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Kant and the “Spirit as an Enlivening Principle”

Kant’s theory of genius and its faculty of the “aesthetic idea” renders the role of art problematic in the *Critique of the Power Judgment*. Rodolphe Gasché, among others, has pointed out that the passages about the aesthetic idea are the central lines in the third *Critique* which foster the question of art.¹ At the same time, it has been argued that the sections concerning “On Art in General”² that deal with genius and the “aesthetic idea” strangely differ from the rest of the book, as the passages on the sublime do, too.³ The “aesthetic idea” as well as the work of art seem conspicuously alien elements in the third *Critique*. In these – seemingly – an objective moment occurs which seems to impede the main focus of subjectivity in the *Critique of Judgment*. “Art” is, as such, quite an ambivalent concept for Kant. The section “On Art in General” begins with a definition:

*Art is distinguished from nature as doing (facere) is from acting or producing in general (agere), and the product or consequence of the former is distinguished as work (opus) from the latter as an effect (effectus).*⁴

It is evident that this distinction mirrors a fundamental difference between a *causa finalis* and a *causa efficiens*. While nature forms a connection of effects, art is to be understood as a connection of purposes. It is one of the main efforts of the *Critique* to show that reflective judgment is able to look upon nature as art, which means that nature “is thought of as specifying itself in accordance with such a principle”⁵. In this case *art* is a *technique*, “[t]hus the *power of judgment*

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¹ Rodolphe Gasché, *The Idea of Form. Rethinking Kant’s Aesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 106.

² This is the title of section 43. Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, transl. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 182. [In the following quoted as *CPJ*.]

³ E.g. Françoise Proust, “Les idées esthétiques”, in: *Kants Ästhetik. Kant’s Aesthetics, L’esthétique de Kant*, ed. Hermann Parret (Berlin et al.: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), pp. 513–529, here p. 519.

⁴ *CPJ*, p. 182.

⁵ *CPJ*, p. 19.

is properly technical; nature is represented technically”⁶, as Kant puts it in the first *Introduction*. The difference between “an *aesthetic judgment of reflection*” and a “cognitive judgment”⁷ will then depend upon the distinction of this technical purposiveness, if it is to be regarded objectively (concerning objects of nature) or subjectively.

Art as a technique is determined “through freedom, i.e. through a capacity for choice”⁸ and is distinguished from “*science*”⁹ and from “*handicraft*”¹⁰. But art is not only an “act of will” (or *Willkür*, as the German reads). Kant stresses in section 43 that “something compulsory [is required], or, as it is called, a *mechanism*, without which the *spirit*, which must be *free* in art, and which alone animates the work, would have no body at all and would entirely evaporate [...]”¹¹ This remark points to the central relevance of the *spirit* and its special compulsory condition, which, in turn, provides the spirit with the necessary body. It is through the spirit that “mechanical” art can be distinguished from “aesthetical”, the latter having “the feeling of pleasure as its immediate aim” as Kant explains.¹² This means: to talk about art makes it indispensable to first take a closer look at the spirit. The internal configuration of the spirit might give us better insight into Kant’s thinking of art, since art has to combine the compulsory and the free spirit.

In what follows, I would like to look at this constellation which marks a decisive structure in Kant’s approach to art, showing a working apparatus inside it that injects the aesthetic into thought as its other. In order to do this, one has to follow the thread that sets up the constellation of spirit, mind, and aesthetic ideas in Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. The spirit, as I will try to argue, is an enlivening principle in the mind insofar as it is the power which makes the aesthetic a determined-undetermined other of the rational. Thus, the spirit is determined, on the one hand, by a constellation of mind, aesthetic ideas, and a certain liveliness, and, on the other, by a constellation of the rational and the aesthetic that relates to the *infinite judgment*. To arrive at this point, I will try to

⁶ *CPJ*, p. 22.

⁷ *CPJ*, p. 23.

⁸ *CPJ*, p.182.

⁹ *CPJ*, p.183.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *CPJ*, p.184.

closely follow Kant's entwined path of spirit, *Gemüt* [*mind*], and the notion of life. As will be seen, the concept of the *Gemüt* plays a decisive role.

Gemüt

Kant's famous definition of the spirit leads directly to the question of the *Gemüt*:

Spirit, in its aesthetic significance, means the animating [*belebendes*, J.V.] principle in the mind [*Gemüt*, J.V.]. That, however, by which this principle animates the soul [*Seele*, J.V.], the material which it uses for this purpose, is that which purposively sets the mental powers into motion, i.e., into a play that is self-maintaining and even strengthens the powers to that end.¹³

One of the vaguest concepts in this definition, which can be easily overlooked, is that of the "mind" (*Gemüt*). It seems somehow imprecise, moving in a grey zone between transcendental philosophy and anthropology or psychology. It is not easy to grasp, whether one is dealing with a principle of the body or, in this case, of the spirit. The *Gemüt*¹⁴ relies on this indeterminateness throughout the first and the third *Critique*, appearing in both cases as an underlying structure, yet hard to grasp.¹⁵ It remains unclear if it belongs more to a transcendental or to an empirical register. This holds also for the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: It is not completely clear just how to describe the *Gemüt*. Kant speaks of a "disposition of the mind" or a "mental state"¹⁶, a "mentality" and the "freedom of the mind"¹⁷, "mental powers"¹⁸ or "the faculties of the mind which constitute genius", as the headline of the section reads, from which the given quotation on the spirit is derived.¹⁹

¹³ *CPJ*, p. 192. In the following, I will rather speak of an "enlivening principle", because "enlivening" renders more closely the connection to the notion of life in *belebend*. The translation as "animation" reduces this connection.

¹⁴ I will continue here to speak of *Gemüt*, instead of mind, because of the bodily connotations this word has in German.

¹⁵ Regarding the function of the *Gemüt* in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, see Robert B. Pippin, "Kant on the Spontaneity of Mind", in: *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 17:2 (1987), pp. 449–476.

¹⁶ *CPJ*, p. 194f.

¹⁷ *CPJ*, p.154.

¹⁸ *CPJ*, p.192.

¹⁹ *CPJ*, p.191.

The *Gemüt* concerns the inner sense “by means of which the mind intuits itself, or its inner state”, it is a “form under which the intuition of its inner state is alone possible”, as Kant phrased it in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.²⁰ The *Gemüt* does not give an intuition of the soul, but it makes it possible to conceptualize the totality of the inner representations. So in this way the *Gemüt* is not always already there, but it can be conceived of as a time-creating functioning of the inner sense, as Werner Hamacher has underlined. “The *Gemüt* is in itself self-affection, insofar as it, as the act of representation in intuition, never has a different effect than an affect on itself.”²¹ Hamacher continues that “this self” never opens anything other “than the transcendental, a priori time; it has to be the one, irreducible bringing about of time [*zeitigen*]”²². It is the bringing about of time because its first relation is self-affection. In the concept of the *Gemüt* itself, a difficult distinction between “nature” and “reason” is already implicated. This makes an understanding of the relation between “spirit” and “*Gemüt*” even more difficult, because now it is no longer possible to conceive of the spirit as of the other of the *Gemüt*. The spirit cannot simply be the other, which would enliven the *Gemüt* through alterity, because the *Gemüt* is always already relation. Already in his earlier text on the *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (from 1766), Kant developed the notion of the spirit as completely negative. In this text Kant tried to maintain a distance from the concept of the spirit, which he saw in a realm beyond experience, together with the “pseudo sensations” of phantasms and “pseudo-reasons” of metaphysics. Of spirits, as Kant put it at that time, there is perhaps a great deal to think, but nothing to know. The reason is evident: no empirical data of spirits could be found.²³

However, how does spirit in an aesthetical sense then come to be an enlivening principle in this kind of *Gemüt*? This, at first, leads to the question, what kind of “life” is at stake at this point.

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²⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 157.

²¹ Werner Hamacher, “EX TEMPORIS. Zeit als Vorstellung bei Kant”, in: *Politik der Vorstellung. Theater und Theorie*, ed. Joachim Gerstmaier and Nikolaus Müller-Schöll (Berlin: Theater der Zeit Verlag, 2006), pp. 68–94, here p. 71f. My translation.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²³ In this regard, see, above all, Monique David-Ménard, *La folie dans la raison pure. Kant lecteur de Swedenborg* (Paris: Vrin, 1990).

Life

In the context of his pre-critical writings, Kant conceived of life as a "principle" that is not explicable through relations of nature alone, but one that also differentiates man as a part of nature *in* nature. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant directly connects this thought to his pre-critical writings, insofar as the latter were clearly influenced by British empiricism. In an appendix to the *Analytics of the Sublime*, Kant writes:

The transcendental exposition of aesthetic judgments [...] can be compared with the physiological exposition, as it has been elaborated by Burke and many acute men among us, in order to see whither a merely empirical exposition of the sublime and the beautiful would lead.²⁴

Kant refers to Burke's understanding of the sublime as a drive, on the one hand, and his inducement of the beautiful from love, on the other hand – similar to Kant's argumentation in the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764), in which Kant conceives of the sublime as a split drive of nature and searches to find the overcoming of this split in the strange form of marriage, where sublime and beautiful, man and woman, come together and surpass nature. In the *Critique* Kant clearly states the universality of the judgment of taste as opposed to an empirical determination. He demarcates a rejection of a psychology of the beautiful, a passage worth quoting at length, because it offers an insight into a very complex relation between life and aesthetics.

As psychological remarks, these analyses of the phenomena of our mind are extremely fine [*schön*, J.V.], and provide rich materials for the favourite researches of empirical anthropology. Moreover, it cannot be denied that all representations in us, whether they are objectively merely sensible or else entirely intellectual, can nevertheless subjectively be associated with gratification or pain, however unnoticeable either might be (because they all affect the feeling of life, and none of them, insofar as it is a modification of the subject, can be indifferent), or even that, as Epicurus maintained, *gratification* and *pain* are always ultimately corporeal, whether they originate from the imagination or even from representations of the understanding: because life without the feeling of the corporeal organs is merely consciousness of one's existence, but not

²⁴ *CPJ*, p. 158.

a feeling of well- or ill-being, i.e. the promotion or inhibition of the powers of life; because the mind for itself is entirely life (the principle of life itself), and hindrances or promotions must be sought outside it, though in the human being himself, hence in combination with his body.²⁵

On first view one could say: “extremely fine”, but unhelpful for further transcendental investigation. But then it becomes clear that the argument proceeds via nearly imperceptible restrictions and withdrawals. At first, Kant admits that surely “all representations” – even if only “imperceptible” – can subjectively be associated with “gratification and pain”. From this concession the phrase develops into a slightly unwilling decline. The following thought goes even further: bodily effects are *always* connected with representations. Kant does not speak of pleasure and displeasure, but of gratitude and pain. On first interpretation, the transcendental exposition of pleasure and displeasure could be understood as the meta-structure of the relation between gratitude and pain, although having in mind that this meta-structure cannot indicate a direct link from one to the other: In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* there is no direct passage from the affect to the effect of pleasure. Nevertheless, the representations localize a place where the relation between gratitude/pain and pleasure/displeasure comes into question. Up to this point, the distinction between the empirical and the transcendental is still possible. However, with the next sentence the situation changes. If one only stayed on the level of this meta-structure, one would miss a central point: life. “Life” requires the bodily sensation of the hindrance or promotion of the vital forces. But these are at the same time the connotations that Kant introduces of the sublime and the beautiful. Thus, in the larger context of the *Critique*, it can be said that life requires the beautiful and the sublime through their expression of feeling. The beautiful, as Kant had defined it previously, “directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life”,²⁶ while the sublime is “being generated, namely, by the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital powers”.²⁷ As such, life means, on the one hand, a feeling of well-being and nausea, the promotion and hindrance of the vital powers. On the other hand, Kant defines the *Gemüt* as such that it is by itself “all life” and thereby

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²⁵ *CPJ*, p. 158f.

²⁶ *CPJ*, p. 128.

²⁷ *CPJ*, p. 128f. See also Gasché, *Idea of Form*, who stresses that life in the organs is felt through the affectation through representations. Gasché also underlines that this life cannot be biological life, because the enlivened subject is already a living subject.

these promotions and hindrances cannot be ascribed to the *Gemüt*. Hindrances and promotions are outside of the *Gemüt* and at the same time corporeal: The human body lives only in this constellation. Life is the expression of the principle of life via the promotions and hindrances of the body.²⁸

But what kind of life is this? If empirical anthropology examines bodily relations of gratitude and pain, then the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* clarifies the preconditions of the promotions and hindrances of the relations of life. This also means that with the analytic of the beautiful and the sublime, the *Critique* aims in a specific manner at the question of life. On which "territory"²⁹ – nature or freedom – is the claim based, such that the *Gemüt* is for itself "all life", the "life principle"? In a reflection from the late 1760s Kant defined life as a purely spiritual principle: "Complete spiritual life starts from the death of the animal."³⁰ The "immaterial [...] principium of life" was to be distinguished from the "material" like "*automaton*" from "spirit".³¹ It was not possible to establish life as a general concept, for the spirit was subjected to a permanent animal limitation. With the notion of "complete life"³² organic life in nature could not be explained, if Kant did not want to assign souls to dogs and plants as well. If he had done that, a great part of nature would have fallen out of the field of science: for he had also admitted that it had nothing to say about spirits and souls. The *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, on the one hand, opens up the way to think of organic life as a specific difference in nature, which is to be explained teleologically. So, in the frame of the third *Critique*, which relevance would then have to be given to the notion of "complete life"? The teleologically defined life of organic beings is different from life in its aesthetic perspective, because it exceeds the realm of science. It is remarkable that Kant mentions that "hindrances or promotions must be sought outside it [the *Gemüt*,

²⁸ Concerning this passage in Kant, see also Ross Wilson, *Subjective Universality in Kant's Aesthetics* (Bern et al.: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 124ff.

²⁹ *CPJ*, p. 61.

³⁰ "[D]as Vollständige Geistige Leben hebt nach dem Tode des Thieres an." My translation. The German original is in: Immanuel Kant, *Handschriftlicher Nachlaß Metaphysik*, Teil I, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, Herausgegeben von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Band XVII, *Handschriftlicher Nachlaß Metaphysik* (Berlin und Leipzig: de Gruyter, 1926), p. 474, R 4240. (I (?) 1769–1770).

³¹ Immanuel Kant, *Notes and Fragments*, transl. Curtis Bowman, Paul Guyer, and Frederick Rauscher, ed. Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 88 [Reflection 385, 1764–68].

³² *Ibid.*

J.V.], though in the human being himself, hence in combination with his body”³³. It becomes clear that Kant conceives of life as an occurrence of effects that is graspable only on the site of the body, but at the same time exceeds bodily limitations.³⁴ The *Gemüt* can neither be understood as an empirical nor as a purely transcendental life. The position of the *Gemüt* is rendered more and more complex, and important in Kant’s architecture by the same token. Thus Kant writes in his first *Introduction* to the *Third Critique*: “We can trace all faculties of the human mind without exception back to these three: the *faculty of cognition*, the *feeling of pleasure and displeasure*, and the *faculty of desire*.”³⁵ The *Gemüt*, lying at the foundation of these faculties, could thus be understood as an anthropological structure of man. But it should already be clear that for Kant anthropology then takes on a completely different meaning. Michel Foucault has written about the notions of *Gemüt* and spirit in this regard, in taking a closer look at their relation in Kant’s *Anthropology*. Foucault’s analysis gives central hints that help take the specific aesthetic constellation of *Gemüt*, spirit, and life into account.

Gemüt, spirit, life

Foucault considers (in one of his first texts) the *Gemüt* to be one of the central concepts in the *Anthropology*.³⁶ He differentiates the *Gemüt* in contrast to “soul” or “spirit”, a difference that leads him to an initial approximate understanding of the “spirit” as a principle. Starting from the definition also used by Kant in the *Anthropology* – “The principle of the mind that animates by means of *ideas* is called *spirit*.”³⁷ – Foucault emphasises that this principle must not be understood as determinate nor reflective, but exactly as enlivening or animating.³⁸ As Kant speaks

³³ *CPJ*, p. 158.

³⁴ Regarding this, see also: Howard Caygill, “Life and Aesthetic Pleasure”, in: *The Matter of Critique, Readings in Kant’s Philosophy*, ed. Andrea Rehberg and Rachel Jones (Manchester: Clarendon, 2000), pp. 79–92, here p. 81.

³⁵ *CPJ*, p. 11.

³⁶ Michel Foucault, “Introduction à l’anthropologie”, in: Emmanuel Kant, *Anthropologie d’un point de vue pragmatique. Précédé de: Michel Foucault, Introduction à l’anthropologie*, ed. Daniel Denfert, François Ewald, Frédéric Gros (Paris: Vrin, 2008). This text together with the translation of Kant’s *Anthropology* is the first part of Foucault’s dissertation, which remains unpublished. The edition from 2008 is the first complete edition.

³⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic point of View*, transl. and ed. Robert B. Loudon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 143.

³⁸ See, Foucault, “Introduction”, p. 37.

of an "animating principle", neither a regulative nor a constitutive principle can be meant. Further on, one has to avoid the assumption that the *Gemüt* would exist in a dependence on the spirit's totality. If this were the case, Foucault states, then the complete *Anthropology* would have to be in search of a figure of the spirit (as a regulative principle), which is obviously not the case. It is rather the idea, freed of the constraints of transcendental use, which opens itself up to new possibilities within empirically given things, by means of the schema. Its own realm is given through experience and it gives the movement of the infinite, in other words a movement of infinite convergence. Consequently, it is a specific aspect of the ideas marking the spirit that appears in the schema and enables them to get in touch with the empirical. Empirical reason is enlivened by the infinite.

Like this, empirical reason never drifts off into the given; in linking it to the infinite that it rejects, the idea makes it live in the element of the possible. Such is the function of the *Geist*: not to organize the *Gemüt* in such a way as to make a living being out of it or the analogon of organic life, or even the life of the Absolute itself; but to enliven it, give birth, in the passivity of the *Gemüt*, which is the passivity of empirical determination, to the swarming movement of the ideas— those multiple structures of a becoming totality which make and unmake themselves like many other partial lives who live and die in the spirit. Like this the *Gemüt* is not simply "what it is", but "what it makes out of itself".³⁹

The *Gemüt* has to be understood as the passive site of empirical determination and at the same time as the site where the enlivening through ideas takes place. It is not the ideas of the spirit, but the spirit is the principle, according to which the *Gemüt* can enter the movement between the empirical and the idea. Once again Foucault:

The spirit would then be the principle in the *Gemüt* of a de-dialectized dialectics, not transcendental, dedicated to the domain of experience and forming a body with the game of phenomena. It is the spirit that opens up the freedom of the possible for the *Gemüt*, pulls it out of its determinations, and gives a future to it, which it does not have due to itself.⁴⁰

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 39. My translation.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* My translation.

Foucault concludes that the spirit is that moment which testifies transcendentally to the absence of the infinite, but which empirically supports the force of the infinite for the movement towards truth. Absent and present at the same time, the spirit denotes not only the place of the truth, but also links the necessity of a *Critique*, in transcendental terms, with a sovereign structure and with the possibility of an *Anthropology* as a determination of the possible in the empirical.⁴¹ Foucault leads this analysis on the background of a possible determination of the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* within the framework of a transcendental architecture, and for this reason he only briefly touches upon the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. The determination of the relation of spirit, *Gemüt*, and the enlivening principle hide an obvious parallel to the relations in the *Critique of the Power Judgment*⁴², although with a meaningful difference. Foucault relates the definition of the spirit to the ideas of reason, freed of their transcendental use. Yet in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* Kant introduces a new type of idea: aesthetic ideas. Aesthetic ideas form the central means by which the spirit as an enlivening principle is able to work on the *Gemüt* in an aesthetical regard.

Aesthetic ideas

In the passage which the quoted definition of the spirit is from, the spirit is kept in a conspicuous, Pauline contrast to the letter; a contrast which is at first alluded to through the opposition of spirit and mechanism. Spirit, Kant says, needs a mechanism for its survival, because otherwise it would “evaporate”. As an example Kant mentions “the art of poetry”, which needs “correctness and richness of diction as well as prosody and meter”.⁴³ Even if the spirit has an enlivening effect, it cannot survive on its own. Every time one tries to catch the spirit in a manifest form, one loses it again. Kant then scrutinizes the notion of the “principle” that is said to enliven the *Gemüt*:

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Now I maintain that this principle is nothing other than the faculty for the presentation of *aesthetic ideas*; by an aesthetic idea, however, I mean that representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought, i.e., *concept*, to be adequate to it, which, consequently, no lan-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40f.

⁴² Foucault seems to think that this is not the case, as he refers only to the definition of the *Gemüt* in the first introduction, quoted above. See Foucault, “Introduction”, p. 38.

⁴³ *CPJ*, p. 183.

guage fully attains or can make intelligible. – One readily sees that it is the counterpart (pendant) of an *idea of reason*, which is, conversely, a concept, to which no *intuition* (representation of the imagination) can be adequate.⁴⁴

Here the distinction between letter and spirit is already alluded to: the aesthetic idea cannot be reached by any language. "Language" is not to be understood metaphorically, but means that there is no possible human expression to reach the spirit. The spirit enlivens by means of ideas and subtracts itself from the body, to which it is connected, at the same time. The aesthetic idea as the "medium" of the spirit finds a pendant in the idea of reason. They relate like left hand and right hand, not in a contradictory opposition, but as equal others. Both are to be established and described only in interrelation and mutual dependence.⁴⁵ The aesthetic idea introduces the connection of letter and spirit:

In a word, the aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination, associated with a given concept, which is combined with such a manifold of partial representations in the free use of the imagination that no expression designating a determinate concept can be found for it, which therefore allows the addition to a concept of much that is unnameable, the feeling of which animates the cognitive faculties and combines spirit with the mere letter of language.⁴⁶

The aesthetic idea is without a concept, but in the moment in which it is associated ("*beigesellt*") to language, the idea connects "pure letter" with spirit. With the reference to association ("*Beigesellung*", which relates to the two meanings of "*Gesellschaft*": society and sociability), the distance or proximity to cognition comes into play. It becomes clear that at the heart of the concept of the spirit lies a difficult relation between the aesthetic and the rational that has to be clarified. The aesthetic idea as the means by which the spirit enlivens not only explains how the spirit proceeds, but also tells us about what the spirit is, because the

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⁴⁴ *CPJ*, p. 192.

⁴⁵ Even if Kant remarks that aesthetic ideas "seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas)" (*CPJ*, p.192), this should not be understood to mean that aesthetic ideas are simply called ideas because they are incomplete ideas of reason, as Karin A. Fray alludes to: "Kant and the Problem of Genius", in: *Kant und die Berliner Aufklärung, Akten des IX. internationalen Kant-Kongresses*, Vol. 3, ed. Volker Gerhardt, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, and Ralph Schumacher (Berlin et al.: de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 546–552, here p. 548.

⁴⁶ *CPJ*, p. 194.

spirit in aesthetical terms is nothing other than this taking place of the aesthetical in the rational, as we will now see.

So, if the aesthetic idea is associated with a concept, how then is the relation between the aesthetic idea and concept to be thought of? The aesthetic seems to stand in a specific proximity to the concept. Nevertheless, the aesthetic idea provides something different than cognition: The “material” delivered via the aesthetic idea to reason, in extension beyond the concept, is not important “objectively, for cognition”, but “subjectively, for the animation [*Belebung*, J.V.] of the cognitive powers” and thereby “indirectly to cognitions”.⁴⁷ Also, the “pendant”, the idea of reason, serves, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, not cognition, but the final understanding of the indeterminate by the means of a concept, to which no intuition can correspond; the idea of reason loses its intuition to the benefit of a concept. What is the aesthetic idea missing?

Some pages later, Kant comes back to the relation between the idea of reason and the aesthetic idea. Ideas in their general sense relate subjectively or objectively to an object, but without enabling cognition of it. Aesthetic ideas are “related to an intuition in accordance with a merely subjective principle of the correspondence of the faculties of cognition (of imagination and of understanding)”⁴⁸, ideas of reason are related to a transcendental concept. While a rational idea aims at a concept without intuition, the aesthetic idea misses the concept, but not in the same measure as the rational idea misses the intuition, for the aesthetic idea supplements the use of the concepts with “much that is undefinable in words” [*viel Unnennbares*, J.V.]. It does not conjure un-conceptual relations beyond the concepts, but agitates in these constellations, it opens up, in other words, the sphere of the conceptual, not by realizing this opening through a concept aiming at totality, but by producing an open collection of representations of the imagination. The aesthetic idea is actually not a counter-part or “pendant” to the rational idea, but its guest, its gift or, stated differently, its opening.

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When Kant talks of “ideas” under the heading “On Taste in Art”⁴⁹ in the *Anthropology*, then it seems to be aesthetic ideas that are meant, as introduced in the

⁴⁷ *CPJ*, p. 194.

⁴⁸ *CPJ*, p. 217.

⁴⁹ Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 143.

third *Critique*. But the quoted passage in the *Anthropology* continues to specify the spirit as "the productive faculty of reason which provides a *model* for that a priori form of the power of imagination"⁵⁰. The spirit "creates" ideas, in order to give them as a sample to the imagination. This seems ambivalent, as the spirit is determined as the *faculty of reason*, and in the following the accent shifts to the aspect of representation. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* the spirit then is defined explicitly as the faculty of the representation of aesthetic ideas and therewith the spirit in aesthetical terms as a faculty of the productive imagination, which does not produce ideas of reason, but aesthetic ideas.⁵¹ One side of the imagination, which is a "blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all"⁵², as Kant puts it in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, comes to the foreground here: its blind, productive faculty, its forming power obtains an undefined independence in representation.

The imagination (as a productive cognitive faculty) is, namely, very powerful in creating, as it were, another nature, out of the material which the real one gives it. We entertain ourselves with it when experience seems too mundane to us; we transform the latter, no doubt always in accordance with analogous laws, but also in accordance with principles that lie higher in reason (and which are every bit as natural to us as those in accordance with which the understanding apprehends empirical nature); in this we feel our freedom from the law of associations (which applies to the empirical use of that faculty), in accordance with which material can certainly be lent to us by nature, but the latter can be transformed by us into something entirely different, namely into that which steps beyond nature.⁵³

Nature is surpassed by following "principles". These principles are rooted in the higher reason, but they enable the imagination to work up nature into something else. In this way productive imagination creates aesthetic ideas, as Kant continues:

One can call such representations of the imagination ideas: on the one hand because they at least strive toward something lying beyond the bounds of experience, and thus

⁵⁰ Kant, *Anthropology*, p. 143f.

⁵¹ See also: Gasché, *Idea of Form*, p. 110f.

⁵² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 211.

⁵³ *CPJ*, p. 192.

seek to approximate a presentation of concepts of reason (of intellectual ideas), which gives them the appearance of an objective reality; on the other hand, and indeed principally, because no concept can be fully adequate to them, as inner intuitions.⁵⁴

Gasché, who underlines the aesthetic idea differently than Foucault, proposes to understand Kant's renaming of the productive imagination as spirit in such a way that imagination, in its productive efficiency, has become analogous to reason.⁵⁵ "Aesthetic ideas, consequently, are indefinite, undetermined ideas; they are, on the level of the sensible, *analoga* of reason, that is, of the faculty of ideas"⁵⁶. And really, following Gasché's allusion, in the aesthetic ideas Baumgarten's *analogon rationis* seem to reappear in a different manner. One could understand this as a reconsideration of Baumgarten's basic intention, to parallelize the sensible and the rational. On the other hand, it is no longer the metaphysical order of ontology that demands a totality, in which the logic of the sensible collides as an independent logic. Baumgarten's logic of the sensible now becomes possible as an indeterminate analogy, because now something undetermined is set in relation to ideas. Aesthetic ideas intensify concepts by means of intuitions, while ideas of reason deliver concepts without intuitions. But aesthetic ideas are not in the same measure independent, but rather an *other* in the world of concepts, they are given reality as representations.

The readings of Gasché and Foucault can be crossed in such a way that the spirit enlivens the *Gemüt* twice: through aesthetic ideas as well as through rational ideas. The aesthetic idea is the product of the spirit in the imagination, which shows itself as a representation. In opposition to the rational idea, the aesthetic idea develops productive representations, while the "rational" spirit enlivens the *Gemüt* with regard to the opening up of the empirical material at the border of the infinite. This would mean that spirit in aesthetical terms would combine with the representation of the possible in the concept with the necessity of *Critique*, while the spirit in rational terms, as Foucault puts it, combines the necessity of *Critique* with the possibility of an anthropology. The spirit, which Foucault claimed to be the principle of a de-dialectized dialectics, would have to be understood twice: It opens up the *Gemüt* to the possible as well as to the representation. In this sense, the

⁵⁴ *CPI*, p. 192.

⁵⁵ See Gasché, *Idea of Form*, p. 111.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

spirit is the double absent presence of what Kant had dismissed in his earlier writings as beyond experience, and had barred from thought together with *delirium* and *mania*. The spirit marks the absent presence of the infinite and the present absence of the representations of the productive imagination, with the spirit not only the path to an anthropology, but also to what aesthetics opens up.

From this perspective, another view is possible regarding the triad of spirit, *Gemüt*, and the enlivening. It was shown that all three are to be understood in a double way and that they oscillate between the realms of anthropology, aesthetics, understanding, and reason. But how does the spirit enliven the *Gemüt*? By ideas, on the one hand, but on the other hand it is at the same time the "material" by which the spirit enlivens the *Gemüt*. A play, – to again quote – i.e. of "that which purposively sets the mental powers into motion, i.e. into a play which is self-maintaining and even strengthens the powers to that end"⁵⁷. The ideas are inseparably connected with the play, which maintains itself and is the play of the *Gemüt*, as could be seen with Foucault. In the aesthetic sign the spirit opens up an enlivening play with regard to representation, which cannot be understood as "*formant corps*" with the phenomena, but which becomes in a way a body itself, combining the force of the idea and the force of the representation.

The consideration mentioned above, that the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* aims at life with the examination of the beautiful and sublime, can now be specified more clearly. "Enlivening" is the result of the connection of spirit and *Gemüt*, and therewith, by way of many complications, also, as cannot be shown here, the result of the combination of the beautiful form with the aesthetic idea. In this regard, too, the transcendental explication of the beautiful and the sublime would be more directly aiming at the enlivening of the *Gemüt* by the spirit, rather than being orientated towards the question of organic life.⁵⁸ Organic life is the starting point to which life as spirit can associate itself.

⁵⁷ *CPJ*, p. 192.

⁵⁸ The idea of the spirit as an animating principle is not new in late Kant. It can be found in many of the early fragments and notes, even in pre-critical times. An extensive list of passages related to the animation of the spirit can be found in: Giorgio Tonelli, "Kant's Early Theory of Genius (1770–1779) Part I" in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 4:2 (1966), pp. 109–131 (see p. 115 for animation). Regarding early theories of organism and spirit, see also Giorgio Tonelli, "Kant's Early Theory of Genius (1770–1779) Part II", in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 4:3 (1966), pp. 209–224. Tonelli points out that Kant replaces the relation of identity between

One can go one step further to see not only how aesthetic ideas relate to the spirit, but also to a conception of art works. The distinction between an idea of reason and an aesthetic idea is reconsidered by Kant on the side of the object, especially in the comparison of “aesthetic attributes” and “logical attributes”. “Jupiter’s eagle, with lightning in its claws”, does not represent what “lies in our concepts of the sublimity and majesty of creation”, but it is a representation, that gives “the imagination cause to spread itself over a multitude of related representations.”⁵⁹ The distinction of the attributes allows Kant to transfer the determination of the aesthetic idea onto aesthetic works. They make it possible to analyze the aesthetic attributes in relation to the logical ones in a given work of art. Kant gives only two examples for “the sake of brevity”⁶⁰, both from poems, more or less doomed to fall into oblivion. In the first example, the aesthetical attribute enlivens the “idea of reason of a cosmopolitan disposition”⁶¹, in the second an intellectual concept enlivens a sensible intuition, but only insofar as the intellectual concept itself, in its aesthetic regard, is used this way. The examples show the enlivening in the concept or in the relation of one concept to another. What is relevant here is less the quality of the examples (lines of poems from Frederick the Great), than the sketched possibility to begin an analysis of works of art. At this point one can take a look at the formal structure in which the aesthetic and the rational relate, which then can be called the formal structure of the spirit from an aesthetical perspective.

Infinite judgments

Each time the aesthetic enlivening is a relational enlivening. The aesthetic attributes go “alongside the logical ones” and the arts take “the spirit which animates [*belebt*, J.V.] their works solely from the aesthetic attributes of the objects”.⁶² They mark “a manifold of partial representations” in “the free use of the imagination”, as a representation, “associated with a given concept”.⁶³ The aesthetic attribute as such does not stand in direct opposition to the logical; the aesthetic idea does not oppose the rational, but it is associated. The aesthetic

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organism and beauty later by a relation of analogy, wherein the “originality and even the meaning of Kant’s mature solution” lies. (p. 216).

⁵⁹ *CPJ*, p. 193.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *CPJ*, p. 194.

idea "allows the addition to a concept of much that is unnameable".⁶⁴ It is not unsayable but unnameable; it is not: not conceptional, but non-conceptional. In representation this becomes an aesthetic expression, an expression of non-conceptionality. At the same time the aesthetic attribute seems, like the aesthetic idea, strangely irreducible in relation to the logical-conceptional structure. Strangely because the relation of irreducibility is in itself not firmly grounded. What can be said about the aesthetic idea and about the aesthetic attribute can only be said via negative differentiations. As such, the aesthetic structure cannot be put down to the conceptional-logical. In other words, it is "bound up" with it, standing in an un-relation with it. There is no third in itself, in front of which the aesthetic structure could be established in relation to the order of the logical. Rather, the aesthetic is distilled as a distinction out of the logical, without there being the possibility to say what would be the guarantor, which would guarantee the possibility of this distinction. As such, the aesthetic and the logical come together in a relation which is not one. That the aesthetic idea and the aesthetic attribute allow "much thought" does not yet mean that this relation would have to be understood as a special relation of cognition. One would have to think of the aesthetic always already as an extension, a deepening, a making particular in a concrete case. The other way round, from the starting point of thought, there can be grasped a realm of the un-conceptional via the infinite judgment. This is decisive for the relation between the aesthetic and the logical and one has to take a brief look at the function of the infinite judgment in Kant to clarify and underline this point, because the sphere that is opened up in the rational through the aesthetic can be understood as the sphere of the infinite judgment.

In his *Logics*, Kant distinguishes, for example, between affirmative, negating, and infinite judgments. An affirmative judgment subsumes a subject under the "sphere" of a predicate, a negating judgment places the subject outside of that "sphere".⁶⁵ Phrases such as "the dog is green" are affirmative, phrases such as "the dog is not green" are negative. Of relevance here is that the negation of the assignment of the colour does not say anything about the existence of the dog.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Logic*, transl. and ed. J. Michael Young (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 80.

An infinite judgment exhibits exactly the transition from pure logics to transcendental logics: It has a strange form which allows it to be, in pure logical terms, an affirmative judgment, but a negation in transcendental terms. It is a double or a split judgment. If one says “a is non-b”, as the general form of this judgment runs, the assignment is positive in logical terms, it is not a negative judgment. This is why Kant can say that this distinction does not belong to the science of logics, because logically it is affirmative.⁶⁶ However, it will not be excluded by Kant, rather he understands it as a completion of transcendental logic. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant develops the infinite judgment as a necessary distinction from the affirmative judgment, because it also asks about the “value or content of the logical affirmation”.⁶⁷ More exactly, he defines it as limitative. In the first *Critique* Kant used a remarkable example to exemplify the forms of judgment: the soul.⁶⁸ The phrase “anima est non-mortalis” defines a specific relation:

Now, since that which is mortal contains one part of the whole domain of possible beings, but that which is undying the other, nothing is said by my proposition but that the soul is one of the infinite multitude of things that remain if I take away everything that is mortal. But the infinite sphere of the possible is thereby limited only to the extent that that which is mortal is separated from it, and the soul is placed in the remaining space of its domain.⁶⁹

The infinite judgment makes a determination in the indeterminate: it determines a subject (through assigning a predicate) and leaves it at the same time indeterminate in its extension.⁷⁰ Thus the soul is neither alive nor dead, it is *undead*.⁷¹ The infinite judgment forms limitative concepts by marking infinity as a border. But also it touches upon existence. A negative judgment tells nothing about the existence of the subject, an infinite does: That the soul is undead means that it

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⁶⁶ Kant, *Logic*, p. 80.

⁶⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 207.

⁶⁸ Kant follows Meier with this example. See Kristina Engelhard, *Das Einfache und die Materie, Untersuchungen zu Kants Antinomie der Teilungen* (Berlin et al.: de Gruyter, 2005), p. 325ff.

⁶⁹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 207f.

⁷⁰ See also: Kristina Engelhard, *Das Einfache und die Materie, Untersuchungen zu Kants Antinomie der Teilungen*, p. 325ff.

⁷¹ Slavoj Žižek pointed this out several times, see, e.g., Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), p. 21f.

is something insofar as it is not something different. Through the assignment of a non-predicate, the negation is moved from the copula to the predicate and the subject is determined through this limitative, finite-infinite sphere.⁷² In a broader sense, Kant's discussion of the infinite judgment has to be related to his discussion of the principle of contradiction, which marks a very important path from his pre-critical to his critical writings. In a specific sense, the infinite judgment opens up the sphere of the excluded middle.⁷³ One can even observe the infinite judgment playing a decisive role in the definition of the antinomies.⁷⁴ Central to the argument in this case, concerning aesthetic ideas, is that the infinite judgment marks a determined-undetermined sphere.⁷⁵

The un-conceptual, formed after the model of the infinite judgment, is the central relation between the aesthetic and the rational. The aesthetic is not *not* conceptual, but it *is* non-conceptual. It does not lie at the roots of the conceptual, it is not its substrate, but an opening that surpasses the "nature" of the conceptualized itself. It is so only insofar as the roots of the undetermined "nature" can be ascertained: It cannot be cognized, but rather only be worked out; thought of as a negative interruption of knowledge, of conceptual order, of the ideas of reason. The powerful imagination somehow produces in the nature of the concept a different nature: It enriches the concept from the inside with the particular and rewrites it in a way that it gets another face, another nature. The aesthetic idea is the prosopopoeia of the concept, always creating another face for it. An inner becoming-other, which is, as the enlivening, at the same time, only possible in the inert, the dead. "Models of taste with regard to the arts of discourse must be composed in a dead and learned language."⁷⁶ If concepts are the framework of thought, then these becoming-other bring life into the concept. This again

⁷² See Slavoj Žižek, "Kant as a Theoretician of Vampirism", in: *Lacanian Ink*, 8 (1994), pp. 19–33, here p. 28.

⁷³ E.g. Peter McLaughlin, *Kants Kritik der teleologischen Urteilstkraft* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1989), p. 67f.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁷⁵ From the point of view of the history of logics, the "infinite judgment" stems from a grey area between the translation of the Aristotelian *aóristos*, which becomes the *propositio infinita* afterwards and then the "infinite judgment", which could have also been called the "undetermined judgment". See Albert Menne, "Die Kantische Urteilstafel im Lichte der Logikgeschichte und der modernen Logik", in: *Journal for General Philosophy of Science*, 20:2 (1989), pp. 317–324, here p. 318f.

⁷⁶ *CPJ*, p. 116.

relates the aesthetic life to the organic life: “The life of creatures”, Kant notes, “is a series of becoming-other out of an inner *principle*.”⁷⁷

If one understands this process as analogous to the discovery of the particular, then it becomes clear that in the play of the indeterminate aesthetic determination – which is the play of the spirit – thought does not come to help cognition and try to specify the concept in the undetermined (as in the question of organic life), but the aesthetic idea produces intuitions and brings the openings of the conceptualized into a representation. This procedure may serve cognition, because it brings about “much thought”, but only if one is prepared for cognition to change from one nature to another.⁷⁸ Cognition runs after the lively concept. Jupiter’s eagle still represents something different. This determined-indeterminate other is what the spirit enables as an opening in the rational, by means of aesthetic ideas, and what Kant calls animating the *Gemüt*. Spirit, in its aesthetic significance, thus allows man to surpass nature toward aesthetical life.

⁷⁷ “Das Leben der Geschöpfe ist die Reihe der Veränderungen aus innerem *principio*”, in: Kant, *Nachlass Metaphysik*, p. 728, [R.4786]. My translation.

⁷⁸ Gilles Deleuze saw in the free play of the faculties a figure that lies beneath all other forms of judgment and by which the third *Critique* grounds all other *Critiques*. But already here the question arises if the third *Critique* is not rather an abyss than a ground, an *Abgrund* more than a *Grund*. See Gilles Deleuze, “The Idea of Genesis in Kant’s Aesthetics”, in: *Angelaki. Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 5: 3 (2000), pp. 57–70, here p. 60.