

Immanuel Kant – The Beautiful and the Sublime

M. Curtis Allen (F2022)

1.Kant's Life and Work

A.Kant's Life

B.Kant's Philosophical System

1.Kantian Aesthetics in *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*

A.The Beautiful

B.The Sublime

Immanuel Kant – Pt. 1: Life and Work

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1A. Kant's Life

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Kant's Life and Work

- Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)
- One of the most significant philosophers of all time (in any tradition)
- Arguably the greatest German philosopher of all time.
- Reoriented modern European philosophy



Kant's Life and Work

- Born and lived his entire life in and around Königsburg, Prussia.
 - A German state whose capital was Berlin.
 - Now called Kaliningrad in modern day Russia.
- Was known to be extremely rigid in his routines, but also very amiable and gregarious.



Kant's Life and Work

- Was a Professor at the University of Königsburg, teaching subjects as varied as:
 - mathematics, physics, logic, geography, anthropology, and metaphysics.
- His most important works, his three *Critiques*, he didn't begin writing until he was in his fifties.



Kant's Life and Work

He is known for:

- Synthesizing insights from both rationalism and empiricism;
- Providing a completely novel understanding of the relationship between human reason and its consequences for knowledge on the basis of a complex theory of mind and experience.



Kant's Life and Work

This theory of mind and experience, called 'transcendental philosophy,' is elaborated in **three major works or Critiques**:

- *The Critique of Pure Reason*
(*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*) (1781)
- *The Critique of Practical Reason*
(*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*) (1788)
- *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*)
(1790)



Kant's Life and Work

- He tried to synthesize our understanding of natural science with rational free will as the source of morals and ethics.
- In doing so he set limits on Reason.
- Making speculation about metaphysical absolutes meaningless or idle.
- This included theological speculation about the nature and existence of God (though Kant himself was a fairly devoted Protestant).



1B. Kant's Philosophical System

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Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

What is Transcendental philosophy?

- Transcendental philosophy is a theory about our *minds* and our *experience*, i.e. the character of our existence as being with minds.
- ‘Transcendental’ does not mean ‘transcendent’. It means what pertains the *forms* of experience, but is not itself empirically given within experience itself.



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

What is Transcendental philosophy?

- Transcendental philosophy investigates the **conditions of possibility** of experience.
 - In other words: what kind of creatures do we need to be, what kind of capacities do we need to have, in order to have the experience of ourselves and the world that we do?
 - To have the knowledge of the empirical world that we do? To act according to our own wills?



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

What is Transcendental philosophy?

- Transcendental philosophy differs from both rationalism and empiricism—and attempts to synthesize them both.
- *Unlike rationalism*, which studies what knowledge could be gained by pure thinking, what is sometimes called ‘analytic *a priori*’ knowledge
 - Meaning: what could be known by analyzing ideas into their most basic components (analytic) and did not depend on experience, (*a priori* here means logically prior to experience).
 - Rationalism rested its knowledge on what it took to be necessary truths discovered by reason.



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

What is Transcendental philosophy?

- *Unlike empiricism*, which studies what knowledge could be gained through experience (e.g. in sense impressions). Empiricism took all knowledge to ultimately stem from our contingent experience of the world. This knowledge is sometimes called, 'synthetic *a posteriori*' knowledge.
 - Meaning: knowledge is built up out of many experiences (i.e. synthesized) and only occurs after these experiences, e.g. knowledge does not come before experience (*a posteriori* here means 'after')
 - Empiricism rested its knowledge on contingent and actual experiences.



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

What is Transcendental philosophy?

- Kant invented a third category, which suited his question about how we could be beings who have contingent experiences and who reason.
- This he called '**synthetic *a priori***' knowledge, or transcendental knowledge, or knowledge about the conditions of possibility of experience and reason.



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

What is Transcendental philosophy?

- ‘**Synthetic**’, because it was knowledge made out of the connection between forms of experience, between our sensations and concepts.
- ‘*A priori*’, because this connection was not something born of the contents of experience, but rather a condition of our having any experience in the first place.
 - Thus: the synthetic form of experience comes ‘before’ our actual experience of particular things.
 - It is what makes that experience *possible*.



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

What is Transcendental philosophy?

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Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

What is Transcendental philosophy?

- With this move, Kant reorients the whole of philosophy away from questions of what is 'out there' and towards about how *our minds* contribute, construct, impose or project, a great deal of what we take to be the order and reality of the world.



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

The Doctrine of the Faculties

- These conditions of possibility of experience take the form of a system of capacities or faculties that interact to give us our experiences.
- Kant's theory of mind is comprised of a *doctrine of faculties*
- These faculties are built into a hierarchy in Kant's philosophy, based on their role in thinking.



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

Hierarchy of the Faculties

Reason (Faculty of Desire/Will)



Understanding (Faculty of Cognition)



Imagination (Faculty of Synthesis)



Sensibility (Faculty of Receptivity)

Types of Headaches

Migraine



Hypertension



Stress

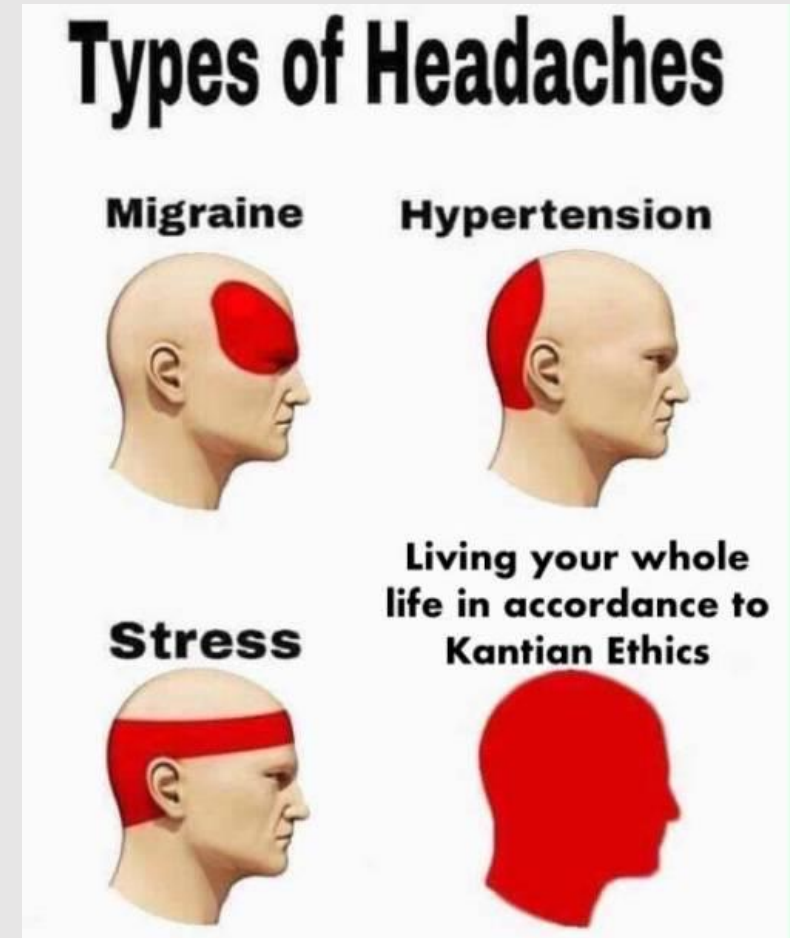
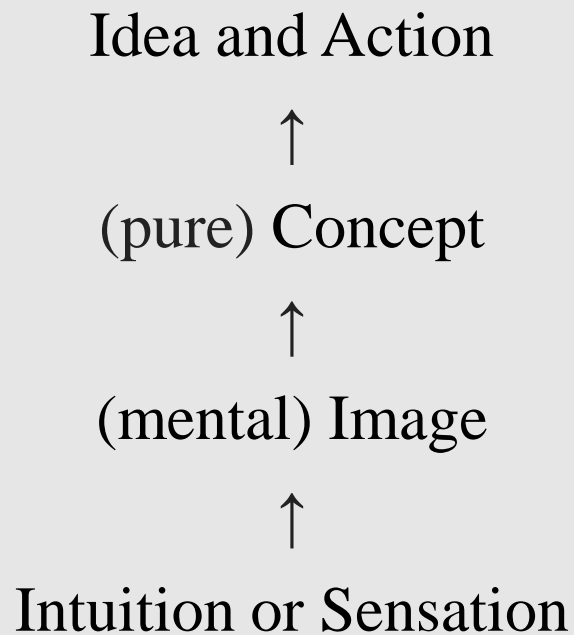


**Living your whole
life in accordance to
Kantian Ethics**



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

Hierarchy of the Faculties, cont.



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

Questions about Faculties

- Where is judgment?
 - Is judgment a faculty?
 - Is there more than one faculty of judgment?
 - If not, what is it?
 - Is judgment a mode or use of a faculty?
 - What does 'power' (*Kraft*) mean in this context?
- Is this a complete list of faculties
 - What about memory?
 - What about sexual drives?
 - If these are not included, then why not?
 - Are these (or other parts of the mind) important for aesthetics?



Some Important Features of Kant's Philosophy

Kantian Aesthetics (Disambiguation)

In Kant, there are **two ways of using the term aesthetics**, or two varieties:

1. The role of sensation and perception
 - The sensible forms by which 'stuff' appears.
 - The content of sensation and perception
2. The role of aesthetics in judgement
 - The role of states of feeling, rather than thinking, in judgment in general.
 - The reflective states of feeling that give rise to special kinds of aesthetic judgment.



Ideas in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

The *Transcendental* Aesthetic

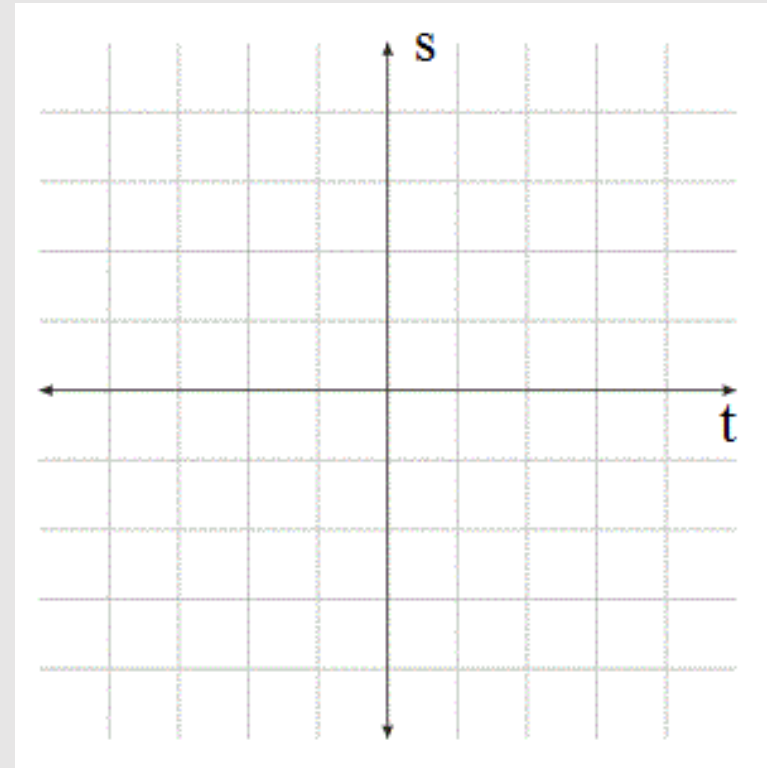
- Kant thought that there were forms required by the mind, for our capacity of sensibility (or intuition) to receive the matter, or sensible data, of experience.
- In other words, there must be a backdrop on which 'aesthetic' stuff can show up in experience.
- These forms of *intuition* were **space** and **time**



Ideas in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

The *Transcendental Aesthetic*, Cont.

- **Space** was required for 'outer sense' within which the extended objects of experience of the physical world co-exist
 - He thought that our intuition of space was the ground of geometrical knowledge
- **Time** was required for both 'inner' and 'outer sense' in order for 'phenomena' to be ordered in a sequence.
 - This was the ground of arithmetical knowledge.



Ideas in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

Concept and Intuition in the CPR1

- But the transcendental aesthetic was not enough to get ordinary experience off the ground; it is little more than a backdrop.
- You also need concrete sensible matter, **particular intuitions** or sensations, given by really existing objects (things-in-themselves) to the passive or receptive faculty of sensibility. (these would be the particular qualities of experience)
- But you also need **concepts**, in order to make phenomena intelligible to the mind, and not merely sensible.



Ideas in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

Concept and Intuition in the CPR1

- In order to arrive at the ordinary units of experience—which Kant understood to be *objects* or empirical concepts of individuals or particulars—the mind synthesizes ‘pure concepts of the understanding’ (categories) with particular intuitions in what Kant called ‘schemata’ under the forms of space and time in the transcendental aesthetic.
- The faculty of the ‘imagination’ does the work of binding these concepts with these intuitions.



Ideas in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

Concept and Intuition in the CPR1

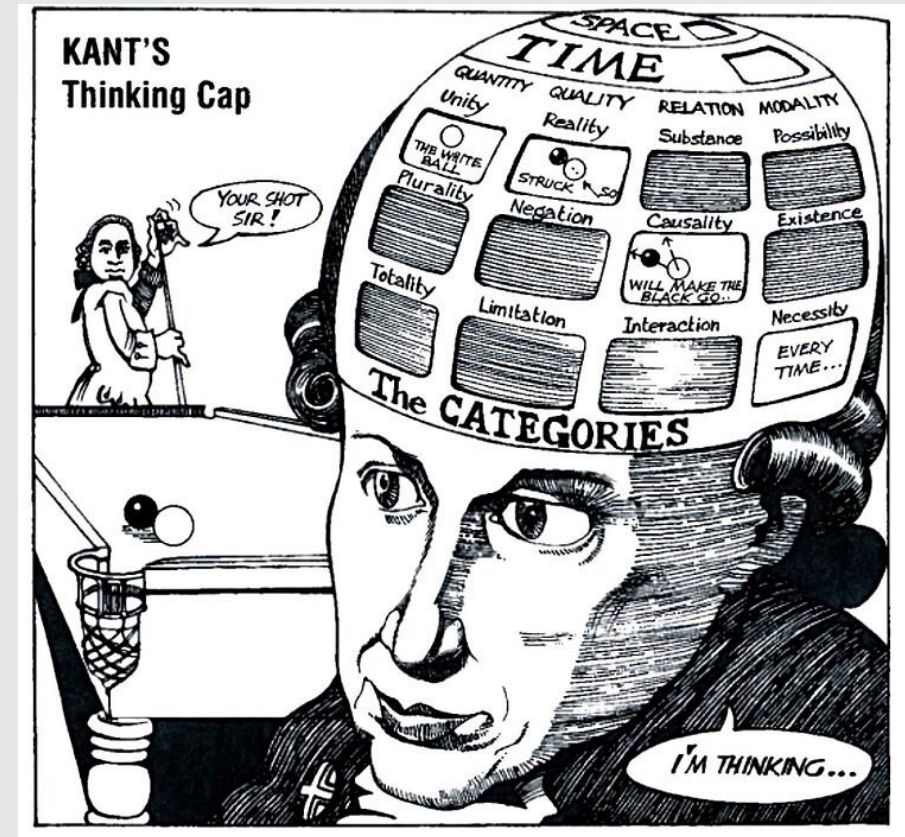
- **Pure Concepts of the Understanding** are the forms of the faculty of thought *must* take in order to experience things the way we do.
- These concepts Kant call the ‘**Categories**’ of the understanding.
- They are about the world, because we cannot have any concepts of objects w/ out them.
- They are necessary for cognition and are therefore grounds of knowledge, along with the forms and matter of sense experience.
- They are especially important for our understanding of natural law, because they allow us to determine regularities between events.



Ideas in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

Kant's Categories

- **Quantity**
 - Unity
 - Plurality
 - Totality
- **Quality**
 - Reality
 - Negation
 - Limitation
- **Relation**
 - Inherence and Subsistence (substance and accident)
 - Causality and Dependence (cause and effect)
 - Community (reciprocity)
- **Modality**
 - Possibility
 - Existence
 - Necessity



Judgment in Kant's Critical Project

Judgment before the CPJ

- Judgment (J) plays a central role in the theory of reason in Kant's philosophy, both regarding pure and practical reason
- With respect to *knowledge*, judgment is the faculty of making valid claims about what is (facts), or having sensical beliefs about experience.
 - Without judgment, experience itself would just be an uninterpretable sensuous manifold, a mess of unordered sensations.



Judgment in Kant's Critical Project

Judgment before the CPJ

- But J plays a central role not only in our ability to acquire knowledge about the empirical world.
- It is also the bedrock of our understanding of ourselves as rational, autonomous beings.



Judgment in Kant's Critical Project

Judgment before the CPJ

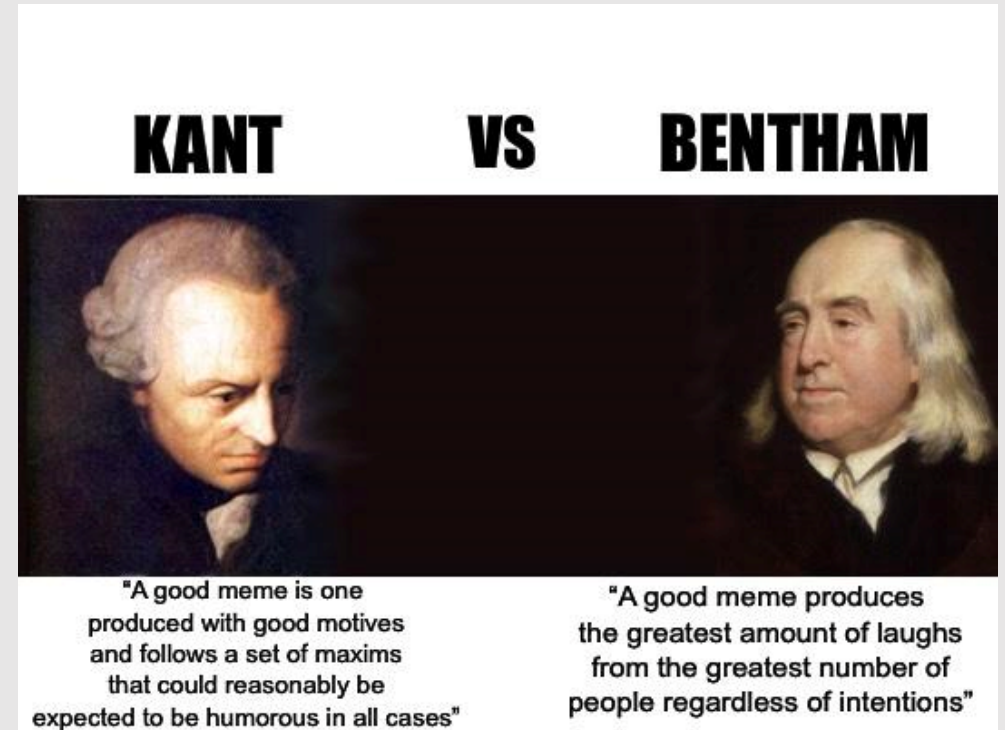
- We make reasoned ethical, moral, and aesthetic decisions and hold ourselves and others accountable or responsible for decisions that we make.
- For this, *normative* Js are fundamental.
 - I.e., Js about correctness, or assessments of 'ought to be' rather than 'there is'.



Judgment in Kant's Critical Project

Judgment before the CPJ: Categorical Imperative

- Along with the Categories of the Understanding there is also **the Categorical Imperative** of practical reason.
- The categorical imperative is an unconditional requirement of any agent acting morally, according to Kant.



Judgment in Kant's Critical Project

Judgment before the CPJ: Categorical Imperative

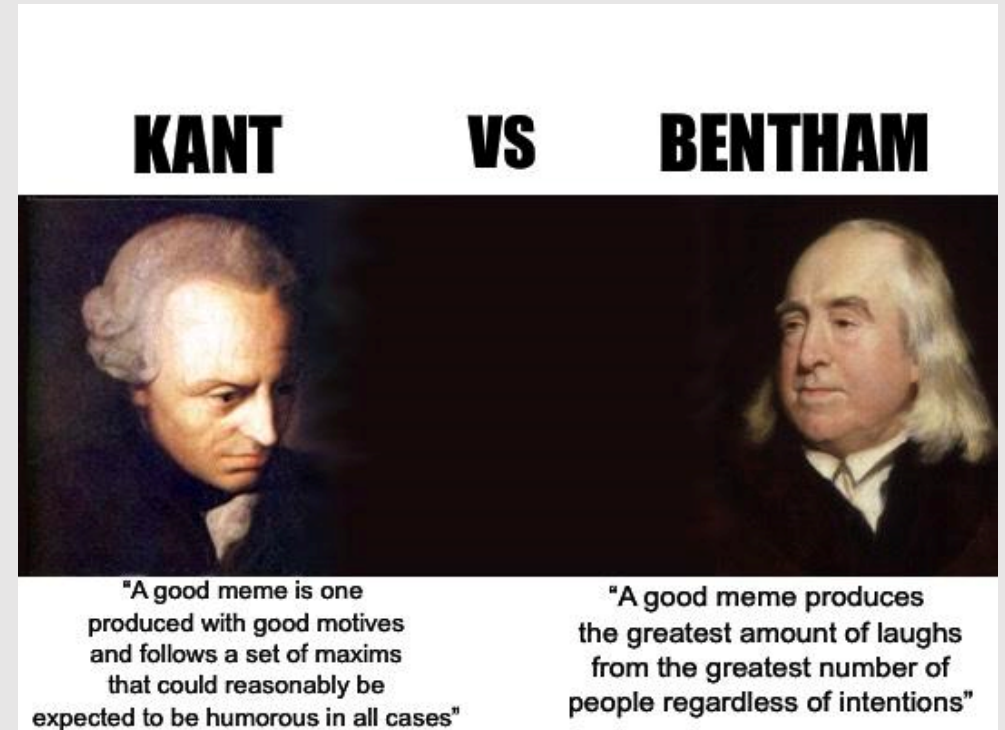
- It reads: “Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.” (GMM, 30)
- This means that no one is justified in performing an action themselves that they would not justify if it were anyone else performing the same action. In order to be morally justified, what is good for you to do, must be equally good for anyone else to do, in the same circumstances.



Judgment in Kant's Critical Project

Judgment before the CPJ

- The fact that we make moral judgments, and hold ourselves and others responsible, implies that we and they have **autonomy**.
- That in order to follow a moral precept, it must have been possible for one to do otherwise.



Judgment in Kant's Critical Project

Judgment before the CPJ

- This means that rationality and morality imply freedom, according to Kant.
- It implies treating rational agents as ends in themselves, not as mere means. In other words, respecting their agency so far as it is rational, even if it goes against our own wishes and whims.



Judgment in Kant's Critical Project

Judgment before the CPJ

- Judgment (J) is the foundation of the notion of value in general, according to Kant.
- J is thus the foundation of aesthetics, a discipline which seeks to articulate a specific domain of value, the 'aesthetic' domain—or the domain of Js which are expressed through sense experience (sensation and feeling). Aesthetic Js are value Js.
 - We *like* this and not that, we *criticize* this work, we *praise* that one.



Judgment in Kant's Critical Project

Judgment in the CPJ

- According to Kant, judgments come in two varieties, separated by their relationship to the universal
 - 1) **determining judgments** are those used in concert with the understanding and allow us to subsume a given particular under the rule of the universal. (e.g. this particular thing, apple, is an instance of the genus 'apples').
 - 2) **reflective judgments** are those for which the situation is reversed. They have a given particular and search for the universal to which it applies.
 - **Aesthetic judgments** (like those of the beautiful and the sublime) are of the second kind.



Immanuel Kant – Pt. 2:
Kantian Aesthetics in the *Critique of
the Power of Judgment*

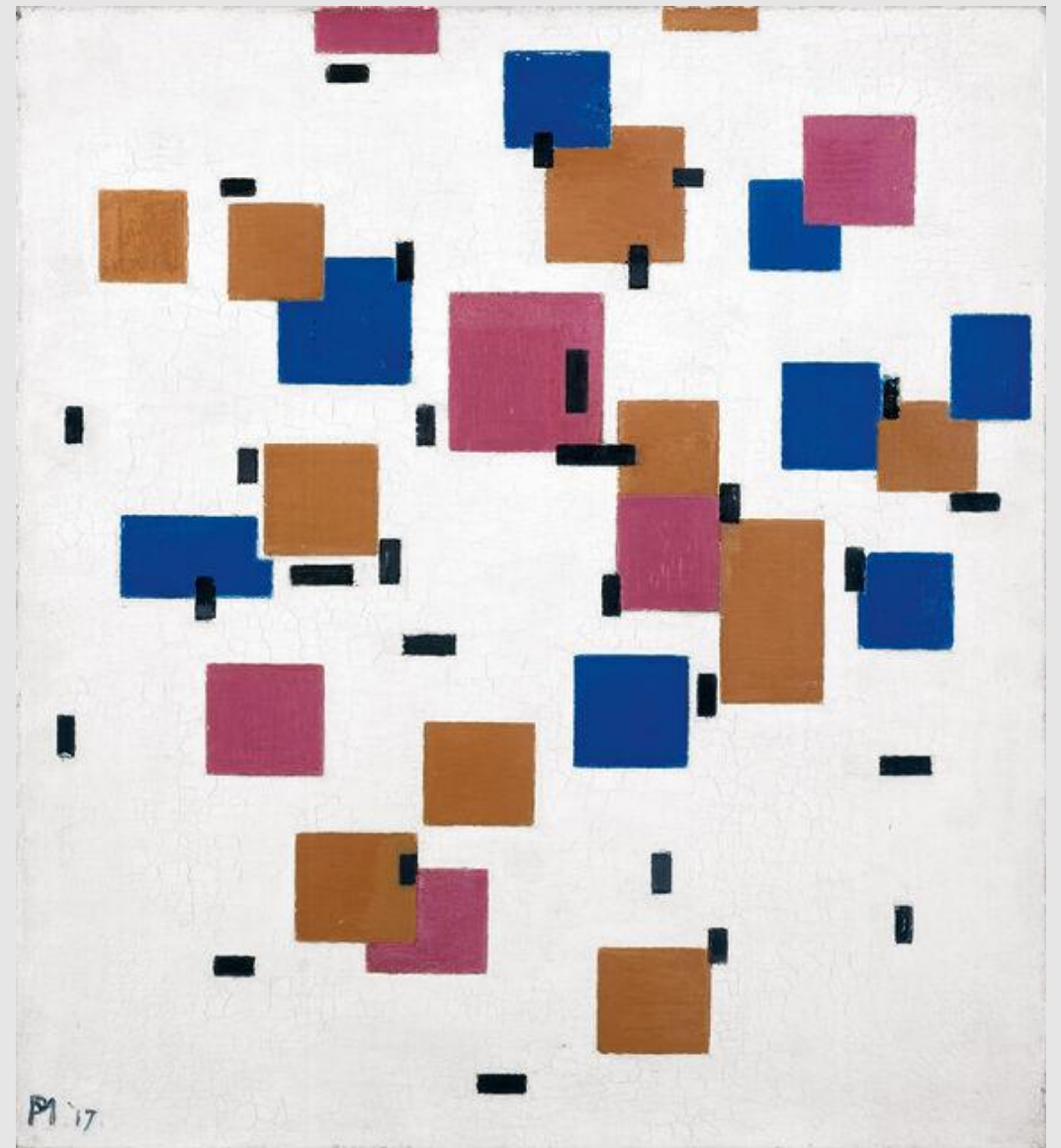
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The Beautiful and the Sublime in CPJ

- The Beautiful and the Sublime are each a type of **Reflective Aesthetic Judgment** (J) for Kant. This kind of judgment is expressed through **Pleasure** (and Displeasure).
 - They are *reflective* in the sense in which they relate *only* to the innerworkings of our minds (via external or internal stimuli or ‘representations’), rather than determining something external
 - Whether theoretical or practical.
- For the **Beautiful**, that J is a harmonious relation between our faculties (esp. between the imagination and the understanding)
- For the **Sublime**, that J is a discordant relation between our faculties (esp. between the imagination and reason).



Jongsuk Yoon, from *Yellow to Pink* (Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder), 2022.



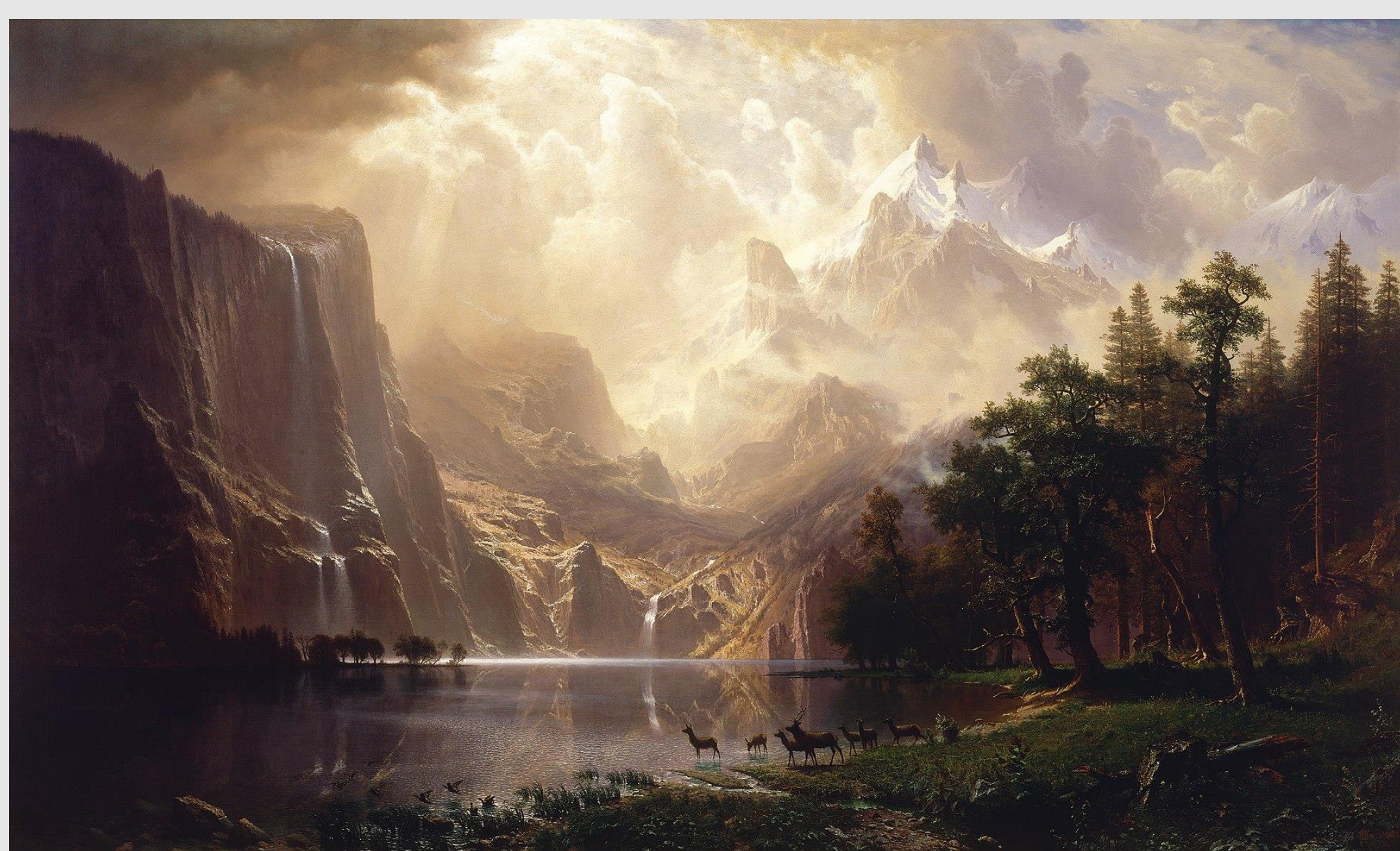
Piet Mondrian, *Composition in Colors A*, 1917



富士山景 駿州 江尻

茶臼角高下

Hokusai, Katsushika, "Ejiri in Suruga Province", 1830-32



Albert Bierstadt,
*Among the
Sierra Nevada,*
California, 1868

2A. The Beautiful

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“Analytic of the Beautiful” In Summary

Aesthetic Feelings are Judgments

- Kant tells us that the aesthetic feelings—the kind we experience in art (i.e. the Beautiful and the Sublime)—are a special kind of judgments.
- They are subjective & universal at once.



“Analytic of the Beautiful” In Summary

- The experience of the beautiful is a state of feeling (pleasure), which is for Kant, an aesthetic, not conceptual, judgment.
- There are 4 four ‘moments’ of the beautiful:
 - disinterestedness
 - universality
 - purposiveness without purpose
 - common sense



“Analytic of the Beautiful” In Summary

The 4 Definitions of the Beautiful According to the 4 Moments:

1. “**Taste** is the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction **without any interest**. The object of such a satisfaction is called **beautiful**. (96)
2. “That is **beautiful** which pleases universally without a concept.” (104)
3. “**Beauty** is the form of the **purposiveness** of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it **without representation of an end**.” (120).
4. “That is **beautiful** which is cognized without a concept as the object of a **necessary** satisfaction” (124).

“Analytic of the Beautiful” In Summary

Disinterestedness

- Subjective
- Impartial
- Contemplative
- Non-conceptual
- Not aggregable
- Not good (in the universal, moral sense)



“Analytic of the Beautiful” In Summary

Universality

- Not interested
- Reflective
- Auto-affection of the mind (its ‘**free play**’ ‘**harmony**’ or ‘**concordance**’)
 - Between Imagination and Understanding
- These judgments are **singular** or **exemplary**
- They are **necessary** but not part of ‘logical judgment’



“Analytic of the Beautiful” In Summary

Purposiveness without Purpose

- These judgments are *not* made with *ends* in mind
- but the manner in which we make them intelligible to us (e.g. in natural beauties) is by acting as if they were made with an end in mind.
- We imagine them in accordance with an end.



“Analytic of the Beautiful” In Summary

Common Sense

- Aesthetic feelings imply common sense in two interconnected ways:
 1. Individual:
 - they imply a means by which the separate faculties, within an individual come into a communication with one another, without the imposition of one faculty;
 - This creates a harmony without rule, a “free lawfulness” or “lawfulness without law”.
 2. Collective:
 - Because (1) makes human cognition in general possible since; it grounds a state of feeling which we think everyone ought to share.
 - A common aesthetic sense which we impute to humanity in general, a ground of feeling on which we expect to build the common sense of cognition on emotive rather than rational grounds, a sense of taste we can all share.



Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

“In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition, but rather relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste... [is] aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective.” (CPJ, 89)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

“Here the representation is related entirely to the subject... which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging a that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state.” (90)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

"The satisfaction that we combine with the representation of the existence of an object is called interest. (90)

"It is readily seen that to say that it is beautiful and to prove that I have taste what matters is what I make of this representation in myself, not how I depend on the existence of the object. Everyone must admit that a judgment about beauty in which there is mixed the least interest is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste." (91)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

3 Satisfactions

- Agreeable, Good, Beautiful
- The Agreeable and the Good are not Beautiful
 - Both imply interest
 - Agreeable = interest of the immediate sensation of pleasure/displeasure
 - Good = interest of reason, the determination of rational ends
- The Beautiful is *disinterested*.

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Disinterest > Universality

“For since it is not grounded in any inclination of the subject (nor in any other underlying interest), but rather the person making the judgment feels himself [sic] completely free with regard to the satisfaction that he devotes to the object, he cannot discover as grounds of the satisfaction any private conditions, pertaining to his subject alone, and must therefore regard it as grounded in those that he can also presuppose in everyone else; consequently he must believe himself to have grounds for expecting a similar pleasure of everyone... (96-97)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Disinterest

Cont. "...Hence he [sic] will speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a property of the object and the judgment logical (constituting a cognition of the object through concepts of it), although it is only aesthetic and contains merely a relation of the representation of the object to the subject, because it still has the similarity with logical judgment that its validity for everyone can be presupposed. But this universality cannot originate from concepts. For there is no transition from concepts to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure (except in pure practical laws, which however bring with them an interest of the sort that is not combined with the pure judgment of taste). Consequently there must be attached to the judgment of taste, with the consciousness of an abstraction in it from all interest, a claim to validity for everyone without the universality that pertains to objects, i.e., it must be combined with a claim to subjective universality." (96-97)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Reflective Judgments

“I can call the first the taste of the senses, the second the **taste of reflection**, insofar as the first makes merely private judgments about an object, while the second makes supposedly generally valid (public) judgments, but both make aesthetic (not merely practical judgments) about an object, regarding merely the relation of its representation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.” (99)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

The Beautiful is not Determined by the Concept

“If one judges objects merely in accordance with concepts, then all representation of beauty is lost. Thus there can also be **no rule** in accordance with which someone could be **compelled** to acknowledge something as beautiful.” (101, my emph.)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Subjective Universality

“Now here it can be seen that in the judgment of taste nothing is postulated except such a universal voice with regard to satisfaction without the mediation of concepts, hence the possibility of an aesthetic judgment that could at the same time be considered valid for everyone.”
(101)

“it [the judgment] only ascribes this agreement to everyone, as a case of the rule with regard to which it expects confirmation not from concepts but only from the consent of others. The universal voice is thus only an idea...” (101)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Subjective Universality

“Now if the determining ground of the judgment on this universal communicability of the representation is to be conceived of merely subjectively, namely without a concept of the object, **it can be nothing other than the state of mind that is encountered in the relation of the powers of representation to each other insofar as they relate a given representation to cognition in general.**

The powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition. Thus the state of mind in this representation must be that of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general.” (102)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Subjective Universality

“The subjective universal communicability of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste... can be nothing other than the state of mind in the **free play** of the **imagination** and the **understanding**” (103)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Purposiveness without Purpose

“An object or a state of mind or even an action, however, even if its possibility does not necessarily presuppose the representation of an end, is called purposive merely because its possibility can only be explained and conceived by us insofar as we assume as its ground a causality in accordance with ends, i.e., a will that has arranged it so in accordance with the representation of a certain rule. Purposiveness can thus exist without an end, insofar as we do not place the causes of this form in a will, but can still make the explanation of its possibility conceivable to ourselves only by deriving it from a will.” (105)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Purposiveness without Purpose

“Thus nothing other than the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object without any end (objective or subjective), consequently the mere form of purposiveness in the representation through which an object is given to us, insofar as we are conscious of it, can constitute the satisfaction that we judge, without a concept, to be universally communicable, and hence the determining ground of the judgment of taste.” (106)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Purposiveness as Pleasure

- The pleasure associated with the Beautiful is not that of charm or emotion, insofar as the former is pure. (108-9)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Beauty, Charm, and Form

“In painting and sculpture, indeed in all the pictorial arts, in architecture and horticulture insofar as they are fine arts, the drawing is what is essential, in which what constitutes the ground of all arrangements for taste is not what gratifies in sensation but merely what pleases through its form. The colors that illuminate the outline belong to charm; they can of course enliven the object in itself for sensation, but they cannot make it worthy of being intuited and beautiful, rather, they are often even considerably restricted by what is required by beautiful form, and even where charm is permitted it is ennobled only through the former. All form of the objects of the senses (of the outer as well as, mediately, the inner) is either **shape** or **play**: in the latter case, either play of shapes (in space, mime, and dance), or mere play of sensations (in time). The **charm** of colors or of the agreeable tones of instruments can be added, but **drawing** in the former and composition in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgment of taste” (110)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Beauty, Charm, and Form

“... a pure judgment of taste has neither charm nor emotion, in a word no sensation, as matter of the aesthetic judgment, for its determining ground.” (111)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Beauty and Perfection

“... if I encounter in the forest a plot of grass around which the trees stand in a circle, and I do not represent a purpose for it, say that it is to serve for country dancing, then not the slightest concept of perfection is given through the mere form. But to represent a formal objective purposiveness without an end, i.e., the mere form of a perfection (without any material and concept of that with which it is to agree, even if it were only the idea of a lawfulness in general), is a veritable contradiction.” (112)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Free Beauty and Adherent Beauty

- **Free beauty** is pure, and unrelated to the concepts of the understanding, and thus to any end
- **Adherent beauty** is that feeling mixed with the intellect according to a rule use or standard of perfection. (114-115)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

The Ideal of Beauty

“From this, however, it follows that the highest model, the archetype of taste, is a mere idea, which everyone must produce in himself, and in accordance with which he must judge everything that is an object of taste, or that is an example of judging through taste, even the taste of everyone. **Idea** signifies, strictly speaking, a concept of reason, and **ideal** the representation of an individual being as adequate to an idea. Hence that archetype of taste, which indeed rests on reason's indeterminate idea of a maximum, but cannot be represented through concepts, but only in an individual presentation, would better be called the ideal of the beautiful...”
(116-7)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

The Ideal of Beauty

“First, it should be noted that the beauty for which an idea is to be sought must not be a **vague** [free] beauty, but must be a beauty **fixed** [adherent] by a concept of objective purposiveness, consequently it must not belong to the object of an entirely pure judgment of taste.” (117)

“However, an ideal of a beauty adhering to determinate ends, e.g., of a beautiful residence, a beautiful tree, beautiful gardens, etc., is also incapable of being represented...” (117)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

The Ideal of Beauty in Humanity

“Only that which has the end of its existence in itself, the human being, who determines his ends himself [sic] through reason, or, where he must derive them from external perception can nevertheless compare them to essential and universal ends and in that case also aesthetically judge their agreement with them: this human being alone is capable of an ideal of beauty, just as the humanity in his person, as intelligence, is alone among all the objects in the world capable of the ideal of perfection” (117)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

The Normal Idea and the Idea of Reason

- **The normal idea** expresses the purposiveness of the form of a figure (or species)
 - E.g. the artistic image of a lion as the Idea of the species of the lion
 - The ideal figure as an average or limit
 - Greek (or Neoclassical) ideal human form
 - Relation to mathematics (regular polygons)
- The **idea of reason** determines the moral good, which in the expression of the human form through ideal beauty is given sensual (rather than cognitive) form (maybe?). (119-20).

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Common Sense

- State of communicability of an "indeterminate norm" or "ought"
- Between sensation and cognition?
- Common sense is that through which we feel, or appeal to the common feeling of our humanity, outside the discursive rationality through which we understand natural law, and the determine moral law.
- Common sense is "free lawfulness" or "lawfulness without law" (125)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Beautiful"

Common Sense

“This indeterminate norm of a common sense is really presupposed by us: our presumption in making judgments of taste proves that. Whether there is in fact such a common sense, as a constitutive principle of the possibility of experience, or whether a yet higher principle of reason only makes it into a regulative principle for us first to produce a common sense in ourselves for higher ends, thus whether taste is an original and natural faculty, or only the idea of one that is yet to be acquired and is artificial, so that a judgment of taste, with its expectation of a universal assent, is in fact only a demand of reason to produce such a unanimity in the manner of sensing, and whether the “should,” i.e., the objective necessity of the confluence of the feeling of everyone with that of each, signifies only the possibility of coming to agreement about this, and the judgment of taste only provides an example of the application of this principle – this we would not and cannot yet investigate here...” (124)

2B. The Sublime

M. Curtis Allen (F2022)

Brief Context for Kant in Relation to the Theory of Burke

Burke's Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime

- Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was a conservative English statesman and philosopher living during the Age of Enlightenment.
- Written at the age of 19, he published *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) in his late 20s.

WHO WOULD WIN?

Some revolutionary Frenchmen



One concerned Irishman



Brief Context for Kant in Relation to the Theory of Burke

Burke's Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime

- It was his only purely philosophical work, and it gained the respect of many philosophers, intellectuals, and artists throughout the remainder of the 18th century, including especially Kant.
- Before the 18th c, the beautiful and the sublime were not often separated out as distinct aesthetic categories. Burke was central in this development.
- As the title suggests, it focuses on the concepts of the Beautiful and the Sublime, and takes these to exhaust the field of aesthetic pleasures.



Brief Context for Kant in Relation to the Theory of Burke

Burke's Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime

- Burke, like Kant after him and Addison before him, took the imagination to play a central role in both feelings, but the imagination adopted complex relationships with the pleasure of the senses in B's theory
- The 'perfections' of these two feelings and their description constituted the fulcrum of the theory
- these both relied on the passions, according to B, and were divided along the lines of social promotion and self-preservation (an idea about pleasure and pain adopted from Hume)



Brief Context for Kant in Relation to the Theory of Burke

Burke's Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime

- The perfections of social feelings arise from pleasure or its absence.
- The **beautiful** arises from the social passion of love.
- It is characterized by the small, the smooth, the various, the delicate, the clear, and the bright

(Shelley 2018)

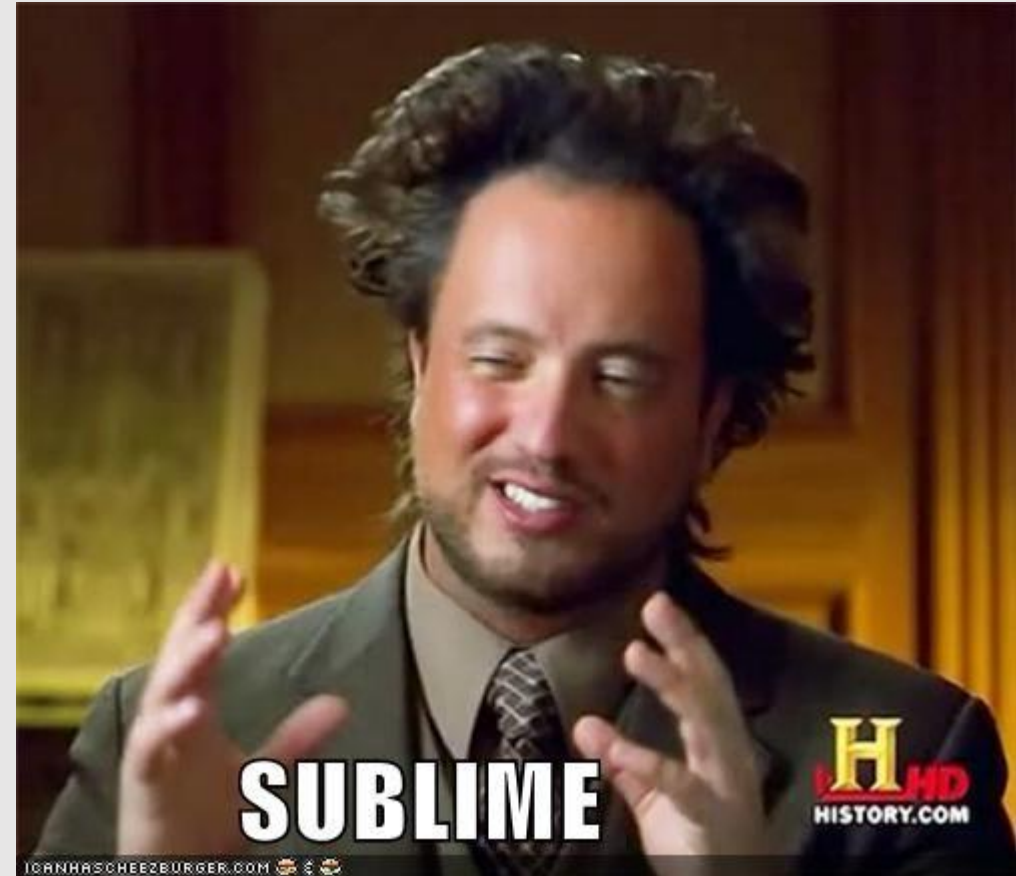


Brief Context for Kant in Relation to the Theory of Burke

Burke's Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime

- The perfections of self-preserved feelings arise from pain or its absence.
- The **sublime** arises from the self-preserved passion of astonishment.
- It is characterized by great, the uniform, the powerful, the obscure, and the somber.

(Shelley 2018)



Brief Context for Kant in Relation to the Theory of Burke

Burke's Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime

- So we can see that Kant takes much of the framework from Burke's *Enquiry*
 - that aesthetics deals with forms of pleasure
 - That the beautiful and the sublime are distinct and have differing, but essential roles to play
 - And that Burke's understanding of these categories roughly align with Kant's own.



Brief Context for Kant in Relation to the Theory of Burke

Burke's Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime

- Nevertheless Kant will focus on their roles in relation to the understanding and to reason
- He will also separate out the idea of perfection from them
- And he will perform an *a priori* rather than empirical analysis of them in line with his project of transcendental psychology and philosophical anthropology.
- Thus Kant's work seeks to place aesthetics within a broader philosophical system of transcendental philosophy—the hallmark of Kant's 'critical' project.



Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

What the beautiful and the sublime have in common

- The sublime is also a reflective judgement
- The satisfaction of the Sublime (S) is "connected to the mere presentation or to the faculty for that [imagination]" (128)
 - e.g. with the state of feeling not with determinate concepts.
- S Js are singular (128), but universally valid.

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

Differences between the beautiful and the sublime

"...([T]he feeling of the sublime) is a pleasure that arises only indirectly, being generated, namely, by the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital powers and the immediately following and all the more powerful outpouring of them..." (128-9)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

Differences between the beautiful and the sublime

“[T]hat which, without any rationalizing, merely in apprehension, excites in us the feeling of the sublime, may to be sure appear in its form to be contrapurposive for our power of judgment, unsuitable for our faculty of presentation, and as it were doing violence to our imagination, but is nevertheless judged all the more sublime for that.” (129)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

Differences between the beautiful and the sublime

“We can say no more than that the object serves for the presentation of a sublimity that can be found in the mind; for what is properly sublime cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason, which, though no presentation adequate to them is possible, are provoked and called to mind precisely by this inadequacy...” (129)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

Specificity of the sublime

“From this we see that the concept of the sublime in nature is far from being as important and rich in consequences as that of its beauty, and that in general it indicates nothing purposive in nature itself, but only in the possible use of its intuitions to make palpable in ourselves a purposiveness that is entirely independent of nature. For the beautiful in nature we must seek a ground outside ourselves, but for the sublime merely one in ourselves and in the way of thinking that introduces sublimity into the representation of the former” (130)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

Specificity of the sublime

- The sublime is divided into the **mathematically** sublime and the **dynamically** sublime
 - The first relates the imagination to the faculty of cognition *as faculty*
 - The second relates the imagination to the faculty of desire *as faculty* (131)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“Now if I simply say that something is great, it seems that I do not have in mind any comparison at all, at least not with any objective measure, since it is not thereby determined at all how great the object is.” (132)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“Now it is noteworthy here that even if we have no interest at all in the object, i.e., its existence is indifferent to us, still its mere magnitude, even if it is considered as formless, can bring with it a satisfaction that is universally communicable, hence it may contain a consciousness of a subjective purposiveness in the use of our cognitive faculties: but not a satisfaction of the object... rather in the enlargement of the imagination itself.” (133)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

Which is more sublime?

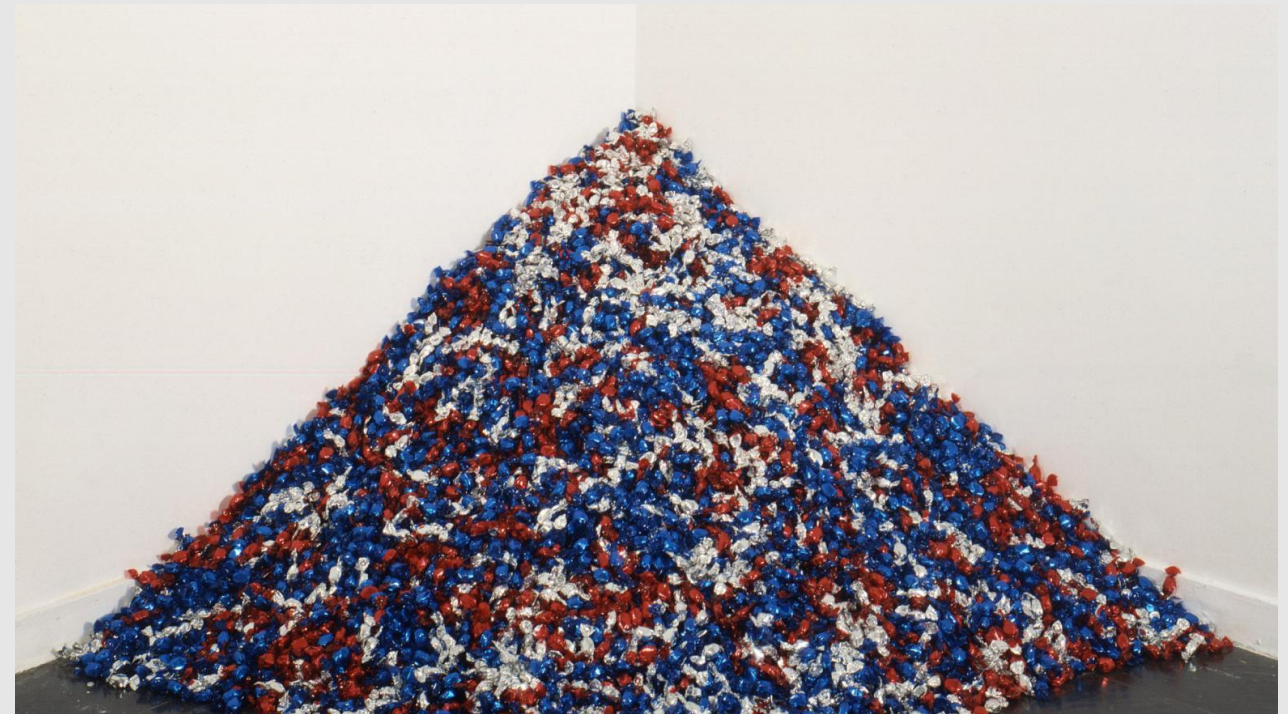


Edward Burtynsky, *Oxford Tire Pile #5, Westley, California* (1999)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

Which is more sublime?



Félix González-Torres *"Untitled"* (*USA Today*) (1990)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“That the sublime is therefore not to be sought in the things of nature but only in our ideas follows from this; but in which of these it lies must be saved for the deduction. The above explanation can also be expressed thus: That is sublime in comparison with which everything else is small... Thus nothing that can be an object of the senses is, considered on this footing, to be called sublime.” (134)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“the very inadequacy of our faculty for estimating the magnitude of the things of the sensible world awakens the feeling of a supersensible faculty in us...”(134)

“That is sublime which even to be able to think of demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure of the senses” (134)

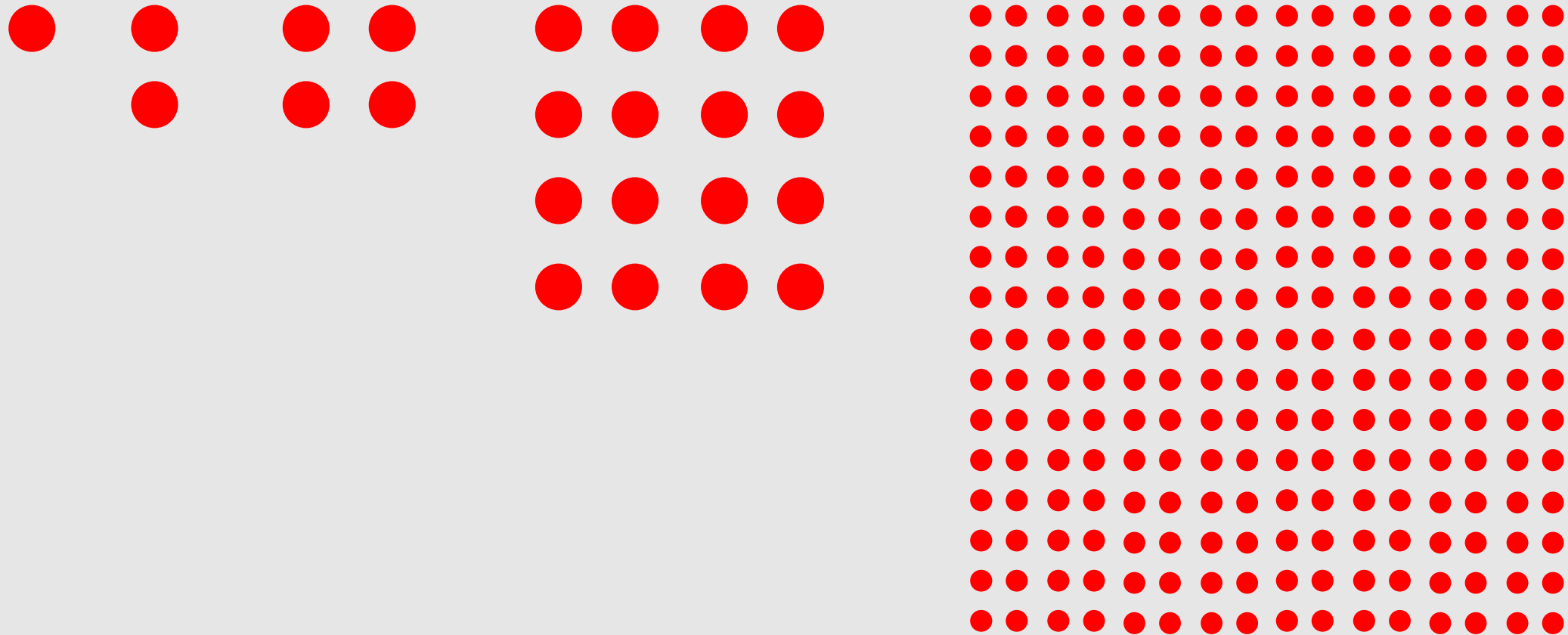
Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“There is no difficulty with apprehension... but comprehension becomes ever more difficult the further apprehension advances, and soon reaches its maximum, namely the aesthetically greatest basic measure for the estimation of magnitude” (135)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

Intuitively estimating magnitude



Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

- The experience of the intuitive magnitude is one of scale.

“ ... that in order to get the full emotional effect of the magnitude of the pyramids one must neither come too close to them nor be too far away. For in the latter case, the parts that are apprehended (the stones piled on top of one another) are represented only obscurely, and their representation has no effect on the aesthetic judgment of the subject. In the former case, however, the eye requires some time to complete its apprehension from the base level to the apex, but during this time the former always partly fades before the imagination has taken in the latter, and the comprehension is never complete.” (135-6)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

"... I only note that if the aesthetic judgment is to be pure... and if an example of that is to be given which is fully appropriate for the critique of the aesthetic power of judgment, then the sublime must not be shown in products of art... nor in natural things whose concept already brings with it a determinate end... but rather in raw nature... merely insofar as it contains magnitude" (136)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“Even a faculty for being able to think the infinite... is great beyond all comparison even with the faculty of mathematical estimation, not, of course, from a theoretical point of view, in behalf of the faculty of cognition, but still as an enlargement of the mind which feels itself empowered to overstep the limits of sensibility from another (practical) point of view. Nature is thus sublime in those of its appearances the intuition of which brings with them the idea of its infinity.” (138)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“Thus, just as the aesthetic power of judgment in judging the beautiful relates the imagination in its free play to the understanding, in order to agree with its concepts in general (without determination of them), so in judging a thing to be sublime the same faculty is related to reason, in order to correspond subjectively with its ideas (though which is undetermined...” (139)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“The feeling of the inadequacy of our capacity for the attainment of an idea that is a law for us is respect.” (140)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“Thus the inner perception of the inadequacy of any sensible standard for the estimation of magnitude by reason corresponds with reason’s laws, and is a displeasure that arouses the feeling of our supersensible vocation in us, in accordance with which it is purposive and thus a pleasure to find every standard of sensibility inadequate for the ideas of the understanding*.” (141)

* The translators have followed the second edition here in translating *Verstandes* as ‘understanding,’ whereas in the first edition it read as *Vernunft* (‘reason’). I’m not totally sure which one it should be. (MCA)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The mathematical sublime

“For just as imagination and understanding produce subjective purposiveness of the powers of the mind in the judging of the beautiful through their unison, so do *imagination and reason* produce subjective purposiveness through their *conflict*: namely, a feeling that we have pure self-sufficient reason, or a faculty for estimating magnitude, whose preeminence cannot be made intuitable through anything except the inadequacy of that faculty which is itself unbounded in the presentation of magnitudes (of sensible objects).” (142, my emph.)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The dynamical sublime

"Power is a capacity that is superior to great obstacles" (143)

- 'Power' is the capacity to overcome things.
- 'Dominion' is one power over another power

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The dynamical sublime

“Nature considered in aesthetic judgment as a power that has no dominion over us is dynamically sublime.” (143)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The dynamical sublime

"We can, however, consider an object as fearful without being afraid of it, if, namely, we judge it in such a way that we merely think of the case in which we might wish to resist it and think that in that case all resistance would be completely futile." (144)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The dynamical sublime

“Bold, overhanging, as it were threatening cliffs, thunder clouds towering up into the heavens, bringing with them flashes of lightning and crashes of thunder, volcanoes with their all-destroying violence, hurricanes with the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean set into a rage, a lofty waterfall on a mighty river, etc., make our capacity to resist into an insignificant trifle in comparison with their power. But the sight of them only becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, as long as we find ourselves in safety, and we gladly call these objects sublime because they elevate the strength of our soul above its usual level...” (144)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The dynamical sublime

“...likewise the irresistibility of its power certainly makes us, considered as natural beings, recognize our physical powerlessness, but at the same time it reveals a capacity for judging ourselves as independent of it and a superiority over nature on which is grounded a self-preservation of quite another kind than that which can be threatened and endangered by nature outside us, whereby the humanity in our person remains undemeaned even though the human being must submit to that dominion.” (145)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The dynamical sublime

“In this way, in our aesthetic judgment nature is judged as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because it calls forth our power (which is not part of nature) to regard those things about which we are concerned (goods, health and life) as trivial, and hence to regard its power (to which we are, to be sure, subjected in regard to these things) as not the sort of dominion over ourselves and our authority to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest principles and their affirmation or abandonment.” (145)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The dynamical sublime

“In this way alone does religion internally distinguish itself from superstition, the latter not providing a basis in the mind for reverence for the sublime, but only for fear and anxiety before the being of superior power, to whose will the terrified person sees himself as subjected without holding him in great esteem; from which of course nothing can arise but the attempt to curry favor and ingratiate oneself, instead of a religion of the good conduct of life.” (147)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The dynamical sublime

“...because it is a dominion that reason exercises over sensibility only in order to enlarge it in a way suitable for its own proper domain (the practical) and to allow it to look out upon the infinite, which for sensibility is an abyss. In fact, without the development of moral ideas, that which we, prepared by culture, call sublime will appear merely repellent to the unrefined person.” (148)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

The dynamical sublime

“...rather [the sublime] has its foundation in human nature, and indeed in that which can be required of everyone and demanded of him along with healthy understanding, namely in the predisposition to the feeling for (practical) ideas, i.e., to that which is moral. This is the ground for the necessity of the assent of the judgment of other people concerning the sublime to our own, which we at the same time include in the latter.”
(149)

Reading Kant's "Analytic of the Sublime"

Criticism of Kant's aesthetic ideas

- Cultural chauvinism
 - (cf. 148)
- Racism (white supremacism)
 - Again 148
 - Also 147
 - the 'normal idea' in the "AotB"
- Classism
 - What conditions are needed to have these feelings empirically?
 - Contemplation
 - The safety of the sublime
 - Etc.
- Human exceptionalism in relation to nature
 - The superiority of our faculties is predicated on the relation of dominance over nature.