

Causation in Reflective Judgment

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Abstract

The existing body of scholarship on Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is rife with disagreement. At the centre of much of this disagreement is the issue of precisely what Kant understands to be taking place in a harmonization of the cognitive faculties. Is aesthetic reflective judgment to be identified with, or separated from, this harmonious state of the faculties of imagination and understanding? If aesthetic judgment is identified with this state, as is argued herein, then upon what is a judgment of beauty to be based? These questions are addressed by focussing on two closely related aspects of Kant's theory of reflective judgment; the role Kant assigns to the power of desire (i.e., to the will) and to the causal structure implicated in reflective judgment. In brief, we argue that a judgment of beauty is not, strictly speaking, something that I do, but is better described that something that happens of itself.

Introduction

There are two long-standing problems in the literature on the *Critique of Judgment* that I would like to revisit in this essay; first, the so-called problem of the key and second, the problem of third *Critique's* internal consistency. Both of these problems are intimately bound up with Kant's claim that reflective judgment must be governed in accordance with an *a priori* principle. Hence, the essay will focus primarily on explicating this demand as it impacts upon these two problems.

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The problem of the key arises because Kant grounds judgments of beauty in a mental state which he declares to be “universally communicable” but which he simultaneously appears to bar from having any phenomenal qualities by means of which it could be identified. A judgment of beauty is said to be the result of the activation of an underlying cognitive system whose only phenomenal product is the feeling of pleasure. But Kant is careful to observe that we must not consider a judgment of beauty to be based on this feeling. For if a judgment of beauty were so based, there would be no way for it to be distinguished from a mere liking. However, by declaring judgments of beauty to be based on a mental state that is “universally communicable” Kant gives us reason to think that he is arguing for the existence of some identifiable state of the subject upon which judgments of beauty are based; and here we might add that if a judgment of beauty were based on any phenomenal state of the subject, the judgment would seem to be an empirical one (i.e., and so would involve a concept).

Since Kant declares that the key to the critique of taste lies in the solution to this aporia, much ink is spilled over it. Béatrice Longuenesse, for instance, argues that “a first order pleasure taken in the free play of the faculties [should be] supplemented by a second order pleasure taken in the universal communicability of the first order pleasure, without any deliberative act of judging being necessary...”¹ Hannah Ginsborg argues for considering the necessary judgment to be reflexively self-validating; a proposal which seems to lead only to the idea of a “kind of pleasure which is characteristic of taste.”² Henry Allison argues for a slight departure from the text so that Kant can be read as intending for a universally communicable mental

¹ Béatrice Longuenesse, “Kant’s Theory of Judgment, and Judgments of Taste: On Henry Allison’s Kant’s Theory of Taste,” *Inquiry* 46 (2003): 154. For a critique of this proposal see Henry Allison, “Reply to the Comments of Longuenesse and Ginsborg,” *Inquiry* 46 (2003): 186.

² Hannah Ginsborg, “Reflective Judgment and Taste,” *NOÛS* 24 (1990): 72.

state of the subject to be the distinguishing mark of aesthetic pleasure.³ Rachel Zuckert presents us with the idea that the universal validity of aesthetic pleasure depends “upon a self-legislated activity of the subject... [that can] be shared by others” and demanded of others as well.⁴ Finally, Joseph Cannon argues similarly for an active judging subject whose judgments of taste have “two [simultaneous] valences... one directed toward the object in intuition, the other toward one’s own mental activity; in reflecting on the object.”⁵ The fact that such a diversity of hypotheses can co-exist seems to imply an inadequacy of grounds to decide between them.

In what follows I will argue primarily for two theses. First, the universal communicability of the mental state upon which a judgment of beauty is to be based is to be found in a change of state, which Kant characterizes as relief from a need. While this state is certainly not misidentified as pleasure, it is better characterized negatively, as the temporary absence of the background state that regularly accompanies our day-to-day endeavours.⁶ Second, Kant goes beyond what he can rightfully declare in this matter. Following through the logic of the third *Critique* leads

³ Henry Allison, “Reply to the Comments of Longuenesse and Ginsborg,” *Inquiry* 46 (2003): 189-190.

⁴ Rachel Zuckert, *Kant on Beauty and Biology*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 335. It may be the case that the subject must be anticipatory in making aesthetic judgments, but it is not clear that reflective judgment *simpliciter* is anticipatory in any sense. Kant says, “judgment prescribes... to itself” (KU, 5:185-186) or “judgment legislates... solely to itself” (FI, 20:225).

⁵ Joseph Cannon, “The Intentionality of Judgments of Taste in Kant’s Critique of Judgment,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 66:1 (2008) p. 55.

⁶ As Socrates remarks near the beginning of the *Phaedo*: “How singular is the thing called pleasure, and how curiously related to pain, which might be thought to be the opposite of it; for they never come to a man together, and yet he who pursues either of them is generally compelled to take the other. They are two, and yet they grow together out of one head or stem; and I cannot help thinking that if Aesop had noticed them, he would have made a fable about God trying to reconcile their strife, and when he could not, he fastened their heads together; and this is the reason why when one comes the other follows, as I find in my own case pleasure comes following after the pain in my leg, which was caused by the chain.” Benjamin Jowett, *Phaedo*, (1901): 60B.

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to the conclusion that the universal communicability of the mental state, upon which a judgment of beauty is to be based, can only indicate the fact that I cannot help but judge certain objects to be beautiful, but not that they are beautiful.

In making these arguments I apply Kant's technic of judgment, as outlined in the latter part of the *Critique of Judgment*, to his analysis of reflective judgment. Reflective judgment, which Kant argues depends upon a natural purposiveness (a purposiveness without a purpose), qualifies for such an analysis. In this case, Kant judges reflective judgment itself to be functioning as a natural purpose. This fact reveals the nature of the causal structure that Kant takes to be occurring in a harmonization of the cognitive faculties, which, in turn, provides us with an answer to the problem of the key.

Background

In order to provide an epistemological foundation for science and, at the same time, to make room for faith, the *Critique of Pure Reason* relies upon the idea that our experiences are organized *a priori* in accordance with certain laws of the mind, which Kant divides into pure intuitions and pure concepts.⁷ On this account, pure intuitions of space and time accomplish preliminary organization of the raw "manifold" of experience after which point this product is subject to further organization in accordance with pure concepts. Since the act of organizing intuitions under concepts is an act of judgment, establishing the possibility of scientific knowledge requires providing an account of the ability of the mind to judge correctly.

In the first *Critique* the crucial task of securing *a priori* judgment is assigned to intermediates, which Kant calls schemata.

⁷ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indiana: Hackett, 1781/1787/1996), *KrV* A 7-10/B 11-14. All translated quotations from the *Critique of Pure Reason* are from this edition.

“Without schemata,” he tells us, “the categories [i.e., the pure concepts] are only functions of the understanding for producing concepts, but they present no object.”⁸ Schemata are necessary, therefore, to the possibility of experience itself. Their essential function is to guide the application of pure concepts to the intuited manifold so as to permit the discovery of universal truths. Just how schemata perform this function, however, is problematic for Kant. In the chapter titled “On the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding” Kant explicates the activity of schematizing in terms of rules, or rule-like processes, for the subsumption of particulars under universals.⁹ Unfortunately, the explication of schemata in such terms ultimately compromises our ability to understand how they can do the job for which they were designed.

In the section immediately prior to Kant’s discussion of the schematism of pure concepts he notes the following problem with the general strategy of the first *Critique*.¹⁰ If understanding is explicated as our power of rules then the power of judgment is the power to subsume under rules, that is, to distinguish whether something does or does not fall under a given rule. General logic, however, since it abstracts from all content, can provide no guidance to this power. For if it sought to give general instruction as to how we are to subsume under rules this could only be by means of another rule; and since a rule is merely a formal principle that cannot provide its own internal measure of correctness, the epistemological demand that the power of judgment be guided by universal and *a priori* rules leads ultimately to an infinite regress of rules for the power of judgment.¹¹ Given that Kant’s recognition of this problem occurs just before he introduces schemata, it can seem

⁸ *KrV*, B 187.

⁹ *KrV*, A 141/B 180.

¹⁰ *KrV*, A 133/B 172.

¹¹ *KrV*, A 133/B 172.

something of a mystery as to why he resorts to describing their function in terms of rules for the application of rules.

The short answer to this mystery is that Kant is caught in a trap of his own devising. Kant understands schemata to be functions of transcendental logic, which are not subject to the limitations of general logic.¹² According to Kant, transcendental philosophy has the advantage over general logic “that, besides indicating the rule (or, rather, the universal condition for rules) that is given in the pure concept of the understanding, it can simultaneously indicate *a priori* the case to which the rules are to be applied.”¹³ Be this as it may, when it comes to *explaining* to the reader how schemata are able to perform their assigned task of subsuming intuitions under concepts Kant is forced to rely analogically upon general logic. Although schemata may benefit from transcendental logic, one's understanding of how schemata perform their function does not.

If knowledge is to be possible, the understanding must be made epistemologically secure. For Kant, this means that the understanding must be guided by *a priori* rules or principles. The attempt to specify necessary and sufficient conditions for the application of a rule or principle is, however, a project doomed from the first, for such criteria can only be provided in terms of further rules, which again require guidance from judgment and so on *ad infinitum*. Hence, Kant is led to conclude the passage in which he sets out this problem with the suggestion that the power of judgment depends for its security on “a particular talent” about which he finds he can say very little. The centrality of this problem to Kant's critical system accounts, in large part, for his devotion to writing a *Critique of Judgment*.¹⁴

¹² *KrV*, A 136/B 175.

¹³ *KrV*, B 174.

¹⁴ For further defense of this interpretation of the role of the third *Critique* see, for example, David Bell, “The Art of Judgment,” *Mind: A Quarterly Review of Philosophy*, XCVI (382), (1987): 221-244.

The *A Priori* Principle of Purposiveness

Kant begins the *Critique of Judgment* by expanding upon and further complicating the account of judgment provided in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. He observes that whether one is addressing theoretical or practical concerns, reason always depends for its material upon the application of universals (rules, principles, laws) to particulars; that is, upon acts of determinative judgment in which particulars are subsumed under universals.¹⁵ However, since "the laws that pure understanding gives *a priori* concern only the possibility of nature as such,"¹⁶ pure concepts alone are insufficient for actual experiences of nature, which require the addition of empirical concepts.¹⁷ The pure concept of causation, for example, merely guarantees that the attempt to understand the world in terms of causes is not in vain. Precisely what causes are at work in nature must be discovered; and this process depends upon the lawful formation and application of empirical concepts. Hence, to fully secure the possibility of knowledge Kant must provide an account of the formation and application of both pure and empirical concepts, and he must do so in a manner that is not dependent upon an analogy with general logic.

Of course, for Kant, neither pure nor empirical concepts are lying about in the understanding waiting to be selected and deployed.¹⁸ Instead, concepts of both types must form in the context in which they are to be applied. Securing this process

¹⁵ I. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar. (Indiana: Hackett, 1987), *KU*, 5:175-179, 196. All translated quotations from the third *Critique* are from this edition.

¹⁶ *KU*, 5:179.

¹⁷ *KU*, 5:179.

¹⁸ Although Kant does, on occasion, speak about the possession of concepts, he believes that relations of time "lie wholly outside the concepts of understanding" (B 159). Hence, for Kant, the use of concepts is "based on the spontaneity of thought" (A 68-9/B 93-4, cf. also, A 79/B 105, A 86/B 118, A 126-8, B 148-9).

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epistemologically requires, in each case, that the underlying system be governed in accordance with an *a priori* principle; for this is the only way that Kant can guarantee that what emerges does so necessarily. But an *a priori* principle has no existence independently from the system which it governs, just as the universal law of gravitation has no existence independently from its instantiation in bodies. Such a principle is rather a formal description of the behaviour of a system.

Now, Kant regards both empirical and pure concepts as laws. But, he remarks, "if [empirical concepts] are to be regarded as laws (as the concept of nature does require) then they must be regarded as necessary by virtue of some principle of the unity of the diverse, even though we do not know this principle."¹⁹ Hence, like pure concepts, empirical concepts form a synthetic unity (or a system) in which each concept is a universal condition for the existence of all the other concepts, in accordance with an *a priori* principle. But, as Kant argues in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment*, the normativity that governs the development of such systems appears also as a product of the reciprocal relations that exist among their parts. In other words, the systems responsible for the spontaneous production of both pure and empirical concepts appear to us as self-organizing entities (i.e., as natural purposes). As a result, we are able to consider the normativity that governs reflective judgment in the on-demand formation of concepts, which Kant captures in *a priori* principles, to be supplied by the reciprocal relations that exist between the elements of the total system of concepts. It is this organizational structure then which guarantees that concepts form invariably and unfailingly, just as crystals form unfailingly when certain conditions obtain between the elements which comprise them.

The central task of reflective judgment is, once again, the formation/application of concepts. This requires the non-

¹⁹ *KU*, 5:179.

arbitrary unification of the diverse elements that comprise the manifold; that is, a unification of the matter of the faculty of imagination leading to the emergence of concept (a form) that we can then judge to be governing that very unification. In accordance with the concept of a natural purpose, the requisite normativity must be supplied to the faculty of imagination by the reciprocal means-ends relations that exist between the very elements of which it, at any given moment, is comprised.²⁰ In this case, all the diverse “parts” of which the manifold is comprised, through their own causality, in some way, produce one another as regards both their form and combination, and in this way produce a whole whose concept can, conversely, be judged to be the cause of the very process of unification, so that the connection of *efficient causes* can at the same time be judged to be a *causation through final causes*. Thus, the required normativity is supplied by the system itself.

Hence, while the system responsible for the spontaneous formation and application of pure concepts is entirely contained within the understanding, the corresponding system of empirical concepts is not.²¹ This fact points to the central difference between the systems of pure and empirical concepts. While we are able to know that the former system is both complete and governed in accordance with an *a priori* principle (i.e., the principle of original synthetic unity of apperception), we must only presume this to be the case for the latter system, the

²⁰ A centerpiece of Zuckert’s book is her defense of an identity of means-ends relations with purposiveness without a purpose. For further support of this claim I defer to her arguments; see, in particular, (op. cit., 2007, pp. 123-124, p. 193, pp. 224-230). The central difference between the position being advocated here and the one set out by Zuckert can be traced to the fact that, for a variety of reasons, Zuckert believes aesthetic reflective judgment to be an activity of the subject, i.e., aesthetic reflective judging.

²¹ Hence, in the case of pure concepts Kant writes that the “instruction for reflection is already [contained] in the concept of a nature as such, i.e., in the understanding, and judgment *schematizes a priori* and applies these schemata to each empirical synthesis, without which no empirical judgment whatever would be possible. Here judgment not only reflects but also determines, and its transcendental schematism also provides it with a rule under which it subsumes given empirical intuitions” (*FI*, 20:213).

individual members of which must all be discovered. If we are to make progress in the discovery of the actual members of this system, and so to have a basis upon which to differentiate true from false members, then the idea that it has a complete and final form must be presupposed. Unmoored from both the pure understanding and from the raw manifold of intuition, reflective judgment governs itself, therefore, in accordance with an *a priori* principle that it "gives as a law, but only to itself."²² In this way, "our reflection on the laws of nature is governed by [the concept of] nature [i.e., in accordance with the technic of judgment]."²³

Relief from Our Need

Section VI of the Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* is titled: "On the connection of the feeling of pleasure with the concept of the purposiveness of nature".²⁴ There Kant declares that "the discovery of the order of nature is an occupation of the understanding conducted with regard to a necessary purpose of its own; that is, the unification of this order under principles."²⁵ As we know, the mental state at the basis of a judgment of beauty cannot be the result of my having attained a personal purpose, for such a pleasure would be mere agreeableness. Instead, the purpose that is fulfilled in the discovery of order in nature must be the natural purpose of reflective judgment itself.

Indeed, Kant justifies the *a priori* principle upon which judgment must be presupposed to function – that the manifold of *apparently* contingent "elements" must be presumed to

²² *KU*, 5:180.

²³ *KU*, 5:180. Kant writes: "For where we think purposes as bases that make certain things possible, we must also assume means whose causal law does not itself require anything that presupposes a purpose, so that this law can be mechanical and yet also a subordinate cause of intentional effects." Cf., also *KU*, 5:414

²⁴ *KU*, 5:186.

²⁵ *KU*, 5:187.

always already be unified (as if by God) – on the basis of the argument that this is required if the understanding is to be able to complete its “assigned task” of rendering nature comprehensible.²⁶ Here Kant applies his “technic of judgment” to the analysis of reflective judgment. Kant, in other words, takes the *a priori* principle of purposiveness to be the overarching organizational principle of the total system of empirical concepts [i.e., of aesthetic reflective judgment] and declares that it is for the sake of the fulfilment of the promise of this principle [i.e., for the discovery of order in nature] that system appears to exist.

Since we cannot, for any given investigation, know that a given hypothesized concept – say that of phlogiston – is an actual member of the system, all the unknown particular empirical concepts that comprise the total system are “contingent as far as we can see (i.e., we cannot cognize them *a priori*)”.²⁷ At the same time, the possibility of discovering any one of these concepts requires that no empirical concept is, in fact, contingent because any unknown empirical concept depends for the possibility of its discovery upon the constraints generated by the interaction of all the empirical concepts that comprise the system.²⁸ As a result, we must conceive any given part of the system that remains undiscovered to be, like apples on a very young apple tree, both necessary and contingent, as far as we can see.²⁹ We must, once again, consider nature to be organized in this way (i.e., as a self-organizing entity or “natural purpose”) because such is required if we are to secure the

²⁶ Cf., also where Kant writes: “Now, nature’s *causality* regarding the form that its products have as purposes I would call a *technic* of nature” (*FI*, 20:219). The deduction is circular. It hinges on an application of the *technic* of teleological judgment which Kant sets out in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* and which dictates that the principle of mechanism be subordinated to the principle of teleology in investigating nature; i.e., that we consider nature *as if* it were designed.

²⁷ *KU*, 5:183.

²⁸ *KU*, 5:369-372.

²⁹ This argument applies not only to undiscovered empirical concepts, but also to all empirical concepts, since they all must be generated on-demand for each moment of experience.

possibility of progress in unifying it and so be able to satisfy our need to understand nature. We cannot, however, ever know that nature is unified in this way because the very the idea of an entity with the kind of structure that is being attributed to reflective judgment contains a contradiction. The concept of a natural purpose "is only a maxim of reflective rather than of determinative judgment; and hence it holds only subjectively".³⁰ Thus, Kant's attribution of purposes to nature and to reflective judgment can amount to no more than an unavoidable strategy of investigation – a technic of judgment, as he calls it.

Reflective judgment must be conceived as depending upon a self-organizing system of empirical concepts governed in accordance with an *a priori* principle because, given its isolation from both the manifold of intuition and pure concepts of the understanding, such is required, if it is to be possible for it to form and apply concepts correctly in fulfillment of its' (as if) assigned purpose of unifying nature under principles.³¹ But we cannot know that the understanding actually has a purpose of its own and so we cannot know that the system upon which reflective judgment depends is governed by an *a priori* principle. Thus, we cannot know cannot know that nature will be rendered comprehensible to us.

Kant maintains this state of affairs provides a background of insecurity against which our visceral need to understand nature must be considered. We are as if by design burdened with a state of discomfort, the possibility of relief of which is entirely uncertain. Thus, Kant writes: "This is why we rejoice (actually we are relieved of a need) when, just as if it were a lucky

³⁰ *KU*, 5:413. See also §74 titled, "The reason why it is impossible to treat the concept of a technic of nature dogmatically is that a natural purpose is inexplicable" (*KU*, 5:395-7).

³¹ Kant attributes this same need to reason when he writes: "And yet reason requires that even the particular laws of nature be combined in a unified and hence lawful way. (This lawfulness of the contingent is called purposiveness). Therefore, unless the power of judgment has [its own] universal law under which it can subsume that particular, it cannot recognize any purposiveness in it and hence cannot make any determinative judgments" (*KU*, 5:404).

chance favoring our aim, we do find such systematic unity among merely empirical laws, even though we necessarily had to assume that there is such a unity even though we have no insight into this unity and cannot prove it.”³² The light of reason reveals to us no guarantee that nature is unified in the way that we require. Hence, whenever we are successful in our endeavour of unifying nature under principles we experience pleasure in light of the apparent contingency of that success.³³ We are temporarily relieved of our need. Moreover, argues Kant, since the possibility of this success requires the *a priori* principle of purposiveness as a condition, there is, in such situations, “a basis that determines the feeling of pleasure *a priori* and validly for everyone.”³⁴

Here, however, Kant goes beyond what he can legitimately conclude. The consistency of his theory of aesthetic reflective judgment depends upon it being impossible for us to know categorically (i.e., determinatively) that reflective judgment operates in accordance with an *a priori* principle. If it could be determined that reflective judgment *is* governed by the *a priori* principle of purposiveness then the unification of nature under principles would be known to occur necessarily. In that case, although considerable effort might be required to unify nature, we could not conceive ourselves to be making discoveries, since we would know that the answer would show up eventually. Sorting out a puzzle in natural science would, thus, rather be like knowing for certain that the missing keys were in the car, but not quite knowing where in the car. You would have no fear that they were missing, but you might have to take the car apart to find them. Hence, if the *a priori* principle of purposiveness could be known to govern reflective judgment then

³² *KU*, 5:183

³³ Hence, Kant writes that “in thinking of nature as harmonizing, in the diversity of its particular laws, with our need to find universal principles [*Allgemeinheit der Prinzipien*] for them, we must, as far as our insight goes, judge this harmony as contingent, yet also indispensable for the needs of our understanding” (*KU*, 5:187).

³⁴ *KU*, 5:187.

we could not be thought to be investigating nature against the background of an insecurity regarding the possibility of its unification under principles; and so we could not be thought to be surprised and relieved when some order appeared to us. Thus, there would, under such circumstances, be no particular reason to "rejoice" – although we would undoubtedly feel pleasure at having completed the task (an interested pleasure).

Knowledge of an *a priori* principle of purposiveness that governs reflective judgment would sever the connection that Kant forges between it, the contingent satisfaction of an aim, and the production of that (disinterested) pleasure which Kant requires for his theory of aesthetic reflective judgment. Consequently, if Kant's theory is to remain consistent then the experience of discovery and the pleasure that accompanies it, can only be empirical evidence in favour of the idea, which we adopt unavoidably, that an *a priori* principle governs reflective judgment (i.e., and by implication that nature is a natural purpose).³⁵ The discovery of a new law of nature, along with the pleasure that accompanies that discovery, can provide no objective ground for concluding that there *is* a total system of empirical concepts governed in accordance with an *a priori* principle. Moreover, as I noted above, such knowledge would be tantamount to declaring the system upon which reflective judgment depends to *be* a natural purpose, which would require applying a problematic concept determinatively.

A closely related line of thought leads Paul Guyer to conclude that Kant's theory of reflective judgment is, in fact, internally inconsistent. Guyer argues that since the *a priori* principle of purposiveness is apparently designed to guarantee that we will be successful in perceiving meaningful order in nature, and since such perceptions always further the necessary purpose (or aim) of cognition, this principle is inconsistent with

³⁵ *KU*, 5:186-188.

the only way in which it can be linked to pleasure, i.e., in the contingent satisfaction of an aim.³⁶ Guyer writes:

The present argument connects pleasure to the perception of systematicity in virtue of the contingency of such perception, or the fact that systematicity is not guaranteed by the laws of the understanding [i.e., by the pure concepts]; but the principle of reflective judgment, that nature itself *is* systematic was apparently designed to guarantee that such a perception would occur, or would at least not seem to be contingent.³⁷

The problem with Guyer's analysis is that it fails to take into account the fact that Kant's attribution of purpose to nature, and by implication to the understanding, can be no more than heuristic.

As we have argued, the *a priori* principle of purposiveness is judged to govern reflective judgment in accordance with an application of the *a priori* principle of teleological judgment (i.e., of the concept of a natural purpose - a technic of judgment). The claim that we cannot help but judge nature to be systematic is not equivalent to the claim that nature is systematic. Since the expectation of systematicity in nature is merely a product of an unavoidable way of judging nature, the contingency that Kant's theory requires is not threatened. Consequently, Kant's theory of aesthetic judgment is saved from the particular inconsistency attributed to it by Guyer, but at the cost of making it impossible to establish determinately that reflective judgment functions on the basis of an *a priori* principle.

Of course, if it cannot be known that reflective judgment operates on the basis of an *a priori* principle, neither can it be established determinately that the pleasure resulting from its

³⁶ Guyer, P.: *Kant and the Claims of Taste*. Cambridge. 1997, 69-74.

³⁷ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 74 (emphasis mine, brackets mine).

supposed activity is universally valid. The most that we can conclude is that since we cannot help but judge reflective judgment to be governed by an *a priori* principle, we cannot help but judge the pleasure in question to be universally valid. Consequently, we cannot help but judge certain things to be beautiful. The demand that others see them as beautiful is the product of similar logic.

While it is true that the *a priori* principle of purposiveness is designed to guarantee that nature will be intelligible, it does so only on the presupposition that the understanding has a necessary purpose of its own which reflective judgment serves. The need of the understanding to unify nature under principles can only be met if empirical concepts form a self-organizing system governed in accordance with an *a priori* principle. However, even if we accept as true the idea that we have a need to unify nature under principles, in order to go from this phenomenological “fact of judgment” to the conclusion that the understanding has a purpose of its own requires that we judge nature purposively, which, even if such a judgment is unavoidable, can only be done reflectively. Consequently, it is impossible to *know* categorically that reflective judgment is governed in accordance with an *a priori* principle; i.e., that the total system of empirical concepts *is* a natural purpose which spontaneously forms and applies empirical concepts correctly.

The Role of the Power of Desire in the Problem of the Key

The approach that I have taken to analyzing Kant’s theory of reflective judgment, which puts his technic of judgment at the centre, has the capacity to offer a novel way of resolving the problem of the key. In the section of the *Critique of Judgment* titled “On Purposiveness in General” Kant argues that a purpose, taken by itself, “is the object of a concept insofar as we regard this concept as the object’s cause

(the real possibility); and the causality that the *concept* has with regard to its *object* is purposiveness (*forma finalis*).³⁸ Thus, if I have as my purpose to build a house then the possibility of this house being realized – the house considered as an effect – depends on my concept of it considered as a cause; that is, it depends on the purposiveness of that concept.³⁹ Such a causal structure immediately implies the involvement of the will, as the power of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*). As Kant points out in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, it is an analytic proposition that in my willing of an object as an effect there is already conceived the causality of myself as an acting cause.⁴⁰ Hence, Kant writes that in a judgment of beauty “the feeling of pleasure is determined *a priori* and validly for everyone merely because we refer the object to the cognitive power; [for] in this case the concept of purposiveness does not in the least concern the power of desire [i.e., the will insofar as it has purpose].”⁴¹ The central import of this claim is that aesthetically produced pleasure is not the result of furthering any particular purpose of my own. It is rather the result of the cognitive system furthering its’ (as if) assigned purpose of unifying nature under principles.⁴² Since the purposiveness, which is bound up with a judgment of beauty, does not involve the power of desire, it follows that it does not involve the empirical subject.⁴³ It is, therefore, strictly speaking, not a

³⁸ *KU*, 5:220.

³⁹ At *KU*, 5:172, for example, Kant writes: “For the will, as the power of desire, is one of the many natural causes in the world, namely, the one that acts in accordance with concepts;” i.e., in conformity with the presentation of a purpose (p. 10). Cf. also *KU*, 5:220.

⁴⁰ *GMS*, 4:417. Cf. also *KrV*, B 275-6, *KU*, 5:172, *KU*, 5:204, *KU*, 5:206, *KrV*, A 539/B 567, and *MS*, 6:213.

⁴¹ *KU*, 5:187 Cf. also in the First Moment Kant claims: “Interest is what we call the liking we connect with the presentation of an object’s existence. Hence such a liking always refers at once to our power of desire, either as a basis that determines it, or at any rate as necessarily connected with that determining basis” (*KU*, 5:204).

⁴² *KU*, 5:186-187.

⁴³ On the issue of aesthetic displeasure I follow Hannah Ginsborg’s analysis. A judgment of aesthetic displeasure is the result of frustrated expectations, but these expectations may be based on previous experiences of beauty. Ginsborg writes: “Things strike us as ugly, I want

judgment that I make. The judgment, as Kant says, is not a cognitive one.⁴⁴

It stands to reason then that the judgment that some object furthers the general aim of cognition is made by reflective judgment itself in its capacity to be self-legislative and the purposiveness of the manifold in the fulfillment of this aim is not something that breaks through into awareness. The cognitive faculties are able to respond to it, but it is not cognizable. As Kant argues a little later, “the subjective [feature] of the (re)presentation which cannot at all become an element of cognition is the purposiveness that precedes the cognition of an object...”⁴⁵ The only detectable “sensation” directly connected with reflective judgment *simpliciter* is, therefore, the feeling of pleasure, which Kant claims is universally valid precisely because it was not contaminated by subjective particularities.⁴⁶

This line of argument raises the question of how we are able to distinguish beautiful objects from those that are merely agreeable or good when we have only pleasure to rely upon. Kant’s response to this question is that a person “can only attain certainty on this point, by merely being conscious that he is separating whatever belongs to the agreeable and the good from the liking that remains to him after that. It is only for [or by means of] this that he counts on everyone’s assent, and he would under these conditions [always] be justified in his claim [that x is beautiful], if only he did not on occasion fail to

to suggest, only because they fail to strike us as beautiful in situations where we take a certain degree of beauty to be called for...” Hannah Ginsborg, *Aesthetic Judging and the Intentionality of Pleasure, Inquiry*, 46 (2003): 177-178.

⁴⁴ *FI*, 20:221.

⁴⁵ *KU*, 5:189.

⁴⁶ The term “sensation” appears in quotes here in recognition of the force of Zuckert’s argument against Guyer that pleasure is not a sensation and that Kant has consequently changed his mind about pleasure being singular in the *Critique of Judgment* (op. cit., p. 236-241). Be that as it may, an appeal to intentional pleasure does not, of course, by itself avoid the problem raised in the introduction (see Zuckert, p. 247).

observe these conditions and so make an erroneous judgment of taste”.⁴⁷

Kant’s language here seems to imply that in order to determine whether an object is beautiful one must be involved in actively discriminating, perhaps after the fact, whether a given pleasure has been produced simply by having furthered a necessary aim of cognition. As I noted earlier, it is not uncommon for commentators responding to this and related passages to argue that Kant’s theory of reflective judgment requires a second order judgment in order to discriminate between pleasures (or between sources of the production of pleasure).⁴⁸ There is, however, even if pleasures are not phenomenologically distinguishable, another possible indicator that the source of *this* pleasure is different and, consequently, there is another way to account for the possibility of error in judgments of taste.

On Kant’s theory of judgment, the possibility of simultaneously experiencing pleasure resulting both from an interest in an object (whether in something merely agreeable or in something good) and from a harmonization of the cognitive faculties is precluded, for this would require the simultaneous engagement and disengagement of the power of desire. This is clearly not possible with respect to the same (re)presentations at the same time. One must, therefore, leave one state in order for the other to manifest and since, for Kant, pleasurable states tend

⁴⁷ *KU*, 5:216.

⁴⁸ Paul Guyer, who may be credited with focussing this debate, argues that for Kant to be consistent the perception of the experience of the underlying pleasure requires the exercise of a psychological capacity over and above what is necessary in cases of mere cognition. Moreover, Guyer writes that: “Once a capacity which is not an absolutely necessary condition of knowledge is introduced into the explanation of aesthetic response, so is an element of contingency, and the possibility of an entirely justifiable *a priori* imputation of aesthetic response to others is precluded. ... The psychological capacity to experience the free harmony of imagination and understanding goes beyond the minimal capacity for knowledge, and ... this harmony occasions a pleasure which is not felt in every case of knowledge” (Guyer, 1979, p. 323; 1997, p. 287).

to persist of their own accord, they will naturally resist change to another state.⁴⁹

It follows that as long as an individual remains moderately successful in the pursuit of his merely personal purposes, that individual is unlikely to experience beauty, since he remains preoccupied with pleasures in the agreeable and the good. Thus, he needs an uncomfortable (displeasurable) predisposition as part of his “judging nature” which cannot be satisfied in this usual manner, but which requires for its satisfaction a temporary suspension of the influence of the power of desire on (re)presentations.⁵⁰ Indeed, it is probable that awareness of this need is dependent, in the first place, upon its sudden satisfaction in a moment of aesthetic appreciation. This dramatic change in the state of the subject is not likely to go without notice and can, therefore, serve as a reliable indicator that the pleasure which results in its wake (from a harmonization of the cognitive faculties) was not his *doing*.

Once aesthetically produced pleasure occurs, “separating out” this pleasure, from pleasure in an object (which cannot actually be present) requires, therefore, attention to the state of the subject; in particular, to the absence of his normal purposeful mode of being, which is a kind of relief.⁵¹ Such an

⁴⁹ Kant is very interested in what we would now call first order phase transitions in which there is a discontinuous jump in the state of the system (see, for example, *KU*, 5:348).

⁵⁰ Kant writes: “So, if we are to feel pleasure in [response to] the harmony, which we regard as merely contingent, of nature’s heterogenous laws with our cognitive power, we need something that in our judging of nature makes us pay attention to this purposiveness of nature for our understanding – namely, an endeavour to bring, if possible, these heterogenous laws under higher though still empirical laws, when this endeavour is met with success” (*KU* 5:188).

⁵¹ Barchana-Lorand argues that “the feeling of pleasure . . . is always present in the operation of reflective judgment.” But, “that we do not remain at the purely formal and pleasurable level of reflective judgment, and our attention from this pleasure is distracted by interests in concepts linked with the object in the second level of reflective judgment, does not entail that we do not, on our way to the second level of reflection, pass through this first pleasurable level” (op. cit., 2002, p. 321). Such language is misleading. First, it implies the existence of a pleasure (a feeling) that one does not notice (i.e., feel) because one is not attending to it. Second, it does not sufficiently emphasize the masking of pleasure; the curtailment of the process caused by the engagement of the power of desire. Consequently, she requires a

explanation renders intelligible such phrases as “stunning beauty.” Beautiful objects, it seems, share with intellectual discoveries the capacity to temporarily suspend the reference of (re)presentations to the power of desire and so to momentarily relieve us of ourselves.

Awareness of this relief underpins claims for the universal validity of such experiences. The universal validity of the resulting pleasure is guaranteed not by what is present in it, but rather by what is absent from it, and, only because of this, by what is present in it; that is, the sudden absence of a kind of striving for order which is unavoidably connected with being a willing subject, unveils an underlying pleasurable state that is symbolic of the morally good. It is not necessary, therefore, to posit special properties of aesthetically produced pleasure, *qua* pleasure, in order to account for this sense of universal validity in a judgment of beauty.

At the same time, it is not inconceivable that one might mistakenly judge an interested pleasure to be an indication of a beautiful object. A person may expect to find beauty in an object and then “read” a consequent pleasure as confirmation of that anticipated beauty, when in fact it is mere gratification.⁵² So, for example, one might play a favourite recording with the anticipation of an experience of beauty and then mistakenly attribute the gratification obtained from *being able* to play that recording with pleasure “in” the object, i.e., beauty. The mistake in this case results from inattentiveness to one’s own state.

When we correctly attribute the pleasure we experience in an aesthetic judgment to the object, we are aware that there is a

“second level of teleological judgment” that leads to the formation of a concept. The involvement of the power of desire does not, however, imply a second order judgment. Rather the power of desire restricts and usurps the process of reflective judgment in service of the attainment of personal ends, which always requires the formation of a concept, with the result that the pleasure, if it gets started at all, must immediately be masked by “mere cognition”, which always involves the empirical subject.

⁵² *KU*, 290 n15.

sense in which this pleasure had nothing to do with me.⁵³ The feeling of pleasure that I experience in apparent response to the object comes upon me in a manner akin to that in which sensible impressions do; even against my will. It is as if the pleasure were a predicate of the object.⁵⁴ It is this feature of aesthetic judgment, therefore, that accounts for “the universal communicability of the mental state,” for the fact that one quite naturally conceives that others *will* also declare such objects to be beautiful (although why they *ought* to do so is not yet fully clear), and for the necessary postulation (or presupposition) of a “common sense” that lies at the basis of such judgments, even if, as I have been arguing, the feeling of pleasure alone can give us no indication of such a sense.⁵⁵

Further support for the present understanding of reflective judgment is to be found in Rachel Zuckert’s insightful book, *Beauty and Biology*. Zuckert draws our attention to the fact that in Kant’s *Anthropology* pleasure taken in objects with which we have no prior experience – initial pleasures – must be interpreted as relief from pain. About such objects Kant writes:

Although leaving one point in time and entering another is one and the same act (of change), there is still a temporal sequence in our thought and in the consciousness of this change, in conformity with the relation of cause and effect. – So the question arises, whether it is the consciousness of leaving our present state or the prospect of entering a future state that awakens in us the sensation of

⁵³ Although I suspect that Rachel Zuckert will not follow me to such a conclusion, she affirms that, for Kant, aesthetic “pleasure does not provide cognition even of the subject; because pleasure is not a conceptual representation (much less a judgment), but merely a ‘felt’ attitude, it may not itself ‘provide cognition’ of the subject” (op. cit., 2007, p. 270). She furthermore suggests that while pleasures that are connected with human purposes can be objectively judged to “belong” to the empirical subject, aesthetic pleasure cannot (pp. 272-3).

⁵⁴ *KU*, 5:191.

⁵⁵ Without such a presupposition we would fall into skepticism. “Common sense,” in this case, writes Kant, “is a mere ideal standard” (*KU*, 5:239). Moreover, the *a priori* principle of purposiveness is simply “regarded as a common sense” (*KU*, 5:238) – emphasis altered.

enjoyment? In the first case the enjoyment is simply removal from pain – something negative; in the second it would be presentiment of something agreeable, and so an increase of the state of pleasure – something positive. But we can already guess beforehand that only the first will happen; for time drags us from the present to the future (not vice versa), and the cause of our agreeable feeling can be only that we are compelled to leave the present, though it is not specified into what other state we shall enter – except that it is another one.⁵⁶

Since this quote occurs in a discussion of pleasure in the agreeable Zuckert restricts its applicability to such pleasure. “Aesthetic pleasure”, she concludes, “does not seem to presuppose something that precedes it – there is no concept that determines what we are “looking for” in the object, nor can we identify a pain that is alleviated by the (unexpected) encounter with the beautiful object.”⁵⁷ As we have been arguing, however, the experience of aesthetically produced pleasure must be understood to take place against the background of a need to understand nature combined with insecurity regarding our capacity to do so. It is this uncomfortable predisposition that is relieved in a moment of aesthetic experience. It is this relief that draws our attention to that pleasure which accompanies a harmonization of the cognitive faculties. We probably ought also to add here that since this state is particularly sweet for us it becomes infused with a longing for its continuance.

Kant is arguing that under normal circumstances cognition is intimately connected with preferences; for in order to know how one should deal with some part of the world one first needs to know to what extent and in what respects it is agreeable or disagreeable and this requires knowing what it is. The power of reflective judgment to generate empirical concepts is, conse-

⁵⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology*, 7:231, in Zuckert, 2007, op. cit., pp. 272-273.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

quently, normally pressed into the service of personal purposes. The pleasure or displeasure that I commonly experience as connected with objects, therefore, generally results from how these objects are expected to affect me and do affect me.⁵⁸ If there is a pleasure of reflective judgment proper that precedes empirical concept formation/application then it is very short-lived indeed and masked by the reference of (re)presentations to the power of desire which calls on the faculty of understanding to bend the fabric of the faculty of imagination to serve merely personal ends.⁵⁹ In a judgment of taste, however, the power of desire is not involved and we are consequently not “*compelled* to give our approval [or disapproval] by any interest, whether of sense or of reason”.⁶⁰ Only judgments of this type are *free* from the compulsions that must be presupposed in cases where interest is the basis that determines approval or disapproval.

Unlocking the Mystery of the Key

It is possible to provide a more detailed description of this process that is keeping with the spirit of Kant’s philosophical approach to analyzing judgment. To begin, consider the paragraph that immediately follows Kant’s definition of a purpose. For it is no coincidence that the section immediately prior to this one contains the problem of key to the critique of taste. He writes:

The power of desire, insofar as it can be determined to act only by concepts, i.e., in conformity with the presentation

⁵⁸ *KU*, 5:209.

⁵⁹ Hence, Kant holds that; “if a judgment about beauty is mingled with the least interest then it is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste” (*KU*, 5:205). I take Kant to be arguing that such judgments are simply mistaken; that is, they are not judgments of taste at all. Hence, he continues: “In order to play the judge in matters of taste, we must not be in the least in favor of a thing’s existence but must be wholly indifferent about it” (*KU*, 5:205).

⁶⁰ *KU*, 5:210 – emphasis mine.

of a purpose would be the will. On the other hand, we do call, objects, states of mind, or acts purposive even if their possibility does not necessarily presuppose the presentation of a purpose; we do this merely because we can explain and grasp them only if we assume that they are based on a causality [that operates] according to purposes, i.e., on a will that would have so arranged them in accordance with the presentation of a certain rule. Hence there can be purposiveness without a purpose, insofar as we do not posit the causes of this form in a will, and yet can grasp the explanation of its possibility only by deriving it from a will. Now what we observe we do not always need to have insight into by reason (as to how it is possible). Hence we can at least observe a purposiveness as to form and take note of it in objects – even if only by reflection – without [actually] basing it on a purpose (as matter of a *nexus finalis*).⁶¹

This passage, which reads like a preamble to the *Critique of Teleological Judgment*, is intended to begin to address the question of how reflective judgment can be self-governing. Purposiveness without a purpose is a description of the causality by means of which reflective judgment is thought to operate. According to Kant, all kinds of things – objects, states of mind, and acts – can legitimately be considered to be purposive without a purpose even if, on the one hand, their possibility does not, in fact, presuppose that such things were actually designed in accordance with a will (i.e., God’s will) and, on the other hand, reason has no other insight into how these things are possible.

In the *First Introduction to the Critique of Judgment* Kant declares that “all purposiveness of nature can be regarded either as natural (*forma finalis naturae spontanea*) or as intentional

⁶¹ *KU*, 5:220.

(*forma finalis naturae intentionalis*).⁶² Since he has ruled out the latter as that purposiveness by means of which reflective judgment functions, we are left with the former. As I have argued, proceeding to consider the aesthetic reflective judgment in this way allows Kant to lift out of his observations, a principle, by means of which reflective judgment can be conceived to govern its own operations. This is the *a priori* principle of purposiveness. This principle is a formal description of the normativity that can simultaneously be conceived as arising from the reciprocal means-ends relations that exist between the elements of which the faculty of imagination, at any given moment, is comprised.⁶³ In this case, the required normativity is, once again, supplied by the system itself.

It is possible to provide a plausible Kantian-inspired account of the functioning of the underlying systems involved in reflective judgment as they either experience an object as beautiful or form and apply concepts that permit the object to be cognized. At any given moment we can conceive the faculty of imagination to function either independently or under the influence of the power of desire. On the one hand, if the power of desire leads the way with an interest, then the system of empirical concepts alters the self-organizing dynamics of the faculty of

⁶² *FI*, 20:235.

⁶³ In this case, all the diverse “parts” of which the manifold is comprised, through their own causality, in some way, produce one another as regards both their form and combination, and in this way produce a whole whose concept can, conversely, be judged to be the cause of the very process of unification, so that the connection of *efficient causes* can at the same time be judged to be a *causation through final causes*. In this case, everything can be considered both as end and also a means. A centerpiece of Zuckert’s book is her defense of an identity of means-ends relations with purposiveness without a purpose. For further support of this claim I defer to her arguments; see, in particular, (op. cit., 2007, pp. 123-124, p. 193, pp. 224-230). The central difference between the position being advocated here and the one set out by Zuckert can be traced to the fact that, for a variety of reasons, Zuckert believes aesthetic reflective judgment to be an activity of the subject, i.e., aesthetic reflective judging. On the argument advanced herein, since any activity of the subject would invoke the power of desire, and aesthetic reflective judgment does not do so, aesthetic reflective judging is not something that I *do*.

imagination so as to produce a concept.⁶⁴ In the case of the famous duck-rabbit phenomenon, for instance, whether individuals first see a duck or rabbit is influenced by priming effects, such as whether the viewing takes place in spring (near Easter) or the fall (near duck-hunting season). Since this activity furthers the attainment of a desired purpose, it is generally gratifying. On the other hand, if there is no interest, even for a moment, then the self-organizing dynamics of the faculty of imagination are *free* of such influence.⁶⁵ Here, according to Kant, the temporarily isolated systems that correspond to the faculty of imagination and the faculty of understanding enter a larger metastable state of some kind that, in preserving itself, *is* pleasurable.⁶⁶

In the case of a suspension of the influence of the power of desire, the system that is responsible for reflective judgment does not find itself subject to a heteronomy of empirical influences from the faculty of understanding. Instead, “concerning objects of such a pure liking” this system “legislates to itself, just as reason does regarding the power of desire.”⁶⁷ It is for this reason that beauty can be symbolic (an indirect exhibition) of the morally good. For in both cases the autonomous functioning of these systems depends on an absence of interest; that is, on the absence of external causal influences resulting from the adoption of *particular* purposes by a willing subject.⁶⁸ Consequently, the capacity of the beautiful to be symbolic of the morally good is intimately bound up with

⁶⁴ This anticipated object either *is* pleasure (or avoidance of pain) or is an object empirically connected with pleasure (*MM*, 4:399 in *ibid.*, p. 246). Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 261.

⁶⁵ See, for example, *KU*, 217, *KU*, 295-296, and *KU*, 316-17. Hence, there is some truth to the view of Longuenesse that “aesthetic judgment starts where the search for concepts collapses” (Longuenesse, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 146).

⁶⁶ Staring off into space or at firelight, seemingly thinking of nothing, does not usually result in an experience of beauty because the purposive mode of being is still operative, though unfocused. I may not currently have any specific expectations, but have not left my purposive mode of being (cf. Zuckert, 2007, *op. cit.*, p. 275-76).

⁶⁷ *KU*, 5:353.

⁶⁸ See Zuckert, 2007, *op. cit.* pp. 248-253 for a nice analysis of “interest.”

the fact that, in both types of judgment, the lower power of desire is not leading the way. This absence of influence permits the systems involved to govern themselves in what we can legitimately conceive as an “attempt” of those systems to attain purposes inherent in them.⁶⁹ From this analogical vantage point, pleasure results because the system is able to attain an aim that is both necessary and contingent, as far as we can see. Since this pleasure has no connection with any interest, but inheres in the autonomous (or he-autonomous) functioning of the underlying system of faculties, we naturally take it must be shared by all humans. The indicator of the universal validity of this mental state is the sudden relief that we experience when the presence of the object precipitates a temporary shutdown of the influence of the power of desire on systems that are ultimately responsible for concept formation and application.

Conclusion

To be consistent Kant cannot permit a judgment of taste to depend upon any special intentional content by means of which it might be identified. The universal communicability of the mental state must be apparent only to reflective judgment itself. The whole process of judgment must occur entirely *a priori*. This may be explanatorily unsatisfying, but it is the only way that the pleasure in question could be universally valid. The key to understanding the universal communicability of the mental state is realizing that when (re)presentations do not concern the power of desire we are momentarily relieved of an inescapable need that is bound up with our sense of ourselves as rational beings in need of systematic

⁶⁹ The main difference between these two forms of autonomy is that Kant acknowledges that our liking for the morally good is necessarily connected with an interest, “but with an interest that does not precede our judgment about the liking but is produced by this judgment in the first place” (*KU*, 5:354).

order. It is this relief that accounts for the certainty that one is “separating out” the beautiful from the agreeable and the good.

Kant's employment of the principle of teleological judgment as a solution to the problem of judgment is consistent with his arguments in the *Critique of Judgment* concerning the generality with which this principle must be applied. As Kant observes, once we have determined that a certain body must be judged to be a natural purpose, “everything in such a body must be regarded as [similarly] organized”.⁷⁰ Since a human being clearly meets the definition of a natural purpose, it follows that all of its parts are similarly natural purposes. Thus, it would seem that to be consistent Kant must judge the faculties of understanding, reason and judgment to be natural purposes.

Whether he is concerned with a manifold of intuitions, a manifold of purposes, or a manifold of concepts, the idea of a self-organizing entity provides him with a way to have a diversity of parts lawfully united in order to realize an *a priori* function. This teleological approach to thinking about the powers of the soul provides Kant with the possibility of systemic self-governance while simultaneously avoiding the demand to provide an *explanation* of that self-governance. Instead of an explanation of autonomous control Kant provides only an *examination* (or exposition) of it.⁷¹ Such an examination is, however, all that he requires, for his goal is only to establish the possibility of reconciliation between the mechanistic and teleological modes of explanation by rendering both of them to be dependent upon our particularly human kind of understanding, which, he observes, must always proceed from the parts to the whole. This discursive type of understanding, he argues, must be contrasted with another kind of understanding, which is intuitive and which is able to proceed determinatively from the whole to the parts.⁷² In this way, Kant defends the possibility

⁷⁰ *KU*, 5:377.

⁷¹ *KU*, 5:412.

⁷² *KU*, 5:405-410.

that the contradictory causal picture inherent in our apprehension of self-organizing systems is a function of our limited kind of understanding.