CHAPTER IV

Synthetic *a priori*

and

the Third *Critique*

Kant in a letter written to K. L. Reinhold, an Austrian philosopher who attempted to popularise Kant’s philosophy, in 1787 wrote “I am now at work on the critique of taste, and I have discovered a kind of *a priori* principle different from those heretofore observed.”¹ This statement of Kant sums up his view very succinctly—that he could trace the presence of *a priori* principle in aesthetic sphere (in the yet-to-publish *Critique of Judgement*) and the nature of *a priori* principle here is different from those of previous two *Critiques*. In the same letter he talks about three faculties of the mind—the faculty of cognition, the faculty of feeling pleasure and displeasure, and the faculty of desire. Thus he recognized three compartments of philosophy. Each of these compartments has its *a priori* principles.

There is no gainsaying the fact that Kant is widely known in the philosophical arena for his epoch-making writings and original contributions in metaphysics, in the field of epistemology and discovering what he claims to be the first principle of ethics, but in addition to that he has also developed an influential and much talked-of theory of aesthetics which made seminal contribution in that field. This theory is presented in his *Critique of Judgment* first published in 1790. It is a two-part work: the nomenclature of the first section is given by him ‘Critique of Aesthetic Judgement’ and the title of the second part is ‘Critique of Teleological Judgement’. Thus we find that the letter written in 1787 and addressed to K. L. Reinhold fructified in 1790 and the *Critique of Judgement* embodied his thoughts in aesthetics and in teleology.
A reading of the *Critique of Judgment* gives us the impression that the intent of Kant in this work is to explore whether the ‘power’ or ‘faculty’ of judgment bestows us to produce an *a priori* principle. Prior to this in his various writings Kant held that judgment was integrated operation of basic mental faculties. In the 3rd *Critique* Kant comes to hold that the action of judgment might be organized and managed by a basic *a priori* principle and it is typical to it. Then he sets out to explore the cogency and ramifications of such a hypothesis.

The *Critique of Judgment* has two segments, as we mentioned before—‘The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement’ and ‘The Critique of Teleological Judgement’. An inquisitive mind tries to explore philosophical connection between Kant's idea on aesthetics and his views on teleology as espoused in the present *Critique*. A study of the 3rd *Critique* gives us the impression that the relationship between the two themes lies in the faculty or power of judgment. Though the *Critique of Judgement* is the finest expression of his view on aesthetics and teleology we should not lose sight of the fact that Kant’s writings on aesthetics and teleology are spread over his entire philosophical career, Hence this is not the only writing of the German philosopher in this area.

We also need to point out that the 3rd *Critique* is part and parcel of Kant’s critical project and hence it should not be considered as an add-on work. In the previous chapter we stated that Kant in the 1st *Critique* exhibited that faculty of understanding has *a priori* principles. 2nd *Critique* explicated that pure practical reason also has *a priori* principles which codifies laws for desire. The 3rd *Critique* affirms that faculty of judgement provides for *a priori* regulations to feeling in the province of reflective judgement. Hence, our point of enquiry is: how in this realm the given laws of the faculty of judgement become synthetic as well as *a priori*?

In the beginning the statement taken from Kant’s letter gives us some inkling that the nature of syntheticity and *a prioricity* will be different here (i.e. in the 3rd *Critique*) than of its two previous lineage. Synthetic *a priori* judgements of the 1st *Critique* made knowledge of objects possible. In other
words, they reveal conditions which make our experience possible and also articulate them. The 2nd Critique’s synthetic a priori principle was regulative—they furnish us conditions for determining what should not be done. The 3rd Critique’s synthetic a priori conveys a different sense. Putting the thing in a different way we can also club two previous Critiques into one in the sense that they talk about principles which are determinant. But reflective judgement about which Kant talks in the 3rd Critique involves no subsumption of particulars under the universal. Says Kant: “Judgement in general is the faculty of thinking the particular as contained under the Universal.”

Kant then goes to talk about divisions of judgement which, for him, are determinant and reflective. If the universal principle is specified, then “the judgement which subsumes the particular under it is determinant.” On the other hand, if merely particular is given and we need to search out the universal principle, the judgement in this case is reflective. From this view of Kant it becomes clear that in reflective judgement the task is not subsumption, rather it has to decode or discover a universal rule. Thus the logical traits of synthetic a priori judgement of 3rd Critique are different from the first two Critiques.

In order to justify the need of such a principle Kant says “... reflective judgement which is compelled to ascend from the particular in nature to the universal, stands...in need of a principle.” This requirement of principle cannot be got from understanding which supplies, as we saw in a previous chapter, only common a priori principles to which objects must conform in order to become part of our knowledge. These concepts are of no help in deducing special empirical laws of nature. For Kant, this principle has to “establish just the unity of all empirical principles under higher...principles, and thence the possibility of the systematic subordination of higher and lower. Such a transcendental principle, therefore, the reflective judgement can only give as a law from and to itself.” What Kant wants to show is that there is no other way open to us for deriving such a principle. If he admits other possibility it has the pitfalls of turning out to be determinant judgement which it is not actually the case. For unearthing special empirical laws and
also organizing them under a more general law, reflective judgement is
dependent on realization that nature, behind its numerous diversities, actually
holds a systematic unitary principle. It is this transcendental principle that
reflective judgment provides as a law. This principle is tacitly present in
other investigations, e. g. scientific investigations, also. As it is a not a
principle of understanding, its validity will also vary. That is why any
expectation that this principle will be validated in the same way like the
principle of understanding will be frustrating. He justifies the variation or
difference in two different sorts of a priori principles (i. e., principles of the
understanding and Reason and principle of judgement) in the following way.

As faculty of judgement does not generate any objective concepts
(Kant considered categories of the understanding and Ideas of reason as
objective) it is out of question that the relation between particulars and
universals will be akin also in case of judgement. Principle of judgement is
subjective. Judgement does not make use of universal concepts of its own
produce like two previous Critiques, but still it furnishes us “with a principle
which made us look for universal concepts, which are not yet given, within
the sphere of particulars.”6 Hence we need to posit the existence of a
principle of judgement which makes us reason that

- the domain of particulars itself lay open to some uniformity,
- the rules for this consistency are not given to us but we must
  visualize them.

Thus this principle of judgement will be different from principles like
‘every occurrence has a cause’.

Cassirer in his commentary says that this a priori principle warrants
us “to treat nature as a system even as regards its merely empirical laws
without leaving the sphere of experience. This principle of systematic unity
is a principle which is applied by empirical science ... faculty of Judgement
demands this systematic unity of nature merely on subjective grounds. ... (it)
presupposes that it will succeed in connecting the particular laws of nature
with each other so as to be able to arrange them in a system.”7
From the above it becomes clear that for Kant there is no rationale for presuming the objective existence of *a priori* laws of judgement. Hence we need to search for this law in experience. Once we discover them in that realm, it seems “as if nature had adapted itself to the faculty of judgement and its subjective principle.” Thus now we can say that the principle of judgement is subjective and not only that this principle is in application in scientific exploration also. As this forms the basis of scientific enquiry there might have a proneness to consider it as objective principle and Kant cautions us about this so that we do not fall into this invisible trap.

Cassirer is of the opinion that though Kant considered this principle as subjective, it can also be reckoned as objective. For him, this principle is a mere maxim which guides us in our inquiry—as we must make use of it while enquiring into nature. This being so we need to attribute to it a special type of objective validity as we cannot presume that nature will adjust with our faculty of judgement. We can also consider it subjective on account of its unique character and which differentiates it from the objective principles given by the understanding.

Having stated his reasons for existence of such a subjective principle, Kant now attempts to show its character of synthetcity and *a prioricity*. We have seen the nature of the synthetic judgement in the chapter where we discussed his 1st *Critique*. Invoking that line of argument he says that the principle of judgement is synthetic as the denial of it does not involve a contradiction. Its *a prioricity* is based on the fact that the source of this knowledge is not sense observation. This principle is a rule that we tacitly assume before any empirical investigation of objects of nature. If this is not admitted our empirical observations will be loose and discreet thus lacking any unity. Cassirer writes: “...we must presuppose that nature is a system in accordance with particular laws which it contains.”\(^8\) Kant’s intent is to show that without a systematic connection of empirical laws our faculty of judgement cannot classify the particulars under a universal which ultimately culminates in finding the highest laws and the forms of nature. All these laws are empirical laws. In other words, in order to explain empirical unity “we
must be capable of regarding the aggregate of particular experiences as a system.” By holding this opinion Kant conveys that there need to be an *a priori* principle, which is distinct from *a priori* principles of the 1st *Critique* (there the idea of systematic unity was a pure concept of reason), which empowers us to consider nature as a system in the domain of experience. The same principle is in use in other empirical sciences too. The difference between this *a priori* principle and *a priori* principles discovered in previous two *Critiques* is regarding their validity. Validity in the present case is subjective whereas validity in the previous cases was objective.

The purpose of reflective judgement is, therefore, completely different. It does not merely “subsumes particulars under given universal rules” which is actually done in case of determinant judgement. In those cases judgements’ task is to apply universal concepts furnished by the understanding on data got through intuitions. However, reflective judgement is focused on empirical laws and concepts. An enquiry into why Kant does not talk about universal objective concepts of the reflective judgement gives us the impression that for Kant Judgement on its own does not generate rules like other faculties though it fancies that ‘it will find determinate empirical concepts for all understanding.’

It might be asked whether can such a principle have transcendental *a prioricity*. Cassirer in answering this question writes that “we should be unable to arrive at empirical concepts of actual objects, to arrange them in a logical system and to divide them into classes, if nature contained nothing but an endless multiplicity of totally different objects.” In other words, only if the presupposition that nature contains within it a systematic unity is taken for granted, then the apparent endless diversities can only be organized, by way of application of principles (of judgement) logically for systematizing them and only then among the chaos we can discern a system of empirical thoughts.

However, this is not all. There is an element of transcendental *a priori* principle in the faculty of judgement also. Let us see this. Notwithstanding the fact that the principle of Judgement is only a technique
for systematizing our concepts of empirical objects, it ultimately hinges upon a transcendental \textit{a priori} principle. It is a principle which is not only attentive to our concepts of natural objects, equally importantly is its concern about objects themselves. It is due to unique feature of natural objects that we can come along empirical concepts and also order them following a system on the basis of the concepts, albeit empirical. Difference between this principle and principles of understanding is that in the former case it merely provides us a guiding principle whereas in the latter case principles or rules are definitive. Though we can never gain these concepts through \textit{a priori} means, it is also a fact that experience of the world would have been impossible, had we not have stumbled on such particular laws of nature. For Kant, the principle which gives authority to search for the laws of nature must be thought of as a genuine \textit{a priori} principle.

We also need to remember that this \textit{a priori} principle does not furnish us objective concepts and hence therein lies the difference between this \textit{a priori} principle with other \textit{a priori} principles. It is not known before our actual experience what are the system of laws of nature or relations between them. “The faculty of Judgement presupposes that we shall find a certain regularity in nature, that natural objects will be of such a kind as to make possible for us to form concepts of them and to discover empirical laws, that nature has observed certain economy, that there is not an unlimited number of totally different laws but a limited number of laws which are related to each other.”\textsuperscript{10} For Kant, this argument justifies the subjectivity of the reflective principle and this principle has relevance merely in the interest of our knowledge.

It is the logical application of the principle of Judgement that classifies natural object in a logical system. Without such an assumption it is not possible for human mind to have information about nature. Kant here actually hints at some sort of power of Judgement. He showed before that laws that pure understanding supplies are \textit{a priori} and they make nature, or knowledge of nature, possible. But when we want to tame the manifold forms of nature, systematize them—ascend from the particulars to a
universal—we find a compelling reason for admitting laws of these forms. Apparently they might be thought to be empirical or contingent, as natural laws are empirical, i.e., known through *a posteriori* means, “still, if they are to be called laws (as the concept of nature does require), then they must be regarded as necessary by virtue of some principle of the unity of what is diverse, even though we do not know this principle.”

Kant seems to say that reflective judgement is under an obligation to move from the known or empirical realm to an empirically unknown realm and this necessity demands a principle for accomplishment of this. He gives reason to show that this principle we cannot have from experience as it forms the foundation of arraying empirical natural laws. As this is not empirical principle, this must be a transcendental principle that reflective judgement gives to itself as a law. The uniqueness of this principle is that neither it can be borrowed from elsewhere nor we can enjoin it to nature. It is because our reflection on “the laws of nature is governed by nature” and not the other way round. Stating this principle, which assemble natural laws, Kant writes: “... since universal natural laws have their basis in our understanding, which prescribes them to nature (though only according to the universal concept of it as a nature), the particular empirical laws must, as regards what the universal laws have left undetermined in them, be viewed in terms of such a unity as [they would have] if they too had been given by an understanding (even though not ours) so as to assist our cognitive powers by making possible a system of experience in terms of particular natural laws. That does not mean that we must actually assume such an understanding (for it is only reflective judgment that uses this idea as a principle, for reflection rather than determination); rather, in using this principle judgment gives a law only to itself, not to nature.”

Cassirer is of the opinion that Kant was well aware that the issue that he was addressing was a specific difficulty of transcendental philosophy. In dealing with this difficulty he finds in nature a logical purposiveness. In spite of the abstract character of this purposiveness transcendental philosopher, says Kant, has enough reason to ‘admire’ it.
We have seen a specific sort of task — viz. classification of natural objects and natural laws following an order and grouping them into genera and species — performed by the Faculty of Judgement. Kant also opines that reflective judgement also accounts for aesthetic judgement and teleological judgement. The former sort of judgement deals with the beautiful and the sublime and the latter sort with that which assigns ends or purpose to natural items. What it means is that purposiveness permeates in every level in natural items and laws. The above two issues he elaborated in the 3rd Critique under two sections, with a number of subsections under each heading, entitled ‘Critique of Aesthetic Judgement’ and ‘Critique of Teleological Judgement.’

**Types of aesthetic judgements**

Kant explains the employment of reflective judgement in both aesthetic and teleological field. Having said that he further asserts that it is more pronounced in its employment in aesthetic judgements. Then he goes on to pinpoint its role in judgement of beauty when it is set against sublime. Even in the arena of beauty he discusses about the beauty of nature and beauty of art. He puts a premium on former type.

An aesthetic judgement, holds Kant, is issued from feeling—specifically from feeling of pleasure. He admits four possible kinds of aesthetic judgements: judgements of the agreeable, judgments of beautiful (or what he calls judgments of taste), judgements of the sublime and judgements of the good. These are four possible sorts of reflective judgements. These are four as it has a correlation with the Table of Judgements that he stated in the 1st Critique under the heading ‘The Logical Function of the Understanding in Judgements’. There he writes: “... we find that the function of thought in judgement can be brought under four heads ...

13 In spite of saying this and talking about four sorts of aesthetic judgements, he uses the expression “aesthetic judgment” in a constricted sense. In this restricted sense Kant seems to deny access to judgments of the agreeable and the good, that is first one and the last one, in the arena of the
judgement of taste. Thus only the remaining two—beautiful and sublime—qualify to be called aesthetic judgements. In the 3rd Critique Kant appears to be addressing aesthetic judgement in this narrow sense.

A cursory look of the four sorts of aesthetic judgements will be in order here. The agreeable judgements are entirely sensory judgements such as ‘This book is hard’. Such judgements are subjective and are grounded on mere inclination. The beautiful and sublime judgements are different in nature and are seemingly oxymoronic, i.e. subjectively universal. Kant calls them ‘subjective’ as they are not moored to any determinate (or absolute) concept. He considers them universal as such judgements are issued with the belief that other people ought to go along with these judgements. This power of ‘ought’ has its source in a community of taste. The last type of aesthetic judgement (i.e. good) is fundamentally judgement that is ethical. This sort of judgements is contrary to agreeable as these are completely objective (we have seen that agreeable judgements are wholly subjective). Judgements of good are similar to moral law and have connection with reason.

Moments of Aesthetic judgements

The “Critique of Aesthetic Judgment” primarily addresses judgments of the beautiful and the sublime, two middle types that we mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Kant’s exposition of judgements of beauty is found under the rubric of “Analytic of the Beautiful.” There he brings out features of judgments of beauty by placing them under four heading or what he calls “moments.” These four moments match or agrees almost similarly with four logical forms that Kant outlined in his enumeration of categories in the 1st Critique. Abstracting only forms of understanding Kant there showed that the function of thought in judgement can be arranged under four caption—quality, quantity, relation and modality. His discussion of the Analytic of the Beautiful also corresponds to these forms and he calls them moment. In short, under four different moments Kant will exhibit essential features of the judgements of taste. For him, such judgements are
First Moment

It is the moment of quality. From the very first heading Kant makes it clear that judgements of taste are aesthetic. They spring from feeling—feeling of pleasure and displeasure—and arise on account of what Kant calls ‘free play’ between the cognitive powers of imagination and understanding. Writes Kant: “If we wish to discern anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer the representation of it to the Object by means of understanding ..., but by means of the imagination (acting perhaps in conjunction with understanding)...”14 These sorts of judgements (i.e. judgements of taste) are performance of the ‘Subject’. Kant goes on to add that they are rooted on feeling—feeling of Subject’s pleasure and displeasure. This feeling has nothing to do with the object. This is entirely due to Subject and the way ‘Subject is affected by the representation.’

What is noteworthy here is that when we judge the beauty of an object we are not determining whether the representation of the object makes us aware anything true about the object or gives us any empirical or scientific facts about it. Thus the pertinent point in judgements of taste is not to acquire any factual data about the object. In such judgements our concern is subjectively centered by which Kant means that its focal point is how the object’s appearance makes the viewer feel. In such a process we separate off our interest from the cognitive contents of the object. Here only we deal with feelings, feelings of pleasure or displeasure, that object’s presentation creates in our judging. Thus Kant is clearly drawing a line between cognition of an object, where we objectively comprehend an object, and aesthetic apprehension where we purely experience how the objects make us to feel.

The pleasure of an aesthetic judgement is distinct from ordinary pleasure in that it is disinterested. Kant defined interest as: “The delight which we connect with the representation of the real existence of an object is called interest.”15 One characteristic of such ‘delight’ is that it has a reference to the faculty of desire. Whereas judgement of taste does not depend on
Subject’s having a desire for the object. This feeling also does not occasion such a desire. Having said that judgements of beauty are grounded on feeling rather than objective sensation Kant differentiates them from cognitive judgements grounded on perception. Moreover, Kant elaborately shows that it is the disinterested character of feeling that draws a distinction between judgements of taste on the one hand and judgements of the agreeable and judgements of the good on the other. The latter types of judgements are also judgements of feeling, but they are not disinterested. Delight in the judgements of the agreeable or judgements of sensory gratification and of the judgements of the good or moral judgement is associated with interest and has ‘reference to the faculty of desire.’

In order to accentuate their difference Kant distinguishes between sensation and feeling. He earmarks sensation especially for pleasure and displeasure which are given rise by five senses. On the other hand the term ‘feeling’ has been used to refer to that feature of experience that covers non-sensory satisfaction. All sensory satisfactions are desire-based and hence concerned with interest in the thing that is objectively associated to the sensation.

We can summarize the above by saying that if we have an interest in something, the representation of that thing’s actuality creates a liking in us. It also propels us to desire that the object will be a reality. This is not a disinterested desire. Judgements of taste are independent of such an expectation. Hence it requires an attitude which is dissimilar to an inclination that is found in case of judgements of interest. That is why Kant calls this unique attitude disinterested on the part of person who makes the judgement.

**Second Moment**

Another distinguishing feature of judgements of beauty is its universality or what has sometimes been called universal validity. In claiming that judgements of beauty have the characteristic of universal validity Kant asserts something which is different from our expectation. From reading of the previous two *Critiques* naturally we are prone to think that if judgements of taste contain validity, then they be founded on
concepts—concepts that he explored in the 1st *Critique* and showed their universal characters. But Kant does not do this and reason for this deviation is that we cannot move from concepts to feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Hence the act of subsumption of the given object under a concept that we find in the 1st *Critique* is not in application in the 3rd *Critique*. But in the 3rd *Critique* in claiming that judgements of taste carry universality Kant says that in making a claim about such judgements one assumes that every person who view the object ought to judge it alike, i.e. as beautiful and also share pleasure in it. On account of its difference in nature from the first *Critique*, judgements of taste, though possess the character of universality, cannot be demonstrated by evidence. What Kant intends to show is that in spite of its universal validity we do not possess any canon by which we can convince others to judge the thing as beautiful like ours. In holding that a judgement of taste ‘delight in the object is connected in the mere estimate of its form’, Kant wants to show that beauty is not concept of objects.

The question is if beauty is not a concept of the object and also not inclination of the Subject what is their exact status. Kant holds that Subject freely ascribes this liking to the object. As in such beauty and its delight there are no personal conditions of knower’s subjective self alone, it makes room for supposition that other persons should have similar delight. As a result of this, writes Kant, “he will speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a quality of the object and the judgement logical ... although it is only aesthetic, and contains merely a reference of the representation of the object to the Subject ....” On account of its similarity to the logical judgement, it is presumed to be valid for everyone. This universality is not fastened with objects rather it is an affirmation of subjective universality. Kant defines the notion ‘beautiful’ drawing from the second moment thus: “The beautiful is that which, apart from a concept, pleases universally.”

Actually the nature of universality of the judgements of taste is a sequel of its first moment or its disinterestedness. On account of such judgements’ disinterested character there arises a feeling that these judgements are independent of one’s own personal desires and interests.
Owing to this it can reasonably be expected that other will also similarly experience that feeling in regard to that object of course if they judge it disinterestedly. Thus a universal feeling of approval creeps into judgements of the beautiful. This universal feeling actually emits from sharing of the similar cognitive faculties.

Third Moment

In his explanation of the third moment of judgements of taste Kant shows its unique relation with end or purpose. He gives us a definition of end in transcendental terms: “An end is the object of a concept so far as this concept is regarded as the cause of the object (the real ground of its possibility); and the causality of a concept in respect of its Object is finality ....”18 Explaining further he says that if it is not the mere cognition of the object but the cognition of the ‘object itself’, i. e. by which he means ‘its form or real existence’ which is considered to be made possible only via a concept of it, there we visualize an end. In judgements of taste our judgements do not presume an end or purpose which the object is desired to meet or fulfill. However, in case of the judgements of the good there is such a presupposition.

In spite of above difference Kant finds a sort of representation in the judgements of beauty what he terms ‘purposiveness’. Distinguishing this representation of purposiveness with ordinary purposiveness which involves attribution of a purpose Kant says that judgements of beauty contain only formal purposiveness or ‘the form of purposiveness’. It appears from his explanation that this formal purposiveness is discerned both in the object itself and also in the venture of imagination and understanding in their cognition of the object. Thus Kant espouses a kind of formalism in his aesthetic judgements.

Unlike judgments of the good, judgments of the beautiful do not presuppose an end or purpose which the object is taken to satisfy. However, they nonetheless involve the representation of what Kant calls “purposiveness”. Because this representation of purposiveness does not
involve the ascription of an end, Kant calls the purposiveness which is represented “merely formal purposiveness” or “the form of purposiveness.” He describes it as perceived both in the object itself and in the activity of imagination and understanding in their engagement with the object.

Fourth Moment

This moment address the moment of the modality of ‘the Delight of the Object’. Out of the modal ideas of possibility, actuality and necessity Kant concentrates on the specific sort of necessity that is attendant to feeling of approval found in the judgements of taste. He clearly states that the necessity he ascribes to judgements of the beautiful is a distinct kind. “It is not a theoretical objective necessity—such as would let us cognize a priori that everyone will feel this delight in the object that is called beautiful by me. Nor yet is it a practical necessity ... it is a necessity of the assent of all to a judgement regarded as exemplifying a universal rule incapable of formulation,” writes Kant. Thus we are certain that the necessity of aesthetic judgement is unique. But the moot question is how this necessity is generated in aesthetic judgements.

The response of the above question we find in Kant. He is of the view that it is the commonalities of the faculties of understanding and imagination and the free play of them in anybody, if he is to experience any object disinterestedly, that furnishes us the notion. Kant calls this necessity ‘exemplary’. He finds a necessity in the assent of all in aesthetic judgements as it represents a universal rule. We saw before that aesthetic judgements are not objective or cognitive judgements. And it precludes us to derive necessity from definite concepts. It is not also derivable from universality of experience. It is so as experience can neither give us evidence which is adequate for the purpose nor empirical judgements furnishes us any “foundation for a concept of the necessity of these judgements.”

Realizing that no definite rules for the comprehension of object in the aforesaid free play are found, Kant falls back upon ‘common sense’ to explain the disinterested feeling of approval. Asserts Kant, “... they must
have a subjective principle, and one which determines what pleases or displeases, by means of feeling only and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity. Such a principle ... could only be regarded as a common sense.”

He draws our attention not to confuse common sense with common understanding as the judgement of the latter one is not made out of feeling, but of concepts. We have seen before that aesthetic judgements are essentially judgements of feeling.

Kant’s notion of common sense makes us think that he is alluding to some capacity of human being. By qualifying the term ‘sense’ with the adjective ‘common’ he seems to convey that all of us has the capacity for experiencing the feeling in a similar way. This common sense, where sense means a sort of feeling, is shared by all human beings alike. This is due to constitution of cognition and its distinct type of interplay between the understanding and imagination. This in turn implies that Kant’s view about necessity and universality that he ascribes to judgements of taste are derived from shared cognitive structure or common capacity to experience. As this capacity standardizes the experience of beauty, it is expected there will be a point where everybody’s view will merge and this accounts for Kant’s claim that everybody’s feeling will be the same in judgements of taste if the object is perceived disinterestedly. It now makes sense for one to hope for others to have the same feeling. Previously we saw that the character of disinterestedness eliminates components of sense-gratification and conceptualization.

How are Judgments of Beauty Possible?

Reading of Kant’s 3rd Critique gives us the impression that judgements of beauty have two apparently contrary features. Kant repeatedly says that they are judgements which spring from feeling and also hold that they do not involve desire for the object. Moreover, he claims that in such judgements there is agreement in everybody’s view. The latter claim sometimes prompt us to think that they be considered as objective cognitive judgements. There are scholars who find an effort in Kant’s view about
judgements of beauty to overcome the problem of empiricists and rationalists view. Empiricists thinkers such as Hume and others held that judgements of taste are actually an expression of feeling and devoid of any cognitive significance. Rationalists group of thinkers contended that aesthetic judgements involve cognition of an object and its objective property. Kant by holding that these judgements are issued from feeling and also have universal validity furnishes us an unconventional view and can be considered as replacement of the above two views.

Kant’s claim of universal validity of aesthetic judgements and substantiation of this claim was an arduous task. We saw before that deriving pleasure in aesthetic judgements is the outcome of free play of the faculties of imagination and understanding. How does it work is a moot point. In the 1st Critique Kant gives an account of imagination by saying that it synthesizes the manifold of intuition. This task is executed under the guidance of principles supplied by the understanding. This is indeed a complex task. There are certain rules imposed by the understanding and dovetailed with concept. These are now put in application on objects with all its empirical features. But in the 3rd Critique Kant seems to hint at a different type of relationship between imagination and understanding. Here we find an explanation where imagination’s pursuit is synchronized with that of understanding without imposing any checks or rules by understanding. In doing this imagination and understanding practically do the same thing what is required for bringing objects under concepts. But the difference lies in the fact that in aesthetic judgements it is done without subsuming the object under any particular concept. Hence it is non-conceptual and a feeling which Kant terms disinterested.

Kant fell back upon this version of pleasure in order to make room for its universal validity. A person who considers such an object to be beautiful and thus derive pleasure can justly claim that other people’s feeling also match his own and their judgements get along with him.

This view of Kant generated a lot of debate in post-Kantian scholars. The generation of disinterested pleasure and the uniqueness of judgements of
taste, i.e. aesthetic judgments and their claim of necessity and universality were questioned by many. It indeed seems a complex mechanism and there are blurred area which demands further clarification. Acceptance of his view revolves on clarification of this grey area. We do not want to enter into detail elaboration of this fuzzy zone as it falls outside the purview of our venture. Still statement of some outstanding questions that has been raised by a number of scholars will be pertinent here.

It is pointed out that there is no basis for accepting the argument of free play that Kant thought of taking place between faculties, imagination and understanding. How can we hold that this free play is in work in one case and not in function in other cases, i.e. in other cognitive perceptual experiences? Had it been in work, we would have perceived all object as beautiful, which is not actually the case. Moreover, it does not seem to be clear how can one demand an agreement of others for an attitude where perceivers faculties were in play. This experiencing of free play is a phenomenon which is not easily understandable as it is not mere cognition but contains something more.

Another debatable point is determination of the relation between pleasure, which is sensed in an object of beautiful, and with aesthetic judgement. When Kant says that aesthetic judgements are issued from feeling of pleasure, there is an implicit claim that pleasure is recognizably different from the act of judging. If it is so, how are they related? Another question that agitated minds of Kantian scholars that in the judgement of tastes which one precedes—pleasure or judging the object? On account of some conflicting statements found sporadically in the Critique of Judgement scholars are unsure about Kant’s exact stand on the issue.

Another pivotal point that demands further explanation is Kant’s notion of ‘free play’. He assumed ‘free play’ between faculties of imagination and understanding. It is from this play that aesthetic judgements originates. But the arguable point is that what is it for the two faculties to be in such a play. Kant gives an explanation of this play by saying it as ‘harmonious accord’ in cognitive faculties. For him it contains the ground of
pleasure. At another place he says judgements of beauty ‘must be one of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general.’ The uniqueness of this free play is that it satisfies the broad conditions for the application of the concepts to objects perceived by a viewer but without applying any specific concept. Thus Kant takes the opportunity to use the advantage of free play. The advantage is that in this free play imagination, on the one hand, complies with the conditions of understanding, on the other, it is free from any restriction of a particular concept. From this view it appears that what Kant intends to convey us is that imagination is in work following certain principles but without being regulated by any one principle in particular. It is what Kant calls ‘lawfulness without law’ and also at some places ‘free conformity to law of the imagination’. Though there is no gainsaying the fact that this explanation of Kant contains novelty, yet some questions remain unanswered. Some questions that haunt a reader’s mind are: how such an activity becomes comprehensible to us? Why does it give rise to a feeling that Kant calls feeling of pleasure? Scholars are grappling with these problems.

Kant held that judgements of taste demand an agreement. In the Introduction to the Critique of Judgement he shows that this demand of agreement is made in the similar way as it happens in the objective cognitive judgement. As we demand an agreement in case of an empirical cognition, likewise we demand an agreement in an aesthetic judgement. He elaborately explains this point in the Introduction. But the nature of this demand is hardly intelligible. There is certainly difference in the nature of aesthetic feeling and objective or empirical cognition. Given this difference it is not understandable how do both of them possess the claim of agreement.

The Sublime

We saw in the beginning that within the fold of aesthetic judgements fall another type of judgement. It is judgement of sublime. Kant stated his view about estimation of the sublime in a lengthy section entitled ‘Analytic of the Sublime’ which runs over hundred pages. Before coming to the
discussion of Kant’s notion of sublime a few lines, which will serve as rudimentary, will be in order.

In the history of thought the notion of sublime first appeared, or at least we could trace its systematic study, in the 1st century. Cassius Longinus, a known rhetorician and philosophic critic, of that time in his *On the Sublime* mainly talks about writing style and applying the concept of sublime there traces five sources this concept. He also traces some of its effects which are usually aroused in his audience. The discussion thus initiated continued and received more attention in the eighteenth century. Among these figures Edmund Burke, a British philosopher and politician, is a notable figure. In his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* argued to show that sublimity and beauty are different and also mutually exclusive. He also dwelt upon psychological effects of sublimity. Kant as early as 1764 addressed the issue of beautiful and sublime but it got its fuller expression in his *Critique of Judgement*. The notions of beautiful and sublime, as we saw before, are at the center of his aesthetic philosophy. For him, sublime is absolutely great and also beyond any comparison. He then talks about two sorts of sublime: mathematical sublime which are great in terms of enormity of magnitude and dynamic sublime which is great in terms of limitless power. It has been used to name natural objects that create a kind of wonder merely through its immensity.

Kant in the beginning of the discussion of the sublime shows its similarity with beautiful, e. g. he says that both of them are pleasurable ‘on their own account’. Then he goes on to show their differences. He underscores two important differences. One is about form—the judgements of beauty have form whereas judgments of sublime lack form. He writes: “The beautiful in nature is a question of the form of the object, and this consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or else by its presence provokes, a representation of limitlessness, yet with a super-added thought of totality.’” Thus connection with the form of the object in one case (in case of judgements of the beautiful) and lacking this connection in another (in
case of judgement of the sublime) is a remarkable feature of these two types of aesthetic judgements. Kant further added that in judgements of the beautiful there is a ‘presentation of an indeterminate concept of the understanding’ whereas in judgements of the sublime it is a ‘presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason’. Furthermore, the delight that such judgements accompany is representation of quality in judgments of the beauty and it is representation of quantity in judgements of the sublime.

Another distinction between two categories of judgements delineated by Kant is that judgements of the sublime are confined to the ‘Objects of nature’. These objects carry with it a finality in its form. Second, it creates a feeling in us which is outrageous to our imagination.

The chief feature of sublime is its greatness. It is absolutely great in comparison to all other things. It also contains within it an aura of mystery and ineffability. Its greatness is so vast that it overwhelms imagination’s capacity to apprehend it. As imagination singly is unable to comprehend it, it struggles to fathom the object as per demand of reason and it led Kant to hold that sublimity of an object resides not in sublime objects but instead in reason. Writes Kant: “... the sublime is not to be looked for in the things of nature, but only in our ideas.”

Previously we talked about mathematically sublime and dynamically sublime. For Kant, objects of nature are apt instances for the former kind. Though he cites instances of St. Peter’s in Rome and Pyramids of Egypt, there are scholars who say that most appropriate instances of mathematically sublime are of objects of nature. Such phenomenon of nature shows the inadequacy of imagination ‘for presenting the idea of a whole’ and in ‘so doing succumbs to an emotional delight.’ In case of dynamically sublime the struggle between reason’s capacity and that of nature itself becomes more evident. Here we regard reason’s superiority over nature and it creates an awe in mind. Thus we can say that sublime is a sort of feeling of pleasure or displeasure (for Kant, displeasure arises from the recognition of the deficiency of our imagination (in case of mathematically sublime) and also from our knowledge of our physical incapability vis-a-vis nature’s impressive might (in case of the
dynamically sublime)). Pleasure arises from apprehension of reason’s superiority over nature. Pleasure and displeasure in the sublime are movement of the mind. The feeling in the sublime oscillates between repulsion and attraction to the same object. Kant claims in judgements of the sublime, like judgements of beauty, universal validity of pleasure. It is this claim that assumes significance in our current investigation. His claim of this universal validity is presumed to involve necessity. It is so as in such an experience there is claim that every person who experiences it ought to share the same sort of feeling. We need to remember that the claim of universal validity that just now we have discussed in case of the judgements of the sublime is grounded not on universal validity that Kant found in the conditions of cognition in the 1st Critique. It is rather founded on universal validity of feeling which sometime Kant calls moral feeling.

It is also important to note that though judgments of the beautiful and judgements of the sublime both are aesthetic judgment we must bear in mind that the seat of the latter feeling is mind and not the object as it is the case in judgments of the beauty. To put it simply we call objects beautiful but we cannot aptly call objects sublime. Sublimity, as Kant says, does not reside in nature but in our mind. Another fundamental difference between two sorts of aesthetic judgements that are in question is that judgements of beauty arises from free play of the faculties of imagination and understanding but the play in case of judgements of the sublime are between imagination and reason. We have attempted a simple explanation of the sublime and its difference from beauty. But there are scholars, e. g. Paul Guyer, who attempts to show ‘phenomenological difference between the feelings of beauty and sublimity’. He shows inadequacies of only logical and epistemological explanations of their nature and difference but that we shall not attempt to discuss here as it does not have much relevance with our current work.

References


3 Ibid., p. 18.

4 Ibid., p. 18.

5 Ibid., p. 19.


7 Ibid., p. 111.

8 Ibid., 110.

9 Ibid., 117.

10 Ibid., 118.


12 Ibid., pp. 19-20. (Werner S. Pluhar’s translation).


15 Ibid, p. 42.

16 Ibid., p. 51.

17 Ibid., p. 60.

18 Ibid., p. 61.

19 Ibid., p. 81.

20 Ibid., p. 82.

21 Ibid., p. 39.

22 Ibid., p. 58.

23 Ibid. p. 90.

24 Ibid., p. 97.


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