BETWEEN INSIGHT AND JUDGMENT: KANT’S CONCEPTION OF GENIUS AND
ITS FATE IN EARLY SCHELLING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate School
of the University of Notre Dame
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Lara Oštarić, B.A., M.A.

______________________________
Karl Ameriks, Director

Graduate Program in Philosophy
Notre Dame, Indiana
July 2006
BETWEEN INSIGHT AND JUDGMENT: KANT’S CONCEPTION OF GENIUS AND ITS FATE IN EARLY SCHELLING

Abstract

by

Lara Oštarić

In this dissertation it will be argued that contrary to many current views the concept of genius is of considerable importance for understanding what is most significant in the aesthetics of German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). In the recent literature on Kant’s aesthetics, it is commonly asserted that Kant’s discussion of genius in the Critique of Judgment is ‘parergonal,’ or merely extrinsic to his aesthetics. Part One reconstructs Kant’s conception of genius and demonstrates that genius, and the art produced by genius, has a fundamental and not only ‘parergonal’ place in Kant’s aesthetics, his moral teleology, and his philosophy of history.

Drawing on the results of Part One, Part Two argues that Schelling, inspired by his early Tübingen Plato studies and Kant’s conception of genius, transformed Kant’s
relatively modest conception of creative subjectivity into a much more ambitious conception of creative agency. According to Kant, there is an aspect of the genius’s production that escapes the complete determination of the understanding because neither the genius nor the observers of its products can account for the steps involved in the genius’s production. But Kant also suggests that even though the genius’s production presupposes a certain privileged intuitive state that is not reached through judgment, this state engages the genius’s rational faculties in such a way that it results in a genius’s insightful judgment which allows genius to determine whether its products meet relevant epistemic standards of intelligibility. Influenced by Plato’s account of poetic inspiration as a state of possession by something divine, Schelling soon transformed the intuitive process of the genius’s creativity in Kant into a genius’s intellectual intuition of the supersensible, leaving a genius bereft of any rational means of discussing the normative aspects of his works. By systematically establishing for the first time the significant connection between Kant’s conception of genius and Schelling’s only recently made available early studies of Plato, Part Two clarifies the still not sufficiently explored issue of the relevance of Plato’s philosophy for the origin of German Idealism.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

A NOTE ON SOURCES ................................................................................................... vi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..................................................................................1

1.1 The Place of Kant’s Conception of Genius in Kant’s Moral Teleology .......... 5

1.2 The Allure of the Platonic Element in Kant’s Conception of Genius for the Origins of German Idealism ................................................................. 9

1.3 Preview ............................................................................................................ 14

PART ONE: KANT’S CONCEPTION OF GENIUS

CHAPTER TWO: NATURE AS ART–KANT’S ACCOUNT OF THE SYSTEMATICITY OF NATURE AS AN INVITATION TO SELF-REFLECTION .... 17

2.1 The Phenomenal and the Noumenal Sense of “Nature in Its Entirety” .... 22

2.2 The Unity of Nature in the Ideas of Reason .................................................... 25

2.3 The “Transcendent” Meaning of Nature in Reflection ................................ 45

2.4 From Nature as a System to Self-reflection ................................................... 54

2.5 The Unity of Theoretical and Practical Reason in Nature’s Systematicity and the Feeling of Pleasure in Reflective Judgment ......................... 62

CHAPTER THREE: ART AS NATURE: FROM SELF-REFLECTION TO SELF-DETERMINATION ................................................................. 68

3.1 Kant’s Conception of “Thin” and “Thick” Forms of Purposiveness .......... 71

3.2 Kant’s Conception of Genius—*Ingenium* or *Genius*? ............................. 76

3.3 Kant’s Account of Genius’s Inspiration as an Extension of Reason .......... 80
# Table of Contents

3.4 Genius’s Spirit as the Power for Producing Original Works of Art.........90

3.5 Genius as the Bridge between the Beauty of Art and the Beauty of Nature...................................................................................................................103


4.1 Paul Guyer’s Recent Account of the Role of Genius in Kant’s Moral Teleology........................................................................................................120

4.2 Transformations in Kant’s Conception of the Moral Image.......................123

4.3 The Moral Image of the World and the Problem of Moral Motivation..........138

4.4 The Work of Genius in Kant as a Source of Moral Motivation....................142

4.5 Fine Art as a Kind of Cognition................................................................164

PART TWO: THE FATE OF KANT’S CONCEPTION OF GENIUS IN EARLY SCHELLING

CHAPTER FIVE: THE WORK OF ART AS THE “DOCUMENT” AND “ORGANON” OF PHILOSOPHY .............................................................................................174

5.1 Schelling’s *Essay on Poets* (August 1792) ............................................. 178

5.2 Schelling’s Account of Creative Production in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (1794) ................................................................. 184

5.3 Schelling’s *Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy* (1795) ................. 203

5.4 The Fate of Kant’s Principle of Purposiveness [*Zweckmässigkeit*].......... 216

5.5 Schelling’s *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* [*Philosophische Briefe Über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus*] (1795) ......................... 220

5.6 Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800)—Art as the *Organon* and Document of Philosophy .........................................................225

AFTERWORD.................................................................................................................233

BIBLIOGRAPHY............................................................................................................237
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to a number of individuals who assisted me in completing this project. I am especially grateful to Karl Ameriks for his guidance and patience with reading many early and inchoate drafts of this dissertation. I am also thankful to my readers David O’Connor, Robert Pippin, and Fred L. Rush, Jr. for their valuable comments and conversations about the issues raised in the dissertation. I am also much indebted to Paul Franks who offered important suggestions at a very early stage of this project; to Gary Gutting and David Burrell who in many ways contributed to my progress and development in graduate school. Special thanks are owed to my fellow graduate students Christian Serafino Johnson and Benjamin Huff who offered philosophical criticism and helpful suggestions regarding my writing style.

I am thankful to Günter Zöller and the participants of his Proseminar at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München for challenging philosophical discussions and a very enriching year in Munich; to Manfred Frank and Violetta Waibel for hosting me in Tübingen on several occasions and for some exciting and joyful philosophical discussions at Manfred Frank’s Stammtisch.
I owe gratitude to the following institutions: to the *Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst*, for a fellowship that freed me from duties of a teaching assistant at Notre Dame and allowed me to conduct my research in Germany; to the *Schelling-Kommision der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, especially Jörg Jantzen and Paul Ziche for sharing with me the then unpublished edition of Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) edited by the *Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften* and for generously offering advice on sources related to Schelling’s early writings.

A version of Chapter Two was presented at the American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division in March 2005 and I thank my commentator Béatrice Longuenesse and the audience for insightful questions and comments. An early draft of Chapter Three was presented at The North American Kant Society in April 2004 and I am indebted to the workshop participants for their suggestions and criticisms. A version of Chapter Four was presented at The Tenth International Kant Congress, Sao Paulo, in September 2005 and I would like to thank the participants for a helpful discussion.

Finally, I am infinitely grateful to my parents for their unconditional love and support and to Tonci for bearing with me through all these for us difficult years.
A NOTE ON SOURCES

KANT

Apart from the Kritik der reinen Vernunft [Critique of Pure Reason], all references to Kant’s writings are to the appropriate volume (in upper case roman numerals) and page number of Kants gesammelte Schriften (AA), edited by the Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (formerly the Königlichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften), 29 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900-). References to the Kritik der reinen Vernunft are to the standard A and B pagination of the first and the second editions (1781 and 1787 respectively). Citations to Reflexionen are made by reference to the reflection number, followed by the relevant volume and page number in AA. Citations to student notes from Kant’s lectures on metaphysics are made by reference to the common title for the set of notes, followed by the relevant volume and page number in AA, and by the page number in Kant, I. (1997). Lectures on Metaphysics. ed. and trans. by Ameriks, Karl and Naragon, Steve, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Below is the list of abbreviations of Kant’s works together with the information on the English translations I have consulted.


ET  *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie*. 1796. [“On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy,” in Fenves (1993), pp. 51-81.]


**SCHELLING**

The edition of Schelling’s works I have used is *Sämtliche Werke-Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe*, edited by the Schelling-Kommision der Bayerische Akademie der
Wissenschaften, Vol. 2, edited by Hartmut Buchner and Jörg Jantzen, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart, 1980. However, all references to Schelling’s works are to the appropriate volume and page number of Schelling, F.W.J., Sämtliche Werke, edited by K.F.A. Schelling, Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1856-1861. I have also used the then unpublished edition of Schelling’s System des Transcendentalen Idealismus 1800 which has recently appeared in Sämtliche Werke-Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe, edited by the Schelling-Kommission der Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vol. 9, edited by K. Hermann, H. Korten, and P. Ziche. References to Schelling’s unpublished early Tübingen Plato studies are to Manfred Franz’s transcription of them in Manfred Franz, Schellings Tübingen Plato-Studien, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1996, pp. 284-319, followed by the appropriate page number in the original writings in Schelling’s Studienhefte located in the Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. I have also used Schelling’s commentary on Plato’s Timaeus, edited by Hartmut Buchner, and published by Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1994.

Below is the list of abbreviations of Schelling’s works together with the information on the English translations I have consulted.


OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES

FICHTE


Below is the list of abbreviations used in the dissertation.


HEGEL


HÖLDERLIN


PLATO

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, contrary to many current views, it will be argued that the concept of genius is of considerable importance for understanding what is most significant in the aesthetics of German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). In the recent literature on Kant’s aesthetics, it is commonly asserted that Kant’s discussion of genius in the *Critique of Judgment* is ‘parergonal,’ or merely extrinsic to his aesthetics. Part One of this dissertation reconstructs Kant’s conception of genius and demonstrates that genius, and the art produced by genius, has a fundamental and not only ‘parergonal’ place in Kant’s aesthetics, his moral teleology, and his philosophy of history. Drawing on the results of Part One, in Part Two, by taking the early Schelling as a test case, I argue that the place of genius in Kant’s system of transcendental idealism helps elucidate still not sufficiently explored Platonic strands of German Idealism.

If modern aesthetics is analyzed into its types, then one can distinguish an aesthetics that proceeds from the observer from one for which the evaluation of the work of art is central. This evaluation can be based on a judgment of the observer that presupposes rational principles, or, as in the empiricist version of this type of aesthetics, the evaluation can be based on the sensations of the observer. A second type of modern
aesthetics ascribes evaluative predicates to a work of art based on the estimation of the degree of talent of the artist who is the originator of the work of art. This is either an expressionist aesthetics or an aesthetics of genius. Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* represents clearly an aesthetics of taste, of the subtype that presupposes rational principles of the observer—except for a brief discussion on genius which is also a contribution to expressionist aesthetics. This discussion has a systematic and historical significance that goes far beyond its modest length.

In sections 46-50 of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment in his *Critique of Judgment*, Kant discusses his conception of artistic genius. According to Kant, “genius is the inborn predisposition of the mind (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art” (KdU, AA V, 307). Kant’s definition of genius and his brief discussion of fine art as the art of genius in the *Critique of Judgment* had a profound influence on Romanticism and its glorification of originality in the creative artist. Kant’s reflections in these passages on freedom of the human spirit and the works which express its free productivity\(^1\) inspired German Idealists to construct an ontology that regards the whole world as an expression of freedom and as exhibiting something analogous to the originality of the human spirit.\(^2\) Kant’s conceptions of genius as exemplary, free and original artistic production has also shaped the discussions in contemporary aesthetics.

---

\(^1\) The term ‘freedom’ in these artistic contexts is not meant directly to imply freedom in Kant’s ‘transcendental’ sense, that is, as an uncaused causing.

\(^2\) See Gould, Timothy, “Genius—Conceptual and Historical Overview,” in Kelly (1998). Consider also the following passage from “Das sogenannte Älteste Systemprogramm des Deutschen Idealismus (1796)”: “The first idea is, of course, the representation of myself as an absolutely free being. With this free, self-conscious being a whole world comes into existence—out of nothing—the only true and conceivable creation from nothing” [Bernstein (2003), p. 185].
Contemporary aesthetics is still looking to answer the questions raised by Kant’s discussion of genius: where does the special character of art come from, does art have a special claim on us, do artists have special capacities that the rest of us lack, can artistic production be taught, what is the role of common culture and artistic tradition in shaping talent?³

Given the enormous influence Kant’s discussion of genius had on the development of post-Kantian philosophy and formation of contemporary discourse in aesthetics, it is puzzling that it has been somewhat neglected by contemporary commentators in the Anglo-American literature. Most discussions of Kant’s aesthetics are devoted to what I would call canonical questions concerning topics such as the universality, the deduction, or the antinomy of Kant’s aesthetic judgment. Philosophers on the Continent have been reluctant to give Kant’s discussion of genius any attention given the dangerous misuse of this issue in recent European history. In addition, the trend in postmodern discourse has been to emphasize texts rather than their authors.⁴ Those Kant scholars who feel

³ See Eldridge (2003), pp. 102-103.

⁴ The theory of genius in Kant’s philosophy was of interest to Kant scholars on the Continent at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. See especially O. Schlapp, *Kants Lehre vom Genie und die Entstehung der “Kritik der Urteilskraft,”* Göttingen, 1901; O. Schöndörffer, “Kants Definition vom Genie,” *Altpreussische Monatsschrift*, 1893, xxx; O. Wichmann, “Kants Begriff vom Genie und seine Bedeutung,” *Deutsche Akademische Rundschau*, Jhg. II, 12 Sem., Folge N. 2, 7, 15 Jan. 1925. But these treatments of the topic are rather archaic and neither properly historical nor philosophical. More recently Kant’s theory of genius was discussed by Giorgio Tonelli, “Kant’s Early Theory of Genius (1770-1779),” in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 4, 1966, Part I pp. 109-31, Part II pp. 209-224. Tonelli’s article is a detailed study of Kant’s *Nachlass* and illuminates Kant’s conception of genius in the period 1770-1779 by presenting it against Kant’s cultural background. However, Tonelli never attempts to speculate on the relevance of the concept of genius for Kant’s aesthetic theory as a whole, or the place of this concept in Kant’s system of transcendental idealism. Jochen Schmidt’s two-volume study is a history of this concept in German philosophy.
compelled to address these sections of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* concede that in Kant’s sections on genius “it is not easy to discern […] a progression of connected thought”\(^5\) and that, although Kant’s account of genius is not without any real importance or interest, “its importance and interest remain extrinsic to the theory of taste itself.”\(^6\)

And indeed, it is not easy to find consistency in Kant’s emphasis on the form and universal intelligibility of beauty on the one hand and, on the other, his description of artistic genius as “a talent for producing that for which no determinate rule can be given” (KdU, AA V, 307). Moreover, even if one is successful in finding consistency in Kant’s discussion of genius and the earlier parts of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment, it still seems that Kant’s discussion of fine art does not bring anything new to his aesthetic theory that he does not already introduce in his discussion of natural beauty. In fact, it seems Kant considers natural beauty to be superior to artistic beauty because “the beautiful in art […] provides no proof of a way of thinking that is devoted to the morally good or even merely inclined to it” whereas “by contrast […] an immediate interest in the beauty of nature (not merely to have taste in order to judge it) is always a mark of a good soul” (KdU, AA V, 298). Thus, it is not surprising that some commentators take the

---

\(^5\) Schaper (1992), p. 385

sections on genius and fine art in the *Critique of Judgment* to be “parergonal”\(^7\) to Kant’s theory of taste.

1.1 The Place of Kant’s Conception of Genius in Kant’s Moral Teleology

The views of the commentators who treat Kant’s discussion of genius as an interesting episode that ultimately remains extrinsic to his aesthetic theory follows from their general approach to the *Critique of Judgment*, which often concentrates on the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and its contribution to modern aesthetics without any regard for Kant’s systematic ends in the third *Critique* as a whole.\(^8\) In contrast to these commentators, I will argue that the proper understanding of Kant’s aesthetics, and especially his views on art and genius in the *Critique of Judgment*, can only be understood once we adopt a “systematic” approach to this work and once we ask

---

\(^7\) Allison (2001), p. 272. Also, Paul Guyer in his *Kant and the Claims of Taste* does not even address Kant’s conception of genius. He includes this topic at the end of the book’s second edition, but again only as marginally relevant to Kant’s aesthetics.

\(^8\) Thus, for example, Eva Schaper admits that there are two possible ways of approaching Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. One she calls the “systematic approach,” which stresses the unity of the work and the relevance of the work for building a bridge between *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*. The other approach considers Critique of Aesthetic Judgment to be independent of Critique of Teleological Judgment. According to Schaper, the “systematic” approach to the third *Critique* is promising for answering the questions regarding the possibility of judgment as such. By adopting the second approach and focusing on the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment it is possible to identify, argues Schaper, Kant’s major contributions to aesthetics. See Schaper (1992), pp. 367-368. This idea is developed in later discussions by, for example, Ginsborg and Guyer.
ourselves what role Kant’s thoughts on aesthetics play in his system of transcendental idealism.⁹

Kant’s system culminates in the final end of reason, that is, morality understood as the realization of our moral ends in the world, a realization that constitutes the entire vocation of human beings. According to Kant, we are beings of both freedom and nature. Thus, even though we are self-determining, i.e., capable of determining our will in accordance with the moral law, we are also creatures of nature and sensibility. As creatures of both freedom and sensibility, we distinguish between what is and what ought to be done, and it is not always the case that we formulate proper moral intentions. Moreover, our moral ends are to be realized in this world, which is governed by mechanical laws and principles unlike our own rational principles. Hence, the natural world is not necessarily cooperative with our rational ends. Given this dual nature of moral agency and the infinite separation between moral agency and the world in which its actions take place, there remains a problem for Kant of how to connect the categorical force of the moral law with the motivational aspects of individual autonomy.

When approached strictly from the perspective of the Analytic of the Beautiful of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant’s aesthetic theory seems to suggest that beauty concerns merely the satisfaction of the *minimal* demands of our rationality. This is because if something is to be judged as beautiful it must set our cognitive faculties into a state of free harmony that accords with the conditions for any cognition in general. But, according to Kant, beauty’s purposive form also satisfies the *ends* of our rationality. This

⁹ Here I would like to thank Violetta Waibel who, upon my visit to Tübingen at the very early stage of this project, urged me to consider why Kant intended to place Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and Critique of Teleological Judgment in one book.
is because it embodies a practical norm, so that the experience of beauty serves as a sign that nature, both our sensible nature and the world around us, may be cooperative with our highest vocation, which is to realize morality in the world. Thus, while the Critique of Teleological judgment, which discusses our need to represent nature as if it were a product of an intentional design, connects the categorical force of the moral law with the motivational aspects of our autonomy at the level of our understanding, the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment connects the categorical force of the moral law with the motivational aspects of our autonomy at the level of our sensibility.⁠¹⁰

If we approach Kant’s aesthetics with these systematic interests in mind, then Kant’s conception of genius represents an interesting “border image.” Unlike ordinary human subjectivity, which is characterized by an opposition between freedom and nature, genius, on Kant’s view, represents a special unity of free human activity and nature. On the one hand, in the figure of a genius the self gives the rule, or the law, to nature through its free and intentional activity. In other words, genius through its creation transforms nature into objects which—although still subject to nature’s mechanical laws—are primarily expressions of human consciousness. On the other hand, it is nature that, through genius, gives the rule to art. Put differently, the products of genius exhibit an originality of form that, unlike the form of other human products, does not lend itself to systematization, and, hence, cannot be fully exhausted by the judgment of its creator. Moreover, the form of the genius’s works is not empty, an “original nonsense” (KdU, AA

---

¹⁰ My thanks here go to Paul Guyer whose question after my presentation at the International Kant Congress in Sao Paulo, September 2005, helped me see even more clearly the complementary relation between the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and the Critique of Teleological Judgment.
V, 308), but rather serves as an exemplary model, or a “standard or a rule for judging” (KdU, AA V, 308).

Some recent commentators have one-sidedly emphasized Kant’s view of genius as a law-giver and have taken genius’s originality as a paradigmatic form of human autonomy. For these commentators, the genius in Kant’s third Critique can be called a “possessor.”

Hence these commentators do not treat genius in Kant’s third Critique as at the same time an autonomous giver of the law and a passive agent of nature. They interpret the meaning of “nature” in Kant’s definition of genius in terms of the genius’s special psychological capacities. In contrast to these commentators, I will argue that “nature” in Kant’s definition of genius primarily signifies the Idea of nature as a system, which in turn invites the thought of its supersensible substrate. On my view then, nature is not just another aspect of but, rather, something that transcends creative subjectivity. Hence, on my reading, genius in Kant’s third Critique is not only a “possessor,” insofar as its production is free and mediated by judgment, but it is also “possessed,” insofar as genius presupposes something that goes beyond its creative subjectivity through the notion of an order that is purposive for human faculties in general, and goes beyond the minimum required for knowledge and action to occur at all.

By emphasizing a transcendent aspect in the creativity of genius in Kant’s third Critique, the aim of Part One of this dissertation is to show that the place of Kant’s discussion of genius in the Critique of Judgment has been misunderstood and


12 This understanding of “nature” in Kant’s definition of genius has also been argued by William Desmond in Desmond (1998).
underestimated. Because the purposive form of the art of genius exhibits nature’s supersensible substrate, genius, and the art produced by genius, just like the beauty of nature serves as a sign that our sensible nature and the world may be cooperative with the ends of our rationality.

1.2 The Allure of the Platonic Element in Kant’s Conception of Genius for the Origins of German Idealism

Dieter Henrich has argued that there is an aspect of Plato’s philosophy in Kant’s system of transcendental idealism:

Kant never identifies freedom with reason. His only claim is that reason becomes a system and a meaningful whole if we understand freedom as its ultimate destination. It follows that one cannot deduce a philosophical system starting from freedom. One has to understand that reason is a system by which one arrives at freedom and, with the incorporation of freedom, the structure becomes self-supporting. For this reason […] Kant describes the philosophical enterprise with the Platonic metaphor of ascent: one arrives at the ultimate principle not at the beginning, but at the end of the philosophical system […] one arrives at freedom as the concept that interprets all the connections of rational activity.¹³

In the above passage, Henrich refers to Kant’s metaphor of reason as a vault whose keystone is freedom in the second Critique.¹⁴ By freedom Kant here does not understand

---


¹⁴ In the second Critique Kant writes:

Now, that the concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, constitutes the keystone of the whole structure of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason; and all other concepts (those of God and immortality), which as mere ideas remain without support in the letter, now
mere transcendental freedom, that is, the fact that our actions are not externally
determined. Instead, Kant here has in mind freedom also in the full positive sense, that is,
our capacity to recognize the moral laws of our reason as binding. With freedom Kant’s
system, just like the vault with a keystone, becomes stable. In other words, freedom is the
principle that holds Kant’s system together by representing an end towards which all our
rational activities, theoretical and practical, are directed. But Henrich emphasizes that
Kant’s discovery of freedom as a “keystone” was not at the beginning of Kant’s
philosophical system. What preceded it was a long chain of his theoretical arguments for
transcendental idealism in the Critique of Pure Reason, which left space first for the
possibility of the postulates of freedom, God, and immortality. This was followed by the
attempts to give theoretical deductions of freedom and morality, which Kant finally gave
up in the second Critique where he claims that freedom is a “fact of reason” (KdpV, AA
V, 31). By the time of the latter work, Kant implies that freedom in its positive sense and

attach themselves to this concept and with it and by means of it get stability and
objective reality, that is, their possibility is proved by this: that freedom is real, for
this idea reveals itself through the moral law” (KdpV, AA V, 3-4).

For Kant now there is no way except through morality for claiming that there is absolute
freedom:

Lest anyone suppose that he finds inconsistency when I now call freedom the
condition of the moral law and afterwards, in the treaties, maintain that the moral
law is the condition under which we can first become aware of freedom, I want
only to remark that whereas freedom is indeed the ratio essendi of the moral law,
the moral law is the ratio cognoscendi of freedom. For, had not the moral law
already been distinctly thought in our reason, we should never consider ourselves
justified in assuming such a thing as freedom (even though it is not self-
contradictory). But were there no freedom, the moral law would not be
encountered at all in ourselves. (KdpV, AA V, 5n)
morality cannot be arrived at by means of a theoretical proof but its claim is certain for us as a fundamental practical law, a synthetic a priori proposition of reason.

Thus, even though Kant’s “fact of reason” is not reached by a proof, or reasoning, it still signifies an act of reason. In other words, even if Kant’s “fact of reason” is not reached through theoretical judgment, it results in a judgment, more specifically a judgment that implies freedom. But, against Kant’s own intentions, his appeal to this kind of a special “moral insight” was alluring to German Idealists who argued that a philosophical system should not rest on a mere fact and end with a principle of unity, but rather should begin with some absolutely certain foundation into which philosophers have a special insight. While the German Idealists rejected the aspect of Plato’s philosophy that Kant admired—that is, the aspect of gradual philosophical ascent—it can be argued that they embraced the aspect of Platonism against which Kant passionately argued, that is, mysticism. For Kant, Platonic mysticism amounts to exaltation [Schwärmerei], which stands not only for intellectual laziness but also irrationality.

15 See Ameriks (2003a), Part II.


17 Kant means to criticize Plato here, but his critique of Platonic exalted insights in the Critique of Pure Reason (see KdrV, A5/B9, A314/B371, A466/B494-A476/B504, A853/B881-A854/B882) and the essay “On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy (1796)” (see ET, AA VIII) is not entirely justified because for Plato we gain insight into the form of the Good. The Good is something that is normative for us and, therefore, cannot be irrational. Dieter Henrich has also pointed out this ambiguity in Kant’s critique of Plato’s intellectual intuition arguing that Kant merely “translated” these Platonic insights into “forms of mental activity and eliminated the possibility of interpreting them in terms of ‘intellectual intuition’” [Henrich (2003), p. 69]. This point was also made by Reinhold in his Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie (1787/88) and it is possible that it influenced Schelling.
This is because, on Kant’s view, an exalted thinker [Schwärmer] claims that he can have a special theoretical knowledge of the supersensible through intellectual intuition, which for Kant can only be an object of practical reason.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, the German Idealists followed what Kant called in his Introduction to the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} a “customary fate of human reason,” which is to “finish its edifice as early as possible and only then to investigate whether the ground has been adequately prepared for it” (KdrV, A5/B9). But, according to Kant, such a procedure inevitably leads to metaphysical dogmatism because “at that point all sorts of excuses will be sought to assure us of its sturdiness or to refuse such a late and dangerous examination” (KdrV, A5/B9).

In Part Two of this dissertation, which focuses on Schelling’s early philosophical writings, I argue that Kant’s conception of genius offered the German Idealists a mystical Platonic allure that transcended his “fact of reason.” In Kant’s account of genius in the third \textit{Critique}, there is an aspect of the genius’s production that escapes the complete determination of the understanding. Kant suggests that a genius’s products exhibit a rule, and its works are an outcome of an intentional activity, and yet neither the genius nor the observers of its products can account for the steps involved in the genius’s production. It seems that, on Kant’s view, the genius’s production presupposes a privileged intuitive state that resembles Plato’s \textit{mantikē} and \textit{enthousiasmos}, which is a state of mind in which the poet says things that are beyond his normal comprehension and in which the poet is

\textsuperscript{18} It has been recently argued by Derrida that Kant’s ardent criticism of Plato’s \textit{Schwärmerei} shows a passion that resembles the passion he criticizes in others. See Derrida, “Raising the Tone of Philosophy,” in Fenves (1993).
considered to be in a state of possession by something divine. But Kant also suggests that even though the genius’s production presupposes a certain privileged intuitive state that is not reached through judgment, this state engages the genius’s rational faculties in such a way that it results in a genius’s insightful judgment. According to Kant, the genius’s production is characterized by a series of evaluative acts, i.e., judgments, which allow genius to determine whether its products meet relevant epistemic standards of intelligibility. Kant’s account of genius denies the Platonic notion of exaltation [Schwärmerei] by suggesting that the genius’s production must be mediated by judgment, and that the genius must have taste. Kant’s account is thus consistent with the values of the Enlightenment and its emphasis on the progress of science and rationality. And even if this state of creative production, or inspiration, is followed by enthusiasm [Begeisterung], which Kant takes to be a state of spirited excitement, this enthusiasm [Begeisterung] is not to be confused with exaltation [Schwärmerei]. The early Schelling, however, was motivated to ground a much more ambitious philosophical system than Kant’s, one based on an absolute first principle. Influenced by his studies of Plato and Kant’s conception of genius, Schelling soon transformed the intuitive process of the genius’s creativity into a genius’s intellectual intuition.

This connection between Kant’s sections on genius and Schelling’s so-called “aesthetics of genius” [Genieästhetik] has already been discussed to some extent in recent

---

literature on Schelling. But unlike these commentators, who limit the influence of Kant’s conception of genius to Schelling’s 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, I demonstrate that these sections of Kant’s third *Critique* had a much stronger *formative* influence on Schelling’s philosophy prior to 1800. By *systematically* establishing for the first time the significant connection between Kant’s conception of genius and Schelling’s early studies of Plato—which only recently became available to the German speaking audience and which have been barely discussed in the English speaking philosophical community—Part Two of this dissertation clarifies the still not sufficiently explored issue of the relevance of Plato’s philosophy for the origin of German Idealism.

1.3 Preview

The argument outlined above is reflected in the structure of the dissertation. In Chapter Two, I discuss the meaning of “nature” in Kant’s definition of genius. I argue that “nature” in Kant’s definition should be understood primarily in terms of the Idea of nature as a system, an Idea which ultimately implies for Kant a supersensible substrate. In this chapter I discuss a number of Kant’s critical writings, including some of


21 Some commentators have recently made cursory remarks that there may be a connection between Kant’s conception of genius and Schelling’s early reception of Plato. See for example Düsing (1988) and more recently Bubner (2003).

his rarely discussed Lectures on Metaphysics, in order to show that this meaning of
“nature” persistently occurs throughout Kant’s critical thought. Thus, even though in the
third Critique Kant does not explicitly state what he takes to be the meaning of “nature”
in his definition of genius, it is still not impossible, as some commentators suggest, to
determine its meaning.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the meaning of Kant’s claim that the works of genius
exhibit a rule. My aim in this chapter is to show that the genius’s creative production is,
on the one hand a result of judgment, because its products exhibit a certain rule, and, on
the other hand, it is also a result of an intuitive process, because a genius cannot
summarize the rule of its act of production. I argue that even though a genius’s act of
production is a result of the genius’s intuitive process, the rule exhibited in the works of a
genius embodies an epistemic and practical normativity.

In Chapter Four, after giving an overview of Kant’s conception of the highest good in
his major writings on ethics, I show that, on Kant’s view, aesthetic Ideas in the works of
genius indirectly exhibit the Idea of the highest good. Because the works of genius
indirectly exhibit the highest good, they serve as a sign that nature is hospitable to the
realization of our moral ends. Thus, these works help prevent demoralization and serve as
a source of moral motivation. Moreover, because according to Kant the progress of
culture brings us further away from nature, I conclude that the works of genius have a
special place in Kant’s philosophy of history. I argue that they serve as crucial signs and
stimulants of our moral destiny.

In Chapter Five, I argue that the place of genius in Kant’s system of transcendental
idealism and its moral teleology, that is, its mediating role between the intelligible and
sensible realms, influenced the young Schelling. Unlike Kant, whose systematic ends merely exhibited a compatibility between the intelligible and the sensible realm, Schelling was motivated to ground a much more ambitious philosophical system aimed at the unity of the intelligible and sensible realm. Inspired by his early Tübingen Plato studies, Schelling soon transformed Kant’s relatively modest conception of creative subjectivity into an absolute ‘I,’ an ‘I’ that fully transcends any division between the sensible and the intelligible realm.
CHAPTER TWO

NATURE AS ART–KANT’S ACCOUNT OF THE SYSTEMATICITY OF NATURE AS AN INVITATION TO SELF-REFLECTION

—Vielleicht ist nie etwas Erhabeneres gesagt, oder ein Gedanke erhabener ausgedrückt worden, als in jener Aufschrift über dem Tempel der Isis (der Mutter Natur): “Ich bin alles, was da ist, was da war, und was sein wird, und meinen Schleier hat kein Sterblicher aufgedeckt.”

1 Kant defines genius as “the inborn predisposition of the mind (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art” (KdU, AA V, 307). The purpose of this chapter is to interpret the meaning of the concept “nature” Kant uses in the above definition. I will argue that the meaning of “nature” Kant uses in the above definition is neither (1) in its empirical sense, i.e., as a physical nature, nor even (2) nature in its phenomenal sense—a totality of appearances, that, through its laws, conditions one to have better or worse cognitive capacities or talent—but rather (3) it is the meaning of “nature” in its noumenal sense. In other words, by “nature” in the above definition of genius Kant refers to that which serves as the ground of the unity of nature and which is implicated in his various

1 KdU, AA V, 317n.
considerations of nature as a system. According to Kant, nature’s amenability to the
demands of our reason cannot be explained in terms of mechanical laws, that is, the fact
that nature’s structure just happens to coincide with the demands of our reason. On
Kant’s view, nature’s amenability to our rational ordering requires a supposition that
nature is designed for our understanding by an intelligence analogous to ours. This is the
reason why Kant compares nature to “art” (EE, AA XX, 204), where the term “art”
should be understood in terms of the Greek word techné that is best translated something
like “crafts.”

At the same time this chapter is intended as a reply to Béatrice Longuenesse’s article
“The Transcendental Ideal and the Unity of the Critical System.” In this article,
Longuenesse summarizes the core of her argument as follows: “I do think that the
Analytic, together with its Appendix, was sufficient to offer an account for systematicity
which does away with the ontological illusion carried by the ideal of pure reason.”
There is much in Kant that invites one to shuffle—just as Longuenesse does—the
regulative role of Ideas and their transcendental function in making the experience of

---

2 For Kant, the use of this concept of an intelligent designer remains strictly
regulative. This means that the concept of an intelligent designer is something we must
presuppose in order to be able to represent nature to ourselves as a system. We would be
overstepping the boundaries of our understanding if we were to make any claims,
whether positive or negative, with respect to the existence of this metaphysical ground of
nature.


nature possible under the heading of reason’s “own practical purposes.” However, I believe that Longuenesse is mistaken in claiming that the Ideas of reason, such as the Ideal of pure reason, are necessary only for Kant’s moral theology while being dispensable in reason’s theoretical function, i.e., the function of representing the nature for our understanding as a unity. According to Kant, our reason has an “urgent need to presuppose” (KdrV, A584/B612) the unconditioned for everything that it finds conditioned in nature and it has “the unquenchable desire to find a firm footing beyond all bounds of experience” (KdrV, A796/B824). For Kant there is only one reason with two distinct functions, or fields of application, namely, theoretical and practical, rather than two distinct reasons, that is, a theoretical reason and a practical reason. Thus, this urgent and unquenchable need is not only the need of reason in its practical function, or even less so of practical reason, but the need of reason as such. Thus, even though it may be possible to explain nature’s systematicity only in terms of mechanical laws, without any appeal to teleological principles, and without the assumption of nature’s supersensible ground, to claim that Kant’s appeal to certain metaphysical principles in order to explain nature’s systematicity is dispensible for reason’s theoretical purposes commits one either to the claim that reason for Kant does not have a final end, i.e.,

---

5 Longuenesse (1995), p. 5. Longuenesse’s suggestion that the sole purpose of certain metaphysical principles in Kant is Kant’s practical philosophy may be confirmed by Kant’s following claim:

All the despisers of metaphysics, who wanted thereby to give themselves the appearance of having clear heads, also had their own metaphysics, even Voltaire. For everyone will still think something about their own soul. [...] Reason would want to give up all other sciences rather than this. These questions concern its highest interest, and to say reason should no longer occupy us with these matters is to say it should stop being reason” (Metaphysik Mrongovius [1782-1783], AA XXIX, 765, 126).
morality, or that Kant has a conception of two distinct reasons, i.e., a theoretical and a practical reason. Therefore, in contrast to Longuenesse, I argue that the notion of the metaphysical ground of the unity of nature is an indispensable and a necessary notion for reason in both its theoretical and practical functions but that this need of reason to presuppose such a notion can only find its satisfaction in the latter.

Finally, by arguing that “nature is art,” or in other words, that we experience nature as if created by an intelligent designer (in the third Critique), or as an imperfect, i.e., “conditioned” copy of a perfect, i.e., “unconditioned” reality (in the first Critique), Kant suggests that our investigation of nature should at the same time be a reflection on ourselves. In the following passage taken from the Lectures on Metaphysics Kant explains his turn from the thought of nature’s systematicity to the process of reflecting on ourselves as subjects: “When we cannot advance with the object, then it is good to direct our attention itself to the subject itself, and this had to come about some time, for if I cannot be certain of things speculatively, I still must be certain of the sources, boundaries, and principles of reason.” In other words, in encountering “nature as art” we are invited to reflect on the possibility of nature being a product of an intelligent author. Since the

---

6 Here I have in mind various principles that serve this function in Kant’s different writings and different contexts, whether it is the Ideal of pure reason and the ens realissimum of the first Critique, or the Idea of the supersensible and intellectus archetypus of the third Critique. Later in the chapter I will explain the specific context in which each of these principles are employed.

7 Consider KdpV, AA V, 121.

8 In the First Introduction to the Critique of Judgment Kant writes: “Natur als Kunst, mit anderen Worten der Technik der Natur” (EE, AA XX, 204).

9 Metaphysik Mrongovius (1782-1783), AA XXIX, 780, 135.
author is not given to our senses in the same way the objects in nature are, we turn to reflect on our cognitive capacities, understanding and reason, and their limitations. According to Kant, it is this that constitutes “the point of view of man”\(^\text{10}\) and “essentially defines the kind of beings we are.”\(^\text{11}\) Thus, it is no accident that Kant mentions repeatedly within the context of his discussion of the unconditioned ground of the unity of nature, and in the span of only six pages, “our reflective judgment” (KdU, AA V, 398), “our human understanding” (KdU, AA V, 406), “human understanding” (KdU, AA V, 405), “human judgment” (KdU, AA V, 404), “human point of view” (KdU, AA V, 403; KdU, AA V, 400)\(^\text{12}\).

Therefore, I believe we should accept only with reservations Longuenesse’s claim that “Kant’s incredible systematic achievement,” is in “his overturning of rationalist metaphysics in favor of a completely new definition of what it means to think or know anything at all.”\(^\text{13}\) Consistent with my overall emphasis on the essential significance of the “unconditioned” (first Critique), or the “supersensible ground” (third Critique) for laying out the specificities of our human way of knowing or thinking I claim that Kant’s relation to his rationalist predecessors cannot adequately be described as Kant’s successful “overturning,” “overthrowing”\(^\text{14}\) of rationalist metaphysics. I argue that,

\(^\text{10}\) Longuenesse (2000).


\(^\text{12}\) The emphasis in these quotations is mine.


although always consistent with his critical position, one must acknowledge how Kant’s views remain deeply indebted to his rationalist predecessors.  

### 2.1 The Phenomenal and the Noumenal Sense of “Nature in Its Entirety”

It is important to acknowledge that Kant does not refer to nature only in one sense. The purpose of this section is to identify the central meanings the concept “nature” can take in Kant’s different writings and to isolate the meaning that is central for the purposes of this chapter.

In Metaphysik L1\(^\text{16}\) Kant already distinguishes between nature as the “internal first ground of that which belongs to the actuality of a thing” (AA XXVIII, 216, 37) and the “entirety of nature,” or “nature in general” (AA XXVIII, 216, 37). What nature is to existing objects in actuality, essence is to the concept of an object that does not exist in reality.  

Thus, only existing things have a nature, and a triangle, which Kant gives as an example, does not have a nature because it is not an actual object but the work of imagination in our pure intuition. Later in the Metaphysik Mrongovius Kant continues to...

---

\(^{15}\) I share this view with Karl Ameriks and Allen Wood. See Ameriks (2006) and Wood (1978). This is not to deny that this is compatible with also stressing that Kant does criticize many specific rationalist claims.

\(^{16}\) These Lectures were written in mid-1770s (AA XXVIII, 195-301) and, thus, belong to Kant’s pre-critical period and are not indicative of his mature critical position.

\(^{17}\) In the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (1786), Kant also distinguishes between the nature of an existing object and the essence of an object that does not exist in empirical reality, such as geometrical figures. See MadN, AA IV, 468 and 468n. In Metaphysik Mrongovius Kant refers to the difference between nature and essence in terms of the difference between cognizing the predicate of a thing synthetically (as the ground of the actuality of a thing) and cognizing it analytically (as the ground of its possibility).
distinguish between these two senses of nature to which he refers as nature in its “adjectival sense” (AA XXIX, 869, 239), i.e., that which we predicate of an individual existing object, and nature in its “substantive sense” (AA XXIX, 869, 239), i.e., not as a predicate of an individual existing thing but as nature in its entirety. A similar distinction between nature of an individual existing object and nature in its entirety appears later in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*:

If the word nature is taken simply in its formal meaning, where it means the first inner principle of all that belongs to the existence of a thing, then there can be as many different natural sciences as there are specifically different things […] but nature is also taken otherwise in its material meaning, not as a constitution, but as the sum total of all things, insofar as they can be objects of our senses, and thus also of experience. Nature, in this meaning, is therefore understood as the whole of all appearances, that is, the sensible world, excluding all the nonsensible objects. (MadN, AA IV, 467)

The meaning of nature in its entirety in this passage corresponds to what Kant in the Architectonic of Pure Reason of the first *Critique* calls the physical or immanent sense of nature, or “nature so far as its cognition can be applied in experience” (KdrV, A845/B874). This meaning of nature amounts to “sum total of all objects of the senses” (KdrV, A846/B874) and can further be divided into the sum total of objects of outer sense, that is corporeal nature, and the sum total of objects of inner sense, that is, thinking nature (KdrV, A846/B874). The science pertaining to the former¹⁸ Kant calls “rational

---

¹⁸ Here I mean metaphysics, or the science of nature that operates on pure *a priori* principles. Kant also has a concept of empirical science of nature, such as empirical physics and empirical psychology. By empirical psychology, for example, Kant understands the observations of psychological phenomena such as “joy, contentment” (Metaphysik Mrongovius, AA XXIX, 757, 119). By metaphysics of nature he understands the “doctrine of nature proper” (Metaphysik Mrongovius, AA XXIX, 755,
physics” (KdrV, A846/B874), or the “doctrine of body” (MadN, AA IV, 467), and the science of the latter “rational psychology” (KdrV, A846/B874), or the “doctrine of the soul” (MadN, AA IV, 467). However, the Architectonic of Pure Reason in the first Critique does not focus only on this phenomenal aspect of nature in its entirety as does the Metaphysics of Natural Science. The Architectonic considers also the “hyperphysical” or “transcendent” (KdrV, A845/B874) meaning of nature that pertains to “that connection of the objects of experience which surpasses all experience” (KdrV, A845/B874). This “transcendent” (KdrV, A845/B874) sense of nature I take to be already anticipated in Metaphysik L1: “But the sum of the particular natures alone, and the natures of all parts, does not yet constitute the entirety of nature; rather to that must also be added the unification” (AA XXVIII, 216, 37). In this sentence I take Kant to claim that there is a sense of nature in its entirety that surpasses the meaning of nature as the sum total of all the objects given in experience and that this, which will later become the “transcendent” sense of nature in its entirety, is related to the Idea of nature as a unified system in accordance with a certain teleological principle of reason.

In a telling passage from the Metaphysik Mrongovius Kant reveals how the concept of nature as a systematic unification of its constitutive elements—that is, our representation of nature as a whole in accordance with a certain teleological principle of nature—leads from the immanent to the transcendent concept of nature:

118). To know nature rationally is to be engaged in the metaphysics of nature that “contains the principles of the speculative use of reason” (Metaphysik Mrongovius, AA XXIX, 755, 118).

19 My emphasis.

20 My emphasis.
we consider the summation of all objects of the senses, i.e., the entirety of nature. We can also think of the whole series of things and then we must assume a highest creator of nature, i.e., God [...] The metaphysics of the entirety of nature or of the world [is] rational cosmology (cosmologia rationalis) [...] The concept of being insofar as it contains the ground of the possibility of the entirety of nature is the concept of God. The last part of metaphysics is thus rational theology (theologia rationalis). (AA XXIX, 755, 118)

We see explicitly in the above citation that when considering nature in its entirety in its transcendent as opposed to its immanent sense then, on Kant’s view, we have to think of nature as an infinite series and also as the concept of the last and unconditioned member of this series. This approach to nature amounts to rational cosmology. In the Architectonic Kant refers to this study of nature as the “transcendental cognition of the world” (KdrV, A846/B874). We can also approach the entirety of nature in its transcendent sense with respect to the unconditioned ground of its possibility. This latter sense of Kant’s transcendent use of nature pertains to “transcendental cognition of God” (KdrV, A846/B874) and is the object of rational theology.

Let us now turn to Kant’s more detailed discussion of these two transcendent concepts of nature in his Dialectic of the Critique of Pure Reason.

2.2 The Unity of Nature in the Ideas of Reason

Kant’s concept of the unity of nature in its “transcendent” sense is inseparable from the need of reason to think always beyond the realm of experience: “But reason does not find its satisfaction in experience, it asks about the ‘why’, and can find a ‘because’ for a while, but not always” (Metaphysik Mrongovius, AA XXIX, 768, 128). In
other words, reason cannot be satisfied with a mechanical conception of nature that relies on empirical explanations. It belongs to the nature of reason not to be satisfied with any rendering of conditions in a “horizontal” manner. A mechanical conception of nature implies a contingency, or the fact that things could have been otherwise. Kant already speaks of this “natural predisposition of reason” not to be satisfied with a “horizontal” explanation and to look for a “vertical” explanation for the existent states of affairs in the B Introduction to the first Critique: “For human reason, without being moved by the mere vanity of knowing it all, inexorably pushes on, driven by its own need to such questions that cannot be answered by any experiential use of reason and of principles borrowed from such a use; and thus a certain sort of metaphysics has already been present in all human beings […] and it will also always remain there” (KdrV, B21).

Reason’s need to think beyond the realm of experience, or its need to seek the “vertical” explanation for the existent state of affairs, is manifested in reason’s Ideas: 22

21 The problem here is whether Kant offers a proper justification for his claim that empirical nature is conditioned. This problem is more recently addressed by Karl Ameriks:

Nowhere does Kant take away the presumption that we are confronted with something literally ‘conditioned’. This is not a minor point. A Humean might say, for example, that an impression simply exists. It may be contingent in the sense that it is not contradictory for it not to have existed. But this does not mean that it is literally ‘given’ in the sense of having to be ‘conditioned’, i.e., depending on something else. Even if it is analytic that whatever is called ‘conditioned’ requires ‘a condition’, it is not analytic that what confronts us is ‘conditioned’. And yet, that the given is conditioned does seem to be a constant theoretical position for Kant. We are finite, receptive minds that take data to be not simply present but to be given to us (see e.g., A19/B33, the first paragraph of the Critique proper), and ultimately, given transcendental idealism, we have to regard them as conditioned in a more than empirical sense. [Ameriks (2006)]

22 I capitalize the term “Idea” in order to emphasize the special meaning this term has for Kant that is different from a vivid sense impression (a meaning this term has for
“Therefore it [reason] ventures a step out of the field of experience and comes to ideas” (Metaphysik Mrongovius, AA XXIX, 768, 128). Because of fear that by coining a new philosophical term he may run the risk of making himself unintelligible, Kant borrows from Plato the term “Idea.” How this Platonic concept is fit for Kant’s own purposes he describes as follows: “Plato made use of the expression idea in such a way that we can readily see that he understood by it something that not only could never be borrowed from the senses, but that even goes far beyond the concepts of the understanding […], since nothing encountered in experience could ever be congruent with it” (KdrV, A313/B370). By claiming that “we understand the author better than he understood himself” (KdrV, A314/B371) Kant proceeds to demonstrate how Plato’s term “Idea” already anticipates the major principles of transcendental idealism. In the same way in which in the metaphysical deduction the pure concepts of the understanding were deduced from the forms of judgment, Kant deduces the Ideas of pure reason from reason’s syllogisms. Just as the categories of the understanding in applying the synthetic unity to the manifold of intuition make the object of experience possible, so reason in its syllogistic procedure, helped by the Ideas, provides the unity that will make the application of the understanding possible. How can a syllogism of reason provide a unity?

In the first Critique, reason in its inferences [Vernunftschlüsse] proceeds from a particular to a universal. In the example of the syllogism of reason the particular is contained in the minor premise, for example, “Caius is mortal.” However, the major premise of the syllogism should provide the condition under which the predicate “is mortal” of the minor premise is given. The major premise would thus be “All humans empiricist philosophers such as Hume), and a mental representation (a meaning this term has for some rationalist philosophers, such as Descartes).
are mortal.” Now in the conclusion the universal predicate “is human” can be attached to
the particular object “Caius.” In other words, the particular “Caius” is now subsumed
under the universal “human,” or can be seen as a member of the human species. The
concept contained in the major premise is relatively unconditioned, so it leads to the
concept of reason, or Idea, once reason introduces the notion of a concept in a major
premise that would not itself be a predicate in a ‘higher’ step of a syllogism.

Because the question of something that is conditioned and something that is
unconditioned is a question of relation, there are as many types of syllogisms and as
many types of the unconditioned concepts to which the syllogism proceeds as there are
types of relations represented by the categories of the understanding. First, for the
relation of the categories in the categorical judgment that determines how the predicate
relates to the subject (A is B) there is a categorical syllogism and the notion of the
unconditioned as the subject that itself cannot be a predicate of any other subject. Second,
for the relation of the categories in the hypothetical judgment that determines the relation
of the member of the series, so that one member is the condition of another that is the
consequence (If A is B, then C is D), there is a corresponding hypothetical syllogism and
the notion of the unconditioned as a member of a series that itself cannot be a
presupposition for any other member of the series. Third, for the relation of the categories
in the disjunctive judgment in which an object is determined through judgments that are
mutually exclusive but together constitute the entirety of cognition in the sense that they
consider all the possible predicates that could be attributed to a particular object (Either A
is B, or A is C), there is a corresponding disjunctive syllogism and the notion of the
unconditioned as the aggregate of all the predicates that requires no other additional predicate in order to determine an object.

Because Kant identifies thinking the unconditioned with reason’s basic need, the purpose of Kant’s critique is not to critically “dismantle”\textsuperscript{23} this concept but to find the solution to the problem reason faces given that it has this need, that is, to find the solutions to the dialectical illusions of reason that consist in reason’s inference from the thought of the unconditioned in the concept (Idea) to the claim that the object corresponding to this concept of the unconditioned exists. There are three different kinds of dialectical illusions: (i) paralogisms, pertaining to reason’s inferences to the unconditioned subject, (ii) antinomies, pertaining to reason’s inferences to the first cause or other category in a series, and (iii) the transcendental ideal, pertaining to reason’s inference to the totality of all the predicates that can be ascribed to an object. If these contradictory or unwarranted claims of reason are left unresolved, skepticism arises that destroys the authority of every metaphysics. (KdrV, B24) This is why Kant sees it as necessary to delineate the limits of reason and differentiate between the claims it is entitled to make and those it is not. This critique never results in the denial that it is necessary for reason to think the unconditioned but only in the fact that the unconditioned as such is not a part of empirical reality and object of our understanding.

That being said, Kant assigns to Ideas three distinct functions. The \textit{speculative} function of Ideas — that is, reason’s need to think the unconditioned. This speculative function of Ideas is responsible for the dialectical illusions I identified above. The discussion of their \textit{practical} function Kant leaves for the second \textit{Critique}. Finally, Kant

discusses extensively the *transcendental* function of the Ideas of reason in the Appendix to the Dialectic, that is, Ideas as the condition of the possibility of experience. In what follows I will discuss how the “transcendent” meaning of nature emerges in the speculative function of Ideas, especially the Transcendental Ideal, and in the transcendental function of Ideas.

### 2.2.1 The “Transcendent” Meaning of Nature in the Transcendental Ideal

There are several indications in the Dialectic that it is the Transcendental Ideal, or the concept of *ens realissimum*, that serves the function of the principle of reason for thinking of nature as a systematic whole. Unlike other forms of syllogism that end with the unconditioned, it is only in relation to the disjunctive syllogism that Kant refers to the unconditioned as to a “system”: “so we must seek an unconditioned, first, for the categorical synthesis in a subject, second for the hypothetical synthesis of the members of a series, and third for the disjunctive synthesis of the parts in a *system*”\(^\text{24}\) (KdrV, A323/B380). Furthermore, the Idea of reason that Kant identifies as the principle of nature as a system is described as follows: “This unity of reason always presupposes an idea, namely that of the form of a whole of cognition, which precedes the determinate cognition of the parts and contains the conditions for determining *a priori* the place of each part and its relation to others” (KdrV, A645/B673).\(^\text{25}\) Similarly within the context of the

\(^{24}\) My emphasis.

\(^{25}\) That said, then Longuenesse is right to identify the *ens realissimum* of the first *Critique* with *intellectus archetypus* of the third *Critique*. Just as the *ens realissimum* is the Idea of the whole of nature that is not the outcome of the sum total of its parts, the
Transcendental Ideal Kant speaks of the relation of individual existing things as being a priori determined by considering the Idea of the whole of reality. Let me now turn to a more detailed consideration of what Kant understands by Transcendental Ideal.

By an Ideal in general Kant understands “the idea not merely in concreto but in individuo, i.e., as an individual thing which is determinable, or even determined, through the idea alone” (KdrV, A568/B596). Kant illustrates the meaning of this definition through an example by referring to “virtue” as an Idea and the image of a “Sage” as an Ideal, i.e., the Idea of an individual that relates to the Idea as an “original image” (KdrV, A569/B597) to a “rule” (KdrV, A568/B597) that is contained in the Idea. Kant also describes the relation between the Idea and the Ideal by comparing it to the relationship between a concept and a “schema” (KdrV, A697/B725), although we should not here take this too radically. In other words, Kant’s claim is not that the Ideal of reason, unlike the schema of a concept, presupposes the work of the imagination. He uses this analogy only in order to illustrate that the Ideal, in contrast to an Idea, is a concept of an individual object, although this object cannot be found in empirical reality. While the Ideal in general is a concept of an individual object that is determined by means of an Idea of intellectus archetypus in the third Critique (§ 77) is the Idea of an intellect that must not proceed as the human discursive intellect from the universal (concepts) and, hence, the whole to the particular (individual things), and hence, parts. Instead, in its procedure it does not know the distinction between the whole and the part. See Longuenesse (2000), p. 261.

26 In fact, Kant explicitly denies that the concreteness of the Ideal is comparable to the image rendered in imagination: “But to try to realize the ideal in an example, i.e., in appearance, such as that of the sage in a novel, is not feasible, and even has about it something non-sensical and not very edifying, since the natural limits which constantly impair the completeness in the idea render impossible every illusion in such an attempt, and thereby render even what is good in the idea suspect by making it similar to a mere fiction” (KdrV, A570/B598).
Idea alone, the Transcendental Ideal, or the Ideal of pure reason, is a concept of an individual object that is “thoroughly determined” (KdrV, A574/B602). In order to understand these definitions let us consider what Kant understands to be the difference between “logical” and “thorough determination.”

Kant claims that every concept falls under the “principle of determinability” by which he understands the following: “that of every two contradictorily opposed predicates only one can apply to it” (KdrV, A571/B579). In other words, to determine a concept is to add predicates to the concept which are not analytically contained in it. For example, to the concept “man” either “rational” or “not rational” can apply but not both, since in that case the concept would entail a logical contradiction. In the example of “thoroughgoing determination” (KdrV, A571/B579) “among all possible predicates of things, in so far as they are compared with their opposites, one must apply to it” (KdrV, A571/B579). The principle of determinability determines a concept with respect to whether or not it is logically possible, so that if two contradictory predicates apply to a concept we say that the concept is not logically possible, as for example when we say that to the concept “animal” both predicates “rational” and “non-rational” apply. The principle of thoroughgoing determination, on the other hand, considers the possibility of existence of an individual thing: “Every thing, however, with respect to its possibility further stands under the thoroughgoing principle of determination” (KdrV, A571/B579). By “things” Kant understands individual objects such as those given in sensible intuition. To think of such an object (thing) a priori as possible one must think of it as fully specific, or completely determined. Thus, for example, the representation of an object “Peter” is fully specific only if all the possible predicates and their opposites must apply
to it. Thus, for example, “Peter” is short as opposed to not short, bold as opposed to not bold, intelligent as opposed to not intelligent, not square as opposed to square, etc. The possibility of an individual thing to which the principle of thoroughgoing determination would apply is not mere logical but real possibility which Kant defines as follows: “whatever agrees with the formal conditions of experience (in accordance with intuitions and concepts) is possible” (KdrV, A218/B266). Thus the concept of a thing that would be completely determined would be the concept of a thing that would be exhibited in intuition and thus which would be a real as opposed to a mere logical possibility.

Absolute possibility, on the other hand, consists in considering the possibility of a thing by mere reason, independent of any conditions of experience. A concept to which the principle of thoroughgoing determination applies would be possible in this absolute sense, but Kant holds that we cannot apply this concept: the “principle of thoroughgoing determination is consequently a concept that we can never exhibit in concreto in its totality, and thus it is grounded on an idea which has its seat solely in reason” (KdrV, A573/B601). In other words, it is impossible to imagine the concept “Peter” as specified with respect to the pair of all the possible contradictory predicates. Such a complete determination is thus an Idea of reason and not a concept of an object given to the understanding. The thoroughgoing determination applies to “real” as opposed to “logical” possibility insofar as the principle of thoroughgoing determination “deals with the content and not merely the logical form” (KdrV, A572/B579). To think of a concept of a thing that is fully determined is to think of an individual, which means that this concept must contain a unique combination of predicates that serve to differentiate it from other individual entities, and this, as Wood remarks, “goes beyond the mere requirement of
Let us consider the meaning of thorough determination in the example of the disjunctive syllogism given by Kant.

In the major premise of the disjunctive syllogism, Kant argues, the representation of the “sum total of all reality” (KdrV, A577/B605) is given, a “concept that comprehends all predicates as regards their transcendental content not merely under itself, but within itself” (KdrV, A577/B605). In order to understand what Kant means by the “sum total of all reality” it is helpful here to consult Wood who, in order to clarify this concept, refers us back to the Aesthetic. Wood points out the analogy between the “sum total of all reality” in relation to the existence of individual things in the Transcendental Ideal to Kant’s “infinite space” as pure form of intuition in the Aesthetic in relation to all finite spaces that the pure form of intuition includes within itself. According to Wood, one could think of the “sum total of all reality” as the “ontological space.” In order that this disjunctive syllogism be an example of a thoroughgoing determination the “either/or” of the major premise must be understood as the “limitation” of this totality of reality in a way that only one will be predicated of the thing and the other excluded from it. This is very well illustrated through Wood’s metaphor of a lighted and a dark portion of ontological space. In the minor premise it will be specified that none of the realities of the ontological space that belong, for example, to the “dark” side can be predicated of the concept, and finally in the conclusion that all of the realities

---


contained in the “light” side of the ontological space do. In this sense the concept is completely determined in so far as no realities that could be predicated of it are left out.

We see that the idea of the thoroughgoing determination presupposes the Idea of the totality of all the possible predicates that can be attributed to a thing. This Idea of the totality of all the possible predicates Kant calls a “transcendental substratum” (KdrV, A576/B604). The negation, or the minor premise in the hypothetical syllogism in the process of complete determination of an individual thing, represents a “limitation” (KdrV, A576/B604) of this “All of reality (omnitude realitatis)” (KdrV, A576/B604). From the Idea of omnitude realitatis reason deduces the Idea of an individual being that does not need the Idea of anything else as a condition of its own determination. In other words, the Idea of this being serves to itself as the condition of its determination. Thus, if we are to think of a thing given in intuition as filling out only one portion of this “ontological space,” then it is natural for reason to think of a being that would completely fill this “ontological space,” or to which one of each of the pairs of possible predicates and their negations would apply. We can present this problem in terms of reason’s natural dissatisfaction with contingency and its need to consider a particular in relation to the whole of nature as necessary. With the principle of thoroughgoing determination one approaches the thing given in experience as fully individuated but also contingent with respect to the necessary ground, i.e., the whole of reality or the ens realissimum.

It is legitimate to ask at this point whether Kant’s discussion of the Transcendental Ideal contradicts the conclusion he reached in the Amphiboly in his Appendix to the Analytic. Discussing the Amphiboly in great detail would diverge from the main concern of the chapter and hence I will only refer in outline to its main
conclusion. One may ask whether Kant in the Transcendental Ideal is taking back his criticism of the rationalists, more specifically Leibniz, which was the focus of the Amphiboly. In the Transcendental Ideal the possibility of things is determined by the Idea of an *ens realissimum*, while in the Amphiboly the possibility of things is determined by our pure forms of intuition, i.e., space and time. We can put the question also in terms of the relation between form and matter. While in the Amphiboly the priority in determining the possibility of a thing was given to the form of our sensible intuition over matter as the manifold of empirical intuition, in the Transcendental Ideal it seems that Kant gives priority to matter as *ens realissimum* that represents the totality of possible predicates over form. Kant accuses Leibniz of the “amphiboly,” or of confusing things in themselves (or the object in general) and the object determined by pure forms of intuition, i.e., space and time. Lacking the distinction between things in themselves and appearances determined by pure forms of intuition Kant claims that Leibniz gave a priority to matter, or—to use the term of the rationalists—“unlimited reality,” in determining the possibility of things. In other words, Leibniz first required that there be given substances, or monads. Then space and time, by means of which things could be individuated, or could receive their form, were the result of the relation of these substances. It is in this sense that the matter, i.e., monads, had for Leibniz priority in determining, or individuating things over form. According to Kant’s Transcendental Idealism, on the other hand, space and time as *a priori* forms of sensibility precede matter, where by “matter” Kant understands the data given in sensible intuition. It is only by means of *a priori* forms of space and time that are independent of, or precede the

29 See KdrV, A270/B326.
manifold given in sensible intuition, that things can be individuated. Therefore, Kant concludes: “The intellectualist philosopher could not bear it that form should precede the things and determine their possibility” (KdrV, A267/B323). Thus, according to Kant’s transcendental position, instead of matter being a ground of all possibility as it was according to the rationalist tradition, the possibility of matter or the thing in itself presupposes the pure forms of our sensible intuition, i.e., space and time.

It seems that the conclusion of the Amphiboly is in tension with the conclusion of the Transcendental Ideal according to which the Idea of the “whole of reality,” or the “totality of all predicates” is the ground of possibility of individual things. The tension is also acknowledged by Longuenesse for whom the conclusion of the Amphiboly can be summarized as follows: “In this developed assertion of the primacy of form over matter, the *ens realissimum* of rational metaphysics, and of Kant’s own pre-critical system, finds its overthrow. As a ground of all possibility it is reduced to a mere *form*, with no ontological status.”

Indeed, why would Kant in the Transcendental Ideal reaffirm something that he reduced in the Amphiboly to a “mere form of reason”? However, Longuenesse’s view of the overall conclusion of the Amphiboly as Kant’s “overthrow” of the *ens realissimum* seems less plausible once one considers Kant’s Remark on the Amphiboly in the light of what Kant really intended to accomplish by assigning to the *ens realissimum* the status of a mere form. By asserting that the *ens realissimum* is a “mere form of reason” Kant claims that the *ens realissimum* or the *noumenon* in general is not like other objects given in our sensible reality, and as such it cannot be an object of

---


our empirical cognition. The explanation lies in the nature of our sensible, human, intuition that does not exhaust all things. This does not imply that there is something fallacious about our cognitive faculties, so that if we were able to “repair,” or “improve” our cognitive faculties we would be able to see the totality of reality. Even if our cognition is to extend as far as possible it would still not be adequate to the absolute whole represented by the *noumenon*. It is because of the nature of our sensible intuition, which can never be adequate to grasp the absolute whole of the *noumenon*, that Kant argues in the Amphiboly that *relative to our* cognitive faculties the *noumenon* is a “mere form.” This at the same time implies that “room thus remains for some other sort of intuition and therefore also for things as its objects” (KdrV, A287/B343).

If the conclusion of the Amphiboly is read this way—that is, as Kant’s claim that the *noumenon*, or the *ens realissimum* of the rationalists, is never possible in the positive sense (as an object given to our sensible intuition) but only in the negative sense (as an object that is excluded from our empirical cognition)—then the tension between the Amphiboly and the Transcendental Ideal is lifted. In other words, all the illusions that in the Transcendental Ideal Kant may be reverting to the positions of the rationalists are dispelled. Consistent with his critical position in the Amphiboly Kant never claims in the Transcendental Ideal that the *ens realissimum* is real in any objective sense. On the contrary, the dialectical illusion of the Transcendental Ideal consists in reason’s tendency to take the *ens realissimum* as a being with objective reality; but this is already the point where reason oversteps its boundaries. On the other hand, in the Amphiboly Kant never denies that there must be something given in experience for it to be possible at all. It is in

---

32 See on this point Ameriks (2006).
fact at the end of the Transcendental Ideal that Kant comes back to the conclusions of the Analytic:

Therefore I ask: How does reason come to regard all the possibility of things as derived from a single possibility, namely that of the highest reality, and even to presuppose these possibilities as contained in a particular original being? The answer suggests itself on the basis of the discussions of the Transcendental Analytic themselves. […] Because that which constitutes the thing itself (in appearance), namely the real, has to be given, without which it could not be thought at all, but that in which the real in all appearances is given is the one all-encompassing experience, the material for the possibility of all objects of sense has to be presupposed as given in one sum total. (KdrV, A581/B609)

Thus, instead of there being a tension between the Amphiboly and the Transcendental Ideal, they in fact stand in a relation of symmetry. While in the Analytic Kant approached the possibility of individual things with respect to their form given by pure forms of intuition (space and time), in the Transcendental Ideal he approaches the possibility of individual things with respect to that which must be presupposed in every experience: “nothing is an object for us unless it presupposes the sum total of all empirical reality as condition of its possibility” (KdrV, A582/B610). The purpose of the Transcendental Ideal was to show that although we cannot know it as demonstrated by the conclusions of Kant’s Analytic, our reason has an “urgent need to presuppose” (KdrV, A583/B661) the Idea of the \textit{ens realissimum}, and moreover, that this Idea of an \textit{ens realissimum}, although it is a “mere idea” (KdrV, A652/B680) in the sense that it does not have a known objective reality, nevertheless has its transcendental and practical function. It is in this
sense that Kant’s debt to the rationalist tradition is much stronger than Longuenesse seems prepared to admit.33

2.2.2 The “Transcendent” Meaning of Nature in the Idea of Nature as a “Purposive Unity of Things”

While in the context of the Transcendental Ideal Kant approaches the problem of reason’s demand for necessity within the context of the rationalist’s (Baumgarten, Wolff) discussion of “thoroughgoing determination” and the Idea of an “All of reality” [omnitudo realitatis], in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic the same problem

33 In the following footnote to the essay “What is Orientation in Thinking?” (1786) Kant is explicit that his rejection of the rationalist’s position is limited:

Since reason needs to assume reality as given before it can conceive the possibility of anything, and since it regards those differences between things which result from the negations inherent in them simply as limits, it finds itself compelled to take a single possibility—namely that of an unlimited being—as basic and original, and conversely, to regard all other possibilities as derivative […] This is the source of the Cartesian proof of God’s existence, inasmuch as subjective grounds for presupposing something for the use of reason (whose use always remains basically confined to experience) are treated as objective: in other words, a need is regarded as an insight. This proof is like all the other proofs of the worthy Mendelssohn in his Morgenstunden: They accomplish nothing in the way of demonstration. But they are not for this reason by any means useless. (My emphasis, L.O.) For on the one hand such highly perceptive accounts of the subjective conditions under which our reason operates give us an excellent incentive to perfect our knowledge of this faculty (and in this respect they remain exemplary); and on the other hand, when we are compelled to pass judgment but lack objective grounds for doing so, a conviction of truth based on subjective aspects of the use of reason continues to be of great importance. We must simply refrain from claiming that what is only a necessary presupposition is in fact a free insight […]. (AA VIII, 138n)

Consider also Kant’s comment with respect to his critique of the rationalist metaphysics in the Critique of Pure Reason: “What is here in dispute is not the matter but the tone” (KdrV, A744/B772).
of reason’s dissatisfaction with contingency is approached from the perspective of
representing nature to ourselves as a product of an Idea in the intelligent mind, i.e.,
representing nature to ourselves as a “purposive unity of things” (KdrV, A686/B714).

According to Kant, we represent nature to ourselves as a “purposive unity of
things” (KdrV, A686/B714) through the regulative use of the Ideas of reason that guide
the understanding in its role of making the experience possible:

They [Ideas] have an excellent and indispensably necessary regulative use,
namely that of directing the understanding to a certain goal respecting which the
lines of direction of all its rules converge at one point, which, although it is only
an idea (focus imaginarius)—i.e., a point from which the concepts of the
understanding do not really proceed, since it lies entirely outside the bounds of the
possible experience—nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the
greatest unity alongside the greatest extension. (KdrV, A644/ B672)

Thus, the role of the Ideas of reason in their transcendental function is to provide for
maximal systematicity of concepts. This maximal systematicity of concepts is
accomplished by reason presupposing an Idea, “namely that of the form of a whole of
cognition, which precedes the determinate cognition of the parts and contains the
conditions for determining a priori the place of each part and its relation to the others”
(KdrV, A645/B673). Reason’s principle of systematicity has four different transcendental
functions: it explains (1) the possibility of forming and deploying empirical concepts,34
(2) the possibility of discovering individual empirical laws, (3) the possibility of

34 Kant makes a strong claim that without the transcendental principle of nature’s
systematic unity “no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible”
(KdrV, A654/B682). I am aware that the problem of empirical concepts and Kant’s
strong suggestions of what seems to be necessary for them is difficult to resolve, and I
postpone consideration of this issue until another occasion since it is not central to the
overall argument of this chapter. However, for a recent discussion of this issue see Rush
systematically unifying individual empirical laws into more general empirical laws, (4) the character of empirical laws as necessary.\textsuperscript{35}

Kant assigns the above named transcendental functions to reason’s principle of systematicity because the transcendental work of the Analytic, that is, its role in providing the conditions of the possibility of experience, has a limited accomplishment. Kant in the Second Analogy takes the purpose of the Analytic to consist in determining merely the “formal conditions of empirical truth” (KdrV, A191/B236). Thus, the Transcendental Analytic is merely concerned with \textit{a priori} rules that determine what can count as an object of possible experience. The concepts of the understanding supply the formal conditions that anything that counts as an object of a possible experience must satisfy. Thus, for something to count as a cat it has to fall under the predicates of quantity, quality, relation, and modality. But the fact that it does fall under these predicates is not sufficient to determine it as a cat. It could have been any other object of a possible experience. Kant’s suggestion is that the possibility of specific empirical concepts and their correct deployment is dependent on their being capable of being organized into more general concepts such as species, genera and families. These “formal conditions” of experience serve as a norm to which all empirical laws must conform in order to count as laws (i.e., empirical laws cannot pertain to a change that is not a change of enduring substance or a change that is a change without causes). Understanding, with its \textit{a priori} principles, does not discover particular empirical laws but determines the formal conditions—Axioms of intuition, Anticipation of perception, Analogies of experience,

\textsuperscript{35} Cf. Rush (2000), p. 839. Moreover, Rush rightly claims that Kant’s employment of reason’s principle of systematicity in the first \textit{Critique} anticipates the principle of purposiveness of reflective judgment in the third \textit{Critique}.
Postulates of empirical thinking—that is, the general norms that something that is to count as an empirical law must satisfy. 36

Moreover, Kant claims that reason’s principle of systematicity is not a mere logical principle but a transcendental principle and, thus, not a principle that is subjectively valid relative to the goal that is to be accomplished, i.e., successful empirical inquiry and scientific progress, rather it is a principle that is necessary and also objectively valid. (KdrV, A648/B676) 37 In other words, the assumption of this principle is not only optional but necessary for any empirical inquiry, “For the law of reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason, and without that, no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth” (KdrV, A651/B679). 38

36 I follow Henry Allison who, unlike Paul Guyer, argues that Kant’s Analytic “leaves ample room for the assignment of genuine transcendental status of reason’s principle of systematicity” [Allison (2000), p.80]. The fact that the transcendental accomplishment of the Analytic is limited to providing formal rules for what can count as an object of possible experience in general, or to the formal norms an empirical law must satisfy in order to count as a law at all, and the fact that reason has a genuine transcendental function is also emphasized by Allison in the second edition of his Kant’s Transcendental Idealism. See Allison (2004).

37 Kant is not always consistent with respect to his use of the distinction between “subjective” and “necessary,” and the various meanings that he ascribes to these concepts can be rather confusing. In this context, by “subjective” Kant understands something that as a method can be regarded as optional relative to the goal that is to be accomplished. Consequently, “necessary” implies that the application of this principle is not optional but is the condition of the possibility of experience. While in this context Kant refers to the principle of nature’s systematic unity as necessary and not subjective, he will later refer to the same principle as subjective in so far as it is a regulative rather than a constitutive principle. Considered in this context the principle is subjective in so far as it is relative to our cognitive capacities as specifically human and our need to represent nature as a unified system, while at the same time we must refrain from making any claims what the nature is like in itself.

On Kant’s view, reason’s principle of systematicity requires that nature be regarded as a purposive unity, i.e., as if it were organized according to final causes:

This highest formal unity that alone rests on concepts of reason is the *purposive* unity of things; and the *speculative* interest of reason makes it necessary to regard every ordinance in the world as if it had sprouted from the intention of a highest reason. Such a principle, namely, opens up for our reason, as applied to the fields of experience, entirely new prospects of connecting up things in the world in accordance with teleological laws, and thereby attaining to the greatest systematic unity among them. (KdrV, A686-7/B714-5)

It is questionable again whether Kant’s assumption of a single supersensible ground of nature adds anything to our representation of nature as a systematic unity. But, on Kant’s view, it is in the nature of reason to be dissatisfied with the idea that nature’s amenability to our rational ordering can be explained by nature’s contingent mechanical unity. Reason’s systematic ordering of nature is, after all, a “sum of appearances,” and, thus, “there has to be some transcendental ground for it, i.e., a ground thinkable merely by the pure understanding” (KdrV, A696/B724). Reason regards its own representation of nature as a system as conditioned and it seeks the unconditioned in the supersensible ground of this systematic unity, that is, in the Idea of the unconditioned intelligence, or *intellectus archetypus*. Although Kant claims that reason has a need to “realize” this Idea by thinking of it in terms of a corresponding object, he always remains consistent with his critical position by denying that we could ever know anything about the existence of this object:

---

39 For example, Fred Rush notes that even if some natural phenomena, such as organisms, cannot be explained solely in terms of mechanical laws, it would still be possible to apply teleological principles only in a limited sense, without necessarily assuming an intelligent designer. See Rush (2000), p.845, 18n.
But in this way (one will continue to ask) *can*\(^{40}\) we nevertheless assume a unique wise and all-powerful world author? *Without any doubt*; and not only that, but we *must* presuppose such a being. But then do we extend our cognition beyond the field of possible experience? *By no means.* For we have only presupposed a something, of which we have no concept at all of what it is in itself (a merely transcendental object); but in relation to the systematic and purposive order of the world structure, which we must presuppose when we study nature, we have thought this being, which is unknown to us, *in accordance with the analogy* with an intelligence (an empirical concept). (KdrV, A698/B726)

Kant claims here that it is necessary for us to suppose *theoretically* the Idea of an *intellectus archetypus* although we cannot claim the actuality of such a being. However, it is also important to note that Kant never disproves that there is such an actuality.\(^{41}\)

### 2.3 The “Transcendent” Meaning of Nature in Reflection

The “transcendent” meaning of nature associated with Kant’s account of nature’s unity in the Transcendental Dialectic and the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic is also found in Kant’s account of nature in the Critique of Teleological Power of Judgment. In Kant’s attempt to think the unity of nature there are similarities but also obvious differences between his Critique of Teleological Judgment and the Dialectic of the first *Critique*. The first obvious difference is that in the Critique of Teleological Power of Judgment the task of representing nature as a unity is left to reflective judgment, while in the Dialectic this task is primarily assigned to the regulative role of the Ideas of pure...

\(^{40}\) The German word “sollen” is here more appropriately translated as “may we.”

\(^{41}\) In conversation Paul Franks pointed out this passage to me as a place in the Dialectic where Kant may be overstepping his critical boundaries suggesting the existence of *intellectus archetypus*. But the passage can be read as not requiring an ‘overstepping’.
reason. The similarity lies in the fact that the inferences [Schlüsse] of reflective judgment in the third Critique are comparable to the inferences of pure reason [Vernunftschlüsse] in the first Critique. Consequently, the principle of “purposiveness [Zweckmäßigkeit]” with which Kant is concerned in the Introductions to the third Critique corresponds to reason’s principle of systematicity in the first Critique. 43

2.3.1 Nature’s Systematicity in the Inferences [Schlüsse] of Reflective Judgment

In the First Introduction to the Critique of Judgment Kant reminds us that the Analytic of the Critique of Pure Reason gave us a picture of experience as a system in terms of transcendental laws. Thus, the categories and the principles of understanding together with the Analogies of experience serve as the rules according to which experience of an objective temporal order is possible, and they also serve as the condition of the objects of experience. This is the reason why Kant claims that “to this extent experience in general in accordance with transcendental laws of the understanding is to be regarded as a system and not as a mere aggregate” (AA XX, 209). However, Kant also notes that this kind of unity of nature, which is the outcome of the transcendental laws of the understanding, and which I earlier identified as nature in its “immanent” as opposed to “transcendent” sense, is not sufficient for acquiring empirical knowledge of things and the reason is the following:


For although experience constitutes a system in accordance with transcendental laws, which contain the condition of the possibility of experience in general, there is still possible such an infinite multiplicity of empirical laws and such a great heterogeneity of forms of nature, which would belong to particular experience, that the concept of a system in accordance with these (empirical) laws must be entirely alien to the understanding, and neither the possibility, let alone the necessity, of such a whole can be conceived. (EE, AA XX, 203)

The tools of the understanding, i.e., its a priori concepts, determine the objects of the possible experience, according to which the mechanical explanation of nature in the form of synthetic a priori judgments have a universal necessity. However, a priori concepts do not extend to a different level of synthesis in which it could give order to an immense diversity of empirical objects and organisms—for example, the level at which different organisms are organized into species and families, or in which empirical objects relate to each other in the form of empirical laws.44

Just as understanding with its a priori conditions of experience generates the unity in self-consciousness out of the manifold given in intuition, so does reason generate the unity of empirical objects and individual empirical laws in nature.45 In Kant’s theoretical

44 It is not clear what exactly Kant’s claim that the principle of nature’s purposiveness has a transcendental status entails. At places Kant suggests that the principle of purposiveness is the condition of the possibility of experience in the sense of our immediate perceptual experience. At other places Kant seems to suggest that the principle of purposiveness is a condition of the possibility of empirical discovery and scientific progress. A similar ambiguity applies to Kant’s account of nature’s systematicity in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic. A recent valuable discussion of these questions can be found in Guyer (1990), Allison (2000), and Allison (2004).

45 In the footnote to the Transcendental Dialectic Kant suggests that there is a symmetry between the role of reason in providing structure to our experience and the role of understanding (i.e., the principle of apperception) in providing the unity of experience in self-consciousness:
philosophy, if our investigation of nature is to yield cognition of nature (even if only
cognition that is subjectively as opposed to objectively necessary) the Ideas of reason as a
principle cannot be sufficient. One needs a lower faculty that is going to connect different
representations of nature in accordance with this principle of reason (i.e., the principle of
nature’s purposiveness). In other words, we need the faculty of the power of judgment.
The judgment that proceeds in its investigation of nature according to reason’s principle
of purposiveness is called teleological judgment, which, furthermore, belongs to the class
of reflective judgments. For Kant, determinative judgment is “the faculty for thinking of
the particular as contained under the universal” (KdU, AA V, 179), or the “ability to
subsume the particular under the universal” (EE, AA XX, 202). Reflective judgment is a
type of a non-determinative judgment that seeks the universal that is not yet given.

Kant describes the state in which judgment “reflects” as follows: “To reflect
means to make oneself aware repeatedly of representations, that is, to hold the
representations together in one consciousness.” Similarly, in the First Introduction to
the Critique of Judgment, Kant describes the process of judgment’s reflection as follows:
“To reflect (or consider [überlegen]), however, is to compare and to hold together given

For the regulative unity of experience rests not on appearances themselves (of
sensibility alone), but on the connection of its manifold by understanding (in one
apperception); hence the unity of the highest reality and the thoroughgoing
determinability (possibility) of all things seems to lie in a highest understanding,
 hence in an intelligence. (KdrV, A583/B661n)

An interesting symmetry between the systematic function of pure apperception and the
systematic function of reason’s principle of systematicity (and later reflective judgment’s
principle of purposiveness) is apparent in Kant’s claims that experience could not obtain
without the latter (KdrV, A654/B682; EE, AXXX, 203), just as experience could not obtain
without the former (KdrV, A90/B123).

Reflexionen zur Logik, R 2881, AA XVI, 556.
representations either with others or with one’s faculty of cognition, in relation to a concept thereby made possible” (EE, AA XX, 211). Thus, judgment in its reflection compares representation in relation to a principle. The above definitions of reflection suggest that the process of reflection is a more general notion, not limited only to judgments governed by the principle of purposiveness.47 Thus, when we speak of teleological judgments we speak of a specific kind of reflection. The kind of reflection that is significant for bringing the unity of nature in terms of empirical laws is the reflection in which judgment proceeds “artistically” (EE, AA XX, 214), as opposed to “schematically” (EE, AA XX, 214). For a judgment to proceed schematically, such as determinative judgment does, would be to proceed “mechanically” (EE, AA XX, 213). In other words, the judgment in that case would proceed in its reflection by following the “direction” [Anweisung] (EE, AA XX, 212) of a “determinate” principle, which is the rule given by the understanding. This rule can be stated, as in the example “If A, then B must follow.” Moreover, we find the instantiations of this rule in reality: “If I hit the ball, the ball will go on the other side of the room.” It is in this sense that the principle of the understanding can be explained, or, in other words, “determined.” But when judgment in its reflection proceeds artistically, as the reflective judgment does, then it proceeds from a

47 This is also pointed out by Béatrice Longueness [see Longuenesse (1995), pp. 534-536]. Longuenesse cites a section from the First Introduction where Kant refers to determinative judgment as a judgment that is “in its reflection at the same time determinant” (EE, AA XX, 212). This serves as a proof that for Kant reflection applies to both determinative and reflective judgments but while the former reflect and subsume imagination under the concepts of the understanding that serve as a source of “instruction for reflection” (EE, AA XX, 212) the latter are “merely reflective” (EE, AA XX, 220). Although it is important to point out that the activity of reflection is not something specific only to reflective judgments, Longuenesse’s use of this detail as a way of undermining the transcendental significance of teleological principles in Kant is not convincing. What matters most is not that both of these judgments reflect but, rather, which concept guides their reflection.
particular that is empirically given (whether an occurrence in nature or an organism) and looks for a universal (whether an empirical law, or a concept of species) under which the given particular could be subsumed while being guided by a principle that is “universal but also indeterminate” (EE, AA XX, 214). The principle of purposiveness is an indeterminate principle because it presupposes a transcendent Idea of nature’s totality that cannot be found in experience.

Reflective judgments in general give rise to inferences [Schlüsse der Urtheilskraft].\textsuperscript{48} The inferences in those judgments Kant regards as “merely reflective” (i.e., aesthetic and teleological judgment that proceed from the particular to the universal) can take either the form of induction or the form of analogy:

\begin{quote}
The power of judgment—which progresses from a particular to a universal in order to draw from experience, therefore not a priori, (empirical) universal judgments—infers either from many to all things of one kind, or from many determinations and characteristics, with respect to which the things of one kind agree, to the remaining things insofar they belong to the same principle. The former kind of inference is called the inference of induction and the latter the inference of analogy.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

In the example of induction, judgment proceeds according to the rule that what applies to the first instances also applies to the remaining instances of this same kind in the series. Because teleological judgment in its reflection on nature as a whole or a system takes an indeterminate principle of nature’s purposiveness as a “guiding thread” [Leitfaden] (KdU, AA V, 389) for its reflection, teleological judgment in its “artistic” procedure must proceed in a form of analogy. In the case of analogy, the judgment reflects on the

\textsuperscript{48} Jäsche Logik, AA IX, §81-§85,131-133.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid, §84,132.
principle that applies to a set of objects that are known (mathematically or empirically) and infers to a set of objects that are not known as long as the same principle applies to them as well.\textsuperscript{50} The fact that judgment that receives a “guideline” [\textit{Leitfaden}] for its reflection from an indeterminate principle (i.e., the principle of purposiveness) must proceed according to an inference by analogy is best explained as follows: judgment reflects on the representations of nature and the conditioned order it finds in them, representing this order as if it were a result of an intelligent design. In other words, in its representation of nature as such it must reflect on the order of nature on analogy to the concept of the practical purposiveness characteristic of artifacts produced by man because the object of the Idea of unconditioned intelligence is not open to our theoretical cognition, that is, the principle of purposiveness is an indeterminate as opposed to a determinate concept.

\textsuperscript{50} Felicitas Munzel identifies two kinds of analogies in Kant: mathematical and qualitative analogy. Her comprehensive research of Kant’s pre-critical and critical writings shows that for Kant a mathematical analogy that applies to mathematical cognition is “a way of finding an unknown quantity, of determining the unknown member of a set. It is the model, in other words of ratio or proportion […] (3:4=x:100; x=75)” [Munzel (1995), p. 305]. Qualitative analogy, in contrast to mathematical analogy, pertains to philosophical cognition and is “complete similarity of two relationships between two things that are totally unlike” [P, AA IV, 375; cited also in Munzel (1995), p. 308]. Specific to qualitative analogy is the fact that it infers to that which is not empirically given and cannot be theoretically known. In the passage above, Kant does not make clear whether his definition applies to mathematical or qualitative analogy and, thus, could equally be applied to both. I will discuss the significance of analogy for symbolic cognition in the works of art in more detail in Chapter Four of this dissertation.
2.3.2 Reflective Judgment’s Principle of Purposiveness and the Supersensible Ground of Nature

Although, *a priori* principles of our understanding do not extend to the existing things in nature that are given to us empirically, nature nevertheless surprises us in the regularity exhibited “among the trees, flower beds and paths in a garden, which I cannot hope to deduce a priori from my demarcation of a space in accordance with an arbitrary rule: for these are existing things, which must be given empirically in order to be cognized and not a mere representation in me determined in accordance with an a priori principle” (KdU, AA V, 364). This regularity that nature exhibits, and which meets the needs of our understanding for its purposes of investigating nature, has an element of contingency [*Zufälligkeit*]. Because this regularity of nature is not merely an outcome of understanding applying its *a priori* rules to nature, nature could have turned out to be so chaotic that understanding would not be capable of cognition. The fact that nature is structured to our advantage results in our “admiration” [*Bewunderung*] (KdU, AA V, 365) of nature as also to the thought that “there is something else above and beyond those presentations of sense, something which, although we do not know it, might hold the ultimate basis for that [agreement or] harmony [*Einstimmung*]” (KdU, AA V, 365). The fact that nature in its organization suits the purposes of our cognitive powers is the reason why Kant compares nature to “art” (EI, AA XX, 204). In other words, we investigate nature, i.e., we “observe nature” and we “hold up and compare nature’s forms’ (EI, AA XX, 205) *as if* these forms were a product of an intelligence.

However, this Idea of the unconditioned, highest intelligence, just by the very fact that it is unconditioned in comparison to the rest of reality, which is conditioned and
dependent on something else, cannot be a part of the empirical realm of nature. As such it cannot also be a subject of our theoretical knowledge. Because such an entity (if it exists) is not given to our understanding reason cannot ascribe to nature the necessity that is objective. Thus, it must satisfy itself with a merely subjective necessity. And what is the meaning of this subjective necessity? It implies that reason takes the Idea of the highest intelligence, the existence of which object it is impossible for reason to prove, as a principle according to which understanding must proceed to represent nature to itself. (Note the emphasis on “principle” and on “representation.”) The former indicates that the way in which the understanding will proceed in its explanation of nature will yield necessity, i.e., these explanations will be universally valid. The latter indicates that this necessity can only be subjective. In other words, understanding’s representations do not say anything about the way in which nature is in itself. There could exist other minds of a different kind that would represent nature differently. This procedure of the understanding is something relative only to our cognitive powers as specifically human.\footnote{In other words, judgment’s subjective application of the principle of purposiveness is based on Kant’s more general argument for Transcendental Idealism.}

What applied to Kant’s principle of systematicity in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic applies to the Idea of nature’s purposiveness in the First Introduction to the \textit{Critique of Judgment}: It is in the nature of reason not to be satisfied with contingency and it looks to replace contingency with something like necessity so that the order of nature is a result of some unconditioned supersensible ground. Thus, the objection that applied to Kant’s approach to empirical reality as “conditioned” in the Dialectic of the first \textit{Critique}, i.e., the fact that Kant never gives a proper justification why reason must approach empirical reality as “conditioned,” applies also to the First
Introduction of the *Critique of Judgment*. Although never properly justified, Kant’s claim seems to be that reason can never be satisfied with a merely theoretical representation of nature. Instead, reason approaches nature with respect not only to some technical objectives, but also with respect to reason’s moral objectives, and hence with respect to the unity of both its theoretical and practical aims.  

2.4 From Nature as a System to Self-reflection

So far in this chapter I have called special attention to the fact that Kant’s “transcendent” conception of nature is the product of a theoretical position that approaches nature as necessarily conditioned, and that reason has a need to seek the unconditioned. This results in reason’s various conceptions of nature as a system that include the thought of an intelligible substrate of nature. Moreover, although never justified by Kant, reason’s need to appeal to some teleological principle in order to represent nature as a system implies reason’s need to represent nature with respect to both its theoretical and practical aims. However, in all the conceptions of “transcendent” nature this chapter summarized so far, Kant is always careful never to overstep the boundaries of his critical philosophy. As this chapter has shown, the Ideal of the intelligible substrate of nature is always used in its regulative as opposed to its constitutive sense. In the following section of this chapter I will analyze Kant’s

52 See Frank/Zanetti (1996 b), p. 1169. Frank and Zanetti note that this is what differentiates the First Introduction from the Second Introduction of the *Critique of Judgment* in their contents and not only in their respective lengths. While the question of the latter is how theoretical and practical reason in spite of their opposed legislative domains (nature and freedom respectively) form a unity, the subject of the former is insufficiency of a theoretical interpretation of the world.
theoretical position according to which we must approach nature as contingent and according to which reason has the need to think the unconditioned. We will see that to think nature in its “transcendent” sense invokes the process of reflection, that is, an examination of our cognitive powers and their limitations.

In paragraph 76 of the Critique of Teleological Judgment Kant proceeds to reflect on the specificities and the limitations of our cognitive powers in relation to the Idea of an intellect to which these limitations would not apply. Kant refers to the Idea of this intellect as *intellectus archetypus* and he further gives three features in virtue of which human intellect differs from the unconditioned intellect or *intellectus archetypus*: (1) the fact that our intellect distinguishes between intuitions and concepts, (2) the fact that we distinguish between necessity and contingency with respect to our actions, and (3) the fact that understanding must proceed in accordance with both mechanical and teleological principles.

First, our human understanding requires both concepts and pure sensible intuition for empirical cognition of things. If we only consider a concept of a thing, we know that the thing is logically possible; but we also need to subsume empirical intuition of the object under the concept in order to know that the object is not only logically possible but also actual. If we deny these two requirements—concepts and sensible intuition—for our knowledge of a thing, we get a concept of a special non-human cognitive faculty that does not distinguish between possibility and actuality of a thing. This is a concept of a cognitive faculty Kant calls “intellectual intuition.” Kant mentions one form of such an intuition in On the Ground of the Distinction of All Objects in General Into Phenomena and Noumena of the first *Critique*, contrasting our sensible intuition with the non-
sensible intellectual intuition that has noumena as its objects of cognition. Another form of intellectual intuition (one that differs from that mentioned in the section on Phenomena and Noumena) can be found in the Deduction of the first Critique: Here Kant does not refer to a special kind of non-sensible intuition but to a “divine understanding” to which the distinction between thinking and existing does not apply and for which to think or represent an object would be to produce that object. Hence, this distinction is not between our human sensible intuition and a special non-sensible intuition but is a distinction between an understanding that is both partially receptive and partially spontaneous and a divine understanding that is fully spontaneous.

While the first example considered our faculties with respect to theoretical cognition, Kant’s second example focuses on our faculties from the perspective of the practical realm. Here Kant will also describe human faculties as spontaneous, which is to say that reason acts as an unconditioned causality in determining will. While moral actions that are determined by the laws of reason are necessary—i.e., morally necessary—from the perspective of our being a part of nature, these actions are contingent. In other words, just because something ought to happen does not imply that

53 “If by noumenon we understand a thing insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition, because we abstract from the manner of our intuition of it, then this is a noumenon in the negative sense. But if we understand by that an object of a non-sensible intuition, then we assume a special kind of intuition, namely intellectual intuition, which, however, is not our own, and the possibility of which we cannot understand, and this would be the noumenon in the positive sense” (KdrV, B 307). Cited also in Förster (2002a), p. 178.

54 “For if I wanted to think of an understanding that itself intuited (as, say, a divine understanding, which would not represent given objects, but through whose representation the objects would themselves at the same time be given, or produced), then the categories would have no significance at all with regard to such a cognition” (KdrV, B 145). See Förster (2002a), pp. 177-178 for the distinction between these two types of intellectual intuition in Kant.
it will happen. There may be conditions in nature that could prevent an action’s taking place: “the action which is morally absolutely necessary can be regarded physically as entirely contingent (i.e., what necessarily should happen often does not)” (KdU, AA V, 403). Furthermore, it is due to our sensible nature that we must represent moral laws as commands:

it is clear that it depends on the subjective constitution of our practical faculty that the moral laws must be represented as commands (and the actions which are in accord with them as duties), and that reason expresses this necessity not through a be (happening) but through a should-be: which would not be the case if reason without sensibility (as the subjective condition of its application to objects of nature) were considered, as far as its causality is concerned, as a cause in an intelligible world, corresponding completely with the moral law, where there would be no distinction between what should be done and what is done, between a practical law concerning that which is possible through us and the theoretical law concerning that which is actual through us. (KdU, AA V, 403-404)

While in the first example Kant considers our faculties from the theoretical perspective of the distinction possible/actual, in this second example Kant considers our faculties from the practical perspective to which the distinction necessary/contingent applies. Our actions are contingent with respect to two issues: (1) although we may know what we ought to do, the circumstances in nature may prevent us from executing our morally formulated intentions; (2) although we know what the moral law commands due to our sensible nature we may never succeed in formulating our intentions in accordance with the moral commands of our reason. Again, due to Kant’s metaphysical position, i.e., Transcendental Idealism, there is a space open for the intelligible world in which action determined by reason would not concern objects of nature, such that where there is a moral obligation there would immediately be a proper action. Similarly, this leaves also
the possibility for the existence of a non-sensible being that, unlike a human being, would not know the distinction between the moral obligation and action, or for whom the moral obligation would be an action.\textsuperscript{55}

Kant’s third example pertains to the distinctively human faculty of judgment, since he considers the uniquely human understanding that must use both mechanical and teleological principles for the cognition of nature. In paragraph 77 Kant writes that

what is at issue is therefore a special character of our (human) understanding with regard to the power of judgment in its reflection upon things in nature. But if that is the case, then it must be based on the idea of a possible understanding other than the human one (as in the \textit{Critique of Pure Reason} we had to have in mind another possible intuition if we were to hold our own to be a special kind, namely one that is valid of objects merely as appearances), so that one could say that certain products of nature, as far as their possibility is concerned, \textit{must}, given the particular constitution of our understanding, \textit{be considered by us} as intentional and generated as ends, yet without thereby demanding that there actually is a particular cause that has the representation of an end as its determining ground. (AA V, 405-406)

Thus, our discursive human understanding when representing natural organisms looks to subsume the particular via the faculty of judgment under the universal. But given that the universal, that is, the principle of purposiveness of reflective judgment, does not determine the particular there will always be a certain contingency, or a certain “unsubsumed residue of particularity.”\textsuperscript{56} In other words, to our discursive understanding it remains contingent in how many different ways we are going to represent the connections of the parts in an organism. To our discursive understanding Kant contrasts a

\textsuperscript{55} Note here that “obligation” suggests being constrained by sensibility.

\textsuperscript{56} See Franks (forthcoming).
non-discursive “intuitive understanding” (KdU, AA V, 406) “which does not go from the universal to the particular thus to the individual (through concepts), and for which that contingency of the agreement of nature in its products in accordance with particular laws for the understanding, which makes it so difficult for ours to bring the manifold of these to the unity of cognition, is not encountered” (KdU, AA V, 406). But Kant does not only define this special “intuitive understanding” in the negative way; he also continues to describe the special capacities of the “intuitive understanding” positively as the understanding that is not discursive but intuitive and which proceeds from “the synthetically universal (of the intuition of the whole as such) to the particular, i.e., from the whole to the parts” (KdU, AA V, 407). Hence, an intuitive understanding derives the intuition of a particular from its concept and, thus, it has the capacity to represent the connection of the parts in the particular as necessary rather than contingent.

57 Eckart Förster notes that Kant differentiates between two distinct faculties that differ from the human cognitive faculties: (1) intellectual intuition for which possibility (thinking) and reality (existing) are identical and (2) intellectual understanding that proceeds from the intuition of the whole to the parts and to which contingency in the representation of the parts with respect to the whole does not pertain. Förster indicates that these two distinct concepts of the non-human cognitive faculty are often reduced one to another in the Kant literature. See Förster (2002 a), p. 177.

58 I find Elizabeth Sike’s illustration of this type of intellectual understanding in the third Critique very helpful. In her dissertation manuscript she compares Kant’s concept of intellectual intuition to a “divine jigsaw puzzler” that unlike a human jigsaw puzzler does not have to proceed from comparing the picture of the whole that it has in view to the individual pieces that lie on the table and is unable to see how these pieces are supposed to fit together to form the unified view. The divine jigsaw puzzler does not have to consult the picture on the front of the box. For divine understanding, looking at the pieces before him or her would be tantamount to a view of the whole, a view that would contain immediate knowledge of how and where each individual piece are connected with the other in relation to the whole.
While in paragraph 77 Kant discussed an “intuitive understanding” in relation to our representation of organisms or natural ends, at the end of paragraph 77 Kant considers an “intuitive understanding” in relation to our representation of nature as a whole:

if for outer objects, as appearances, a sufficient ground related to causes cannot even be found, but this, which also lies in nature, must still be sought only in its supersensible substratum, from all possible insight into which we are cut off: then it is absolutely impossible for us to draw from nature itself any explanatory grounds for purposive connections, and in accordance with the constitution of the human cognitive faculty it is necessary to seek the highest ground of such connections in an original understanding as cause of the world. (KdU, AA V, 410, my emphasis, L.O.)

In this context Kant refers to an “intuitive understanding” as a “cause of the world,” which further has the capacity to represent nature as a whole, or “nature as a system” (KdU, AA V, 409), as a necessary unity of the particular laws while we can only represent it as a contingent unity of the mechanical laws. 59

I summarized above Kant’s account of the intellectual intuition and intuitive understanding, and his account of the specificities and limitations of our human faculties in relation to these in order to show that, according to Kant, considering our powers as special, i.e., specifically human, and limited requires a thought of the understanding that is different from ours. Kant explicitly states this thought in the following passage:

We must here be presupposing the idea of some possible understanding different from the human one (just as in the Critique of Pure Reason, we had to have in

59 See also Förster (2002 a), p. 179. Förster also notes that this form of “intuitive understanding” is very close to Kant’s concept of “intellectual intuition” that is immediate and direct while at the same time productive.
mind a possible different intuition if we wanted to consider ours as a special kind, namely, as an intuition from which objects count only as appearances). Only by presupposing this idea can we say that because of the special character of our understanding must we consider certain natural products, as to how they are possible, as having been produced intentionally and as purposes. (KdU, AA V, 405)

The other possible approach, the one taken by Béatrice Longuenesse, would be to see Kant’s description of intellectus archetypus as something “relative to us.” Although it is true that Kant’s discussion of intellectus archetypus must be relative to us because such an intelligence is not given to us in empirical reality and thus it is not possible for us to give more than a negative description of such an intelligence, the emphasis should nevertheless remain on the fact that the Idea of this intelligence is a necessary requirement for thinking of our intellect as limited and derivative in relation to the intellect that is archetypal in nature. Longuenesse indeed mentions that in Kant discussion of intellectus archetypus there is, besides its positive role—i.e., role in showing the capacities of our intellect to structure reality—also a negative role, i.e., a role in showing the limitations of our intellect. However, she never acknowledges that we can only think of our intellect as limited and derivative by presupposing an original intellect. If she did, she would never claim that “intellectual intuition is for Kant a negative counterpart to our own (conditioned) reason” and as such “could have been critically reduced to [my emphasis, L.O.] (as it were, dismantled into) the transcendental role played by our forms of intuition on the one hand, and our discursive forms on the other hand (to which should be added, however, in the investigation of organisms, the analogy provided by our own technical activity)” were it not for this concept being “an

indispensable regulative concept, again in view of the role it is called upon to play in moral theology.”

2.5 The Unity of Theoretical and Practical Reason in Nature’s Systematicity and the Feeling of Pleasure in Reflective Judgment

In “What is Orientation in Thinking?” (1786) Kant compares the situation in which reason finds itself as it tries to comprehend the objects that are not given to us in empirical reality to one trying to orient oneself in space. In trying to distinguish among the different directions on the horizon (north, south, west, and east) one must be able to distinguish between his left and right hand-side and one is only able to make this distinction by being able to “feel the difference within [one’s] own subject” (WhdO, AA VIII, 135, 238), or by means of the “feeling” (WhdO, AA VIII, 135, 238). The same occurs with reason as it tries to “orient itself” in the realm of supra-sensory objects, i.e., as it guides itself by what it perceives to be true of the super-sensory realm. In this “orientation,” claims Kant, reason is also guided by a feeling. This feeling is the feeling

---

61 Ibid, p. 263.

62 The essay itself was intended as the answer to the debate between Mendelssohn and Jacobi that started the debate on Spinozism [Spinozismus Streit]. Although he intended the essay to serve as the answer to the debate, Kant did not take sides in the debate but used the occasion to defend again the position of transcendental idealism while connecting to the debate only by retaining in the title the reference to the question posed by Mendelssohn. See for example Beiser (2002), or Zammito (1992), pp. 228-247, for the historical details and the philosophical implications of this debate. The references to this work will be first to the Akademie edition followed by the page numbers in H.B. Nisbet translation of the essay in Kant Political Writings, Reiss, H.S. (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2nd edition, 1991.
of the “need of reason itself” (WhdO, AA VIII, 137, 241). Kant claims that the feeling of a need, which is inherent in reason itself is,

Twofold in character: firstly, it has a theoretical use, and secondly, a practical use. The first of these [...] is merely conditional—that is, we must assume that God exists if we wish to pass judgment on the first causes of all contingent things, especially in the ordering of those purposes which are actually present within the world. Much more important, however, is the need of reason in its practical use, because this is unconditional, and because we are compelled to assume that God exists not only if we wish to pass judgment, but because we must pass judgment. (WhdO, AA VIII, 38, 242)

Kant suggests that reason’s practical need is reason’s final end, that is, the realization of morality in the world. Given reason’s practical need, reason also has a theoretical need, that is, to represent nature as if it were amenable to both minimal (i.e., epistemic) and maximal (i.e., moral) demands of our rationality. Only with regard to its practical need does reason approach nature as a systematic whole, that is, as if it were created by an unconditioned intelligence.

Kant’s discussion of reason’s feeling of a need to represent nature theoretically with respect to its practical interest is important for the following reason. Robert Pippin very suggestively argues for an immanent connection between Kant’s third Critique and Hegel’s early reception of this work by showing that Hegel found the possibility of overcoming Kant’s concept-sensibility opposition in Kant himself and more precisely in his account of reflective judgment. According to Pippin, a characteristic of reflective judgment, and of the realization that nature cooperates with the needs of our

63 See Pippin (1995).
understanding, is a feeling of pleasure that is intentional in nature. By this I take Pippin to mean that the feeling of pleasure that is specific to reflective judgment, and, more specifically, to the judgment of beauty, is a feeling that has the capacity to generate meaning. In other words, it has the capacity to orient us meaningfully in the world but not in the way that this “self-orientation” is the outcome of either imposing our concepts on nature, or of a generation of meaning, and hence normativity, that is imposed on us according to the empiricist model. We “orient ourselves,” or give ourselves the norm by going beyond the concept-sensibility dualism in a way not yet explained in Kant’s first Critique. In support of his interpretation Pippin refers to Kant’s essay “What is Orientation in Thinking?” and claims that in this essay Kant already anticipates the idea of a feeling that is in itself normative. Hence, what Kant restricted in that essay to orientation in a thought he will later in the third Critique extend to the more fundamental “orientation’ in all the ‘activity of life’” and, moreover, given its normative dimension, will provide the “critique” of this feeling. But Pippin fails to note that the “feeling of need” that is the central focus of “What is Orientation in Thinking” is, as I demonstrated above, the feeling of reason’s need for morality, and that the feeling of pleasure in reflective judgment in the third Critique derives from the satisfaction from that need. In other words, reason demands that nature be amenable to the realization of its ends, and the contingent occurrences of either beauty, or successes in investigation of nature, serve as signs that nature may in fact be amenable to the requirements of our rationality, which

---

64 Ibid, p. 985.

65 Ibid, p. 990, emphasis Pippin’s.

66 Ibid, p. 988.
further results in a feeling of pleasure. Thus, it is not that feeling generates the norm in Kant, as Pippin seems to suggest, but rather the feeling is the outcome of judgment (in aesthetic pleasure), or reason (in pleasure associated with teleological judgment) giving the norm to itself by applying the principle of nature’s purposiveness.

There is, however, a kind of feeling that, according to Kant, is in need of a critique. This is the assent to truth that is reached by intimation [Ahnung] that Kant considers to be the “death of all philosophy” (ET, AA VIII, 388, 62). In this example, “a need is regarded as an insight” (WhdO, AA VIII, 137, 241n). This means that instead of seeing claims of the existence of intellectus archetypus as the necessary assumption reason must make relative to its practical needs, reason transforms the claim that is relative to us into an objective claim or an intimation that claims the existence of intellectus archetypus as an object in itself. This intimation [Ahnung] “leads straight to philosophical exaltation [Schwärmerei]” (WhdO, AA VIII, 138n, 242n), which will be the topic of Kant’s “On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone of Philosophy” (1796). In this essay, Kant claims that the philosophical convictions that are based on intimation [Ahnung] are equivalent to “the principle of wanting to philosophize under the influence of a higher feeling [höheres Gefühl]” (ET, AA VIII, 395, 58) that is characteristic of Plato’s philosophy. Assenting to truth based on intimation is for Kant equivalent to mysticism, which can only lead to false cognition. This is why Kant speaks with irony of such form of cognition that, according to Kant, is typical for Plato: “since he cannot lift up the veil of Isis, he can nevertheless make it so thin that one can intimate the goddess

67 See “On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy,” in Fenves (1993). All the references to this work will be first to the Akademie edition followed by the pagination number in Fenves’s translation.
under this veil.’ Precisely how thin is not said; presumably just thick enough so that one

68 In other words, Kant suggest that—in lieu of Platonic mysticism—our observations of nature, and the

immediate surprise that nature cooperates with the needs of our understanding, is an

invitation for Kant to analyze reason and its limitations and to acknowledge the relevance

of feeling but only of the feeling that has a specific “criterion” (ET, AA VIII, 396n, 59n),
i.e., a law or principle that reason must assume relative to its own needs.

In sum, in this chapter I have shown that the noumenal or transcendent meaning

of “nature” in Kant is inseparable from Kant’s thought of nature as a systematic unity.

This account of nature one can already find in the Dialectic of the Critique of Pure

Reason (especially its Appendix) and it continues to be a central issue for Kant in the

third Critique (especially the First Introduction and the Critique of Teleological
Judgment). My argument in this chapter was that the need of reason to represent nature to
itself as a system is the outcome of its fundamental theoretical position according to

which reason approaches nature as conditioned and hence contingent. Kant does not offer

a justification why our reason approaches nature as conditioned and not as simply given,
as impressions are approached according to the empiricist account. Moreover, he does not

offer a justification why reason should not be looking for the unconditioned horizontally,
that is, in mechanical causes. Instead, Kant argues that the reason looks for the
unconditioned vertically, or in the archetypal nature of the Ideas of reason. My

suggestion has been that Kant’s appeal to teleology in order to explain nature’s

68 The Egyptian goddess Isis was also a major theme for Reinhold, Schiller, and

Novalis.
systematic unity is motivated by reason’s practical aims. Furthermore, I have argued that any attempt to account for nature’s systematicity in Kant by relying solely on the logic of the Transcendental Analytic, as this line of argument was pursued by Longuenesse, leads either to an interpretation of Kant’s reason as a reason without a final end, or violates Kant’s unity of theoretical and practical reason.

Based on the conclusions of this chapter in the following chapter I will demonstrate that genius, according to Kant, consists in the special capacity to intuit this archetypal sense of nature. The main purpose of the following chapter will be to show that the Idea a genius has the capacity to intuit—that is, the noumenal sense of nature to which Kant also refers as the “nature outside of us”—becomes determined in the observer as freedom, or the noumenal “nature inside of us.” The claim that a genius intuits the noumenal sense of nature will be also of consequence for the issues that are commonly discussed in literature on Kant’s aesthetics: the absolute freedom of genius, originality of its work, cognitive dimension of the work of art, and the relation between beauty of nature and beauty of art.
CHAPTER THREE

ART AS NATURE: FROM SELF-REFLECTION TO SELF-DETERMINATION

While in the previous chapter my aim was to give an interpretation of what Kant understands by nature in its transcendent sense, which I take to be essential for his definition of genius, in this chapter I address the question of the meaning of Kant’s claim that genius’s products must exhibit a “rule” (KdU, AA V, 307).

Kant claims that the products of genius must be objects of aesthetic judgment and, therefore, they must exhibit taste (KdU, AA V, 311-313). In other words, genius’s products must elicit a proper aesthetic response, i.e., an aesthetic judgment that although subjective is universally valid. Determinative judgments (whether theoretical or practical) determine the object, that is, they assign predicates, for example ‘is big’ or ‘is good,’ that pertain to the inherent nature of the object. An aesthetic judgment assigns the predicate ‘is beautiful’ to the object so that this holds universally true or false of the object but the attribute ‘is beautiful’ is not inherent to the nature of the object but pertains to the object’s relation to the subject, i.e., to the object as represented.¹ Aesthetic objects

¹ This does not exclude the possibility, as suggested by Karl Ameriks, that there are some concrete features of the object responsible for eliciting a specific kind of
(whether of art or of nature) possess special features in virtue of which they are capable of eliciting in the observer aesthetic judgment that occasions reason’s concept of purposiveness, causing a further feeling of pleasure due to the free harmony of the observer’s cognitive capacities. This special feature that aesthetic objects in general, including the products of genius, must have is the form of purposiveness. Therefore, when defining genius as “the talent (natural gift) that gives the rule to art” (KdU, AA V, 307) Kant suggests that one must think of the “rule” exhibited in genius’s products as their purposive form. I suggest that the pure form of purposiveness of aesthetic objects in general, including products of genius, manifests itself first as a specific kind of epistemic normativity and then as a practical normativity.\(^2\)

The first part of the chapter focuses on the rules of genius’s products with respect to their epistemic normativity. There are two aspects to the epistemic normativity of the “rules” exhibited by genius’s products: (1) the fact that they are responsible for eliciting aesthetic response in the observers that is “universally communicable” (KdU, AA V, 217); (2) the fact that they must be “exemplary” (KdU, AA V, 308). The former pertains to the form of purposiveness exhibited in the rule of genius’s products, a feature they share with all works of fine art and beauties of nature. By the latter, Kant suggests that genius’s products “while not themselves the result of imitation, […] must yet serve others in that way, i.e., as a standard or a rule for judging” (KdU, AA V, 308). I argue that, according response in the subject necessary for pronouncing the object beautiful. See Ameriks (1983), especially pp. 9-16.

\(^2\) Cf. Allison (2001), p. 195. This should be contrasted with some other commentators (Donald Crawford, Kenneth Rogerson, Salim Kemal, Anthony Savile) who argue that the connection between taste and morality is central for establishing the normativity of aesthetic judgment itself.
to Kant, the exemplarity of genius’s products is due to the fact that their “rules” sensibly exhibit a specific intentional content — the Idea of nature in its noumenal sense — hence, in its capacity to sensibly exhibit an *archetype*. This claim will be of consequence for (1) my interpretation of Kant’s conception of creative subjectivity and its artistic production, and (2) my interpretation of the nature of genius’s product, especially its claims to originality (KdU, AA V, 307). Some commentators argue that, unlike the Platonic account of genius, according to which an artist is reduced to an instrument of divine inspiration, on Kant’s account genius is (1) *natural* talent “given to man at birth, rather than a form of divine inspiration from above,” (2) a *conscious* giver of rules to a work of art, and finally (3) a producer of *original* rules of a work of art, where originality is understood as novelty.³ While the Platonic account of genius is an account of genius as a state of being “possessed,” Kant’s account of genius is the account of genius as a “possessor.” In contrast, I argue that, according to Kant, genius is a subject of limited freedom that can be described equally as “possessed” and as a “possessor.” Furthermore, instead of claiming that the originality of a genius’s product is an expression of its individuality and its capacity to raise itself above the existing standards, I argue that its originality is a requirement of the archetypal nature of its product.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the “rules” of genius’s products with respect to their practical normativity. According to Kant, nature’s purposiveness, by causing the feeling of pleasure of the free harmony of the faculties in the observer, has the capacity to promote receptivity of the mind to moral feeling. It is commonly argued in Kant literature that this mediating function between the realm of nature and the realm of

freedom must be limited to the beauty of nature because it is nature’s purposiveness that has the capacity to promote mind’s receptivity to moral feeling. In contrast, I argue that the purposiveness of the “rule” of genius’s products also expresses nature in its noumenal sense. Therefore, the works of genius have the capacity to mediate between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom to the same extent as the works of nature, and to promote the mind’s receptivity to morality.

3.1. Kant’s Conception of “Thin” and “Thick” Forms of Purposiveness

By a “purpose” Kant understands an object that is a product of an intentional cause, or an object that presupposes the concept of what the object is meant to be. “Purposiveness” is, thus, the attribute of an object (aesthetic object), state of mind (free harmony of the faculties), or action (directed towards an end) that presupposes intention as its cause (KdU, AA V, 220). “Purposiveness without purpose,” or “pure form of purposiveness” is purposiveness that does not require appealing to the actual existence of the intentional cause but for which an assumption or mere representation of this causality suffices (KdU, AA V, 221). Thus, when aesthetic judgment guided by the *a priori* principle of purposiveness represents an aesthetic object as having a pure form of purposiveness it represents this object *as if it were* a product of an intentional causality. Furthermore, the form of purposiveness applies to aesthetic objects in general—whether it is a beauty of art or a beauty of nature. “Nature was beautiful, if at the same time it looked like art; and art can only be called beautiful if we are aware that it is art and yet it looks to us like nature” (KdU, AA V, 306). On the one hand, nature appears beautiful to
us if it appears to us as purposive without purpose, or as a product of an intentional design without needing to presuppose the actual existence of this intentional causality. On the other hand, art is a product of a concrete intentional causality (i.e., that of the artist) but it elicits a proper aesthetic response in the observer only if it is possible for us to represent the rule the work of art exhibits as purposive without regard to the actual existence of its intentional cause. In other words, only if the purposiveness of art is a free form of purposiveness, just as is the purposiveness of nature, will a work of art elicit a proper aesthetic response in the observer.

Kant’s aim in the Analytic is to isolate the features in virtue of which aesthetic judgment can be distinguished from determinative judgments on the one hand, and a mere sensation, or charm on the other hand. Considering the context of Kant’s aim in the Analytic it is not surprising that Kant’s conception of the object as purposive without a purpose stresses its spatio-temporal representation of the object, or its formal features, in contrast to the matter of the object that is given in sensation: “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” (KdU, AA V, 225). Given Kant’s strict formalism in the Analytic our aesthetic experience amounts to a perceptual experience of an object’s spatio-temporal form that occasions aesthetic judgment and a determination of our faculties, imagination and understanding, in their free play. As a consequence of this free play of cognitive faculties the observing subject experiences the feeling of pleasure. According to Kant, “The

4 This particular aspect of Kant’s account of the form of a work of art is regarded in contemporary literature as “too classical.”
subjective universal communicability of a kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a *cognition in general*)” (KdU, AA V, 218). In determinate cognition imagination is responsible for providing the unity of the manifold of intuition and understanding for providing the concepts that unify the representations of the given manifold. In determinative judgments of understanding imagination obeys the rules of the understanding but the harmony between imagination and understanding in determinative judgments, although not free, is characteristic of aesthetic judgments as well. Thus, just as in determinative cognition harmony of understanding and imagination is universally communicable to everyone, the harmony of understanding and imagination of reflective judgments is also universally communicable to everyone, securing the universal validity of aesthetic judgments.\(^5\)

While in the Analytic an object’s formal features are necessary and sufficient conditions for aesthetic judgment, in Kant’s later characterization of beauty as an expression of aesthetic Ideas, which pertain both to objects of natural beauty and art, a

---

\(^5\) Some commentators argue that due to this feature of the harmony between understanding and imagination which determinative and aesthetic judgments share, all objects then must be beautiful. However, Kant claims that although the harmony of the cognitive faculties is something that both determinative and aesthetic judgments share, the free harmony of the cognitive faculties in aesthetic judgment is special: “In an aesthetic respect, however, the imagination is free to provide, beyond that concord with the concept, unsought [*ungesucht*] extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept” (KdU, AA V, 317).
form is a necessary but no longer sufficient condition for aesthetic judgment.\(^6\) In the later parts of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment, Kant’s emphasis is also on the “material” (KdU, AA V, 310), or intentional content expressed by aesthetic Ideas in addition to the formal features of the object. Aesthetic Ideas are the intuition of the imagination expressed in a work of art that render sensible the Ideas of reason by means of “aesthetic attributes” (KdU, AA V, 315). Kant’s concept of aesthetic attributes must be understood by analogy to his concept of logical attributes. Logical attributes serve the purpose of determining a concept, or specifying the concept by adding attributes to it that are not analytically contained in it. The outcome of this determination by means of logical attributes is the process of acquiring more specific concepts from more general ones.

Aesthetic attributes, on the other hand, are presentations of the imagination that express “the concept’s implications and its kinship with other concepts” (KdU, AA V, 315). In Kant’s example: the image of the rays of sun of a beautiful morning that a poet compares to tranquility of a virtue does not simply sensuously represent the concept ‘virtue.’ In encountering this verbal or visual image the imagination of the observer, rather, is prompted to produce presentations (aesthetic attributes) by means of which the observer associates the present concept of virtue with many different concepts, in such a way that the entire aesthetic experience of the image in the poem can never be adequately put into words, i.e., expressed in terms of determined concepts. On the one hand, the image chosen by the artist accomplishes the “unlimited expansion” of a concept, ‘virtue’, by means of aesthetic attributes. On the other hand, this associative power of the image

---

\(^6\) Regarding Kant’s claim that aesthetic Ideas pertain both to the beauty of nature and the beauty of art consider the following: “Beauty (whether it be of nature or of art) can in general be called the expression of aesthetic ideas” (KdU, AA V, 320).
should not be such that the aesthetic experience loses all reference to this particular aesthetic object, or image. And this is where purposiveness of form of the aesthetic object is exhibited. On the one hand, the image (whether verbal or visual) must be such that the aesthetic attributes of this image do not associate just any concepts with this particular image. Under these conditions the image may receive a number of plausible interpretations. On the other hand, none of these interpretations individually, nor all of them collectively, can exhaust the meaning of this image. This kind of meaningful form of aesthetic object, according to Kant, is capable of eliciting a harmonious play of faculties in the observer based on which the observer can pass universally valid judgment—i.e., the aesthetic object has a number of meaningful interpretations; and also this play of faculties is free because the meaning is not exhausted by any one particular interpretation.\(^7\) Thus, the Analytic relies on a “thin,” or purely formal, notion of purposiveness according to which aesthetic experience amounts to perceptual experience accompanied with a feeling of pleasure. The later parts of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment rely on a “thick” notion of purposiveness that presupposes not only form but also a meaning expressed in this form according to which aesthetic experience presupposes interpretation.\(^8\)

\(^7\) This interpretation of purposive form of aesthetic object in connection to aesthetic Ideas is advanced by Fred L. Rush, Jr. in Rush (2000), p. 624.

\(^8\) Although Allison never gives an account why Kant introduced restricted formalism in the Analytic, he argues that Kant’s formalism in the Analytic should be understood in the more general sense that is in the end not only compatible but also presupposed by Kant’s discussion of aesthetic Ideas:

The form is just the unity or coherence given to a collection of aesthetic attributes by the genius in virtue of which it becomes a communicable aesthetic idea […] Thus, Kant’s “expressionism” not only is compatible with his “formalism” but
3.2 Kant’s Conception of Genius—Ingenium or Genius?

This distinction between “thin” and “thick” notions of purposiveness helps in interpreting the initial definition of genius as “the inborn predisposition of the mind (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art” (KdU, AA V, 307). In order that the products of genius elicit a proper aesthetic response the mental faculties of genius, understanding and imagination must also be in a state of free harmony (KdU, AA V, 316). This explains why Kant in his definition of genius uses the Latin word ingenium. In its original meaning this word denoted an overall set of one’s capacities of character such as one’s specific inclinations, talents, and dispositions. This meaning of the concept “genius” was predominant in the aesthetics of French Classicism where it denoted broadly a creation that is natural and original in contrast to production that is in accordance with cultivated taste. The English took over this meaning of the concept used in France but they also gave it a specific anthropological tone. The concept “genius” in England denoted “special mental endowment” and a “man who is endowed with superior faculties.” Since the late 18th century it has denoted a peculiar and independent cast of mind. It is plausible that, given that the special harmony of the faculties was requisite for

also presumes it, since the form serves as the necessary vehicle for the expression. [Allison (2001), p. 288]

Rush’s interpretation of Kant’s “thick” notion of purposiveness is, thus, close to Allison’s but I found Rush’s original contribution to be in his interpretation of purposiveness of aesthetic object in terms of meaning and interpretation.

My translation of the citations taken from Ritter (1998), p. 281. The definitions are taken originally from W. Temple, Of Poetry (1690) and S. Johnson, Dictionary (1755).
Kant’s notion of genius, Kant found it fitting to use, the then popular, French-English term *génie*, derived from the Latin *ingenium*.\(^{10}\)

The other meaning of the concept “genius” that was in use parallel with the French/English *génie* comes from the Latin word *genius* and is typical of the German reception of this concept. In Germany, the concept “genius” denoted a peculiar spirit [*Geist*] and it derived its meaning from the Greek word *daimōn*, i.e., an independently existing external soul. However, in the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) Kant asks the following: “how would it be if we were to express the French word *génie* with the German ‘peculiar spirit’. Our nation lets itself be convinced that the French have a word in their own language that we do not possess in our own and we had to borrow it from them. The French themselves borrowed the word from the Latin *genius*, which denotes nothing but a peculiar spirit” (Anth, AA VII, 225, my translation).\(^{11}\) Thus, although Kant in his initial definition of genius uses the neuter *das Genie*, derived from

\(^{10}\) Cf. Zammito (1992). Kant’s initial anthropological definition of genius is most likely influenced by the work of a Scottish philosopher Alexander Gerard *An Essay on Genius* (1774) that was influential at the time. But Kant explicitly rejects Gerard’s anthropological picture of genius: “Genius is not, as Gerard argues, a special power of the soul (if it were so, this power would have a special object). Instead, genius is a principle of enlivening of all other powers by means of Ideas of object that one desires” (R 949, AA XV, 421, approximately dated 1776-8). Gerard’s aesthetics was broadly speaking based on the theory of association of ideas, a doctrine that Kant refers to in this passage but also rejects. According to some Anglophone commentators, Kant rejects Gerard’s theory of the association of ideas because it was incompatible with Kant’s notion of our freedom from complete empirical determination. [See Kivy (2001), p. 113.] However, according to this view, the alternative that Kant offers is just another version of the doctrine of the association of ideas. I take this view to be confusing Kant’s notion of Idea [*Idee*] as an archetype in Plato’s sense and Kant’s notion of representation [*Vorstellung*]. In the contemporary Anglophone literature, the latter is the meaning most commonly associated with the term “idea” as a sort of mental representation.

\(^{11}\) Cited in Grimm (1897-), p. 3409.
the Latin word *ingenium*, there is a tendency in Kant to equate this term with *der Genius*, derived from the Latin word *genius*, which denotes an unknown demon [*daimōn*], or spirit.\(^{12}\) This tendency is not only evident in Kant’s *Pragmatic Anthropology* but also in the third *Critique* where Kant claims that spirit is requisite for genius (KdU, AA V, 313-314). Spirit, according to Kant, is “the animating principle in the mind” and, furthermore, “what this principle uses to animate [or quicken] the soul, the material it employs for this, is what imparts to the mental powers a purposive momentum, i.e., imparts to them a play which is such that it sustains itself on its own and even strengthens the powers for such play” (KdU, AA V, 314).\(^{13}\) If we look at Kant’s *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie*, we will see that by this “material” that serves spirit as a principle for the enlivening of our cognitive powers Kant understands the following: “Spirit is the animation of sensibility by means of an Idea.”\(^{14}\) Kant elaborates more on this thought in the following *Reflexion*: “Spirit is the principle of enlivening (of talents, powers of the soul) by means of Ideas (thus of purposively enlivened imagination). An Idea enlivens when, to its own advantage, it puts the imagination to a manifold effectiveness […]” There can be plenty of

\(^{12}\) Considering Kant’s Lutheran background it is plausible that the term “spirit” for Kant has specific Biblical connotations. Cf. Grimm (1897-), p. 2642.

\(^{13}\) I take this to be a point of shift in Kant’s argument in the Critique of Aesthetic Power of Judgment. While earlier, until the paragraph 49, the free harmony of our cognitive powers was ascribed to the pure *form* of purposiveness, now spirit, or that part of the work of fine art which represents its “rich material” (AA V, 310) is that which (a) induces and (b) strengthens this free play of our cognitive powers. I will return to this shift in Kant’s argument later in the chapter.

\(^{14}\) R 933, AA XV, 414. See also the following related reflections in the same volume: 740, 782, 824, 831, 844, 932, 934, 938. On the relevance of this concept for the *Critique of Judgment* see also Zammito (1992), pp. 301-305.
sensation in a text, plenty of thought [...].”\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, (1) spirit enlivens the imagination of genius by a specific conceptual content. This content is not just any conceptual content but something that is in principle beyond finite determination. One should recall that for Kant an Idea is a concept that cannot have a corresponding object in empirical reality. This conceptual content Kant identifies with the “material” that, therefore, should not be understood as a physical material, but as an intentional material, i.e., as meaning; (2) although imagination is enlivened by an Idea, it is essential for it that in its enlivened state it retains the form of purposiveness.

Thus, Kant’s tendency to equate the French/English génie with the German der Genius is demanded by his “thick” notion of purposiveness. On the one hand, the purposive form of genius’s products reflects the purposive harmony of the artist’s cognitive capacities. On the other hand, the purposive harmony of genius’s cognitive capacities is caused by a principle. This “principle” Kant identifies with the Idea: “The Idea is the principle of the rule. The archetype.”\textsuperscript{16} Thus, the purposive form genius’s products exhibit expresses a special intentional “material.” This is the reason why Kant distances himself from naturalist conceptions of genius: “I do not search for physical causes of genius, e.g. imagination—memory. These causes are not in our powers. Instead, I search for the leading powers that give direction to that which is natural, that is, the formal principle.”\textsuperscript{17} Therefore, the special gift of genius is twofold: on the one hand, it

\textsuperscript{15} R 942, AA XV, 418, approximately written either 1772 or 1776.

\textsuperscript{16} R 961, AA XV, 423, dated approximately 1776-8.

\textsuperscript{17} R 960, AA XV, 423, dated approximately 1776-8.
has a special capacity to grasp the principle; on the other hand, it has a special capacity to express this Idea in a purposive form.

3.3. Kant’s Account of Genius’s Inspiration as an Extension of Reason

According to Kant, genius does not grasp this principle of reason analytically through judgment but rather intuits it. The fact that genius intuits this principle explains the unconscious element in genius’s production.\footnote{The unconscious element in genius’s production allows Kant to argue that we can only speak of an artistic genius and not of a scientific genius. Due to the unconscious element in genius’s production genius can never summarize the steps that were necessary to complete his creative process. Although Newton’s laws of motion are original, one could still demonstrate mathematically how Newton came to postulate them. See on this issue AA V, 308 and numerous passages in Kant’s anthropology lectures: AA XXV, 556-7, AA XXV, 1061, AA XXV, 1310-11. Kivy objects understandably that Kant confuses the “method of displaying with the method for making discoveries.” Kivy suggests that the order in which Newton presents the theorems in his Principia is not the order in which they “came to him.” In other words, Newton presented the proofs of his theorems after he intuited them. See on this distinction Kivy (2001), p. 111. Although Kant denied the possibility of a scientific genius, there is a textual evidence showing that Kant allowed for a philosophical and a mathematical genius. See Lectures on Anthropology, AA XXV, 784.} The nature of this intuitive process of genius, however, is relevant for the distinction between a proper and an improper mode of genius’s inspiration according to Kant. “The Idea,” writes Kant, “must firstly enliven the understanding and then the sensibility. When the Idea enlivens first the sensibility and then the understanding, then it is no longer inspiration [Begeisterung] but a state of feverish heating [Erhitzung].”\footnote{R 933, AA XV, approximately written either in the period 1776-8 or in 1772.} Thus, Kant does not reject the notion of inspiration as
such, i.e., a moment, a mood [Laune] in which the artists feel particularly creative.

Kant rejects only a specific kind of inspiration the outcome of which is not a work of art with a meaningful form. This is the reason why Kant uses two distinct words for inspiration: Begeisterung, which can be translated as “inspiration,” and Erhitzung, which one could translate as a state of “feverish heat.” Kant expresses a similar kind of opposition with the terms Enthusiasmus and Schwärmerei. Inspiration understood as Enthusiasmus sets genius’s cognitive powers—imagination and understanding—in a harmony that is a condition of any cognition in general and yields a universally communicable meaningful form. Therefore, Enthusiasmus implies an inspiration that remains within the boundaries of the rational as opposed to Schwärmerei which is a form of irrationality and a pathological state of mind.

Furthermore, according to Kant, the inspiration characteristic of an “exalted genius [schwärmender Genie]” is analogous to Kant’s understanding of intellectual

---

20 See R 771, AA XV, 37, approximately written 1773-5.

21 R 933, AA XV, p. 414.

22 Ibid.

23 See for example Versuch Über die Krankheiten des Kopfes (1764), AA II, 269, and also Der Streit der Facultäten (1798), AA VII, 86.

24 Schwärmerei was a common topic of Kant’s criticism in numerous of his essays. See for example Dreams of a Spiritsear (1766) AA II, 366, On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy (1796) AA VIII, 398, What is Called to Orient Oneself in Thought (1786) AA VIII, 145, and Critique of the Power of Judgment (1790), AA V, 275. The passages are also cited in Ritter (1998), pp. 1479-1480.

25 R 921, AA XV, 407, approximately written in the period 1776-8. I adopt Peter Fenves’s translation “exaltation” of the German word Schwärmerei for the same reasons he gives in Fenves, 1993. The inadequacy of rendering the term as “fanaticism” was already pointed out by H. B. Nisbet in Reiss (1990), pp. 284-5. According to Nisbet,
intuition. The latter implies a direct and non-discursive theoretical knowledge of the supersensible of which human beings, according to Kant, are not capable. This is the sense of intuition that is not limited to things given in experience and does not require concepts in order to yield knowledge. The intuitive act of an exalted genius [schwärmender Genie] is “the enemy of all clarity, as he attempts to entertain neither through concepts, nor pictures but rather through the movements of the soul.”\(^{26}\) This is the sense of genius and inspiration to which Kant also refers in his essay What is Orientation in Thinking?: “Freedom of thought also signifies the subjection of reason to no laws other than those which it imposes on itself; and its opposite is the maxim of the lawless use of reason (in order that it may, as the genius imagines, see further than it does when restricted by laws) […] nevertheless, it still continues to use the language of reason” (WhdO, AA VIII, 145, 248).\(^{27}\) In the Critique of Judgment Kant similarly

“fanaticism” suggests the extreme emotional commitment with which a belief is held rather than the irrationality of the belief itself. Rendering the term in English as “enthusiasm” is obviously inadequate because, as indicated above in my discussion, Enthusiasmus has positive connotations. To render the terms as “zealotry,” according to Fenves, is inadequate because as my discussion will show later, Schwärmerei implies a certain kind of passivity, while just the opposite is connoted by the term “zealotry.” Hence “exaltation” remains as the most fitting choice because it is “closely connected with an uplifting emotion, but it nevertheless retains the note of danger” [Fenves (1993), p. xii.] By “danger” I take Fenves to mean that “exaltation” implies danger of irrationality.

\(^{26}\) R 771, AA XV, 37, written approximately either in the period 1773-5 or in 1772.

\(^{27}\) A similar pejorative remark on genius can be found in Kant’s “On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy” (1796). In this essay Kant describes philosophers who rely on intellectual intuition instead of hard labor of self-critique as a source of knowledge as “geniuses, already in a position to achieve everything that hard work alone can bring and indeed to achieve more than that by a single penetrating glance into their interior” (ET AA VIII, 390, 52). The references to this essay are first to the Akademie
describes Schwärmeri as “pure, visionary rapture [Schwärmeri], which is a delusion of
being able to see something beyond all bounds of sensibility, i.e., to dream in accordance
with principles (to rave with reason)” (KdU, AA V, 275). In both passages Kant thus
describes the state of exaltation as a state in which genius still uses the concepts but the
way he uses the concepts ultimately fails to communicate meaning. This irrationalism of
“exaltation,” that only on the surface still appears to be rational, is, according to Kant, a
failed attempt to give emotions a cognitive significance and is also a state that Kant
associates with “possession”:

But how the poets came to consider themselves also as inspired (or possessed),
and as speaking the truth (vates), and how they could claim to have during their
poetical impulses (furor poeticus) any intuition, can only be explained by the fact
that the poet, unlike the prose-orator who prepares his ordered speech well in
advance and with plenty of leisure has to snatch the favorable moment of his inner
mood as it comes over him28 with its lively and powerful imagery and feeling […].
(Anth, AA VII, 188)

In the sense of inspiration that Kant pejoratively refers to as Schwärmeri29 the artist
behaves in relation to his creativity “as if he were only passive” (Anth, AA VII, 188).
His passivity is explained by the fact that the Idea, or principle, genius intuits animates
his sensibility, and hence his passive and receptive faculties, as opposed to his cognitive
capacities, and hence his active, and meaning generating faculties. Thus, unlike the

28 My emphasis.

29 The word Schwärmeri derives from the swarming of bees. Like bees
Schwärmer irrationality takes erratic paths. The word was used for the first time in
Germany since the time of Reformation in inter-confessional disputes. It denoted
deviation from the doctrinal religion, heresy and uncontrolled stubbornness. See Ritter
feeling of pleasure that is the consequence of the judgment of taste, exaltation is a feeling that is—as I noted already in the last section of the previous chapter—in need of a critique as it does not have its own rational principle.

Kant, furthermore, associates the meaning of inspiration as exaltation [Schwärmerei] with Plato. Kant received the teaching of Plato in its transformed post-Hellenic form (pseudo-Dionysius) and through its reception by the rationalists (Leibniz, Malebranche, Crusius). Thus, what to Plato is the knowledge of the Idea of the Good as he describes it in Book VI of the Republic, to Kant amounted to direct intuition of the archetypes in the Divine Understanding. In Kant’s best-known critique of Plato (anticipated in many of Kant’s Lectures on Metaphysics), contained in his essay “On the Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy” (1796), Kant claims that Plato, in order to explain the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge, assumed that human beings are capable of a priori intuitions that “did not have their first origin in our understanding (for our understanding is a discursive faculty and thus a faculty of thought, not of intuition) but rather in the kind of understanding that is at the same time the originary basis of all things: a divine understanding whose intuitions are direct and thus deserve to be called archetypes (Ideas)” (ET, AA VIII, 391, 53). According to Kant’s interpretation of Plato, this direct intuition of the archetypes in the Divine Understanding would amount to the knowledge of the structures of being of the order of the world and our capacity to

---

30 Consider Kant’s remarks in Metaphysic Pölitz-V, 80. Cited also in Heimsoeth (1967), p. 131.
reproduce these structures in our intuition. But for Kant our human cognitive capacities are not capable of knowing the structures of being of the way the world or nature is in itself. Instead, genius has a special gift to intuit nature not in its “structures of being” but in its “structures of meaning.” In other words, genius intuits the Idea of nature in its noumenal sense as a rule or a principle of reason, that is, via the reason’s principle of purposiveness. Furthermore, it recreates this principle of purposiveness in intuition and more specifically in the harmonious play of its cognitive faculties, imagination and understanding. Thus, for Kant, the genius’s intuition of “meaning structures” is active, whereas the Platonic intuition of “being structures” is passive, because given our cognitive capacities, we can only respond to intentional content and not ontological content (being) itself. Responding to the latter, according to Kant, can only amount to an emotional response that has pretenses to cognition—i.e., is a “surrogate of cognition” (ET, AA VIII, 398, 62)—but can never amount to actual cognition. This is also the only

31 According to the Platonic tradition, the mind is never passive in receiving the truth. The knowledge of these basic structures of being always presupposed the capacity of the finite mind to reproduce them if it is to know them at all. Cf. Beiser (2003), p. 65.


33 Kant’s charges of mysticism against Plato’s philosophy, to wit, that it presupposes intellectual laziness, indicates that Kant’s understanding of Platonism was far from the authentic philosophy of Plato, which presupposes the practice of philosophy and argumentation as the condition of the ascent towards the knowledge of the Good. Dieter Henrich claims that in the 18th century revival of Platonism there were at least three different receptions of the Platonic philosophy each associated with a type of “philosophical mysticism.” The first Platonic mystical tradition in the 18th century defends the claim that there is a second, “deeper” source of insight that one acquires while being in a direct contact with either God, morality, or the spirit of the world. The second is a theory according to which one is capable of a special insight into the foundations of knowledge. According to the third, one is capable of a special knowledge
sense in which Kant wants to distance himself from a Platonic model of genius as “inspired”: “A genius is not a demon who shows inspiration and revelation. If a genius is to have some content, it must have learned something, or have studied methodically and form-conducively.”

Therefore, Kant translates the Platonic “insight” of intellectual intuition as an insight that implies rational cognition. Although the knowledge of the intuited principle is not something reached by reasoning, it is nevertheless an act of reason. In other words, genius does not proceed discursively, that is, from parts (sensible intuition) to the whole (synthetic representation in a judgment). Genius, has a special capacity of proceeding from the whole to the parts. But this process of a genius’s intuition must be distinguished from what Kant takes to be an irrationality (mysticism) of intellectual intuition because it is an intuition of “structures of meaning” as opposed to “structures of being.” The intuition of genius, according to Kant, proceeds from intuiting the Idea as a rule (the whole) and then reproducing this rule in its intuition and in a particular form of judgment (parts). This means that Kant’s positive conception of genius presupposes taste.

into the connection of all things based on which we can develop a rational enlightenment. According to Henrich, Kant himself at first embraced the mysticism of the first kind [“The Only Possible Proof of the Existence of God” (1768)] though he later rejected it. On Henrich’s view, Kant will later level against the German Idealists sweeping charges of mysticism ascribing to them the position he himself earlier rejected. See Henrich (2003), pp. 65-81 and especially pp. 70-71.

34 R 899, AA XV, 393, written approximately in the period 1776-8.


36 What I call Kant’s “positive” and “negative” conception of genius Allison identifies as Kant’s “thick” and “thin” conception of genius. Kant’s “thick” conception of
According to Kant, taste is “an ability to judge” (KdU, AA V, 313). In order to understand better how a genius’s “insight” into an undetermined conceptual content as a rule amounts to a judgment I find Kant’s account of judgment in the first Critique helpful: “If the understanding in general is explained as the faculty of rules, then the power of judgment is the faculty of subsuming under rules, i.e., of determining whether something stands under a given rule (casus datae legis) or not” (KdU, A132/B171). Thus, a genius’s creative process amounts to a series of “evaluative acts” in which genius judges which particulars (colors, symbols, composition) she should choose in order to express the intuited content so that this expression meets the epistemic standard of the purposive arrangement of her cognitive capacities. 37 Furthermore, this capacity to “translate” the genius is the one that is not limited to genius’s imaginative capacities but also includes genius’s understanding and genius’s evaluative capacity. His “thin” conception of genius is limited to genius’s imaginative capacity and does not presuppose judgment and evaluation. See Allison (2001), p. 301. In his discussion of fine art Kant is not always explicit which concept of genius he has in mind.

37 This important aspect of Kant’s account of artistic production has already been noted by Fred L. Rush, Jr.:

Kant views art making as in part a series of evaluative acts by the artist making judgments of taste. In describing the activity of art making in this way, Kant means to steer clear of the two competing eighteenth century assessments of artistic creation and merit: i.e., on the one hand, the ‘English’ view that art is created ex nihilo through the immediate relation of genius to material and, on the other hand, the ‘French’ model that locates the artist’s genius in improvisation within rule-governed contexts. It is one of the many merits of Kant’s views on the production of art, briefly stated though they are, that he views the artist in a continuous critical interchange with what is being created […]. [Rush (2000), pp. 625-6]

At places, however, Kant’s description of artistic production comes very close to the “French model”:

Clarity is not, as the logicians say, the consciousness of a representation; for a certain degree of consciousness, which, however, is not sufficient for memory,
“insight” into judgment, or to be able to properly identify the particulars that meet the normative standards implied in the purposive arrangement of genius’s cognitive capacities implies practice and skill:

But just because this is a rule, it would demand another instruction for the power of judgment, and so it becomes clear that although the understanding is clearly capable of being instructed and equipped through rules, the power of judgment is a special talent. Thus this is also what is specific to so-called mother-wit, the lack of which cannot be made good by any school; for, although such a school can provide a limited understanding with plenty of rules borrowed from the insight of others and as it were graft these onto it, nevertheless the faculty for making use of them correctly must belong to the student, and in the absence of such a natural gift no rule that one might prescribe to him for this aim is safe from misuse. A physician therefore, a judge, or a statesman, can have many fine pathological, juridical, or political rules in his head, of which he can even be a thorough teacher, and yet can easily stumble in their application, either because he is lacking in the natural power of judgment (though not in understanding), and to be sure understands the universal *in abstracto* but cannot distinguish whether the case *in concreto* belongs under it, or also because he has not received adequate training for this judgment through examples and actual business. (KdrV, A133/B172)

According to Kant, however, although this evaluative capacity implies practice, judgment understood as the capacity of correctly identifying particulars that meet the normative standards of the understanding is not something that can be learned. A genius’s taste is,

must be met with even in some obscure representations, because without any consciousness we would make no distinction in the combination of obscure representations; yet we are capable of doing this with the marks of some concepts (such as those of right and equity, or those of a musician who, when improvising, hits many notes at the same time). Rather a representation is clear if the consciousness in it is sufficient for a consciousness of the difference between it and others. (KdrV, B415n)

Thus, Kant in this passage refers to artistic production as “obscure representation.” A musician when improvising relies on some rules, or some combination of concepts, but his consciousness is a consciousness of an “obscure representation” because he cannot specify the rules of his production (is not “conscious” of his rule-following).
thus, an innate capacity that through practice and adequate schooling can only be, so to say, “fine-tuned.”

My above discussion, thus, suggests that the spirit of genius in Kant can best be described as a “possessor”, in so far as its inspiration engages genius’s cognitive faculties and judgment. Indeed, Kant describes the artist’s creative act as the act of freedom:

By right, only production through freedom, i.e., through a capacity for choice that grounds its actions in reason, should be called art. For although people are fond of describing the product of the bees (the regularly constructed honeycombs) as a work of art, this is done only on account of the analogy with the latter; that is, as soon as we recall that they do not ground their work on any rational consideration of their own, we say that it is a product of their nature (of instinct), and as art it is ascribed only to their creator. (KdU, AA V, 303)

However, the spirit of genius in Kant can equally be described as “possessed” in so far as this moment of inspiration, or “insight,” is not reached through judgment, as is empirical knowledge of things, but rather is something that results in judgment. From here it follows that in addition to the active, conscious, rule-giving element of genius, Kant also associates with a spirit of genius a passive, unconscious, and receptive element. In his

---

38 I am borrowing the metaphors of a “possessor” and of “being possessed” from Peter Kivy. See Kivy (2001). Furthermore, it is useful at this point to draw a parallel between genius’s “insight” and moral “insight.” With respect to the latter I have in mind Kant’s theory of the Fact of Reason that Dieter Henrich calls Kant’s “moral insight” [Henrich, “The Concept of Moral Insight and Kant’s Doctrine of the Fact of Reason,” in: Henrich, (1994), pp. 55-87]. Both the “insight” of a genius and moral “insight” result in the rational principles (the former in the principle of purposiveness and the latter in reason’s Categorical Imperative) and both of them result in a form of judgment (the former in some form of aesthetic judgment and the latter in practical judgment that try to identify the particular cases that fit these principles). However, neither genius’s “insight” nor the moral “insight” of the Fact of Reason can be deduced from other principles and do not represent a piece of knowledge reached through judgment. In other words, both genius’s “insight” and Kant’s moral “insight” are rational in so far as they result in judgments, but it is a kind of rationality that is not reducible to theoretical rationality since it is not a piece of knowledge reached through judgment.
Kant describes this element as follows: “One does not know this peculiar spirit oneself, and one does not have the movements of this spirit in one’s possession.”

My further discussion will continue to elaborate on this dual characterization of genius in Kant as possessor and possessed, although no longer with respect to a genius’s production but now with respect to the concrete product of genius’s inspiration, that is, the work of art.

3.4. Genius’s Spirit as the Power for Producing Original Works of Art

In contemporary discussions of Kant’s aesthetics much attention is paid to the originality of genius in the third Critique. Some commentators, especially in the Anglophone philosophical communities, interpret Kant’s discussion of genius’s originality by appealing to freedom of a genius’s imagination that stands in a harmony with understanding without being constrained by determinate concepts. Genius, on this account, is described as a “possessor” because it produces works that display original rules and, thus, it places itself above already established standards. Indeed, the textual evidence found in the third Critique supports this view:

> The mental powers, then, whose union (in a certain relation) constitutes genius, are imagination and understanding. Only in the use of the imagination for cognition, the imagination is under the constraint of the understanding and is

---

39 R 932, AA XV, 413.

40 Here I have in mind Kivy (2001), Guyer (forthcoming). Of special significance for this position is also the essay by Paul Guyer “Exemplary Originality: Genius, Universality, and Individuality,” in Guyer (2005). According to Guyer a work of a genius is original because it “must always strike us with an element of contingency or novelty” (Guyer, 2005, p. 128).
subject to the limitation of being adequate to its concept; in an aesthetic respect, however, the imagination is free to provide, beyond that concord with the concept, unsought extensive undeveloped material for the understanding, of which the latter took no regard in its concept [...] thus genius really consists in the happy relation, which no science can teach and no diligence learn, of finding ideas for a given concept on the one hand and on the other of hitting upon the expression for these, through which the subjective disposition of the mind that is thereby produced, as an accompaniment of a concept, can be communicated to others. The latter talent is really that which is called spirit, for to express what is unnamable in the mental state in the case of a certain representation and to make it universally communicable, whether the expression consists in language, or painting, or in plastic art —that requires a faculty for apprehending the rapidly passing play of the imagination and unifying it into a concept (which for that very reason is original and at the same time discloses a new rule, which could not have been deduced from any antecedent principles or examples), which can be communicated without the constraint of rules. (KdU, AA V, 317)

On the one hand, the wealth of genius’s imagination cannot be determined by the concepts of the understanding. On the other hand, genius has the capacity to structure the wealth of its imagination purposively (“unifying it into a concept”) in a way that presupposes a complex conceptual activity although it excludes the possibility that her imagination be determined by a specific concept. The fact that a genius does not produce her work in accordance with any determinate concept explains the originality of

---

41 The fact that Kant’s claim that aesthetic judgment (regardless whether in artistic production or in one’s response to art) is “non-conceptual” cannot amount to the fact that it is entirely without concepts has been already emphasized by Karl Ameriks. In the text above I have emphasized that Kant’s claim that aesthetic judgment is “non-conceptual” should be understood in the sense that it does not amount to a logical, or determinative judgment [also pointed out in Ameriks (1983), p. 6]. Ameriks further emphasizes that by “non-conceptuality” of aesthetic judgment Kant also understands that “we don’t believe a matter of taste can be proved by concepts alone” [Ameriks (1983), p. 6]. According to Ameriks, Kant’s arguments for “non-conceptuality” of aesthetic judgments “show at most that in taste the consideration of concepts, or at least of some types of concepts in certain kinds of ways, is not sufficient, not that it is not (in some ordinary sense) essential” [Ameriks (1983), p. 6]. Consider also Ameriks (1998), reprinted in Ameriks (2003), pp. 307-323. The opposite and somewhat controversial view according to which aesthetic judgments in Kant do not at all involve concepts but have claims to universal validity can be found in Ginsborg (1994).
her work. One could contrast the product of genius with an artifact. The latter, for example, a basket, is produced in accordance with a concept commonly shared of what a basket must look like and what purpose it must serve. Even if one were not an expert on basket weaving, with some instruction and practice one would be capable of producing a basket. The same cannot be said of a work of genius. Such work is original, but its originality cannot be idiosyncratic and, hence, it cannot amount to “original nonsense” but, instead, must serve others as a “standard or a rule for judging” (KdU, AA V, 308). In other words, the work of genius must be “exemplary” (KdU, AA V, 308). On this interpretation, a genius’s originality amounts to a capacity to produce something entirely new, not seen before, the production of which is only in her power. The reason why some commentators interpret the meaning of originality in Kant’s theory of genius in terms of novelty is that they interpret Kant’s conception of genius in light of the English theories of genius in the 17th and 18th century, especially the theories of Alexander Gerard and Young. Within the context of the scientific revolution of the 17th century, the concept “genius” in England came to be closely related to those of discovery and invention. Although Kant was familiar with the English theories of genius, I believe that these commentators underestimate how deeply embedded Kant was in his own German intellectual milieu. In contrast to these commentators, I argue that originality in Kant’s conception of genius should not be understood in terms of a product that is merely new but as something that is original insofar as it is not only not-ectypal, but also a sensible representation of something that is archetypal. Thus, I believe that in order to

42 Kant describes the aesthetic Idea as “the archetype, or original image” (KdU, AA V, 322).
understand the true meaning of a genius’s originality, attention should be paid not only to the originality of the formal aspects of a genius’s work but also the kind of content that requires an original form. For this reason it is essential that we turn again to Kant’s discussion of aesthetic Ideas.

3.4.1 Aesthetic Idea: the “archetype or original image”

In his remarks on genius in the *Reflexionen* Kant suggests that an Idea of reason serves as a *principle* for organizing the sensible manifold in a genius’s process of creation: “The Idea is (an archetype to which cognition applies, unity of creation) a unity of a concept as a principle of determination of the manifold in the corresponding intuition.”

While the Ideas of reason serve as a *principle* for organizing the sensible manifold in genius’s process of creation, they themselves, as the archetypes, can never have a sensible form. In other words, the Ideas of reason are undetermined concepts unlike the concepts of the understanding, which are determined and structure the imagination according to the rules contained in it. The Ideas of reason are undetermined because by determination [*Bestimmung*] Kant understands the process of adding a predicate to a concept that is not analytically contained in it. Thus, if the predicate is not analytically contained in the concept, it can be added to the concept only if the concept is instantiated in sensible intuition. By definition the Ideas of reason cannot be instantiated in sensible intuition and are hence undetermined.

---

43 R 945, AA XV, 419, written approximately in the period 1776-8.
The problem then is how the concepts that are undetermined can have any effect on a genius’s sensibility. As a solution Kant claims that these Ideas of reason have their sensible counterparts (KdU, AA V, 314) in imagination–aesthetic Ideas. Aesthetic Ideas are works of imagination that are organized according to the Ideas of reason as their formal principle. The essential features of aesthetic Ideas can be understood in relation to the kind of imagination of which aesthetic Ideas are the products. In the first *Critique* Kant distinguishes between productive and reproductive imagination. Reproductive imagination serves the purpose of recalling representations of objects that were already experienced according to the law of association, i.e., of calling into consciousness one representation that calls into consciousness another representation that in the past was experienced together with it (KdrV, A118-A122). In contrast to the reproductive imagination that is governed by the empirical rule of association, the productive imagination is the faculty of producing a representation of an object in sensible intuition that was never experienced before, and thus it must be governed by an a priori rather than an empirical rule (KdrV, A118). Hence, aesthetic Ideas, given that they sensibly exhibit the Ideas of reason, must be the work of productive rather than the reproductive power of imagination. However, even the productive power of imagination of aesthetic Ideas is not productive in the sense that it creates representations out of nothing: “For the imagination ([in its role] as a productive power) is very mighty when it creates, as it were, another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it” (KdU, AA V, 314). The

---

44 It is worth noting here again a parallel between Kant’s aesthetics and his practical philosophy. In the *Groundwork* (1785) Kant addresses a similar question of how it is possible for that which moves our intelligible part to move also our sensible part: “For us human beings it is quite impossible to explain how and why the *universality of a maxim as law* and hence *morality interests us* (my emphasis, L.O.)” (GMS, AA IV, 460).
imagination at work in artistic production, unlike the two types of productive imagination Kant discusses in the first *Critique*, neither produces geometrical objects in pure intuition, nor schemas of the categories as the transcendental power of imagination in the figurative synthesis.\footnote{See KdrV, B 151.} It is appropriate then to ask in what sense the imagination at work in a genius is productive. The specific accomplishment of the productive power of imagination is that it produces a new and original organization of the material already given to it in intuition, and yet it does so neither through experience nor through the concepts of the understanding.\footnote{See also Lüthe (1984), p. 69 and a similar point in Düsing (1986), p. 93. Although Düsing points out well that the productivity of aesthetic imagination in Kant consists in reconstruction of the material that is already given in experience, I disagree with the conclusion he draws from it. Although the aesthetic imagination takes the material from empirical reality, this does not mean—as Düsing seems to suggest—that the originality aesthetic imagination brings is something that can be reduced only to its form. Indeed, Kant’s formalism in aesthetic theory is motivated by the fact that the material of aesthetic imagination is something the artist takes from empirical reality and as such cannot represent the criterion for aesthetic appreciation, while the form is the element that is given through the producing activity of the subject independent of empirical reality. However, one must take into account that in reconstructing the material given in empirical reality aesthetic imagination does not only produce new and original forms but also a new and original content. I address below more precisely my critique of these “reductive” readings of aesthetic Ideas that are not only found in Düsing but also in Lüthe.}

The fact that the imagination of aesthetic Ideas is neither structured according to the rules contained in the understanding, nor the rules given to us in experience but nevertheless has a definite structure, turns us back to Kant’s claim that aesthetic Ideas are “sensible counterparts” (KdU, AA V, 314) of rational Ideas. To say that aesthetic Ideas are sensible counterparts of rational Ideas is to suggest that there is a structural parallel
between aesthetic and rational Ideas. This parallel in form is already suggested by the fact that Kant refers to aesthetic Ideas as “Ideas” even though they are not determinate concepts like rational Ideas (which can be defined, e.g. God) but, rather, products of the imagination. Although aesthetic Ideas are not determinate concepts Kant refers to them as “Ideas” because they “do at least strive toward something that lies beyond the bounds of experience” (KdU, AA V, 314). According to Kant, in order that there be knowledge in the proper sense of this term two elements are necessary: the concepts or the rules of the intellect and a corresponding intuition that is structured according to the rules contained in the concepts. The Ideas of reason are the outcome of reason’s need to seek for what is unconditioned and necessary, beyond that which is given as conditioned and contingent. Hence these Ideas extend beyond the concepts of the understanding and as such cannot and do not have a corresponding intuition and do not yield knowledge.

Similarly, aesthetic Ideas are intuitions “to which no determinate thought whatsoever, i.e., no [determinate] concept, can be adequate, so that no language can express it completely and allow us to grasp it” (KdU, AA V, 314). This is the reason why the meaning of aesthetic Ideas is always marked by an excess, i.e., material that cannot be sufficiently well expressed in words because it can never be adequately captured by concepts.

---

47 The concept of “structural parallel” is used by Lüthe and I take it over as it is an apt way to explain what Kant means by “counterpart” in this context. See Lüthe (1984), p. 70.

48 See Kant’s discussion of transcendental Ideas and the syllogisms of reason for a more detailed explanation (KdrV, A321/B378-A324/B381) and my discussion of these passages in the previous chapter.

49 I borrow this expression from William Desmond. See Desmond (1998), p. 606. Karl Ameriks notes that most of our concepts are indefinite, i.e., they do not contain a ‘definite’ rule that determines how this concept is going to be illustrated. But there is a special indefiniteness about beauty that is very different from indefiniteness of other
should pay attention to the fact that Kant claims that the content of aesthetic Ideas cannot be completely grasped in language and not that it cannot at all be grasped in language. Thus, aesthetic Ideas are not entirely beyond concepts and we can discuss them. However, just as the Ideas in the realm of concepts express striving for the unconditioned, so too aesthetic Ideas, at the level of intuition, strive for a totality that can never be adequately grasped by a concept and, thus, can never yield knowledge. It is for this reason that Kant claims that aesthetic Ideas have a “completeness for which no example can be found in nature” (KdU, AA V, 315).

And this also explains how the overall expression of genius’s work must be original given the demands of the kind of content it expresses. Unlike some commentators who claim that the originality of a genius’s work is due to the genius’s freedom of imagination—the fact that she does not produce in accordance with rules that follow from any determinate concept—I am arguing that Kant’s discussion of freedom of imagination from determinate concepts, and the fact that imagination brings an abundance of undetermined material, is inseparable from the fact that imagination in a work of genius serves as a sensible counterpart of an archetype, i.e., rational Ideas. Therefore, a genius in Kant can be described as a “possessor” insofar as his works exhibit originality due to his freedom of imagination from determinate concepts. However, a genius can equally be described as “possessed” insofar as this originality cannot be adequately described as mere innovation, understood as the artist’s statement of her everyday concepts (e.g. ‘silly’). Ameriks notes this with the intention to argue against those commentators who take the indefiniteness that pertains to beauty to be a proof of the fact that our experience of beauty is non-conceptual. According to Ameriks, the fact that aesthetic experience involves indefinite concepts does not imply that “any particular instance is ever properly appreciated in a way that goes beyond concepts altogether.” See Ameriks, “Taste, Conceptuality, and Objectivity,” in Ameriks (2003a), p. 340.
individuality—i.e., her distinction from the common and accepted—but as originality that is dictated by the requirements of the conceptually undetermined content of her work. This conceptually undetermined content that is sensibly rendered in aesthetic Ideas is something that transcends the artist’s individuality.

3.4.2 Genius in a Critical Dialogue with Its Tradition

That the originality of genius should not be ascribed strictly to novelty of the form of a genius’s work is further suggested by Kant’s claim that genius must emulate prior models. In other words, Kant seems to suggest that a genius finds his original expression only by critically situating himself within existing traditions. In the third Critique Kant distinguishes different degrees of an artist’s critical appropriation of exemplary models: imitating [Nachahmung] by artists (KdU, AA V, 309), and copying [Nachmachung] (KdU, AA V, 309) or aping [Nachäffung] by counterfeiters and plagiarists (KdU, AA V, 318). By imitation Kant understands an artist’s critical appropriation of a rule that is abstracted from the precept but in a way that also allows for the genius’s freedom to surpass its model. By copying or aping Kant understands blind copying of external form of the model without any critical evaluation of the meaning of the work of art. While Kant already distinguishes in his pre-critical period among these different degrees of the artist’s critical appropriation of exemplary models of her tradition, in his critical period Kant introduces a new opposition that is central for his discussion of genial production in the third Critique—i.e., the opposition between “imitation” [Nachahmung] and
“emulation” [Nachfolge] of the examples of other great artists (KdU, AA V, 318).\textsuperscript{50} What follows is one of Kant’s descriptions of this practice of critical appropriation:

Genius is exemplary originality [musterhafte Originalität] of the natural endowment of a subject for the free use of his cognitive faculties. In this way the product of a genius (in respect of that which is to be ascribed to genius, not to possible learning or schooling) is an example, not for imitation [Nachahmung] (for then that which is genius in it and constitutes the spirit of the work would be lost), but for emulation [Nachfolge] by another genius, who is thereby awakened to the feeling of his own originality, to exercise freedom from coercion in his art in such a way that the latter thereby itself acquires a new rule, by which the talent shows itself as exemplary [musterhaft]. (KdU, AA V, 318)

Although an artist’s imitation may lead him to test his own talent and surpass the model he imitates, his product itself could never serve as exemplary originality [musterhafte Originalität]. In contrast, a genius’s following of an exemplary model of another genius yields a new exemplary model for future generations.

It has been suggested by some commentators that Kant’s notion of “following” should be understood within the context of Kant’s problematic notion of moral exemplarity.\textsuperscript{51} In the first Critique Kant warns that one must not take an example [Beispiel] of virtue to be a pattern [Muster] for action. In other words, a moral example serves only as an indication of the practicability of the moral rules required of a virtuous character but not as a source of these rules. The rules are in the archetype [Urbild] of a virtuous character in our reason. Taking virtue to be a matter of imitation of examples implies that the value of virtue is subject to empirical conditions. Thus, examples of

\textsuperscript{50} A very helpful discussion of the development of the concept of imitation in Kant and the many nuanced meanings this term takes can be found in Gammon (1997). Gammon discusses the influence of Hamman, Winckelmann, Tetens, and Feder on Kant’s conception of imitation and its role in artistic production.

\textsuperscript{51} See Gammon (1997), pp. 583-588.
virtue should not be a subject of imitation [Nachahmung] but a subject of following [Nachfolge]. Thus, the moral agent is inspired by an example of virtue but the example reorients the agent to the archetype of virtue “within,” i.e., the Idea of virtue in her reason. Similarly in the aesthetic context, a genius in a critical appropriation of the purposive form of original exemplarity arrives at her own Idea of purposiveness in her reason and her own exemplary expression.

On Kant’s view, although a genius’s production is original, it can never be fully independent of the developing continuity of its tradition. After all, a genius finds its original expression, according to Kant, while in critical dialogue with her tradition. My suggestion is that we should understand a genius’s dependence on its tradition in light of the way Kant understood his own development within the context of his tradition. Kant’s explicit appreciation for the content of the work of genius is evident in his appreciation for genius in philosophy: “There exist exalted but good minds […] Rousseau is an enthusiast worthy of respect [achtungswürdiger Schwärmer]. Plato thinks in an exalted manner [schwärmt] in general. One can really learn from an exalted genius. Exalted geniuses left insights that enlarged the universal wealth.” On Kant’s view every “exalted original spirit [der schwärmede originalgeist],” must judge his own product within the context of a tradition because his own creative process and the meaning of the

---

52 In the Groundwork Kant writes: “Imitation [Nachahmung] has no place at all in moral matters, and examples serve only for encouragement [Aufmunterung], i.e., they put beyond doubt the feasibility of what the law commands and they make visible what the practical rule expresses more generally” [GMS, AA IV, 408-409, cited in Gammon (1997), p. 584n].

53 R 921, AA XV, 407, approximately written either in the period 1776-8, or 1775-7, quoted also in Heimsoeth (1965), p. 372.
product exceeds his own comprehension.\textsuperscript{54} Thus, exalted thinkers—among whose number it is not excluded that Kant understands himself—should verify their own judgment by imitating others:

Imitation is an unassuming and safe step of a genius. This path of imitation that a genius undertakes is his judgment of the attempts of others that traveled the same path. There could not exist a single great master who did not imitate other masters, and no invention that could not be seen in relation to other preceding it and to which this one is similar. Everything stands within the laws of continuity, and that which has been entirely torn away from this continuity, leaving a gap between it and its predecessors, belongs to the world of empty figments of the brain \textit{[Hirngespinst].}\textsuperscript{55}

The passage suggests that Kant understood his Critical perspective as something that surpassed \textit{[übertreffen]} the position of the exalted writers, such as Plato, but without whose works the development of Kant’s own Critical position would not be possible. Thus, Kant’s critical evaluation of his philosophical tradition led him to the realization that the success of philosophy depends on humility: “Philosophy makes one humble […] humbleness is related to the rules.”\textsuperscript{56} In other words, Kant came to the conclusion that the success of philosophy consists in, what Paul Franks calls, Kant’s “reworked esotericism.”\textsuperscript{57} Franks suggests that Kant’s critical position does not amount to destruction of the metaphysics of the rationalists. Kant critique of the rationalist

\textsuperscript{54} See R 939, AA XV, 417: “genius is used to considering different points of view, and, because he has incomprehensibility of the whole before his eyes, he does not trust his own judgment about that which is the most excellent.”

\textsuperscript{55} R 778, AA XV, approximately written in the period 1772-5.

\textsuperscript{56} R 939, AA XV, 417, approximately written in the period 1776-8, or in 1772.

metaphysics replaced Plato’s “theological esotericism”—that is, esotericism that pertains to the knowledge of the Ideas in the Divine Understanding—with his “cosmological esotericism”—that is, esotericism that pertains to the Idea of what constitutes human condition as such (i.e., freedom and morality). According to Franks, while the former presupposes superhuman gifts and is elitist, the latter presupposes hard work of judgment and is in principle egalitarian.  

If we bring to bear this insight concerning how Kant related himself to his own philosophical tradition to his conception of a genius, then a genius in Kant can truly be described as a “possessor” insofar as its artistic expression is original with respect to already existing schools and norms because “a genius places herself above the rules and gives laws.” However, a genius in Kant can also be described as “possessed” insofar as its original expression is reached through its critical dialogue with its tradition.

58 Thus, parallel to this criticism of Plato’s philosophy one also discerns Kant’s sympathy for Plato’s project as a whole. Instead of taking the supersensible to be the object of theoretical inquiry, as Kant believes was the case in Plato’s philosophy, in Kant the supersensible remains the object of one’s will. See VdnA, AA VIII, 418 and in Fenves, 1993, p. 88. All the references to this work will be first to the Akademie edition of this essay followed by the page number in the English translation. A more detailed discussion of the claim that the supersensible in Kant remains the object of one’s will follows in the third chapter of the dissertation. According to Kant, the “passage to the supersensible” (ET, AA VIII, 404, 70) as the object, or matter, of the will, must be preceded by the formal determination of our will. In other words, it must be preceded by testing of one’s maxims to the universal demands of reason. In contrast to those who “philosophize by feeling” (ET, AA VIII, 401, 56), Kant’s “passage to the supersensible” (ET, AA VIII, 404, 70) via formal determinations of the will presupposes “ever proceeding labor and careful work of the subject to take up and appraise its own faculty (of reason)” (ET, AA VIII, 404, 70).

59 R 812, AA XV, 361.
3.5 Genius as the Bridge Between the Beauty of Art and the Beauty of Nature

My discussion so far has focused on the rule the work of genius exhibits that serves as an epistemic kind of normativity. In this section I will discuss how the rule exhibited by genius manifests itself also as a source of practical normativity. The fact that the work of genius represents a practical normativity implies that (1) both beauty of art and beauty of nature help bridge the gap between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom, or between theoretical and practical reason and their respective domains, and (2) Kant does not privilege the beauty of nature over the beauty of art with respect to the object of the intellectual interest in the beautiful that is supposed to indicate one’s special disposition to morality.

3.5.1 The Art of Genius and The Unity of Subjectivity

In paragraph 6 of the Analytic, Kant claims that aesthetic judgments are unique because, unlike moral and empirical judgments, they show satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the aesthetic object without any interest in its existence. Thus, according to Kant, aesthetic experience is a state of disinterested pleasure [Wohlgefallen]. An object that we find agreeable is an object of our inclination, which evokes our direct interest in the existence of this object. (KdU, AA V, 210) An object we find good is an object of our respect, which also indicates our interest in the existence of this object. (KdU, AA V, 210) It is only the object of our aesthetic judgment that we receive with favor, an attitude which, according to Kant, is an indication of a genuinely “free satisfaction” (KdU, AA V,
Aesthetic judgment is “not grounded in any inclination of the subject (not in any other underlying interest)” but rather in the free harmony of the cognitive faculties that the judging subject can thus suppose in everyone else (KdU, AA V, 212). But although aesthetic judgment is not grounded in any interest and, thus, does not allow for any direct interest in the existence of the object, Kant nevertheless claims that aesthetic judgment arouses “indirect” interests in the judging subject (KdU, AA V, 296). These can be empirical (i.e., the mere pleasure in the existence of the aesthetic object) and intellectual. The latter interests Kant deems to have greater significance than the former because these relate to the judgment of taste a priori and as such they exhibit a “mediating link in the chain of human faculties a priori” (KdU, AA V, 298). The intellectual interest in the beautiful is, claims Kant, a “sign of a good moral character” that exhibits the mediation of aesthetic judgment in bridging the gap [Kluft] between the sensible and the supersensible realm.

In section IX of the Second Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment Kant formulates the problem of the “gap” [Kluft] (KdU, AA V, 176) between theoretical and practical domains in the following manner:

---

60 The fact that it is we who receive nature favorably rather than nature who does us a favor is an important distinction. While the former case implies that it is our reflective judgment guided by the a priori principle that is responsible for aesthetic experience, the latter implies that our aesthetic experience is determined by nature. While the former is indicative of Kant’s transcendental approach, the latter is indicative of empiricist approach to aesthetics.

61 Thus, the interest in the existence of the object is not the cause of aesthetic pleasure but once one has a pure aesthetic pleasure and establishes its analogy to moral pleasure it is possible to claim the interest in the object as a consequence rather than the cause of aesthetic pleasure. This is why Deleuze, for example, refers to Kant’s conception of intellectual interest in the beautiful as “meta-aesthetic.” According to Deleuze, this interest is not in the beautiful itself but is, rather, reason’s interest in nature’s capacity to produce beautiful things. See Deleuze (2002), p. 91-92.
The understanding legisitates a priori for nature, as object of the senses, for a theoretical cognition of it in possible experience. Reason legisitates a priori for freedom and its own causality, as the supersensible in the subject, for an unconditioned practical cognition. The domain of the concept of nature under the one legislation and that of the concept of freedom under the other are entirely barred from any mutual influence that they could have on each other by themselves (each in accordance with its fundamental laws) by the great chasm [große Kluft] that separates the supersensible from the appearances. The concept of freedom determines nothing in regard to the theoretical cognition of nature; the concept of nature likewise determines nothing in regard to the practical laws of freedom: and it is to this extent not possible to throw a bridge from one domain to the other. (KdU, AA V, 195)

In the above passage Kant identifies the gap as that between the two separate domains of legislation: the legislation of reason and the legislation of the understanding. The norms that apply to one realm cannot determine anything about the other, and vice versa. Kant takes it to be his task to show that a bridge between the domain of understanding, i.e., nature as appearance, and the domain of reason, i.e., freedom conceived in terms of moral laws, is necessary and possible. An Übergang, or bridge to experience, is necessary for practical reason: the moral law dictates what ought to be, and if our moral ends in principle are not realizable in nature, then the moral law must be viewed as an “empty figment of the brain [Hirngespinsten]” (KdrV, B 597). Kant conceives of the bridge as a mutual influence that the practical and theoretical domains can have on each other. The fact that Kant formulates the problem in terms of two distinct realms of legislation that cannot determine each other directly does not imply that the solution to the problem as a

---

62 Thus, I agree with Henry Allison who suggests that the problem of bridging the gap between the sensible realm (the domain of the legislation of the understanding) and the supersensible realm (the realm of the legislation of reason) is a “practical problem”—i.e., it is a problem of how we must think of nature in order to realize the ends dictated by morality. See Allison (2001), p. 204. Cf. Düsing (1990).
mutual influence between the two realms consists in showing how the laws governing nature can normatively determine our practical realm by telling us what ought to be done. It also does not imply that the moral laws can essentially determine the realm of nature, that is, can serve as conditions of our theoretical cognition of nature. Instead, Kant offers an empirical-anthropological solution to the unity of theoretical and practical reason and their respective domains.

Kant’s empirical-anthropological solution is twofold and follows from the two senses of “nature” that, according to Kant, can be conceived as an obstacle to our moral ends. By “nature,” or the sensible realm, Kant has in mind both nature “inside of us,” our sensible nature, and nature “outside of us,” or the physical world. On the one hand, our nature understood as our passions and inclinations can be an obstacle to formulating requisite moral intentions. On the other hand, nature understood as an external world with its own physical laws may not be cooperative with our intention to realize our moral ends. The solution to the problem of the Übergang in the former case has important implications for the unity of the subject because its aim is to show that our sensible nature is amenable to the moral demands of our reason. The solution to the problem of the Übergang in the latter case has important implications for the unity of the subject and the external world because its aim is to show that our moral ends can have an effect in that world. While in the former the locus of obstacles to our freedom is in our natural

---

63 My use of the term the “unity of the subject” should not be confused with Dieter Henrich’s use of this term by which he denotes the unity of self-consciousness (the unity of understanding and sensibility). See Henrich, “On the Unity of Subjectivity,” in Henrich (1994), pp. 17-55. My use of the term refers to the unity of the phenomenal and the noumenal parts of the subject.
constitution, in the latter the locus of obstacle to our freedom is in the physical world.\(^6^4\)

In this chapter I will demonstrate that Kant’s solution to the problem of the Übergang has implications for the unity of the subject’s sensible and supersensible nature. I will reserve discussion of his solution to this problem in its implications for the unity of the subject and external nature for the next chapter.

Kant suggests the following empirical-anthropological solution to the problem of the gap [*Kluft*], which has clear implications for the unity of the subject’s sensible and supersensible nature: “Taste as it were *makes possible a transition from sensible charm to the habitual moral interest without too violent a leap* by representing the imagination even in its freedom as purposively determinable for the understanding and teaching us to find a free satisfaction in the objects of the senses even without any sensible charm” (KdU, AA V, 354; my emphasis, L.O.). Furthermore, in the Second Introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* Kant suggests that,

\[^6^4\] Both Allison and Düsing conceive of the problem of the Übergang as a practical problem, i.e., the problem of conceiving nature as cooperative with the moral demands of our reason. Allison, more clearly than Düsing, identifies two different loci of obstacles to our morality, i.e., one being our sensible nature and the other being the real world. However, they both fail to draw the conclusion that the solution to the problem of Übergang is supposed to have potential implications for both the unity of the subject with itself and the unity of the subject with the external world. Allison approaches the empirico-anthropological solution to the problem of Übergang to be ultimately the problem of realization of our moral ends in the real world [Allison (2001), p. 205]. Thus, he reduces the implications of Kant’s solution to the problem of Übergang for the unity of subjectivity to the implications of this problem for the unity of subject and the external world. Düsing, in contrast, reduces the implications of Kant’s solution to the problem of Übergang for the unity of subject and the external world to the implications of this problem for the unity of subjectivity. Düsing takes Kant’s discussion of beauty as a symbol of morality, which I take to be central for the question of unity between the subject and the external world, to be central for the analogy between the aesthetic and moral freedom. Düsing (1990), p. 85.
the spontaneity in the play of the cognitive faculties, whose harmony with each other contains the ground of this pleasure, makes that concept of purposiveness suitable for mediating the connection of the domain of the concept of nature with that of the concept of freedom, as regards freedom’s consequences, inasmuch as this harmony also promotes the mind’s receptivity to moral feeling. (KdU, AA V, 197; my emphasis, L.O.)

In aesthetic experience one experiences a contemplative condition of the free harmony of the faculties that is free of the coercion of the senses. According to Kant, one’s capacity to elevate oneself from the coercion of sensibility in aesthetic experience serves as a preparation for determining one’s will in accordance with the moral law independent of any demands of our sensibility. Thus, the role of beauty is to make human beings, “if not morally better, at least better mannered for society” by reducing the “tyranny of sensible tendencies, and preparing humans for a sovereignty in which reason alone shall have power” (KdU, AA V, 434). The role of beauty is thus in creating a “culture of discipline [Zucht (Disziplin)]” (KdU, AA V, 432) that helps liberate the will from the power of desire and thus helping to train our sensible nature to be responsive to the demands of our supersensible nature, that is, morality.65

The above canvassed role of the purposive form of the beauty of nature and the work of genius in enhancing the unity of the sensible and the supersensible aspects of the

---

65 Henry Allison notes that in his Metaphysics of Morals (1797) Kant defines “moral sense” as “the susceptibility [Empfänglichkeit] to feel pleasure or displeasure merely from being aware that our actions are consistent with or contrary to the law of duty” [MdS, AA VI, 399; cited in Allison (2001), p. 216]. Allison notes that although it is clear that according to the premises of Kant’s ethical theory a moral agent does not act morally because of the promise of the feeling of pleasure or the threat of the feeling of displeasure, if one were completely devoid of moral feeling, the moral requirements would not possess any motivational force. Thus, the experience of beauty and the cultivation of beauty in society lead to the cultivation of feelings that are essential for morality.
human subject can be described also in terms of the work of aesthetic judgment. In the Second Introduction to the Critique of Judgment Kant suggests that, “The power of judgment through its a priori principles for judging nature in accordance with possible particular laws for it, provides for its supersensible substratum (in us as well as outside us) determinability [Bestimmbarkeit] through the intellectual faculty” (KdU, AA V, 196). On Kant’s view, our intelligible nature—or what Kant at places calls the “supersensible substrate of humanity” (KdU, AA V, 340) in us—is indeterminate for our understanding. In aesthetic experience this supersensible substrate of humanity becomes “determinable [bestimmbar]” (KdU, AA V, 196), that is, it becomes representable to our understanding as a condition analogous to the state of the free harmony of the faculties in aesthetic experience in which the subject is free from the coercion of the senses. Furthermore, “reason provides determination [Bestimmung] for the same substratum through its practical law a priori” (KdU, AA V, 196). In other words, reason determines our intelligible substrate as freedom to act in accordance with the moral law. Thus, aesthetics makes possible the “transition from the domain of the concept of nature to that of the concept of freedom” (KdU, AA V, 196).

3.5.2 The Art of Genius as a Challenge to the Preeminence of the Beauty of Nature

In the Second Introduction to the Critique of Judgment Kant claims that the “mediating concept” between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom is the

---

66 I follow Düsing who rightly suggests that Kant’s solution to the problem of the Übergang is ultimately grounded in the transcendental solution to the problem, that is, aesthetic judgment. See Düsing (1990), pp. 87-91.
“concept of a purposiveness of nature” (KdU, AA V, 196). Because the works of art are human products and not the products of nature it is not obvious how the products of art can evoke the concept of nature’s purposiveness even though at places Kant claims that they do. This further implies that only the beauty of nature can help cultivate the feelings that are essential for the cultivation of morality and that only the beauty of nature can serve as a bridge between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom. In what follows I shall summarize two recent attempts in Kant literature to provide a solution to the above problem.

Jane Kneller in her article “The Interest of Disinterest” notes that, given Kant’s definition according to which genius is “the inborn predisposition of the mind (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art” (KdU, AA V, 307) the fine art of genius is itself a product of nature. By suggesting that by “nature” in his definition of genius Kant has in mind the genius’s special sensible nature, his special power of imagination, she further concludes that “this seems to make the object of fine art a natural object, like a beautiful waterfall obeying laws of physical nature. It certainly mitigates the sharp division between natural and art objects, thus also mitigating the distinction between kinds of possible interest.” In contrast to Kneller, Henry Allison suggests that a

67 Consider for example the following passage: “The power of judgment’s concept of a purposiveness of nature still belongs among the concepts of nature, but only as a regulative principle of the faculty of cognition, although the aesthetic judgment on certain objects (of nature or of art) that occasions it is a constitutive principle with regard to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure” (KdU, AA V, 197).

68 Kneller (1996), p. 783. A similar argument has already been advanced by Deleuze. See Deleuze (2002), p. 97-98. More recently Paul Guyer emphasized Kant’s characterization of genius in the third Critique as a “natural gift” and the significance of this characterization for including artistic beauty together with the beauty of nature among the object of intellectual interest in the beautiful. Both Guyer and Kneller take
possible reading of Kant’s claim that artistic beauty somehow prompts the thought of the
purposiveness of nature “turns on what is supposedly common to the two species of
beauty, namely, a purposiveness of form.” In support of his interpretation Allison
refers to Kant’s claim that “art can only be called beautiful if we are aware that it is art
and yet it looks to us like nature” (KdU, AA V, 306). In other words, only if the works of
art exhibit the pure form of purposiveness without a purpose, just like the beauties of
nature do, can the works of art be considered beautiful. Therefore, Allison concludes that,
according to Kant, the work of art occasions the concept of nature’s purposiveness
because the appreciation of the beautiful forms of art leads one to contemplate the forms
in nature which then occasions the concept of nature’s purposiveness.

In answer to these commentators, I have been arguing that the meaning of
“nature” in Kant’s definition of genius is the meaning of nature in its noumenal sense. It
is true that, on Kant’s view, there is something special about genius’s imagination and it
is understandable why genius’s sensible nature would be of interest to interpreters such as
Kneller. Kneller’s interpretation, however, fails to stress that Kant is not an empiricist
and that, on Kant’s view, the imagination of genius is very special because it is guided by
a very special principle of reason, that is, the principle of nature’s pruposiveness that

“nature” in Kant’s definition of genius to signify genius’s sensible nature. See Guyer
(2003), pp. 158-159. In her response to Kneller, Munzel indicates that the word “nature”
in Kant takes many different meanings but suggests in the end that it is more likely that
the word “nature” in Kant’s definition of genius signifies the external world rather than
genius’s inner nature as suggested by Kneller because it is in relation to the external
world that “reason is seeking a congruency or fit that would make possible the exercise of
its own causality within it.” See Munzel (1995), p. 791. I will show in the next chapter
that, on Kant’s view, the works of genius have a moral significance with respect to both
the formulation of our requisite moral intentions and the realization of these intentions in
the world.

genius has a special capacity to intuit. In section 3.2 of this chapter I have pointed to Kant’s numerous *Reflexionen* where he describes genius as a subject with a special capacity to intuit an Idea that gives the rule to its work. My argument was that this Idea is a precursor of what is later to become the principle of purposiveness and, moreover—in light of Kant’s definition of genius in the third *Critique*—the principle of *nature’s* purposiveness, which, as I have shown in the previous chapter, implies the supersensible substrate of nature, or nature in its noumenal sense. In section 3.4.1 of this chapter I have demonstrated that, according to Kant, aesthetic Ideas in a work of art sensibly exhibit an archetype, that is, an Idea of reason. My aim there was to suggest that there is a more general structural parallel between aesthetic Ideas and the supersensible substrate of nature, and not only one between aesthetic Ideas and specific rational Ideas. Hence, unlike Allison, I argue that the work of genius does not evoke our intellectual interest in the beautiful indirectly, that is, in analogy with the beauty of nature, but rather directly because the work of genius ultimately exhibits the principle of nature’s purposiveness.

Although on my interpretation the moral significance of the works of genius equals the moral significance of the beauty of nature, it still remains unclear why in paragraph 42 of the *Critique of Judgment* Kant claims that one’s interest in the beauty of nature is “always a mark of a good soul” (KdU, AA V, 299) while “the interest in the beautiful art […] provides no proof of a way of thinking that is devoted to the morally good or even merely inclined to it” (KdU, AA V, 298). On Kant’s view, our intellectual

---

70 It has been stressed by Paul Guyer that Kant’s choice of interest in natural beauty as a superior alternative to one’s intellectual interest in artistic beauty contrasts with the anthropology lectures where Kant claims that the works of fine art have an explicit moral content. See Guyer (2003), p. 158.
interest in the beauty of art is obstructed not so much by our empirical interest in it, i.e., by charms, as by the interest of our vanity because, we decorate our rooms with art works and display our connoisseurship of art for the purpose of self-aggrandizement (KdU, AA V, 299). Kant’s suggestion seems to be that our aesthetic appreciation of the beauty of nature can be pure more easily than our aesthetic appreciation of the works of art because self-love, which is the basis of Kant’s doctrine of radical evil, is far harder to overcome than one’s empirical interest in beauty. However, although never explicitly stated by Kant, it is plausible that Kant considers great art works, or the art of genius, to be a separate category from the decorative art that is the object of the interest of vanity. The works of genius, unlike decorative art, belong to a special category of fine art that has the capacity to exhibit the principle of nature’s purposiveness and inspire our intellectual interest to the same extent as the beauty of nature.

In this chapter I have portrayed genius as understood in Kant’s third Critique as a subject with a special capacity to intuit a specific undetermined conceptual content, that is, the Idea of nature in its noumenal sense. Genius does not intuit the noumenon itself, for this is something that is reserved only for an intuition unlike ours—intellectual intuition. Instead, genius intuits noumenal nature as an Idea, a principle of reason, or in other words, a rule. I have demonstrated in this chapter that, on this interpretation of the rule exhibited in the works of a genius, a genius can be described both as a “possessor” and a “possessed” with respect to both its process of production and its originality. Furthermore, my interpretation of the meaning of the “rule” exhibited in a work of a genius also has consequences with respect to the interpretation of the practical
normativity of its work. I have demonstrated that the work of genius for Kant has as much moral significance as the beauty of nature.\(^71\)

At this point two objections can be raised against Kant’s account of artistic production and his account of genius.

(1) The fact that genius’s products, according to Kant, are sensible instantiations of nature’s supersensible substrate does not limit them to specific themes, or to a specific set of aesthetic Ideas. Kant’s account of artistic production allows for a variety of topics even though the rule genius’s works express must be thought in analogy to our own purposiveness—i.e., morality. However, Kant’s explanation of artistic production does not account for the fact that the artist’s choice of aesthetic attributes that are associated with certain aesthetic Idea may vary with historical periods. Similarly, aesthetic attributes that are in one historical period associated with one aesthetic Idea may, in a different historical period, be associated with an entirely different set of aesthetic Ideas. My suggestion is that, from the perspective of artistic production, the spirit of genius cannot be considered independently of concrete historical context. In other words, a genius’s choice of rules that are adequate for expressing its intuited content, i.e., genius’s judgment, presupposes a process of interpretation that is dependent on concrete human experience. This idea finds its confirmation in the historical development of artistic forms.

(2) The fact that, according to Kant, our contemplation of the rule exhibited in the products of genius increases our receptiveness for morality suggests that a person with a capacity to produce such a work, a genius, must himself be especially receptive to

\(^{71}\) Here I mean the beauty of “mere” nature because the work of genius is itself in an important sense also “nature.”
morality. According to Kant’s reception aesthetics, our appreciation of beauty reveals that sensible nature that is responsive to the purposiveness of noumenal nature outside of us is also receptive to the purposiveness of morality, or noumenal nature inside of us. Similarly, according to Kant’s production aesthetics, the fact that genius’s sensible nature is especially receptive to the principle of nature’s purposiveness, or noumenal nature implicated in the principle, indicates that genius’s nature must also be especially receptive to morality. Thus, Kant’s notion of genius is very different from his notion of “virtuosi of taste, who are not only often but usually vain, obstinate, and given to corrupting passions” (KdU, AA V, 298). However, experience shows that some of the greatest minds and the greatest artists were far from being moral human beings.\textsuperscript{72}

In this chapter I have discussed the moral significance of the work of genius with respect to its capacity to contribute to, what I called, the “unity of subjectivity,” or the cooperation and receptiveness of our sensible nature to the demands of our noumenal nature or morality. In the next chapter of this dissertation I continue to discuss the moral significance of the work of genius for the unity of subject and the external nature, that is, for its significance of serving as a sign that the world is a hospitable environment for the realization of our moral ends.

\textsuperscript{72} It may be argued here that even if artists in some of their life may be immoral, when acting as artists they are really being moral. This would raise further questions about the unity of the subject.
Art in general can satisfy us in many different ways. A work of art can be something merely pleasing to the senses (as in decorative art), or a mode of unique questioning of current social and political issues, of the boundaries between art and reality, and of the boundaries of art itself (as in some forms of contemporary art). The latter is a special mode of questioning that moves us not only intellectually but also sensibly and that cannot be simply replaced by discourse. On Kant’s view, however, the work of a genius is aesthetically significant in a special way.

In Chapter Two, I argued that for Kant the work of a genius, in addition to serving as an epistemic norm, also serves as a practical norm. I suggested that the purposiveness exhibited in the work of a genius serves as a reminder of our moral vocation. Thus, according to Kant, the work of a genius is special because it has the capacity to tell us something about ourselves as subjects. It reminds us of our noumenal, or “true” selves, that is, a self that is ontologically prior to our phenomenal self. In this respect, the work
of a genius engages both our imagination (i.e., our sensible nature) and our noumenal nature. Therefore, on Kant’s view, the work of a genius has important implications for the unity of noumenal and sensible nature in the subject, i.e., the transition from nature to the supersensible “within.”

But, according to Kant, the work of a genius is also special insofar as it has the capacity to tell us something about the world. In this chapter, I will argue that, on Kant’s view, the work of a genius serves as a sensible exhibition [Darstellung] of the Idea of the highest good [HG]. Put another way, the works of a genius serve as a special sign that the world is hospitable to our moral ends and that the realization of our moral vocation in such a world may indeed be possible. Thus, whereas Chapter Three focused on the practical significance of the work of genius with respect to its capacity to remind us of the noumenal aspects of our subjectivity, this chapter will focus on the practical significance of the work of genius with respect to its capacity to remind us of the noumenal aspect of external nature. In other words, whereas Chapter Three discussed the significance of the work of a genius for the unity of nature and the supersensible “within,” this chapter will discuss the significance of the work of genius for the unity of nature and the supersensible “without.”

My decision to treat this aspect of the practical significance of genius’s work in a separate chapter is motivated by the relevance this issue has for Kant’s philosophical system as a whole. “I understand by a system,” writes Kant, “the unity of the manifold cognitions under one idea” (KdrV, A832/B860). The “Idea” his philosophical system aims at articulating—which Kant also takes to be the “final end of reason”—is the “entire
vocation of human beings,” or morality (KdrV, A840/B868). However, unlike his Idealist successors, Kant did not conceive of philosophical systematicity as consisting in some higher synthetic *a priori* principle of unity of theoretical and practical reason. Instead, Kant’s philosophical system consists in the complementary relation between the discourses of theoretical and practical philosophy. On the one hand, Kant’s *theoretical philosophy* first leaves space for the possibility of genuine moral causation (because the world does not have only a phenomenal aspect of mechanical causations but also a noumenal aspect as well). On the other hand, his *practical philosophy* claims certitude for the truth of the moral law as the “fact of reason” (KdpV, AA V, 31). The apex of such a philosophical system is a conception of the world, i.e., nature, that is the object of theoretical philosophy, as consistent with the ends demanded by the moral law, i.e., the object of practical philosophy. The representation of such a world that corresponds to our moral vocation Dieter Henrich calls “the moral image of the world.”

---

1 Kant took the demand that philosophy be conceived systematically in the proper spirit of the Enlightenment, the demand for philosophy to be conceived scientifically: “systematic unity is that which first makes ordinary cognition into science, i.e., makes a system out of a mere aggregate of it” (KdrV, A832/B860). The fact that the Idea of the whole determines the relation of the parts implies that the completion of the system cannot depend on contingently added parts. On the indebtedness of Kant’s conception of systematicity to his rationalist predecessors see Zöller (2001), pp. 53-72.

2 Karl Ameriks, for example, argues that the unity of Kant’s system remains “modest” and a “unity of coherence rather than any reduction of practical consideration to theoretical ones, or to some ‘common root’” [Ameriks (2001), p. 83]. Henrich similarly insists that for Kant the discourses of theoretical and practical philosophy remain distinct and a “system can only be envisaged when the way in which the discourses fit together and complement one another have been understood” [Henrich (1992), p. 7].

3 See Henrich (1992), pp. 3-28. Henrich suggests that due to Kant’s conception of the philosophical system that culminates in the “moral image” it became possible again, in a Platonic fashion, to think of ontology as inseparable from ethics, i.e., not to think that
Henrich, the “moral image of the world” is, thus, the Idea of the world in which our moral ends would be realizable, or the Idea of the world that would correspond to the demands of our moral conscience.

The chapter opens with section 4.1 that discusses Paul Guyer’s recent account of the role of genius in Kant’s moral teleology in order to show how my interpretation supplements this already existing account. Section 4.2 gives a brief overview of the evolution of Kant’s conception of HG. The purpose of this brief excursion into Kant’s practical philosophy is to establish (1) the transcendent nature of HG, (2) the connection of the transcendent nature of HG to moral motivation, and (3) the voluntary character of our belief in the existence of HG. Establishing these three aspects of Kant’s conception of HG I find relevant for demonstrating in Section 4.4 its connection to Kant’s aesthetics in general and the phenomenon of genius in particular. Since, on my view, fine art in Kant serves as a sensible representation of an undetermined conceptual content (i.e., the Idea of HG), Section 4.5 addresses a vexed question of whether Kant’s account of fine art perhaps already anticipates the cognitive role attributed to it later by the German Idealists. Finally, section 4.6 evaluates the general argument of the chapter by raising a question of the overall significance of fine art in Kant in comparison to the significance attributed by Kant to the beauty of nature.

“the world of objects and the world seen from the moral viewpoint are totally separate” [Henrich (1992), p. 4].
4.1 Paul Guyer’s Recent Account of the Role of Genius in Kant’s Moral Teleology

The problem of the role of genius in Kant’s moral teleology has recently been addressed in Kant literature. Paul Guyer in his essay “Beauty, Freedom, and Morality” advances the following argument:

By characterizing genius as a gift of nature, however, Kant implies that the existence of artistic as well as of natural beauty is evidence of the harmonious fit between nature and human objectives: just as the existence of natural beauty, that is, the beauty of nature outside of our own minds and dispositions, such as the beauty of flowers and birds and perhaps even of our own bodies, is evidence or at least a suggestion of nature’s fitness as an arena in which to realize our moral objectives, so nature’s production of a special human disposition, the special talent needed to produce beautiful art, can serve as evidence or at least a suggestion of the receptiveness of our own dispositions to the requirements of morality, that is the possibility that we can successfully harmonize our own inclinations and reason in the way necessary to formulate morally requisite intentions in the first place. [Guyer (2003), p. 159]

Guyer’s interpretation of the role of genius in Kant’s moral teleology as “evidence, or at least a suggestion” that we can successfully harmonize our sensible nature with the demands of morality is consistent with what he takes to be “the heart of Kant’s teleological vision,” that is, the “ultimate harmony between our rational objectives and our natural ones” where by “natural objectives” Guyer understands happiness understood as satisfaction of all our inclinations. In other words, the fact that genius’s sensible nature manifests purposiveness in its capacity to produce special works of art serves as “evidence, or at least a suggestion” that our own sensible nature can be amenable to the purposive demands of morality.

Guyer’s focus on the issue of harmony between our rational and natural ends as central for Kant’s moral teleology is due to significance he attributes, for example, to claims by Kant that the moral worth of action lies in the good will in which “the unconditional good alone can be found” (GMS, AA IV, 401, my emphasis). The fact that Kant identifies the good will as the “unconditional good” is to be understood within the context of his theory of radical evil. In the *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) we learn that the subordination of the incentives to act in accordance with the moral law to other non-moral incentives, or our propensity to evil, is something that attaches to our “moral faculty of choice” (R, AA VI, 31). Because this evil is the result of man’s free choice Kant calls it a “radical innate evil in human nature” (R, AA VI, 32). Thus, even the moral agent already in possession of a good moral disposition can lapse into temptation to choose non-moral, as opposed to moral, maxims. The moral agent already in possession of a good moral disposition cannot be certain that she will retain this disposition as much as a morally corrupted individual cannot be certain that he will ever repossess the good will. Human beings’ propensity to evil, i.e., their subjective disposition to adopt non-moral maxims, remains ultimately inscrutable to us because it originates in freedom, the noumenal ground of which remains inaccessible to our theoretical knowledge (R, AA VI, 51). Because, on Kant’s view, one’s persistence in a good moral disposition remains a constant struggle the outcome of which is ultimately not accessible to our theoretical knowledge Kant refers to our capacity to have the good will as an end, the unconditioned good, we hope to be able to achieve.⁶

---

⁵ Hereafter *Religion*.

⁶ See for example R, AA VI, 44, 51, and 52.
The fact that for Kant the good will is the unconditioned good I take to be the reason motivating Guyer to identify the problem of attaining and persisting in the good will as the “heart of Kant’s teleological vision.” The fact that obtaining and persisting in the good will is a subject of hope I take to be the reason why we seek signs that we can indeed achieve that which is merely the object of our hope. Even on this interpretation, however, we can only claim that genius can serve as a suggestion, rather than as a piece of evidence, that our sensible nature can comply with the purposiveness of reason just as the sensible nature of genius complies with the purposiveness of reason. Given the premises of transcendental idealism and the fact that the noumenal realm remains unknown to our theoretical knowledge nothing can serve as evidence that what we hope may in fact be realizable.

The discussion that follows will serve to complement Guyer’s interpretation of the role of genius in Kant’s moral teleology by focusing instead on the highest good as “the ultimate end of pure reason” (KdrV, A803/B831). Although morality is the “unconditioned good” (R, AA IV, 401)—or the good valuable in and of itself as opposed to being valued as a means to some other good—it is, on Kant’s view, “far from being the complete good” (KdrV, A813/B841). The highest, or the complete good consists in “happiness in exact proportion with the morality of rational beings, through which they are worthy of it” (KdrV, A814/B842). Because nature outside of us operates in


8 I thank Karl Ameriks for turning my attention to Guyer’s equivocation between “evidence” and “suggestion.”
accordance to its own mechanical laws, there is nothing in the sensible world that guarantees to us a proper distribution of happiness in proportion to our worthiness of it. Put otherwise, the connection between the two constitutive elements of HG, morality and happiness, is not a necessary connection.

Below I proceed to summarize transformations in Kant’s justifications for the assumption of the highest being that is supposed to serve as an “assurance” [Versicherung] (R, AA VI, 67) that the connection between morality and happiness be a necessary one. The fact that, on Kant’s view, we are indeed in need of this assurance evinces the transcendent status of HG, so often disputed in Kant literature.

4.2 Transformations in Kant’s Conception of the Moral Image

4.2.1 The Moral Image of the Worthiness to be Happy

In his Lectures on Ethics Kant claims that, “The understanding can judge freely but to give the power to this judgment of the understanding, so that it can move the will is the philosophers stone [der Stein der Weisen]” (AA XXVII, 54).\(^9\) In the Canon Kant acknowledges that moral judgments engage the subject in a very different way than do theoretical judgments. The mere awareness of the moral norm engages the subject at the level of the understanding, or at the level of theoretical reason, however this mere awareness cannot explain a subject’s approval of the moral law which presupposes also

---

its sensuous response to the truth of practical reason. The ground of the explanation of the
specific nature of the subject’s approval of the truths of practical judgments lies in the
nature of the human will, which, in order to be motivated to act, must be sensuously
affected [affiziert] by the object. For the will to be sensuously affected by an object does
not, however, entail that the will is necessitated by this object as is the animal will
[arbitrium brutum]: “The human power of choice is indeed an arbitrium sensitivum, yet
not brutum but liberum, because sensibility does not render its action necessary” (KdrV,
A534/B562).10

Kant attempts in the Canon to solve the problem of the moral subject’s incentive
for the execution of moral principles by looking for an a priori connection between moral
principles and that which the execution of these principle entails as its consequence,
namely, the promise of happiness. This is also evident in Kant’s formulation of the
categorical imperative in the Canon: “Do that through which you will become worthy to
be happy” (KdrV, A809/B837). Kant’s central idea of happiness in the Canon is not the
idea of the Epicurean empirical happiness that follows as the result of the satisfaction of
our desires and inclinations. Neither is it the Stoic idea of happiness, which consists
merely in the awareness of one’s own virtue.11 Kant’s conception of happiness, rather,
combines both Stoic and Epicurean elements. In a Reflexion dated from the same period,


11 Cf. Düsing (1971), p. 11. Düsing claims that Kant’s rejection of the Epicurean
and Stoic conceptions of happiness is based on the mistaken teaching of these schools
with respect to the relation of objective principles and the subjective grounds of their
execution. Thus, while the Epicureans took the subjective ground of the execution (i.e.,
happiness) to be also their objective principle (i.e., morality), the Stoics took the
objective principles of morality to be identical with the subjective ground of their
execution.
Kant distinguishes between the “matter [Materie]” and the “form [Form] of happiness.”

The “matter of happiness” is of a sensible nature while the “form of happiness” is of a purely intellectual nature. By the “form of happiness” Kant understands a will that is in accordance with the moral law, so that happiness follows from the realization of practical freedom. However, this “form of happiness” is not sufficient for the actual attainment of happiness but only as a condition for the possibility of happiness. Kant conceives of the “matter of happiness” as well-being [Wohlbefinden] that cannot be left to contingencies in nature but is a condition that comes as a reward to those who have already fulfilled the condition of the pure form of happiness, i.e., morality.

According to Kant, morality on the one hand, and, on the other, happiness in proportion to morality are constitutive of HG. In contrast to the Epicurean and the Stoic schools, Kant’s conception of HG arose from the acknowledgment that our human nature has both a noumenal and a phenomenal aspect. Hence, HG has two separate and heterogeneous but related goods: morality as worthiness to be happy and happiness proportional to worthiness. Each of these is good for its own sake. But morality is good “unconditionally” and happiness is good “conditionally.” In other words, the goodness of morality depends on itself, while happiness, which is valued for its own sake, is dependent on the goodness of morality. HG, as the world where happiness would be

---

12 R 7202, AA XIX, 276, written approximately in the period 1780-1789.

13 Kant distinguishes between practical freedom in its negative and in its positive sense. By the former he understands “independence of our will from necessitation through impulses of sensibility” (KdrV, A534/B562). By the latter he understands the capacity of the will to do that which the moral law commands. In the above sentence I have in mind the positive sense of practical freedom.

distributed in proportion with one’s worthiness of being happy, could be created by us insofar as “everyone do what he should, i.e., that all actions of rational beings occur as if they arose from a highest will that comprehends all private choice in or under itself” (KdrV, A809/B838). In other words, we could be the creators of such a world if every man acted in accordance with the moral law, contributing not only towards his own happiness but also towards the happiness of others. Given that not everyone does what one ought to, the connection between morality (as worthiness of being happy) and happiness is contingent. There is no guarantee that even if one acts morally one will be justly rewarded for one’s moral deeds. Moreover, there is no guarantee even that one will be able to persist in one’s moral disposition due to one’s constant temptations to choose non-moral maxims. Therefore, according to Kant, the hope of obtaining the necessary connection between happiness and worthiness to be happy is possible only in the intelligible world, under the assumption of the existence of an intelligence with a morally perfect will that could guarantee this necessary connection and supplement the imperfections of the human will.

However, Kant’s initial treatment of HG as a solution to the problem of the incentive for the execution of the moral law is circular.15 On the one hand, the

15 I emphasize that Kant’s treatment of HG in the Canon is his initial treatment of this topic because in the first Critique the issues in ethics were not Kant’s first priority. There has been much speculation in Kant literature regarding the development of Kant’s ethics. For example, Eckart Förster suggests that Christian Garve’s three volumes of Philosophische Anmerkungen und Abhandlungen zu Ciceros Büchern von den Pflichten served as a motivation for Kant to write the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (1785), the work that first introduces the concept of duty into Kant’s ethics. Förster also notes that Kant initially believed that his planned Metaphysics of Morals (1797) did not need a critique because, after Rousseau, Kant believed that the principles of morals are known to everyone. Thus, Kant did not have the project of the Critique of Practical
assumption of the existence of God and immortality gives force to the moral law, for without these we would have to “regard the moral laws as empty figments of the brain [Hirngespinst], since without that presupposition their necessary success, which the same reason connects with them, would have to disappear […] Thus without a God and the world that is now not visible to us but is hoped for, the majestic ideas of morality are, to be sure, objects of approbation and admiration but not incentives [Triebfeder] for resolve and realization” (KdrV, A811-813/B839-841). On the other hand, this assumption, if it is to be justified, must be a consequence of the already existing moral conviction:

“For it was these laws alone whose inner practical necessity lead us to the presupposition of a self-sufficient cause or a wise world-regent” (KdrV, A818/B846). The circularity of this argument from the Canon led Kant to abandon this position and to look for an


16 The circularity entailed in Kant’s justification of morality in the Critique of Pure Reason is also evident in the following passage:

For suppose there were obligations that were entirely correct in the idea of reason but would have no real application to us, i.e., would be without any incentives, if a highest being were not presupposed who could give effect and emphasis to the practical laws; then we would also have an obligation to follow those concepts, that even though they may not be objectively sufficient, are still preponderant in accordance with the measure of our reason, and in comparison with which we recognize nothing better or more convincing. (KdrV, A589/B617)

“Preponderance” of moral laws parallels Kant’s claim of their “inner practical necessity” (A 818/B 847) in the passage I cited above and both of these expressions are equally unclear. Kant’s intention is to save the normativity of the moral law that is independent of the assumption of God’s existence although this normativity without the assumption of God’s existence cannot be binding for us. The question thus remains: how is it possible on these conditions to recognize the moral laws as normative at all.

entirely new justification of morality. This new attempt at justification—i.e., justification
that is independent of theoretical reason and in which the reality of the moral demand is
grounded in the moral consciousness of the subject—Kant develops first in the *Critique
of Practical Reason* (1788).\(^{18}\)

### 4.2.2 The Moral Image of the “Moral Insight” in the *Critique of Practical
Reason* (1788)

In the Dialectic of the *Critique of Practical Reason* the moral law does not gain
its force from the promise of happiness but it makes demands on us independent of any
factors that are external to the moral law itself. This is the reason why Kant in the second
*Critique* refers to the moral law as the “fact of reason” (AA V, 31). The fact that Kant
ascribes the validity of the moral law to an “insight”\(^{19}\) indicates that he no longer tries to
justify morality through theoretical reason:

> Consciousness of this law may be called a fact of reason because one cannot
> reason it out from antecedent data of reason, for example, from consciousness of
> freedom (since this is not antecedently given to us) and because it forces itself
> upon us of itself as a synthetic a priori proposition that is not based on any
> intuition, either pure or empirical, although it would be analytic if the freedom of
> the will were presupposed; but for this, as a positive concept, an intellectual
> intuition would be required, which certainly cannot be assumed here. (KdpV, AA
> V, 31)

\(^{18}\) Düsing points out that in the Canon the assumption of the existence of God still
forms the foundations of ethics that Kant abandons in the *Critique of Practical Reason.*

\(^{19}\) Henrich refers to Kant’s doctrine of the “fact of reason” as an “insight of the
In the Third Antinomy Kant establishes that on the premises of transcendental idealism transcendental freedom, understood as a noumenal non-spatiotemporal causation, is logically consistent with the mechanical causality in the phenomenal realm. However, this could not serve as a sufficient proof of transcendental freedom’s objective reality. In the section III of the *Groundwork* Kant attempts to give a theoretical proof of freedom’s objective reality, i.e., its deduction, but abandons it completely shortly after. Instead, in the second *Critique* Kant claims that we have *a priori* knowledge of the validity of the moral law he calls the ‘fact of reason’ in order to contrast it with knowledge that is the outcome of a proof, or a deduction. By a “fact” in general Kant understands the “intuition corresponding to a concept” (KdU, AA V, 468). However, intuition that pertains to the

---

20 I am aware that in Kant literature the issue of what kind of metaphysics Kant’s account of transcendental freedom really entails is controversial. In *Kant’s Theory of Freedom* Allison argues that Kant’s picture of reason acting as a timeless efficient cause is “cryptic” [Allison (1990), p. 26]. Instead, Allison suggests that reason’s causation should not be understood “literally” but as efficacy of “our belief in these principles” [Allison (1994), p. 49]. In contrast to Allison, Ameriks argues that Allison’s allegations of mysteriousness entailed in Kant’s account of reason’s efficient causality are unfounded: “the claim that there is noumenal causation (i.e., a noumenal cause with an empirical effect) does not entail the claim that there is ‘merely’ such causation, nor that the phenomenal ‘expression’ of reason is inappropriate, let alone impossible […] a noumenal character can underlie a phenomenal appearance of that very being, just as an empirical thing can underlie its appearance. In other words, whatever story Allison wants to tell about the modeling function of our idea of ourselves as free rational agents should be a perfectly acceptable addendum to Kant’s noumenal metaphysics” [Ameriks (2003b), pp. 217-218].

21 On the historical account of Kant’s development of his doctrine of the ‘fact of reason’ see Ameriks (2000a), Ch. VI, pp. 189-233. In contrast to some other commentators who argue that the *Groundwork* already anticipates Kant’s doctrine of the ‘fact of reason’ (Henrich, Paton), or that his doctrine of the ‘fact of reason’ contains a “hidden” theoretical proof of freedom (L.W. Beck), Ameriks argues that Kant in the second *Critique* fully abandons his attempts of the *Groundwork* III. According to Ameriks, the reason for this radical turn in Kant’s argument can be found in his full acceptance of the consequences of his theoretical position with respect to the knowledge of the self. In other words, given that we cannot know our noumenal self we cannot argue from freedom to morality based on what is theoretically known about the noumenal self.
‘fact of reason’, i.e., the knowledge of the validity of the moral law, does not denote the usual meaning of the term ‘intuition’ for Kant. By ‘intuition’ Kant here means neither empirical intuition of a given particular, which is his standard use of the term ‘intuition’, nor the intellectual intuition of the German Idealists, i.e., a direct intuition of a transcendent realm of being that is not given in empirical reality. For Kant, the ‘fact of reason’ is an intuition of a principle or rule, and hence is a ‘fact of reason’. It is also a non-theoretical acceptance of the claim of this principle on us and hence is a ‘fact.’ From the certainty of the validity of the moral law Kant then deduces the objective reality of freedom although the ground of this objective reality is practical rather than theoretical. In other words, with the certainty of the moral law the problematic concept of freedom becomes determinable, i.e., can be thought more concretely, but ultimately it cannot be proved theoretically.

Kant’s doctrine of the fact of reason led to a further elaboration of the account of moral motivation. Kant resolves the problem of an incentive for moral action with the feeling of respect for the moral law (KdpV, AA V, 72-78). Although the feeling of respect for the moral law is an effect on the sensibility of a moral agent it has no ultimate

---

22 The ambiguity of the content of the ‘fact of reason’ has often been stressed in Kant literature. Kant refers to it variously as the “moral law” (KdpV, AA V, 47), “consciousness of the moral law” (KdpV, AA V, 31, 46), “autonomy in the principle of morality” (KdpV, AA V, 42) to name a few. What all of these various ways in which Kant characterizes the content of the ‘fact of reason’ have in common is a rule or a principle. This is also the reason why for Kant this intuition is an act of reason although it is not reached through reasoning (see my discussion of genius’s intuition of the principle of purposiveness in the previous chapter). This is also the reason why the intuition of the ‘fact of reason’ cannot be compared to what Kant would take to be the mystical intuition of Platonic insight. According to Ameriks, although Kant’s doctrine of the ‘fact of reason’ is an intuition of a principle and not a direct intuition of a special realm of being it still cannot serve as a fully satisfactory justification of the validity of the moral law because it shares some of the features of the ultimacy of intuitionistic systems and as such it could be said that it encouraged the return to dogmatic metaphysics in Germany.
empirical origin. The feeling of respect does not arise as the effect empirical reality has on our sensibility but as a sensible outcome of the moral judgment that recognizes the moral law as binding.

In the Dialectic of the second Critique, the Idea of the HG no longer serves as the incentive for the execution of the moral law but, instead, becomes the object of the will one has a duty to further (KdpV, AA V, 115). While in the Canon of the first Critique Kant conceived of happiness as “moral happiness,” i.e., happiness that follows as a reward in the intelligible world in proportion to one’s morality, in the Dialectic of the second Critique Kant conceives of happiness empirically: “Happiness is the state of a rational being in the world in the whole of whose existence everything goes according to his wish and will, and rests, therefore on the harmony of nature with his whole end as well as with the essential determining ground of his will” (KdpV, AA V, 124; my emphasis, L.O.). A moral agent, although rational, is at the same time dependent on nature that can act as a potential obstacle to the will. Given that Kant now conceives of HG as the object of the will, the happiness associated with HG will be identical to the state of HG being achieved, and the conditions that are necessary for its achievement, i.e., removal of the empirical obstacles. By “nature” as an empirical obstacle Kant understands either our sensible nature—which, with the demand of our inclinations, represents a constant temptation to choose non-moral maxims—or the external nature that is governed by mechanical laws over which we do not have control and which may be an obstacle to the realization of our moral maxims.

Although HG is the object of our will that we have a duty to further, it is not achievable by us in this world. We can only approximate to it in the “endless progress
toward that complete conformity” (KdpV, AA V, 122). The above formulation of HG and happiness leads Kant to the doctrine of the postulates of practical reason. According to Kant, a postulate is a “theoretical proposition” insofar as it asserts that something must be the case, but the truth of this proposition cannot be proved theoretically but only in reference to the moral law. In other words, given that we have a duty to promote HG—but can never achieve the complete conformity of our will with the moral law due to the temptations of our sensible nature, or our realization of the moral maxims in the world is obstructed by the laws of external nature—we need to assume that God exists as a being that will make these obstacles to our will cooperative, and, thus, the realization of HG possible. We also need to assume the immortality of the soul in order to be assured of the objective reality of the endless progress towards HG. Therefore, in the Dialectic of the second **Critique** although HG becomes central to morality, it retains its transcendent status because it is not attainable by human finite will.

### 4.2.3 The Moral Image of the Ethical Community

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) and the *Religion* (1793), Kant’s conception of HG takes yet another form. In the third *Critique* Kant distinguishes between the “ultimate end” [lezter Zweck] (KdU, AA V, 426) of nature and the “final end” [Endzweck] (KdU, AA V, 426) of creation as a whole. By the former Kant understands the end in virtue of which it is possible to think of nature teleologically as a systematic unity. By the latter Kant understands an end that does not presuppose an end beyond itself to which it can serve as a means (KdU, AA V, 433). The final end is not the
end of nature insofar as it exists but the purpose of its existence, or the “ultimate end of creation” (KdU, AA V, 443). According to Kant, only human beings qualify as the ultimate end of nature insofar as they are capable of setting the final end: “It is his vocation [Bestimmung] to be the ultimate end of nature; but always only conditionally, that is, subject to the condition that he has the understanding and the will to give to nature and to himself a relation to an end that can be sufficient for itself independently of nature, which can thus be a final end, which, however, must not be sought in nature at all” (KdU, AA V, 431). In other words, nature in itself does not have an ultimate end and, thus, it does not constitute a teleological system until human beings give it one by setting the final end, which is HG. Given that the final end has no other end as its condition, it cannot be set by any other creature in nature, nor the phenomenal part of a human being, because these are always conditioned by some other mechanical cause. Only the human being considered as a noumenon has the capacity to set the final end because of its “supersensible faculty” (KdU, AA V, 435), that is, freedom.

In contrast to Kant’s conception in the Canon and the second Critique, according to which HG consists in the happiness of moral individuals, Kant’s conception of HG as the final end of creation in the third Critique speaks of “the human being [as such] under moral laws” (KdU, AA V, 445). By “human being” [der Mensch] Kant does not understand an individual human being but “each rational being in the world” (KdU, AA V, 448), or humankind as a whole. Kant’s conception of HG as an ethical community, i.e., as a “universal republic based on the laws of virtue” (R, AA VI, 98) is particularly evident in the Religion. In the Religion Kant argues that we have a specific duty to further HG as a good common to all: “Here we have a duty sui generis, not of human beings
toward human beings but of the human race towards itself. For every species of rational beings is objectively — in the idea of reason—destined to a common end, namely the promotion of the highest good as a good common to all” (R, AA VI, 97). Kant’s conception of HG as an “ethical community” is motivated by his position that HG cannot be achieved as the effort of an individual moral agent but only as a communal effort: “This highest moral good will not be brought about solely through the striving of one individual person for his own moral perfection but requires rather a union of such persons into a whole toward that very end” (R, AA VI, 97). In the Religion Kant claims that the original setting of evil is social: “Human beings (as we have remarked above) mutually corrupt one another’s moral predisposition, and even with the good will of each individual, because of a lack of a principle which unites them, they deviate through their dissensions form the common goal of goodness, as if they were instruments of evil, and expose one another to the danger of falling once again under its dominion” (R, AA VI, 97). Hence, the struggle against evil can be effective only as a communal effort to reverse this original corrupting setting: “The highest moral good will not be brought about solely through the striving of one individual person for his own moral perfection but requires rather a union of such persons into a whole toward that very end” (R, AA VI, 98).


24 Cf. Wood (1999), pp. 313-317. Both passages are also cited in Wood (1999), p. 314. Wood emphasizes Kant’s valuing of a community and the pursuit of the collective ends as a necessary means to fulfilling our moral vocation. Wood, however, implies that, on Kant’s view, ethical community is a condition of “the moral progress of the human race” as such. But Kant does not suggest in the Religion that the human race gets better. According to Kant, our propensity to evil always remains. In the communal setting, rather, individuals over time have an opportunity to bring about the good, so that the world as a whole gets better. Thanks to Karl Ameriks for bringing this to my attention.
However, even mutual effort can never be sufficient to reach the ethical community that will be in complete conformity to the moral law: “The distance between the goodness which we ought to effect in ourselves and the evil from which we start is, however, infinite, and, so far as the deed is concerned—i.e., the conformity of the conduct of one’s life to the holiness of the law—it is not exhaustible in any time” (R, AA VI, 66). Thus, just as he had in the second Critique, in the Religion Kant conceives of our pursuit of HG as an infinite progress (R, AA VI, 67). In order to think of progress as possible for us “we must assume a higher moral being through whose universal organization the forces of single individuals, insufficient on their own, are united for a common effect” (R, AA VI, 98). The assumption of the existence of God assures the promise of “moral happiness” (R, AA VI, 68). By the latter Kant understands the “assurance of the reality and constancy of a disposition that always advances in goodness (and never falters from it)” (R, AA VI, 67). With the assurance of “moral happiness,” or the formal aspect of happiness, we are also assured of “physical happiness” (R, AA VI, 67-68), or its material aspect: “If one were absolutely assured of unchangeableness of such a disposition, the constant ‘seeking after the Kingdom of God’ would be equivalent to knowing oneself already in possession of this kingdom, inasmuch as a human being 

25 In his third review of Herder’s Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind (1785), Kant compares the infinite progress of human history to an asymptotic line:

But if the human species signifies the totality of a series of generations which runs on into infinity (i.e., the indeterminable)—and the term is commonly used in this sense—and if it is assumed that this series constantly approximates to the line of its destiny which runs alongside it, it is not a contradiction to say that the series in all its parts is asymptotic to this line yet coincides with it as a whole. In other words, no single member of all the generations of the human race, but only the species, attains its destiny completely. [Reiss (1991), p. 220]
thus disposed would from himself derive the confidence that ‘all things else (i.e., what relates to physical happiness) will be added to him’” (R, AA VI, 68).\(^{26}\)

My emphasis on the transcendent nature of Kant’s conceptions of HG can be contrasted with Eckart Förster’s interpretation of Kant’s Idea of HG. Förster suggests that Kant’s argument in the *Religion* at least opens the possibility for thinking of the connection between morality and happiness in a way that is immanent as opposed to transcendent.\(^{27}\) Förster finds the support for his claim in Kant’s formulation of “moral happiness”: “This ‘moral happiness’ consists in awareness of ‘constancy of disposition that always advances in goodness’ (6:67, compare 6:75).” This leads Förster to conclude that “moral happiness” is in principle achievable by the subject itself.\(^{28}\) But Kant never says that “moral happiness” consists in our awareness [Bewustsein] of the constancy of our moral disposition but in our assurance [Versicherung] of such constancy. This assurance can come only with the assumption of the existence of a perfectly moral being that assists our ethical community and our own individual efforts to maintain this constancy. Furthermore, Förster suggests that Kant’s second *Critique* already anticipates

---

\(^{26}\) In the third *Critique* HG also culminates in these two forms of happiness. Kant’s formulation of happiness as “moral happiness” is clearly found at KdU, AA V, 451, 452 and his formulation of happiness as a “physical good” can be found at KdU, AA V, 450. Both forms of happiness are also found in the second *Critique* and the Canon of the first *Critique*, as I have argued above. By arguing that the “matter of happiness,” i.e., “physical happiness” understood as well-being [Wohlbefinden], follows as a consequence from the “form of happiness” or morality, Kant continues in the Aristotelian and Scholastic traditions. The former conceives of HG as an exercise of *nous* as the highest human faculty and pleasure that follows from it. The latter conceives of HG as an act of contemplating the Divine essence and pleasure associated with this activity.


\(^{28}\) Ibid, p. 354.
the quasi-immanent status of HG in the *Religion*. According to Förster, the HG that becomes the object of the will in the second *Critique* is something that must be realized in this world and something that is “possible in the world.”29 For, when Kant asserts in *What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* (1786) that HG is “possible in the world insofar as it is possible only through freedom” (WhdO, AA VIII, 139) he implies that HG is the object of the will and as such is something that is realized in the world. But this is not sufficient to claim that in the period after 1786 HG is immanent for Kant. For Kant HG clearly remains the “best world” (KdpV, AA V, 125), and however much we can approximate it in this world, its full realization presupposes “uninterrupted continuance of this progress […] even beyond this life” (KdpV, AA V, 123). This distinction between the perfect divine will and the finite human will collapses in German Idealism. However, it is inaccurate to argue that Kant’s mature critical period already anticipates this collapse. Thus, in contrast to Förster, I conclude that Kant’s conception of HG remains from the Canon of the first *Critique* (1781) all the way through the *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) transcendent in part, despite the various forms Kant’s conception of HG takes.30

---


30 See also Förster (1992), esp. pp. 169-170 for his argument according to which Kant already in his mature critical period insinuates that the concept of HG as a world where happiness is distributed in proportion to worthiness under the supreme moral regent may not at all be possible.
4.3 The Moral Image of the World and the Problem of Moral Motivation

In the preceding discussion of the various forms of HG in Kant we have seen that, after the Canon of the first *Critique*, Kant argues for HG based on the fact that, according to Kant, it is not in the power of a finite human will to realize the ends the moral law commands. Within this broader structure of Kant’s argument Robert Adams in his article “Moral Arguments for Theistic Belief” distinguishes two more specific arguments for HG in Kant, which he calls (because of their respective conclusions) (1) “theoretical” and (2) “practical argument for HG.” The first, “theoretical argument” can be summarized as follows: (1) We ought (morally) to promote the realization of the highest good; (2) What we ought to do must be possible for us to do; (3) It is not possible for us to promote the realization of the highest good unless there exists a God who makes the realization possible; (4) Therefore, there exists such a God. Indeed, Kant claims that if the moral law commands us to promote that which we are not able to achieve, we will regard the law as “fantastic [phantastisch] and directed to empty imaginary ends” and as “in itself false” (KdpV, AA V, 114). But one should take Adams’s summary of Kant’s argument here with caution because Kant’s conclusion is that “it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God” (KdpV, AA V, 125, my emphasis), and not that “there exists such a God.” It is never Kant’s intention to give a theoretical proof of God’s existence and, hence, Adams’s choice of title for this argument in Kant is somewhat questionable.


32 See KdpV, AA V, 125 as one of the places where Kant gives a “theoretical” version of the argument for the assent to the existence of God.

33 My thanks to Karl Ameriks for bringing this to my attention.
That said, Adams rightly objects that Kant’s “theoretical” argument for the existence of God is not “very promising” because “in any reasonable morality we will be obligated to promote only the best attainable approximation of the highest good.”\(^{34}\) By this I take Adams to mean that we are not obligated to realize the ideal of the highest good but to strive towards it the best way we can. Because the assumption of God’s existence is only justified as a necessary condition for realizing the moral ideal commanded by the moral law if only approximation of HG can be the content of any reasonable morality, then the assumption of the conditions of HG are no longer justified.

According to Adams, Kant’s “practical argument” fares better and can be summarized as follows: (1) It would be demoralizing not to believe there is a moral order to the universe; for then we would be obliged to hold that the history of the universe will not be good irrespective of what we do. (2) Demoralization is morally undesirable. (3) Therefore, there is moral advantage in the belief that there is a moral order in the universe. (4) Theism provides the most adequate theory of a moral order of the universe. (5) There is a moral advantage in accepting theism and, therefore, we should believe in God.\(^{35}\) This argument relies on human psychology and is anthropological in nature. In other words, if one does what is in one’s power to promote the good, while one’s moral actions always have a negative effect on the greater good of the community, one will begin to believe that regardless of his right actions and good intentions things will always turn out the wrong way. The moral agent in his discouragement will regard the moral law as no longer having force in its demands. A passage in the third Critique indicates that Kant

\(^{34}\) Adams, 1979, p. 124.

\(^{35}\) Ibid, p. 125.
himself was perhaps aware that the “practical argument” for HG was the only one that could hold its own:

There is the fact that we feel ourselves forced by the moral law to strive for a universal highest end, but at the same time feel ourselves and all of nature to be incapable of attaining it; there is the fact that it is only insofar as we strive for this that we feel that we can judge ourselves to be in accord with the final end of an intelligent world-cause (if there is one); and there is thus a pure moral ground of practical reason for assuming this cause (since this can be done without contradiction), even if for nothing more than avoiding the danger of seeing that effort as entirely futile in its effects and thereby flagging in it. (KdU, AA V, 447; my emphasis, L.O.)

It is important to note, however, that the ideal of HG—which, according to Kant, belongs to “matters of faith” [Glaubenssachen] (KdU, AA V, 469)—with respect to both “theoretical” and “practical arguments” is “freely approved by reason” (KdU, AA V, 472n). According to Kant, “only those objects are matters of Glaube for which taking something to be true is necessarily free, i.e., determined by reasons for truth that are not objective insofar as they are not independent of the nature and interests of the subject.”

That is to say that reason cannot have theoretical certainty irrespective of whether conditions for HG obtain, but it can assent to this voluntarily as a result of rational deliberation and the practical advantage that the assent to the possibility of the moral world order offers.

---


37 Jäsche Logik, AA IX, 70.

38 The voluntary character of Glaube is also emphasized by Adams (see Adams, 1979, p. 130). It can also be discerned in the following passages in the second Critique:
However, it is due to the voluntary character of Glaube that Kant claims that it “can waver even in the well-disposed” (KdpV, AA V, 146). In order that one can persist in one’s disposition of Glaube “because of the natural need of all human beings to demand for even the highest concepts and grounds of reason something that the senses can hold on to, some confirmation from experience or the like […] must be used” (R, AA VI, 109). In this passage Kant has in mind concrete religious practices that, according to Kant, serve the purpose of maintaining, as opposed to grounding, Glaube. This is a well known point, but in what follows I will argue for a conclusion that is not so well known, namely that the work of genius serves a similar function. The work of genius as a symbol of morality, just as a beauty of nature, helps one to maintain Glaube and, hence, one’s moral disposition, by serving as a source of moral motivation.

But as for what concerns happiness in thorough conformity with that worthiness, there is no need of a command to grant its possibility in general, since theoretical reason has nothing to say against it; but the way in which we are to think such a harmony of the laws of nature with those of freedom has in it something with respect to which we have a choice, since theoretical reason decides nothing with apodictic certainty about it, and with respect to this there can be a moral interest which turns the scale. (KdpV, AA V, 144-145; my emphasis, L.O.)

Consider also the following passage:

But as a postulate from a practical point of view; and granted that the pure moral law inflexibly binds everyone as a command (not as a rule of prudence), the upright man may well say: I will that there be a God, that my existence in this world be also an existence in a pure world of the understanding beyond natural connections, and finally that my duration be endless. (KdpV, AA V, 143; my emphasis, L.O.)
4.4 The Work of Genius in Kant as a Source of Moral Motivation

4.4.1 “Beauty as a Symbol of Morality”: On the Formal Conditions of Symbolic Representation in Kant

The first step in unraveling the connection between Kant’s conception of genius and the problem of moral motivation is to explain Kant’s claim that beauty is a symbol of morality. In paragraph 59 of the Critique of the Power of Judgment, entitled “On beauty as a symbol of morality” Kant argues that “to demonstrate the reality of our concepts, intuitions are always required” (KdU, AA V, 351). According to Kant, there are three ways in which a concept can be provided with a corresponding intuition (be rendered in terms of sense [Versinnlichung]), or three kinds of “hypotyposis” (KdU, AA V, 351): (1) examples, (2) schemata, and (3) symbols. These correspond to three kinds of concepts: (1) empirical concepts, (2) pure concepts of the understanding, and (3) the rational concepts, or Ideas. Empirical concepts are rendered sensible by means of examples in empirical reality, pure concepts of the understanding by means of schemata (for example, for the concept of causation there is a schema of temporal succession), and finally for an Idea of reason one furnishes a symbol—an intuition, which is an indirect representation of the idea of reason by means of analogy, more specifically by means of qualitative analogy.  

39 On Kant’s distinction between mathematical (quantitative) and philosophical (qualitative analogy) see Chapter Two, section 2.3.1, footnote 51, and for a more detailed discussion of this distinction see Munzel (1995), pp. 305-309.
In analogical exhibition of a concept,\textsuperscript{40} “judgment performs a double function: it applies the concept to the object of sensible intuition; and then it applies the mere rule by which it reflects on that intuition to an entirely different object, of which the former object is only the symbol” (KdU, AA V, 352).\textsuperscript{41} Thus, a concept of a despotistic state can be represented symbolically by a handmill (KdU, AA V, 352). The empirical concept “handmill” provides an intuition for the concept “despotistic state.” The choice of the symbol “handmill” is not arbitrary but, rather, the rule for reflecting on the concept “handmill” and the concept “despotistic state” is similar. The rule of causality between the handmill and its constitutive parts is similar to the rule of causality between a despotistic state and its constituents: both imply force. Thus, the relation between the concept and its corresponding symbol is reduced to a rule contained in a pure concept of the understanding, i.e., the concept of causality.\textsuperscript{42} One understands the object of the Idea of reason (e.g., despotistic state) by relating the kind of causation it has on its effect (e.g., subjects governed by force) to the causation the object of symbolic representation (e.g., handmill) has on its effect (e.g., matter ground by force). According to Kant, reducing the

\textsuperscript{40}This indirect as opposed to direct exhibition of the Ideas of reason will be central to Hegel’s critique of Kant in Faith and Knowledge [Glauben und Wissen]: “As if the esthetic Idea did not have its exposition in the Idea of Reason, and the Idea of Reason did not have its demonstration in beauty […] But he [Kant] does not recognize that as beauty, it [the Idea] is positive, it is intuited, or to use his own language, it is given in experience” (GW, 340). See also GW, 339-341. In Kant’s theory of aesthetic Ideas Hegel sees Kant approaching, but ultimately avoiding, the Idea of Reason as an identity of the sensible and the supersensible.

\textsuperscript{41}Already in §10 of Kant’s Inaugural Dissertation it is evident that for Kant symbolic cognition is not, as it was for the rationalists, an indirect representation of more complex concepts. Already in Kant’s Inaugural Dissertation symbolic cognition is cognition of intelligible objects.

\textsuperscript{42}Cf. WhdO, AA VIII, 136.
relation between a symbol and an Idea to a rule contained in a concept of understanding avoids exaltation [Schwärmerei]. Exaltation [Schwärmerei] is avoided because the analogical exhibition prevents pretenses of our reason to the knowledge of things beyond those given in experience, that is, prevents taking that which can “only serve as a symbol to be a schema” (KdpV, AA V, 70-71).

While the preceding discussion aimed at clarifying the formal aspects of symbolic presentation, the content of symbolic presentation in beauty still remains to be determined.

4.4.2 “Beauty as a Symbol of Morality”: Engaging Some Recent Interpretations

In contemporary Kant scholarship much attention has been given to the question of what the qualitative analogy in paragraph 59 expresses, i.e., what the undetermined conceptual content symbolically exhibited in beauty is. In the title of paragraph 59 Kant states that the terms of the analogy are “beauty” and “morality” [Sittlichkeit]. Later in the paragraph Kant names the terms of analogy as “beauty” and the “morally good” [das Sittlich-Gute]. Here I will provide a brief summary of the most prominent interpretations in recent Kant literature of the terms of the qualitative analogy in symbolic presentation, state the reasons why each of these positions is ultimately unsatisfactory, and suggest what I take to be a more plausible solution.

43 Similarly, in the Critique of Practical Reason, in the section The Typic of Practical Reason, Kant warns against “mysticism of practical reason” (KdpV, AA V, 67-72). The “typic,” i.e., the lawfulness of nature, serves as a symbol that helps the imperative of the moral law becomes comprehensible for us.
In *Kant and the Experience of Freedom* Paul Guyer argues as follows:

The beautiful is the symbol of the morally good because the experience of beauty is felt to be an experience of freedom. Beauty is here the symbol of the morally good because the freedom of the imagination that is characteristic of the response to the former may be taken as the symbolic representation of the freedom of the will that is essential for the latter.  

Guyer’s suggestion that we should understand the “morally good” in Kant’s qualitative analogy as freedom, or the transcendental ground of morality, because “the experience of beauty is felt to be an experience of freedom” makes Kant’s reference to symbol and qualitative analogy superfluous. If freedom is something that can be experienced as the beauty of empirical objects can be experienced, then one would not need reference to symbolic hypotyposis of a concept that does not have a corresponding object in empirical reality.  

One could reformulate Guyer’s claim and instead argue that the causal effect of freedom understood as autonomy is similar to that of beauty, so that we can say that beauty is a symbol of freedom. However, even on this reformulation the causal effect of freedom understood as autonomy is not similar to the causal effect of beauty. The former

---


45 Guyer’s interpretation of the moral significance of beauty in Kant is very close to Schiller’s reception of Kant’s aesthetics and his focus on beauty as a representation of freedom. *Kallias Letters* is Schiller’s work that is the most exemplary of his reception of this aspect of Kant’s aesthetics. Karl Ameriks emphasizes that Guyer’s interpretation of the moral significance of beauty in Kant—and, hence, also Schiller’s—presupposes an imprecise meaning of Kant’s notion of freedom. [See Ameriks (1995), p. 366.] For example, one of the meanings the term “freedom” takes in Kant is “freedom” understood as a transcendent Idea, or a “supersensible faculty” (KdU, AA V, 445) by which Kant understands the capacity of our reason to determine the will in accordance with the moral law. Another meaning the term “freedom” takes in Kant is freedom of the will from external constraints. The Idea of freedom in the former sense cannot be an object of our *experience* as objects of empirical reality can.
implies the *positive* sense of practical freedom as our capacity to act in accordance with
the moral law. The latter implies the *negative* sense of practical freedom as freedom from
coercion of sensible nature.\(^{46}\)

Furthermore, Guyer’s interpretation clearly favors natural beauty as the paradigm
example of beauty as a symbol of morality. This is problematic because, on Kant’s view,
beauty, both of art and of nature, is a symbol of morality, which implies that the beauty of
art should have at least equal moral significance as the beauty of nature. According to
Guyer, artistic beauty is a more likely suspect for empirical interest in the beautiful.
Kant’s examples, claims Guyer, “make it clear that he is concerned with the use of the
fine arts to gratify human inclinations” such as self-aggrandizement.\(^{47}\) The fact that
works of art are subject to an empirical interest in the beautiful is an impediment to the
experience of beauty as a free harmony of imagination and understanding and, thus, of its
function as a symbol of morality.

In her article “‘The Beautiful Is the Symbol of the Morally Good’”, Felicitas
Munzel argues that Kant’s use of the terms *Sittlichkeit* and *Sittlich-Gute* as opposed to
*Moralität* and *moralisch* is decisive.\(^{48}\) All these terms are univocally rendered in English
as “morality” and “moral,” which in Kant literature is most commonly related to the
transcendental ground of morality, i.e., freedom. This univocal translation of *Sittlichkeit*
and *Sittlich-Gute* loses sight of a very different meaning denoted by these terms.

\(^{46}\) See my discussion of the role of aesthetic experience in evoking “moral
feeling” and fostering the “culture of discipline” in the previous chapter.


\(^{48}\) See Munzel (1995).
Sittlichkeit, argues Munzel, “by virtue of its very root retains the essential connection with the social conduct—with the good as something realized within human life [...] it points to morality’s making an appearance in actual life and conduct.”\(^49\) Moralität, in contrast, “shifts to the investigation of the moral law itself, its determinative activity—the determination of the human will and feeling.”\(^50\) Thus, according to Munzel, Sittlichkeit denotes moral good as the object of our will and not the moral law and freedom as its transcendental ground.\(^51\) Given that, according to Munzel, Sittlichkeit and Sittlich-Gute denotes the “matter,” i.e., the purpose or object of Kant’s moral philosophy, it points to one’s moral character that is in turn only a sensible manifestation of one’s “inner moral character.”\(^52\)

Munzel’s identification of one term of the qualitative analogy—the morally good—with the Idea of one’s inner moral character clearly privileges artistic beauty over the beauty of nature as the other term of the qualitative analogy. In support of her position Munzel points the reader to the passage where Kant claims that the purposiveness of nature is completely different from the concept of “practical purposiveness” exhibited in “human art” and “morals [Sitten]” (KdpV, AA V, 181).\(^53\)

According to Munzel, in our reflection on the work of art, as opposed to the beauty of

\(^{49}\) Ibid, p. 315

\(^{50}\) Ibid, p. 316.

\(^{51}\) It is, however, questionable whether Munzel’s emphasis of a clear distinction between Sittlichkeit and Moralität was so clear in the 18th century.


nature, we receive the “requisite intuition of how such realization [of the good] takes place.”

Moreover, it is more likely that we can receive such an intuition from a work of art because the creation of a work of art is “an act of bringing forth through freedom” and thus points to the transcendental condition of our realization of the good in the world.

Therefore, on Munzel’s view, the work of art serves as a source of moral education, i.e., as a concrete example of what we are to “make of ourselves.” However, she admits that Kant explicitly denies such a role for art in moral education and concludes that given that human beings do require such a positive motivation for moral cultivation “Kant’s moral philosophy remains incomplete.”

Munzel’s interpretation—which demonstrates sensitivity for nuanced meanings of Kant’s terminology that she elucidates within the context of Kant’s corpus as a whole—nevertheless suffers from the following shortcomings. (1) Contrary to Kant’s claim that beauty, both of nature and art, is a symbol of morality, Munzel one-sidedly privileges the beauty of art. (2) Munzel herself admits that Kant is skeptical towards the use of art in moral education. In the second Critique, the Doctrine of the Method of Pure Practical Reason, Kant admits that “It certainly cannot be denied that in order to bring either a mind that is still cultivated or one that is degraded onto the track of the morally good in the first place, some preparatory guidance is needed to attract it by means of its own

---

54 Munzel, 1995, p. 323.
56 Ibid, p. 325.
57 Ibid, p. 329.
advantage or to alarm it by fear of harm” (KdpV, AA V, 152). However, at the same time Kant expresses his skepticism that literary works can be used for this purpose:

But I do wish that educators would spare their pupils examples of so-called noble (supermeritorious) actions, with which our sentimental writings so abound [...] for, whatever runs into empty wishes and longings for inaccessible perfections produces mere heroes of romance who, while they pride themselves on their feeling for extravagant greatness, release themselves in return from the observance of common and everyday obligation, which then seems to them insignificant and petty. (KdpV, AA V, 155)

(3) By arguing that the work of art symbolizes the Idea of the inner moral character Munzel restricts the content of the work of art to moral themes. In other words, Munzel is committed to the position that the work of art indirectly exhibits specifically moral ideas. Although in the third Critique Kant chooses examples of works of art with moral themes, this does not imply that his aesthetic theory could not accommodate the works of art that do not have explicitly moralizing content.

In contrast to Munzel and Guyer, Henry Allison’s interpretation is intended to accommodate Kant’s claim that both beauty of art and beauty of nature symbolize morality. Hence, Allison tries to find the solution that would reconcile Guyer’s position, privileging the moral significance of nature, and Munzel’s position, privileging the moral significance of fine art. Allison’s interpretation focuses on the relevance of aesthetic Ideas, i.e., their (1) “quasi-schematizing function” and their (2) “transcendent pretensions,” as central for understanding how beauty symbolizes morality. By the former, Allison understands the function of aesthetic Ideas in their indirect exhibition of rational Ideas that cannot have an object in empirical reality. By the latter, Allison

understands the striving of aesthetic Ideas for the maximum in trying to provide the representation of something sensible for which no example can be found in nature. In virtue of these two characteristics, aesthetic Ideas constitute a “subset” of various symbols of rational Ideas. However, Allison acknowledges that not all rational Ideas are moral Ideas, and that an explanation must be found for Kant’s claim that the beautiful (whether natural or artistic) symbolizes morality. Allison sees the solution to this problem in an “isomorphism” between our reflection on the beautiful and our reflection on the morally good. He suggests that by the “morally good” \([\text{Sittlich-Gute}]\) we should understand the end of pure practical reason in its “completeness or totality,” i.e., the highest good. According to Allison, our reflection on such an object starts with something sensible, since it concerns an end that is to be realized in the world, it necessarily proceeds to the supersensible idea of its completion which can never be exhibited in experience, and from this to the supersensible conditions of its realization (the postulated ideas of God, freedom, and immortality).

In a similar way, reflection on the beautiful starts from something sensible, i.e., aesthetic attributes in a particular work of art, and proceeds analogously towards the reflection on rational Ideas that are sensibly exhibited in aesthetic Ideas.

Allison’s position has an advantage over Guyer’s and Munzel’s on the following points. (1) It accommodates Kant’s claim that beauty in general is a symbol of morality and not only either natural or artistic beauty. (2) It allows for the fact that aesthetic Ideas

\[59\] Ibid, p. 258.
\[60\] Ibid, p. 260.
do not provide an indirect exhibition of only moral Ideas. Thus, the work of art, according to Allison, does not need to have a specifically moral content in order for it to serve as a symbol of morality. Instead “in virtue of the same formal feature through which aesthetic ideas symbolize ideas of reason […] they also symbolize morality, whether or not the particular ideas are directly related to morality.”

By arguing for a purely formal conception of how the beautiful symbolizes the morally good, Allison shows how aesthetic judgment, which is not guided by determinate concepts, can still have determinate intellectual object, i.e., the morally good.

Allison’s position, however, is not without a disadvantage. Although Kant claims that beauty in general, thus both natural and artistic beauty, is a symbol of morality, Allison argues that Kant clearly privileges natural beauty from a moral point of view while the moral significance of artistic beauty is not completely denied. According to Allison, since beauty symbolizing morality “involves the idea of nature’s moral purposiveness, natural beauty may be said to bring about a transition to the supersensible without as well as within, while an engagement with artistic beauty promotes primarily a transition to the supersensible within.”

Allison’s claim here should be understood against the background of his argument that natural beauty “provides hints or traces” of nature’s moral purposiveness, i.e., in experiencing the beauty of nature, nature in its purposiveness appears to favor us, which further gives us hope that nature is a hospitable environment to our moral ends. This is the sense in which natural beauty brings the transition to the supersensible “without.” Natural beauty, however, brings the transition to


\[63\] Ibid, p. 263.
the supersensible “within,” as well as “without,” because it occasions the experience of the free harmony of the faculties in the subject. In the free harmony of the faculties the subject experiences freedom from inclinations that is analogous to the will that acts in accordance to the moral law regardless of one’s natural desires. Thus, in experiencing beauty we think of our sensible nature as amenable to the requirements of our noumenal nature, i.e., the supersensible “within,” or morality. According, to Allison the beauty of art does not occasion the principle of nature’s purposiveness and thus cannot provide a sign that the external nature is amenable to our moral vocation. Instead, by occasioning the free harmony of the faculties in the observer, the beauty of art has the capacity to prompt the thought of the purposiveness of nature. By evoking the free harmony of the faculties in the observer the beauty of art, just like the beauty of nature, promotes the mind’s receptivity to moral feeling and serves as a sign that the human sensible nature is amenable to our moral vocation. According to Allison, it is only in this latter sense that the beauty of art can serve as a symbol of morality.

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that if we take the meaning of “nature” in Kant’s definition of a genius in its noumenal sense, then the works of a genius serve as a bridge between nature and freedom and promote the mind’s receptivity to moral feeling not only in analogy to the beauty of nature, as Allison seems to suggest, but directly because the works of a genius exhibit the form of nature’s purposiveness. I am in agreement with Allison that we should take the meaning of the term of the qualitative

64 See my discussion of beauty serving as a transition from nature to the supersensible “within” in the previous chapter of this dissertation.

analogy “morally good” to denote the highest good. However, in what follows, my aim is to amend Allison’s account of the practical significance of the works of genius in Kant on two further points. I will argue below that, on Kant’s view, fine art as a work of genius is very special in its moral significance and that, contrary to Allison’s argument, it brings the transition both to the supersensible “within” and to the supersensible “without” and, therefore, has just as much moral significance as the beauty of nature. I will also argue that symbolic representation for Kant should not be restricted to a merely formal significance.

4.4.3 Nature’s Moral Purposiveness in the Work of Genius

An object that we consider to be a purpose is an object of an intelligent causality aimed at a determinate end. When we consider an object as purposive for our cognitive capacities we consider as if it were a product of an intelligent cause. But, as Henry Allison also acknowledges, “to think of it in this way is to attribute its ‘form’, that is, its purposive or design-like appearance, to a supersensible ground or substrate.” 66 The fact that there are objects in nature that occasion in us the principle of purposiveness and the free harmony of the faculties—the fact that these objects appear as if designed for us—suggests the Idea of a designer and, therefore, the Idea of the supersensible substrate of nature. 67 Thus, when Kant defines genius as “the inborn predisposition of the mind (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art” (KdU, AA V, 307) I do not take


the term “nature” to denote a genius’s special psychological makeup, i.e. his or her imagination, but rather nature in its purposive appearance, which also implies its supersensible ground or substrate.

In contrast to Allison I do not take the term “nature” in Kant’s definition of genius to denote only the supersensible substrate of a genius’s nature. Although Allison is among very few Kant commentators in the Anglophone philosophical community who explicitly articulate the connection between the principle of nature’s purposiveness and nature’s supersensible substrate, he suggests that the purposiveness exhibited in the work of genius is the “purposiveness of nature within the subject.” 68 According to Allison, it is the supersensible substrate of genius’s nature, or the supersensible “within,” that is responsible for the special aesthetic effect of genius’s products. On Allison’s view, because it is not clear how artistic beauty could prompt the thought of the purposiveness of external nature, works of genius are only capable of occasioning the transition between the sensible and the supersensible “within” in the observer. 69 For this reason, on Allison’s view, works of genius indeed have a moral significance, but this significance is inferior to the beauty of nature that occasions the transition both to the supersensible “within” and the supersensible “without.” In contrast to Allison, I have been arguing in this dissertation that purposiveness exhibited in the work of genius is very special insofar as it implies not only the supersensible substrate of genius’s “nature” but also the supersensible substrate of external nature. Because, as Allison suggests, Kant uses the term “nature” in many different ways and it is not obvious which meaning of the term


“nature” is intended in his principal definition of genius, more textual evidence is called for in support of my interpretation of the relation of genius to nature.

Paul Guyer claims that Kant introduces the connection between nature and the talent of genius for the first time in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*:

What he [Kant] never seems to have done prior to writing the *Critique of Judgment*, however, is to characterize this special degree of harmony and the capacity to communicate it to others as a *gift of nature*, although the equation of this “talent” with a “natural gift” is the very first feature of the third *Critique’s* account of genius.  

However, Kant’s *Reflexionen* indicate that the general connection between nature and the work of fine art and the specific connection between nature and the talent of genius was a subject of Kant’s philosophical speculations already in the late 70s:

Nature and art (art and contingency). The intended object is opposed to the contingent object. Contingency and intention. The game of nature. The nature connects art and contingency. Art: nature and contingency. Contingency: free movement of the powers of the soul. There is indeed a method in it; in the contradiction or the change of representation: that something is art and looks as if contingent and is nature but looks as if art.

The passage suggests that, on the one hand, works of art are designed and, hence, are produced in accordance with a determinant concept. On the other hand, works of art are, nevertheless, suggestive of “contingency” insofar as they are a cause of aesthetic experience and the free harmony of the faculties in the observing subject. The fact that genius is a gift of nature resolves the problem of how works of art as the products of a

---

70 Guyer (2003), p. 159.

71 R823, AA XV, 367.
determinate end nevertheless exhibit the form of purposiveness without a purpose. Kant explains already in the late 70s the relation between the purposive form of the beauty of nature and the purposive form of the beauty of fine art in terms of genius’s spirit [Geist] and its connection to nature: “Spirit is the secret source of life. It is not subordinated to the whim but its movements come from nature.”

Moreover, in his attempt to give an interpretation of the meaning of genius’s “nature” Guyer focuses on a very telling passage from Kant’s lectures on anthropology. In the Pillau lectures (Winter 1777/78) Kant attributes the harmony of the faculty of genius to the “Idea” of genius’s spirit:

Spirit is not a special faculty but that which gives the unity to all the faculties. Understanding and sensibility—or even better, imagination—are human faculties. It is, therefore, the general unity of the human soul, or, put otherwise, the harmony of the faculties. Spirit is also the enlivening of the faculties by the Idea.

(AA XXV, 782)

Guyer, for example, suggests that the meaning of the term “Idea” in the above passage is Kant’s “abstract characterization” of what, in the third Critique, become rational and moral Ideas in the work of art. Guyer, however, neglects to quote the passage in its entirety. Immediately following the above-cited passage Kant writes:

72 This is, as I already mentioned in Chapter Three of this dissertation, the sole significance Allison attributes to Kant’s conception of genius in the third Critique. See Allison (2001), p. 272ff. Although I do acknowledge that Kant’s conception of genius is important for resolving the formal connection between the beauty of nature and the beauty of art, I believe that Kant’s discussion of genius goes beyond this systematic function in implying that the work of fine art is as morally significant as the beauty of nature.

73 R 831, AA XV, 371.

The Idea does not have a meaning of a concept. One can have concepts independent of an Idea. The development of a whole science belongs to an Idea. The Idea is business [Geschäft] of the understanding but not through abstraction because these are then concepts [Conceptes]. [Idea] is the principle of the rules. There is a double unity: a distributive and a collective unity. The Idea concerns always the unity of the manifold as a whole. The Idea contains the principle of the manifold as a whole. (AA XXV, 782; “whole” my emphasis, L.O.)

In Chapter Two I demonstrated that, on Kant’s view, reason’s Ideas (the principle of systematicity and the principle of purposiveness) function as a condition of the possibility of thinking the manifold as a unity. The concepts of the understanding unify the manifold given in experience by serving as a condition of the possibility of the objects of experience. Unlike the unity that is provided by the concepts of the understanding, or what Kant in the above passage calls a “distributive” unity, the Ideas of reason are conditions of the possibility for thinking nature as a “whole.” They are in function of, what Kant in the above passage calls, a “collective” unity (AA XXV, 782). Therefore, I take the meaning of “Idea” in the above passage to be a precursor of what is later to become Kant’s principle of systematicity in the Dialectic of the first Critique, and his principle of purposiveness in the third Critique. Moreover, given Kant’s discussion of genius as the “inborn predisposition of the mind (ingenium) through which nature gives the rules to art,” and his discussion of the connection between genius’s spirit and the Idea, I conclude that the term “nature” in Kant’s definition of genius denotes the Idea of nature as a “whole,” or nature understood in its systematic unity. Furthermore, nature
understood in its systematic unity, as I have already demonstrated in Chapter Two of this dissertation, implies nature’s supersensible substrate.\textsuperscript{75}

Because it is the Idea of nature as a systematic whole (or the Idea of nature’s supersensible substrate) that acts through genius, works of genius, just like the beauties of nature, exhibit nature’s moral purposiveness. First, the aesthetic experience of the work of genius prompts the reflective judgment to represent the work of genius as being \textit{contingently} in accord to our \textit{minimal} rational requirements, i.e., our cognitive capacities. The work of genius is a product of human intentional causation. Hence its form must be in accord with our cognitive requirements. However, the fact that this accord is contingent differentiates the work of fine art from an artifact. But the principle of nature’s purposiveness exhibited in the work of genius, just like the principle of nature’s purposiveness exhibited in the beauty of nature, suggests also that nature may be in accord with the \textit{ends} of our rational nature, i.e., our morality. In the previous chapter I demonstrated how, on Kant’s view, works of genius evoke moral feeling and bridge the gap between the realm of nature to the realm of freedom by fostering one’s receptiveness to morality. However, given that works of genius exhibit nature’s purposiveness, works of genius indirectly, or symbolically, exhibit nature’s supersensible substrate, that is, the

\textsuperscript{75} Munzel argues that Kant claims that the principle of nature’s purposiveness is different from the principle of purposiveness occasioned by aesthetic experience of works of art. [See Munzel (1995), p. 323.] However, in the passage from the Second Introduction to the \textit{Critique of the Power of Judgment} which Munzel cites in support of her claim Kant contrasts the purposiveness of nature to the “practical purposiveness \textit{[praktische Zweckmäßigkeit]}” of human art understood as \textit{techné} and not purposiveness exhibited in the works of fine art. (See KdpV, AA V, 181.) The significance of the contrast is that purposiveness exhibited in fine art and beauty of nature is purposiveness without purpose while “practical purposiveness” of artifacts implies a specific determinant concept.
supersensible condition of the realization of the highest good in the world. Thus, aesthetic experience of a work of genius serves as a sign that what we hope may in fact be realizable, and it is in this capacity that works of genius serve as a source of moral motivation.

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how works of genius, on Kant’s account, serve as a source of motivation for formulating the morally requisite intentions. I took this to be Kant’s empirical-anthropological “bridge” from our sensible nature, that is, our desires and inclinations, to our supersensible nature, that is, morality. In this chapter I demonstrated how works of genius motivate one to persist in one’s already acquired moral dispositions because they symbolically exhibit the highest good. I take this to be Kant’s empirical-anthropological solution to the problem of the Übergang between the realm of external nature and the realm of our supersensible nature. However, Kant’s empirical-anthropological solution to the problem of the unity of subject and the external nature is ultimately grounded in his transcendental solution, just as was the case in his empirical-anthropological solution to the unity of subjectivity I discussed in the previous chapter. Just as our supersensible substrate became first determinable (that is, representable) through the spontaneity of our cognitive faculties in a free play, the supersensible substrate of nature becomes first determinable through our reflection on aesthetic Ideas in a work of art. But it is ultimately in the Idea of reason that nature’s supersensible substrate becomes determined as nature’s amenability to the realization of our moral ends, or becomes a symbol of morality. Thus, in contrast to Allison, I conclude that works of genius, just like the beauty of nature, exhibit the form of nature’s moral
purposiveness and enable a transition both to the supersensible “without” and the
supersensible “within.”

4.4.4 A Non-Formalist Account of Symbolization

In my summary of Kant’s accounts of HG earlier in the chapter I argued that
Kant’s Idea of HG remains always, at least in part, transcendent. According to Kant,
it also interests reason that the ideas (for which it produces an immediate interest
in the moral feeling) also have objective reality, i.e., that nature should at least
show some trace or give a sign that it contains in itself some sort of ground for
assuming a lawful correspondence with our satisfaction that is independent of all
interest […] reason must take an interest in every manifestation in nature of a
correspondence similar to this. (KdU, AA V, 300)

My argument here also serves as an answer to Anne Margaret Baxley. In her
article “The Practical Significance of Taste in Kant’s Critique of Judgment: Love of
Natural Beauty as a Mark of Moral Character” Baxley, along Allison’s lines, argues the
following:

Kant holds, further, that there is a close kinship between the harmony of nature
and with our cognitive aims made manifest in nature’s presentation of beautiful
forms and an analogous harmony of nature with our moral aims (which we take to
be suggested by any manifestations of nature’s aesthetic purposiveness). As moral
agents striving to pursue our moral ends in the world, these ‘hints’ or ‘traces’ of
nature’s moral purposiveness undoubtedly interest us and give us pleasure,
because they give us reason to suppose that our moral efforts are not completely
in vain. But since objects of art are, after all, products of art, not nature, by
definition they could provide no such indications of nature’s moral
purposiveness” [Baxley (2005), p. 40].

In the footnote to this passage Baxley admits that “Kant’s theory of genius complicates
matters for him on this point” but she herself never ventures to explain how. [Baxley
(2005), p. 45, 29n]
Thus, given the transcendent status of the Idea of HG, I agree with Allison that by claiming that “beauty is a symbol of morality” Kant implies that beauty is a sensible representation of the Idea of HG. Our assent to the existence of HG, as I argued earlier, is a voluntary act. Hence, in cases of, for example, injustice, when a moral agent feels discouraged in persisting in her good moral dispositions, beauty as a sign that the Idea of HG may have objective reality helps one persist in one’s moral disposition.\footnote{However, according to Kant, beauty is not the only sensible representation of morality. Religious practice is another example of a sensible representation of morality that assists in maintaining, although not in forming, of our moral dispositions. In the \textit{Religion} Kant writes:}

\begin{quote}
An ethical community under divine moral legislation is a \textit{church} which, inasmuch as it is not the object of a possible experience, is called the church invisible (the mere idea of the union of all upright human beings under direct yet moral divine world-governance, as serves for the archetype of any such governance to be found by human beings). The church visible is the actual union of human beings into a whole that accords with this ideal. (R, AA VI, 101)
\end{quote}

Thus, on Kant’s view, a religious community is a sensible representation of a perfect moral community, i.e, the HG. Hence, a religious community may play a similar role in moral motivation to the occurrences of beauty in nature.

\footnote{However, according to Allison, if we are to avoid undermining the generic difference between moral and aesthetic judgments, this transition to the supersensible can be conceived only as a formal similarity between our reflection on beauty and our reflection on morality. However, I suggest that it is possible to interpret this transition to the supersensible in a way that (1) takes a full account of the meaning that symbolic representation has for Kant—i.e., the fact that it is an indirect representation of a specific undetermined conceptual content—and (2) preserves the specificities of aesthetic...}
judgment. By the latter I have in mind the following features of aesthetic judgment: (1) disinterestedness, (2) universality and non-conceptuality, (3) subjective purposiveness, and (4) necessity. If we distinguish between the aesthetic and metaesthetic level of Kant’s arguments, we will be able to see that Kant does not have to give up the special features of aesthetic judgment in order to argue that there must exist a necessary connection between our experience of beauty and morality. For the purpose of differentiating aesthetic judgment from moral judgment I take (1) and (2) to be of particular importance. According to (2), aesthetic judgment is valid for everyone, but this universal validity is not like that of theoretical judgment, which is based simply on the cognition of the object through concepts. The universal validity of aesthetic judgment is unlike the universal validity of the moral judgment, which is based on a concept of the object, i.e., the notion of its perfection or what it ought to be. According to (1), aesthetic judgment—unlike the judgment about the agreeable and moral judgment—is “independent of the satisfaction that we combine with the representation of the existence of an object” (KdU, AA V, 205). A judgment about the agreeable is determined by desire which the judging subject feels with respect to the object judged (KdU, AA V, 205-207). A judgment about the good is determined by the satisfaction which a judging subject feels towards the existence of the object or action she judges either as good in itself or good for something else (KdU, AA V, 207-209).

However, Kant never claims that we consider something beautiful because of its necessary connection with morality. Although reason must have an interest in finding the signs in nature that our moral ends are realizable, this does not mean that the aesthetic judgment is based on such a moral interest. Kant clearly states that aesthetic judgment
has no interest “for its determining ground,” but this does not exclude the fact that aesthetic judgments have a feature that “qualifies” them for an association with a moral interest (KdU, AA V, 298, 302).\(^78\) Furthermore, the judgment that an object is beautiful is based on the free harmony of the faculties. Hence, it is non-conceptual simply in the sense that, unlike theoretical judgments, it cannot be proved by concepts alone.\(^79\) This does not imply, I emphasized earlier, that it is independent of concepts altogether—for example, the concept of the supersensible substrate or the concepts of the things perceived. Thus, having pronounced the object beautiful based on the free harmony of the faculties and the feeling of pleasure that follows from it, we can regard on the metaesthetic level the effect HG has on our will to be analogous to the effect an aesthetic object has on our cognitive faculties. In this respect, we can think the cause of HG, i.e., the necessary conditions of its existence, in terms of beauty. Put otherwise, we regard beauty as a symbolic hypotyposis of the necessary conditions of HG and, hence, of an indeterminate conceptual content.

---

\(^78\) This distinction between the aesthetic and the metaesthetic level of Kant’s argument parallels Baxley’s reconstruction of Kant’s argument as “distinguish[ing] two things: (1) the initial disinterested pleasure we take in a pure aesthetic judgment, where the object of aesthetic evaluation is valued for its own sake; and (2) the further morally-based interest we take in the existence of the object deemed beautiful, where the object whose existence we take pleasure in is, ultimately, valued for the sake of something else” [Baxley (2005), p. 41]. Therefore, a clear distinction between the aesthetic and the metaesthetic level of Kant’s argument helps explain how beauty can be valued for its own sake and for the sake of something else.

\(^79\) See on this Ameriks (1984), p. 6 and my introduction to the previous chapter of this dissertation.
4.5 Fine Art as a Kind of Cognition

Acknowledging that the connection between beauty and morality consists in more than the similarity between the form of our reflection on beauty and the form of our reflection on morality helps explain why Kant refers to the presentations of the work of fine art as “kinds of cognition” [Erkenntnisarten] (KdU, AA V, 305). This claim is puzzling when compared to Kant’s persistent contrary claims that aesthetic judgments, as non-determinative judgments, do not use the concepts of the understanding for the purpose of determining the intuition, and, hence, cannot yield cognition of the object. Furthermore, in his Lectures on Metaphysics Kant argues that ascribing taste (i.e., the “feeling of pleasure and displeasure”) to the faculty of cognition (i.e., understanding) is a mistake of the rationalists:

Wolff wanted to derive everything from the faculty of cognition, and defined pleasure and displeasure as an act <actus> of the faculty of cognition […] But this is impossible here. Wolff came to this merely from the cited false definition of substance; thus there were powers which all had to be derived from a basic power, so he assumed the power of representation <vis representativa> as basic power—etc. […] Pleasure is matter of perfection—[a] basic property (basic ability if it is sensible; basic faculty, if it is intellectual—which cannot be reduced to anything, thus also not to the faculty of cognition.  

While Wolff defends a doctrine that the power of representation (understanding) underlies all the powers of the soul, Kant insists on the autonomy of the faculties and, in this example in particular, on the autonomy of the faculty of reflective judgment. Thus, taste as a function of aesthetic judgment cannot be reduced to cognition, i.e., the faculty  

80 “Metaphysik Dohna” (delivered 1792-93), AA XXVIII, 674, 375.
of understanding. The tension between Kant’s insistence on the autonomy of aesthetic judgment (its non-determinative and hence non-cognitive aspect) and Kant’s claim that aesthetic experience nevertheless has a cognitive dimension is resolved when Kant’s qualification of the latter as “kinds of cognition” is taken seriously. (KdU, AA V, 305, my emphasis)

Kant’s intention behind this qualification can be best elucidated by looking at other instances where Kant attributes a cognitive dimension to aesthetic experience of the work of art:

When the aim is aesthetic the imagination is free, so that, over and above the harmony with the concept, it may supply, in an unstudied way [ungesucht], a wealth of undeveloped material for the understanding which the latter disregarded in its concept. But the understanding employs this material not so much objectively, for cognition, as subjectively, namely, to quicken the cognitive powers, though indirectly this does serve cognition too. (KdU, AA V, 317, my emphasis, L.O.)

In the above passage Kant suggests that aesthetic experience does not yield typical objective cognition; rather the wealth of imagination in its purposive harmony serves cognition “indirectly.” The question here is to determine the kind of cognition Kant has in mind. On Kant’s view, empirical knowledge of things is not the only kind of cognition

81 Kant’s description of imagination as “unstudied” [ungesuchte] will be better understood within the context of the following sentence: “the unstudied, unintentional, subjective purposiveness in the imagination’s free harmony with the understanding’s lawfulness presupposes such a proportion and attunement of these powers as cannot be brought about by any compliance with rules” (KdU, AA V, 318). The more literal translation of the German term ungesucht is “that which is not gained by search,” which implies an element of the unexpected, or a surprise brought about the fact that imagination is not structured by the rules imposed by the concepts of the understanding. Kant’s describes for the same reason the material brought by imagination that is free from the rules of concepts as “the wealth of undeveloped material [unentwickelter Stoff]” (KdU, AA V, 317).
we may have. Kant also distinguishes cognition brought about by practical reason, which he calls “practical cognition” (KdpV, AA V, 134).\footnote{82 For Kant’s various other references to “practical cognition” consider also KdpV, AA V, 50, 57, 73 and the various references in the Canon of the first Critique.} While by “theoretical cognition” Kant means “that through which I cognize \textit{a priori} (as necessary) that something is,” by “practical cognition” he means “that through which it is cognized \textit{a priori} what ought to happen” (KdrV, A633/B661). By the knowledge of “what ought to happen” Kant means the certainty of the moral law that gives us knowledge how things ought to be judged. Moreover, certainty of the moral law entails the objective reality of the necessary conditions for the realization of our moral ends—the Ideas of freedom, God, and immortality. For this reason, although the truth of the Postulates cannot be proved theoretically, Kant claims that by means of these Postulates “theoretical cognition of pure reason certainly receives an increment” (KdpV, AA V, 134).

A similar notion of “practical cognition” is characteristic for \textit{Glaube}. Although \textit{Glaube} does not qualify as knowledge [\textit{Wissen}], in the Jäsche Logik Kant claims that \textit{Glaube} is one of the forms of cognition [\textit{Erkenntnis}]. Kant orders the forms of cognition with respect to the level of their certainty [\textit{Gewissheit}], which is a function of modality, or to what degree our holding of something to be true [\textit{Fürwahrhalten}] is necessary. Kant distinguishes three levels of \textit{Fürwahrhalten} with their respective levels of certainty: (1) having an opinion [\textit{Meinen}]; (2) having belief or faith [\textit{Glauben}]; (3) knowing [\textit{Wissen}] (AA IX, 66). Opinion, as a form of problematic judgment, is equivalent to “taking something to be true with the consciousness that it is subjectively as well as objectively insufficient” (KdrV, A822/B850). It should nevertheless be distinguished from an
arbitrary invention because the matters of opinion “are always objects of an at least intrinsically possible experiential cognition” (KdU, AA V, 467). Thus, for example, we can have an opinion about “ether” that we, according to Kant, could perceive it if we had sharp enough outer senses (KdU, AA V, 467). Glauben, as a form of assertoric judgment, is subjectively sufficient but objectively insufficient (Jäsche Logik, AA IX, 66). Put otherwise, to hold a moral belief means that the acting subject can be certain of the validity of its moral belief (based on the certainty of the moral law) but this is a conviction that cannot be demanded from everyone universally as in the case of knowledge [Wissen]. Knowing [Wissen], as a form of apodictic judgment, is both subjectively and objectively sufficient. The objects of knowledge can be empirical, i.e., based on experience, and rational, i.e., mathematical and philosophical knowledge. When we hold something to be true with the certainty of knowledge, we can be certain of it on the level of the subject, and we can demonstrate theoretically the proof for our knowledge claims. Because holding something to be true at the level of moral belief [Glaube] is subjectively but not objectively sufficient, Kant claims that Glaube “comes in the place of cognition only in relation to me, without itself being cognition.”

In the previous chapter, I emphasized the negative significance of the structural parallel between the Ideas of reason and aesthetic Ideas, i.e., the fact that neither of them can yield knowledge in the proper Kantian sense. However, if we emphasize also the positive significance of this structural parallel, it will be possible to explain how aesthetic experience generates not theoretical, but, rather, “practical cognition.” Kant claims that aesthetic Ideas, by expressing a striving within the realm of imagination towards the

---

83 Jäsche Logik, AA IX, 70.
unconditioned, serve as a mode of “exhibiting” [Darstellen] (KdU, AA V, 314) the Ideas of reason, or in other words, as their sensuous counterpart and sign of objective reality. If we emphasize that the significance of the positive structural parallel between aesthetic Ideas and rational Ideas is that the former, in symbolic hypotyposis, is a sensible representation of an undetermined conceptual content presupposed in the latter (the Idea of HG), then we can understand Kant’s claim that aesthetic Ideas provide a “presentation of the imagination which prompts much thought” (KdU, AA V, 314). In other words, we can understand his claim that the presentations of the works of fine art are “kinds of cognition” (KdU, AA V, 305).

My suggestion that we should interpret the meaning of Kant’s characterization of artistic presentations as “kinds of cognition” (KdU, AA V, 305) in relation to Kant’s notion of “practical cognition” should be compared to other accounts of cognitive aspects of Kant’s aesthetics in current literature. Below I distinguish two such interpretations.

In (1), argued by Ameriks, an aesthetic judgment is non-cognitive in so far as it is not a determinative judgment. However, it is cognitive in so far as it is a judgment at all as opposed to a sensation, and, hence, it pronounces an object beautiful in such a way that this will be universally true of the object. This is a sense in which Kant’s notion of aesthetic experience is both subjective (an outcome of the way in which the cognitive powers of the subject are affected), but also objective (it has the capacity to tell us something about the object such that this claim has universal validity). This cognitive aspect of aesthetic judgment involves what Ameriks calls a “narrow notion of cognition.” It is a cognition that is “to be an ordinary perception, that is, an experience that involves a
claim to ‘universal validity’ because it is about what all should be able to see.” In (2), suggested by J.M. Bernstein, Kant in the third Critique already anticipates Hegel’s notion that the cognitive element of aesthetic experience suggests that everything, including the intelligible realm, must be transparent to our reason. I take my interpretation of the cognitive dimension of aesthetic judgment to occupy a middle position between Ameriks’s and Bernstein’s positions. Ameriks’s interpretation, although consistent with my position, focuses on the cognitive element in aesthetic experience on a purely aesthetic level, while I believe that Kant’s own assertions with regard to the cognitive element of aesthetic experience are also made on a metaesthetic level, i.e., with respect to the necessary connection between beauty and morality. I take Bernstein’s position to bring Kant too close to Hegel’s argument according to which art is the cognition of the Absolute. To argue that Kant here already anticipates Hegel is to disregard Kant’s strict distinction between “thinking [denken]” and “cognizing [erkennen].” In this section, I suggested that the cognitive aspect of aesthetic experience, or the possibility of the supersensible being accessible to our knowledge in aesthetic experience, is at best possible in relation to Kant’s notion of “practical cognition.”


85 See Bernstein (1992), Introduction, Ch. 1 and Ch. 2. Bernstein argues that Kant is responsible for divorcing art from the truth (of determinative and moral judgments) and for making art “merely aesthetic” [Bernstein (1992), p. 66] which is also the beginning of the end of art because art becomes alienated from knowledge. However, on Bernstein’s view, “aesthetics is from its beginnings the overcoming of aesthetics” [Bernstein (1992), p. 67]. In other words, as soon as Kant alienates beauty from knowledge by arguing that judgments of beauty are independent of moral and cognitive judgments his aesthetic theory shows indications of overcoming the gap Kant himself opened. Thus, for Bernstein, Kant’s claim in the third Critique that representations of fine art are “modes of cognition” is a desperate attempt of aesthetics to reconnect to truth from which it was divorced. According to Bernstein, this project of reconnecting aesthetics to truth continues in the works of Hegel and Heidegger.
This chapter has demonstrated that Kant’s aesthetics allows for a special status of fine art as the art of genius in Kant’s moral teleology. Moreover, it has demonstrated that—if we take the meaning of “nature” in Kant’s definition of genius as external nature in its purposive appearance—Kant does not privilege the moral significance of the beauty of nature over the moral significance of the beauty of fine art understood as works of genius. Works of genius exhibit nature’s moral purposiveness to the same extent as the beauty of nature does. But this demonstration appears to leave us with a disappointing conclusion. According to Kant then, works of genius do not satisfy any special need of human beings that cannot already be satisfied with the beauty of nature. It seems that, after all, Kant’s discussion of fine art remains, as already noted by some commentators, “parergonal to Kant’s theory of taste.”  

However, to draw such a conclusion would be to judge too soon.

In Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History (1786) Kant presents us with a picture of human “history of freedom,” “beginning with evil” but at the same time a “progression from worse to better for the species as a whole” (MA, AA VIII, 115, 227). Mankind, according to Kant, begins in the state of nature as a state of innocence and, due to its rational nature, it engages in the exercise of free choice. The latter represents a “fall” and a human temptation to commit evil as man struggles to choose between the ends demanded by his rational nature and the ends demanded by his animal nature (MA,

---


87 The reference is first to the Akademie edition followed by the page numbers in Reiss (1991).
AA VIII, 115, 227). But at the same time it marks the beginning of man’s path towards the fulfillment of his “moral destiny” as species (MA, AA VIII, 116, 227). Kant envisions this teleological progression of human history as a constant struggle between man’s culture (i.e., the realm of human free and rational production) and nature (i.e., internal nature understood as human instincts and external nature where man realizes his culture). This struggle ends when “art, when it reaches perfection, once more becomes nature—and this is the ultimate goal of man’s moral destiny” (MA, AA VIII, 117-118, 228). Put otherwise, the struggle ends with the achievement of the highest good, where there is no obstacle to either our internal or external nature, or to the realization of our human moral vocation.

However, in the Critique of Judgment Kant reveals that in the course of making progress towards the end of our moral destiny our “later age […] will always be further from nature” (KdU, AA V, 356). By moving away from nature it will also move further away from the examples of nature’s moral purposiveness that serve as a reminder of the course the human culture should take in order to ensure the development towards fulfillment of man’s moral destiny. Although it is never explicitly stated by Kant, the discussion in this chapter has given sufficient reasons for suggesting that works of genius—as the works that exist within the realm of human culture while at the same time serving as representation of nature’s moral purposiveness—will continue to serve, as we become increasingly further away from nature, as culture’s reminders of man’s moral destiny.

Gregg Horowitz’s essay “The Residue of History: Dark Play in Schiller and Hegel” has brought my attention to this passage. See Horowitz (forthcoming).
Thus, on Kant’s view, the work of genius (1) connects the theoretical and practical reason and their domains, that is, nature and freedom, and (2) has a special *regulative* role in Kant’s philosophy of history. According to Kant, the connection between the theoretical and practical reason is possible insofar as the work of genius first, promotes humanity’s receptivity to morality and second, motivates human beings to persist in their already existing moral dispositions. The regulative role of the work of genius in Kant’s philosophy of history consists in the fact that the work of genius serves as a sign of what, on Kant’s view, is the end of human history, i.e., the achievement of the highest good, or the unity of nature and freedom. Thus, according to Kant, we can never have an *insight* into the course of human history but only reasonable hope, based on some hints and traces, including the occurrences of genius in human history, that the development of human history follows some higher wisdom towards the fulfillment of the end of human rationality.

In the following chapter my aim is to show how for Schelling in his early philosophy (ending with the *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800) the work of genius retains a systematic function similar to what it had in Kant’s philosophy. That is, (1) it connects theoretical and practical philosophy and their domains, i.e., nature and freedom, and (2) it plays a role in Schelling’s account of the historical development of self-consciousness. However, this function of the work of genius for Schelling is no longer regulative as it was for Kant but constitutive. On Schelling’s view, the work of genius is no longer a purposive mediation between the intelligible and the sensible world but, rather, the work of genius *is* the realization of the intelligible in the sensible world. Furthermore, the work of genius for Schelling is no longer just a sign of the possibility of
the fulfillment of human history but *is* the end of human history, or more specifically, the end of the historical development of human self-consciousness. The first part of this dissertation demonstrated that Kant’s discussion of genius in the third *Critique* already anticipates the systematic function this concept is going to play in Schelling’s philosophy. However, it is due to Schelling’s reception of Plato (a reception that is heavily influenced by his reading of Spinoza and Reinholdian reception of Kant) that the regulative role of the work of genius in Kant becomes constitutive in Schelling.
The following chapter analyzes selected works of Schelling written in the period between 1792 and 1800. My aim in this chapter is not to claim that there is a systematic development of Schelling’s early Idealism. On the contrary, Schelling’s early works do not indicate an inner unity. However, many of his early works have a theme in common that preoccupies young Schelling, that is, the theme of the unity of theoretical and practical reason. In view of this common theme, the early development of his Idealism can be interpreted as a beginning of a philosophical system or as a “proto-system” of what is later to become *The System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800).¹

Schelling’s development of the theme of the unity of theoretical and practical reason in his early Idealism is influenced by his reception of Kant’s practical philosophy,

¹ It is often emphasized in the secondary literature on Schelling that there is a lack of unity to his early works. But that they represent a “proto-system” has been already claimed by Hartmut Kuhlmann. See Kuhlmann (1993), p. 11.
Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*, Reinhold’s *Elementarphilosophie*, and Plato’s dialogues *Timaeus* and *Ion*. The secondary literature on Schelling has already emphasized the influence of Reinhold on the development of Schelling’s early Idealism\(^2\) and the connection between Schelling’s early studies of Plato and his reception of Kant’s Critique of Teleological Judgment.\(^3\) In contrast to the existing commentaries I will argue in this chapter that the proto-systematicity of Schelling’s early Idealism is best explained by emphasizing the connection between Schelling’s early reception of Plato and of Kant’s discussion of genius in the third *Critique*.\(^4\) This reception is the key to understanding the role of genius and art as the “organon” and “document” of philosophy in his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800).

In the first two chapters of this dissertation I emphasized two important aspects of Platonism in Kant’s philosophy, that is, (1) the relevance of Kant’s reception of Plato’s Ideas for his metaphysical conception of nature (Chapter One), and (2) his critique of Platonic exaltation [*Schwärmerei*] as a form of irrationalism according to which human intellect—in this case the intellect of genius—exceeds the critical limits and has direct intuition of the archetypes in the Divine Understanding (Chapter Two). In his early writings Schelling also discusses the problem of Platonic exaltation [*Schwärmerei*] as this

\(^2\) See for example Kuhlmann (1993).

\(^3\) See for example Franz (1996). Franz emphasizes the importance of ¶62 of the Critique of Teleological Judgment (KdU, AA V, 363-364) for Schelling’s *Timaeus*.

\(^4\) Klaus Düsing and, more recently, Rüdiger Bubner suggest that there is an important connection between Kant’s discussion of genius in the third *Critique* and Schelling’s early reception of Plato. However, they do not systematically elaborate on this issue. See Düsing (1988) and Bubner (2003).
theme was present in the philosophical discussions of his time. Schelling’s discussion of exaltation [Schwärmerei] in his early writings on Plato emerges within two distinct contexts that parallel the two aspects of Kant’s reception of Platonism I identified above: (1) the context pertaining to our representation of nature as a whole, and (2) the context pertaining to creative production. Schelling’s discussion of Plato with respect to our representation of nature as a unity will lead later to his philosophy of nature. In fact, most of commentators thus far have emphasized the importance of Schelling’s reception of Plato for the development of his philosophy of nature. In contrast to these commentators, in this chapter I will focus on the significance of Schelling’s reception of Plato for the development of his theme of creative production. I will argue that in his early writings Schelling holds that a certain form of knowledge Kant considers to be exaltation [Schwärmerei] and, thus, an unjustified extension of human cognition, is necessary for gaining access to the highest ends of our rationality. Schelling replaces the pejorative connotation for this form of cognition implied by the notion of “exaltation [Schwärmerei]” with the notion of enthusiasm [Begeisterung] and argues that only special individuals are capable of such cognition. Although, as was noted in Chapter Three of this dissertation, Kant considered enthusiasm [Begeisterung] to be a necessary component of the genius’s creative process, he also insisted that knowledge gained in this

---

5 Rüdiger Bubner, for example, suggests that “anti-Platonism” is in general the “inheritance of the modern tradition” that “connected Plato’s name with hypertrophy of philosophical thought” [Bubner (1992), pp. 87, 89]. Put otherwise, Plato’s philosophy in the modern age was associated with “emotional attitude directed towards higher visions” and contrasted with sobriety of scientific methods. [Bubner (1992), p. 89].

6 See my discussion of the history of this concept in Chapter Three, Section 3.3 of this dissertation.
creative process must always be mediated by judgment. For Schelling, however, enthusiasm [Begeisterung] in creative production is a precursor of what is later to become his notion of intellectual intuition, a direct non-discursive knowledge of the supersensible. Schelling’s new interpretation of the enthusiasm [Begeisterung] of creative production paves the way to unifying theoretical reason in the domain of nature and practical reason in the domain of freedom. In his early writings Schelling continues the themes of Kant’s Critique of Judgment, but under the influence of Plato and Spinoza, he eventually transforms a modest Kantian system, in which theoretical and practical reason are compatible, into a more ambitious system, in which they are identical. He also transforms Kant’s conception of a creative subjectivity into a conception of an absolutely free subjectivity.

---

7 See Chapter Three, Section 3.3 of this dissertation.

8 Hence, the thesis of this chapter is a direct challenge to Kuhlmann’s claim that aesthetics plays no role in young Schelling (1792-1800). See Kuhlmann (1993), p.19.
5.1 Schelling’s Essay on Poets (August 1792)⁹

In his Essay On Poets, Schelling discusses enthusiasm within the context of creative production. The term he uses is not Schwärmerei, which has pejorative connotations, but, rather, Begeisterung and Enthusiasmus, which he takes to be proper interpretations of Plato’s enthousiaso, which is a state of poetic inspiration Plato describes as a form of a possession by the divine spirit. Schelling’s focus in the essay is Plato’s dialogue Ion. Plato aims in this dialogue to show that although poets claim to speak with a “special” kind of knowledge, their production is in fact without any use of the understanding and, hence, is irrational. Schelling’s interpretation of Plato’s dialogue indicates that he is unaware of, or perhaps intentionally chooses not to acknowledge, Plato’s ironic approach to poetic production as a form of enthousiaso. The fact that Schelling does not acknowledge Plato’s ironic treatment of poetic inspiration is evident from Schelling’s comment on the passage he takes from Plato’s Apology and cites in his Essay On Poets. In the passage, Socrates tells the Athenian Assembly about his effort to refute the saying of the oracle that he is the wisest man. In his effort to refute the oracle Socrates visits those who had the reputation of being the wisest in Athens, that is, politicians, poets, and craftsmen. Having visited the poets Socrates says the following:

---

⁹ Hereafter DA. The original title of Schelling’s essay is “Über Dichter, Propheten, Dichterbegeisterung, Enthusiasmus, Theopneustie, und göttliche Einwirkung auf Menschen überhaupt.” All the citations are taken from Manfred Franz’s transcription of Schelling’s essay in Manfred Franz’s Schellings Tübingen Plato-Studien, pp. 284-295. The original essay is available in Schelling’s Studienhefte in the Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. The pagination is first to Franz’ transcription followed by the page number of the original version of the essay. All the translations from the German and the Greek are mine. I did at times consult the English translation of Plato’s Ion by Paul Woodruff published in Plato Complete Works, ed. John M. Cooper, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 937-950.
I went to the poets, the writers of tragedies and dythirambs and the others, intending in their case to catch myself being more ignorant than they. So I took up those poems with which they seemed to have taken most trouble and asked them what they meant, in order that I might at the same time learn something from them. I am ashamed to tell you the truth, gentleman, but I must. Almost all the bystanders might have explained the poems better than the authors could. I soon realized that poets do not compose their poems with knowledge, but by some natural talent \( \text{fusei tini} \) and by inspiration \( \text{enthousiazontes} \), like seers and prophets who also say many fine things without any understanding of what they say.\(^{10}\)

To this passage Schelling writes the following footnote:

Naturally! To every poet it would be difficult to explain in a sufficiently \textit{definite} way and in \textit{different words} what he said in a poem. In what he said for the first time he connected the abundance of his representations in the way he could not connect in any other expression. In general, there are thoughts and feelings of a poet that one can say well only in one manner and for this reason there is no interpreter of poets who tolerably aspires to express these thoughts in a different way. (DA 291-2n, 12-3n)

While Plato’s aim is to show that poetic production does not entail knowledge, Schelling’s aim is to emphasize that there is something special about poetic inspiration that results in originality. On Schelling’s view, the price of this originality is also the incapacity to reproduce or summarize the content of the original product because every attempt at reproduction or interpretation would always fail to capture the original meaning intended. It is not difficult to recognize that Schelling’s failure to capture Plato’s irony in this passage is motivated by Kant’s discussion of aesthetic Ideas in a work of art whose meaning can never be fully exhausted by our interpretations.\(^{11}\)


\(^{11}\) See my discussion of aesthetic Ideas in Chapter Three of this dissertation.
Schelling’s positive interpretation of Plato’s ironic treatment of poetic production is also evident in the fact that he ascribes poetic inspiration to Plato himself, “Plato is so full with the living divine power of the poets that he can interpret the exaltation [Enthusiasmus] of declarers and reciters of poets by nothing else but divine power [theian dunamin]” (DA, 285, 4). In the Essay On the Spirit of Plato’s Philosophy (1792) Schelling portrays Plato as an exalted thinker and claims that even for a philosopher it is necessary to be to some extent a Schwärmer: “the first case [the case in which Socrates might have thought on the guidance of a spirit] is an example that also a wise man […] could be an exalted spirit [Schwärmer].”

Moreover, in the Essay On Poets Schelling extends the divine element in poetic inspiration to all acts of cognition, which runs entirely in opposition to Plato’s aims in the Ion, that is, Plato’s clear distinction between cognition and artistic inspiration: “Plato speaks of divine powers not only in relation to poetry but also in relation to all the powers of the understanding” (DA, 289, 10).

Furthermore, what to Plato is a fact that pertains to the nature of poetic production, namely, that it lacks “mastery” [technē] and “knowledge” [epistemē] to Schelling is a puzzle: how is it possible for poets to produce in accordance with rules even though their production surpasses a mere skill?

On Schelling’s view, Kant’s Critique of the Power of Judgment provides the answer to the puzzle. Although in his Essay On Poets Schelling does not even once

---

12 Schelling, Essay On the Spirit of Plato’s Philosophy [Über den Geist der Platonischen Philosophie], from the transcription available in Franz (1996), 316, 47 [Hereafter GP]. The pagination is first to the page numbers in Franz (1996) followed by the page numbers of Schelling’s original.
mention Kant, from the following passage it is evident he has in mind Kant’s sections on genius of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*:

> The actual poetic power takes effect in accordance with *rules* [*Gesezen*] of which poet himself cannot clearly be aware and which for others are even less recognizable; the product of a poet is at the same time an effect of a miracle for which one cannot find a natural explanation. This effect of a miracle stands suddenly before the eyes of the amazed observer as the poet like a God produces the world from chaos [...] (DA, 288, 7, my emphasis)

Nowhere in his dialogue does Plato mention production in accordance with “rules.”

Production in accordance with rules [*Regeln*], however, is a part of Kant’s definition of genius in the third *Critique*. (KdU, AA V, 307) The closest thing in Plato that resembles Kant’s account of artistic production in accordance with rules would be craft-production. The latter presupposes a skill or *techné* that Plato clearly believes poets lack. Thus, Schelling emphasizes the aspect of production by genius that Kant in his discussion of genius identified as the intuitive process of the artist. For Kant, in this intuitive or unconscious process, the spirit [*Geist*] of a genius has a special capacity to intuit what is later to become the purposive form of the art-work. This special intuitive process also explains why the genius is not capable of summarizing the rule, or tracing back the steps involved in her creative production. But while Kant’s emphasis at the end is on the purposive form of the product that is the outcome of the special purposive harmony of the genius’s faculties, Schelling’s emphasis is on the intuitive aspect of the creative process that he, in the *Essay On Poets*, describes as follows:

---

13 I take this detail together with Schelling’s footnote to Plato’s *Apology* I discussed earlier as a piece of evidence that already in 1792 Schelling was familiar with Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*. Kuhlmann claims that Schelling considers seriously the third *Critique* only after 1797. See Kuhlmann (1993), p. 14.
[The poet...as a God] creates a world from an overflowing wealth of representations and feelings—it is a lightning flash speed of feelings and emotions of his own thought and power of combining representations with which he constantly awakens new emotions. He jumps from feeling to feeling, from thought to thought, and everything connects to one harmonious whole. (DA, 288, 8).

Furthermore, Schelling associates the unconscious element in Plato’s account of poetic production, i.e., divine providence [theia moira], with the workings of “nature”:

That Plato used the term phusei tini where he usually uses theia moira serves as a proof that by the latter he wants to indicate a general power one cannot trace back to an empirical context. As one says: this and that is of nature, that is, no further reason can be given than that it is there because the nature wanted it that way. Genius in a human being is a power that never lies in the rank of his effects, which is independent of his effectiveness, but is made available to his freedom, and this is what Plato wanted to say with phusei tini and theia moira. (DA, 291-292, 12)

Schelling writes this comment in answer to the earlier cited passage from Plato’s Apology, where Plato refers to a poet as someone who does not produce according to wisdom [sophia] but “by some nature” [phusei tini] and “inspiration” [enthusiasontes]. Schelling considers it necessary to explain why Plato refers to poetic inspiration as a “natural talent” because he has Kant’s discussion of genius in the background. According to Kant, genius is “an innate mental predisposition (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art” (KdU, AA V, 307, my emphasis).14 It is not apparent what meaning Kant intended

14 Rüdiger Bubner also speculates that Schelling probably connected the divine element in Plato’s account of poetic production with the unconscious working of nature in Kant’s account of genius. Bubner further suggests that Kant’s conception of genius is also behind Schelling’s affirmative interpretation of the Ion, but Bubner neither gives a systematic interpretation of Kant’s conception of genius, nor a more detailed analysis of Schelling’s writings on Plato in order to support his speculations. See Bubner (2003), p. 14.
to the term “innate mental predisposition.” Schelling could have reductively interpreted Kant’s definition of genius as a gift that is inherent in the genius’s special mental capacities. However, Schelling’s interpretation of a genius’s “natural talent” as a “general power one cannot trace back to empirical context” indicates that Schelling intended to give a complementary reading of Kant’s discussion of genius in the third *Critique* and Plato’s *Ion*. In this way Kant’s description of genius as an “inborn mental predisposition” is consistent with Schelling’s reading of Plato and with his central interest in his interpretation of Plato, that is, poetic inspiration as a form of divine possession.

Schelling’s attempt to read Kant as consistent with Plato continues also in his reading of Plato’s *Timaeus*.\(^{15}\)

---

\(^{15}\) It is here important to note that Schelling was not the first one to interpret Plato’s philosophy as consistent with Kant’s Critical philosophy. In his *Commentary*, Schelling refers to Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann whose four volume work *System der Platonischen Philosophie* (1792-5) is an attempt to interpret Plato’s theory of Ideas in light of Kant’s Critical philosophy in its popularized version in Reinhold’s *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*. It is possible that Tennemann was directly inspired by Reinhold because the latter half of Reinhold’s *Briefe* has to do with how to read the ancients from a Kantian perspective. According to Manfred Baum, the first two volumes of Tennemann’s work had already appeared at the time when Schelling wrote his *Commentary*. See Baum (2000), pp. 203-4.
5.2 Schelling’s Account of Creative Production in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* (1794)

Schelling’s *Commentary on the Timaeus* (1794)\(^{16}\) is most commonly regarded in the secondary literature as Schelling’s preliminary step to his later work in the philosophy of nature. My aim in this section is to show that this standard approach to Schelling’s *Commentary on the Timaeus* ignores the relevance of the central concept of the ‘Demiurge’ in Schelling’s *Commentary* and Schelling’s constant preoccupation with the conception of creative agency. Those commentators who do emphasize the importance of Plato’s concept of the ‘Demiurge’ for Schelling relate this concept to Kant’s critical conception of subjectivity, i.e., the subjectivity that is the source of the conditions of the possibility of experience.\(^{17}\) In contrast to these commentators I emphasize the importance of Kant’s conception of subjectivity that emerges in his discussion of genius in the third *Critique* as the paradigm example of the creative subjectivity Schelling has in mind in his discussion of Plato’s ‘Demiurge.’ Just as the notion of enthusiasm [Begeisterung] as a special extension of reason was important for Schelling’s conception of the poet-genius

\(^{16}\) Schelling, *Timaeus* (1794), ed. Buchner, Hartmut, Frommann-Holzboog, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1994, p. 31 [Hereafter TK]. All translations from this text are mine.

\(^{17}\) Here I have in mind Michael Franz and Rüdiger Bubner. Franz for example argues that it was Kant of the *Critique of Judgment* that helped Schelling interpret Plato in terms of his conception of the “absolute self” in his essay *Vom Ich* [see Franz (1996), pp. 255-6]. But Franz emphasizes the importance of Kant’s Critique of Teleological Judgment for Schelling’s conception of creative subjectivity and never the sections on genius in Kant’s Critique of Aesthetic Judgment. Bubner discusses the influence of Kant’s critical conception of subjectivity for Schelling’s interpretation of Plato’s ‘Demiurge’ but also fails to draw the parallel between Kant’s conception of genius and Schelling’s discussion of the ‘Demiurge’ in his *Commentary on the Timaeus* [see Bubner (2003), pp. 18-23].
in his Essay on Poets, it also serves as a Leitfaden for illuminating Schelling’s conception of creative subjectivity in his Commentary on the Timaeus.

5.2.1 Schelling’s Notion of the Demiurge in his Commentary on the Timaeus

In his Commentary on the Timaeus Schelling claims that Plato distinguishes between two kinds of Ideas, (1) “the Ideas that are the foundation of the world in the material respect,” and (2) “those that are the foundation of the world in the formal respect, that is, those that do not refer to any single object as such (as for example, the Idea of the Good, quantity, quality, and causality, etc.)” (TK, 31). In his attempt to read Plato as consistent with Kant’s transcendental idealism Schelling, in contrast to Plato’s original position, claims that for Plato Ideas are not “substances in the intelligible world” (TK, 68) and are not “physically existing” (TK, 69). Instead, for Schelling when Plato speaks of Ideas he speaks of nothing but “subjective forms according to which one represents the world” (TK, 69). These Ideas originate in the Divine Understanding and then “are made

---

18 For Plato Ideas are real and existing entities in the realm of Being. But Schelling’s intention here is not to argue against Plato’s original position but against Leberecht Plessing who was, at the time, one of the leading historians of philosophy. According to Plessing, Plato’s Ideas are immaterial substances and these entities have been seen in intellectual intuition by the soul before coming into existence. Although Plessing never intended to ascribe to these entities physical existence, Schelling misunderstands Plessing’s position and believes that Plessing’s interpretation of Plato’s Ideas as existing entities presupposes their physical existence, which, Schelling holds, cannot be compatible with their supersensible status. In his System der Platonischen Philosophie, Tennemann refers to Plessing’s interpretation of Plato’s Ideas as being in opposition to his own. See Baum (2000), pp. 206-208.
possible in human understanding [\textit{Verstand}] through the intellectual unity [\textit{intellektuelle Gemeinschaft}] of men with the origin of all being” (TK, 37n).\textsuperscript{19}

Schelling interprets Plato’s “apeiron,” that is, Plato’s conception of the unordered matter as Kant’s category of quality, more specifically his category of reality. He interprets Plato’s “peras,” that is, Plato’s conception of the limit, boundary or form that the Demiurge imposes on matter, as Kant’s category of quantity. For Schelling, Kant’s category of causality connects “apeiron” and “peras” together in the form of Plato’s “koinon.” “Peras,” “apeiron,” “koinon,” and causality are for Schelling Platonic Ideas that relate to the world “formally” (TK, 31). In the language of Kant’s transcendental idealism these Ideas are conditions of the possible objects of experience. For Schelling, the role of these Ideas in Plato’s \textit{Timaeus} is comparable to what Kant in the Second Analogy calls the “formal conditions of empirical truth” (KdrV, A191/B236). In other words, Schelling understands the role of these Ideas to be analogous to the goals of Kant’s Transcendental Analytic, that they provide a set of \textit{a priori} rules which determine

\footnotesize{19 This interpretation of Plato’s theory of Ideas according to which Ideas exist in the Divine Understanding goes back to Philo of Alexandria, 1\textsuperscript{st} century A.D. Among the modern historians of philosophy there were two different traditions of interpreting Plato’s theory of Ideas. One camp was led by the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) and the other by Johann Jakob Brucker (1696-1770). According to Cudworth’s school, Ideas are concepts of God, and, according to Brucker’s school, Ideas are eternal substances existing for themselves and known only through pure thought. Among the historians of Schelling’s time Plessing follows Brucker, while Tennemann follows Cudworth. Schelling, thus, appears to be a follower of the neoplatonic conception of Plato’s Ideas revived in modern times by Cudworth. See Baum (2000), pp. 206-207. It is likely that Schelling’s preference for Cudworth/Tennemann’s interpretation of Plato’s Ideas was reinforced by Kant’s claim that Ideas for Plato are the Ideas in the “highest reason” (KdrV, A313/B370), or the “origin of all things” (KdU, AA V, 363), which suggests that Kant’s understanding of Plato’s Ideas was consistent with Cudworth’s school.}
what can count as an object of a possible experience and they determine the rules to which all empirical laws must conform in order to count as laws.\textsuperscript{20}

Those Ideas of Plato that on Schelling’s view refer to the world in its “material aspect,” or as he puts it elsewhere, those Ideas that are the “foundation of objects \textit{as such}” (TK, 32) Schelling relates to Kant’s principle of the purposiveness of teleological judgment, according to which we represent organisms and nature as a system of laws. Although Schelling mentions Kant’s “purposiveness [\textit{Zweckmässigkeit}]” only once\textsuperscript{21} in the entire \textit{Commentary}, the following passage together with Schelling’s explicit mention of Kant’s Critique of Teleological Judgment dispel any doubt with regard to the meaning of Schelling’s term “Idea” or a “Form” that is the “foundation of the material aspect of the world”:

\begin{quote}

each being of nature is not a product of matter but an \textit{agreement of individual pure laws} with the whole, that is, it was a work of an \textit{Idea}, pure \textit{representation} of the agreement of individual laws with the whole. Moreover, this agreement of pure laws […] is a work (not of matter) but of the pure \textit{form of unity}, a work of an intelligence. We have to remember further that Plato approached the entire world as a \textit{zoon}, that is, as an organized being the parts of which are possible only through their relation with the whole and the parts of which mutually relate to each other as a means and as an end […] And] we have to consider that we, according to the subjective arrangement of our cognitive capacities, could not think the origin of an organized being other than through a causality of a concept, an Idea, which determines \textit{a priori} everything that is contained in the being. (TK, 33)
\end{quote}

In this passage Schelling no longer has in mind the regularity of the world that is achieved by our \textit{a priori} concepts of the understanding, which is the subject of Kant’s

\textsuperscript{20} With Natorp and other later neo-Kantians there was also a tendency to connect Plato’s Ideas and Kant’s forms.

\textsuperscript{21} See TK, 49.
Transcendental Analytic. Schelling, rather, in this passage refers to the systematic representation of organisms and nature as a whole that is accomplished by Kant’s Critique of Teleological Judgment and his objective principle of purposiveness.\(^{22}\)

In the Critique of Teleological Judgment, Kant offers two arguments in order to justify his conception of organisms as natural ends or purposes. First, according to Kant, if we were to rely only on mechanical principles in our explanation of organisms, then we would have to consider the connection of their parts as contingent. In other words, it would always be possible to claim that the connection of the parts could have been otherwise. Because of reason’s dissatisfaction with contingency we represent organisms as if they were purposes or ends of reason. In accordance with this principle of unity, that is, the principle of purposiveness, reason represents the connection of parts as if this connection were necessary and not contingent.\(^{23}\) This means that we represent an organism as a being whose “parts [...] are possible only through their relation to the whole” (KdU, AA V, 373). In other words, we consider an organism as if it were an intentional product, so that the concept of what this organism was intended to be determines a priori the relation of all its parts. But this feature of organisms tells us only why we represent them as if they were an end, or a product of a rational causation. This feature does not tell us why we represent organisms as a natural end, that is, why we do not represent them as if they were the products of a rational cause that exists independent

\(^{22}\) In a footnote he adds to the above passage Schelling refers explicitly to the paragraph 65 of Kant’s Critique of Judgment.

\(^{23}\) See KdU, AA V, 370 and also Frank/Zanetti (1996b), pp. 1266-1267. See also my discussion of reason’s dissatisfaction with contingency and its need to represent nature as a systematic unity in Chapter Two of this dissertation.
of organisms. This is the reason why Kant introduces the second argument for why we represent organisms as natural ends. Kant claims that we represent an organism as if it were “a cause and effect of itself” (KdU, AA V, 371). In other words, we have to consider the connection of efficient (mechanical) causes in an organism to be identical with the connection through final causes. Only in this way can we explain (1) growth of a tree, that is, the fact that a tree generates itself as an individual, (2) that a tree can generate another tree and preserve itself as a species, and (3) that a tree can compensate by the function of its healthy parts for the malformations of certain other parts. (KdU, AA V, 371)

In the passage cited above, Schelling has in mind not only Kant’s discussion of our representation of organisms but also his claim in the paragraph 67 of the Critique of Teleological Judgment that the concept of the “natural end” “leads to the idea of the whole of nature as a system in accordance with the rules of ends” (KdU, AA V, 378). Thus, Kant claims by considering nature’s organisms that one is justified to consider nature and its laws as a system or a purposive whole where nothing is in vain and everything in the world is good for something. In other words, to consider an organism as a natural end implies that there is nothing contingent about this organism, including its

24 Hannah Ginsborg has recently argued that there are two meanings to Kant’s claim that organisms are not mechanically explicable. One meaning pertains to their composite character and the need of our reason to represent the composition of the parts as a matter of choice, thus, as necessary rather than a contingent product of matter. The other meaning pertains to Kant’s claim that organisms are non-machine-like. In other words, organisms, unlike machines, are composed of parts that are not independent but, rather, depend on one another for their existence. With respect to their non-machine-like character we represent organisms not only as if they are ends but also as if they are natural ends. In her article Ginsborg insightfully compares Kant’s teleology of organisms to that of Aristotle and also suggests how certain aspects of their teleology survive, while others must be rejected in the light of modern biology. See Ginsborg (2004).
growth and reproduction as a species. This further implies the Idea of a broader systematic organization in nature that supports the purposive function of organisms.\textsuperscript{25} The principle according to which we consider nature as an organic, purposive whole is not a principle of determinative judgment but a principle of reflective, more precisely, teleological judgment. Hence it is a regulative and not a constitutive principle, that is, a principle according to which we represent nature relative to our cognitive faculties and not as nature is in itself. The latter claim would amount to a “relation of nature to something supersensible, which far exceeds all of our teleological cognition of nature” (KdU, AA V, 378). Schelling keeps Kant’s regulative/constitutive distinction well in mind when, in the above passage, he claims that Plato approaches the world as an organized being but only in accordance with the “subjective arrangement of our cognitive faculties.”

According to Schelling, the work of the Demiurge in Plato’s \textit{Timaeus} is then twofold. (1) He brings the unity to the world by bringing “apeiron” and “peras” together, that is, by accomplishing the kind of unity that is the object of Kant’s Transcendental Analytic:

He [Plato] had to presuppose this Form of the world as something that exists independent of matter; he placed it, therefore, in the understanding, and he described it as something that is comprehensible only to the understanding (\textit{logoi kai phroneset perilepton}), and because he could find the cause of the connection between the Form (\textit{peras}) and the matter (\textit{apeiron}) in neither the former nor the latter, nor in the two together […] Hence, the third cause was necessary that

\textsuperscript{25} Frank and Zanetti note that there is a difference between Kant’s Idea of nature’s systematic unity for the purposes of our empirical exploration of nature and Kant’s Idea of nature’s organic unity that follows from the consideration of organisms as natural ends. While the former is an “undetermined representation of reason,” the latter is “real/material and objective.” See Frank/Zanetti (1996b), p. 1273.
united the two together, or that gave “the world a Form, which was a copy of the original pure Form of the understanding.” “What moved the originator of the world to bring about this Form?” 26 (TK, 27)

Also, (2) he organizes the world according to Kant’s principle of purposiveness and, hence, brings the “second order unity” to the world, or the unity that is the object of Kant’s Critique of Teleological Judgment:

Insofar as, according to his [Plato’s] theory, all the beings of the world are the products of the Demiurge, they do not belong to matter but to the form that the Demiurge unifies with matter. The matter for itself and in itself could not bring forth zoa because these could only be the products of the world-architect who unifies the form of the understanding with matter. By unifying the form with matter, the world-architect brings the universal lawfulness not only to the nature as a whole but also to the individual products of nature. (TK, 32)

However, regardless of whether the activity of the Demiurge is to bring about the kind of unity to the world that is accomplished by Kant’s Transcendental Analytic, or the kind of unity that is accomplished by Kant’s teleological judgment, his creation requires a special kind of knowledge that Schelling calls the “intellectual faculty of knowledge [das intellektuelle Erkenntnißvermögen]” (TK, 72), a precursor of what is later to become the faculty of “intellectual intuition.” In his Commentary on the Timaeus, Schelling refers to enthusiasm [Begeisterung] as an external sign of the Demiurge’s special “intellectual faculty of knowledge.”

26 Schelling is here paraphrasing the following sentence in Plato’s Timaeus: “Now why did he who framed the whole universe of becoming frame it?” (Timaeus 29d5-6) Therefore, by the “originator of the world” he is referring to Plato’s ‘Demiurge.’
5.2.2 Enthusiasm [Begeisterung] of the Demiurge

Schelling refers to both kinds of Plato’s Ideas—those he interprets in analogy to either Kant’s concepts of pure understanding or Kant’s principle of purposiveness—as “intelligible Form[s]” (TK, 71). Furthermore, Schelling, following Plato, distinguishes between the knowledge of the physically existing empirical objects and the knowledge of the non-physically existing intelligible Forms or Ideas. While every human being is privy to the former, to the latter “only gods and few men who, as Plato calls them, are gods’ favorites” are privy (TK, 71-72).\(^\text{27}\) According to Schelling, ordinary Kantian empirical knowledge of things does not require this special kind of “intellectual knowledge.”\(^\text{28}\) However, knowledge of the necessary conditions for having the ordinary empirical knowledge of things does require this special kind of knowledge and so does the production of the Demiurge in accordance with these principles. In the former case, Schelling implies that philosophers, such as Plato, as those who have knowledge of these principles as necessary for empirical knowledge of things, must have this special kind of “intellectual cognition.” In the latter case, the Demiurge that produces the order in the universe in accordance with these principles must also have this special kind of “intellectual cognition.”

We have seen that Schelling’s interest in extending Kant’s conception of reason was already evident in his discussion of exaltation [Schwärmerei] and enthusiasm.

\(^{27}\) Schelling is here referring to the following passage in Plato’s *Timaeus*: “Principles [archai] yet more ultimate than these are known only to god, and to any man he may hold dear” (Timaeus 53d).

\(^{28}\) There are indications, however, in the text that one must at least to some extent participate in this special knowledge of the “intelligible Forms” in order to be capable of empirical knowledge of things.
[Begeisterung] in his early Tübingen studies of Plato. While according to these studies both enthusiasm [Begeisterung] and exaltation [Schwärmerei] are desirable qualities of genius-poets and great minds such as Plato, in his Commentary on the Timaeus exaltation [Schwärmerei] has clearly negative connotations for Schelling, and Schelling’s intention is to defend Plato of any accusations of Schwärmerei in order to portray him as a good Kantian. While in his early Tübingen studies of Plato Schelling associates both terms Begeisterung and Schwärmerei broadly with a production the principles of which cannot be explained simply by a skill, his understanding of Schwärmerei in his Commentary on the Timaeus takes on a different meaning:

Plato presupposes that (1) the world with respect to its conformity to natural laws is an expression of some higher regularity; also he presupposes that (2) there is an Idea at the basis of every living organism in the world that contains the nature of its entire shape [...] Had he presupposed that corresponding to each organism there is an objective, invisible but physically existing parallel being at the basis of each organism that contains its shape, then this would amount to exaltation [Schwärmerei], i.e., carrying over of the merely sensible, of that which belongs merely to empirical intuition to the supersensible. But Plato constantly protests against such a position. (TK, 32)

On Schelling’s view, an exalted thinker [Schwärmerei] is someone who is capable of sensibly intuiting non-sensible, or supersensible, correlates of appearances, that is, of “carrying over of the merely sensible, of that which belongs merely to empirical intuition to the supersensible.”29 While Schelling defends Plato against any accusations of

29 Schelling’s understanding of exaltation [Schwärmerei] in the above passage parallels Kant’s use of it in his Critique of Teleological Judgment: “For in the necessity of that which is purposive and so constituted as if it were intentionally arranged for our use, but which nevertheless seems to pertain originally to the essence of things, without any regard to our use, lies the ground for the great admiration of nature, not outside of us so much as in our own reason; in which case it is surely excusable that through misunderstanding this admiration gradually rose to exaltation [Schwärmerei]” (KdU, AA
exaltation [Schwärmerei], he describes him as a philosopher of enthusiasm

[Begeisterung]:

It was a great Idea of Plato—which could easily lead him to enthusiasm [Begeisterung]—that he did not search for the explanation of the harmony of the natural organisms in the empirical inquiry but, rather, in the research of the pure form of our power of representation [Vorstellungsvermögen].

No wonder that when he spoke about this Idea he expressed himself in language which takes an unusual flight away from the common philosophical language that had to necessarily originate in us through such a discovery of a supersensible principle of Form and harmony of the world. But this enthused intuition of a principle raised above all sensibility was the reason that he expressed himself about the being of this principle, its purity that is so far removed from anything material, in language that was so strong and powerful that it seems impossible how one could so often ascribe to him the belief in the physical existence of these Ideas [...]. (TK, 34)

While exaltation [Schwärmerei] presupposes knowledge of things as they are in themselves, enthusiasm [Begeisterung] does not presuppose any special intuition of the

V, 363-4). Hence, for Kant, just as for Schelling in his Commentary on the Timaeus, exaltation [Schwärmerei] is equivalent to confusing knowledge of appearances with knowledge of things as they are in themselves. (The passage is cited according to the Guyer/Matthews translation of the Critique of Judgment, Cambridge 2000. However, instead of their translation of Schwärmerei as “enthusiasm” I substituted “exaltation” for the reasons I indicated in Chapter Three of this dissertation.)

30 Schelling’s use of the term “power of representation” [Vorstellungsvermögen] is the evidence of the influence of Reinhold’s An Attempt at a New Theory of Human Power of Representation [Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens] (1789). Henrich notes that Reinhold’s influence on Schelling’s Timaeus does not have a significant philosophical import but is only terminological in nature. See Henrich (1986), p. 86. However, as Karl Ameriks suggested to me, Reinhold’s influence on Schelling here may be more than just terminological because Reinhold’s insistence on an absolute first principle [Grundsatz] anticipates Schelling’s later Philosophy of Identity. Indeed, Schelling first became familiar with Reinhold’s philosophy through a lecture held by J.F. Abel in Tübingen in the Summer 1792. See Kuhlmann (1993), p. 42. Moreover, Schelling’s now lost “Magister Arbeit,” written in the fall of 1792, only two years before his Commentary, was entitled Über die Möglichkeit einer Philosophie ohne Beinamen nebst einigen Bemerkungen über die Reinholdische Elementarphilosophie. Thus, it is rather unlikely that Reinhold’s influence on Schelling’s Commentary is just “terminological” in nature.
noumenal but merely that knowledge of Ideas or Forms which, for both Kant’s and Schelling’s understanding of Plato, presupposes a knowledge of concepts but not of existing things that correspond to these concepts.\textsuperscript{31}

In Chapter Two it was noted that Kant distinguishes four kinds of a special, non-human understanding: (1) intellectual intuition that is immediate and direct while being non-sensible, (2) intellectual intuition that is immediate and direct while being productive, (3) intuitive understanding that proceeds synthetically from universal to particular without any mediation of concepts, and (4) intuitive understanding as a cause of the world.\textsuperscript{32} Schelling in his \textit{Commentary on the Timaeus} defends Plato of the possible accusation of affirming a non-sensible intellectual intuition that has the capacity to intuit the noumenal realm directly. This kind of intellectual intuition Schelling identifies with exaltation \textit{[Schwärmerei]}. The cognitive capacity Schelling identifies as enthusiasm \textit{[Begeisterung]} corresponds to Kant’s conception of an “intuitive understanding” that proceeds synthetically from universal to particular without any mediation of concepts. While Kant rejects both of these types of intuition as kinds of knowledge of which human beings are not capable, Schelling rejects only Kant’s notion of “intellectual intuition” as a direct, non-sensible intuition of the noumenon. Schelling embraces Kant’s notion of “intuitive understanding” that proceeds synthetically from universal to particular without

\textsuperscript{31} Schelling’s passage above echoes Kant’s discussion of Plato in his Critique of Teleological Judgment: “Plato, himself a master of this science [geometry], was led by such an original constitution of things, in the discovery of which we can dispense with all experience, and by the mental capacity for drawing the harmony of things out of their supersensible principle […] to the enthusiasm \textit{[Begeisterung]} that elevated him beyond the concepts of experience to ideas, which seemed to him explicable only by means of an intellectual communion with the origin of all things” (KdU, AA V, 363).

\textsuperscript{32} See Chapter Two, Section 2.4 of this dissertation.
any mediation of concepts as a kind of knowledge of which only special individuals are capable.

In sum, although the context of Schelling’s discussion of Plato’s Demiurge is not aesthetic in an obvious sense, Schelling’s discussion of the Demiurge’s enthusiasm [Begeisterung] in his Commentary on the Timaeus continues to explore the issues central to Schelling’s early Tübingen studies of Plato, that is, Schelling’s conception of creative subjectivity and the special kind of knowledge that is requisite for such a creative production. Thus, Kant’s notion of genius remains a recognizable theme in Schelling’s early reception of Plato. In what follows, I will discuss originality as another characteristic in addition to enthusiasm [Begeisterung] that the Demiurge of Schelling’s Commentary shares with the genius of Schelling’s Essay on Poets.

5.2.3 The Originality of the Demiurge’s Works and the Originality of the Works of a Genius

In his Critique of Teleological Judgment Kant claims that organisms are characterized by a special kind of originality:

For although as far as the components that it [a plant] receives from nature outside of itself are concerned, it must be regarded only as an educt, nevertheless in the separation and new composition of this raw material there is to be found an originality of the capacity for separation and formation in this sort of natural being that remains infinitely remote from all art when it attempts to reconstitute such a product of the vegetable kingdom from the elements that it obtains by its decomposition or from the material that nature provides for its nourishment. (KdU, AA V, 371, my emphasis)
Thus, although a plant is composed of physical elements that we find in nature and that the plant uses for its growth, we will never be able to reproduce the plant even if we know all the individual parts of which it is composed. In other words, we cannot reproduce the rule or the principle that connects its parts into a whole. A similar kind of originality is characteristic of the products of genius according to Kant. The rule or principle according to which the work of a genius is composed cannot be consciously reproduced even by the genius himself in the way in which an artisan, for example, can reproduce the steps required in making a chair. The products of Schelling’s Demiurge are analogous to Kant’s conception of natural end, or organism. Thus, the originality involved in the work of Kant’s genius, and of organisms in nature, is equally involved in the products of Schelling’s Demiurge. What all these three products have in common is an Idea intuited by creative subjectivity, an Idea that serves as a model for its production.

In his *Commentary on the Timaeus* we find Schelling’s paraphrase of the following passage in Plato’s *Timaeus*: “Principles [archai] yet more ultimate than these are known only to god, and to any man he may hold dear” (53d). Schelling cites the same passage in his *Essay on Poets* which in his translation he renders as follows: “The unity of the visible elements with Ideas, Plato says, is known only by God, and by one to

---

33 Consider Kant’s following claim: “and absolutely no human reason (or even any finite reason that is similar to ours in quality, no matter how much it exceeds it in degree) can ever hope to understand the generation of even a little blade of grass from merely mechanical causes” (KdU, AA V, 409).

34 See my discussion of originality of genius’s products in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

35 See TK, 72.
whom God reveals this knowledge”’ (DA, 294, 16). Schelling interprets Plato’s “principles” [archai] as meaning the “connection of the sensible elements with Ideas” (DA, 294, 16). According to Franz, for example, Schelling takes Platonic archai to be analogous to Kant’s productive imagination in its function of providing schemata for the pure concepts of the understanding. Just as the rules governing productive imagination serve the function of mediating between the sensible realm (i.e., imagination) and the supersensible realm (i.e., concepts of the understanding), so Plato’s archai mediate between the supersensible Ideas and matter that is organized in accordance with these Ideas. Although Franz is correct in identifying a Kantian theme in Schelling’s interpretation of the passage in Plato’s Timaeus, I believe that the paradigm example of Kant’s productive imagination Schelling has in mind here is not its function of providing a schematism for the pure concepts of the understanding in the first Critique but, rather, of the productive imagination of genius in the third Critique. I have demonstrated in Chapter Three that aesthetic Ideas—works of genius’s productive imagination—function in Kant’s third Critique as sensible representations of archetypes, or Ideas that for Kant stand for supersensible objects that can only be indirectly or symbolically represented in empirical reality. The same originality that pertains to imagination of aesthetic Ideas does

36 Cf. Franz (1996), p. 213. Franz also notes that Schelling’s interpretation of Plato’s archai was very atypical for the 18th century reception of Platonism in Germany. In Brucker’s Historia critica philosophiae (1742-44)—one of the most influential treatments of the history of philosophy in the 18th century—and in Mosheim’s translation and commentary on Cudworth’s True Intellectual System of the Universe (1773), and Mosheim’s dissertation Plato’s archai are interpreted as a more general form of Ideas, or as ideal paradigms of all the beings of the world. Plato’s distinction between Principles [archai] and Ideas collapses in the 18th century reception of Plato in Germany and consequently both concepts, Principles and Ideas, become part of the intelligible world of Ideas. Schelling, however, contrary to the trend of his time, acknowledges the distinction Plato’s dialogues make between these two concepts.
not pertain to schemata of the concepts of the understanding, the function of which is to render these concepts sensible directly (as opposed to only mediately or symbolically).37

This new insight into the possible influence of Kant’s conception of genius on Schelling’s interpretation of Plato’s Demiurge adds also a new dimension to the recent discussion of the unity of the Ideal and Real in Schelling’s Commentary on the Timaeus.

5.2.4 Schelling’s “Transfer [Übertragung] Citation”—Engaging Some Recent Interpretations

In his Commentary on the Timaeus Schelling claims that “the key for the explanation of the entire philosophy of Plato is a remark that everywhere he transfers [überträgt] the subjective to the objective” (TK, 31). This sentence contains Schelling’s philosophical intention behind his interpretation of Plato’s Timaeus and has been the topic of recent debates on the development of early German Idealism.

Dieter Henrich, for example, suggests that Schelling’s Übertragung-citation signifies Schelling’s attempt to read Plato’s Timaeus as a work that is consistent with

37 The analogy between Schelling’s conception of the ‘Demiurge’ in his Timaeus Commentary and Kant’s conception of genius suggests that the idea of creative subjectivity was perhaps also of importance for Schelling’s early philosophy of nature. Sturma discusses Schelling’s use of the Platonic metaphor of a “connecting bond” that holds the opposed moments together, that is, the moment of nature as “visible spirit” and the moment of spirit as “invisible nature.” Sturma notes that Schelling’s view of self-consciousness as the expression of nature is important for his System of Transcendental Idealism of 1800. However, he does not relate Schelling’s understanding of self-consciousness as the expression of nature and nature as the expression of self-consciousness to Schelling’s preoccupation with the phenomenon of creative subjectivity and the possible influence on Schelling’s development of Kant’s discussion of genius in the third Critique. See Sturma (2000), p. 225.
Kant’s theory of empirical knowledge and with what Kant specifies are the necessary conditions for such knowledge. Thus, Henrich interprets “subjective,” or the ideal, in Schelling’s Übertragung-citation to stand for Kant’s a priori concepts under which we subsume the manifold of the world, or the “objective,” that is, the real.\(^{38}\) In her dissertation on Schelling’s early philosophy Birgit Sandkaulen-Bock follows Henrich’s argument: “his [Schelling’s] subject matter in this commentary is to show that Plato’s discussion of the creation of the world is nothing but Kant’s conception of cognition [Erkenntnis].”\(^{39}\) Henrich’s and Sandkaulen-Bock’s interpretations both rely on Schelling’s discussion of Plato’s apeiron and peras. However, they do not take into account that Schelling’s aim in his Commentary is to relate Plato’s Timaeus not only to the kind of representation of nature Kant accomplishes with his Transcendental Aesthetic and his Transcendental Analytic in the Critique of Pure Reason but also to the Critique of Judgment.

Hence, in contrast to Henrich and Sandkaulen-Bock, Franz argues that Henrich’s and Sandkaulen-Bock’s interpretation amounts to the claim that, according to Schelling, Plato “objectivizes the subjective,”\(^{40}\) that is, turns subjective representations or phenomena into objective representation, or empirical judgments about the world. On Franz’s view, Schelling’s Übertragung-citation should be understood as “subjectivizing of the objective.” According to Franz, Schelling’s Übertragung-citation should be understood in light of Kant’s Critique of Judgment and especially Kant’s concept of the


“technic” of nature. To approach nature as technē or art means to approach something objective, i.e., the real world, as if it were designed for our cognitive capacities, i.e., as subjective, or the ideal:

Only the Idea of the world comes forward necessarily as a form of unity. This is because this Idea itself originates in the form of the absolute unity of the powers of representation [Vorstellungsvermögen]. In this way the transfer [Übertragung] of the subjective to the objective, which dominates the entire Platonic philosophy, becomes visible. The world is in fact possible as a unity only as a representation in us. For this reason the subjective form of reason goes over the entire absolute unity, and also each part of the world that one can approach as a particular world, and the reason, which without any obstructions reaches towards the unconditioned, represents the world as a whole. (TK, 38)

The Idea the Demiurge uses as a model for its creation is the principle in virtue of which we are capable of representing to ourselves nature and its organisms as a unity. In other words, we “transfer the subjective to the objective” (TK, 38). By “subjective” Schelling here denotes the Idea of reason in virtue of which we represent the world, i.e., the objective, as a unity. In representing to ourselves organisms and nature as a unity “reason subjectively generates the Idea of the world” (TK, 39).

Manfred Baum has argued recently that Schelling’s philosophical intention behind his Commentary—his intention to demonstrate that for Plato “nature is a type of a higher world” (TK, 31)—is directly inspired by Kant’s Typic of Pure Practical Judgment in the Critique of Practical Reason. In the Typic, Kant suggests that we are “permitted to use the nature of the sensible world as the type of an intelligible nature” (KdpV, AA V, 70). If we are to apply the “law of freedom” and the Idea of the “morally good” (KdpV,

---

41 A similar point is suggested by Bubner. See Bubner (2003), pp. 20-21.

AA V, 68) to actions, or the sensible world, we cannot use a schema of sensibility because both these Ideas are the Ideas of reason. Instead, we must use a “law of nature” as a way of indirectly exhibiting the moral law as opposed to exhibiting it directly in a schema of imagination. Thus, according to Kant’s Typic, we approach sensible nature as if it were the moral law, or intelligible nature.

I agree with both Franz and Baum that the meaning of Schelling’s Übertragung-citation is best understood against the background of Kant’s thought that we represent sensible nature in accordance to some Idea of reason and, thus, as a type of intelligible nature, rather than against the background of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. However, I believe that the paradigm example of this Kantian theme is neither The Critique of Teleological Judgment, as argued by Franz, nor the Typic of Pure Practical Judgment, as argued by Baum, but, rather, Kant’s Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and especially Kant’s conception of genius. The accounts of both Franz and Baum ignore the central theme of creation and the creative subjectivity of the Demiurge in Schelling’s Commentary. Schelling’s Demiurge creates organisms, or the real, in accordance with its subjective principle of reason, or the ideal. Although the aesthetic aspect of Schelling’s solution to the problem of the unity of the Ideal and the Real will not become apparent until his Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism (1795) and his System of Transcendental Idealism (1800), it is evident that the notion of a creative subjectivity in Kant’s

\[\text{43}\]

To support his argument Baum notes that Schelling’s second dissertation (written in 1792, only 2 years before the Commentary) is entitled Über die Übereinstimmung der Critik der theoretischen und praktischen Vernunft, besonders in Bezug auf den Gebrauch der Categorien, und der Realisierung der Idee einer intelligiblen Welt durch ein Factum in der letzteren. Although according to Baum this dissertation is lost to us, its title suggests that it must have dealt with Kant’s categories of freedom and the Typic in the second Critique.
conception of genius and Schelling’s own interpretation of Plato’s Demiurge continues to be a significant influence on Schelling’s conception of the ‘absolute I’ in his Of the I As the Principle of Philosophy (1795).

5.3 Schelling’s Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy (1795)\textsuperscript{44}

Of the I is one of the very first works by Schelling that display Fichte’s influence. Schelling’s familiarity with Fichte’s work began most likely in 1793, after Fichte as the author of Attempt at a Criticism of All Revelation [Versuch einer Critik aller Offenbarung]—the work that made Fichte famous—was studied at Tübinger Stift. As all the reputable scholars in Tübingen felt the need to respond to Fichte’s most recent writings, Schelling as a talented and ambitious student in the Stift shared a similar eagerness. Although Of the I is one of Schelling’s works that in the most obvious manner reflects Fichte’s influence on Schelling,\textsuperscript{45} this essay also continues to develop Schelling’s early preoccupation with the conception of creative subjectivity that, through his

\textsuperscript{44} The original title of the essay is Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen. Hereafter VI. Pagination is first to Schelling, Werke, 1856, followed by the page numbers in the English translation of this text by Fritz Marti in Marti (1980). The title of the essay suggests that Schelling was possibly influenced by Jacobi who in his writings stressed the Unbedingte.

\textsuperscript{45} For example, another work by Schelling that demonstrates Fichte’s influence on his work is On the Possibility of the Form of Philosophy [Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt] (1794) in which, following the publication of Schulze’s Aenesidemus (1792), Fichte’s Review of Aenesidemus (1792), and Fichte’s Concerning the Concept of the Wissenshafstlehre in May 1794, the same month that Fichte was in Tübingen, Schelling argues for the self-positing ego as the first principle of philosophy that can secure philosophy against the attacks of skepticism.
interpretation of Plato, led Schelling to an original conception of the absolute ‘I’, a conception distinct from Fichte’s.  

*Of the I* endorses some central theses of Fichte’s *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* [Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre] (1794) and the first part of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* [Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre] (1795), i.e., Fichte’s foundationalism, primacy of freedom and the primacy of the ‘I’ as the first principle of philosophy. However, Schelling’s sharp distinction between the ‘absolute I’ and the ‘empirical I’—according to which the ‘absolute I’ is a first unconditioned principle of philosophy which cannot be found in either the subject or the object—indicates Schelling’s departure from Fichte’s principal theses. In order to understand Schelling’s departure from Fichte in his essay *Of the I* it is helpful to give a brief overview of Fichte’s basic concepts and philosophical concerns in his *Über den Begriff* and the *Grundlage*.

---

46 Because, as I will proceed to demonstrate, Schelling’s *Vom Ich* continues to develop his early preoccupation with the conception of creative subjectivity, I am skeptical of Beierwaltes’s efforts to show that Schelling’s *Vom Ich* contains the “inner affinities” to Neoplatonism. While Neoplatonism had a considerable influence on Schelling’s later Philosophy of Identity, it is unlikely that it influenced Schelling’s transcendental philosophy. As I have been arguing in this chapter, the focus of Schelling’s early philosophy is on the creative as opposed to contemplative reason of the Neoplatonic self-thinking *nous*. See Beierwaltes (2002), especially pp. 395-400.

47 According to Beiser these were Fichte’s works that Schelling read at the time of composing *Of the I*. See Beiser (2002), p. 472. Annemarie Pieper suggests that Fichte mailed to Schelling the theoretical part of his *Grundlage* at the end of 1794, or at the beginning of 1795. See Pieper (1982), p. 23.
5.3.1 Fichte’s Conception of the ‘Absolute I’

According to Fichte, the first unconditioned principle that provides the foundation of human knowledge in its entirety is the ‘I’. Because the ‘I’ is not determined by anything outside itself Fichte refers to it also as the ‘absolute I’. Fichte’s ‘absolute I’ is absolute in a formal and a material sense. The formal aspect of Fichte’s ‘absolute I’—unlike Kant’s formal ‘I’, or his concept of pure apperception that accompanies and thus unifies all our spatio-temporal representations—amounts to intellectual intuition of its existence. But the formal aspect of the ‘absolute I’, or the intuition of the ‘I am’, still does not tell us anything about the content of this ‘absolute I’, i.e., in what its self-determining activity consists and what is its end. While the ‘absolute I’ in its formal aspect is the intellectual intuition of the ‘I’ as it exists, the ‘absolute I’ in its material aspect is the ‘I’ as it ought to exist. The latter refers to self-determining activity of the ‘I’ as the giver of the moral law to itself. The individual “posits” [setzen] itself with respect to the moral law not in the sense that it determines the content of the moral law but insofar as the moral law is binding for the individual and represents something that the individual wills to obey. Furthermore, the ‘absolute I’ in its formal aspect is pre-reflexive insofar as it is the condition of any representation and of ego’s awareness of this representing activity, that is, self-consciousness. The ‘I’ which represents and is conscious of its representation is determined by the content of its representations or the ‘not-I’, that is, the external world.

However, on Fichte’s view, it is not only the representing and the self-conscious ‘I’ that is ideal with respect to the pre-reflexive ‘absolute I’. The ‘not-I’ is also ideal and cannot exist independent of the ‘I’ for two reasons: (1) the admission of the existence of a thing-in-itself would entail skepticism, and (2) the admission of the existence of a thing in itself destroys freedom. Much of Fichte’s fear of (1) is due to his reception of Kant’s transcendental philosophy via Reinhold, whose enthusiasm for Kant’s practical philosophy and moral religion led to an oversimplification of Kant’s theoretical position.\(^50\) According to Reinhold, philosophy begins with a notion of representation rather than Kant’s notion of experience, and the fundamental fact \([\text{Tatsache}]\) of philosophy is the “principle of consciousness,” i.e., the fact that each representation distinguishes itself from its subject and its object. But for Fichte this notion of transcendental idealism amounts to a series of private impressions. However, in Reinhold’s “representationalism”—and consequently Kant’s transcendental idealism as Fichte received it via Reinhold—Fichte saw a more troublesome consequence. The fact that transcendental idealism allows for the causal effect of a ‘not-I’ on perception undermines freedom.\(^51\) The solution to (1) and (2) Fichte finds in the ideality of the ‘not-

\(^{50}\) For a detailed account of how Reinhold’s interpretation and popularization of Kant is a paradigmatic example of, what Ameriks calls, a “short argument to idealism,” i.e., the argument for transcendental idealism according to which “reflection on the mere notion of representation, or on very general features such as the passivity or activity involved in representation, is what is meant to show that knowledge is restricted from any determination of things in themselves,” see Chapter 3 of Ameriks (2000). [Ameriks (2000), p. 163].

\(^{51}\) Ameriks for example argues that for Fichte this practical worry is even more important than the skeptical challenge of transcendental idealism. [Ameriks (2000), p. 174]. Ameriks further argues that Fichte’s concern that the causal effect of things on our perception undermines freedom is due to Fichte’s conflation of the necessary requirements of omnipotence with the necessary requirements of freedom. The fact that
I’ that can meet the skeptical objections. Given that on Fichte’s view no theoretical argument for the existence of the external world can meet the skeptical challenges, Fichte’s argument for the ideality of the ‘I’ amounts to a claim that any certain assertion of external existence must be on a basis implied by the moral law, i.e., the empirical reality entailed in the concept of “striving” towards the realization of the ends of the moral law, or of the content of the ‘absolute I’.

5.3.2 Schelling’s Conception of the ‘Absolute I’

Schelling in his conception of the ‘absolute I’ follows Fichte in identifying the ‘absolute I’ as the foundational principle “from which all firmness and all form of knowledge springs” (VI, 85, 71). But for Schelling, unlike for Fichte, the ego can never be the source of the ‘absolute I’:

Since the subject is thinkable only in regard to an object, and the object only in regard to a subject, neither of them can contain the unconditional because both are conditioned reciprocally, both are equally unserviceable […] this kind of subject is also determinable as an object, and for this reason the endeavor to turn the subject into an unconditional fails, as does the endeavor with an absolute object […] Now it becomes clear that we must not look for it in the sphere of objects at all, nor even within the sphere of that subject which is also determinable as an object. (VI, 89, 74)

we are constrained in one respect, i.e., that our representation of things is dependent on the things given in perception, does not imply that we are constrained in all respects. According to Ameriks, the fact that we are sometimes free is “all that an advocate of freedom needs” [Ameriks (2000), p. 176].

On Schelling’s view, the subject is conditioned by the object of its representations to the same extent that the object is determined by the subject who does the representing. Therefore, neither the subject nor the object can qualify for the first and unconditional principle of all knowledge. This point in itself would not be a significant departure from Fichte’s view because Fichte also makes a distinction between the ‘absolute I’ and the ‘I’ that would be equivalent to Schelling’s ‘empirical I’, i.e., the conscious ‘I’ that represents and is partly determined by the content of its representation. In this regard Schelling’s ‘absolute I’ is equivalent to Fichte’s, and Schelling, like Fichte, defines the ‘absolute I’ as the intellectual intuition of one’s existence that precedes all consciousness: “I am. My I contains a being which precedes all thinking and imagining” (VI, 90, 75).

However, Schelling departs from Fichte insofar as he denies any self-consciousness to the ‘absolute I’.\(^\text{53}\)

---

You insist that you should be conscious of this freedom? But are you bearing in mind that all your consciousness is possible only through this freedom, and that the condition cannot be contained in the conditioned? Are you considering in any way that the I is no longer the pure, absolute I once it occurs in consciousness; that there can be no object at all for the absolute I; and, moreover, that the absolute I never can become an object? Self-awareness implies the danger of losing the I. It is not the free act of the immutable but an unfree urge that induces the mutable I, conditioned by the not-I, to strive to maintain its identity and to reassert itself in the undertow of endless change. (Or do you really feel free in your self-awareness?) (VI, 104-105, 84)

On Schelling’s view, the ‘absolute I’ rules out any possibility of self-consciousness because self-consciousness implies that the self is being aware of itself. In this reflexive act of self-awareness the ego becomes an object of its own reflexive activity. Thus, the I

---

\(^{53}\) See on this point also Frank (1985), p. 59.
becomes a thing \([\text{Ding}]\) and as such it becomes determined \([\text{bedingt}]\) in the process of self-reflexion. But, according to Schelling, the ‘absolute I’ is unconditioned \([\text{unbedingt}]\) and “cannot be thought of as a thing at all” (VI, 89, 74).\(^{54}\)

Fichte, however, does not distinguish between the ‘absolute I’ in its formal aspect, i.e., the intellectual intuition of one’s own existence, and the act of self-consciousness:

By the act described, the self is merely endowed with the possibility of self-consciousness, and therewith of all other consciousness; but no true consciousness comes into being as yet. The act in question is merely a part, and a part not originally separated, but only to be distinguished by the philosopher, of that entire enterprise of the intellect, whereby it brings its consciousness into being. (my emphasis, L.O.)\(^{55}\)

According to Fichte, the ‘absolute I’ in its formal aspect, i.e., the intellectual intuition of the ‘I am’, cannot be originally distinguished from the act of self-consciousness that Fichte at other places also calls the “pure active self-consciousness” (ZE, 473). On Fichte’s view, the act of intellectual self-intuition is only distinguished from the act of self-consciousness by the philosopher, who “discovers it, not immediately, as an isolated item in consciousness, but rather by distinguishing what appears in combination in the

\(^{54}\) See Frank (1989), pp. 155-158. Frank discusses Schelling’s play with the etymology of the concept “unconditioned \([\text{unbedingt}]\)” and also cites a passage in Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism* where Schelling repeats his characterization of the Absolute as something “unconditioned \([\text{unbedingt}]\)” that cannot be an object \([\text{Ding}]\) of reflection. Frank also anticipates well that such a conception of the self that is not an object of its own reflection cannot be a proper conception of a subject: “The Absolute is thus without a thing \([\text{undinglich}]\), without an object \([\text{ungegenständlich}]\)—but note: it is also not a subject because subjects can very well turn themselves into objects […] thus Schelling, just like the Romantics—in order to preserve the purity of the Absolute—takes away later from the Absolute the quality of the self” [Frank (1989), p. 157].

\(^{55}\) Fichte, J.G., “Second Introduction to the *Wissenshaftslehre*” (1797), 459. Hereafter ZE.
ordinary consciousness, and resolving the whole into its constituent parts” (ZE, 465). In other words, on Fichte’s view, the philosopher, unlike others, possesses the required conceptual apparatus and a special “sense of truth.”\(^56\) With respect to the latter Fichte writes: “The philosopher requires an obscure feeling for what is right, or genius, to no less an extent than does, for instance, the poet or the artist. The difference is in the type. The latter needs a sense of beauty; the former needs a sense of truth. Certainly such a sense does exist” (BdW, 128n, 73n).\(^57\) Thus, according to Fichte, the philosopher has the capacity to conceptually distinguish between the origin of self-consciousness, i.e., the intellectual intuition of the ‘I am’, and the actual self-consciousness. But in the ordinary consciousness these two moments cannot be separated from each other. Thus, Schelling’s conception of the ‘absolute I’ that excludes any possibility of self-consciousness clearly transcends subjectivity even though Schelling insists that—in contrast to Spinoza in


\(^{57}\) Karl Ameriks brought to my attention that Fichte liked to think of himself as a genius. It is also possible that the reaction of Schlegel and other early romantics may be related to Fichte’s claim that a philosopher is similar to a poet or an artist. Later in the second edition Fichte cites (imprecisely) the objection to this note advanced by Salomon Maimon in his “Über den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis” (1795) and proceeds to give his reply: “I am not quite sure how and why, but an otherwise admirable philosophical author has become a bit agitated over the innocent assertion contained in the forgoing note. ‘One would, he says, prefer to leave the empty word ‘genius’ to tightrope walkers, French cooks, ‘beautiful souls,’ artists and others. For sound sciences it would be better to advance a theory of discovery.’ One should indeed advance such a theory, which will certainly happen as soon as science has reached the point where it is possible to discover such a theory. But where is the contradiction between such a project and the assertion made above? And how will we discover such a theory of discovery? By means, perhaps, of a theory of the discovery of a theory of discovery? And this?” (BdW, 73n). To Maimon’s objection that philosophy should not be modeled on the arts but rather on the sciences Fichte replies that even a scientific discovery requires a special insight, or genius.
relation to which Schelling’s work is intended as a “counterpart” (VI, 80, 69)—this absolute being is not outside of us but inside of us. The commentators are puzzled with the question of why Schelling makes such a claim at all.\textsuperscript{58} Manfred Frank, for example, ascribes to Hölderlin’s influence Schelling’s departure from Fichte with respect to the issue of the ‘absolute I’.

5.3.3 Hölderlin’s Influence on Schelling’s Conception of the ‘Absolute I’

According to Manfred Frank, Schelling’s conception of the ‘absolute I’, which offers an alternative theory of the relation of the self to an ontologically prior identity of self and nature, is an original insight that Hölderlin developed at the end of 1794 or beginning of 1795 and serves as the basis for his critique of Fichte. In support of his position Frank cites Hölderlin’s letter to Hegel of January 26, 1795:

In the beginning, I suspected him [Fichte] very much of dogmatism; he appears, if I may speculate, to have stood very much at the crossroads, or still to stand there—he wants to move in theory beyond the fact of consciousness; many of his statements show that […]—his absolute “I” (=Spinoza’s substance) contains all reality; it is everything, and outside of it there is nothing; hence there is no object for this “I,” for otherwise not all reality would be within it; however, a consciousness without object cannot be thought, and if I myself am this object, then I am as such necessarily restricted, even if it were only within me, hence not absolute; therefore, within the absolute “I,” no consciousness is conceivable; as absolute “I” I have no consciousness, and insofar as I have no consciousness I am (for myself) nothing, hence is the absolute “I” (for me) nothing.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{58} See for example Beiser (2002), p. 472.

According to Frank, the letter reflects the beginnings of Hölderlin’s critique of Fichte’s reflexive model of self-consciousness that he first articulated in his *Judgment and Being*, which was written at the beginning of 1795. According to Hölderlin’s *Judgment and Being*, Fichte’s “first principle” of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, i.e., the identity principle “I=I” presupposes reflection and, hence, self-consciousness, or the distinction between the ‘I’ that reflects and the ‘I’ that is the object of this reflection. Thus, Fichte’s conception of the ‘absolute I’ represents the ‘I’ as an object of reflection and not as it is in itself. Thus, it is not an ‘absolute I’. The latter can only be found in the unity of subject and object and, hence, something that is a condition of self-consciousness but itself does not amount to one, that is, in the intellectual intuition of Being. The latter, as the condition of self-consciousness, is covered up in the act of judgment *[Ur-teilen]*[^60] that splits the original unity into the subject-object relation of self-consciousness.

My intention is not to deny that Hölderlin’s thoughts in this period overlap with Schelling’s. However, in contrast to Frank, my aim is to emphasize that there is a recognizable theme in Schelling’s early works that is genuinely his own, i.e., his focus on the phenomenon of creative subjectivity that has a special capacity to intuit an Idea of some ontologically prior unity of self and nature. My reluctance to portray Schelling in this period completely as Hölderlin’s apprentice is also encouraged by Hölderlin’s own portrayal of their discussions as being “not always in accord with each other.”[^61]

[^60]: Hölderlin interprets the German word *Urteil* (judgment) according to a false etymology that was common at the time and according to which *Urteil* is a consequence of the act of *[Ur-teilen]*, i.e., dividing something that was originally a unity.

cause for the disagreement between Hölderlin and Schelling lies in what they see to be the solution to the opposition between the Ideal and the Real. Hölderlin’s solution was theoretical, that is, an intellectual intuition with an aesthetic nature that “could be neither thought nor practically realized.” In contrast to Hölderlin, Schelling’s solution is practical because, as Schelling claims, “man was born to act, not to speculate.”

5.3.4 The Difference Between Schelling’s and Fichte’s Conception of Intellectual Intuition

The difference between Schelling’s conception of the ‘absolute I’ and Fichte’s conception of the ‘absolute I’ in its formal aspect explains the difference in their respective conceptions of intellectual intuition. In his Review of Aenesidemus (1794) Fichte makes brief and sporadic remarks on the conception of intellectual intuition, and in the Grundlegung (1795) and Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre (1794) Fichte does not use the concept of intellectual intuition at all except in the footnote in Concerning the Concept where he refers to the philosopher’s “special sense.” Thus, at the time of composing Of the I Schelling was most likely familiar with Fichte’s cursory remarks on intellectual intuition in his Review of Aenesidemus. But these remarks anticipate Fichte’s more elaborate exposition of this concept in his subsequently written Introductions to the Grundlegung. Fichte, aware of Kant’s disparaging remarks regarding

---


63 Intelligenzblatt zur Allgemeinen Literatur Zeitung, 1796 where Schelling described the purpose of his treaties Of the I. Translated in Marti (1980), p. 128.
the possibility for a finite intellect to have a non-sensible intuition of the supersensible realm, claims that his concept of intellectual intuition does not amount to immediate consciousness of some non-sensible entity, i.e., a thing in itself. Fichte’s conception of intellectual intuition “refers, not to existence at all, but rather to action” (ZE, 472), or, put otherwise, to immediate awareness of the activity of one’s self-consciousness.⁶⁴

Although Fichte claims that his concept of intellectual intuition is not an intuition of an existent supersensible entity, to prove the reality of philosopher’s intellectual intuition, i.e., the fact that it is not a mere subjective thought, Fichte points towards the content of the intuited ‘absolute self,’ or the moral law: “I am given to myself, by myself, as something that is to be active in a certain fashion [...] Only though this medium of the moral law do I behold myself” (ZE, 466). Thus, the intellectual intuition of one’s self-consciousness materializes itself by realizing the intelligible content of the self with respect to the Idea of the self one ought to become. Therefore, although Fichte denies that his conception of the intellectual intuition is an intuition of the separately existing supersensible realm, it still amounts to knowledge of the intelligible or noumenal aspect of oneself.

Schelling, like Fichte, distinguishes intellectual intuition from intuition of an existing entity that is associated with sensible intuition. For Schelling, just as for Fichte, intellectual intuition is immediate knowledge that is not mediated by inference from higher principles, generalization from empirical observation, or subsumption of particulars under universals. However, unlike for Fichte, for whom intellectual intuition

⁶⁴ Paul Franks specifies that “immediacy” implicated in intellectual intuition refers to knowledge that is reached without mediation of either empirical observation, logical inference from some higher principle, or subsumption under a concept. See Franks, forthcoming.
of the ‘absolute self’ in its formal aspect amounts to intuition of the activity of one’s self-consciousness, for Schelling intellectual intuition amounts to an intuition of an Idea of the world and nature as a whole.

Thus, Schelling’s conception of intellectual intuition is a development of his earlier thoughts on a special faculty of knowledge we have seen in his *Timaeus*—that is, the Demiurge’s special knowledge of the archetypes where archetypes are conceived not as separately existing entities but as Ideas in the Divine Intellect that the Demiurge intuits in its own mind—and his discussion of exaltation [*Schwärmerei*] and enthusiasm [*Begeisterung*] in his early Tübingen Plato studies. The novelty, however, brought by *Of the I* is Spinoza’s influence on Schelling’s conception of the ‘absolute I.’ At the beginning of the essay, Schelling expresses his hope “that some happy time may be granted in which it will be possible to bring to realization the idea of writing a counterpart to Spinoza’s *Ethics*” (VI, 80, 69). For Spinoza the highest self-knowledge consists in realization that the self is only an attribute of a single infinite substance, which calls for annihilation of subjectivity with respect to this substance. In contrast, the “counterpart” to which Schelling refers would express the fact that the self *is* “all being, all reality” (VI, 111, 89). Hence, instead of Spinozistic annihilation of subjectivity, for Schelling “the ultimate goal of the I” is “to turn the laws of freedom into laws of nature, and the laws of nature into laws of freedom, to bring about nature in the I, and I in nature” (VI, 126n, 98n). We have already seen Schelling’s interest in the unity of the Ideal and Real in his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, that is, in his Übertragung-citation. But in the *Of the I*, and after Spinoza’s growing influence on his work, Schelling even more clearly transgresses the regulative limits of Kant’s transcendental philosophy and
envisions a unity of the Ideal (the realm of freedom) and the Real (the realm of nature) in opposition to Spinoza’s concept of the ‘absolute’ by placing this unity in the subject and not in nature.

Thus, Schelling’s conception of the creative subjectivity is inspired by Kant’s account of the intuitive capacities of genius, which Schelling complemented with his reading of Plato. However, Schelling’s ‘absolute I’ departs significantly from Kant’s model of creative subjectivity. The first indications of this departure are indicated in Schelling’s approach to Kant’s principle of purposiveness.

5.4 The Fate of Kant’s Principle of Purposiveness [Zweckmässigkeit]

Schelling’s ‘absolute I’ is a being with “absolute power” (VI, 96, 123) for whom “there are no possibility, no necessity, and no contingency […] so likewise it does not know of any purposes to be attained [Zweckverknüpfung] in the world” (VI, 241, 126). All the specific characteristics that, according to Kant’s paragraph 76 of the Critique of Teleological Judgment, pertain to human understanding—i.e., the distinction between the possibility and actuality, contingency and necessity, teleological and mechanical principles—Schelling denies to the ‘absolute I.’ With respect to its practical faculty the ‘absolute I’ does not represent the moral law as a command, that is, it is “compelled to unify the contrast between laws of freedom and laws of nature in a higher principle in which freedom itself is nature and nature freedom” (VI, 241, 127). With respect to its theoretical faculty the ‘absolute I’ “must […] come upon a higher principle in which finality and mechanism coincide” (VI, 241, 127). “What is absolute harmony for the
absolute I,” Schelling writes, “is for the finite I elicited harmony, and the principle of unity is for the former the constitutive principle of immanent unity but for the latter only a regulative principle of objective unity which ought to become immanent. Therefore the finite I ought to strive to elicit in the world that which is actuality in the nonfinite, and which is man’s highest vocation—to turn the unity of aims in the world into mechanism, and to turn mechanism into a unity of aims” (VI, 241, 127).

In the above cited passage Schelling is indirectly referring to Kant’s following claim in The Architectonic of Pure Reason:

Essential ends are on this account not yet the highest, of which (in the complete systematic unity of reason) there can be only a single one. Hence they are either the final end, or subalternate ends, which necessarily belong to the former as means. The former is nothing other than the entire vocation of human beings, and the philosophy of it is called moral philosophy. (KdrV, A840/B868, my emphasis, L.O.)

In the Critique of Teleological Judgment Kant again refers to the “final end [Endzweck]” of reason as “the human being under moral laws” (KdU, AA V, 445). Thus, for Kant the highest vocation of human beings and the final end of human reason is the ideal of a moral world. The moral law, claims Kant, demands of us to strive to obtain this formal end even though “at the same time we feel ourselves and all of nature to be incapable of attaining it” (KdU, AA V, 446). Thus, Kant’s view of humans’ highest vocation entails a view of the world that seems to have a contrast between the ends of freedom and nature. According to Kant, in order to preserve their moral motivation to persist in pursuing this formal end of reason, human beings must assume “the intelligent world-cause […] even if for nothing more than avoiding the danger of seeing that effort as entirely futile in its effects and thereby flagging in it” (KdU, AA V, 446). For Schelling, on the other hand,
our “highest vocation” does not consist in striving to obtain a moral world but in striving to obtain a world in which there would no longer be striving, that is, a world in which there would no longer seem to be any opposition between freedom and nature. This is also a world in which a human being could do away with the opposition between the mechanical and the teleological principles because a world in which there is no opposition between the goals of freedom and nature is also a world in which one does not have the need to approach nature as if it were a product of an intelligence in order to be able to persist in one’s moral disposition. This is the reason why Schelling claims that the principle of unity between the realm of freedom and the realm of nature for the ‘finite I’ is regulative and for the ‘infinite I’ is constitutive. It is constitutive for the ‘infinite I’ because nature is the product of an intelligence, i.e., its own product.\footnote{Franz notes that in his \textit{Commentary on Timaeus} Schelling mentions Kant’s principle of purposiveness only once. According to Franz, this suggests that already in his \textit{Commentary} Schelling wanted to find a way out of Kant’s teleology of the Critical philosophy and move towards developing Spinoza’s metaphysics. See Franz (1996), p. 247.}

In his Critique of Teleological Judgment Kant already anticipates this direction of the development of his Critical philosophy. According to Kant, Spinoza’s metaphysics offers an explanation of how the laws of nature and natural organism are constitutive parts of a systematic whole. On Kant’s view, for Spinoza natural phenomena and natural organisms “count not as products of an original being but as accidents inhering in it” (KdU, AA V, 393). But, on Kant’s view, Spinoza’s metaphysics “removes their [objects of nature] contingency, without which no unity of purpose can be thought, and with that removes everything intentional, just as he removes all understanding from the original ground of natural things” (KdU, AA V, 393). In other words, on Kant’s view, if the
systematic unity of nature and the systematic unity of nature’s organisms is not the result of our reflective judgment that represents nature and organisms as if they were a product of an intelligent causation, then the whole system of nature amounts to “natural necessity” (KdU, AA V, 394). This is because

on […]Spinoza’s system] the connection of ends in the world must be assumed to be unintentional (because it is derived from an original being, but not from its understanding, hence not from any intention on its part, but from the necessity of its nature and the unity of the world flowing from that), hence the fatalism of purposiveness is at the same time an idealism of it. (KdU, AA V, 392)

Although Schelling places Spinoza’s absolute not in the world but in the subject, Kant’s objection nevertheless applies. The unity of freedom and nature is not the outcome of the necessity of nature in the world, but still the outcome of the necessity of nature in the subject. Hence, the question, to which I will return later, is whether Schelling’s conception of absolute freedom of the ‘absolute’ or ‘infinite I’ can count as freedom at all.

Schelling continues to discuss the problem of the unity of the realm of freedom and the realm of nature and his conception of the ‘absolute I’ as a possible solution to the problem in his Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism [Philosophische Briefe Über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus] (1795) written shortly after his Of the I. However, in this essay Schelling returns to seek a solution of the unity between the realm of freedom and the realm of nature more explicitly in aesthetics.
5.5 Schelling's *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* [Philosophische Briefe Über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus] (1795)

*Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* are best interpreted against the background of Schelling’s fight against the orthodox Tübingen theologians. The Tübingen theologians\(^66\) used Kant’s Postulates of Pure Practical Reason in order to reinforce their orthodox theological positions. In other words, they intentionally interpreted Kant’s postulates so that God, freedom and immortality were no longer merely objects of practical reason but objects of revelation. Carl Immanuel Diez attacked the orthodox positions of Storr and Flatt, and Schelling joined Diez in his critique of the Tübingen orthodox theologians by using Kant against the self-proclaimed Tübingen “Kantians.”\(^67\) Schelling’s *Letters* are considered to be explicitly inspired by his critique of the Tübingen theologians. The Tübingen theologians used Kant’s philosophy for their own theological agenda, but it could not be objected to them that they did not have the knowledge of Kant’s texts because in their writings they cited Kant profusely. Thus, Schelling felt compelled to defend Kant’s philosophy by relying more on the “spirit” rather than on the “letter” of Kant’s philosophy.\(^68\) But, according to Schelling, Kant himself did not understand the revolutionary idea behind his project. Thus, in reaction to the Tübingen theologians Schelling interpreted the “spirit” of Kant’s Practical Postulates as a demand

---

\(^66\) Here I have in mind Gottlob Christian Storr, Johann Friedrich Flatt, Friedrich Gottlieb Süskind, and Georg Christian Rapp.

\(^67\) For the most recent account of the importance of the Tübingen orthodox theologians and Carl Immanuel Diez’s critique of the Tübingen orthodoxy for the inception of German Idealism consider Henrich (2004).

to realize the Absolute, i.e., the unity of the realm of freedom and the realm of nature, through one’s own activity. On Schelling’s view, Spinoza accomplished this goal “dogmatically,” that is, as the unity of the realm of freedom and the realm of nature in the object in the face of which the subject must renounce its own individual freedom. In contrast to Spinoza, Schelling interprets Kant’s Postulates as the unity of the realm of freedom and the realm of nature in the subject that results in the unconditioned freedom of the ‘absolute I.’ This latter philosophical position that to Schelling represents an antipode to Spinoza he refers to as “criticism.”

Even though Schelling in the Letters does not even once mention Fichte, it is considered in the secondary literature that, given Schelling’s expressed enthusiasm for Fichte’s philosophy, by “criticism” Schelling has in mind Fichte’s philosophical system. Commentators are surprised that Schelling’s solution to the unity of the realm of nature and the realm of freedom in the activity of the ‘absolute I’ resembles the practical part of Fichte’s Grundlage that Schelling did not even have a chance to read at the time of composing the Letters. While to these commentators this is an “astonishing similarity between the trains of thought of these two philosophers,” to me this is suggestive of the fact that again in the Letters Schelling continues his focus on the concept of creative subjectivity that started as early as his reading of Plato in 1792. The novelty of the Letters, however, consists in the fact that Schelling’s discussion of the ‘absolute I’ includes again the aesthetic context he had not considered since his Essay on Poets, 1792.

---

69 Spinoza’s philosophy appealed to Schelling also because of Spinoza’s own defense of philosophy against the theologians of his time, the situation with which Schelling himself could identify. See Pieper (1982), p. 22.

In the *Letters* Schelling writes:

If we consider the idea of a moral God from this aesthetic side, we can pronounce judgment quickly: whenever we accept that idea we lose the proper principle of aesthetics. For the thought of taking a stand against the world loses all greatness the moment I put a higher being between the world and myself, the moment a guardian is necessary to keep the world within bounds. 71

Schelling is not explicit about whom he has in mind in the above passage. However, in Chapter Three of this dissertation I have shown that for Kant the beauty of both art and nature is a symbol of morality insofar as through aesthetic Ideas the beauty of art and nature indirectly schematizes the supersensible conditions of the highest good and, thus, serves as a source of moral motivation. Therefore, in the above passage I take Schelling to be referring to and ultimately rejecting the feature of Kant’s aesthetics I described in Chapter Three of this dissertation. What Kant took to be the significance of beauty—i.e., its role of representing nature as cooperative with our moral ends through the assistance of the supernatural God—for Schelling is to “lose the proper principle of aesthetics.”

As an alternative to Kant’s aesthetics Schelling suggests the following:

True art, or rather, the divine [theion] in art, is an inward principle that creates its own material from within and all-powerfully opposes any sheer mechanism, any aggregation of stuff from the outside lacking inner order. This inward principle we lose simultaneously with the intellectual intuition of the world, an intuition which arises in us by means of an instantaneous unification of two opposing principles and is lost when neither the contest nor the unification is any longer possible for us. (DK, 157, 285) 72

---


72 It is possible that in this passage Schelling is indirectly arguing against Fichte. By “inward principle” in the passage Schelling might have in mind Fichte’s first unconditional principle of self-consciousness that Fichte, later in the *Second Introduction*
For Kant, a genius had a special capacity of purposively structuring his imagination so that the free harmony of imagination and understanding served as a standard for genius’s judgment for choosing and ordering the particulars into a work of art that would exhibit originality as well as a purposive form that had the capacity of evoking the free harmony of the faculties in the observer. For Schelling, the production of “true art” is not based on the principle of purposiveness but, rather, on the intellectual intuition of genius that arises “upon unification of two opposing principles,” i.e., the principle of nature (the mechanical principle) and the principle of reason (the teleological principle). Although for Kant teleological and mechanical principles pertain to his Critique of Teleological Judgment and his discussion of what is necessary for our knowledge of nature as a system and our knowledge of natural ends, Schelling in the above passage applies mechanical and teleological principles to an aesthetic context. Schelling seems to suggest that imagination, a human faculty that belongs to our sensible nature, is governed by mechanical principles. However, the creative production of a genius has the capacity to purposively order imagination, or to structure it in accordance with a principle of reason.

In Chapter Three I argued that for Kant the principle of reason, which genius intuits and which gives the “rule” to his work of art [or what Kant in his definition of genius calls “nature” that “gives the rule to a work of art” (KdU, AA V, 307)] is the Idea of nature’s supersensible substrate. Schelling, here—like Kant and like his own interpretation of Plato in his Essay on Poets—refers to the principle that orders imagination of a genius as “an inward principle […] of the world.” However, unlike Kant,

to the Science of Knowledge (1797), describes as an intellectual intuition analogous to Kant’s notion of pure apperception.
Schelling claims that truly creative production of a genius is based on the intellectual intuition of this “inward principle.” In other words, on Schelling’s view, in the creative production of a genius the principle that governs imagination and the principle of reason are no longer in opposition. What for Kant was a purposive harmony of genius’s sensible nature (imagination) and genius’s rational nature, Schelling replaces with genius’s special capacity of intellectual intuition of an Idea, a synthetic universal, which does not purposively harmonize but instead produces its own particular, or its own sensible intuition. Because the particular, or that which belongs to our sensible nature (i.e., imagination), is something that is derived from the synthetic universal in intellectual intuition, there can no longer be any opposition between the natural and the mechanical on the one hand, and something rational and purposive on the other hand.

Thus, for Schelling in order to obtain the unity of the realm of freedom and the realm of nature “reason itself would have to create a new realm there where its knowledge ceases, that is, from [being] a merely cognitive [reason] it would have to turn into a creative reason [schöpferische Vernunft], from theoretical reason into practical” (DK, 311, 175). In other words, genius “make[s] the absolute, which could not be an object of knowledge, an object of action […] by which the absolute is realized” (DK, 333, 190-1). For Schelling, this “action” is not just any kind of action but, rather, the fruits of this action “must be preserved for the highest in art” (DK, 336, 192). Thus, for the early Schelling, the unity of practical and theoretical reason is a sporadic achievement in history reserved for special individuals rather than a basis for philosophy in general as it seems to be for Schelling’s later Philosophy of Identity. That the unity of theoretical and practical reason in art is reserved for special individuals is confirmed by Schelling’s
remarks on the esoteric nature of philosophy: “For the worthy she [nature] has reserved a philosophy that becomes esoteric by itself because it cannot be learned […] This philosophy is a symbol for the union of free spirits, a symbol by which they all recognize each other, and one that they need not hide, since for them alone it is intelligible, whereas for others it will be an eternal riddle” (DK, 341, 196). We shall see in the proceeding section that in the System of Transcendental Idealism Schelling continues his thoughts on the genius’s creative reason as a vehicle of unity between theoretical and practical reason although, unlike in the Letters, he remains ambiguous as to whether a genius is a “keystone” or a “capstone” of philosophy.  

5.6 Schelling’s System of Transcendental Idealism (1800)—Art as the Organon and Document of Philosophy

In light of the development of Schelling’s early thought I outlined in this chapter, the concluding section of Schelling’s 1800 System should not come as a surprise. Schelling’s 1800 System is a systematic history of self-consciousness. The history of self-consciousness starts with the lowest degree of self-consciousness, which Schelling identifies with “nothing else but an act of self intuition as such.” This the most

73 I thank Karl Ameriks for suggesting the metaphor of a “keystone” versus a “capstone” as a way of aptly expressing the distinction between two different roles the creative reason of genius can play in philosophy for Schelling.

74 In Greek to organon means an instrument or an organ.

75 Schelling, System of Transcendental Idealism (1800). Hereinafter STI. The references will be first to Schelling, Werke (1856), followed by the page numbers in Heath’s translation, 630, 233.
primitive level of consciousness Schelling takes over from Fichte, according to whom an immediate knowledge of oneself originates in intellectual intuition. The second degree of self-consciousness Schelling conceives as a degree in which the self is not immediately intuited in intellectual intuition as an object but becomes an object for the self mediated through sensation. In the third degree of self-consciousness the self is the object to oneself qua sensing and in the fourth degree of self-consciousness as purposively productive. In the fifth stage of the development of self-consciousness, the self is the object to oneself as the being that has the will and the capacity to choose between acting in accordance with the moral law or in accordance with one’s inclinations. This state of self-consciousness, in which the self understands itself as a free being, is still not the highest degree of self-consciousness. The latter can be accomplished only with the creative intuition of genius and its art in which one intuits oneself as a complete subjectivity, that is, a subjectivity that no longer is restricted by the opposition between freedom and nature, subject and object.

According to Schelling’s *System*, self-consciousness consists in the activity of the unconscious and conscious. On Schelling’s view, our products are on the one hand products of our freedom and are consciously brought about and on the other hand, our products are similar to the products of nature and are brought about by an unconscious mechanical causation. The end of self-consciousness is to achieve the identity of the purposive, intentional, causation on the one hand and the mechanical causation on the other hand and, furthermore, to understand itself as this identity. The aesthetic production of a genius unites the free, rational, and purposive with the unconscious, mechanical, or sensible aspect of our agency. The creative activity of a genius demonstrates the
involuntary and unconscious nature of its production, that is, the fact that the creative
production of an artistic genius is motivated by an inspiration, or an “irresistible urge
[unwiderstechlicher Trieb]” (STI, 613, 222). The unconscious aspect of genius’s
creativity is revealed in the fact that the meaning of her product surpasses her own
comprehension. An artist-genius is compelled to “say or depict things which he does not
fully understand himself, and whose meaning is infinite” (STI, 618, 223). An artist-
genius also demonstrates a conscious aspect of his production because the production of
an artist-genius involves the artist’s reflection on how his work relates to tradition, and it
also presupposes some skill. (STI, 618, 223) But, unlike ordinary consciousness, genius
has the capacity to unify the mechanical and the purposive elements of its production in a
work of art.

What Schelling in his System identifies as the unconscious aspect of the creative
production of a genius artist is, as we have seen, what Kant in his definition of genius
identifies with the activity of “nature” in genius’ production. The fact that on Kant’s view
a genius cannot summarize the steps involved in the production of his work (i.e., that the
originality of the work of a genius surpasses any skill, and that for Kant the meaning of a
genius’s work can never be fully exhausted even by the genius himself) is echoed in
Schelling’s discussion of the unconscious aspect of genius’s production. We have also
seen in Schelling’s Essay on Poets an interest in Plato’s theomania, which Schelling
related to poetic enthusiasm [Begeisterung]. Enthusiasm [Begeisterung] is an example of
the extension of human reason that Schelling also discusses in his Commentary on the
Timaeus as the necessary condition for the creative production of the Demiurge and
which later in Of the I and the Letters will turn into an intellectual intuition of the
‘absolute I.’ Also, just like the creative production of the Demiurge that “transfers [überträgt] the subjective to the objective,” and the activity of the “creative reason [schöpferische Vernunft]” in Of the I and the Letters that facilitates the unity of the realm of freedom and the realm of nature, the activity of a genius in Schelling’s System also makes possible the unity of the realm of nature and the realm of freedom, or in the words of Schelling’s System, the unity of the unconscious and conscious. However, new to Schelling’s System is the special relation between art and philosophy that follows as the outcome of the unity of the realm of freedom and the realm of nature provided in genius’s work of art.

Philosophical consciousness, on Schelling’s view, is grounded on the opposition between the unconscious and conscious activity and, unlike the creative production of a genius, philosophical production does not have the capacity to achieve an identity of the conscious and unconscious. According to Schelling, the vehicle of philosophical production is intellectual intuition. Through intellectual intuition a philosopher constructs theories and concepts about the nature of self-consciousness. But the philosopher is able to present this knowledge about self-consciousness “in a merely subjective fashion” (STI 629, 232). In other words, the philosopher’s theories and concepts about the dual nature of self-consciousness—on the one hand, its intentional and conscious, and, on the other hand, its natural and unconscious aspect—lack objective reality and a proper justification of their meaning. The philosopher’s intellectual intuition gains its objective reality in the genius’s aesthetic intuition. In the work of a genius the dual nature of self-consciousness is no longer a theory or a concept in the philosopher’s consciousness but is, rather, manifested in a concrete object, a work of art. This is the reason why Schelling claims
that aesthetic intuition is “intellectual intuition become objective” (STI, 627, 231). An artist-genius in her work reconciles what to a philosopher was an object of infinite striving, i.e., an artist-genius reconciles the unconscious and conscious elements of self-consciousness.

Therefore, for Schelling, art “is at once the only true and eternal instrument [*Organon*] and document [*Document*] of philosophy” (STI, 627, 231). The art of a genius is a “document” of philosophy because it serves as an objective reality of the philosopher’s intellectual intuition, a piece of evidence and a proper realization of the philosopher’s strivings. Thus, genius is a “capstone” of philosophy because the objective realization of the unity of the unconscious and conscious element of self-consciousness, which completes Schelling’s *System of Transcendental Idealism*, depends on a rare occurrence of a very special individual in history. But Schelling also seems to suggest that genius is a “keystone” of philosophy insofar as the art of genius is the “organon,” or the instrument of philosophy: “art is paramount [*das Höchste*] to the philosopher, precisely because it opens to him, as it were, the holy of holies, where burns in eternal and original unity, as if in a single flame, that which in nature and history is rent asunder, and in life and action, no less than in thought must forever fly apart” (STI, 628, 231). But in the *System* Schelling remains ambiguous regarding the implications this may have for the practice of philosophy. In the title of Part Six of the *System*, “Deduction of a Universal Organ of Philosophy, or: Essentials of the Philosophy of Art According to the Principles of Transcendental Idealism”76 he seems to suggest that the art of genius is the instrument of philosophy insofar as it is the object of the philosophy of art, which

---

76 My emphasis.
interprets self-consciousness, the condition of philosophical practice, in its objective form. But he also seems to suggest that the art of an artist-genius is a model for the philosophical practice insofar as the philosopher should be imitating aesthetic intuition of an artist-genius:

But now if it is art alone which can succeed in objectifying with universal validity what the philosopher is able to present in a merely subjective fashion, there is one more conclusion yet to be drawn. Philosophy was born and nourished by in the infancy of knowledge, and with it all those sciences it has guided toward perfection; we may thus expect them, on completion, to flow back like so many individual streams into the universal ocean of poetry from which they took their source. (STI, 629, 232)

By suggesting that philosophy should imitate an artist-genius, Schelling comes close to Novalis and Schlegel. By suggesting that philosophy should interpret the works of an artist-genius, Schelling anticipates his later Philosophy of Identity, according to which, in contrast to his early phase, the unity of the Ideal and Real, or the Absolute, can become the object of philosophical knowledge.78

In sum, Schelling’s early reading of Plato is consistent with the major themes in Kant’s passages on genius in the Critique of Judgment. However, already in his early reception of Plato Schelling is much more focused on the intuitive aspect of creative

77 Düsing insightfully suggests that there is a parallel between Schelling’s claim that the art of an artist-genius is an “organon” of philosophy and the philosophical tradition of the rationalists before Kant, according to which logic was regarded as the “organon” of philosophy understood as a theory of forms and laws of pure thinking. According to the rationalists’ philosophical tradition before Kant, logic as the “organon” is a part of philosophy. Similarly, according to Schelling, the art of an artist-genius is also a part of philosophy insofar as it is the object of the philosophy of art. See Düsing (1988), p. 210.

78 See also Düsing (1988), p. 213.
production and does not show any interest in Kant’s claim that genius’s products must meet certain epistemic standards. Schelling will soon transform the intuition exhibited by Kant’s genius into an intellectual intuition. In his System Schelling writes:

For since the idea of the whole cannot in fact become clear save through its development in the individual parts, while those parts, on the other hand, are possible only through the idea of the whole, there seems to be a contradiction here which is possible to solve only through an act of genius, i.e., an unexpected concurrence of the unconscious with the conscious activity. (STI, 624, 228)

In other words, genius has a special capacity for intuiting the Idea from which he derives the particulars. Thus, Schelling eliminates Kant’s Idea of the purposive harmony of genius’s cognitive faculties. He accomplishes this elimination by uniting in intellectual intuition the opposition between the purposiveness of reason and the mechanism of sensibility. This unification is possible because in intellectual intuition sensibility is derived from the Idea of reason and is not given in experience.

With the elimination of the principle of purposiveness, the genius of Schelling’s 1800 System, just like the ‘absolute I’ of the Of the I and the Letters, is no longer a free subject: “Now that which was utterly impossible through freedom is to become possible through the act here postulated, though as the price of this the latter must cease to be a free act, and becomes one in which freedom and necessity are absolutely united” (STI, 614, 220). By overcoming the opposition between nature and freedom, and by becoming absolutely free, Schelling’s genius acts from the necessity of its own nature. Thus, while for Kant a genius was a “possessor” but also was “possessed” in that one aspect of its creative production was not simply an act of reasoning (although still an act of reason),
Schelling’s genius, through aspiration to become an absolute “possessor,” ends up being simply “possessed.”
AFTERWORD

My aim in these final brief remarks is not to summarize the main points of this study but, rather, to give a brief evaluation of its results and to suggest a direction of its future development.

Contemporary discussions in value theory emphasize theoretical, practical and aesthetic sources of normativity. This study, even if still limited to the field of aesthetics, contributes to this discussion by emphasizing the importance of creativity and creative agency as one of the sources of normativity.1 According to Kant’s model of creative agency, the sources of normativity are within the subject but they also transcend the subject. Chapter Three of this dissertation demonstrated that the autonomy of a Kantian genius is best described as that of someone who is a “possessor” while at the same time being “possessed.” In other words, Kant’s genius is a “possessor” because the epistemic and practical norms its works embody are the products of a genius’s own judgment. However, Kant’s genius is also “possessed” insofar as the source of the epistemic and

---

1 See Hans Joas’s recent contribution to this topic in the field of sociology. See Joas (1996).
practical norms of a genius’s works is also in its passive intuition of the Idea of nature as a system, an Idea that ultimately implies for Kant a supersensible substrate.

In the conclusion to Chapter Five, I have also argued that, when compared to Kant’s conception of genius, Schelling’s speculative extension of Kant’s conception of creative agency should be considered a *regress* rather than a *progress*. Kant’s view of the autonomy of a creative agency that is best described as both the possessor and the possessed was unsatisfactory to the *young* Schelling,² who soon argued for a subjectivity that is absolutely free, or an absolute possessor. But the problem of Schelling’s conception of subjectivity that acts out of necessity of its own nature is that it can never assert that its actions are properly its own. Furthermore, by eliminating the principle of purposiveness and by substituting for it a genius’s aesthetic judgment that takes the form of an intellectual intuition, Schelling argued for a unity of freedom and nature that in fact can be objectively realized only in the works of a genius. The problem is that for Schelling, the philosophical realization of the unity of freedom and nature can only be an object of infinite striving even though this unity in some sense is presupposed in any thinking. Thus, the knowledge of an artistic genius is superior to the knowledge of a philosopher, but the works of Schelling’s early conception of genius leave us bereft of any rational means of discussing their content and their significance.³

These shortcomings of Schelling’s ambitious conception of creative agency notwithstanding, my aim was not to argue that Kant’s conception of creative subjectivity

² It is important to note that this claim is restricted to the young Schelling because it may be controversial when Schelling’s overall work is taken into consideration.

³ See on this point also Pippin (1989), p. 64.
is without any need of improvement. Karl Ameriks has argued that Kant’s recourse to the “fact of reason” is somewhat unfortunate and disappointing because he failed to provide a deduction for the absolute freedom on which he put so much emphasis.\(^4\) Thus, even though this dogmatic conception of freedom in Kant’s metaphysics is not mystical, because it is not an intuition of a particular but, rather, is similar to an intuition of a synthetic universal, or a principle, it has a “non-naturalistic ultimacy”\(^5\) that is typical for intuitionistic systems. In this respect, Kant’s “fact of reason” encouraged the return to dogmatic metaphysics in the philosophies of post-Kantians. A similar claim can be made in regard to, what on Kant’s view is, the special intuitive capacity of a genius. The special practical normativity of Kant’s genius and its special role in Kant’s moral teleology and his philosophy of history, is ultimately grounded in the genius’s special intuition of the noumenal. Even though for Kant a genius’s intuition is never an intuition of a particular but is the perception of a synthetic universal, it can ultimately be conceived Platonically and this way, as I have shown, Kant’s conception served as a catalyst for Schelling’s even more dogmatic Platonic reinterpretation of genius.

Perhaps these shortcomings of Kant’s theory of genius and the normativity embodied in its work can be eradicated if we conceive great works of art as evidences of an effort at understanding better what we take to be our justifying reasons within a particular social and historical context.\(^6\) Conceiving of the normativity embodied in the great works of art in social and historical terms would offer a possible proto-Hegelian

---


\(^6\) I am alluding to Robert Pippin’s interpretation of Hegel and his understanding of normativity as a “space of reasons.” See for example Pippin (2003), pp. 104-5.
solution to objection I raised to Kant at the end of Chapter Three, that is, the objection that the rules of an artistic genius should not be thought of as independent of their historical and social context. However, it will be impossible to give up entirely Kant’s noumenal dimension of creative subjectivity unless we are willing to concede that the only aesthetic experience we can have is a trivial one, or that the need for the great works of art is something that we have, in a Hegelian fashion, simply overcome.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Frank, Manfred and Zanetti, Véronique (1996a). Kants Schriften zur Ästhetik und Naturphilosophie, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, Frankfurt/Main.


(forthcoming). “Kant’s Dirty Laundry: Intellectual Intuition, Geometry, and German Idealist Responses to the Challenge of Naturalism.”


Grimm, Jacob and Grimm, Wilhelm (1897-). *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm*, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München.


