

#### CHAPTER IV

#### Synthetic a Priori and the Third 'Critique'

#### [ I ]

Kant's third 'Critique', the Critique of Judgment is not a mere appendage. It performs, so Kant believes, the important function of linking the other two 'Critiques' and it constitutes a part of the critical philosophy undertaken in the first and the second 'critiques'. "Further, if the power or faculty of judgment is related", writes F. Copleston, "in regard to its a priori principles, to feeling in a manner analogous to the ways in which understanding is related to cognition and reason (in its practical employment) to desire, we can see that the Critique of Judgment forms a

necessary part of the critical philosophy, and not simply an appendage which might or might not be there"<sup>1</sup>. Kant admits of three particular cognitive faculties, viz, understanding, judgment and reason; and he believes that each of them is connected with a different mental power or faculty. The first 'critique' shows that there are a priori principles of the understanding, which makes knowledge of objects possible. In the second 'critique' Kant holds that reason, too, has an a priori principle which legislates for desire. In the same way, in the third 'critique' Kant asserts that the faculty of judgment gives a priori rules to feeling. As a part of the critical philosophy the third 'critique' is concerned with the general critical question : How synthetic a priori judgments are possible ? But this time the question is raised not with reference to the world of freedom but with reference to the domain of reflective judgment, i.e., the purposive and the beautiful products of nature and art. "The objects of the teleological and the aesthetic judgment, the purposive and the beautiful products of nature and art, constitute the desired immediate field between nature and freedom : and here again the critical question comes up, how, in relation to these, synthetic judgments a priori possible ?"<sup>2</sup>

Though the same critical question is raised in the third 'critique' also, the meaning of the expression,

'synthetic a priori' changes with the change of domain. In the Critique of Pure Reason the synthetic a priori judgments are such that they make knowledge of objects possible. They state conditions of the possibility of experience itself. These judgments are constitutive. In the second 'critique' the synthetic a priori judgments do not stand for conditions of the possibility of experience nor do they mean conditions of the determination of what should be done. They come to stand for those judgments which state the conditions of the determination of what we should not do. These synthetic a priori judgments are regulative. In the third critique the expression 'synthetic a priori' assumes a third sense, i.e., a sense which is not exactly similar to the sense either of the first 'critique' or of the second 'critique'.

Though the synthetic a priori judgments of the first two 'critiques' have each a different connotation, in one important sense they belong to the same category. These judgments are, according to Kant's division of the term 'judgment', determinant. 'The faculty of judgment, in general'<sup>3</sup>, Kant holds 'is the power of thinking the particular as being contained in the universal'. The subsumption of the particular under the universal may assume two forms, and accordingly we have two kinds of judgment, viz, determinant and reflective judgments. In judgment of the first kind we subsume the particular under

a determinate concept or rule supplied by the understanding or the pure reason. But the reflective judgment is independent of any determinate concept or law. Here the law or concept is not given, it is to be discovered. 'If the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) is given, then the faculty of judgment which subsumes the particular under it is determinant, this being true also when the faculty as a transcendental faculty of judgment gives a priori the conditions under which alone the particular can be subsumed under the universal. But if only the particular is given, for which the faculty of judgment is to find the universal, then judgment is merely reflective'<sup>4</sup>. Thus the reflective judgment is not simply a case of subsumption. It has to find the universal, as Kant puts it, under which the particulars can be subsumed. Thus though the universal law of causation is given a priori by the understanding, the special empirical laws under which the particulars are to be subsumed are not so given, for they are not deducible from the universal law of causation; nor are they given a posteriori, as objects of experience. They are to be discovered. As the factor of being dependent or being independent of any determinate concept or law plays a role in the characterisation of the logical status of a judgment and as the third 'critique' is concerned with the reflective judgments, it is not unlikely that the logical character of the synthetic a priori judgments of the third 'critique' will be different from that of the first or the second 'critique'.

## [ II ]

Reflective judgment which ascends from the particular in nature to the universal needs a principle of its own. This principle is not supplied by the understanding. Understanding supplies the most general a priori principles to which any object of experience must conform. From these principles we can not deduce the special empirical laws of nature. For the discovery of these special empirical laws, or for the subsumption of one empirical law under a more general one, i. e., for constructing a system of inter related laws reflective judgment depends, Kant holds, on the principle that 'nature itself is systematic'; that an unlimited diversity of empirical laws does not belong to nature, that, instead 'nature is fitted for experience as an empirical system'.

It is a principle which is implicit in all scientific enquiries. But since it is not a principle of the understanding, its validity is essentially different from the categories and the principles of the understanding.

"... the faculty of judgment demands this systematic unity of nature on merely subjective grounds. It expects that nature will meet its demands. The faculty of judgment 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. It follows that the faculty of judgment is not entitled to assume the objective existence of such laws or of such a system. It can do no more than apply its principle as a principle of enquiry into nature. Since there are no laws given to judgment, all that judgment can do is to look for such laws in experience. When it finds them there, it must seem as if nature had adapted itself to the faculty of judgment and its subjective principles. Thus the principle of judgment is of an entirely different kind from the objective principles of the understanding which are necessary conditions of experience as such. It is a subjectively necessary principle, a necessary maxim of scientific enquiry"<sup>5</sup>.

This principle of reflection is different from the principle that 'every event must have a cause'. It is not a synthetic a priori judgment in the sense in which the principle of universal causation is. Let us see how far we can characterise it as 'synthetic a priori'.

The judgment that 'nature itself is systematic' is a synthetic judgment. It is synthetic in the sense that the negation of it does not involve us in any self-contradiction. It claims also to be a priori. It may claim to be a priori in the sense of not being empirical. Though it is in a real sense empirically verified, it is not in itself the result of observation. This principle is, rather, the

presupposition of all empirical investigation of objects of nature. But it is not a priori in exactly the sense in which the judgment 'every event must have a cause' is. This 'universal law of causation is objectively valid; it is a constitutive principle, it is a priori in the sense that it is the very condition for there being any object at all.

The principle of reflective judgment, 'nature itself is systematic' is, on the other hand, subjective. To make this point clear Kant calls it a "technic of nature". It does not furnish "knowledge of objects and their nature". It does not attribute anything at all to the object, but only concerns our mode of reflection on it. Kant holds that this principle "only represents the unique mode in which we must proceed in our reflection upon the objects of nature ... and so is a subjective principle, i.e., a 'maxim of judgment". This principle is not a constitutive principle, without which any experience would be impossible, but a regulative principle, which motivates the search for a system among the concepts of experience. The supreme principle of morality, the Categorical Imperative, which has been recognised by Kant as a synthetic a priori judgment in the second 'critique', is also regulative. But there is an important distinction between these two regulative principles. The categorical imperative has, Kant asserts, objective validity. It does not express subjective feeling of approval

or disapproval. Its validity can be demonstrated. But the principle of reflective judgment, 'Nature itself is systematic', being independent of all concepts can not be demonstrated to be valid. It is subjectively valid, it concerns only our mode of reflection.

But though this principle is not constitutive in the sense of being a condition of the possibility of experience, it is the condition of the possibility of a system of such experiences. The possibility of undertaking an investigation for bringing the distinct experiences or the individual empirical laws into a unified whole or system presupposes that nature itself is systematic. In this sense it is a priori. According to Kant, H.W. Cassirer writes, "Experience depends upon two a priori presuppositions : (a) that nature is determined by universal laws and (b) that the empirical laws of nature are intelligible to the human mind"<sup>6</sup>.

We have objective grounds to accept the first presupposition and this is shown by Kant when he establishes the objective validity of transcendental laws in the Critique of Pure Reason. The second presupposition is a "subjectively necessary transcendental presupposition" because it is accepted not on the basis of objective reasons but simply on the ground that experience would be impossible without it. "Thus it is a subjectively necessary transcendental

presupposition that this unlimited diversity of empirical laws and heterogeneity of natural forms, of which otherwise we might be afraid, actually does not occur in nature. We must presuppose, on the contrary, that nature, through the affinity of particular laws, provides itself with the qualities necessary for it to become experience as an empirical system"<sup>7</sup>.

Thus the principle of reflective judgment is synthetic a priori in the sense of being a condition not of the constitution of objects themselves, but of the systematic study of these objects, already constituted by the principles of the understanding. This sense of 'synthetic a priori' is definitely not exactly similar to the sense in which this expression has been used in the first or in the second 'critique'. The synthetic a priori judgment that 'nature itself is systematic' states neither a condition of the possibility of experience nor does it state a condition of the determination of what should be avoided. It attributes a new sense to the expression 'synthetic a priori', but this sense is not completely new. The synthetic a priori judgments of all the three 'critiques' are alike in respect of being or stating a 'condition' of something, but they differ in being conditions of 'different things'. In the first 'critique' it states a condition of 'the possibility of experience', in the second 'critique' of 'the determination of what should not be done', and in the third 'critique' of

'the establishment of the relations among the experiences'.

[ III ]

H.W.Cassirer holds that in the Critique of Judgment 'Kant goes on to distinguish two kinds of reflective judgment, viz, aesthetic judgments of reflection and teleological judgments of reflection'. These two kinds of reflective judgments, Cassirer asserts, 'are only subjectively valid in so far as they can not determine their objects as such but only in relation to the human mind'<sup>8</sup>.

Like the occurrence of the pair of terms 'synthetic analytic' or 'a priori-aposteriori' the occurrence of another pair of terms 'subjective-objective' is very much frequent in Kant's philosophy. It is possible to give more than one interpretations to any term of these pairs. The terms 'subjective' and 'objective', for example, admit of at least, three different interpretations; and what is subjective in one interpretation may be called 'objective' judged by a different interpretation. 'A judgment is subjective if no universality or necessity can be attributed to it, if for its validity it depends entirely on the state of mind of an individual subject. A judgment is objective if some such universality or validity can be attached to it'<sup>9</sup>. Judged by this criterion a reflective judgment "This picture is

beautiful" is objective or it has objective validity. But it is subjective in the sense that it refers to the knowing subject and not to natural objects; or in the sense that it is independent of all determinate concepts. Kant calls an aesthetic judgment subjective in both these two senses.

In what follows we shall take up a particular form of reflective judgment and see whether we can sustain the conclusion that in the third 'critique' a judgment is 'synthetic a priori' in yet a different sense. We shall confine our discussion to aesthetic judgments only. This is because of two reasons. First, here we have a limited purpose of showing that in the third 'critique' a different sense, which is not present either in the first or in the second 'critique', is attached to the expression 'synthetic a priori', and for this limited purpose inclusion of the second form of reflective judgment within the purview of our discussion is not indispensable. Second, of the two forms of reflective judgment, aesthetic judgments "are more closely connected with the faculty of judgement than teleological judgments"<sup>10</sup> in so far as they do not make use of any concepts and thus obviously can not derive their principles from any other faculty of the mind than judgment.

## [ IV ]

There is a clear distinction between two modes of speaking and we use both these forms. We say, on the one hand, that 'this stone seems to me to be heavy' or that 'I believe this stone to be heavy' and, on the other, that 'this stone is heavy'; we say that 'impartiality is desirable' and that 'being impartial is a duty'. It is the claim of 'universality' or a 'reference to others' on which the above distinctions are dependent.

Same is the case with judgments of aesthetic taste. Some merely state private likes and dislikes, and others in addition to this, a claim to universal validity. Some times we say 'I like this statue' i.e., the statue seems to be beautiful to me. Again, we say that 'the statue is beautiful'. The latter claims that any body who judges the statue differently is, in some sense, wrong. It is this latter form of aesthetic judgments, called by Kant judgments of taste, which will be discussed below with the aim of finding out the sense in which a judgment of taste is synthetic a priori.

Kant analyses an aesthetic judgment or a judgment of taste from four different standpoints, or, as he calls them, 'moments', which he claims to correspond to four different logical forms of judgment - quality, quantity, relation and modality. Each moment constitutes a partial definition of 'beautiful'.

In the opinion of F.Copleston, however, these four moments have been 'rather oddly perhaps' correlated with the four logical forms of judgment. "I say 'rather oddly perhaps', because the judgment of taste is not itself a logical judgment, even though, according to Kant, it involves a reference or relation to the understanding"<sup>11</sup>.

(1) From the standpoint of quality beautiful is that which is the object of an 'entirely disinterested'<sup>12</sup> satisfaction or dissatisfaction. An aesthetic judgment or a judgment of taste implies that the object which is called beautiful causes satisfaction without depending on any desire or appetite of the subject who judges. In this respect a judgment of taste is different from a judgment about the pleasant or the good. Both in case of the pleasant and the good we have feelings of pleasure. But we call something to be pleasant, for example, because we are interested in its existence, because we like to have it.

It is to be noted here that by using the expression 'entirely disinterested' Kant does not want to mean that an aesthetic judgment can not or that it ought not to be accompanied by any interest. What he really wants to mean is that an interest is never the determining ground of a judgment of taste. "In society men certainly have an interest in communicating the pleasure which they feel in aesthetic

experience. And Kant calls this an empirical interest in the beautiful. But interest, though it may accompany or be combined with the judgment of taste, is not its determining ground. Considered in itself, the judgment is disinterested"<sup>13</sup>.

(2) From the standpoint of relation beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, without any representation of a purpose. In a pure judgment of taste, says Kant, there is an awareness of finality, without the concept of an end which is achieved in the object, called beautiful. In making the aesthetic judgment 'the flower is beautiful', we do not conceive of any purpose which is achieved in the flower. On the other hand, if in judging a particular building as beautiful, we represent to ourselves a purpose which is achieved and perfectly embodied in the building, we miss a pure judgment of taste. "There can, of course, be a concept of purpose, which accompanies the experience of beauty. But Kant will not allow that a judgment of taste is 'Pure' if it presupposes a concept of a purpose. He distinguishes between what he calls 'free' and 'adherent' beauty. If we judge that a flower is beautiful, we have, most probably, no concept of a purpose which is achieved in the flower. The beauty of the latter is then said to be free; and our judgment of taste is said to be pure".<sup>14</sup>

(3) According to quantity, beautiful is 'that which pleases universally, without a concept'<sup>15</sup>.

The fact that the beautiful pleases universally is implicit in the fact, already stated, that the beautiful pleases without any reference to interests or private inclinations. If my judgment that 'the statue is beautiful' is entirely disinterested, i.e., independent of my private inclinations and idiosyncrasies, then I will have reason to believe that the beautiful object will produce a similar feeling of pleasure in all others who face it, and hence others will judge it to be beautiful, too. A judgment of taste is universal. In respect to this feature of universality a judgment of taste is different from a judgment concerning the pleasant. When I say that 'hot-bath is pleasant', I recognise the possibility that others may find it unpleasant. I take the latter judgment that 'hot-bath is unpleasant' to be quite consistent with my judgment that 'hot-bath is pleasant'. This is because I am conscious that my judgment concerning the pleasant is dependent on my peculiar inclinations, and inclinations may vary. Thus a judgment about the pleasant does not demand universal agreement.

But the case is quite different with the beautiful. An aesthetic judgment involves a claim to universal validity. It is true that a judgment about the beautiful involves a subjective element like the judgment about the pleasant. I do not judge a statue, for example, to be beautiful unless I myself enjoy a feeling of satisfaction at the representation

of the object. This may be idiomatically expressed as 'tasting the taste with one's own tongue'. But this is not all. An aesthetic judgment of taste is based on my own feeling of pleasure, this feeling is not caused by anything peculiar to me, but by something common to all, i.e., the harmonious relation between the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding. It is because of this that when I assert that 'the statue is beautiful', I do not take it to be valid simply for myself but for all others. An aesthetic judgment claims universal acceptance, and this feature distinguishes it from an ordinary judgment of taste which does not involve any such a claim.

This claim of universal validity is, to some extent, peculiar, since the validity of it can not be demonstrated to others. Logical proof or demonstration requires the use of determinate concepts, but an aesthetic judgment being a variety of reflective judgment is independent of all concepts. In making an aesthetic judgment we refer "only to the feelings in every subject. We can not, therefore, make good our claim to the universal validity of the judgment by any process of logical argument. We can only persuade others to look again, and to look with more attention, at the object, confident that in the end their feelings will speak for themselves and that they will concur with our judgment. When we make the judgment, we believe that we speak, as it were, with a

universal voice, and we claim the assent of others; but they will give this assent only on the basis of their own feelings, not in virtue of any concepts which we adduce"<sup>16</sup>.

(4) From the standpoint of modality 'beautiful is that which without any concept is recognized as the object of a necessary satisfaction'<sup>17</sup>.

In judging something to be beautiful we 'assume agreement' on the part of everybody who perceives it. This necessity which an aesthetic judgment involves is different both from the theoretical objective necessity and from the practical necessity. When I say that 'the statue is beautiful', I do not claim to know a priori that everybody will agree with me. My knowledge that others in fact agree with me depends on empirical investigation. If my aesthetic judgment were theoretically necessary, I should have that knowledge of agreement without waiting for any further information. Again, this necessity is different from practical necessity. Practical necessity originates from the concept of an objective law which determines how we ought to act. To distinguish aesthetic necessity from the other two forms of it, mentioned above, Kant calls it 'exemplary'; 'that is, necessity of the assent of all to a judgment which is regarded as an example of a universal rule which one can not state'<sup>18</sup>. An aesthetic judgment, say, 'the statue is beautiful' claims

that everybody ought to describe it as beautiful. The necessary connection between the representation of the statue and the feeling of pleasure presupposes a universal principle. This can not be a logical principle, for an aesthetic judgment is a form of reflective judgment which is independent of any determinate concept.

Here two points may be noted. First, the four moments of aesthetic judgment or the four partial definitions of beauty do not have the same function in the making of aesthetic judgments. The moments of universality and necessity state the goal at which the particular aesthetic responses, i.e., the feelings of pleasure, aim at - the goal of inter-subjective validity or agreement. This inter-subjective validity is different from objective validity. Kant, of course, has not made any distinction between inter-subjective and objective validity in the first and the second 'critiques'.

The other two moments, i.e., the moments of disinterestedness and finality of form, on the other hand, state the conditions to be fulfilled by an aesthetic response for becoming intersubjectively valid.

The second point is that though Kant is clear enough in explaining that a particular aesthetic judgment has both an empirical and a priori elements, he does not state whether the

four partial definitions of beauty are synthetic or analytic.

[ v ]

According to Paul Guyer, Kant argues that 'aesthetic judgment is a variety of synthetic a priori judgment, so that the problem of a deduction of aesthetic judgment may, therefore, be considered "part of the general problem of transcendental philosophy : How synthetic a priori judgments possible ?"<sup>19</sup>. From the expression 'a variety of' it may be guessed that Kant did not use the expression 'synthetic a priori' with reference to aesthetic judgments in exactly the same sense in which he used it in the other 'critiques'.

The second point that may be guessed is that an aesthetic judgment makes an a priori claim, for what requires a deduction in a synthetic judgment is just whatever a priori claim it contains. A judgment that contains an a priori claim is an a priori judgment. An a priori claim is made by an aesthetic judgment in the sense that it attributes universal and necessary validity to particular feelings of pleasure.

It is, however, clear that an aesthetic judgment can not be synthetic a priori in the sense in which we have such

judgments in the first or in the second 'critique'. In the first 'critique' the judgment 'every event must have a cause' is an example of synthetic a priori judgment. This judgment states the condition of the possibility of objects of experience. In the second critique the Categorical Imperative, which is recognised by Kant as synthetic a priori, states the condition of the determination of what should not be done. In both the cases, a synthetic a priori judgment states an objective condition or criterion of something. An aesthetic judgment, according to Kant, is neither a theoretical cognitive judgment nor a practical cognitive judgment, but a reflective one. Like a judgment concerning the pleasant, it is a subjective judgment concerning the pleasant, it is a subjective judgment in the sense that it does not state anything in the object but our private feelings that we take in the object. Hence, an aesthetic judgment is unable to state any objective condition or criterion of anything. If it is synthetic a priori, it must be so in a different sense.

[ VI ]

In our attempt to find out the meaning of the expression 'synthetic a priori' with reference to aesthetic judgments let us proceed in a different way. Instead of asking the

meaning of the single expression 'synthetic a priori' let us ask whether an aesthetic judgment is 'synthetic' and whether it is 'a priori'. That an aesthetic judgment is synthetic is not difficult to understand. A synthetic judgment, as it is explained by Kant in the first 'critique', is that in which the predicate goes beyond the subject, or, we may say, in which the predicate can be denied of the subject without any contradiction. An aesthetic judgment is synthetic, for it is self-evident that its predicate, i.e., the pleasure connected with the representation of the object, is not implicit in the concept of the object. When we assert that we take pleasure in the object, we do so 'irrespective of any concept'. The predicate also goes beyond the intuition of the object judged. Intuition enables us to know sensible qualities of object. But a judgment of taste joins as predicate to our intuition of the object something that has nothing whatever to do with the object. "It is easy to see, that judgments of taste are synthetic judgments, for they go beyond the concept and even the intuition of the object in order to add as predicate to that intuition something that has no reference to knowledge, namely, the feeling of pleasure or pain"<sup>20</sup>.

The expression 'a priori' means prior to experience. In the first critique Kant holds that a judgment is a priori if it is logically independent of sense-experience. To

assert an a priori judgment we are not required to wait for further experience. But this is all about the manner in which an a priori judgment is made. An a priori judgment has also an a priori content as its part. In the first critique, apart from giving a definition of 'a priori' Kant mentions universality and necessity as marks of a priority.

An aesthetic judgment may be said a priori because of the manner in which it is made. It is never made on the basis of any induction from other persons' expression of approval. It must be "pronounced a priori"<sup>21</sup>. A judgment to qualify as a judgment of taste must be made on the basis of one's own feeling of pleasure. Thus the manner in which it is made is in some sense a priori. Kant holds that taste makes a claim to "autonomy"<sup>22</sup> and if the judgments of others are made the determining ground of one's own judgment of tastes, taste will cease to make that claim.

Does a judgment of taste have an a priori content, too? In his analysis of the 'beautiful' from four different standpoints or 'moments' Kant has held that a judgment of taste is universal and necessary. It is with reference to this feature of universality and necessity that Kant makes an important distinction between a judgment about the pleasant and an aesthetic judgment. But though according to Kant, a logical judgment and an aesthetic judgment are

different from a judgment concerning the pleasant, an aesthetic judgment can not be universal and necessary in the sense in which a logical judgment or a synthetic a priori judgment of the first or the second 'critique' can be.

In the first critique Kant identifies universality or necessity with objective validity. But in the third critique Kant shifts away from this identity. An aesthetic judgment has got only subjective validity. So the sense of its universality and necessity must be different. Objective necessity is the necessity that any determinate concept be predicated of a particular object. An aesthetic judgment refers to the subject and his feelings. When we say that 'the table is beautiful', we are not concerned with an object 'table' and we do not ascribe a property to that object. We are, rather, concerned with the pleasure or pain which we feel when we represent the object to ourselves. But in the logical judgment, 'the table is round' we ascribe a property to an object, 'table'. An aesthetic judgment, not being at all concerned with an object, can not claim objective validity. Its universality and necessity must be different from that of a logical judgment, for "it does not join the predicate of beauty to the concept of an object taken in its entire logical sphere". 'Its universality and necessity rather consists in the fact that it extends this predicate over the whole sphere of judging subjects'<sup>23</sup>. This universality is

subjective. An aesthetic judgment is not universal in the sense that it claims that others actually feel the same pleasure which I myself feel. If it claimed that it would have been an empirical proposition, since what others actually feel can be determined only through an empirical investigation. It rather claims that others ought to feel the same pleasure or ought to agree with me. 'Ought' remains unaffected even if no body actually agrees with me, and this ought can be determined only with reference to an a priori principle. Thus an aesthetic judgment is synthetic in the sense of going beyond the concept of an object, and it is a priori in the sense that it claims universal validity of pleasure, that it demands the agreement of all. This is, definitely a new sense of 'synthetic a priori'.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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