" and "All bachelors are unmarried", how different they are. Again, necessarily true statements like "God exists" and "Socrates exists" are not universal statements. Yet in the first Critique Kant argued that the transcendental requirements of universality and necessity are co-extensive : "necessity and strict universality are ... sure characteristics of a priori knowledge, and are inseparable from each other"²⁴.

In the opening sections of the fourth moment Kant's description of the requirement of necessity is almost indistinguishable from his exposition of the demand for universality. He

associates different forms of aesthetic judgment with the three varieties of modality. A synthesis of pleasure with any representation is at least possible. To say that an object is agreeable is to say that it is actually causes pleasure to the speaker. But in the case of the beautiful, Kant says, we are concerned with a necessary connection to delight"²⁵. It is not a "theoretical objective necessity", nor is it a practical necessity. It cannot also be a practical necessity. It cannot also be derived from the universality of experience, since no amount of empirical evidence can itself sustain a claim of necessity. Rather, Kant asserts, the necessity involved in aesthetic judgment can "only be called exemplary" : it is "the necessity of the assent of all to a judgment which is regarded as an example of a universal rule which cannot be furnished"²⁶. Kant means that the ordinary consequences of knowledge obtain without the actual application of a concept.

There is another important point. Kant had said earlier (in Section 8) that the claim of taste is conditional. Now in Section 19 he amplifies the remark. Does aesthetic judgment retain an element of uncertainty? As Kant put it : "The should in aesthetic judgments ... is yet pronounced only conditionally. He suggests that one cannot in fact be certain that a given pleasure has been correctly attributed to a common ground, that is the harmony of the faculties. We may also say that Kant keeps the issue of the rationality of aesthetic judgment separate from

that of its certainty. Hence aesthetic judgments remain corrigible, that is one cannot show that there can be no errors in taste²⁷.

What taste actually calls for is necessary agreement in response. It can occur only under ideal conditions. Agreement alone is a sufficient condition for aesthetic judgment. It could be contingent. Again, disagreement does not mean that a judgment of taste is false. So it is not simply intersubjective validity which aesthetic judgment requires, but rather an agreement which is necessary, though under ideal conditions. What the judgment of taste requires as a condition of calling an object beautiful is that it occasion a pleasure which could be felt, and which under ideal conditions would be felt, by any human observer of an object, because it is produced by the object's effect on a ground common to all. And in attributing a pleasure to such a source, one is claiming that it is a pleasure which is in a sense necessary rather than contingent. A pleasure due to the harmony of imagination and understanding is a pleasure which one has just in virtue of possessing the faculties necessary for cognition. It is by assigning a pleasure such status that one makes rational its imputation to other persons.

Both the moments of universality and necessity place the same demand on the judgment of taste. If I say that an object x is beautiful, then, I can rationally expect that others

will take pleasure in it, unless of course I am mistaken in assigning my own pleasure to its proper source. This demand can be met only if the pleasure is attributed to a ground which is neither private nor contingent, but is instead a necessary constituent of human nature. The demand of taste can be met only by an object which disposes one's imagination and understanding to the harmonious state of free play. This is what Kant has called the "Key to the critique of taste".

The judgment of taste requires that one's delight in a beautiful object be regarded as having a "necessary relation" to that object. But the problem is that it cannot be known a priori that a given object is beautiful. So Kant insists that one's connection of pleasure to an object, a connection presupposed in judging it to be beautiful, can be made on the basis of actual experience of the object, or empirically. On the one hand, the delight which grounds an aesthetic judgment must be a necessary delight; but on the other, moral feeling excepted, no pleasure can be connected a priori with the representations of an object. Kant's point is that the predication of delight of a beautiful object is not a priori, it is not entailed by the predication of any determinate concept of that object. Pleasure cannot be connected to an object a priori for all judgments of taste are singular judgments. They do not connect their predicate of delight with a concept, but with a given singular empirical

representation.

While the feeling of pleasure cannot be produced a priori, one's reflection on one's pleasure can produce an a priori judgment, or the judgment of taste has an a priori element. Reflection on one's pleasure in an object can reveal that the feeling is due to a necessary rather than a contingent source, or a public rather than a private condition, even though it could not have been predicted in advance. Once having felt the pleasure, one can attribute it to the harmony of the faculties. On the basis of this attribution, the a priori judgment that the object is beautiful, that the pleasure it produces may be imputed to others, can be made. That I perceive and estimate an object with pleasure, is an empirical judgment. But that I find it beautiful, i.e. that I may impute that delight to everyone as necessary, is an a priori judgment.

The judgment that a given object is beautiful has both empirical and a priori elements. Insofar as it reports my own pleasure, it is empirical, for it depends on my experience of the object. And insofar as it attributes my pleasure to the harmony of the faculties, it is also empirical, being a judgment about a causal link in my mental history. But insofar as it takes the last attribution as a basis for imputing my pleasure to others, the judgment of taste is a priori. For it depends not upon actual experience of shared responses, but on the a priori assumption

that what occasions the harmony of the faculties is the same for all. Since the imputation of pleasure to others is part of the actual content of judgment of taste, the judgment not merely rests on an a priori assumption, but also makes an a priori claim.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. CJ Sections 5, 9, 17 and 22
2. CPR A70/B95, A80/B106
3. See Donald Crawford, Kant's Aesthetic Theory, p. 17.
Also its review by Peter Gay in The Journal of Philosophy, 22, No. 3, 1975, 78-9.
4. CPR, A219/B266
5. CJ, Section 8, also section 37
6. FI, VIII
7. CJ, Section 6
8. CJ, Section 7
9. CJ, Sections 6, 7 and 8
10. CJ, Section 40
11. CJ, Section 19
12. R.K. Elliott in "The Unity of Kant's 'Critique of Aesthetic Judgment' ", British Journal of Aesthetics, 8, No. 3, 1968, 244-259.
13. CJ, Section 6
14. CJ, Section 8
15. CPR, A218-219/B265-266.
16. CPR, A234-235/B287.
17. C Pr. R
18. CJ, Section 8
19. CJ, Section 1

20. CJ, Section 1.
21. CJ, Section 6.
22. CJ, Section 8.
23. CJ, Section 8.
24. CPR, B4.
25. CJ, Section 18.
26. CJ, Section 18.
27. Beck has argued that Kant's characterization aesthetic judgments as a priori leads to the false conclusion that there is no room for error in such judgments. See also Francis Coleman, The Harmony of Reason: A Study in Kant's Aesthetics, pp. 79-84. I shall make some remarks about the issue in Chapter VIII.