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Sinead Murphy  
[somurphy@hotmail.com](mailto:somurphy@hotmail.com)

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## Avant-Garde or Pré-Jugé?

Sinead Murphy

### Abstract

This paper receives its impetus from Gadamer's account of effective history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and his corresponding challenge to the 'problem of purity' that he locates in Kant's critique of aesthetic judgment and that derives from the attempt to establish universal founding principles for thought and action. This is a deep and wide-ranging issue, and so I focus on a very specific aspect of it: the division between intuition and understanding, between history as a given flux and enlightenment as a unifying synthesis, that motivates Kant's search for pure reflective grounds to reconcile them, and on the challenge posed to this division by the version of history as prejudice that Gadamer describes. My aim is to make salient key markers in the 'history v purity' problem, through a dialogue between two themes (*pré-jugé* and *avant-garde*) that continue to pervade the problem and three figures (Kant, Gadamer and Lyotard) who partially see the problem but do not succeed in getting beyond it.

### Key Words

aesthetics; *avant-garde*; *pré-jugé*; effective history; Gadamer; hermeneutics; Kant; Lyotard; Mallarmé; Newman

### 1. Out with the Old Problem; In with the New

Common to the concepts of '*avant-garde*' and '*pré-jugé*' is the idea of something before, something previous, something prior.<sup>[1]</sup> According to Gadamer's account of 'effective history,' judgments are not pure but prejudiced, that is, made and implemented within a framework of pre-given purposes that are not themselves, at that moment, freely chosen or subject to reflective consideration. Before we come to weigh up our choices in an explicit and apparently rational manner, we have already been directed in our range of choices and in the purposes that will determine their fate. We have already judged before coming to make a judgment. We are *pré-jugé*.<sup>[2]</sup> Being *pré-jugé*, is, thus, in a certain sense, very like being *avant-garde*. Lyotard, for instance, holds that our judgments are always subject to choices and decisions that are made *prior* to the application of fixed rules, *avant-garde*, on the basis of a *feeling* that is subject to conditions of legitimacy other than those that determine the judgments of science. To judge *avant-garde* is to judge before certain formal criteria are in place, to judge without knowing how to judge as it were, effectively to pre-judge.<sup>[3]</sup>

This opening up of understanding to an experience that comes before the rules of reason apply immediately reveals both Gadamer and Lyotard as radical critics of certain Kantian divisions: of intuition and understanding on the one hand, and of thought and feeling on the other. Kant's division between intuition and understanding generates a conception of history as, at once, an almost totally unpredictable flux and a synthesizing, unifying invariance. The task of reconciling these two modes of history, the intuitions that are given to us with

the categories that we give to ourselves, becomes his central problem. It is not possible that the reconciliation between flux and invariance be thought out, or known, or reasoned. . . .All of this would require the application of categories and would achieve unity at the expense of flux by privileging one side of the divide. And yet, to achieve flux at the expense of unity would be to put paid to any dreams of reason and enlightenment that Kant enjoyed: understanding would always then be at the mercy of intuition and our knowledge always subject to change of the most unpredictable and disruptive kind. Hence Kant's delineation of the faculty of pure reflective judgment in the third critique, a faculty dependent neither on the content of our intuitions on the one side nor on the categories of thought on the other, a faculty subject neither to flux nor to absolute invariance, a faculty based on feeling and not on cognition, and equipped with a 'pure' foundational principle; loose enough to provide for the diversity implied by history as flux and yet sufficiently universal and necessary to guarantee that history never threatens the unifying force and extension of our understanding.

Though Kant outlines this faculty for pure reflective judgment in his aesthetic of feeling, nevertheless it is clear that it is intended, first and foremost, as a guarantee for the continued coherence of his science of thought, whose traditional divide between pure empirical research and abstract theoretical reasoning, between 'external' unpredictable history and internal categorical history, yields the divide between understanding and intuition in the first place. It is from science, above all, that the pure, unprejudiced, disinterested aesthetic feeling derives its importance. However, with their rejuvenation of effective history and of judgment *avant-garde* or *pré-jugé*, Gadamer and Lyotard show both that even science is subject to judgments that are prior to its alleged purity (it relies on certain narrative constructions that are not themselves subject to scientific criteria, Lyotard says[4]) and that there are domains of thought and practice (Gadamer labels these loosely as 'the human sciences'[5]) for which the alleged purity of scientific judgments is inappropriate. Both appeal to a level of experience more basic than science and in the context of which the claims of science, and the capacity for aesthetic feeling that Kant designed in their support, are subject to *pre-judgments* rather than *pure* judgments.

For their critique of Enlightenment to be most effective, however, Gadamer and Lyotard locate its germs at the heart of the very tradition that would vehemently deny its worth: in the capacity for pure, disinterested reflection that lies at the core of Kant's critical system in his critique of aesthetic judgment. According to both Gadamer and Lyotard, even within Kant's own account, there is described the outline of a model for understanding that does *not* accord with the rational criteria that have formed the greater part of his philosophical bequest. To take on board the basic components of this alternative model and fully tease out its details and implications for a philosophical tradition so convinced by the demands of reason would be, at one and the same time, to question the dominant Kantian rendition of reason as opposed to prejudice[6] and to ground that questioning in the very account of aesthetic judgment that Kant himself describes, though Kant uses it to secure the capacity for pure reason that Gadamer and Lyotard

use it to undermine. What could be more effective as a model for effective historical understanding than one derived from the heart of the philosophical tradition it is directed against?

Hence, my starting point is the rejection of the Kantian problem of establishing universal and necessary foundations of thought, which Gadamer and Lyotard demonstrate by using the judgments that we make on art as exemplary of a kind of historically embedded understanding for which it is not possible to establish ahistorical foundations but only shifting standards and historical conditions. Rejecting the 'problem' of universal and necessary foundations does, however, give rise to a related different problem: no longer how to guarantee the purity of our truth claims, but how to guarantee their possibility, how to accommodate the possibility of truth claims and practices within a framework of contextual conditions and always-underdetermined legitimacy. How, having taken aesthetic judgment as our paradigm of historically effected understanding, can we reconcile the radically contingent nature of our judgments on art with the broad-sweeping validity which we accord those judgments and that produces our canons of great writers, our museums of classic artists, our compilations of 'greatest hits,' and so on? How, in other words, can we account at one and the same time for the fact that we are both within history and yet not totally constrained by any single version of it?

Not only does the dissolution of our first problem yield a deeply puzzling second problem, however, it also robs us of the traditional manner of solving deep problems philosophically, which is to establish a set of founding premises, deduce therefrom a number of possibilities, reconcile these with the facts of the case, and produce an ideally stable solution. For the very possibility of determining foundations and of producing solutions (in any neutral, uninvolved fashion) is no longer held to obtain. And so the puzzle must be propelled forward very differently, on the back of a number of approaches to the problem of history and judgment, all of which 'see' the puzzle to some extent but, as I show, fail in different ways to move it beyond a residual loyalty to the Kantian, foundationalist tradition from which the puzzle emerges. In the absence now of firm foundations for our inquiries, it is to this kind of debate that we can turn for the partial illumination of our darker puzzles; we do not advertise it as entirely sufficient but use it to establish certain links between relevant conceptual histories and construct the larger problem of which they partake without presuming to identify its solution.

As for this particular partial illumination, it aims first at isolating the relevant features of Gadamer's and Lyotard's shared appropriation of the Kantian aesthetic to oppose the marginalization of aesthetic judgment with which it has traditionally been associated. Since their respective readings of Kant's third critique, upon which they base their appropriations and subsequent revisions, are by no means uncontentious in themselves, however, they will require some detailed discussion here in order to next draw out the dangers of an even radical rereading of Kant's account of art, by highlighting the still very Kantian presuppositions of purity that underlie Lyotard's version of the sublime, and then to locate the

tension that exists between Gadamer's commitment to history as prejudice and the residual elements of history-as-purity that linger on in his version of aesthetic taste. All this in order, finally, to identify the persistence of the Kantian division between intuition and understanding, between flux and invariance, even within Lyotard's and Gadamer's explicit rejection of this division, and to conclude both with a greater sense of the complexities and risks that accompany the problem of history and truth and with the beginnings of a demonstration that such complexities and risks might be more successfully overcome.

## **2. Gadamer and Lyotard: Co-opting the Kantian Aesthetic**

As a function of their rejection of the Kantian 'problem of purity' and its over-emphasis on scientific reason, both Gadamer and Lyotard disrupt the account of art that Kant used to support his science by opposing both the marginal role to which art is assigned in the Kantian tradition and the kind of art favored by that tradition because it feeds into its own marginalization.

Though Kant devotes an entire half of an entire third of his critical system to explicating the conditions and legitimacy of aesthetic judgment - it does, after all, provide him with an account of reflection in its 'purest' and therefore most innovative and enlightening form - he is careful also to insist on the utterly subjective character of the claims that we make in this domain; careful, in other words, to ensure that judgments based purely on feeling never count as knowledge and therefore never disrupt the purposes and certainties of science. For Kant, the kind of art that best exemplifies the aesthetic is to be found on carpets and wallpaper in those ornamental and repetitive patterns that serve no function but to be beautiful and have no purpose but to be purposeless.<sup>[7]</sup> It is then no surprise that art, for Kant and his descendants, is regarded as 'merely' art, as a superfluous activity to be pursued only in fun and judged only in play. Art is a game and not to be taken seriously. Hence, in the preface to *Critique of Pure Reason*, though Kant begins by admitting that a rigorous epistemology must proceed by discursiveness and intuition (by which in this instance he means aesthetic judgment), he is careful to privilege the former logical means over the latter aesthetic ones, even going so far as to complain that the clarity and distinctness guaranteed by the use of our logical powers is often impeded by too persistent an appeal to illustrative examples and other such aesthetic aids.<sup>[8]</sup> Thus, aesthetic judgment, for Kant and the tradition that follows him, is a decidedly secondary concern.

Having undermined the claims to absolute authority over the field of knowledge that a Kantian pure reason had assumed, both Gadamer and Lyotard call into question the attendant designation of art as secondary and superfluous. In the manner of questioning the presuppositions of traditions from within that is typical of his hermeneutical approach, Gadamer continues to characterize art as a game, but now analyzes the nature of play as paradigmatic of the nature of understanding generally: play, though it is ultimately purposeless in that its goal is not an external one, is at the same time determined by

very specific rules and goals that put paid to the Kantian tendency to oppose the game of art to the rule-driven rigour of a scientific reason; in play, also, there is a crucial sense in which the game both pre-exists and also requires our participation therein that makes it both larger than us and therefore 'given' at any one time, and yet also subject to the changes wrought by our own particular way of playing and therefore open to a level of reflective activity which it does not absolutely determine.<sup>[9]</sup> Thus, the game of art, in Gadamer's view, demonstrates the activity of play in a broader sense that has relevance for understanding generally, in which it is not a matter of purely subjective feeling because a game or play consists of rules and aims that carry all the weight of an 'object' in the world for us, and yet also not the case that we remain hopelessly determined by a pre-existing tradition because it requires our particular participation to make a play happen at all.

Lyotard, from a slightly different angle, also undermines the Kantian denigration of art as essentially purposeless and thereby absolved of the responsibilities that attach to the purposive practices within science and the moral. In *The Postmodern Condition*, by highlighting the scientifically impossible requirement that science would establish the grounds for its own legitimacy, Lyotard claims to have identified the founding story or 'narrative' of science and thereby undercut the tendency of science to dismiss as 'mere storytelling' the kinds of narrative that are subject to aesthetic and not scientific criteria. Science itself rests ultimately on criteria that can be legitimized 'only' aesthetically, as a convincing story whose validity relies on its aesthetic appeal;<sup>[10]</sup> and the fact that science disguises its narrative origins as compelling scientific grounds and thereby negates, from the outset, the pretensions to knowledge of other worldviews by designating them as 'mere stories,' makes science into the terrorizing 'metanarrative'<sup>[11]</sup> that Lyotard describes. Hence, both Gadamer and Lyotard actually use the Kantian rendition of art as 'mere' play or 'only a story' in order to undercut the privilege that a science that denies its 'aesthetic' origins would claim for itself.

Not only, however, do Gadamer and Lyotard oppose the marginalization of art by a scientific tradition; as part of the process they also call into question the type of art that that tradition elevates in order thus to denigrate: the 'purely' ornamental art that Kant describes and the purely 'representational' art that the ensuing tradition most values. Of course, Kant was concerned mostly with the beautiful in nature and not, primarily, with art (precisely because art is designed to be beautiful and is never, to that extent, purposeless),<sup>[12]</sup> but this preference is ultimately explainable in terms of Kant's critique of teleological judgment and his proof for the existence of God. Hence, as the Romantics realized, any account of aesthetic judgment that wishes to distance itself from theology must take the beautiful in art and not in nature as its exemplar. When he does come to art, however, Kant opts for wallpaper designs as his paradigm; they are closest to nature in exhibiting almost nothing in the way of purpose or function above and beyond simply being beautiful.<sup>[13]</sup>

But as Gadamer points out, this is a very poor starting point

for an account of the aesthetic, as it excludes almost anything that we would count as art (sculpture, poetry, architecture, music, etc), all of which is implicated, whether by reference to events, feelings, other styles or periods, certain functions and so on, in purposes other than being merely beautiful.<sup>[14]</sup> And, though the Enlightenment tradition that followed Kant naturally did not continue to restrict its paradigmatic artworks to wallpaper designs, the enthusiasm for representational art that characterizes that tradition still produces too narrow an account of art and still feeds too readily into the marginalization of the aesthetic. Representations are to art effectively as propositions are to science: the object, it is assumed, is constant and known, and it is simply a matter of predicating something of that object by making Charles I, for instance, into the prince that he really is, or the Alps into the site of awe that they are but are not always seen to be. It is no surprise, then, that a tradition so intoxicated by the propositional logic of science should designate as 'beautiful' only a certain propositional/representational logic in art. But, of course, art, restricted as it is to a merely figurative or aesthetic representation of its objects, can only ever approximate the accuracy and fecundity of science and only then by being translated into the objective propositional language that it emulates. And so art-as-representation is designated as the poor cousin of thought, fun for a while but never as good as science is at telling us about its objects.

Thus, as Lyotard and Gadamer both show, the notion that representationalism is the paradigmatic art form is really a prejudice of the very scientific tradition which then uses the second-rate (when measured in terms of propositional logic) representations of art to justify its second-rate status. In pursuit of this point, Lyotard devotes considerable time to the art movements of the second half of the nineteenth century, from Impressionism to present-day Minimalism, that began to question, the value of representationalism in art and the possibilities for aesthetic significance that lie outside of its stultifying domain. From Manet to Cézanne and Buren and Duchamp, Lyotard establishes a counter-Enlightenment aesthetic tradition that combines a self-conscious reflection on the scientific presuppositions that determined its restriction to the representation of objects with a heightened sense of the possibilities inherent in its materials and techniques when they are not regarded merely as instruments towards a representational end.<sup>[15]</sup> Hence the Impressionist focus on the brush stroke to denote time, Cézanne's innovative work on the significance of line and form, Matisse's rehabilitation of colour, Duchamp's critique of the very activity of production, and so on. , Lyotard maintains that we owe a much greater awareness of the restrictions implied by representationalism and the possibilities for art that are opened up in its wake to such a counter-tradition.

### **3. Understanding within History: Experience as Event**

Having thus contested the hegemony of scientific reason and undermined its rendition of art by exposing its implicit agenda, both Gadamer and Lyotard proceed to redeem from the experience of aesthetic judgment (now freed from its poor-cousin status) a model of understanding that will offer a positive challenge to the dominant, Kantian one. Liberated

from the objectivist yolk privileged by the Enlightenment, this account of experience does not rely on a subject standing over against its object and predicating more and more aspects of it as it gets to know it better and better. Instead, the experience of understanding that is recuperated by a greater aesthetic awareness is structured, according to both Gadamer and Lyotard, as an event, as something that happens to one rather than something that originates in oneself. It is also at this point, however, that Gadamer and Lyotard diverge in their reading of aesthetic experience and their attendant response to Kantian assumptions about knowledge. This is illustrated succinctly by the choice of artwork that each makes as exemplary of the experience of understanding, both in terms of its content and its form.

The epigraph to Gadamer's *Truth and Method* is a quotation from a poem by Rilke:

"Catch only what you've thrown yourself, all is  
mere skill and little gain;  
but when you're suddenly the catcher of a ball  
thrown by an eternal partner  
with accurate and measured swing  
towards you, to your center, in an arch  
from the great bridgebuilding of God:  
why then catching becomes a power -  
Not yours, a world's."

Gadamer uses the image of catching a ball that is thrown from elsewhere to communicate the kind of experience that he holds is exemplified in our judgments on art and applies to the kind of prejudiced understanding that takes place, within the human sciences at the very least. This kind of experience is, he tells us, experience-as-*Erfahrung*. *Erfahrung* refers to an event that one undergoes as one participates in a process that is larger and more continuous than oneself and in the context of which one always has a sense that there is much more to be said than one can communicate in a single sentence or a single life's work.<sup>[16]</sup> For a better explanation of this kind of experience, Gadamer uses an image from Aristotle where the experience of understanding is rendered as a fleeing army coming to a stop, and it is impossible to tell at what moment flight turns to halt and yet possible to say at one point that the army flees and at another that it stands.<sup>[17]</sup> Historically effected understanding is generated when a certain pattern or repetition emerges as a certain experience, though no single subjective experience can be identified as responsible for its emergence. Thus, experience-as-*Erfahrung* is acquired unpredictably and yet not out of the blue, for the importance of repetition in the generation of a pattern of experience means that the ground is always prepared for understanding before it actually occurs.<sup>[18]</sup> It is in this context that Gadamer rehabilitates the notion of prejudice; because in order to understand, we must 'log in' to a tradition that lies beyond us; we are always already directed in certain ways before we come



to reflect, always already judging before we come to make a judgment.

When Lyotard describes understanding as an event, however, he has a very different account of event in mind, though, like Gadamer, he refers us to the content of a particular artwork as illustration. He points us to a series of paintings by the artist Barnett Newman entitled *Here I, Here II, Here III*, another two entitled *Now*, and others.<sup>[19]</sup> In these paintings, according to Lyotard, Newman explores in an inevitably barren, minimalist fashion the experience of understanding as an event in the present, the present as a point in time in itself and not in relation to the moment just past and the moment just to come. Lyotard interprets Newman as asking, What does it mean to experience the present as an event in itself, an event out of which understanding is composed but which cannot itself be understood in any determined, compositional or relative manner? The answer: It means the experience that something has happened rather than nothing, that in the face of the possibility of nothing but a blank page words have been written and in spite of the imminence of silence a note has been struck. From where? This is what, when one experiences the present as an event in its own right, one cannot tell. For that something has happened rather than nothing is like an inspiration, a message from nowhere, an event from nothing, a judgment *avant-garde*. Thus, while both Gadamer and Lyotard describe understanding as an event that addresses us from beyond ourselves, for Lyotard this event is instantaneous and emerges from nowhere, from an 'ahistory' or a 'prehistory,'<sup>[20]</sup> while for Gadamer it is a process whose roots lie in the past and whose future stretches ahead. For Gadamer, understanding is an *Erfahrung*; for Lyotard, it has the structure of *Erlebnis*, a radically finite experience that one must live, that is, encounter directly and instantaneously.

For both Gadamer and Lyotard, then, Kant remains an important background figure, though as we have seen they devote considerable time and effort to undermining key aspects of Kant's aesthetic. On Gadamer's account, the exemplary experience of art is processual, in that it has the structure of an event that is ongoing and in which one participates for a time and for which one's participation may or may not effect a more or less radical change in direction and impetus. Thus at stake in the judgment of art and in understanding generally is, for Gadamer, the achievement, however temporarily, of a level of harmony between what is pre-given and what is added in reflection; between the historical nature of the object to be understood and the prejudices of the subject who is to understand; between one's prejudices and one's judgments. In understanding as *Erfahrung*, one participates in a historical event that is larger than the individual encounter can comprehend; in coming to an optimal arrangement between the event as a tradition and the particular encounter with that tradition, if only for a time, one achieves maximum openness to the divergent perspectives implied by historical existence. Thus, harmony, or beauty, operates as a regulative ideal, the negotiation of which requires a common sense that has a feel for what is generally (universally?) acceptable without having the concepts or categories to prove it. Kant's account of taste for the beautiful, then, remains more or less intact within the framework of

Gadamer's commitment to history, as a means of articulating our negotiation of the event of understanding as *Erfahrung*, of understanding as *pré-jugé*.

It is to feeling for the sublime, however, that Lyotard applies in his rendition of the event of understanding as *Erlebnis*. For Lyotard, art is not primarily about beauty and harmony but much more importantly communicates something disruptive of beauty and harmony. Art interposes as an event into the steady ebb and flow of expectations, constructions, hypotheses and accommodations that constitute our knowledge and for which a sense of taste is eminently suitable. And the content of this event is not important. For it is only the 'that it happened' that is significant in this context; the 'what happened' comes later and is the province of those who would wallpaper over the primary happenings with comforting constructions and beautiful forms. Thus it is only the very minimal combination of pain (at the possibility that nothing will happen) and pleasure (at the fact that something did) that amounts to a really authentic experience of the conditions that make all understanding possible. This contradictory feeling is feeling for the sublime, to which Kant devotes a very little space in this account of aesthetic judgment but which Lyotard emphasizes as the key to aesthetic experience and to understanding generally.<sup>[21]</sup>

Their divergent readings of the Kantian aesthetic in answer to their different accounts of understanding as event produces, for my purposes, a very significant contrast between Gadamer and Lyotard because it begins to show what I would draw out of this debate: An even radically critical rereading of Kant's aesthetic is not necessarily going to overcome the 'problem of purity' and the division between flux and invariance that it purports to address. Although Gadamer and Lyotard share a similar problem and point towards its similar solution in a commitment to history and prejudice, there are crucial differences between them, between being *pré-jugé* and being *avant-garde*. For to be *avant-garde*, to pre-judge in this sense, is on Lyotard's account also precisely not to be prejudiced, precisely not to operate with concepts or categories, whether rationally or hermeneutically. Like Gadamer, Lyotard identifies the emphasis on reason and science that emerged from Kant's rejection of history as a prejudice that does not pass its own test of purity. But unlike Gadamer, Lyotard opposes Kantian reason and objectivity because it is a prejudice *per se*, and not simply because it is a prejudice that has advertised itself as and had the influence of a self-evident and neutral method for deriving truth.

Hence, it is in the name of the Kantian prejudice against prejudice that Lyotard rejects the modern scientific tradition in favor of a model of understanding based on feeling for particular events rather than knowledge from general rules. And hence, his notion of *avant-garde*, though directed in a manner similar to Gadamer's rehabilitation of prejudice, is motivated very differently: it claims it is the product of a 'pure' and truly unprejudiced feeling rather than an 'impure' and thoroughly historical context. To be *avant-garde* is certainly not to be *pré-jugé*. To simply oppose the privileging of reason by privileging the aesthetic, then, is not in itself going to rehabilitate prejudice and reinstall history as crucial regulators

of meaning. For though founding a model of understanding on feeling as opposed to knowing will certainly undermine the hegemony of scientific reason (as Lyotard shows), it will of itself do nothing to undermine the ideal of purity which it is Gadamer's declared intention to do. It is as possible for Lyotard to construe feeling as the source of purity as it was for the Enlightenment to construe knowing as the source of purity.

And it is in not recognizing this, or not remaining alive to its implications, that Gadamer's account of effective history is open to serious objections about the presuppositions of purity that underlie his own rehabilitation of history and tradition. There is a crucial difference between being *avant-garde* (operating before making a judgment, on the basis of a pure feeling and without any prejudice at all) and being *pré-jugé* (operating before making a judgment, within a framework of presuppositions that are not subject to explicit formulation at that time). To confuse the one with the other, as I now want to characterize Gadamer as sometimes doing, is to mistake a stance that is infused with the most important principles of Enlightenment as the equivalent of an attitude that would throw those principles open for question.

#### 4. The Lyricist and the Minimalist

Not only does the content of Rilke's poem and Newman's painting communicate something of the nature of understanding as an event (either as *Erfahrung* or *Erlebnis*), much more importantly each artwork participates in a form of aesthetic production that according to Gadamer and Lyotard respectively is, uniquely designed to testify to the experience of understanding that both want to offer as an alternative to the dominant Enlightenment model. Rilke's poem is a lyric, and it is to the lyric that Gadamer looks as the exemplary art form, one that demonstrates the conditions for aesthetic experience generally and for the model of understanding that he seeks to derive therefrom; Newman's paintings make part of a minimalist movement within art that for Lyotard is, privileged in its access to the truth about art, about aesthetic judgment, and about the minimal and very ambiguous origins of understanding in the broader sense. A careful look at the manner in which both Gadamer and Lyotard employ their respective paradigmatic art forms, however, is enough to reveal both the beginnings of a serious tension between prejudice and truth in Gadamer's work and the kind of deep puzzle that any rejection of Kant's division between understanding and intuition in the face of effective history must confront.

In parallel attempts to appropriate the Kantian aesthetic for their own counter-Kantian ends, Gadamer and Lyotard outline their version of aesthetic judgment in a single, seminal essay. For Gadamer, it is 'The Relevance of the Beautiful';<sup>[22]</sup> for Lyotard it is 'The Sublime and the *Avant-Garde*.' In these essays, Gadamer and Lyotard expound on the features of their chosen art form that make it eminently suitable as exemplary of art as a whole and of aesthetic understanding as an alternative to science. A brief and somewhat schematic look at the points of contrast and comparison between the lyric (as Gadamer describes it) and the art of the *avant-garde* (as Lyotard describes it) is enough to reveal the tendency in

Gadamer's work to undermine the radically historical aspect of judgment that is *apré-jugé* in favor of the Kantian purity that is promised by judgments that are *avant-garde*.

The most extreme and thus telling form of the lyric poem, Gadamer writes in his essay, is exemplified by the kind of 'pure poetry' for which Mallarmé is famed. So the question now becomes: What are those aspects of the lyric as pure poetry that are essentially aesthetic and that reveal the conditions of possibility for the kind of judgment that Gadamer wants to offer as an alternative to the Kantian model? The first and most outstanding feature of Mallarmé's pure poems is their striving for an increasingly complete self-referentiality. In other words, if one were to look for a model for poetry to oppose the traditional representationalist model,, this would be the place to start. Mallarmé believed first and foremost in the self-sufficiency of literary language as directly opposed to the instrumentalist attitude to language that prevails where information and representation is at stake. For him, the purpose of poetry is not to convey emotional states nor to manipulate language in carefully crafted ways, but to forge a separate symbolic reality by means of dense codes and subtle impressions. Thus, more and more, Mallarmé's pure poems came to refer not to objects in the world, nor even to their effects on the mind of the artist, but only to the poems themselves and to the act of writing itself.

It is not for nothing, however, that Mallarmé is frequently referred to as an influence on the contemporary *avant-garde*; the most important aspect of Newman's paintings, for Lyotard, is precisely the self-referentiality that Gadamer privileges in the pure lyric poem. There are, Lyotard explains in 'The Sublime and the *Avant-Garde*,' no allusions in Newman's work. His paintings announce nothing, nothing but themselves. Their message, he says, 'speaks of nothing.'<sup>[23]</sup> And it is in their not referring to anything but themselves that Lyotard locates these paintings' sublimity; in refusing us the possibility of formulating interpretations and speculating as to significance, they compel us to feel very simply and very forcibly that, as a minimum, this painting exists where nothing might have been, and that this feeling is the feeling that lies at the heart of all understanding, which is effectively an attempt to cover over the feeling and ignore its pressing and troubling reality.

But if the radical self-referentiality that characterizes both Mallarmé's poems and Newman's paintings is so effective a testimony to the sublime feeling that understanding comes from nothing, why is it that Gadamer uses it to communicate an experience of understanding that comes from tradition? As illustration of the sublime, and of the very barren feeling that prior to anything that happens *avant-garde* there must be a moment of suspense that nothing might happen at all, Lyotard finds such art works understandably appropriate, but how is it that they illustrate Gadamer's account of understanding as always situated within particular contexts and prejudices and never subject to the kind of blank-slate nothingness from which inspiration 'out of nothing' strikes? Is Gadamer's account of understanding *apré-jugé* after all just another version of understanding as *avant-garde*, and does he therefore rely, as Lyotard does, on a version of purity purportedly more basic than Kant's but also purportedly more basic than the histories

and prejudices wherein Gadamer has claimed to locate understanding?

The short answer to this question is 'No.' Gadamer's account of aesthetic judgment as *pré-jugé* does *not* amount to Lyotard's account of aesthetic judgment as *avant-garde*. And this turns on the fact that they understand the notion of self-referentiality very differently. Mallarmé's poetry, in its attempt to get well and truly beyond the tradition of representationalism, relies on words themselves to communicate meaning, rather than on their referential function. For him, then, words are not media through which meaning is communicated; they are themselves the communication. This was his poetic ideal: To write words of such dazzling immediacy that their significance lies in themselves and in their placement in the text, not beyond themselves or outside of the text. Now this immediacy is importantly different from the instantaneousness, which Lyotard claims is demanded of a judgment on a painting such as Newman's where it is not the immediacy (the continuity of the text and the interpreter such that no process of translation between them is necessary) of the communication which is at stake but its momentary and non-relational character. Aspects of Newman's paintings do not derive their meaning from within the whole of which they are part; not only would this be very difficult to achieve because they do not consist of many identifiable parts, but to break them down in this manner would be to repress the sublime feeling that they provoke when encountered in an instant, all at once, as a single response, a lived experience. Thus while Lyotard demands that one judge of art instantaneously, without thinking, without trying to formulate or make sense or interpret, Gadamer insists that we judge of art immediately, by which he means that we interpret, hypothesize and construe but only in a specifically aesthetic context and not in the context of other historical contingencies that lie outside of the text and impinge upon its purity.

But the other answer is 'Yes. Gadamer does confuse his notion of *pré-jugé* with the notion of *avant-garde*.' For if we are to do now as Gadamer (and Lyotard) set out to do, which is to derive from the experience of art a model of knowledge to challenge the prevailing Kantian one, we are left, on Gadamer's account of the lyric poem, with a rendition of understanding that sits very uneasily with his declared rehabilitation of prejudice, for now, it seems, though we must continue to recognize objects and events (and ourselves) within particular contexts, it is only the relevant aspects of history that go to make up those contexts. Thus, though we may always be prejudiced and never totally open, we are always, it seems, prejudiced properly or relevantly, and are not the radically compromised and historical creatures that Gadamer had at first seemed to think us.

Though for Gadamer this implies that understanding is always embedded in particular contexts, it also legitimizes the abstraction of the text (the poem, for example) from various levels of context or history from which it had initially *seemed* we could not abstract our always prejudiced, always finite and historical selves. And this abstraction of the understanding that is supposedly *pré-jugé* from a whole series of contexts,

which can from the outset be determined as illegitimate prejudices and therefore irrelevant to the experience of art and to understanding generally, can be construed as a function of Gadamer's confusion of the notion of *avant-garde*, with its very close ties to the Kantian aesthetic and the Enlightenment tradition with which it is imbued, and with his own notion of *pré-jugé*, which was to have called into question rather than accepted the opposition between reason and tradition with which Kant operated and which Lyotard admits to perpetuating. For while he continues to insist, *contra* Lyotard, that understanding is always embedded in particular contexts or traditions, the importance of immediacy implies that certain contexts or certain aspects of a context are from the outset irrelevant for understanding to the extent that they interpose themselves between the text and its interpreter and upset the seamless continuity between them that is Gadamer's ideal. And so, prior to any judgment but prior also to any *pre-judgment* and therefore *avant-garde*, a certain level of our finite situatedness is rendered aesthetically irrelevant and understanding is preserved from a certain level of history.

### 5. Understanding without History: Aesthetic Abstraction

But in what does this certain level of aesthetically irrelevant history consist? From what is the experience of understanding as *pré-jugé* always already (*avant-garde*) abstracted? It is a testimony to the extent to which Gadamer has, at this stage, lost his way that both he and Lyotard agree in their respective essays on the Kantian aesthetic, in spite of their explicitly contrary agenda, about the three broad categories of history from which understanding must be abstracted:

(i) First, it must be abstracted from the intellectual. The exemplary experience of art is, on both Gadamer's and Lyotard's account, to be had without the assistance of intellectual concepts, categories or rules. Therefore both , continue Kant's determination to absolutely distinguish between the judgments that we make on art and those that constitute our knowledge. Now of course Gadamer and Lyotard claim that Kant was too narrow in restricting the title of 'knowledge' to categorical judgments and that purely aesthetic (i.e., non-categorical) judgments must also (or instead, according to Lyotard) be granted a certain validity as 'knowledge.' But this in itself does nothing to challenge the basic opposition between thinking and feeling that Kant established. Hence, just as Lyotard maintains that in order to leave oneself open to the sublime experience available in art one must destroy all the forms of thought that would direct one from the outset in this way and not another, just as he argues that thought must be "disarmed"[24] in order to feel *avant-garde*, so also Gadamer identifies a rigorous divide between the intellectual categories of an "aesthetic consciousness" and the openness of a "historical consciousness," refusing from the outset to entertain the various prejudices of an intellectual response to the aesthetic in favor of the allegedly greater freedom available to the one who would experience the art work without being directed to look for particular styles, patterns, motifs, and so on. The art work, he says, is related to an ultimate meaning 'that could not be recuperated in intellectual terms,'[25] and so, from a position that had appeared only to want to temper the role of

the purely intellectual/rational with an acknowledgment of the contingency and partiality of all its categories, Gadamer has arrived at a position for which those categories, by their very nature, are irrelevant and distorting.

(ii) Second, aesthetic experience must be abstracted from the everyday. Gadamer uses the notion of 'aesthetic nondifferentiation' [26] to justify this further abstraction. One of the questions with which he is concerned in his essay on the beautiful is the question of the identity of art through time. How is it that we speak of the same work through its centuries of interpretation, if interpretation, as he claims, is so thoroughly steeped in historical circumstance as to make such a guarantee of identity appear very precarious? The answer he provides is once again that the kind of historical circumstances that are relevant for the interpretation of an art work are not to be confused with a certain level of historical circumstance - what he calls the "pragmatic contexts of everyday life" [27] - that, if admitted, might threaten the continuity of the work and its interpretation through time. Thus for Gadamer, the particular life experiences of the interpreter, her social class, race, gender, hopes, expectations, purposes and so on, remain irrelevant for the activity of interpretation, just as the conditions of a performance, the tone of a specific reading, the quality of an actor's rendition, the insights of a particular direction, and so on, must also be taken out of consideration. [28] From both sides of the aesthetic experience, as it were, from the situation of the 'text' and from the context of its interpreter, a whole plethora of historical conditions are barred whose radical contingency Gadamer cannot countenance, in spite of his declared rehabilitation of history and tradition, in the context of his desire to retain, above all, the continuity of a work through time. In this he is also like Lyotard, though the latter performs a similar abstraction from the "everyday or "ontic" level of history for the sake of an opposed agenda to Gadamer's preservation of continuity at all costs. For Lyotard, the most significant aspect of the historical for an understanding that proceeds on the back of sublime moments in which meaning is, for a time, suspended, is not the series of contingent events that might appear to serve his purpose of disrupting expectations and interrupting the forms of thought, but a far more radical, much more unfamiliar event - an event like Auschwitz - than the nondescript circumstances which go to make up our everyday existence. [29]

(iii) Third, the experience of art must be abstracted from tradition or community. We are familiar with the definition of the artist as the solitary figure, creating outside of the bounds of his tradition in order to fulfill the requirement for innovation with which the modern artist was burdened. Lyotard avails of this familiar account for his own purposes, construing the artist of the *avant-garde* as a radicalization of this mythical aloneness: Artists of the *avant-garde*, in his view, operate beyond the bounds of the familiar; they produce art works that can only shock because their refusal to parry to recognizable forms and traditional motifs makes it impossible to feel anything else. Such artists, he holds, are guided not by their own culture but by an inspiration that comes to them from nowhere. [30] But Gadamer too, in spite of his declared commitment to tradition, ends in abstracting the artist from

his community in order to complete the process of aesthetic non-differentiation that will, we presume, ensure that Shakespeare will always be considered a great artist, his greatness having nothing at all to do with his own historical nature as embedded within a community or tradition whose styles and values may not (indeed do not) translate across all contexts and times. And in place of the community that he "loses" when he begins to create, Gadamer posits for him a truly universal community that extends to the whole world.<sup>[31]</sup> Strong echoes here of the Kantian faculty of taste, in which one is guided neither by intellectual criteria nor by fashionable trends but by a sense or feel for what is truly universal in the experience that one undergoes. But this aspect of Kantian taste, its justification in terms of an ahistorical faculty with universal extension, is precisely the aspect that Gadamer's account of judgment *aspré-jugé* was designed to depose. In the end, he seems unable to reconcile his initial intentions with a persistent and very Enlightenment tendency to establish the continuity or contemporaneity of past and present by making art into the site for an "overcoming of time."<sup>[32]</sup>

On the strength of such aesthetic abstractions from the intellectual, the everyday and community or culture, Lyotard leaves us with an account of understanding as a series of infinitely simple rather than partial and historical events that cannot be reconciled into any particular historical narrative without inevitable damage or terror; and Gadamer leaves us with an account of understanding as a continuous series of unmediated and truly aesthetic rather than partial and historical experiences that are determined within certain appropriate concepts and contexts and therefore reconciled in an appropriately aesthetic tradition. Thus Lyotard's account of art gives us *Erlebnis* without reconciliation (history in its purest and simplest form as flux), and Gadamer's account of art gives us *Erfahrung* without contingency (history in its truest, most lasting, form as invariance). But now Kant's opposition of the manifold given to intuition and the categories given to the understanding - the very division that led him into the problem of purity that Gadamer and Lyotard claim to have rejected - is curiously reproduced in the combined responses of Gadamer and Lyotard to the emergent "problem" of history and truth.

## 6. Conclusion

This "problem" of truth under historical conditions emerged, as we have seen, from Gadamer's and Lyotard's sustained rejection of a problem that bedevilled the Enlightenment tradition before it: the Kantian conundrum of how to identify pure foundational criteria, loose enough to provide for the kind of diversity typical of our aesthetic tastes and yet sufficiently universal and necessary to guarantee that such tastes must be imputed to anyone anywhere who has any pretensions to making them part of the rational community. So Kant himself was alive to the issue that I and Gadamer and Lyotard are concerned with: the problem of overcoming the apparent divide between history as manifold (an out and out flux in which only difference and claims relative to difference obtain) and history as synthesis (an invariant system over which certain absolute categories always prevail). By explicitly rejecting the alleged purity of both these versions of history



(as flux and invariance), Gadamer and Lyotard are still left with an emergent version of it: the problem of judgment under historical conditions. It is my contention, however, that neither Gadamer nor Lyotard really do reject the purity of Kantian history. Nevertheless, both provide a very useful commentary on the efforts of the other, and both together yield, for my purposes, a productive illumination of the nature of the problem as a whole.

In Gadamer's account of effective history and in his commitment to tradition and prejudice, for instance, there is much that acts as an antidote to Lyotard's still too-Enlightenment account of experience as *Erlebnis*. For instance, Lyotard offers a description of Cézanne as an artist of the *avant-garde*, creating on the strength of a purely sublime impulse that behind art there is the founding possibility that nothing more will happen. Cézanne, Lyotard maintains, worked in order to reduce our experience of color to instantaneous sensations, in other words to the bits that make up all and every way of seeing. . He thereby cleanses the perceptual of the "prejudices inscribed even in vision itself,"<sup>[33]</sup> Now the description of Cézanne as an innovative artist of color is all very well, Gadamer would reply, but the tendency to construe him as therefore *avant-garde* is really unsustainable, not only because, as Lyotard implies in his own writings, Cézanne makes part of a very specific tradition that, coming in the wake of the Enlightenment enthusiasm for representationalism, seeks to question the presuppositions of the tradition from which it has emerged, but also because in order to engage in this line of questioning Cézanne refers us to other traditions again: to the mask-making traditions of Iberia and, as Gadamer shows, to the art of the high Middle Ages, whose appearance as a text written in pictorial symbols rather than a view as if from a window is now, after Cézanne, able to be understood again.<sup>[34]</sup> Seen in this light, Cézanne's innovation appears less an instance of judgment *avant-garde* as judgment *pré-jugé*, less a support of understanding-as-*Erlebnis* than a demonstration that understanding-as-*Erfahrung* is prior to any lived experience, any moment of originality or genius.

But Lyotard's commitment to history as consisting in instantaneous or different events is also useful as a corrective to what we have now identified as Gadamer's too rigid commitment to history as continuity. From instances such as Cézanne's kinship with a tradition as far from his own as that of the High Middle Ages, Gadamer concludes that there is an overriding continuity between past and present, which is the condition that makes understanding possible generally and is most strikingly apparent in the domain of art. "[H]ow," he asks, "can we find an all-embracing concept to cover both what art is today and what it has been in the past?"<sup>[35]</sup> In this context, however, Lyotard's very convincing work on the radical shift that took place between the representational art of the Enlightenment and the tradition of questioning referentiality as an aesthetic value that continues to motivate contemporary artists is an important remedy to Gadamer's too-great reliance on the seamless continuity of history to which he thinks the identity of art works, and of art itself, succeeds in testifying to through time. For though it is the case that Cézanne, in his response to representationalism in

art, both appeals to alternative traditions (Iberian mask making, for instance) and enables us to interpret old traditions (the High Middle Ages, for instance) in a new light, this is not the equivalent to a proof of the continuity of history and identity of art that Gadamer thinks it is. For as Lyotard's work shows, very specific historical conditions contributed to the possibility of Cubism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when certain items became possible as art works that were not possible before. To derive from this an overall continuity to art is to abstract too far from the discrete events or prejudices that determine the experience of art at any given time.

As for both Gadamer and Lyotard, however, their respective choices of exemplary artwork - pure, lyric poetry and *avant-garde* art - ironically illustrate the manner in which our aesthetic judgments (which are evident as much in our illustrative examples as anywhere else) do not operate *avant-garde* (without prejudice) but are, as Gadamer begins by saying, *pré-jugé*. Lyotard takes as paradigmatic of the aesthetic attitude *per se* the kind of constant testifying to the incommensurability between thought and the real world that carries its impetus only in the context of a prevailing Kantian tradition for which propositional logic and its aesthetic poor-cousin, representational art, take precedence. Far from operating *avant-garde*, then, Lyotard's aesthetic and the artists it favors have a coherent, identifiable agenda at stake, one with deeply historical relevance and, for that reason, with merely historical and not pure significance.

In his essay, "The Sublime is Now," Lyotard's favored artist, Newman, declares that his work is a direct reaction against the notion that art emerges from within a tradition, that art produces beautiful accommodations with its tradition. "We are creating," he claims, "images whose reality is self-evident and which are devoid of the props and crutches that evoke associations with outmoded images. . . . We are freeing ourselves," he continues, in open acknowledgment of the agenda that is, after all, at stake in his work, 'of the impediments of memory, association, nostalgia, legend, myth, or what have you, that have been the devices of Western European painting. . . . The image we produce is the self-evident one of revelation, real and concrete, that can be understood by anyone who will look at it without the nostalgic glasses of history.'" [36] Likewise, Gadamer's choice of Mallarmé's "pure poetry" as illustrative of the features essential to art and to the continuity that he demands of the aesthetic in fact merely isolates a particular contemporary art form whose significance too is derived from the Enlightenment tradition of representationalism in art and the dominance of propositional knowledge from which it is derived. According to a recent translator of Mallarmé's verse, Mallarmé's esoteric use of language was motivated by an enduring personal commitment to what was, for him, a Classical project of transcending the constraints of representationalism in pursuit of throwing light on everlasting, *ahistorical* truths. "Mallarmé is often obscure," Weinfield admits, "but he is no obscurantist; his obscurity and difficulty are organic to, necessary concomitants of, . . . the philosophical vision, the actual content of his poetry: the quest for Beauty and for a transcendent Ideal and the tragic vision on which that quest is

based."<sup>[37]</sup>

Thus while as historically influenced choices of art work to undermine certain prevailing assumptions about art and knowledge both Gadamer's and Lyotard's aesthetic tastes are appropriately forceful and effective, as choices of allegedly paradigmatic aesthetic features that demonstrate the conditions for understanding as a universal experience they are too prejudiced in favour of the projects to which they are attached to be convincing. As Gadamer predicted, the experience of understanding of which our aesthetic judgments are exemplary is not *avant-garde*, but *pré-jugé*.

### Endnotes

[1] The word Gadamer most commonly uses to express the inevitable situatedness of human practices is 'prejudice,' and not '*pré-jugé*.' My alteration of the term for the purposes of this paper is not a merely rhetorical contrivance, however. As my primary effort is to demonstrate the manner in which two such explicitly opposed accounts of judgment as those proposed by Gadamer and Lyotard, actually share a fundamental failure to execute their planned revision of their Enlightenment tradition, a failure whose roots can be found in their respective readings of Kant's version of aesthetic judgment, the contrast achieved by the juxtaposition of '*avant-garde*' and '*pré-jugé*' is effective: It highlights the ambiguity contained in the term '*avant*,' which suggests a position that is both in front or at the vanguard of human endeavour, and also timely in the sense of coming before that which is usual, accepted, common sense, and yet, because of that, giving rise to the usual, the accepted, the common sense by virtue of its association with the past, with the already done, already tried and tested; the association of '*garde*' and '*jugé*,' for its part, prepares us for the eventual capitulation that both Gadamer and Lyotard make to the Kantian practice of identifying and validating judgments in terms of their form, not their substance, thereby from the outset disarming the challenge to human understanding implied by the substantial changes wrought by the flux of historical existence.

[2] For Gadamer's account of prejudice, see H-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), pp.277-306.

[3] For Lyotard on the *avant-garde*, see J-F. Lyotard, 'The Sublime and the *avant-garde*' in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. A. Benjamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), pp.196-211.

[4] See Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984), pp.27-31.

[5] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p.3.

[6] See Kant's famous '*Sapere aude!*: Have courage to use your *own* reason!' in his 'What is Enlightenment?,' trans. L. White Beck, in *On History*, ed. L. White Beck (Indianapolis & New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1963), pp.3-10; ref. on p.3.

[7] Only design features are relevant to an aesthetic judgment on art, in Kant's view, to the exclusion of, for instance, color

as an aesthetically relevant component of an artwork. See Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1987), p.71.

[8] See I. Kant, 'Preface to the First Edition' in *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), pp.7-15.

[9] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp.102-07.

[10] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, pp.27-31.

[11] *Ibid.*, p.34.

[12] "A man who has taste enough to judge the products of fine art with the greatest correctness and refinement may still be glad to leave a room in which he finds those beauties that minister to vanity and perhaps to social joys, and to turn instead to the beautiful in nature. . . .If that is how he chooses, we shall ourselves regard this choice of his with esteem and assume that he has a beautiful soul, such as no connoisseur and lover of art can claim to have because of the interest he takes in his objects [of art]." Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, pp.166-67.

[13] Kant does value fine art - he is careful to incorporate the notion of 'genius' into his critique as the ability to present aesthetic ideas, that is, ideas that prompt the imagination to the kind of creative because undetermined play characteristic of pure judgments of taste - and even regards fine art as superior to nature in that it can present or describe things beautifully that in nature are not beautiful (it can add to our stock of the beautiful, in other words). However, in Kant's careful exclusion of his account of genius from his main exposition of the four moments of pure aesthetic judgment, and in his equally careful delineation of genius as the exercise of a pure, unanalyzable aesthetic judgment within the bounds broadly set out by a given concept, it is clear that Kant's understanding of the nature of fine art is constrained within his determination to preserve his account of pure, purposeless aesthetic judgment, of which the activities and products of genius are derivative and to which they remain secondary. See Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, pp. 176-189.

[14] Indeed, Gadamer gives Kant the benefit of the doubt in this instance and claims that Kant never meant to restrict the aesthetic possibilities in art to the design features on carpets and that the latter function merely as examples of aesthetically relevant features that can also be identified elsewhere in more 'substantial' artworks. (*Truth and Method*, p.92).

[15] Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, p.79.

[16] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp.357-58.

[17] *Ibid.*, p.352.

[18] *Ibid.*, p.352.

[19] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the *Avant-garde*," pp.196-98.

[20] *Ibid.*, p.243.

[21] Not only does Kant devote relatively little to time to discussion of the sublime, in his third critique he deliberately denigrates the sublime as a 'mere appendix' to judgment on the beautiful. Kant's explicit reason for this denigration is that the sublime give us a sense of a purpose merely within ourselves and not in nature. *Critique of Judgment*, pp. 99-100. However, that the sublime, of which only nature provides the occasion but which requires the language of art for its admittedly imperfect expression (the capacity of genius, which is to imaginatively add to the direct demands of the concept it would present, is the only capacity we have that might, by its imaginative indirections, present something of the absolute Ideas that give rise to the experience of sublimity), depends upon our ability to place a pure aesthetic judgment in the service of concepts, and now 'Ideas' also contributes to its marginalization as part of Kant's more general belittlement of those practices in which the crucial purity of his account of reflective judgment is subject to determining purposes.

[22] H-G. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. N. Walker, ed. R. Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[23] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the *Avant-Garde*," p.241.

[24] *Ibid.*, p.197.

[25] Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," p.37.

[26] *Ibid.*, p.29.

[27] *Ibid.*, p.28.

[28] *Ibid.*, p.29.

[29]. See Lyotard's "Discussions, or Phrasing 'after Auschwitz,'" trans. G. Van Den Abbeele, in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. A. Benjamin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

[30] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the *Avant-Garde*," p.202.

[31] Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," p.39.

[32] *Ibid.*, p.46.

[33] Lyotard, "The Sublime and the *Avant-Garde*," p.207.


[34] Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," p.7-8.

[35] *Ibid.*, p.19.

[36] B. Newman, "The Sublime is Now," in *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. C. Harrison and P. Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 574.

[37] H. Weinfield, Introduction to *Stéphane Mallarmé: Collected Poems*, trans. H. Weinfield (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). p. xii.

Dr. Sinead Murphy  
Beechmount House  
Carrigrohane, Cork,



Co. Cork

Ireland

[somurphy@hotmail.com](mailto:somurphy@hotmail.com)

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