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The Communicability of Pleasure and the Pleasure of Communication: The "Obligation" of Aesthetic Feeling in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

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Abstract

Kant makes a puzzling claim in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* concerning the connection between the feeling of pleasure occasioned by the appreciation of an object as beautiful and the universal communicability of this aesthetic feeling: on the one hand, he claims that this feeling is due to the free play of the faculties of imagination and understanding, and on the other hand, that it has its ground in the very communicability of this pleasure. The central argument of the present study is that it is possible to clarify the relation between the feeling of pleasure occasioned by the reflective judging of an object and the universal communicability Kant attributes to such a judging by grasping the demand for a 'universality without concept' claimed by a pure judgment of taste in terms of what appears to be a problematic relationship of grounding between the shareability of pure aesthetic feeling and the reflective activity of the mind. I will claim that this relationship can be rendered clearer by an explication of the 'share' of disinterestedness, purposiveness, and subjective universal validity claims in pure judgments of taste and brought together in the notion of a common sense (*sensus communis*). What thereby comes into view is an original orientation in the world that is presupposed by explicitly theoretical and practical judgments.

Keywords: Reflective Judgment, Communication, Pleasure, Aesthetic Judgment, Orientation.

Hazzın İletilebilirliği ve İletişimin Hazzı: *Yargı Gücünün Eleştirisi*'nde Estetik Hissin "Zorunluluğu"

Öz

Kant *Yargı Gücünün Eleştirisi*'nde, bir nesnenin güzel olarak değerlendirildiği durumlarda hissedilen haz ve bu hazzın evrensel iletilirliği arasında şaşırtıcı bir iddiada bulunur. Bir yandan bu hazzın anlama ve hayal gücü yetileri arasındaki özgür oyundan kaynaklandığını söylerken; diğer yandan, söz konusu hazzın temelini bu hazzın iletilirliğinde konumlandırır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, bir nesneye dair reflektif yargının ortaya çıkardığı haz hissi ile Kant'ın bu yargıya atfettiği evrensel iletilirlik arasındaki ilişkiyi netleştirmektir. Bunun yolunun, saf beğeni yargılarının barındırdığı 'kavramsız evrensellik' talebinin saf estetik hissin paylaşılabirliği ve zihnin reflektif etkinliği arasındaki temellendirici ilişki dolayısıyla kavranmasından geçtiği iddia edilir. Bu ilişkinin netleştirilmesi adına, saf beğeni yargılarında çıkarırsızlığın, amaçlılığın ve öznel evrensel geçerliliğin payları açıklanmakta ve nasıl ortak duyuda (*sensus communis*) bir araya geldikleri gösterilmektedir. Böylece görünürlük kazanan şey, kuramsal ve pratik yargılara öncel olan bir 'orijinal oryantasyon'dur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Reflektif yargı, İletişim, Haz, Estetik Yargı, Oryantasyon.

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Introduction

One of the most significant ‘discoveries’ of Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* is his claim that there are kinds of judgments that cannot be understood as the application of objectively determinate concepts to the passively received manifold of intuition.² These kinds of judgment—*aesthetic judgments of taste*—derive their universal validity not from the objectivity of the concepts of the understanding. They must rather be seen as the expression of a subjective feeling, while at the same time demanding universal agreement from all subjects under similar circumstances. The subjective universal validity claim associated with this kind of judgment is said to be a function of the reflective capacity of the human mind and points to a kind of normativity that is not the application of a determinate rule, but one whose basis is the universal communicability of pleasure. Pure aesthetic judgments of taste are paradigmatic of this kind of judgment, and Kant claims that the normativity claim inherent in such judgments requires the ‘postulation’ of a common sense which is not private and subjective, but rather social and intersubjective.

The more general significance of these claims lies in the fact that they open up a possible mediation between the theoretical and the practical activities of the mind by virtue of the role of reflection in orienting the subject in experience so as to prepare the ground for explicitly cognitive and moral judgments. This ‘original’ orientation is neither an application of, nor obedience to a determinate rule, but rather an indeterminate feeling occasioned by the reflective activity of the mind.³ The details of Kant’s claims, however, are quite puzzling. In arguing that the feeling of pleasure occasioned by the appreciation of an object as beautiful has to be free from all interest on the part of the subject, and matter on the part of the object, not only does he claim that this pleasure, if the aesthetic judgment is pure, is due to the free play of the faculties (of understanding and imagination), but also he seems to claim that this pleasure has its ground in the universal communicability of the aesthetic feeling.⁴ Thus, on the one hand, he seems to suggest that the kind of pleasure at issue is the result of judgment; but, on the other hand, he claims that this pleasure is the sole basis of judgment. In other words, pleasure seems to be the result of the universal communicability of a certain mental state, *viz.* feeling of pleasure, which is itself pleasurable (or *is* this very pleasure).

The central argument of the present study is that it is possible to clarify the relation between the feeling of pleasure occasioned by the reflective judging of an object as beautiful and the inherent universal communicability Kant attributes to such a judging and, hence, to such a feeling. An important element of this clarification is to grasp the demand for a ‘universality without concept’ claimed by a pure judgment of taste in terms of what appears to be a problematic relationship of grounding between the shareability of pure aesthetic feeling and the reflective activity of the mind in appreciating an object as beautiful. I will claim that this relationship can be rendered clearer by an explication of the ‘share’ of disinterestedness, purposiveness, and subjective universal validity claims in pure judgments of taste and brought together in the notion of a common sense. To

² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³ See Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment* (University Of Chicago Press, 1995). In particular, see chapter 8.

⁴ Even though the strange status of the connection between pleasure and communicability has drawn scholarly attention, the precise way in which the two are to be linked in terms of a common sense as ‘original orientation’ in the world has not been pursued in detail. See Miles Rind, “What Is Claimed in a Kantian Judgment of Taste?,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38, no. 1 (2000): 63-85.; Linda Palmer, “A Universality Not Based on Concepts: Kant’s Key to the Critique of Taste,” *Kantian Review* 13, no. 1 (March 2008): 1-51.; Daniel Wilson, “The Key to the Critique of Taste”: Interpreting §9 of Kant’s Critique of Judgment,” *Parrhesia* 18, (2013): 125-138.

this end, I propose to first give a brief sketch of the major claims Kant makes with respect to pure judgments of taste and, second, to offer a more detailed reading of the Second and Fourth Moments of the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’⁵. Finally, I will discuss the relationship between pleasure and communication in light of the first and second stages of my argument.

1. The Elements of Pure Judgments of Taste

Kant claims that ‘beautiful’ is not a concept under which a particular object is to be subsumed, i.e. when I judge an object to be beautiful, I am not attributing an objective predicate to this object. Rather, this judging comprises in the fact that, in the presence of an object, I am in a certain mental state. This mental state is of such a nature that I am justified in assuming that all other subjects, situated under similar circumstances, would also be in such a mental state, i.e. feel ‘the same way’. This state is claimed to be pleasure, which consists in the tendency of the subject to maintain itself in this particular state and to enhance the feeling of life. As such, the particular nature of this pleasure is different from sensation, which is ultimately sensuous. Moreover, this pleasure is disinterested to the extent that it does not concern any desire for the existence of the particular object occasioning such a pleasure.

This pleasure is a function of or attaches itself to the reflective awareness of a harmony of the cognitive faculties, which consists in the imagination reproducing a manifold in harmony with what would have been required by the understanding, without, however, any explicit direction from the understanding in the form of a rule. Because this harmony is one that does not arise by virtue of an application of a concept, Kant refers to it as a free play. Moreover, the free harmony of the cognitive faculties is in some way related to the reflective activity of the mind, which consists in seeking a universal for a given particular, without there being such a determinate universal in the case of our appreciation of an object as beautiful. This reflective striving is ‘directed at’ the formal aspects of the object before us and culminates in the realization that such an object is purposively suited to our cognitive aims, without there being a specific purpose. This ‘generates’ a delight that accompanies the attainment of all aims.⁶

Finally, Kant claims that such a reflection involves the reflecting subject’s orienting itself in experience in such a way as to detach its judging from all particular and private aspects and take account of everyone else’s way of judging. Hence the universal communicability of such a state, namely, the feeling of pleasure, requires the assumption of a common sense that guides judgment in its reflective function. Thus such a subject is said to be able to demand legitimately the necessary agreement of others with his judgment: the feeling of pleasure in the experience of beauty is normative, binding on all similarly situated human beings, without this norm being a determinate concept. The notion of a common sense articulates this by virtue of its postulation of an indeterminate feeling that nonetheless demands to be universally communicable and binding on all subjects.

A more detailed investigation of Kant’s claims in the Second and Fourth Moment of the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’ highlights and clarifies the more difficult aspects of what I have delineated of his more general cla-

⁵ A full discussion of this issue would have to consider many other sections of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*; however, I emphasize these, while only referring to other sections when I find it necessary, because the disinterestedness and the purposiveness claims are used in these sections as well and because this narrowing of emphasis keeps the discussion in focus.

⁶ This point is particularly clearly expressed in Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

ims about pure judgments of taste so far. In the Second Moment of the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’, Kant begins the discussion by arguing for the subjective universality of a pure judgment of taste from its disinterested nature. The fact that, when I appreciate an object as beautiful, my appreciation does not arise from any interest on my part, Kant claims, entails that my appreciation contains a ground of satisfaction for everyone. An interest in this case would mean that my judgment was determined by a private inclination. Since the disinterestedness of a pure judgment of taste entails the absence of any private conditions for my judgment, I must regard my judgment as grounded in conditions that could be presupposed in everyone else. In other words, I will speak *as if* beauty were a property of the object, and hence, just as when I determine an object as subsumable under a concept (e.g. ‘This is a table’), I expect anyone else who is also in the presence of the table to agree with me, if he knows what ‘table’ means, I will expect a similar pleasure in everyone when I say ‘This is beautiful’, if he has taste. However, since the judgment in this case is aesthetic, as opposed to logical, and so does not consist in the application of a concept but rather the relation of an object to a subject, the universality I claim for my judgment cannot be based on concepts: “... there must be attached to the judgment of taste, with the consciousness of an abstraction in it from all interest, a claim to validity for everyone without the universality that pertains to objects, i.e., it must be combined with a claim to subjective universality”⁷.

The subjective universality of the feeling of pleasure in a pure judgment of taste is to be differentiated from both the agreeable and the good. For Kant, in the case of the agreeable, the maxim ‘everyone has his own taste’ is perfectly valid.⁸ The basis of our discriminations in the case of the agreeable is private and personal, and to this extent there is no point in disputing with those who do not share our preferences. In evaluations of this type, Kant includes the discriminations we make with our five senses; e.g., for one person the color violet is gentle and lovely, for another dead and lifeless. So long as we qualify these judgments as being relative to our own subjective person, there should be no confusion with pure judgments of taste. For such a relativity of the validity of our evaluation with respect to ourselves is precisely what is not permissible in the case of pure judgments of taste. In judging an object to be beautiful, I am not judging merely for myself, but for everyone; I am entitled to rebuke those who judge otherwise and deny that they have taste. The basis for this entitlement is not actual agreement I might have encountered in the past, but rather a normative demand that they ought to agree with me, if they have taste.⁹ Thus Kant distinguishes merely general rules (which are empirical) from universal rules. Only pure judgments of taste and moral judgments qualify for the latter (hence genuine normativity). Moral judgments, however, differ from judgments of taste, since the good is represented through a concept and gives rise to an interest, whereas this is not the case for aesthetic judgments.

Kant formulates the basic distinction between judgments concerning agreeableness and judgments concerning beauty in terms of taste of the senses and taste of reflection, respectively¹⁰. Although both kinds of judgments consist in the relation of a representation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, the former kind is private whereas the latter kind is public, hence putatively generally valid. In this regard Kant makes the interesting observation that although “... in the case of the taste of the senses experience not only shows that its judgment ... is not universally valid, but also that everyone is so ... modest as not even to ascribe this assent to

⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:212.

⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 212.

⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:213.

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:214.

others (even though a quite extensive unanimity is often found in these judgments as well), whereas the taste of reflection, which ... is often enough rejected in its claim to universal validity ..., can nevertheless find it possible ... to represent judgments that could demand such assent universally ...”¹¹. Thus, even though there is generally more frequent actual agreement about what is agreeable, we do not demand universal agreement with our particular judgments from everyone else, but we do demand such universal assent in the case of judgments concerning what counts as beautiful, despite the wide-ranging actual disagreement.

As I mentioned above, a pure aesthetic judgment of taste does not make a claim about an object by subsuming it under a general concept. If this were the case, the judgment would be objectively valid, in the sense that the judgment would be valid of everything that is within the extension of that concept, and ipso facto it would be valid for everyone who represents the object thus. Rather, an aesthetic judgment concerns the subjective relationship to a representation (of an object), and hence does not rest on concepts; yet, it is valid for everyone (“extends over the whole sphere of those who judge”)¹². If I were to determine the object before me by recognizing it as an instance of a concept, say a plate,¹³ then there could be no question of an aesthetic appreciation, since the experience would be exhausted by my cognitive determination. But precisely because this is not what transpires in reflection occasioned by the object, there are no rules I can invoke in order to compel someone to agree with me that this object before us is beautiful. Kant claims that in aesthetic appreciation, one does not allow oneself to be talked into a particular judgment, but rather wants to present the object to his own senses (*as if* such an appreciation depended on sensation). However, if, after such a presentation, one judges the object to be beautiful, then “... one believes oneself to have a universal voice, and lays claim to the consent of everyone ...”¹⁴

The significant claim here is that when I make a pure judgment of taste, I must take myself to be speaking with a universal voice, and hence to be imposing a demand on others to agree with me. Since for such a judgment no rules are available in the form of concepts, I cannot postulate the agreement of everyone; this would be possible only in the case of cognitive judgments for which one can adduce grounds and proofs. But since a pure judgment of taste is subjective *and* valid for everyone, “... it only **ascribes** this agreement to everyone, as a case of the rule with regard to which it expects confirmation not from concepts but only from the consent of others.”¹⁵ Hence the universal voice, under the assumption of which I take my subjective judgment to be valid for everyone, is a normative idea.¹⁶ I might be mistaken about whether I am in fact speaking with the universal voice, but I cannot be mistaken about *that* I am speaking with a universal voice, if I take myself to be genuinely making a pure judgment of taste, provided that I am aware of separating everything that pertains to the

¹¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:214.

¹² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:215.

¹³ For the purposes of my discussion here, the difference between ‘natural’ and ‘artificial’ objects is not important, although, of course, most of Kant’s claims concern judging objects of nature as beautiful.

¹⁴ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:216. In a note to this section of the text, Paul Guyer mentions a passage from the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, where Kant describes the judgment of beauty as an invitation to others to experience the pleasure one has oneself felt in an object. This is quite suggestive, but it is also clear that ‘invitation’ seems too weak a notion in this context, since, as we have seen, Kant claims that I am entitled to rebuke those who do not agree with me, to consider them as lacking taste, and impose upon them what seems to be a duty (albeit not a moral one) to have taste, i.e. they ought to agree with me, if they have taste.

¹⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5:216, emphasis in original.

¹⁶ One could say that it is through such an appeal that a link may be established between judgments of taste and a normative politics. See Toros Günes Esgün, “Beğeni Yargılarından Hukuk ve Politikaya: Kant’ın Ahlak Metafiziği’nde Estetiğin İzleri,” *FLSF (Felsefe ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi)* 15, no. 30 (2020): 345-58.

agreeable and the good from the feeling of pleasure accompanying my reflection. Kant says that “this is all for which [the judging subject] promises himself the assent of everyone.”¹⁷

Although the basic intent of this claim is clear, it is difficult to understand how exactly the subject making a pure judgment of taste is related to the idea of a universal voice. Henry Allison makes the helpful suggestion that universal voice is the aesthetic analogue of Rousseau’s general will.¹⁸ Although the latter notion is by no means straight forward, the claim is that, just as the general will is said to function as the source of the universality of the political subject’s legislation, the universal voice serves as the source of the universality of a pure judgment of taste. To the extent that the universal voice is postulated in a judgment of taste, such a judgment presupposes the condition of its own possibility. Making a judgment of taste conforming to the condition of a universal voice demands that I attempt to abstract from all factors pertaining to the agreeable and the good. Thus, according to Kant, I can be certain that I have made a judgment of taste (not a pure judgment of taste, but simply a judgment of liking based on a feeling) and I can be certain that I have attempted to make a pure judgment of taste by trying to make my judgment conform to the condition of a universal voice. But I cannot be certain that I have succeeded in this attempt. This is all Kant seems to claim at this point.¹⁹

Hence the reference to the universal voice seems to be a more concise way of stating what Kant has been claiming all along with respect to pure judgments of taste, namely, they claim a subjective universal validity. The problem is articulating on what this universal voice with which I take myself to be speaking when I appreciate an object as beautiful rests, i.e. its conditions of possibility. In section 9 of the Second Moment Kant begins to address this issue. The question he explicitly asks is: “whether in the judgment of taste the feeling of pleasure precedes the judging of the object or the latter precedes the former.”²⁰ The answer to this question is said to be the key to the critique of taste and it is here that the communicability condition is introduced.

Kant proceeds by elimination. If the pleasure were to precede the judgment, and the possibility of communication (universal communicability) were a supervening and secondary attribute of the representation of the object, then this pleasure would be merely an agreeable sensation. Such a feeling would have only private validity, because it would be the result of the representation through which the object is given. Kant had ruled out such a passive determination of the subject by what is given in experience, insofar as the feeling of pleasure in aesthetic experience (of beauty) is related to, in some sense that needs to be explained, the *reflective activity* of the mind. Thus, since the first alternative does not give us more than private validity, which is not enough for a pure judgment of taste, Kant affirms the second alternative: “... it is the universal capacity for the communication of the state of mind in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgment of taste, must serve as its ground and have the pleasure in the object as a consequence.”²¹ This formulation makes it seem like the feeling of pleasure pertaining to a pure judgment of taste is the result of the universal commu-

¹⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 2:216.

¹⁸ Henry E. Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁹ Hence, unless further developed, this point makes the Kantian account particularly vulnerable to charges of subjectivism. See Nil Avcı, “Kant’ın Estetik Kuramının Gadamerci Eleştirisi Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme,” *Temaşa Felsefe Dergisi* no. 11 (2019): 74-90.

²⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 216.

²¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 217.

nicability inherent in such judgments; that is to say, it seems like it is the communicability of such a feeling that ‘causes’, or ‘gives rise to’, the pleasure we take in it.

Soon after this passage, however, Kant relates both the pleasure and the communicability of this feeling to the play of our cognitive faculties in reflection. He claims that only cognition, and what pertains to cognition, is capable of being universally communicated, since only in this way we have a universal point of reference in virtue of which our judgments are objective and valid for everyone. However, since the determining ground of aesthetic judgments can be conceived of only subjectively (and hence without reference to concepts), “... it can be nothing other than the state of mind that is encountered in the relation of the powers of representation to each other insofar as they relate a given representation to cognition in general”²² The cognitive powers, namely imagination and understanding, that are thus ‘activated’ and put into relation are said to be in free play, because no determinate concept restricts their activity to a particular rule of cognition. Hence the state of mind that is at issue in the appreciation of an object as beautiful (and whose universal communicability needs to be established) is a feeling of the free play of the cognitive faculties.

Rudolph Makkreel describes what is at stake in this ‘free play’ in terms of a contrast between “subjective vs. objective agreement”²³: in aesthetic consciousness the relation between imagination and understanding is one of subjective agreement manifested as aesthetic pleasure, as opposed to the objective agreement in the normal judgments of experience. In the latter, a representation is referred to a definite concept of an object and the imagination serves the understanding by subsuming representations of sense to concepts. In the former, however, the relation is not one of subordination but involves free coordination and mutual play. Kant, then, is claiming that the feeling of pleasure in aesthetic judgments arises because of the felt harmony between our cognitive faculties without there being a concept that would subject their play to a determinate rule. In this way Kant is able to relate the indeterminate feeling of pleasure occasioned by an object deemed beautiful to a condition of cognition in general, since the harmonious and proportionate working of the cognitive faculties is necessary for there being any cognitive activity. And since this condition must be valid for everyone, the feeling at issue must be capable of being communicated universally. As Kant puts it, “[t]he subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste ... can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding ... : for we are conscious that this subjective relation suited to cognition in general must be valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable ...”²⁴

So, to go back to the initial question, how are judgment and pleasure related to each other in the aesthetic judging of an object as beautiful? Kant’s reformulated answer is this: “[the] merely subjective (aesthetic) judging of the object, or of the representation through which the object is given, precedes the pleasure in it, and is the ground of this pleasure in the harmony of the faculties of cognition; but on that universality of the subjective conditions of the judging of objects alone is this universal subjective validity of satisfaction, which we combine with the representation of the object that we call beautiful, grounded.”²⁵ Thus, the judging of the object, or we could say the reflective activity of the mind before such an object, is the ground of the pleasure we

²² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 217.

²³ Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*, 47.

²⁴ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 218.

²⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 218.

take in the harmony of the faculties occasioned by this object; but the universality of the subjective conditions of judging (the harmonious coordination of imagination and understanding) is the ground of the universal subjective validity of our feeling of pleasure.

Kant claims that the natural tendency of human beings to sociability is indicative of the pleasure we take in our ability to communicate our states of mind. However, the pleasurable nature of communication attested to by our inclination to sociability would not be enough to ground the subjective universal validity claimed for pure aesthetic judgments of taste.²⁶ In his answer to the question whether I become aware of the harmony of the faculties in the judgment of taste through sensation or intellectually, Kant claims that it cannot be intellectually through the consciousness of our intentional activity whereby we put them in play, since the representation occasioning the judgment of taste is not a concept. Rather, we become aware of the harmony of our faculties through sensation. Kant says that “[t]he animation of both faculties to an activity that is indeterminate but yet ... in unison ... is the sensation whose universal communicability is postulated by the judgment of taste.”²⁷ Hence, when I appreciate an object as beautiful there is an enlivening, an animation, of my cognitive faculties without this activity being determined by the concept of an object. The surprising realization that a singular representation ‘generates’ a well-proportioned relationship between my cognitive faculties that is necessary for all cognition affects a state of mind that is experienced as pleasure. Because this relationship is deemed necessary for all cognition, I am warranted to regard my feeling to be valid for all human beings, that is, beings who judge by means of the coordination of understanding and sensibility.

2. Common Sense as Orientation

The Fourth Moment of the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’, through the postulation of a common sense, further articulates what is involved in the claim for subjective universal validity in a pure judgment of taste. The notion of beauty has an inherent necessity claim with respect to the feeling of pleasure. This necessity is not, however, theoretical, such that we would be able to claim a priori that *everyone will feel* a pleasure in the object deemed beautiful by me. Rather, an aesthetic judgment involves a claim to what Kant calls an exemplary necessity: “a necessity of the assent of *all* to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule that one cannot produce.”²⁸ This necessity claim is peculiar in that it can neither be derived from concepts nor grounded on a de facto unanimity in judgments of taste.

As I mentioned above, the judgment of taste ascribes assent to everyone and claims that everyone should agree with my claim about a certain object as beautiful. Now Kant claims that the demand for the agreement of everyone presupposes a common sense: “... only under the presupposition that there is a common sense (by which, however, we do not mean any external sense but rather the effect of the free play of our cognitive powers), ... can the judgment of taste be made.”²⁹ If the judgment of taste were like a determinate cognitive judgment, which is possible on the basis an objective principle, then I would be able to claim unconditioned necessity for my judgment; if there were no principles at work in a judgment of taste, then there would not be

²⁶ Therefore, the normative dimension of the claim involved requires a stronger connection between communication and community. See Bart Vandenabeele, “Common Sense and Community in Kant’s Theory of Taste” in *Cultivating Personhood: Kant and Asian Philosophy* (De Gruyter, 2010), 308-20.

²⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 219.

²⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 237.

²⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 238.

any point in claiming a necessity for them. However, neither of these alternatives is the case for a judgment of taste. In order to ground the peculiar subjective universal validity claim involved in a judgment of taste, there must be a subjective principle that determines what is pleasing and what is not through feeling with universal validity.

To make this presupposition plausible, Kant refers again to the communicability condition.³⁰ The argument will prove instructive for our purposes: 1) Judgments must be able to be universally communicated, if they are to be more than expressions of mere subjective play of our faculties of representation. 2) In order for judgments to be communicated, the mental state, that is, the disposition of our faculties for producing cognitions through their proportionate relationship, must also be capable of being communicated. 3) This is because this disposition is the subjective condition of cognition and, hence, without it cognition could not arise. 4) This disposition has different proportions depending on the objects that are given. 5) However, there must be one optimal proportion between the cognitive faculties, and this can only be determined through feeling. 6) This feeling must be capable of being communicated (by (2)). 7) The universal communicability of feeling presupposes a common sense as the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our cognition.

Under the assumption of a common sense, then, I am able to treat the subjective necessity (for others to agree with me) that I claim for my appreciation of an object as beautiful as an objective necessity. When I judge an object as beautiful, I demand the same judgment from others with respect to the same object without being able to ground this demand on a concept of the object, but rather on my feeling occasioned by it. This feeling, however, is not to be understood as private but as common, since it involves a 'should'. I do not claim that everyone will agree with me but that they should. Thus, the presupposition of common sense gives me an ideal norm with respect to which I offer my particular judgment as an example and on the basis of which I claim exemplary validity for it. This is because it is a norm necessary for everyone, if they intend to make a pure judgment of taste. This norm, however, is necessarily indeterminate because it is a feeling.

In summary of the salient aspects of the account provided above, we can say that when I claim that a certain object before me is beautiful what I am claiming is that attending to the formal properties of the object occasions a reflective activity on my part to seek a concept for it. This reflective activity is equivalent to a free play of the imagination and the understanding. This free play is harmonious when the imagination and the understanding mutually enhance each other's powers as equal partners. This harmonious activity affects the mind as a pleasure and attests to a suitability of the representation (of the object) for the cognitive ends of the mind (without assigning any specific purpose to this subjective purposiveness). This feeling of pleasure is universally communicable and is grounded in a common sense, which serves as a norm with respect to which I claim the assent of everyone to my judgment, without the normativity involved here being a matter of the application of a determinate rule.

We can say that the assumption of a common sense brings together all the aspects of pure judgment of taste, namely, disinterestedness, purposiveness, and subjective universal validity, as is clear from Kant's more detailed definition of it in section 40: "By *sensus communis* ... must be understood the idea of a **communal** sense, i.e. a faculty for judging that in its reflection takes account (a priori) of everyone else's way of represen-

³⁰ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 238-239.

ting in thought, in order as it were to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole”³¹ Moreover, Kant also claims that “taste can be called *sensus communis* with greater justice than can the healthy understanding ... if indeed one use the word ‘sense’ of an effect of mere reflection on the mind: for there one means by ‘sense’ the feeling of pleasure. One could even define taste as the faculty for judging that which makes our feeling in a given representation **universally communicable** without the mediation of a concept.”³² Thus, when read in light of the Fourth Moment, common sense comes to designate a principle, a norm, a faculty, the feeling of pleasure, and taste itself.

Hence the postulation of a common sense opens up the possibility that there is an original orientation in experience in virtue of a feeling of pleasure such that this also serves as the subjective condition of the possibility of cognition in general.³³ This pleasure is neither a pleasure of mere enjoyment, nor of a determinately lawful activity, but, as Kant says, of mere reflection. Precisely because this pleasure has to do with an orientation through feeling that is the condition of possibility of cognition in general, it is common to everyone and hence communicable. In reflecting on the formal properties of an object, I am also trying to situate or orient myself in experience as anyone else would, to take into account everyone else’s standpoint. And in so reflecting, I am relying on a common sense, which must remain indeterminate for Kant. It is important to note that this process of reflection must be distinguished from a universalizability test for taste. Because what is at issue in such aesthetic judgments is a feeling of pleasure, the latter is not possible for taste.

But what then is the purport of this reflective process for the communicability of feeling and how does it stand with respect to the possibility of erroneous judgments in matters of taste? I discussed above Kant’s claim that, in case somebody disagrees with my judgment about an object as beautiful, I cannot adduce any proofs or rules in order to convince him of the rightness of my judgment. In this sense I must simply resign myself to the fact that my judgment is valid simply for me. However, a pure judgment of taste also makes a normative claim: I demand that the other person agree with my judgment. Kant’s argument culminating in the postulation of a common sense can be seen as working out the transcendental conditions for such a judgment to be legitimate, and not an irrational demand on others to evaluate the world as I do. Nothing in fact will guarantee that there will be a unanimity concerning the ‘status’ of an object as beautiful; in fact, when I judge a particular object to be beautiful, I can never be certain that my judgment of taste was pure, since there is no determinate public criterion to which I can refer—maybe I was not successful when I thought that I had abstracted from the charm of the object.³⁴

But Kant does not deny the permanent possibility of error in judgments of taste. Rather, his claim is that if we are to entertain the claim that taste of reflection, as opposed to taste of senses, is normative, then we must assume the possibility of something like a common sense and the communicability of pleasure it grounds. This can also be seen in the Antinomy of Taste, where he says that there is the possibility to argue about taste, but

³¹ Kant, 5: 293, emphasis in original.

³² Kant, 5: 295, emphasis in original.

³³ For another concise statement of this, see Kant, 5: 292.

³⁴ In this connection, Allison makes the suggestion that there is a parallel here with Kant’s moral philosophy. Although I am obliged by the categorical imperative to act not merely according to the moral law, but also from duty for the moral law, I can never be certain that I have actually acted from duty alone; that is to say, some pathological inclination could also have played a role in the determination of my will. See Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Taste*, 109.

not to dispute.³⁵ Acknowledging the possibility of argument in matters of taste amounts to entertaining the hope of coming to a mutual agreement, which would be a silly hope if one did not thereby commit oneself to the reflective requirements of *sensus communis*. This could also explain some of Kant's formulations I referred to above, where he seems to claim that in appreciating something as beautiful, what I am appreciating is the shareability or communicability of my feeling. This formulation seems to suggest that it is the communicability of feeling that grounds the purity of a judgment of taste, in contrast with Kant's other formulations, where the communicability of a judgment of taste is grounded on the reflectively judging activity of the mind. But, as the discussion of what is involved in the notion of a common sense indicates, these formulations do not comprise mutually exclusive options. As Lyotard says, communicability is the way taste is recognized when it occurs, but this communicability would not be possible without the reflective activity of the mind for which Kant offers a transcendental ground in the notion of a common sense.³⁶

Conclusion

Kant's exploration of aesthetic judgments of taste leads us to a profound understanding of the intricacies of human experience, especially the normativity in our aesthetic experiences. Kant's elucidation of the subjective universal validity inherent in these judgments makes visible a dimension of experience wherein pleasure and reflection intertwine, transcending mere subjective sentiment to evoke a shared understanding of beauty. We thereby uncover a bridge between the theoretical and practical realms of human cognition. The reflective activity of the mind not only orients us in our experiences but also lays the groundwork for cognitive and moral judgments. This 'original' orientation, devoid of determinate rules, emerges as a result of the nuanced interplay between subjective feeling and universal communicability.

The argument of the present study demonstrates that the pleasure derived from pure aesthetic judgments serves as more than just a subjective experience—it becomes the very basis of our capacity to engage in meaningful communication about beauty. Through disinterestedness, purposiveness, and subjective universal validity claims, we discern the emergence of a common sense—a shared understanding that transcends individual perspectives and fosters communal appreciation of the beautiful. It is clear that this sense of an original orientation revealed through the experience of beauty appears strange from the perspective of Kant's emphasis on strict conceptual determination for the intelligibility of experience in general. For example, one would need to ask further about the constitution of this common sense, which is both condition and conditioned.³⁷ However, one can say that, within the limits of the present study, Kant's exploration not only enriches our understanding of aesthetic experience but also sheds light on the profound connections between pleasure, reflection, and human communication.

³⁵ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 5: 338.

³⁶ Jean-François Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 223.

³⁷ It is plausible to claim that one of the central motivations of German Idealism after Kant was to pursue this line of questioning. See Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

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