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The Role of Aesthetic Experience in Kant's Architectonic

by

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Abstract

For Kant, the interrelation between the logical-epistemological and the practical-moral domains of reason, and thus, the possibility of transition from the one to the other, is mediated by aesthetic experience. Yet, the grounds for this specific modality of mediation, that is, why it should have an aesthetic character, and how *aesthesis* itself is to be understood, remain difficult to fully fathom. In this paper, I will address these themes by explicating how both the theoretical and practical domains entail a certain *representative closure* of reason, through its determinate conceptual articulation. Consequently, even in their non-illusory, regulative functioning, the two modes of representative closure, through which the “unbounded yet also inaccessible [...] field of the supersensible” is mediated, continue to maintain the strict demarcation between the sensible (phenomenal) and supersensible (noumenal) realms.

It is in relation to this problematic that Kant’s introduction of aesthetical considerations must be understood. I will argue that if *reflective* (as opposed to determinative) judgment serves a mediating function between the theoretical and practical realms, it is because it tries to rearticulate the transcendental as an *experiencing*, that is, as the ceaseless yet purposive (regulative) movement of rational thought, below the threshold of ‘objective’ or determinate conceptual representation. On the one hand then, this move appears to reintroduce experiential content into the apparent formalism of Kant’s practical philosophy. On the other, it maintains the negative character of this *experiencing*, (both in the awareness of the *contingency* of the harmony between the imagination and understanding in the experience of beauty, and in the indeterminate, non-representational feeling of the sublime), that is objectified in the unconditional or universal form of the moral law.

To explicate this claim, I analyze reflective judgment with respect to the experience of beauty and sublimity, to show how it functions as the non-reified transcendental ‘ground’, that is, ‘reason’ understood as experiential movement, that connects and underlies the determinate theoretical and practical articulations of reason.

Speaker Bio

Nishad Patnaik teaches philosophy at the department of Social Sciences and Humanities, Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology, New Delhi, India. His research interests include, Kantian transcendental idealism and Husserlian phenomenology, and comparative issues between the two, phenomenological approaches to social and political philosophy, with particular reference to the Marxist, Post-Marxist, and Critical Theory traditions, ethics, and the phenomenological and post-phenomenological approaches to technology. Some of his recent publications include a book titled *Modernity and its Futures Past: Recovering Unalienated Life* (2023); and articles “*The Human Being as Homo Faber: Technological Intentionality, Epistemology, History, and Art*” (forthcoming, *Philosophy of Technology in India*, 2026); “*The Worldly Self: Immersion and the Possibilities of Self-distancing*” (*TransCultural Practices: Perspectives and Possibilities*, 2025); “*The Narrativizations of Time: Paul Ricoeur on Memory and History*” (*Sophia*, Vol. 64, 2025); “*Cyber Alienation and Traditional Conceptions of Technological Alienation: A Symptomatic Reading*” (*Jadavpur Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 31, 2024); “*Indeterminacy and Identity: Kant and Husserl on Moral Consciousness*” (*Self-Knowledge and Moral Identity*, 2022).