

On Missing Elements in Kant's Metaphysics: Beauty and Organism

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Abstract

This paper deals with elements that are missing from Kant's initial presentation of the critical philosophy in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The elements I am concerned with here are beauty and organism. Kant did treat both in the two major parts of the *Critique of Judgment*. I begin this paper by briefly delineating the chief features of the critical philosophy to show what it cannot cover. In the two principal parts of this paper, I then go on to first consider Kant's paradoxical treatment of beauty or more specifically, his effort to demonstrate that when treated critically in a judgment of taste, the subjective feeling of beauty is nevertheless universal and necessary. These are claims, I argue, that cannot be equally accepted. I then turn to his treatment of organism. This, by Kant's own admission, cannot be revealed through the mechanist approach the critical philosophy adopted from early modern thought. Kant replaces the mechanist approach with a teleological one, discussed in the second part of this paper. In the end, both discussions point to the supersensible.

Keywords: beauty, organism, judgment, aesthetics, mechanism, teleology.

Sobre los elementos ausentes en la metafísica de Kant: Belleza y organismo

Resumen

Este artículo trata sobre los elementos que faltan en la presentación inicial de la filosofía crítica de Kant en la *Crítica de la razón pura*. Los elementos con los que me ocupo aquí son la belleza y el organismo. Kant trató ambos temas en las dos partes principales de la *Crítica del juicio*. Comienzo este artículo delineando brevemente las características principales de la filosofía crítica para mostrar lo que no puede cubrir. En las dos partes principales de este artículo, primero considero el tratamiento paradójico de Kant sobre la belleza o, más específicamente, su esfuerzo por demostrar que, cuando se trata críticamente en un juicio de gusto, el sentimiento subjetivo de la belleza es, sin embargo, universal y necesario. Estas son, sostengo, afirmaciones que no pueden ser aceptadas por igual. Luego paso a

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su tratamiento del organismo. Esto, según la propia admisión de Kant, no puede ser revelado a través del enfoque mecanicista que la filosofía crítica adoptó en el pensamiento moderno temprano. Kant reemplaza el enfoque mecanicista con uno teleológico que se discute en la segunda parte de este artículo. Al final, ambas discusiones apuntan a lo suprasensible.

Palabras clave: belleza, organismo, juicio, estética, mecanismo, teleología.

1. Introduction

The following introductory remarks present a radically abbreviated account of the first major parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason* without consideration, admittedly, of the interpretive difficulties that might emerge along the way.² My goal here is to sketch the outline of Kant's argument in the theoretical philosophy so that its limitations, as relevant to the project of the paper, come to light. My project is to identify what the theoretical philosophy cannot cover (beauty, organism for instance) and to find what Kant can do in its stead to bring the missing elements to life (aesthetic and teleological judgments).

Kant's theoretical philosophy was in the first instance devoted to certainty. Motivated by the question of whether there could be certainty in metaphysics (at first sight it does not seem that there could be given its history of disputes), he investigated whether there could be certainty in any field, presumably thinking that if there could be certainty in one type of investigation, then the method employed there could be applied to metaphysical investigations regarding such matters as God, freedom, and immortality (and others). The investigations deemed potentially capable of certainty at this point were logic, mathematics, and natural science (in short

² Texts include the Analytic (KrV, B74–294), the B-Preface (KrV, Bvii–xliv), the Introduction (KrV, B1–30) and the Transcendental Aesthetic (KrV, B33–73). All references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* (KrV) are to the A/B marginal numbers. References to the *Critique of Judgment* and other texts by Kant are to the Academy edition (AA) listing volume and page numbers. All translations are my own.

epistemology). By implication, it is of central importance in this ultimately metaphysical investigation (KrV, Bvii–xxxvii).

Since the epistemology at hand is governed by a goal for objectivity and certainty, it is an *a priori* objectivity, meaning that its essential elements are prior to experience rather than derived from it. Elements derived from experience (*a posteriori*) are subject to variation while those prior to experience (*a priori*) are not. It is important to note, however, that though *a priori* and therefore certain, these elements of knowledge can be such elements only with some essential twists.

First, although the *a priori* elements in the knowledge project are prior to experience, they do not come from the subject in the form of innate ideas, but from the subject as (universal) agent of knowledge.³ They do not originate with some individual subject, but with human subjects in general, ultimately, Kant thought, because all human thought proceeds in a certain way, independently of location and time. Over time, these activities have been observed and ultimately codified. Kant's *a priori* forms of thought is such a codification. He did not collect the manifold ways of thinking. Instead, he turned to Aristotle's logic to facilitate the discovery of rules of thought. Aristotle had observed that human thought progressed according to what he identified as a series of general rules. Thinking that these are rules that human beings as a matter of fact employed when thinking, Kant transformed the rules of Aristotle's general logic into a set of categories (or forms of thought). These are the *a priori* conditions of thought. They are prior to experience because they represent how human thought operates, and they originate with the subject as agent of knowledge because human thought proceeds necessarily in their terms. This is not a matter of individual choice, and it is not a matter of location. Given that these are necessary forms of thought, their identification allows Kant to delineate the shape of the world, or the features the world must have to be known by us.⁴

But this is not the totality of Kant's story. A second twist of the *a priori* account of knowledge is that knowledge is in fact not entirely *a priori*. Indeed, Kant maintained that *a priori* and empirical elements are necessarily combined in the knowledge project. On Kant's account, knowledge involves

³ Innate ideas are generally assumed to be fully formed in the mind at birth; *a priori* elements are not fully formed ideas, but in Kant's case at least, forms of intuition and thought, respectively, that direct the processing of intuited material. While innate ideas are static, *a priori* elements are dynamic.

⁴ Because if it did not have this shape, we couldn't know it.

the combination of empirical (intuitive) and a priori (conceptual) elements by way of judgment. As he put matters in the Transcendental Logic: "Intuitions and concepts constitute the elements of our cognitions so that neither concepts without intuitions corresponding to them [...] nor intuitions without concepts could provide cognition" (KrV, B74). We might know a priori that the world has a certain shape (that it is substantial and causal, for example), but we don't know ahead of time just how this shape plays out in the present. The different actualities of different times have to do with what empirical information is available in the moment. For instance, we might know that events are caused, but what can count as a cause might well depend on how we interpret matters in the current time and location. At one point, the cause might have to be accepted to be some power we may not otherwise understand, at another time, subjects might point to some scientific theory to explain the same phenomenon. This explains why the same basic structure need not translate into an identical world.

The empirical elements of knowing reveal further a priori conditions. The intuitive components of the judgments we make are sensory. According to Kant, sensations are received in space and time, where space and time are not themselves empirical but are a priori forms of intuition (sensations are located beside each other in space and after one another in time). Differently put: sensations received in space and time are identified as intuitions and have their own form (space and time). Like the forms of thought, the forms of intuition come from the subject. Just as the categories indicate how human beings think, space and time demonstrate how human subjects receive sensory data (KrV, B33–74).

The a priori conditions Kant identified in these initial sections function as the groundwork of metaphysics. If we know ahead of time what features the world must have to be known by us, then metaphysical questions can be answered with certainty. We know, for instance, that substance is permanence and not "something I know not what."⁵ Metaphysics, therefore, has certainty and Kant's first question has been answered in the affirmative.

But is this in fact the correct answer? On the account provided by the critical philosophy, the subject generates knowledge by processing

⁵ This is John Locke's famous claim in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 2.23.15.

spatiotemporal sensory data (in other words, sensations received in space and time, the a priori conditions of intuitions) in light of the a priori conditions of thought. The combination is achieved through judgment. The knowledge thus generated is of objects as (mind dependent) appearances, not of (mind-independent) things in themselves. And metaphysics, one might well think, has to do precisely with a level of reality inaccessible to the senses (the level of things in themselves or mind-independent reality). It seems impossible to deal with questions of God, freedom and immortality, to name a few, in the empirical world of appearances. Certainly, Kant's first critics were not convinced that a knowledge of appearances, even a certain one, could translate into certain knowledge of the world.⁶

No question, knowledge of metaphysical matters is a problem in the context of the critical philosophy. For the purposes of this paper, this does not matter. I am interested in the missing link in metaphysics not in the first instance with respect to standard metaphysical questions, but with what the theoretical philosophy cannot reveal despite the breadth of the a priori system set out by it. Kant came to identify (some of?) these missing elements himself in the third *Critique*, the *Critique of Judgment* (1790),⁷ hereafter *KU*. There he demonstrated that beauty refers to a feeling that cannot be accounted for in terms of concepts, categories, or forms of intuition. Nor, it emerges, can organisms be explained through the mechanist philosophy of the theoretical philosophy. He dealt with the experience of beauty in the first part of the *KU*, the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and with organisms in the second part, the Critique of Teleological Judgment. These two additions to the critical philosophy will be discussed in the remainder of this paper.

Both beauty and organisms are too variable to be captured by the mechanist nature of the transcendental philosophy. Yes, an object deemed beautiful (Kant's flower, for instance) might be a substance, but even if this were the case, that wouldn't be what would render it beautiful. Nor would

⁶ This problem emerged in the idealism objections. In his review of the *B-Critique*, especially its Refutation of Idealism, Herman Andreas Pistorius makes a telling comment: "It [outer experience] is after all only our own self-created product, and how can we infer anything from this about the objective reality of outer things?" (1788, p. 354; Sassen, 2000, p. 181).

⁷ The standard translation of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is now the perhaps overly literal *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. I am reluctant to adopt this new convention. Yes, judgment is a power, but this is the very meaning of the term (in German and in English) and there is no need to reiterate this in the title.

the knowledge that a tree, say, is a substance tell us that it is a living being that reproduces. By implication, if the cognitive account is linked to the mechanist philosophy, a non-cognitive account must be provided to capture beautiful things and organisms.

The one element central to the critical philosophy that remains in the third *Critique* is judgment. In the theoretical philosophy, a determinate (*bestimmendes*) judgment facilitates the subsumption of a posteriori intuitive under a priori conceptual elements, thus affording knowledge indeed certainty of the world of appearances. The basic task of unification remains in the third *Critique*, but otherwise judgments are drastically changed. Here judgments are reflective. Rather than begin with a priori concepts that set out the shape of the world, they begin with the empirical and potentially but not necessarily move up to the conceptual (KU, AA 5: 179–180).⁸ Just how the unification works out in aesthetics and teleology will have to be found as the discussion progresses.

2. Critique of Aesthetic Judgment (Beauty)

If there were a category of beauty, then its perception would not be an issue. On the account provided in the theoretical philosophy, the subject constitutes the world in light of the a priori conditions of intuition (space and time) and thought (the categories). But there is no category of beauty (KU, AA 5: 209). The categories may set out the structure of the world (as it appears to us), but in the absence of a category of beauty, we cannot tell ahead of time (or a priori), what features something must have to be considered beautiful. Nor is this something Kant seeks. Delineating features of beauty would limit its perception. Accordingly, an altogether different account must be provided of beauty than is available by way of the theoretical philosophy. Such an account can be found in the Analytic of the Beautiful (KU, AA 5: 203–244).

It is unfortunate that Kant developed the analysis of beauty in the context of the critical philosophy thereby forcing the discussion into a framework that might well not be suitable to it. One might think that the perception of beauty is not conducive to the kind of treatment that

⁸ On a more detailed discussion of judgment, especially as it applies to the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment, see Kristi Sweet (2009).

philosophical and scientific judgments or even those in ordinary life receive there. As indicated, the theoretical philosophy is driven by a goal for certainty that is facilitated, in turn, by the language and methodology of a certain way of doing philosophy. But beauty, at least as commonly understood, even by Kant prior to the KU,⁹ is not consistent with certainty and objectivity or, therefore, this way of doing philosophy. By developing an account of one in terms of the criteria of the other, Kant presented what appears to be a deeply paradoxical theory of beauty.

As stated, Kant's analysis of beauty appears in a section called the Analytic of the Beautiful. In the theoretical philosophy, the Analytic of Concepts seeks to identify the a priori concepts of understanding. It does so by way of providing an analysis of judgments. Here the features of the type of judgment that generates objectivity are identified (KrV, B91–116). Even though objectivity and certainty are not the goal of taste, and a judgment of taste (beauty) operates without determination by concepts, the analysis of the judgment that perceives beauty is identified as an analytic. In tune with the format of the Analytic in the theoretical philosophy, the judgment of taste is analysed in terms of the features set out in the first *Critique*: its quality, quantity, relation, and modality.¹⁰ As is to be expected given the radically different contexts and goals, the details of the analysis are different when compared to the analysis of judgment in the first *Critique*.

The first fundamental truth about judgments of taste is that they are subjective: “[t]he judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment, hence not logical, but aesthetic, by which I mean that its determining ground *cannot be other than subjective*” (KU, AA 5: 203). To understand the implications of the posited subjectivity, it is important to understand its nature. In the critical philosophy all judgments are subjective in the sense that they are made by subjects. But they can be subjective in one of two ways: one is that subjects are engaged in the unification of intuitive and, in the case of theoretical judgments, conceptual elements. Here the unification is under the direction of a priori concepts or categories. Under the determination of these concepts, theoretical judgments are objective. The second way in which

⁹ Kant wrote an essay on beauty and sublimity in the pre-critical period: *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (1764 [AA 2: 207–256]; 1960). Here he took the standard sensory approach to beauty and sublimity by focusing on the feelings generated by beautiful things and on the type of characters who are more likely to have one kind of feeling or another.

¹⁰ Each of these qualities is discussed in its own section or moment: 1) subjectivity and disinterestedness, 2) universality, 3) purposiveness without purpose, 4) necessity.

judgments are subjective is that they are made without determination by the categories. These are judgments of taste. Lacking the universal and objective making categories (as noted, there is no concept or category of beauty), judgments of taste are irrevocably subjective in the sense that they would hold only for the individual subject making them. Except, as we will see, they are not.

Immediately after having emphasized the judgment's subjectivity, Kant asserts that the judgment is universal (moment 2) and necessary (moment 4). While these claims make sense in a philosophy committed to certainty, neither claim can stand in the context of the posited subjectivity of judgments of taste. So, they cannot be accepted without significant (or even with) further elaboration, ultimately because both are contingent on the very presence of concepts that is here denied. If universality and necessity cannot be guaranteed in virtue of shared categories, how can they be guaranteed in the aesthetic sphere?

Before proceeding, notice something here. Kant posits the judgment's universality, but not its objectivity. The latter would entail that the judgment is about objects, which can only be achieved in virtue of the categories, which are here absent. But even if the judgment is not about objects, it can make a claim about the universality of judging subjects. A judgment is universal if all those making it will find likewise. Of course, we may well wonder what entitles Kant to claim that all subjects should find likewise in matters of beauty.

The answer to this question is complex. Kant's initial reply is to point to the aesthetic judgment as having to be disinterested (KU, AA 5: 211). That is, a judgment of taste must be without personal and private concerns to be entitled to assign beauty. We do not assert beauty because we get something out of doing so or for any other reason pertaining to our personal stance. Absent anything private and the judgment is said to be universal.

On the surface, this seems convincing. However, when further investigated, this claim is deeply unsatisfactory.¹¹ Kant maintains that a judgment of taste made in view of private concerns cannot be universal. In some cases, this is obviously true. If someone were to claim something is

¹¹ On this point and an extensive discussion of disinterestedness see Larrissa Berger (2012).

beautiful because doing so would make the object so designated attractive for a possible sale, for example, this claim could in no way be regarded as universal. But then it would not be a judgment of taste. Setting aside such an extreme case, I suspect 'interest' is much more prevalent than Kant allows. Recall that on his account we are immersed in a largely meaningful world (in virtue of the transcendental conditions that constitute this world) and, surely, we have 'interests' as a function of this immersion. Therefore, an entirely disinterested stance seems impossible.

Perhaps the notion can be rethought in the following manner. If our immersion in a meaningful world makes absence of interest difficult if not impossible, yet the universal perception of beauty is contingent on such disinterest, then that perception requires that we are removed from that immersion. Perhaps that's just what the object (or representation) deemed beautiful through a judgment of taste does. Disinterest, in other words, is created rather than decided or chosen. One could say that what is judged beautiful disrupts us from our immersion in the meaningful world as it initiates the judging process.

Suppose that this interpretation of disinterestedness is acceptable. Something is deemed beautiful so long as it removes us from our immersion in the familiar world. But that still leaves the question of the nature of the judgment of taste and its universality. Disinterest may be a necessary condition for the judgment, but can it be a sufficient one? Making matters even more difficult, Kant continues to argue (in the fourth moment) that the judgment is necessary (KU, AA 5: 236–240). In view of the absence of concepts, neither can be merely asserted. Kant further qualifies these claims by specifying that the universality is subjective (KU, AA 5: 213) and the necessity subjective (KU, AA 5: 239) and conditioned (*bedingt*) (KU, AA 5: 237). None of that makes a great deal of sense.

In spite of these qualification, or even in view of them, it is difficult to make sense of the paradoxical combination of absence of determination by concepts and universality (and necessity). However, Kant maintains that these combinations are paradoxical only from a logical or a transcendental standpoint (KU, AA 5: 213), not from an aesthetic one. Logical universality is expected, aesthetic universality is imputed (*zugemutet*) and, as noted, subjective. We cannot know beauty, but we can feel it. Knowledge requires (shared) concepts, beauty requires feeling. And feeling cannot be shared.

This means that to have the feeling of beauty, a judgment of taste must be made.

Such a judgment involves the free play of the cognitive capacities (imagination and understanding), as Kant claimed at the very outset of the *Analytic of the Beautiful* (KU, AA 5: 203). Imagination is generally responsible for unification and unification is generally accomplished in virtue of concepts. In the absence of concepts, imagination can try out various unifications and understanding, generally (but not here) the faculty of concepts, can reject or accept a suggested unification. There can accordingly be a back and forth between the faculties. This is play. Since there is no definite endpoint, the play is continuous and, as it turns out, pleasurable.¹² As Kant explains further in §9, the play generates a state of mind (*Gemütszustand*) (KU, AA 5: 217) which can be (universally) communicated. Of course, this reiterates the question of universality. For, as Kant notes here, “nothing can be universally communicated except cognition and representation insofar as it belongs to cognition” (KU, AA 5: 217). At this point Kant also suggests that in the case of the judgment of taste, a “given representation is related to *cognition in general*” (KU, AA 5: 217).

This still does not explain what right we have to demand that others judge likewise when coming across something deemed beautiful; it does not explain subjective universality (or conditioned necessity). But perhaps the requisite ground can be found the third moment of the *Analytic of the Beautiful* (purposiveness).

There is reason to think that this might be so. Recall Kant's overall commitment to structure, which suggests, in turn, that each of the Critiques is composed along similar lines. The third section of the *Analytic of Concepts* in the *Critique of Pure Reason* presents the tools by which we constitute the empirical world.¹³ By analogy, the third moment of the *Analytic of the Beautiful* might tell us how the otherwise subjective judgment of taste must be universal.

¹² Actually, Kant links the judgment of taste to pleasure or displeasure, without indicating just how one is to understand the displeasure and how, if at all, the displeasure might be linked to something that is designated ugly, whatever this might mean. On this issue see, for instance, Alix Cohen (2013).

¹³ In the succeeding *Principles* section, we find Analogies of Experience (of substance, of causality, of reciprocity) (KrV, B224–262).

The judgment, as we have seen, involves the free play of the cognitive capacities. Something is deemed beautiful if it is purposive for the free play. This would be a perfect moment to consider what features an object must have to be purposive in this manner. However, this is not the route Kant took, no doubt because identifying necessary features would mean that the judgment could not be free. Instead of focussing on the object (or the representation) found beautiful, Kant now turns to the subject with the surprising claim that: “the judgment of taste rests on a priori grounds” (KU, AA 5: 221).

This assertion is generally sufficient to stop readers in their tracks. As a priori, these grounds must originate with the subject, but for obvious reasons they cannot be concepts (or forms of intuition). The only remaining possible a priori grounds arising from the subjects are the cognitive capacities that engage in free play. This free play, recall, is said to enliven our cognitive capacities, and that, in turn, functions as a purposive (inner) causality to continue the play. As just noted, this produces a state of mind and such a state of mind can surely not be known but only felt. By implication, everyone must make their own judgment of taste or feel the free play and the ensuing state of mind. The details of this play may differ from one subject to the next, the important requirement is that it happen and that the state of mind is felt.

One might say that merely invoking the cognitive capacities is insufficient for universality. But then Kant does more than invoke those capacities, he also sets out the nature of a judgment of taste complete with play, state of mind and so on. If the subjects making the judgment of taste are not too differently located (something Kant did not consider), then we can probably concede that all other things being equal, if they make a judgment of taste of something found beautiful by some, others could reasonably be expected to judge likewise. Universality, therefore, seems likely, given all the conditions listed.¹⁴

But what about necessity? Necessity faces objections that are similar to the objections raised against universality. Just as the judgment can be universal without benefit of concepts, so it can be necessary without following rules. Although the beautiful “does have a *necessary* connection

¹⁴ Many of the topics touched on in this and earlier paragraphs have been widely discussed in the literature, too widely to be mentioned here. For a representative discussion see Vandenabeele (2012).

to pleasure”, this necessity is “of a special kind” (KU, AA 5: 236). Not objective and not practical, aesthetic necessity is “*exemplary*” (KU, AA 5: 237). This means that it must be viewed as a “necessity to **everyone’s** agreement with a judgment, which makes it an example of a universal rule that cannot be identified” (KU, AA 5: 237).

One may well wonder about the significance of a rule that cannot be identified, or for that matter why it should even matter that a judgment of taste is necessary. Perhaps Kant is here too tied to the architectonic and thus insists on it.¹⁵ I suspect that a defense of the posited necessity could be mounted but doing so would require introducing terms such as *sensus communis* (this term appears in §40 [KU, AA 5: 293]). Doing so here would take me too far afield at this point. For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to acknowledge, as we will see in a moment, that in the analysis of natural beauty Kant made room for felt access to the supersensible not accessible via theoretical judgment. Of course, Kant can know that things in themselves must exist, as he maintains in the Refutation of Idealism (KrV, B274–279) but making such a claim does not carry the conviction of the feeling we might get through a judgment of taste.

The account provided thus far has implications for the overall point of the paper. The question of the paper was how some non-cognitive reality could be accessed. What is beautiful on this account cannot be captured by the transcendental conditions, instead it removes us (disrupts us) from the immersion in what is familiar. But if the beautiful removes us from the world of appearances, what does it reveal? Arguably, it reveals a glimpse of what is preconceptual, perhaps the world of things in themselves. Kant does not claim that the judgment of taste provides knowledge; knowledge, recall, requires the transcendental conditions. But the judgment may well give us a glimpse into what there is that we cannot know, what there is prior to conceptualisation. We do not know the preconceptual but in a judgment of taste we feel it.

Kant’s account of beauty was in the first instance an account of the beauty of nature. As the discussion continues, he introduced two additional forms of beauty: beauty of the sublime and artistic beauty. Not surprisingly, the accounts provided for each both echo and differ from the account

¹⁵ One is here reminded of Schopenhauer’s (1969) complaint that the symmetry of all critical works has become the Procrustean bed on which Kant forces all other consideration.

developed here of natural beauty. The sublime appears to deal with objects that are either immense in size (mathematically sublime) or in power (dynamically sublime) and Kant introduces examples to suggest that this is so. The examples of the dynamically sublime are particularly impressive here: thunderstorms, volcanos, hurricanes and other natural disasters (KU, AA 5: 261). Impressions to the contrary, however, it would be a mistake to locate sublimity here, as it would be a mistake to locate natural beauty in objects. In both cases beauty lies in the subject. Here Kant mounted an argument demonstrating how the entirely reasonable fear we feel when we meet with a nature we cannot control reverts into pride in our mind. He speaks here in the sublimity of the mind “insofar as we become conscious of being superior to nature within us and thus also to nature outside us” (KU, AA 5: 264). Of course, it is hard to imagine feeling superior if caught up in a natural disaster but perhaps not if we are at a safe distance or encounter it in a representation. Whatever one might think of the psychology behind this, it seems clear that sublimity is more appropriately placed into a moral context rather than an aesthetic one and that what is revealed here that cannot be revealed in the theoretical philosophy is the human being as a supersensible being.

The account of beauty associated with fine art is complex because it involves both its production and its judgment (KU, AA 5: 304–335). Given its complexity it cannot be treated in the detail it might deserve. Suffice it to say that fine art is also disruptive and functions as a window into the non-conceptual.

3. Critique of Teleological Judgment (Organism)

The second missing element in Kant's theoretical philosophy I want to investigate here concerns organism. This entails a move from beauty to biology and that is surely a peculiar move. What does the one have to do with the other? In part the answer is that both involve a step away from the theoretical philosophy, from its determinate judgments and associated certainty to reflective judgment. The judgment of taste involves mere reflection, that is, reflection without concepts, the judgment of organism is more specifically interested in purposes or ends. And while in the first part Kant seeks universality in something inherently subjective (aesthetic taste), in the second he seeks to make something comprehensible that cannot be

accounted for by the means of the theoretical philosophy (a priori concepts and the determinate judgments facilitating knowledge). Here the latter is cashed out in terms of 18th century biology.

Surprisingly, given Kant's commitment to parallelism, the Critique of Teleological Judgment does not quite begin as the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment did. To be sure, there is an Analytic, but this Analytic does not follow the form of the Analytic of the Beautiful. That is, Kant does not delineate the quality, quantity, relation, and modality of whatever judgments might be found here. Instead, he does something here that he certainly did not do in the aesthetic: consider what is judged through teleological judgment—the living body or organism.

To understand why he had to do this, a view to the history of 18th century biology is appropriate. Like many at the time, Kant was inspired by early modern philosophy (emp). EMP was concerned with the behavior of bodies. Approaches might have varied somewhat but they generally came down to the motion of bodies in space, analysed, for instance, in terms of motion and collision (Descartes), or mathematical physics (Newton). But laws of motion can only tell us about the behaviour of inert moving bodies; they cannot tell us anything about the origin and development of living (self-moving) bodies. Having adopted this approach, Kant himself realized that he could not explain why a bird should have hollow bones (and other properties) facilitating speed (KU, AA 5: 360). Indeed, it seems to be the “utter contingency of nature” (KU, AA 5: 360). It follows that a different explanatory model is required than the one he adopted from early modern philosophy.¹⁶ Kant came to reject the idea of nature “as a mere mechanism” and claims that “teleological judging is rightly drawn into our research into nature” (KU, AA 5: 360). Given the difficulties of understanding the object to be perceived, it makes perfect sense that the Analytic involves an analysis, not in the first instance of judgment but of the object to be judged.

Kant was not the only thinker who came to feel some discontent with the mechanist approach, especially as far as production and generation of life was concerned. By the end of the 18th century, there were multiple theories to account for the emergence and regeneration of life. However,

¹⁶ Clearly, much more would have to be said about emp to do justice its complexity. Still, these few remarks are sufficient to indicate the difficulties Kant was facing. For a more complete account of the history, see, for instance, Wim Beekman and Henk Jochemsen: “The Kantian account of mechanical explanation of natural ends in 18th and 19th century biology” (Beekman and Jochemsen, 2022).

according to naturalist and anthropologist Johann Blumenbach,¹⁷ there were only two competing theories of generation that were of importance: 'evolution', then understood as preformation, and epigenesis. Preformation is the long-standing theory (it goes back to antiquity) that at the time of creation of life all life was provided with germs of all future generations (in miniscule form). For purposes of reproduction only growth was required, and growth means expansion. Over the centuries, the theory changed to some extent (germ being either in male semen or female ova for example), but the basic idea remained the same. All life (generally contained in the male seed) contains the germs of all future generations.

Kant had already rejected the notion of preformation in the form of 'Preformationsystem' of pure reason in the first *Critique*. He argued there that if we thought the original creator had created the categories along with their harmony with the laws of nature, then "the categories would lack the *necessity* they need" (KrV, B167–168). Why? In Kant's view, this is so because we could say no more than that we happen to have been made in a certain way, it does not say it is necessary that we were so made.

But how does the rejection of the preformationsystem in one case apply to the rejection of biological preformation? In §81, Kant deals with a variety of existing or past theories of evolution. He declares himself against all those theories, such as occasionalism, requiring divine intervention (KU, AA 5: 422). He also offers several objections to the preformation theory wondering about such things of long-term health and survival of germs awaiting development, possibly for millennia. Altogether, biological preformation simply carries too many absurdities (KU, AA 5: 422). Interestingly, Blumenbach investigated this matter in more detail. He claimed that after having dissected numerous frogs etc., he did not find any evidence of existing germs awaiting development. Probably his most successful objection concerns the mixture of characteristics offspring may have although the theory posits that just one sex carries the germ for future generations.¹⁸

¹⁷ Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) was a physician and a naturalist, a physiologist and an anthropologist. In the context of this essay, he was most important as the author of a short essay *Ueber den Bildungstrieb*.

¹⁸ These multiple objections appear in the second section of Blumenbach's essay (1792, pp. 32–58).

The alternative to the theory of preformation is the theory of epigenesis, developed by Blumenbach.¹⁹ The central concept of this theory is what Blumenbach calls *Bildungstrieb* (formative power).²⁰ Blumenbach (and later Kant) tries to come to terms with a living being's ability to produce and reproduce, to do the very things mechanist philosophy cannot explain, at least not at the time. Blumenbach was a scientist, so his descriptions, indeed, his theories, spring from observation. The notion of formative power seeks to express that any living being has the power to recreate or form itself. He does not (cannot?) explain the root of this power, but he does suggest that it translates into the ability to find the materials required to form itself and the ability to build all its parts in a harmonious and timely fashion. If a living being has an injury such as a cut, then the formative powers ensure that its parts can grow back together. These are all abilities, he believes, that the theory of preformation cannot explain.

Kant was familiar with Blumenbach's short treatise and evidently impressed by it.²¹ Perhaps he was even influenced by it. However, since his discussion appears in a work of critical philosophy, Kant has to capture the insight he might well have gained from Blumenbach in the terminology of the 3rd *Critique*. So rather than account for generation in terms of *Bildungstrieb*, he identifies the natural product, which cannot be accounted for in terms of efficient causality, as a 'natural end' (*Naturzweck*) and maintains that such a natural end "is both cause and effect of itself" (KU, AA 5: 370).

Aware that this is an unusual perhaps a paradoxical connection, he proceeds to illustrate what he has in mind here with respect to the (re)production of a tree. He considered three stages of this reproduction: the tree as a species, as an individual, and as having its own integrated parts. Throughout these stages, it is important to see that efficient causality could not give us the tree considered at each stage but that a teleological causality is required. The end functions as the cause.

¹⁹ The connection between Blumenbach, Kant and others was complex. For more detail see Zammito (2003).

²⁰ The first (and perhaps only) English translator did not know how to render the German term *Bildungstrieb* into English and settled on the Latin term *nisus* instead (Blumenbach, 1792, pp. ix–x).

There are several references that speak to this in his correspondence and even in his written work. Kant to de la Garde (publisher) March 25, 1790 (AA 11: 146). Request that a copy of the KU be sent to Blumenbach. Kant to Blumenbach, August 5, 1790 (AA 11: 184–185). Here he thanks Blumenbach for the essay on generation. See also a comment on epigenesis in §81 (KU, AA 5: 424).

Consider the reproduction of the tree as a species. The tree does not merely produce itself as a tree, it produces itself as *this* (species of) tree. For that to be possible, the reproduction must be directed so that “the tree that it generates is of the same species” (KU, AA 5: 371). Where does the direction originate? Kant gives a surprising response: “on the one hand, it [the tree] produces itself as effect, on the other hand as cause” (KU, AA 5: 371). Note also, that the more trees of a certain species there are, the more likely that the species will continue. By implication, we get a rather an interesting interrelation of cause and effect. The end (effect) is the cause and the cause, in turn, maintains the end. The natural end plays a role analogous to Blumenbach's formative power, which cannot be further explained than that of natural end can.

Reproduction on the level of the individual proceeds along similar lines. Clearly, the individual (a tree or a cow) must take in materials not just to expand but to grow as this individual. Just like Blumenbach's formative power, the being's end provides direction. We find here another point against the theory of preformation. That simply has the individual grow or expand. But that is surely not enough. The individual has to be able to select appropriate material facilitating growth, given availability. It needs to be able to grow as this individual in this species (it needs to build itself). Both formative power and Kant's ends may fill the gap left by other then available theories.

In his account of the third stage of production, Kant takes an interesting slant. This is not just a question of the whole but of the parts that make the whole. The leaves, stem, bark and so on that are parts of a tree must grow in harmony with each other, and not, as with a watch, for instance, in a consecutive fashion. True, the parts of the watch may be reciprocally interdependent, but a watch is constructed in a step-by-step fashion by an artisan who is external, whereas the parts of the tree that are reciprocally interdependent grow together without external agency. The parts are possible only in relation to the whole just as the whole is possible only in relation to the parts. And again, the question is how this is possible. Mechanical construction as in the production of a watch can create a whole in a piece-by-piece fashion, adding the required and integrating the parts

that make a watch, but the point about the tree is that the parts grow in unison. The tree is an organism.²²

Having emphasized that the living being is both cause and effect of itself. Kant appears to get cold feet. Quite surprisingly, in §65, he maintains that the principle of something as both cause and effect of itself, offers an “inauthentic [uneigentlich] and indeterminate expression” (KU, AA 5: 372). To make it more acceptable than it appears to be, he suggests that it “needs a derivation from a determinate concept” (KU, AA 5: 372).

Initially this claim does not make any sense especially after the extensive discussion of the tree's reproduction. However, Kant is here in effect setting up the conflict between two types of causality to be discussed in the upcoming Antinomy: that of understanding and that of reason. From the perspective of the 1st *Critique*, the idea that something could be both causes and effect of itself is indeed ‘inauthentic’ and ‘indeterminate’ as well as very much in need of a ‘determinate’ concept (causality) to fix it. In the Second Analogy, Kant claimed that “[a]ll change occurs according to the laws of the connection of cause and effect” (KrV, B232). According to this conception of cause, it is something upon which something else (the effect) follows in accord with a rule. A necessary temporal sequence is implied: a cause has to always occur first, the effect must always be second. By implication, the above claim that the tree's development is directed by the effect is confusing and challenges the first *Critique* conception of causality. No wonder Kant thought it as inauthentic and indeterminate.

Kant seems to have been aware that implied in the notion of a natural product was a challenge to the to him standard conception of causality. That's why his account of natural ends leads to a dual conception of causality: that of understanding in which there is the clear temporal sequence of cause and effects (KU, AA 5: 372) and that of reason in which we have a backwards and forward conception of causality: cause can be effect and effect can be cause, as so well illustrated by the integrated production of the parts and whole of the tree discussed above.

There is clearly a struggle here. Kant wants to defend mechanical (cause-effect) causality, but he needs the teleological causality of cause-effect-cause to account for living self-organizing beings. At this point, he

²² For a more in-depths analysis of organism see Micheal Barker (2018).

has to concede that teleological causality has won that struggle at least as far as living beings are concerned. Mechanical causality, as he has said repeatedly, can simply not account for life.

To get a closer conception of a natural product Kant compares it and contrasts it to two forms of final causality: art and natural products. Can a natural product be reduced to a product of art. At first it seems this might be the case since both involve teleology. Both are produced in view of an end. Still, there are several differences. The main or most obvious difference is that art has an external creator (artisan or artist) who has an idea, even if only vaguely, of what it to be made and organizes the production from that point. In a natural product such an external agency is absent. The natural product grows itself. Kant therefore rejects the analogy, arguing that any analogy one might make with natural purpose is not sufficiently illuminating because: “the organization of nature is not analogous with any causality we know” (KU, AA 5: 375). The ultimate upshot of these discussions is that “[a]n organized product of nature is that in which everything is *end* reciprocally also *means*. Nothing is in vain, without purpose, or to be ascribed to a blind mechanism of nature” (KU, AA 5: 376).

Having established that the living body must be accounted for in virtue of teleological judgment, Kant proceeds to extend this judgment to nature which is now presented as “system of ends” (KU, AA 5: 378). Given that we have two principles of judgment to account for nature, there is an antinomy (conflicting maxims). Ultimately, this antinomy is resolved by way of unifying these maxims. Neither explanatory principle (mechanism of nature and principle of ends) can be abandoned because the one gives us the system of nature and the other provides a “heuristic principle to research the special laws of nature” (KU, AA 5: 411). As it turns out, the unification of the two principles is finally contingent on a further common principle, which lies in the supersensible: “the common principle of the mechanical derivation on the one hand and the teleological on the other is the *supersensible*” (KU, AA 5: 543).

4. Concluding Comments

My aim in this paper has been to find what we cannot perceive by means of the structure and rules set out by the cognitive philosophy (forms of intuition and thought). In the *Critique of Judgment* Kant demonstrates that this includes beauty and organism. If we live in a largely meaningful world constituted by the a priori conditions of thought and intuition, then how is it even possible to perceive something that does not fall into this meaningful totality? Kant's first answer is that beauty disrupts us from this immersion. And yet, though the judgment of taste (beauty) proceeds without determination of rules (there is no concept of beauty) and whatever is deemed beautiful is not found to be so in terms of a set of criteria or features that all beautiful things share, we can sense them. In virtue of the posited sameness of our cognitive capacities, we can be assured that we are in principle all able to find beauty. And that means that we are in principle able to have an awareness of non-cognitive reality. Even if we couldn't know such a reality, we can be certain that there is more or other than what we can know.

This conviction is confirmed in the Critique of Teleological Judgment. Biological organisms and the non-cognitive treatment they require demonstrate that the cognitive structure developed in the theoretical philosophy is not enough to account for the world we inhabit. Granted, again, we do not get knowledge here of the supersensible, but at the very least, the investigation into something that cannot be known by Kant's cognitive structure can be known by other means. Here this is teleological judgment. One wonders what other elements of the world there might be that could be known or at least perceived by non-cognitive means.

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