Expository on *The Beautiful:*
Analytic of The Beautiful, The Critique of Judgement
Immanuel Kant

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Introduction

Immanuel Kant (April 22, 1724 – February 12, 1804) was an 18th-century German philosopher, who set out to attempt to rationalize and understand the ultimate nature of reality. He composed three texts, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, *The Critique of Practical Reason*, and *The Critique of Judgment*, in which he systematically explicates the system of thought that he believed brought together the two schools of thought of the Empiricist and the Rationalist.

In the final critique, *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant seeks to define the Judgment of Taste as it pertains to The Beautiful and The Sublime. In this paper I will examine Kant's *Analytic of the Beautiful* as contained in his third critique, expounding upon Kant's understanding of our capacity to perceive and appreciate beauty. The Beautiful, according to Kant, is a quality which; pleases universally without requiring a concept; is connected by means of a “Judgment of Taste” to the purposive form of an object, which is defined by definite boundaries.

First Moment

"Taste is the faculty of judging an object or a method of representing it by an entirely Disinterested Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called beautiful."

(Kant, 55)

Kant, as analogous to most philosophers, requires a definition of the terms to begin to understand key concepts that he uses as the building blocks of his system. The first being Taste.

The definition of Taste, as pulled from a standard english dictionary, is the ability to discern what is of good quality or of a high aesthetic standard. In the case of Kant, it is the faculty of judging the beautiful. Through this Judgment of Taste one distinguishes between that which is beautiful and that which is not. In the process of judgment of taste one,

refer[s] the representation not by the Understanding of the Object for cognition, but by the Imagination (perhaps in conjunction with the Understanding) to the subject, and its feeling of pleasure or pain. (Kant, 45)

This mode of judgment, being based upon feeling, is not a judgment of cognition, and contains no logic, therefore it is æsthetical, showing that the judgment of the Beautiful is a matter of Subjective Taste, and specifically a taste that is defined by the rule of Disinterested Satisfaction. This rule of Dissatisfaction is set in place to maintain a judgment that is unbiased and of the most truth and universality as possible. Kant contrasts this rule of Disinterested Satisfaction with the two interested satisfactions: the Pleasant and the Good.

The Pleasant is a taste which gratifies immediately, via the natural, meaning physical senses, i.e, sight, taste, smell, touch, and sound. The Good is a taste that is morally pleasing,
that which satisfies via a fulfillment of its purpose or will. “That of taste in the Beautiful is alone a disinterested and free satisfaction (Kant, 54).”

Second Moment

The Beautiful is that which pleases universally without requiring a concept.

(Kant, 67)

In the second movement the judgement of the Beautiful receives a second restricting or guiding rule, that the object must be judge devoid of any conceptual association. Once an object’s concept is considered then the outcome of the judgement can only be either the Good, or the Not Good. A concept implies an inherent purpose or intent and the judgement becomes of logical reasoning, and therefore cannot be beautiful. Here Kant further explicates the rule of Disinterested Satisfaction.

For the fact of which every one is conscious, that satisfaction is for him quite disinterested, implies in his judgement a ground of satisfaction for all men. For since it does not rest on any inclination of the subject (nor upon any other premeditated interest [, meaning a concept ] ) but since the person who judges feels himself quite free as regards the satisfaction which he attaches to the object, he cannot find the ground of this satisfaction in any private conditions connected with his own subject [, meaning Disinterested Satisfaction ]; and hence it must be regarded as grounded on what he can presuppose in every other person

(Kant, 56).

At this point the Beautiful becomes only that which independent of concepts is represented as the object of a universal satisfaction. However, Kant goes on to show that we have yet to prove this judgment’s ability to pretend towards universality. “He does not count on the agreement of others with this judgement of satisfaction, because he has found this agreement several times before, but he demands it of them.” (Kant 58) To prove universality of an æsthetic judgment Kant introduces several new terms: General Validity, or Subjective Universal Validity, meaning the “validity in reference of a representation not to the cognitive faculty, but to the feeling of pleasure and pain for every subject.” (Kant, 60) Conversely, objective universal validity. An objective universal validity is always valid subjectively, but a subjective universal validity does not extend to the Objective.

A object of the Judgment of Taste can be transformed into a logically universal concept, as Kant explains with this example.

I describe by a Judgment of Taste the rose, that I see, as beautiful. But the judgment which results from the comparison of several singular judgments, “Roses in general are beautiful” is no longer described simply as æsthetical, but as a logical judgment based on an æsthetical one. (Kant, 61)
Once, we transfer a Judgment of Taste to a logical judgment, it becomes based upon a concept, and a Judgment of Taste is subjective and without a concept, according the second governing rule stated by this moment of the text. This Idea of the Beautiful being of a concrete Universal Validity is only that an idea, but an idea necessary for the experience of the Beautiful. Kant is uncertain whether or not one who is making a Judgment of Taste is in fact doing so in accordance with this Idea.

At this point in the Analytic of The Beautiful, Kant has explained the first two requirements of Taste, in the judging of the Beautiful, Disinterested Satisfaction and the ability to pretend toward Subjective Universal Validity, leaving one still to wonder, where is the Beautiful?

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**Third Moment**

**Beauty is the form of the purposiveness of an object, so far as this is perceived in it without any representation of a purpose.** (Kant, 90)

To begin, one must understand the difference between Purposiveness and Purpose and their relation to Form. Purposiveness as defined by a standard English dictionary is, is a state of condition serving or done with a purpose. Purpose, as defined by a standard English dictionary is, a reason for which something exists.

Kant differentiates between these two ideas as follows:

The Purpose is the object of a concept, in so far as the concept is regarded as the cause of the object (the real ground of its possibility); and the causality of a concept in respect of its Object is its purposiveness (forma finalis). Where then not merely the cognition of an object, but the object itself (its form and existence) is thought as an effect only possible by means of the concept of this latter [Purposiveness], there we think a purpose (Kant, 67).

Thus distinguishing, the two ideas by placing them on a timeline of creation, a Purpose is given a concept via the objective, or the logical understanding, which is then created as an object. In the case of Purpose, the object is subordinate to the concept, which is derived from the purpose. Purposiveness on the other hand comes as Final Causality (in respect to our timeline) of a concept as governed by the Object.

This timeline, according to Kant, may approached from either side. Making it possible to call something purposive regardless of a knowledge of its purpose or form. In the process of contemplating an object, the Imagination Faculty first presents it to the Understanding Faculty through a representation. The Understanding does not necessarily provide a label for the objects concept, but merely a relation of the object to the faculty of Knowledge, allowing a Purposiveness to be discovered, and a satisfaction derived without any representation of a purpose.

Kant concludes the Third Moment with an elucidation of the Ideal of Beauty and the process through which one can pretend to contain a Universality of Taste. The Ideal of Beauty
is the mean of all a specified species, “... the image which is as it were designedly at the basis of natures Technic... (Kant, 87).” One discovers this average, as Kant illustrates, through the unconscious sliding of one image into another. With modern day technology it would be to take and layer image after image atop one another until an Ideal or average image was reinforced. A sonic example of this would be Alvine Lucier’s study on the acoustics of a room and the effect on the human voice titled, *I Am Sitting In A Room*. From this normalization, from which one can assume an experience based model or common measure, one can claim to contain a subconscious knowledge of a Universal Standard of Taste.

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**Fourth Moment**

The Beautiful is that which without any concept is cognized as the object of necessary satisfaction. (Kant, 96)

This idea of a Universal Standard, or what the Fourth Moment explores, a Common Sense, is a Subjective Necessity. In all judgments in which one labels something as containing the Beautiful, one allows for no other opinion, by grounding judgment not on concepts, but on the subjective, i.e. feelings, that are based on the so called Common Feeling.

This [Common Feeling, or] Common Sense is not grounded upon experience; for it aims at justifying judgments which contain an ought. It does not say that everyone will agree with my judgement, but that he ought (Kant, 94)

Therefore the proper Judgment of Taste in respect to the Beautiful can be assumed as Subjectively Universal, an Idea that is necessary for everyone to experience the satisfaction of the Beautiful. Furthermore, because of this Universal Subjective Necessity inherent in the requirements of the Judgment of Taste, the Judgments of the Beautiful can pretend to Universality.

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**Brief Inquiry Into the Beautiful & The Sublime**

The Beautiful in nature is connected with the form of the object, which consists in having definite boundaries. The Sublime, on the other hand, it to be found in a formless object, so far as in it or by occasion of it boundlessness is represented, and yet its totality is also present to thought. (Kant, 101-02).

For Kant this division between what is the Beautiful and what is the Sublime is the final piece needed to solidify the Judgment of the Beautiful, that it must consist of definite boundaries. The satisfaction in the Beautiful is bound up in Quality. The satisfaction of the Sublime is bound up in Quantity.
Kant goes on to rather poetically describe the two emotions tied to the satisfactions. In the case of the Beautiful one experience the feeling of the “furtherance of life (Kant, 102).” Conversely, the Sublime produces a feeling of the “momentary checking of the vital powers and a consequent stronger outflow of them (Kant, 102)”

Conclusion

The picture, processes, and conclusion to be made of the beautiful has now been fully illuminated. Kant has shown that we can make judgements of Truth about the Beautiful. The Beautiful being, a quality which pleases universally without requiring a concept, rather, it requires a purposiveness of form. A form, which in contrast to the Sublime, is defined by definite boundaries. We can make this Judgment of Taste with the expectation of universal agreement based upon the Common Feeling.