

Nicholas Dunn\*

# Kant on Judgment and Feeling

<https://doi.org/10.1515/kant-2024-2004>

**Abstract:** It is well known that Kant connects judgment and feeling in the third *Critique*. However, the precise relationship between these two faculties remains virtually unexplored, in large part due to the unpopularity of Kant’s faculty psychology. This paper considers why, for Kant, judgment and feeling go together, arguing that he had good philosophical reasons for forging this connection. The discussion begins by situating these faculties within Kant’s mature faculty psychology. While the ‘power of judgment’ [*Urteilkraft*] is fundamentally reflective, feeling [*Gefühl*] reveals itself as essentially non-discursive. Their systematic connection emerges through the principle of purposiveness [*Zweckmäßigkeit*], which the former legislates for the latter. I claim that we must understand this notion in terms of the suitability of the faculties for each other, as displayed in mere reflection. That is, we can only recognize the fitness of two things for each other through feeling, which, in turn, is the only way that we can engage in the activity of merely reflecting judgment. I conclude by gesturing at an even further way in which judgment and feeling are related, based on their mutual role in orienting all of the faculties of the human mind.

**Keywords:** Judgment; Feeling; Reflection; Faculty Psychology

## 1 Introduction

Kant’s faculty psychology has been the subject of much criticism, especially from those who remain wary of its seemingly problematic ontological commitments. Most famously, P.F. Strawson derided Kant’s “imaginary subject of transcendental psychology”, urging us towards a ‘faculty-free’ way of understanding Kant’s account of the human mind.<sup>1</sup> While Kant’s talk of mental faculties, capacities, and powers has had its defenders<sup>2</sup>, interpreters have generally not focused on this aspect of Kant. This is especially true for the faculty of feeling, which, up until very recently,

---

1 Strawson, P.F.: *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*. London 1966, 32.

2 See: Deleuze, Gilles: *Kant’s Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties* [1967]. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London 1984; Kitcher, Patricia: *Kant’s Transcendental Psychology*.

---

\*Kontakt: Nicholas Dunn, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; ndunn@bard.edu

has received almost no direct attention.<sup>3</sup> Even less attention has been given to Kant's decision to align each of the three 'higher cognitive' faculties with one of the three 'fundamental' faculties – and, specifically, to have the former provide *a priori* principles for the latter.<sup>4</sup> Thus, while it is well known that Kant fills a gap in his Critical system by connecting feeling with judgment in the third *Critique*, the precise relationship between feeling and judgment remains insufficiently explored.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, one could be forgiven for suspecting that Kant's rather late decision to link up feeling and judgment was less the result of a deliberate philosophical conviction regarding the nature and relation of these faculties and more an ad hoc decision driven by an obsession with systematicity. Put another way: one might think that an overarching concern with making everything fit together resulted in some parts being more tenuously related than others. Such a suspicion would at least explain why the relationship between the capacity to judge and the capacity to feel has been almost entirely neglected. This is especially unfortunate given that Kant saw his pairing of judgment and feeling as the key to the completion of his Critical system.<sup>6</sup>

My aim in this paper, then, is to consider why, for Kant, judgment and feeling go together. To be precise: I will examine the relationship between the higher cognitive faculty that Kant calls the 'power of judgment' [*Urteilkraft*] and the fun-

---

ogy. New York 1990; Wuerth, Julian, "Kant's Map of the Mind". In: *Kant on Mind, Action, and Ethics*. Oxford 2014, 189–235.

3 *Kant and the Faculty of Feeling*. Ed. Kelly Sorensen and Diane Williamson. Cambridge 2018.

4 The most recent exception to this is Frierson's contribution to the edited volume on feeling just mentioned. For Frierson, the most important innovation related to the genesis of the third *Critique* is Kant's realization of a way to use psychological taxonomies for making new philosophical discoveries – namely, lining up higher cognitive faculties with fundamental faculties in order to discover new *a priori* principles (Frierson, Patrick, "A New Sort of A Priori Principles: Psychological Taxonomies and the Origin of the Third Critique". In: Sorensen and Williamson, op. cit., 109). While Frierson invokes Kant's specific realization that judgment provides a law for feeling, he does not take up this relationship in any detail (117–119, 123–128). For other recent discussions of the relation between the higher cognitive faculties and the three fundamental faculties, see: Pollok, Konstantin: *Kant's Theory of Normativity: Exploring the Space of Reason*. Cambridge 2017; Wuerth, op. cit., 2014.

5 This is especially true in the Anglophone literature. The situation is slightly better in the German scholarship, which has one monograph on the topic (Wieland, Wolfgang von: *Urteil und Gefühl. Kants Theorie der Urteilkraft*. Göttingen 2001).

6 Kant, Immanuel: *Critique of the Power of Judgment* [1790], AA 5: 170. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge 2000. Hereafter abbreviated KU. English translations of Kant are from the Cambridge Editions of the Works of Immanuel Kant. Kant's works are cited according to the Akademie Ausgabe pagination (volume number: page number) with the appropriate abbreviation (as noted in each case) – with the exception of the *Critique of Pure Reason* for which I provide the standard A/B pagination.

damental faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure [*Gefühl der Lust und Unlust*]. I contend that there are both interpretive and philosophical reasons for recognizing a natural suitability between feeling and judgment. In other words, Kant had genuine reasons for forging this connection *and* these reasons are philosophically compelling. To this end, I begin by laying out the structure of Kant's mature faculty psychology, isolating Kant's decision to link judgment and feeling (§ 2). I consider these two faculties in turn. First, I highlight the fundamentally reflective nature of the power of judgment. Then, I demonstrate that feeling is an essentially non-discursive capacity. With this in place, I raise the question of the relation between the reflective and the non-discursive. I show that judgment and feeling belong together because they share a specific kind of subjectivity, which I spell out in terms of the principle that the power of judgment provides for feeling: namely, subjective purposiveness (§ 3). I suggest that we understand the notion of subjective purposiveness in terms of the suitability of one thing for another, seen most clearly in the harmony of the imagination and understanding in mere reflection. That is, we can only recognize the fitness of two things (e.g., faculties and their representations) for each other through feeling, which, in turn, is the only way that we can engage in the activity of merely reflecting judgment. I conclude by gesturing at an even further way in which judgment and feeling are related, based on their mutual role in orienting all of the faculties of the human mind (§ 4). On my view, all of the exercises of our capacity to judge are grounded in the basic need of human beings to feel at home in the world – cognitively, morally, and aesthetically.

## 2 'Something Systematic': Feeling and Judgment in Kant's Critical Faculty Psychology

### 2.1 Systematic legislation for the fundamental faculties

We can begin by situating both the faculty of feeling and the power of judgment within Kant's overall conception of the mind and its faculties. To do so requires looking at two different trichotomies: on the one hand, what Kant calls the 'fundamental' faculties of the mind, and, on the other, what he describes as the 'higher cognitive' faculties. Kant defines a fundamental faculty [*Grundvermögen*] in terms of its inability to be "reduced" to a further faculty, and contends that there are three: "We can trace all faculties of the human mind without exception back to these three: the faculty of cognition, the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and the

faculty of desire”.<sup>7</sup> Kant appeals to the distinct kinds of representations generated by each as a reason for the irreducibility of all of the faculties to a single, fundamental faculty. Notably, for our purposes, the kinds of representations which issue from the faculty of feeling have a “relation merely to the subject”, rather than an object that we either cognize or desire.<sup>8</sup>

Within the first of these fundamental faculties – the faculty of cognition – Kant makes a further threefold distinction – namely, between its higher powers, or sub-faculties [*obere kenntniß Vermögen*]: understanding, the power of judgment, and reason.<sup>9</sup> They are defined as follows: the understanding [*Verstand*] is “the faculty for the cognition of the general (of rules)”; the power of judgment [*Urtheilskraft*] is “the faculty for the subsumption of the particular under the general”; and, reason [*Vernunft*] is “the faculty for the determination of the particular through the general (for the derivation from principles)”.<sup>10</sup> Kant finds that this exhaustively captures the higher, or spontaneous, aspect of our faculty of cognition, referring to this set of definitions as a “systematic representation of the faculty for thinking”.<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting that while this trichotomy was already in place in the first *Critique*, Kant thought that only two of the higher cognitive faculties (understanding and reason) yielded *a priori* principles.<sup>12</sup> It is for this reason that he initially planned to write only two critiques, resulting in the universal laws of nature (the categories) and freedom (the moral law, or categorical imperative), respectively.

Kant’s realization of the necessity of writing a third critique came rather late – only a few weeks after sending off the second *Critique* to the publisher. In his famous letter to Reinhold, written in the spring of 1787, Kant describes recognizing “something systematic” – namely, that each of the three fundamental faculties of the human mind have their own *a priori* principles.<sup>13</sup> Kant had initially held that a critique of aesthetic judgment was impossible, since he took feeling to be entirely subjective and thus incapable of grounding universally valid knowledge claims.<sup>14</sup> Kant also indicates that he had previously thought that his first two critiques (of theoretical and practical reason, respectively) would be sufficient for the task of

---

7 Kant, Immanuel: “First Introduction” to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, AA 20: 205–206. Hereafter abbreviated EEKU. Cf. EEKU, AA 20: 245–246; KU AA 05: 177–178; Kant, Immanuel: *Correspondence*, AA 10: 514. Trans. By A. Zweig. Cambridge 1999. Hereafter abbreviated Corr.

8 EEKU, AA 20: 206.

9 EEKU, AA 20: 201.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Kant, Immanuel: *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781/1787], A 130–131/B 169. Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Cambridge 1998. Hereafter abbreviated KrV.

13 Corr, AA 10: 513–516.

14 KrV, A 21.

providing a unified and complete system of philosophy. But, after having established the reality of the domains of nature and freedom in the first two *Critiques*, there remained “an incalculable gulf [...] just as if there were so many different worlds”.<sup>15</sup> To combine these two parts of philosophy into a systematic whole was the final task, and it was a job that, he came to believe, could only be performed through an analysis of the faculty of mind that had not yet undergone critique: the power of judgment. Indeed, Kant concludes the Preface to the third *Critique* by declaring: “[W]ith this I bring my entire critical enterprise to an end”.<sup>16</sup>

The systematicity that Kant describes in his letter to Reinhold is laid out for the reader of the third *Critique* in form of a chart near the end of its Introduction<sup>17</sup>:

All the faculties of the mind	Faculty of cognition	<i>A priori</i> principles	Application to
Faculty of Cognition	Understanding	Lawfulness	Nature
Feeling of Pleasure and Displeasure	Power of Judgment	Purposiveness	Art
Faculty of Desire	Reason	Final End	Freedom

Kant correlates each of the fundamental faculties with a higher cognitive faculty in the following way: the latter provides the normative principle that governs the former. His discovery, then, amounted to the realization that the power of judgment, just like the other two higher cognitive faculties, yielded an *a priori* principle – and thus, that the fundamental faculty of feeling pleasure and displeasure [*Gefühl der Lust und Unlust*], just like the faculties of cognition and desire, also had its own principles. Kant describes the special, or transcendental, principle that the power of judgment provides for feeling as ‘purposiveness’ [*Zweckmäßigkeit*].

It is the precise relationship between feeling and the power of judgment that is our present concern. Within their respective trichotomies, feeling and judgment are both described as “intermediary” faculties.<sup>18</sup> This seems to be why Kant did not, at first, assign a special principle to them or think of them as bearing on each other. But it is also what ends up giving him the hunch that, given their similar mediating roles, they might have their own special connection.<sup>19</sup> In order to be in a position to consider this connection, we must first get a better grasp of the nature of each of these faculties. Only after this can we consider why Kant put them together.

<sup>15</sup> KU, AA 05: 175–176.

<sup>16</sup> KU, AA 05: 170.

<sup>17</sup> KU, AA 05: 196–198; cf. EEKU, AA 20: 245–246.

<sup>18</sup> KU, AA 05: 168, 177–178; EEKU, AA 20: 207.

<sup>19</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 202; KU, AA 05: 178–179.

## 2.2 The Autonomy of Reflection: Kant's concept of the Power of Judgment

In the first *Critique*, Kant defines the power of judgment in general as “the faculty of subsuming under rules, i.e., determining whether something stands under a given rule or not”.<sup>20</sup> Kant recognizes the need to distinguish the understanding, as the faculty of rules, from a faculty that is concerned with applying rules. Insofar as rules are inherently general, which is to say, can be applied to more than one case, there must be a separate faculty that is responsible for recognizing when a rule applies in a given case. Importantly, this faculty cannot itself be governed by rules that would direct it in its application of rules, for this would only generate a regress problem (there would need to be rules for those rules, and so on, *ad infinitum*). For this reason, Kant refers to the power of judgment as a “talent” or skill, which “cannot be taught but only practiced”.<sup>21</sup> But, at this point, Kant does not assign to it its own principle.

Kant provides a similar definition of the power of judgment in the third *Critique*: it is “the faculty for thinking the particular as contained under the universal”.<sup>22</sup> However, Kant now makes a distinction between two uses of this faculty, which he refers to as ‘determining’ [*bestimmend*] and ‘reflecting’ [*reflectirend*]. The distinction hinges on whether or not the universal is given. If it is, then judgment “merely subsumes” the particular under it; if it is not, then judgment must seek one out.<sup>23</sup> We can take determining judgment to involve something like predication, that is, attributing a property to a thing. For example, I might possess the concepts ‘red’ and ‘coffee mug’, and say of some object before me that it is a red coffee mug. However, the first time I saw a coffee mug, I lacked the concept necessary for seeing it *as a coffee mug*. It was only after reflecting on this particular object (and presumably other coffee mugs) that I arrived at the concept ‘coffee mug’. The relationship between the determining and reflecting power of judgment is not well understood and raises a number of questions about the nature of the power of judgment (e.g., how these two uses or functions relate to each other, whether one takes priority over the other as opposed to being on par with each other, and so on). What we should specifically want to know at present is how to understand the power of judgment as the higher cognitive faculty that Kant connects with the faculty of feeling.

Kant holds that it is only the *reflecting* power of judgment that is capable of both undergoing critique and producing an *a priori* principle: “a critique of the

---

<sup>20</sup> KrV, A 133/B 172.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> KU, AA 05: 179.

<sup>23</sup> KU, AA 05: 179.

power of judgment [...] must be grounded on the distinction that it is not the determining but only the reflecting power of judgment that has its own principles *a priori*”.<sup>24</sup> To appreciate this claim, we must consider what it means for something to be a higher cognitive faculty. For it is precisely because Kant attends to the status of the power of judgment as a higher cognitive faculty in its own right that he realizes it too legislates for a fundamental faculty. By the time he writes the third *Critique*, Kant holds that if something is a higher cognitive faculty then it has its own *a priori* principle – discovered through a critique of this faculty. Moreover, he thinks that a higher cognitive faculty is autonomous, because it gives itself its own law.<sup>25</sup>

Shortly after distinguishing determining and reflecting judgment, Kant defines ‘reflection’ as follows: “To reflect [...] is to compare and to hold together given representations either with others or with one’s faculty of cognition”.<sup>26</sup> The structure of this activity is to be understood in terms of what Kant calls the free play of the imagination and understanding.<sup>27</sup> This is importantly different from the way that imagination and understanding relate in a determining judgment, i.e., cognition of an object. In that case, the understanding provides a universal (a concept of an object), and the imagination apprehends the sensible given in a way that allows it to be subsumed under it. However, in the absence of a universal, these two faculties attempt to harmonize freely; the imagination attempts to connect what it combines in intuition with the understanding’s demand for lawfulness, or conceptualization. In other words, since the understanding is not instructing the imagination on how to synthesize what is given, the latter faculty strives to take up the world in such a way that it could agree with the former’s desire to “advance from intuition to concepts”.<sup>28</sup>

---

24 EEKU, AA 20: 248. Note that there is both a stronger and a weaker version of this claim. On the strong version, the reflecting power of judgment is *identical* with the power of judgment as such. Determining judgment would “not in fact properly belong to the power of judgment at all” (KU, AA 05: 361); instead, it would be a judgment arising from the cooperation of reflecting judgment with either the understanding or reason (whichever faculty was providing the law). A weaker version simply holds that the relevant aspect of the power of judgment at issue in the third *Critique* is the reflecting power of judgment. This view says nothing about the place of determining judgment within Kant’s conception of the power of judgment as a whole. I argue elsewhere for the stronger view (Dunn, Nicholas, “Subsuming ‘determining’ under ‘reflecting’: Kant’s power of judgment, reconsidered”. *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 2021). However, nothing that I say here depends on it. For the rest of the paper, then, I operate only on the basis of the weaker view – which is fairly uncontroversial, given Kant’s own remarks to this effect (e.g., his description of the text as “The critique of the reflecting power of judgment” [EEKU, AA 20: 251]).

25 KU, AA 05: 196; EEKU, AA 20: 225.

26 KU, AA 20: 211.

27 KU, AA 05: 217.

28 KU, AA 05: 287.

Now, it is reflection that Kant considers autonomous.<sup>29</sup> Kant says of the paradigmatic case of reflecting judgment – aesthetic judgment – that it must be based “in a rule of the higher faculty of cognition, in this case, namely, in the rule of the power of judgment, which is thus legislative with regard to the conditions of reflection *a priori*, and demonstrates autonomy”.<sup>30</sup> Kant introduces a special term to mark the distinctive self-legislation of the power of judgment: *heautonomy*. The reflecting power of judgment “prescribes a law, not to nature (as autonomy), but [solely] to itself (as heautonomy)”.<sup>31</sup>

Reflecting judgment, Kant says, “can only give itself such a transcendental principle as a law, and cannot derive it from anywhere else (for then it would be the determining power of judgment)”.<sup>32</sup> Kant calls determining judgment ‘heteronomous’ because its law is always given from elsewhere: it “operates only [...] under laws of another faculty (the understanding [or reason])”.<sup>33</sup> Here, the concept of the object “plays the role of the principle”; this is what it means for the universal to be given.<sup>34</sup> Kant goes as far as to say that determining judgment does “not in fact properly belong to the power of judgment at all”.<sup>35</sup> We can instead think of it as a judgment arising from the cooperation of reflecting judgment with either the understanding or reason, assisting them in applying their principles.

The autonomous nature of the activity of reflecting judgment thus consists in the fact that it must “subsume under a law that is not yet given and which in fact is only a principle for reflection on objects”.<sup>36</sup> In such an instance, I hold my representations up to each other in order to perceive whether they belong together – just as they would if there were a determinate concept present. With no discursive rule at our disposal, we judge only by means of a feeling – that what the imagination freely puts together agrees with the demands of the understanding. With a

---

29 I should note that in this paper I am using ‘reflection’ and ‘reflecting judgment’ interchangeably. Some commentators have suggested that there are reasons against doing this, but I cannot discuss this matter here. As far as I can tell, nothing I argue for in what remains hinges on this.

30 EEKU, AA 20: 225.

31 KU, AA 05: 185–186; EEKU, AA 20: 225. According to Floyd, this term, which is presumably invented by Kant, adds the Greek definite article *he* to *auto* (the latter, meaning ‘self’) in order to capture the reflexive or self-referring dimension (Floyd, Juliet: “Heautonomy: Kant on Reflective Judgment and Systematicity”. In: *Kants Ästhetik/Kant's Aesthetics/L'esthétique de Kant*. Ed. Herman Parret. Berlin 1998).

32 KU, AA 05: 180.

33 EEKU, AA 20: 248; cf. KU, AA 05: 183, 389.

34 *Ibid.*

35 KU, AA 05: 361.

36 KU, AA 05: 385.



better sense of the power of judgment at issue – namely, as reflecting – we can now turn to a consideration of the sense of feeling that is crucial to its exercise.

### 2.3 Feeling as a Non-Discursive Mode of Thought

Kant describes aesthetic judgment as “a judgment of mere reflection grounded on a principle *a priori*”.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Kant states that reflection “requires a principle just as much as determining” lest it be “arbitrary and blind”.<sup>38</sup> However, there is something paradoxical about the idea of there being a rule for reflection. Kant observes that there are “great difficulties” involved in the search for a principle for the power of judgment, as a faculty that is not governed by determinate rules but “concerned only with their application”.<sup>39</sup> The power of judgment cannot be bound by an objective principle, otherwise “yet another power of judgment would be required in order to be able to decide whether it is a case of the rule or not”.<sup>40</sup> Kant recognizes this as early as the first *Critique*, but stops short of assigning to the power of judgment a special principle of its own – leaving its operation ultimately mysterious. In the next section, we will consider this principle in more detail.

One might be tempted to have a view of the relationship of feeling to judgment according to which feeling is involved in aesthetic judgment, but does not play a role in the kinds of judgments that are at issue in the first and second *Critique* (theoretical and practical, respectively). After all, Kant says that the determining ground of an aesthetic judgment is a feeling, while that of a cognitive judgment is a concept. Such a view follows from thinking that these latter two types of judgments are strictly determining, and, consequently, that reflecting judgment has its place only in the third *Critique*. In other words, restricting the role of feeling in this way presupposes that determining and reflecting judgments are mutually exclusive. But, as I have suggested, there are good reasons for thinking that all determining judgments also involve an act of reflecting judgment. If I am right concerning the reflective basis of all judgments, then it follows that there is also an affective basis to all judgments. To begin to see what this looks like, we can examine Kant’s notion of feeling, as both that for which the power of judgment legislates and that which functions as the ground of an aesthetic judgment.

---

<sup>37</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 244.

<sup>38</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 212.

<sup>39</sup> KU, AA 05: 169.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

Curiously, one is hard pressed to find an explicit definition of feeling from Kant. We find something close to an actual definition of feeling in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, written several years after the third *Critique*. There, Kant defines ‘feeling’ as “the capacity for having pleasure or displeasure in a representation,” and thus the “susceptibility” of a subject to be affected by a representation.<sup>41</sup> Even then, feeling is almost always defined negatively: it has “no relation at all to an object [...] [and thus] expresses nothing at all in the object but simply a relation to the subject”.<sup>42</sup> For this reason, Kant often speaks of feeling in terms of its subjectivity: it pertains to the “merely subjective” aspect of a representation.<sup>43</sup> Again, “nothing at all in the object is designated”, but only the way in which the subject is affected by a representation.<sup>44</sup>

What we have an easier time finding is a definition of the feeling of pleasure: “Pleasure is a state of the mind in which a representation is in agreement with itself, as a ground, either merely for preserving this state itself (for the state of the powers of the mind reciprocally promoting each other in a representation preserves itself), or for producing an object”.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in § 10 of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, Kant says: “The consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, for maintaining it in that state, can here designate in general what is called pleasure”.<sup>46</sup> To feel pleasure is thus to be aware of the activity of one’s own mind – in particular, whether it is being furthered (or hindered, which would be displeasure).<sup>47</sup> This general definition covers the pleasure associated with sensation [*Empfindung*], when one is affected by external objects. Yet the kind of feeling that is at issue in the third *Critique* is a “special feeling” that is not empirical but *a priori* – a feeling that arises from the activity of one’s faculties.<sup>48</sup> Thus, if aesthetic judgment is the paradigmatic case of the exercise of the reflecting

---

41 Kant, Immanuel: *Metaphysics of Morals* [1797], AA 06: 211. In: *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. M. Gregory. Cambridge 1996.

42 MS, AA 06: 211 ff.

43 MS, AA 06: 211.

44 KU, AA 05: 204.

45 EEKU, AA 20: 230–231.

46 KU, AA 05: 220.

47 In this I follow Cohen, who argues that feelings are “affective appraisals of our activity”, which “mak[e] us aware of the way our faculties relate to each other and to the world” (Cohen, Alix, “A Kantian Account of Emotions as Feelings”. *Mind* 129 (514), 2020, 430). However, for Cohen, feelings require reflecting judgment in order to be “interpreted”: “we cannot make sense of their meaning until we reflect on them [...]” (437 ff.). The view I am putting forward here is, in a sense, the inverse: it is not judgment through which we determine the content of our feelings, but rather feeling through which we determinate the content of our judgments.

48 EEKU, AA 20: 207.

power of judgment, then aesthetic pleasure is the paradigmatic case of the faculty of feeling pleasure and displeasure.<sup>49</sup>

At various points throughout the third *Critique*, Kant claims that the feeling of pleasure is “identical” to the representation of subjective purposiveness.<sup>50</sup> We will have occasion shortly to consider the notion of subjective purposiveness. But for now we can simply observe that what it is to experience pleasure in mere reflection on the form of an object in the absence of a concept *just is* to judge that it is purposive for our faculties. In the aesthetic judgment, then, Kant isolates the “immediate relation” or connection of the power of judgment and the feeling of pleasure, one that precludes the mediation of a concept. With no rule in hand, we judge the particular only by means of the feeling we have when it affects us. The ground of this judgment is not a determinate concept of an object, but rather the feeling that arises from the activity of reflecting on a representation in the absence of a rule, one that manifests itself when we perceive that our faculties are in agreement with each other. Here, the pleasure (arising from such an agreement) is “felt, not understood”.<sup>51</sup> Thus, to claim that feeling has a principle or norm is to say that feeling itself functions as a distinctive, non-discursive mode of judging. Kant affirms that the faculty of feeling “grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging” – referring, of course, to the merely reflecting power of judgment.<sup>52</sup> As Allison puts it: “feeling serves as the vehicle through which we perceive the aptness or subjective purposiveness [...] of a given representation for the proper exercise of our cognitive faculties”.<sup>53</sup> That is, we *just see* that two (or more) things belong together, perceiving their agreement via a feeling – and not because we judge that

---

49 I follow the trend among commentators in taking aesthetic judgment to be the paradigmatic case of reflecting judgment, as it is a matter of ‘merely’ reflecting on a particular in the absence of a universal. One may wonder what this means for teleological judgment, the subject of which occupies the latter half of the third *Critique*. While Kant also takes teleological judgment to be reflecting rather than determining judgment, he nonetheless says that it is “not a special faculty” because it involves concepts (KU, AA 05: 194, 270). By contrast, aesthetic judgment *is* a special faculty precisely because it does not proceed according to concepts. For this reason, Kant describes the part of the third *Critique* that treats aesthetic judgment as “essential, since *this alone* contains a principle that the power of judgment lays at the basis of its reflection”, and, likewise, says that it is “*only* in taste [...] [that] the power of judgment reveals itself as a faculty that has its own special principle” (Ibid, 5: 193, 244; emphasis mine). For more on this, see Pollok, op. cit., 21, 278–285.

50 KU, AA 05: 196; EEKU, AA 20: 228–230, 249.

51 EEKU, AA 20: 232.

52 KU, AA 05: 204. Cf. Kant’s description of feeling, in the *Groundwork*, as “an obscure discrimination of judgment” (Kant, Immanuel: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* [1785], AA 04: 451. In: *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. M. Gregor. Cambridge 1996).

53 Allison, Henry: *Kant’s Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*. Cambridge 2001, 71.

they fall under a concept or a rule (for, again, how would we be able to judge *this* if not by a further rule?). Insofar as discursive rules generate the regress problem associated with the power of judgment, only something non-discursive is capable of putting a stop to the regress in order for us to be able to make judgments at all.

We have now seen that by the power of judgment “as a special faculty [...] nothing else can be meant than the reflecting power of judgment,” and that the feeling of pleasure at issue is “a special feeling” that is “dependent only on reflection” and “connected with it in accordance with a principle *a priori*”.<sup>54</sup> We are now in a position to consider this principle as what links judgment and feeling. The foregoing allows us to sharpen the question regarding the pairing of judging and feeling. We can now ask: why does the activity of reflecting on one’s representations in the absence of a rule (or determinate concept) go with the capacity to non-discursively perceive the suitability of one’s representations for each other?

### 3 Subjective Purposiveness and the Suitability of the Faculties

#### 3.1 On the Transcendental Principle of the Power of Judgment

Having considered both the nature of the faculties of judgment and feeling, we can now turn more explicitly to a consideration of their relationship. One might be tempted to have a view of the relationship of feeling to judgment according to which feeling is involved in aesthetic judgment, but does not play a role in the kinds of judgments that are at issue in the first and second *Critique* (theoretical and practical, respectively). After all, Kant says that the determining ground of an aesthetic judgment is a feeling, while that of a cognitive judgment is a concept. Such a view follows from thinking that these latter two types of judgments are strictly determining, and, consequently, that reflecting judgment has its place only in the third *Critique*. In other words, restricting the role of feeling in this way presupposes that determining and reflecting judgments are mutually exclusive. But, as I have suggested, there are good reasons for thinking that all determining judgments also involve an act of reflecting judgment. If I am right concerning the reflective basis of all judgments, then it follows that there is also an affective basis to all judgments.

A natural starting point is Kant’s own musings as to why judgment and feeling might belong together, which appear in the introductory material to the third *Cri-*

---

<sup>54</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 249, 207.

*tique*. Prior to investigating their connection, Kant observes “a certain suitability of the power of judgment to serve as the determining ground for the feeling of pleasure”, given the subjectivity that marks both.<sup>55</sup> This is because, while understanding and reason both “relate their representations to objects [...] the power of judgment is related solely to the subject [...]”.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, while both the fundamental faculties of cognition and desire “contain an objective relation of representations...the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is only the receptivity of a determination of the subject”.<sup>57</sup> This shared subjectivity, then, prompts Kant to consider further their connection. At this point, however, his remarks are only conjectural: “if the power of judgment is to determine anything for itself alone, it could not be anything other than the feeling of pleasure, and, conversely, if the latter is to have an *a priori* principle, it will be found only in the power of judgment”.<sup>58</sup>

Recall that the third column in the above chart listed the principle that the higher cognitive faculty (column 2) provides for the fundamental faculty (column 1). We can now turn to purposiveness as the principle of the *reflecting* power of judgment – and a principle governing feeling. Given the various distinctions between kinds of purposiveness that Kant draws throughout the text, it is important to start by specifying the precise notion of purposiveness that is operative as the transcendental principle of the reflecting power of judgment. To this end, we can look at Kant’s general definition of both a ‘purpose’ and ‘purposiveness’. In § 10 of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, entitled ‘On purposiveness in general’, Kant defines a ‘purpose’ (or ‘end’) [*Zweck*] as “the object of a concept insofar as the latter is regarded as the cause of the former”, and ‘purposiveness’ [*Zweckmäßigkeit*] as “the causality of a concept with regard to its object”.<sup>59</sup> We call something purposive when its existence “seems to presuppose a representation of that same thing” as its cause.<sup>60</sup> For example, suppose I want to make a knife. The concept of a knife (as a thing whose function is to cut) plays an important causal role in explaining how it is that the knife comes into being; it is an idea that exists in my mind prior to its existence and governs how I go about bringing it into existence. Were one to come across a knife in the forest – or, to use Kant’s example, a hexagon drawn in the sand on an island – they would assume that a partial explanation regarding the existence of this object involved an agent who had this as a purpose or end in mind.<sup>61</sup>

---

55 EEKU, AA 20: 208.

56 *Ibid.*

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*

59 KU, AA 05: 220.

60 EEKU, AA 20: 216.

61 KU, AA 05: 370.

To treat nature as purposive is to view it “as if [it] had been designed by the power of judgment for its own need” of subsuming particulars under universals.<sup>62</sup> Kant calls purposiveness a “special concept” that originates solely from the *reflecting* power of judgment.<sup>63</sup> This principle is not objective, meaning that it does not yield cognition of nature as purposive. In other words, we are never entitled to conclude that nature is actually purposive. If we can only explain the possibility of something by conceiving of it as the product of a will that had this purpose in mind, then this purposiveness is represented as “without a purpose”.<sup>64</sup> Though we have no reason to believe that such a will exists (as the ground of the object), we approach the object as if it were the consequence of such an intentional causality. And again, Kant says, we can notice this purposiveness “in no other way than by reflection”.<sup>65</sup>

Kant’s most important distinction among kinds of purposiveness corresponds to the two main parts of the third *Critique*, the aesthetic and the teleological. This is the distinction between *subjective* and *objective* purposiveness. Kant defines ‘subjective purposiveness’ as “the purposiveness of nature for our cognitive faculties and for their use”.<sup>66</sup> This purposiveness is represented when we reflect on an object without a concept, judging that the form of the object harmonizes with our faculties. More directly: subjective purposiveness is a property or feature of a representation, namely, its disposition to produce a certain representational state in the subject. But what is this ‘state of mind’ [*Gemüthszustand*]? Kant holds that we feel pleasure any time we achieve a certain end, thus establishing a link between feeling and purposiveness: “The attainment of every aim is combined with the feeling of pleasure”.<sup>67</sup> Yet in the case of reflection there was no aim to begin with. Therefore, “without having any purpose or fundamental principle as a guide, this pleasure [of mere reflection] accompanies the common apprehension of an object by the imagination”.<sup>68</sup> What’s more, this representational state is not related to a concept of the object, but instead to the subject and their feeling of pleasure, which “express[es] nothing but its suitability to the cognitive faculties that are in play in the reflecting power of judgment”.<sup>69</sup>

---

62 EEKU, AA 20: 216.

63 Ibid; KU, AA 05: 181.

64 KU, AA 05: 220.

65 Ibid.

66 KU, AA 05: 182.

67 KU, AA 05: 187.

68 KU, AA 05: 292.

69 KU, AA 05: 189 ff.

Kant defines ‘objective purposiveness’ as the notion of an object itself displaying purposiveness.<sup>70</sup> Our representation of it involves a concept not only by which we judge the object to be possible, but also to which we judge it to conform. The distinction between subjective and objective purposiveness, then, is grounded in the distinction between aesthetic and logical judging.<sup>71</sup> When we judge that an object displays purposiveness in itself, we do so by means of a concept – whereas when we judge that an object is purposive for our faculties, we do so by means of a feeling. The very faculties at play differ; in the former instance, it is the understanding and reason. Only in the latter case does the power of judgment have an “immediate relation” to the faculty of feeling pleasure.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, Kant opens the *Analytic of the Beautiful* by declaring that an aesthetic judgment is not a logical one, which he describes as its having a subjective rather than an objective determining ground.<sup>73</sup>

Kant will refer to the principle of subjective purposiveness as both formal and logical. It is a necessary condition on experience, i.e., the logical use of the understanding. Nature presents itself in the form a logical system of concepts and laws, whereby we can think of these as interconnected so as to make possible the subsumption of particulars under universals. Logical purposiveness amounts to the “conformity [of nature] to the subjective conditions of the power of judgment with regard to the possible interconnection of empirical concepts in the whole of an experience”.<sup>74</sup> The power of judgment assumes, as a principle for its reflection on nature, that nature is suitable for its own activity. Kant is eager to remind us that we cannot infer from this anything like objective, or ‘real’, purposiveness. This is important, not merely because it prevents us from attributing properties to objects (something we are not entitled to do), but also because it relocates (or at least shifts) the purposiveness – away from the world and into the subject.

One of Kant’s passing remarks concerning the notion of logical purposiveness is particularly suggestive: “Now if nature showed us nothing more than this logical purposiveness, we would indeed already have cause to admire it for this”.<sup>75</sup> The implication, I think, is that nature in fact shows us more; what this is that nature shows us will hopefully become clearer in due course. At this point, Kant’s notion of subjective purposiveness involves a relation to external things (i.e., objects in nature). Yet the focal point is still the subject – in that the purposiveness of the

---

70 KU, AA 05: 359–361.

71 KU, AA 05: 193.

72 KU, AA 05: 169.

73 KU, AA 05: 203–204.

74 EEKU, AA 20: 217.

75 EEKU, AA 20: 216.

object is only intelligible in relation to subject. Logical purposiveness captures the normative relation of our judging power to nature, but it does not exhaust the normative relation intrinsic to the judging power itself. On my reading, the principle of logical purposiveness occasions us to reflect on the idea of suitability as such, which, in turn, leads us to recognize the suitability of our own faculties – in particular, the relation between the imagination and the understanding – *for each other*.

For now, we can draw two preliminary conclusions about the sense in which the principle of purposiveness functions as the principle of the power of judgment. The first is that it is *subjective* purposiveness – not objective purposiveness: “Thus the faculty of aesthetic reflection judges only about the subjective purposiveness (not about the perfection) of the object”.<sup>76</sup> Because “it is strictly pure aesthetic judgments that are at issue”, what we are searching for is a law of “aesthetic purposiveness”, which Kant characterizes as “merely formal”.<sup>77</sup> The second conclusion, which follows straightforwardly from the first, is that this principle governs aesthetic judgments – not teleological ones (the subject of the second half of the third *Critique*). We have already seen this in Kant’s assertion that the fundamental notion of purposiveness, which emerges as the special concept of merely reflecting judgment, is not “posited” in the object, but only in the subject.<sup>78</sup> Even though we can attribute purposiveness to other kinds of things, such as living beings, Kant claims that “The teleological power of judgment is not a special faculty”.<sup>79</sup> While teleological judgments are also products of reflecting judgment, they refer to objects in nature and proceed “in accordance with concepts” – namely, that of the perfection of the object; as Kant reiterates later, they always “presuppose the concept of an end”.<sup>80</sup> By contrast, aesthetic judgments are not about objects, but only about our subjective responses to objects. Accordingly, then: “The aesthetic power of judgment is [...] a special faculty for judging things in accordance with a rule but not in accordance with concepts”.<sup>81</sup>

In sum: Kant takes subjective purposiveness – which includes (but, as I will show, cannot be limited to) the suitability of nature for our cognitive faculties – to be the relevant kind of purposiveness that governs those pure expressions of the power of judgment as its normative principle.

---

76 EEKU, AA 20: 229.

77 KU, AA 05: 270.

78 EEKU, AA 20: 216.

79 Ibid.

80 KU, AA 05: 194, 270.

81 KU, AA 05: 194.



### 3.2 Subjectivity, Indeterminacy, Affectivity

We can identify as least three distinctive features of the principle of subjective purposiveness – features which set it apart from the guiding principles of the two other higher cognitive faculties. These are: subjectivity, rather than objectivity; indeterminacy, rather than determinacy; and affectivity, rather than discursivity. We have already seen hints of all of these in our discussion so far. Indeed, these characteristics function so closely together that they cannot be easily discussed apart from each other. For a subject to judge purposively is to feel that two things belong together (where this could be concepts, objects, representations, or even faculties themselves), while remaining unable to articulate a rule in support of this, or reasons that would settle the matter.

Attending to what it means for this principle to be subjective sheds light on the way in which both judgment and feeling are to be understood as subjective. Thus far, we have only seen the idea of subjectivity defined negatively: it “attributes nothing at all to the object”.<sup>82</sup> Unlike understanding and reason, the power of judgment “can claim no field of objects as its domain”.<sup>83</sup> Accordingly, purposiveness is not a principle for judging about objects. While this characterization is not incorrect, it can be understood in a deeper sense – namely, as overseeing the subject’s own activity of judging. In mere reflection, we judge only “in subjective relation to our cognitive faculty, not in objective relation to the objects”.<sup>84</sup> Floyd points out that what is distinct about the autonomy of reflecting judgment – vis-à-vis that of understanding and reason – is that it “can only be exercised relative to itself” and its own activities.<sup>85</sup> The reflecting power of judgment does not operate according to a law given from elsewhere, but it is also not for this reason lawless; therefore, it must provide the law itself. The idea of purposiveness, Kant argues, “serves as a principle, merely for the subject”.<sup>86</sup> In this, Kant restricts the legislation of judgment to an entirely internal set of objects: our faculties. Thus the principle of purposiveness is subjective in the sense that it governs the subjective conditions of judging. The principle that reflecting judgment gives itself “can serve as a merely subjective principle for the purposive use of the cognitive faculties”, that is, the activity of our imagination and understanding in free play.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> KU, AA 05: 184.

<sup>83</sup> KU, AA 05: 177.

<sup>84</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 200.

<sup>85</sup> Floyd, 205.

<sup>86</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 205.

<sup>87</sup> KU, AA 5: 385.

Kant refers to reflection as “an activity that is indeterminate but yet, through the stimulus of the given representation, in unison”, and “a free and indeterminately purposive entertainment of the mental powers”.<sup>88</sup> The indeterminacy of the activity follows from its standing under an indeterminate principle. While the norms of understanding and reason are discursive and determinate, Kant describes the principle of purposiveness as a norm that is affective and “indeterminate”.<sup>89</sup> When the only thing directing the imagination is the idea that what it is trying to apprehend admits of lawful combination, there are multiple, unspecified ways in which it can go about its business. This is closely connected to another sense of indeterminacy – that of the concept under which an object is subsumed. When there is no particular concept of an object, the imagination in its apprehension need only agree with “the presentation of a concept of the understanding (though which concept be undetermined)”, of a “concept in general”.<sup>90</sup> If we contrast this operation with instances where the understanding provides a determinate concept or rule, then, the imagination is given no freedom with respect to how it apprehends an object.

Kant describes the assumption that nature is suitable for our faculties as an “indeterminate principle of a purposive arrangement of nature in a system, as it were for the benefit of our power of judgment”.<sup>91</sup> The idea that the objects of our judgment are such that we will be able to make sense of them is a necessary assumption in order to judge at all, but this is short of telling us how we are to judge. This presupposition forms the basis of an *a priori* principle for reflection – “without however being able to explain this or determine it more precisely”.<sup>92</sup> We must believe that certain things do belong together, but we lack a principle that tells us *how* they belong together. We are here dealing with a principle, Kant says, “even though it is indeterminate” – i.e., contains no specific criteria for its application.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.3 What is this Subjective Purposiveness?

In what remains, I wish to sketch out a notion of subjective purposiveness that is more fundamental than the suitability of nature for our faculties – namely, the suitability of our cognitive faculties *for each other*. In particular, I claim that it is this notion that reveals why judgment and feeling belong together. Recall that in merely

---

<sup>88</sup> KU, AA 05: 219, 242.

<sup>89</sup> KU, AA 05: 239.

<sup>90</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 221–223.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 20: 214; cf. KU, AA 05: 188.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 239.

reflecting judgment, the imagination is not governed by a concept, where the latter functions as a rule for the unification (or synthesis) of representations. Thus, when the free imagination encounters a given manifold of intuition, it has no instructions for how to combine this manifold. In contrast to reflection aimed at cognition, the imagination is not ‘at the service’ of the understanding, but rather the opposite.<sup>94</sup> Characteristically, the lawful yet free imagination acts as if it were rule-governed, even though it is not. That is, it apprehends an object in the same way that it would if it had been given a concept by the understanding. Further, its product is met with a feeling of pleasure, which suggests that in combining it in a particular way it has accomplished some aim – despite having proceeded without any instructions.

As already noted, there is something somewhat puzzling about the idea that there could be any kind of rule for the imagination when it embarks *without a rule*. Kant himself states this problematic idea as follows: “Yet for the imagination to be free and yet lawful by itself, i.e., that it carry autonomy with it, is a contradiction”.<sup>95</sup> Bell puts it most succinctly when he notes that “at some point we have to judge immediately, spontaneously”.<sup>96</sup> This statement, made in response to the regress problem, leads Bell to state what he takes to be the genuine philosophical problem that captivates Kant in his theory of judgment: the paradox and possibility of “a rule-determined spontaneity” – in other words, how something could be both lawful and free.<sup>97</sup> Bell invokes Wittgenstein’s notion of hitting bedrock when trying to give an explanation for why one follows a rule: At some point, we must throw up our hands and say “This is simply what I do”.<sup>98</sup> The Wittgensteinian sentiment is indeed central to one prominent, contemporary commentator’s account, which I will now consider.

Ginsborg puts forward a manner of understanding the notion of purposiveness which, she argues, makes sense of the different kinds of reflecting judgments we

---

<sup>94</sup> KU, AA 05: 242.

<sup>95</sup> KU, A 05: 240.

<sup>96</sup> Bell, David, “The Art of Judgment”. In: *Mind* 96 (382), 1987, 226. My view is very similar to that of A.W. Moore, who argues that Kant’s solution to the regress problem is an affective response, which he calls ‘the Feeling of Unity’ and characterizes as a kind of “inexpressible knowledge” (Moore, A.W., “Is the Feeling of Unity That Kant Identifies in his Third Critique a Type of Inexpressible Knowledge?”. *Philosophy* 82 (321), 2007, 477). In other words, the question of how rule-governed objective judgement is possible is answered by appealing to a non-rule-governed subjective element: “grounded in a feeling that certain elements of experience constitute an integral, satisfying whole” (Ibid, 476). See also Allison, op. cit.: “one [must] simply be able to see whether or not a datum or state of affairs instantiates a rule”, which requires “the capacity for such nonmediated ‘seeing’, or [...] ‘feeling’” (14).

<sup>97</sup> Bell, 222.

<sup>98</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig: *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. New York 1953, § 217.

make – in particular, aesthetic and teleological ones. Arguing for a unified reading of the third *Critique*, Ginsborg suggests that we think of purposiveness as “normative lawfulness”.<sup>99</sup> Elsewhere, Ginsborg articulates this notion in terms of what she labels ‘primitive normativity’: our awareness of the appropriateness of our imaginative responses. To judge in this way is to take oneself to be judging as one ought to, even though one cannot specify a rule according to which one’s judgment is correct. In general, this seems in keeping with what I have said about the principle of purposiveness. Ginsborg acknowledges this in a footnote, saying that the purposiveness of nature for our cognitive faculties can be understood as the idea that “nature and our cognitive faculties stand in a relation of mutual appropriateness”.<sup>100</sup> In other words, we take ourselves to be judging as we ought in the sense that the objects are appropriate for our judging just as much as our judging is appropriate to the objects. The primitiveness consists in this: “an irreducible harmony or fit between the object and the imaginative activity it elicits”.<sup>101</sup> However, if what comes along with the notion of ‘primitive’ is the idea that nothing more can be said, then it is difficult to see how this is not just a naturalistic account of what we do in mere reflection – a concern Kant attempted to avoid when warning of empirical psychological explanations that tell us “only how things are judged, but never [...] how they ought to be judged”.<sup>102</sup> Of course, at some point it will be the case that one’s spade is turned, as Wittgenstein says – one hits bedrock and is unable to give a further explanation (i.e., no more reasons) as to why one judges as they do. But it seems as if something more can be said about the normativity of judgment. To continue the metaphor: Ginsborg stops digging too soon.

If such a primitive notion of normativity is to be discovered, it will be found at a deeper level, not at the level of the fit between us and the world, but rather within our own mind and its faculties. Kant describes a relationship that is entirely internal to the subject: “the purpose is not posited in the object at all, but strictly in the subject and indeed in its mere capacity for reflection”.<sup>103</sup> What does it mean that the purposiveness is posited *in* the subject? I suggest that we take this in a very literal sense. This is the second kind of subjective purposiveness which I have been hinting at. In reflecting judgment, we become aware of “a mutual subjective correspondence of the powers of cognition *with each other*”.<sup>104</sup>

---

99 Ginsborg, Hannah: *The Normativity of Nature: Essays on Kant’s Critique of Judgement*. Oxford 2015, 10.

100 Ibid, 84 fn48.

101 Ibid, 90.

102 KU, AA 05: 278.

103 EEKU, AA 20: 216.

104 KU, AA 05: 218 (emphasis mine).

Kant says of the purposiveness of nature (what I will call the first kind of subjective purposiveness): “This is what first gives us the concept of an objectively contingent but subjectively (for our faculty of cognition) necessary lawfulness”.<sup>105</sup> For Kant, this is what first makes us aware of the notion of suitability as such. However, there is also a second, more fundamental kind of purposiveness. This must be prior to the pleasure we experience when we feel the fit between our faculties and nature because this latter kind of agreement presupposes a kind of unity of the faculties, which cannot be taken for granted. That nature is purposive for our faculties is only intelligible on the condition that our faculties are already purposive for each other. Were the imagination and understanding in perpetual discord, there would be no possibility of nature being purposive for us. In characterizing the principle of purposiveness, then, as the transcendental principle of the power of judgment, we should specify it in terms of the purposiveness of the imagination for the understanding – and then work outward, specifying logical purposiveness, for example, as an instance of this more fundamental suitability.

My claim is that this second notion of purposiveness is not found in the first half of the critique of aesthetic judgment, where Kant discusses the judgment of beauty, but instead in the second half, where Kant treats judgments of the sublime. This notion is hinted at in the introduction, where Kant presents the distinction between ‘internal’ and ‘relative’ purposiveness – a distinction which, he notes, cuts across the distinction between subjective and objective purposiveness (which is to say that it applies to both). The notion of the purposiveness of the faculties for each other arises in this latter notion of relative purposiveness.

Kant describes ‘internal’ purposiveness as grounded in the representation of the object in itself. In mere intuition, without any concept, we perceive the object as purposive for the power of judgment. Hence, we attribute subjective purposiveness to the thing and indeed to nature as well. But Kant argues that there is a purposiveness that does not relate to the form of the object whatsoever. We do not detect anything purposive in it in mere reflection, but only make “contingent use” of the object.<sup>106</sup> Kant describes ‘relative’ purposiveness as a feature of a representation of an object insofar as it can be “applied to a purposiveness lying in the subject *a priori*”.<sup>107</sup>

What is this purposiveness that lies in the subject? Something lacking internal purposiveness can nevertheless acquire a “purposive use” insofar as it “arous[es]” a feeling – not of beauty, but of sublimity.<sup>108</sup> This is not a feeling of pleasure, in

---

<sup>105</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 243.

<sup>106</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 249.

<sup>107</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 249 ff.

<sup>108</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 250.

perceiving the suitability of the object's form for our mind, but rather of awe, for its function in bringing to light "the inner purposiveness in the disposition of the powers of the mind".<sup>109</sup> It is the feeling that the imagination, as the faculty of intuitions, and the understanding, the faculty of concepts, are made for each other – such that the reflecting power of judgment does not 'strive' to rise from intuitions to concepts in vain.

Kant claims the judgment of the sublime is not to be excluded from the critique of aesthetic judgment, since it also exhibits subjective purposiveness (at a deeper level, I would add). To be sure, the sublime has received far less attention than the beautiful. Kant's somewhat cryptic remark that the former is a "mere appendix" to the latter is unfortunate, since Kant also ascribes to the sublime an important role in making us aware of the idea of subjective purposiveness.<sup>110</sup>

In the *Analytic of the Sublime*, Kant asks: "What is this subjective purposiveness?" As already stated, the presentation of subjective purposiveness in the sublime does not arise from the form of the object, as displayed in the judgment of beauty. Instead, it arises from the "purposive use that the imagination makes" of a representation in its efforts to advance from the sensible to the supersensible.<sup>111</sup> In apprehending an object without regard for its form, Kant notes that "limitlessness is represented", which he connects to the imagination's striving toward the infinite – and its "presentation of an indeterminate concept" of the understanding.<sup>112</sup> Accordingly, the judgment of the sublime "indicates nothing purposive in nature itself, but only in the possible use of its intuitions to make palpable in ourselves a purposiveness that is entirely independent of nature".<sup>113</sup> Moreover, the ground of such a judgment lies solely "in ourselves".<sup>114</sup> Hence, sublimity "must be sought only in the mind of the one who judges".<sup>115</sup> Without displaying purposiveness in its form, the object (in our apprehension of it) "provides the occasion for becoming conscious of this [idea of subjective purposiveness]".<sup>116</sup> It does this by revealing "a purposive relation of the cognitive faculties".<sup>117</sup>

Kant returns to this sort of language in the final pages of the critique of the aesthetic power of judgment, describing nature as providing "an occasion for us to perceive the inner purposiveness in the relationship of our mental powers in

---

109 Ibid.

110 KU, AA 05: 246.

111 Ibid; cf. KU, AA 05: 268.

112 KU, AA 05: 244, 250.

113 KU, AA 05: 246.

114 Ibid.

115 KU, AA 05: 256.

116 KU, AA 05: 280.

117 Ibid.

the judging of its products”.<sup>118</sup> We can thus conclude by considering this in light of Kant’s definition of purposiveness as “the lawfulness of the contingent as such”.<sup>119</sup> This definition no doubt applies to nature and its particular laws and forms which certainly could have been otherwise (all of which nonetheless conform to the formal laws of the understanding). But, more fundamentally, it applies to the contingent agreement of the imagination and the understanding. For what could account for such harmony in the absence of a rule to oversee their respective activities? In the determinative context, Kant speaks of a concept as the kind of thing that “unites” the understanding and the imagination, yielding cognition of an object.<sup>120</sup> By contrast, the “subjective unity of the relation [of imagination and understanding] can make itself known only through sensation”.<sup>121</sup> Kant goes on to describe this as “that sensation which the harmonious play of the two faculties of cognition in the power of judgment, imagination and understanding, produces in the subject insofar as in the given representation the faculty of the apprehension of the one and the faculty of presentation of the other are reciprocally expeditious [*beförderlich*]”.<sup>122</sup> In other words, we observe that the imagination and understanding are mutually beneficial, “promoting” each other’s respective tasks, as if they were made for each other or had each other in mind.<sup>123</sup> Thus, Kant speaks of “the *purposive* disposition of the [free] imagination for its correspondence with the faculty of concepts in general”, i.e., the understanding – as well as “the suitability of the imagination in its freedom to the lawfulness of the understanding”.<sup>124</sup>

In mere reflection, the imagination and understanding contingently agree, and their agreement manifests itself in terms of a feeling that they belong together. This feeling is not only that through which we can recognize the suitability of two things for each other, but also the only thing that is capable of yielding such a judgment. It is not merely that no discursive rule exists to govern the activities of the cognitive faculties in free play, but also that no rule *could* exist. When we reflect, we hold our representations up to each other and affectively respond to them so as to judge that they belong together in a certain way.<sup>125</sup> The activity of reflection is thus “merely

---

118 KU, AA 05: 350.

119 EEKU, AA 20: 217, 228; KU, AA 05: 184, 404.

120 KU, AA 05: 218.

121 KU, AA 05: 219.

122 EEKU, AA 20: 224.

123 EEKU, AA 20: 231.

124 KU, AA 05: 319, 344.

125 Granting feeling an essential role in judgment also provides a degree of continuity between determining and reflecting judgment. These may seem likely markedly different exercises of the power of judgment—insofar as one involves applying a given universal to a particular, while the other involves searching for a universal for a particular. If, as I argue elsewhere (Dunn, op. cit.),

for the sake of perceiving the suitability of the presentation for the harmonious (subjectively purposive) occupation of both cognitive faculties in their freedom”.<sup>126</sup>

## 4 Conclusion: What is Orientation in Judgment?

In his ‘What is Orientation?’ essay, Kant describes orientation in space as only possible through a “feeling of a difference” (or, ‘distinction’) between left and right.<sup>127</sup> One cannot find one’s bearings among empirical objects solely through theoretical knowledge, but only through affective means. Since one’s right and left hands “display no perceptible difference as far as external intuition is concerned”, one “must necessarily be able to feel a difference within [one’s] own subject”.<sup>128</sup> Kant conceives of feeling as an alternative mode of knowing to discursivity – indeed, one that can accomplish certain things that conceptuality cannot. Even if one possessed all relevant information about a set of objects, they would still be unable to orient themselves among such objects if they utterly lacked affective capacities. Kant extends this notion of orientation to our attempts to navigate the ‘space’ of supersensible objects (e.g., God, the soul), arguing that one must rely on a subjective principle – namely, “the feeling of a need” to orient oneself – when objective grounds are lacking.<sup>129</sup>

Were we to push this analogy even one step further, we could see the legislation of the power of judgment as an attempt to orient supersensible creatures who also inhabit a sensible world – and thus a way of thinking about its function of closing

---

the power of judgment is essentially reflective, then one might wonder what this means for the status of determining judgment. For unlike reflection, where the imagination and understanding are in free play (owing to the absence of a rule on the part of the understanding), a determining judgment is a case of the understanding providing a universal and the imagination apprehending the sensible given in a way that allows it to be subsumed under it. Yet the presence of a rule does not abrogate the necessity of reflection to hold our representations up to each other, affectively respond to them, and judge whether they belong together. This is easy to see in the case of an aesthetic judgment, where, in reflecting on a particular in the absence of a universal, I have no other resources at my disposal except the feeling that my response is appropriate. But it is also the case in a determining judgment (either theoretical or practical). I hold up my intuition of an object to a concept. There can be no rule instructing me on how to subsume the former under the latter: *I just see* (indeed, *I feel*) that this intuitive representation belongs with this discursive representation.

<sup>126</sup> KU, AA 05: 292.

<sup>127</sup> Kant, Immanuel, “What is Orientation in Thinking?”, AA 08: 134. In: *Kant: Political Writings*. Ed. H.S. Reiss. Trans. H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge 1991.

<sup>128</sup> WDO, AA 08: 134 ff.

<sup>129</sup> WDO, AA 08: 136.



the gap between nature and freedom. Indeed, in the third *Critique*, Kant speaks of judgment's act of self-legislation in terms of a "need of ours" to seek out purposive unity.<sup>130</sup> Subjective purposiveness is described as "not a concept of the object at all, but only a principle of the power of judgment for providing concepts in the face of this excessive multiplicity in nature (*in order to be able to be oriented in it*)".<sup>131</sup> Relatedly, Kant remarks that the understanding "could not find itself" in nature without such a principle. This, combined with the essentially affective dimension to orientation, provides us with a reason for seeing the activity of mere reflection, exhibited in the autonomous exercise of the power of judgment, as orientational. To the extent that this is the case, judgment and feeling would mutually figure in our cognitive lives by guiding and directing the activities of all of the faculties of the mind.<sup>132</sup>

As I noted at the outset, there have been many who have thought that we would be better off without Kant's faculty psychology. One of the underlying motivations of this paper, however, has been the idea that one cannot properly understand Kant's Critical philosophy apart from his systematic approach to the mind and its various faculties, capacities, and powers. What I hope to have shown here is that at least one aspect of this – namely, the intimate relationship between the faculties of judgment and feeling – is worth attending to, even if we are not yet in a position to accept all aspects of his faculty psychology.

---

<sup>130</sup> EEKU, AA 20: 205.

<sup>131</sup> KU, AA 05: 193 (emphasis mine).

<sup>132</sup> The orientational role of feeling has been acknowledged by some commentators. Cohen argues that feelings "play an indispensable orientational function in the Kantian mind" (2). In a recent response to Cohen, however, Merritt takes issues with this claim (Merritt, Melissa M., "Feeling and Orientation in Action: A Reply to Alix Cohen". *Kantian Review* 26 (3), 2021, 363–369). Matthews argues that the feeling of pleasure helps us meet our cognitive and moral demands, and thus "provides orientation for the other two powers [i.e., cognition and desire]" (Matthews, Patricia M.: *The Significance of Beauty: Kant on Feeling and the System of the Mind*. Dordrecht 1997, 136). Likewise, the orientational aspect of judgment has been discussed by a number of commentators. Düring and Düwell provide a loosely Kantian account according to which "human beings orient themselves in the world via judgments" (Düring, Dascha and Düwell, Marcus, "Towards a Kantian Theory of Judgment: the Power of Judgment in its Practical and Aesthetic Employment". *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 18 (5), 2015, 943). Makkreel characterizes the relationship between judgment and orientation primarily in terms of its hermeneutical or interpretive import (Makkreel, Rudolf A.: *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant: The Hermeneutical Import of the Critique of Judgment*. Chicago 1990, 154–172; Makkreel, Rudolf A.: *Orientation and Judgment in Hermeneutics*. Chicago 2015, 59 ff.).