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BEAUTY AND *A POSTERIORI* COGNITION IN KANT

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BEAUTY AND A POSTERIORI COGNITION IN KANT

CAIO VICTOR LEMOS

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Resumo

O presente estudo tem por objetivo contribuir com o debate a respeito da importância do juízo de gosto para o todo da economia argumentativa do projeto crítico kantiano. A chave de leitura aqui escolhida é o argumento de que esse juízo pode ser entendido como uma pista a favor da validade do empreendimento de sistematização do conhecimento *a posteriori*. Primeiro, apresenta-se a constatação, por parte de Kant, de que não nos é possível *a priori* ter certeza do sucesso de tal empreendimento, devido à ampla variedade que as formas da natureza podem apresentar. O máximo que se tem *a priori* é uma pressuposição, que ganha forma em duas propostas de Kant: o uso regulativo do princípio de completude, gerado pela razão teórica, e o princípio heautônomo de técnica da natureza, o qual rege a atividade da faculdade de julgar reflexionante. Em cada caso, há um esforço de sistematização protagonizado pela respectiva faculdade. Assim, a análise da primeira proposta ocupa o segundo momento do presente estudo; e a análise da segunda proposta, o terceiro. Por fim, debate-se então a inserção do juízo de gosto nesse tema. Tal juízo, classificado por Kant como um juízo estético reflexionante, é a vivificação da faculdade de prazer mediante o jogo livre e harmônico das faculdades do entendimento e da imaginação, a partir do contato com uma representação cuja determinação conceitual lhe é indiferente. Na medida em que esse jogo livre corresponde à relação necessária à cognição em geral, cabe ao juízo de gosto reivindicar universalidade subjetiva; cabe-lhe também, conseqüentemente, uma finalidade formal: a interpretação, também de caráter subjetivo, de que o objeto belo é favorável ao trabalho da faculdade de julgar.

Palavras-chave: Gosto. Natureza. Sistematização.

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to contribute to the debate on the relevance of the judgment of taste to the whole of the argumentative economy of Kant's critical project. The chosen perspective here is the argument that one can see this judgment as a clue to the validity of our attempt to systematize *a posteriori* cognition. First, the study presents Kant's acknowledgment that it is not possible for us *a priori* to be sure of the success of this attempt, given the great diversity that nature's forms might present. *A priori* we can go as far as presupposing this possibility, either in the form of the regulative use of theoretical reason's principle of completeness or in the form of the heautonomous principle of the technique of nature, which governs the activity of the reflecting power of judgment. In each case, there is an effort toward systematization made by the faculty that is featured. Therefore, the analysis of the first proposal occupies the second moment of the study; and the analysis of the second proposal, the third. Afterward, the study then debates the judgment of taste within this theme. This judgment, which Kant classifies as a reflecting aesthetic judgment, is the vivification of the faculty of pleasure by means of the harmonious free play of the faculties of the understanding and imagination, as a result of one's contact with a representation whose conceptual determination is in this case irrelevant. Because this free play corresponds to the relation necessary to cognition in general, this judgment is able to claim subjective universality; consequently, this judgment also presents formal purposiveness: the interpretation, also with a subjective character, that the beautiful object is favorable to the labors of the power of judgment.

Keywords: Taste. Nature. Systematization.

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Introduction

For a long time, Kant has been recognized as one of the most important Western philosophers.¹ As is well known, his most relevant work consists of the three *Critiques*, often referred to as his critical project, which officially began with the publication of the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in 1781, also referred to as the first *Critique*. Until today, scholars have seen it as a daunting challenge to interpret the philosophical system that emerges from these books, due to its depth, sophistication and intricacy. Another reason is that it was not born complete, given that Kant changed gears along the way. This scenario is quite clear when one considers, for example, the novelties presented in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, also referred to as the third *Critique*, whose first edition was published in 1790.

The first *Critique* was published after a long period of dedication, from 1770 to 1781, today referred to as Kant's silent decade, during which he published very few works, focused on dealing with the issues that would be addressed in the book. From the beginning, his intent was to write a text that would present the fundamentals of human experience, although its exact structure and content went through changes. Apparently, one of the reasons Kant took so long to publish the first *Critique*, which was given its final name only in 1777, was his effort to deal with a specific issue, namely, how a representation can relate to an object; and, indeed, this theme became an important axis of the book. At least in the early 1770s, Kant intended to include in the first *Critique* the themes of morality and taste, which ended up being those of the *Critique of Practical Reason* — also known as the second *Critique*, published in 1788 — and of the third *Critique*, respectively.

The impact of the publication of the first *Critique* was almost immediate, not only in Germany, but also in other European countries that also had a philosophical tradition — France and Britain, for example. It consisted of a “Preface”, an “Introduction”, a “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements” — which is, by far, at least today, its most studied item — and a “Transcendental Doctrine of Method”, a structure inspired by the standard of books on logic of that time. However, Kant felt the need to implement a number of changes in the text, which resulted in the publication of its second edition, in 1787. The most significant ones are, probably, the new “Preface” and the new “Transcendental Analytic”, being the latter

¹ To give the information found in this chapter, I trust several texts, such as: Guyer 2002, Guyer 2010, Terra 1995.

a component of the “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements”. Indeed, the substantial changes are an important object of study: ever since, scholars have systematically attempted to understand their impact on Kant’s endeavor, comparing the arguments of both editions. Nowadays, the standard is to publish a version of the book that includes the texts of both editions.

Only in 1787, after already publishing the second edition of the first *Critique* and having concluded the text of the second one, Kant wrote, for the first time, in a letter to a professor, that a third *Critique* was on the way. There, Kant clearly stated that he arrived at a new *a priori* principle, that of teleology, which would determine the faculty of pleasure and displeasure and be related to taste (and the living organism). This new principle — and, consequently, this new book — would then complete his system of *a priori* principles, given that there would finally be a principle determining each of our mental faculties. According to Kant, as is well known, the other two mental faculties are the faculty of cognition, which deals with the *a priori* laws of nature, and the faculty of desire, which is determined by the law of freedom, the moral law. Although both themes, teleology and taste, were addressed by Kant for decades, the attempt to connect them on those terms, that is, by means of an *a priori* principle, was a true novelty, considering his work.

Texts of the third *Critique* that currently circulate include a initial version of its “Introduction”, also known as its “First Introduction”, a “Preface”, the “Introduction” that was then published, now referred to as its second or published “Introduction”, and two parts, the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment” and the “Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment”. Apparently, the second version of the “Introduction” emerged due to the fact that Kant judged that the first one should be shortened; and, indeed, the second version is not only more succinct, but also better structured, despite the fact that it lacks the theoretical strength of the first one. The complete text of the “First Introduction” was only published posthumously, more than a hundred years later, in 1914, after the discovery of a manuscript. The fact that there are two “Introductions” to the third *Critique* also deserves the scholar’s attention, although the text of the second one, by and large, does not present fundamental changes. In 1792, the third *Critique* had its second edition published and, in 1799, its third edition. Both incorporated revisions, although it is not clear who made them in the third one.²

Kant’s critical project revolves around his theory of the faculties, by means of which he maps our cognitive abilities and limits. Those he identifies to be the discursive faculties, or

² On the choices regarding this matter, as far as the translation used here is concerned, see Guyer 2002, xlv-xlvi.

our ‘higher faculties’, are the ones that deserve most of the attention, given that, for Kant, they operate on the ground of our *a priori* principles. Those faculties are: the understanding, reason and the power of judgment. Each *Critique* is focused on dealing with one out of the *a priori* principles: the laws of nature, the moral law and that of the technique of nature. According to Kant, the most fundamental structure of human cognition, our cognitive faculties, is shared by all human beings. This structure would result precisely in all cognition that has its origin *a priori*, regardless of the character of the *a posteriori* input one might receive. This structure conditions our contact with nature, when it comes both to the characteristics of our cognition and to its limits.

The focus of the present text is to study both the first and the third *Critiques*: more precisely, an aspect of the judgment of taste that helps us comprehend how the proposal of this judgment fits into the general argument of the critical project, as far as the possibility of the complete systematization of *a posteriori* cognition is concerned. Briefly put, according to Kant, due to the limits of our cognitive faculties, the complete systematization of *a posteriori* cognition cannot be guaranteed *a priori*, because nature’s forms might be infinitely diverse; and it rises as an issue given that complete systematicity, for him, allows a more proper, enhanced use of cognition. In the third *Critique*, among other arguments, Kant puts forward the judgment of taste, a harmonious, non-cognitive, disinterested, pleasant mental (that is, involving our cognitive faculties) event that, under the auspices of the principle of the technique of nature — which encompasses the presupposition of the compatibility between our cognitive faculties and nature’s forms —, is brought to life precisely as a result of one’s contact with one of those forms. It would then be a clue to the validity of our endeavor to study nature.

The presentation of the arguments that concern both beauty and *a posteriori* cognition, as well as how these themes are intertwined, in the way Kant makes it, is a clear textual sign of the then ongoing development of the endeavor of the critical project. Two themes stand out. First, the fact that Kant presents two different solutions, related to two different faculties, in two different books, to this issue: the first one, in the first *Critique*, relating it to theoretical reason; the second one, as already alluded to, in the third *Critique*, relating it to the reflecting power of judgment. Second, the fact that, in the third *Critique*, he argues in favor of an *a priori* ground for taste, which he denied in the first *Critique*. The first issue deserves a lot of attention in the present text, given that it helps shed light on the relation between beauty and *a posteriori* cognition. The second one, I should say, has already been given a proper answer:

the discovery of the *a priori* principle of the technique of nature. Both themes, one can notice, help reveal the relevance of the arguments of the third *Critique*.

Four Chapters constitute the bulk of the present text: in Chapter 1, I describe how Kant presents, in his epistemology, the issue concerning the possibility of the complete systematization of *a posteriori* cognition. Then, in the following Chapters, 2 and 3, I present, respectively, the solutions Kant gave to this issue. First, in Chapter 2, the first one, which he associates with theoretical reason and put forward in the first *Critique*. Second, in Chapter 3, the second one, which he now associates with the reflecting power of judgment and puts forward in the third *Critique*. Finally, in Chapter 4, I argue in favor of the judgment of taste as a clue to the compatibility between our cognitive faculties and nature's forms. In the Conclusion, I attempt to sum up both the reasoning presented here and the findings of my research.

1 *A posteriori* cognition

In this chapter, I develop the first part of the argument, the issue within Kant's critical project concerning the lack of *a priori* guarantees for the complete systematization of *a posteriori* cognition, as far as the faculty of understanding is concerned. In order to achieve this goal, here I will examine four themes: first, a debate on the discursive nature of human cognition; second, the argument that the notion of systematicity plays a pivotal role in Kant's conception of the understanding; third, a brief description of Kant's theory of the faculties; and fourth, the presentation of the issue concerning the systematization of *a posteriori* cognition. Conveniently, I divided this chapter into four topics, each one examining, in order, one theme. As one might notice, the first three will lay the groundwork for the arguments that appear in the last one.

1.1 The discursive nature of human cognition

As is well known, both the "Introduction"³ and the "Transcendental Doctrine of Elements" of the first *Critique* form together the core of Kant's epistemological theory. The "Introduction" presents key concepts and key issues. Afterward, there are a few main divisions. The first division of the "Transcendental Doctrine of Elements" presents, in turn, the "Transcendental Aesthetic", which debates the normativity of the sensibility, and the "Transcendental Logic", which debates the normativity of both the understanding and theoretical reason. The "Transcendental Logic" presents, in turn, the "Transcendental Analytic", which mainly features the understanding, and the "Transcendental Dialectic", which mainly studies theoretical reason's characteristics. However, the first three parts already present the most basic elements of Kant's transcendental idealism. This topic of the chapter will put sensibility and the understanding in the spotlight, considering that here my aim is precisely to bring forward these elements.

According to Kant, our most fundamental cognitive procedure is the attempt to find common marks among sensorial representations, intuitions, in order for us to be able to produce discursive representations, concepts. Indeed, human cognition, for him, necessarily involves these two elements. As his notorious phrase illustrates, "[thoughts] without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind".⁴ This cognitive procedure is what Kant named synthesis, carried out by the understanding. For him, synthesis is, "in the most general

³ Here, I always mention the "Introduction B" (B1-B30).

⁴ Kant 1998, A51/B75.

sense, (...) the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition”.⁵ Then, intuitions, says Kant, are the most direct relation we can have to objects of cognition, and concepts, mediate representations that allow us order our sensorial data.

He classifies cognition, as well as representations, into two types, *a priori* and *a posteriori*: “although all our cognition commences **with** experience, yet it does not on that account all arise **from** experience”.⁶ This passage is crucial as far as it establishes that *a priori* cognition is generated simply by the activity of our cognitive faculties, put in motion by empirical input, but resulting in something without any empirical content. For Kant, *a priori* cognition is the discursive structure on which *a posteriori* cognition is built and with which it always agrees. Therefore, *a posteriori* cognition is that which presents both *a priori* and empirical content. The following passage more explicitly differentiates both types of cognition:

we will understand by *a priori* cognitions not those that occur independently of this or that experience, but rather those that occur *absolutely* independently of all experience. Opposed to them are empirical cognitions, or those that are possible only *a posteriori*, i.e., through experience. Among *a priori* cognitions, however, those are called **pure** with which nothing empirical is intermixed.⁷

Having the other passage in mind, it is possible to interpret that here Kant uses the expression ‘independently of’ only to explain that *a priori* cognition is always the same, no matter what empirical input our cognitive faculties receive.

Kant argues that the most fundamental elements of our discursive capacity are the logical functions of judgment. He identifies what he claims to be a thorough table and equally distributes them, by similarity, under four titles: quantity, quality, relation and modality.⁸ Among those forms, there are, for instance, ‘all As are Bs’, ‘it is not the case that A is B’, ‘if..., then...’.⁹ He explains that, in order for possible experience to emerge, *a priori* synthesis takes place. Our sensibility, “[the] capacity (receptivity) to acquire representations through the way in which we are affected by objects”,¹⁰ the faculty that provides us our sensorial representations, is actually able to generate two of them, space and time, *a priori*. They will constitute the form of all empirical intuitions. Working on the manifold of *a priori* intuition, the understanding, “the **spontaneity** of cognition”,¹¹ is able to produce, by means of *a priori*

⁵ Kant 1998, A77/B103.

⁶ Kant 1998, B1; Kant’s marks.

⁷ Kant 1998, B2-B3; Kant’s marks.

⁸ Kant 1998, A70/B95.

⁹ Thorpe 2015, pp. 127-8.

¹⁰ Kant 1998, A19/B33.

¹¹ Kant 1998, A51/B75; Kant’s marks.

synthesis, *a priori* cognition. According to Kant, the forms of judgment, in contact with the manifold of *a priori* intuition, will give birth to our *a priori* concepts, the categories. Some categories are, respectively: unity, negation, cause and effect.¹² Following the same behavior of the forms of judgment, they are equally distributed among four titles, establishing another complete table. Both lists, Kant explains, are as simplified as possible.

Kant's description of our cognitive activities are under the auspices of his discursivity thesis, as Henry Allison names it, the claim "that human cognition is discursive",¹³ that is to say, "that it requires both concepts and *sensible* intuition".¹⁴ Allison interprets that, for Kant, to cognize is to cognize an object, which then obviously implies "that an object somehow be give to mind",¹⁵ and that, since we are finite beings, our cognition is partial, mediate, which means that we are not able to generate "the object through the act of intuiting"¹⁶ and, thus, that "our intuition and, more generally, that of a finite cognizer, must be sensible, that is, receptive, resulting from an affection of the mind by objects".¹⁷ Nevertheless, a spontaneous, creative faculty is still required for cognition, given that our sensibility is then merely passive, and here is exactly where the discursive faculty of the understanding comes in, as it produces concepts from what sensibility can gather.

In fact, Allison points out that Kant's discursivity thesis conveys "that the very possibility of discursive cognition requires that the data be presented by sensibility in a manner suitable for conceptualization"¹⁸ and, at the same time, "that the way in which sensibility presents its data to the understanding for its conceptualization already reflects a particular manner of receiving it, that is, a certain form of sensibly intuiting, which is determined by the nature of human sensibility rather than by the affecting objects".¹⁹ Not by accident, I presume, Allison's interpretation seems to go along with Kant's argument of the Copernican Turn, mentioned in the "Preface to the second edition" of the first *Critique*, which is a somewhat useful illustration of his attempt to legitimize human cognition:

[up] to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better

¹² Kant 1998, A80/B106.

¹³ Allison 2004, p. 13.

¹⁴ Allison 2004, p. 13; Allison's marks.

¹⁵ Allison 2004, p. 13.

¹⁶ Allison 2004, p. 14.

¹⁷ Allison 2004, p. 14.

¹⁸ Allison 2004, p. 14.

¹⁹ Allison 2004, pp. 14-15.

with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us.²⁰

Indeed, these words here announce exactly his effort to demonstrate, considering that an intellectual, presumably divine-like intuition is impossible for us, that the right approach to human cognition is to accept its partiality and, as a consequence, to examine our cognitive faculties in order to find out how they cognize.

It is exactly within this approach that Kant presents one of his most notorious and crucial dichotomies, that between phenomena and things in themselves. As Allison argues,²¹ phenomena, for Kant, are the manner in which objects of experience are presented to us, already within and according to our *a priori* epistemological conditions; things in themselves, in contrast, are objects seen as if free of any epistemological condition, and, due to this, when it comes to human beings, they can only be thought of, having a place only in the realm of the unconditioned,²² with no link to possible experience whatsoever. The argument is precisely to affirm that this dichotomy is not ontological, but epistemological. It means that, for Kant, there are not two layers of objects in experience, with humans being able to access only one of them, as an ontological dichotomy would suggest, but simply that our contact with objects of cognition will always be conditioned by our cognitive faculties. This is the reason why, for Kant, we cannot cognize things as they are in themselves, but only think about how they probably are.

Now, if human cognition is circumscribed, how can we call it cognition at all? The answer to this question involves the acknowledgment, made by Kant, that, assuming we all share the same faculties, we are also able to share this content with one another and, more importantly, to take off from the same ground, *a priori* cognition. As far as Kant's approach to human cognition is concerned, having the ideal of absolute truth as a touchstone is simply beside the point. Indeed, it is not about trying to be completely sure if an object either is or is not in a certain way, but about how well we, human beings, can comprehend it in our own terms. My next step is to look into the behavior of the understanding in order to demonstrate the importance of the notion of systematicity to Kant's view of human cognition and, as a consequence, to lay the groundwork for the debate on the limits of this faculty when it comes to *a posteriori* cognition.

²⁰ Kant 1998, Bxvi; Kant's marks.

²¹ Allison 2004, *passim*.

²² The realm of the unconditioned, as I will later explain, mainly in chapter 2, is the realm legislated by the faculty of reason.

1.2 Systematicity and the understanding

Kant argues that human beings can produce only two kinds of representations of objects, either sensorial (intuitions) or discursive (concepts), and associates each type with a different faculty, respectively, sensibility and the understanding, being the presence of both of these representations necessary for cognition. Right at the first pages of the “Transcendental Analytic”, he reveals important features of our discursive representations. He argues that “[all] intuitions, as sensible, rest on affections, concepts therefore on functions”,²³ explaining that a function is “the unity of the action of ordering different representations under a common one”.²⁴ A little further, he complements by saying that, “[since] no representation pertains to the object immediately except intuition alone, a concept is thus never immediately related to an object, but is always related to some other representation of it (whether that be an intuition or itself already a concept)”.²⁵ Then, intuitions can directly relate to an object, but only to a single one; concepts, conversely, can relate to objects only indirectly, but to as many as possible.

Those passages already show us that Kant sees our discursive capacities as tools to order sensorial data. The ability that a concept has to relate to many intuitions concerns the fact that it aims at the same features eventually found in several sensorial representations, enabling us to order them. As Allison explains, “because of its generality, a concept can refer to an object only by means of features that are also predicable of other objects falling under the same concept”.²⁶ By using the word ‘red’, for example, we can pinpoint a certain characteristic in any object that turns out to present it, which in turn will allow us to classify it accordingly, among objects of different colors. On a second level, we can use the word ‘color’ to gather all words that correspond to object features that can be classified as such, pinpointing what those concepts have in common and, consequently, allowing us to include the word ‘color’ in a group with many other physical features that an object can have, such as texture, size, weight etc.

Moreover, according to Kant, this relation established between concepts and objects takes place through the act of judging. He explains that “the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than that of judging by means of them”²⁷ and that we can “trace all actions of the understanding back to judgments, so that the **understanding** in general can be

²³ Kant 1998, A68/B93.

²⁴ Kant 1998, A68/B93.

²⁵ Kant 1998, A68/B93.

²⁶ Allison 2004, p. 78.

²⁷ Kant 1998, A68/B93.

represented as a **faculty for judging**".²⁸ Kant details this relation as follows: "[judgment] is therefore the mediate cognition of an object, hence the representation of a representation of it. In every judgment there is a concept that holds of many, and that among this many also comprehends a given representation, which is then related immediately to the object".²⁹ Therefore, extending my example, it is by formulating judgments such as 'this book is red' or 'red is a color' that we are able to link concepts with objects. Allison sums it all up as follows: "the intuition provides the sensible content for the judgment, while the concept provides the discursive rule by means of which this content is thought. It is precisely by determining this content that the concept is brought into relation with the object. That is why Kant characterizes the relation between concept and object as mediate".³⁰

Actually, according to Kant, the connection between our capacity to judge and our concepts is even deeper. It would go as far back as *a priori* cognition, the categories, which would correspond to the meaning underlying each logical function of judgment. Kant explains that, in order for cognition to take place, the manifold of sensibility, present even in its *a priori* representations, must be dealt with, and here is where *a priori* synthesis takes place. In Kant's words, "[the] same function that gives unity to the different representations **in a judgment** also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations **in an intuition**, which, expressed generally, is called the pure concept of understanding".³¹ Not surprisingly, I interpret, both the definitions of function and synthesis given by Kant convey the same procedure, namely, that of gathering many representations under a discursive, general one. More precisely, for Kant, every act of cognition, either *a priori* or *a posteriori*, is a result of synthesis, which he contrasts with analysis.³² To synthesize is to add something new, a discovery, a content that was not there before, conveyed by a new concept. So, Kant, at first, points at the general capacity of our concepts to work as functions and, secondly, argues that this capacity comes from the understanding's ability to synthesize when in contact with sensibility's manifold.

As already mentioned, in the "Transcendental Analytic" Kant claims to have successfully found the exhaustive list of the logical functions of judgment and, consequently, of the categories, being both lists appropriately organized. The premise behind this procedure, that of the existence of a stable, finite discursive structure, is, as far as Kant's epistemology is

²⁸ Kant 1998, A69/B94; Kant's marks.

²⁹ Kant 1998, A68/B93.

³⁰ Allison 2004, p. 85.

³¹ Kant 1998, A79/B104-A79/B105; Kant's marks.

³² Kant 1998, A6/B10-A10/B14.

concerned, unquestionably foundational. Shared by all human beings and independent of experience, this structure would be the backbone of all human cognition. He already alludes to this unity in the very first passage of the “Transcendental Analytic”, when establishing the aim of this part of the book: “the analysis of the entirety of our *a priori* cognition into the elements of the pure cognition of the understanding”.³³

Right after that, Kant lists as one of the guidelines for this investigation the condition “[that] the table of them be complete, and that they entirely exhaust the entire field of pure understanding”,³⁴ then affirms, though, that

this completeness of a science cannot reliably be assumed from a rough calculation of an aggregate put together by mere estimates; hence it is possible only by means of an **idea of the whole** of the *a priori* cognition of the understanding, and through the division of concepts that such an idea determines and that constitutes it, thus only through their **connection in a system**.³⁵

Kant here argues that any order found among the *a priori* products of the understanding should follow a discovered underlying pattern, without which any study concerning them would be random or even arbitrary.³⁶ Indeed, here systematicity appears as a mandatory characteristic when it comes to our discursive capacities.

Then, in Kant, a system is a stable, complete distribution, determined according to levels of similarity and generality, of elements that do not allow gray areas or, at least, allow a consistent method to eradicate them as much as possible, a criterion that our discursive tools could meet. In fact, here is the place where our debate truly takes off, because now, after establishing a stable discursive structure *a priori*, Kant needs to investigate the behavior of *a posteriori* cognition, as far as systematicity is concerned. This notion will keep being the cornerstone, and, for Kant, the attempt, within the critical project, will precisely be to allow this demand to be followed through. The main issue is the fact that the systematization of *a posteriori* cognition demands more effort. However, before examining it, it will be useful to sketch Kant’s theory of the faculties.

1.3 Kant’s theory of the faculties

In order to explain Kant’s epistemology, one needs to make use of his take on certain features of our cognitive faculties. Indeed, the former is deeply intertwined with the latter, as anyone

³³ Kant 1998, A64/B89.

³⁴ Kant 1998, A64/B89.

³⁵ Kant 1998, A64/B89-A65/B89; Kant’s marks. See also: Kant 1998, A65/B89-A65/B90; Kant 1998, A66/B91-A67/B92.

³⁶ Kant’s own list and its distribution might be seen as being arbitrary, and this seems to be a legitimate criticism to be made. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier in the text, my particular attempt here is to debate the merit of his methodological thrust.

would expect from any epistemological theory. However, his theory of the faculties identifies more than just two of them. Actually, in it one clearly identifies five cognitive faculties: sensibility, imagination, power of judgment, understanding and reason. The first two are, paradigmatically, sensorial faculties. The other three are those Kant classified as “the higher faculties of cognition”,³⁷ due to their discursive character. It is important to say that here I will not present theoretical reason nor the power of judgment in detail, given that the next two chapters will, respectively, fulfill this role. Having a good grasp on each faculty’s features, behaviors and roles, at least as far as cognition is concerned, is crucial for anyone who wants to study Kant’s epistemology.

Sensibility, being affected by objects of experience, that is to say, phenomena, generates intuitions, both *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Intuitions are, obviously, sensorial representations, containing the manifold of experience, which prompts the labor of the understanding. Now, our sensorial representations are composed of two elements, matter and form: the latter, “that which allows the manifold of phenomenon to be ordered in certain relations”,³⁸ being constituted of our *a priori* intuitions, space and time; the former, what Kant names sensation, “[the] effect of an object on the capacity for representation, insofar as we are affected by it”.³⁹ Kant explains:

[since] that within which the sensations can alone be ordered and placed in a certain form cannot itself be in turn sensation, the matter of all phenomenon is only given to us *a posteriori*, but its form must all lie ready for it in the mind *a priori*, and can therefore be considered separately from all sensation.⁴⁰

One can notice, then, that the most basic elements of human cognition are precisely our *a priori* intuitions, which have the ability to conform phenomena.

In the “Transcendental Analytic”, when explaining the process of synthesis performed by the understanding, Kant actually argues that, in order for it to happen, imagination needs to participate, helping the understanding deal with the manifold of sensibility. After a few words on the characteristics and role of synthesis, he writes:

[synthesis] in general is, as we shall subsequently see, the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul, without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious. Yet to bring this synthesis **to concepts** is a function that pertains to the understanding, and by means of which it first provides cognition in the proper sense.⁴¹

³⁷ Kant 1998, A130/B169.

³⁸ Kant 1998, A20/B34; modified translation: I decided to use the term ‘phenomenon’ instead of ‘appearance’, being the former, I understand, more appropriate to Kant’s semantics.

³⁹ Kant 1998, A19/B34; modified translation.

⁴⁰ Kant 1998, A20/B34; Kant’s marks.

⁴¹ Kant 1998, A78/B103; Kant’s marks.

In this passage, Kant does not really say much, but already gives a hint about the central role imagination plays in cognition, participating in the transcendental schematism. Indeed, it is only in the “Analytic of Principles”, in its first chapter, “On the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding”, that he will define this role, which turns out to be crucial to cognition. The issue more broadly concerns the fact that, for him, concepts and intuitions are, by definition, heterogeneous representations, given their opposite characteristics: the former, discursive, mediate, aiming at universality; the latter, sensorial, immediate, aiming at singularity. The result is the question: how can they both relate?

Kant’s solution for this dilemma is the proposal of a third, hybrid element, which will enable the other two to determine each other:

[now] it is clear that there must be a third thing, which must stand in homogeneity with the category on the one hand and the phenomenon on the other, and makes possible the application of the former to the latter. This mediating representation must be pure (without anything empirical) and yet **intellectual** on the one hand and **sensible** on the other. Such a representation is the **transcendental schema**.⁴²

According to Kant, ‘[this] mediating representation’ is the *a priori* intuition of time, which allegedly contains both these characteristics:

[now] a transcendental time-determination is homogeneous with the **category** (which constitutes its unity) insofar as it is **universal** and rests on a rule *a priori*. But it is on the other hand homogeneous with the **phenomenon** insofar as **time** is contained in every empirical representation of the manifold. Hence an application of the category to phenomena becomes possible by means of the transcendental time-determination which, as the schema of the concept of the understanding, mediates the subsumption of the latter under the former.⁴³

A little bit further, he will finally explain:

[the] schema is in itself always only a product of the imagination; but since the synthesis of the latter has as its aim no individual intuition but rather only the unity in the determination of sensibility, the schema is to be distinguished from an image. Thus, if I place five points in a row, , this is an image of the number five. On the contrary, if I only think a number in general, which could be five or a hundred, this thinking is more the representation of a method for representing a multitude (e.g., a thousand) in accordance with a certain concept than the image itself, which in this case I could survey and compare with the concept only with difficulty. Now this representation of a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image is what I call the schema for this concept.⁴⁴

Briefly put, the schematism is then a procedure of the imagination, which the *a priori* intuition of time enables, that allows one to internally search for images that relate to the meaning a concept conveys, making cognition possible.

The “Analytic of Principles” concerns more properly the role of the power of judgment in determination. At its beginning, after a few important comments, he writes:

⁴² Kant 1998, A138-A139/B177-B178; Kant’s marks; modified translation.

⁴³ Kant 1998, A138/B177; Kant’s marks; modified translation.

⁴⁴ Kant 1998, A140/B179-B180.

“[the] **analytic of principles** will accordingly be solely a canon for the **power of judgment** that teaches it to apply to phenomena the concepts of the understanding, which contain the condition for rules *a priori*”.⁴⁵ Therefore, for Kant, this procedure involves not only the imagination, but also the power of judgment. In fact, Kant’s take on the power of judgment was not fully developed in the first *Critique*, considering the novelties he presents in the third *Critique*. He will not only also associate it with a new *a priori* principle, that of the technique of nature, but also with an important activity, that of reflection, being both, the concept and the activity, intrinsically related not only to each other, but also to the production and systematization of *a posteriori* cognition.

It is important to point out that, according to Kant, *a priori* cognition also includes the laws of nature, also products of the application of the functions of judgment to sensorial data and the principles to which the title “Analytic of Principles” refers to. Among them is the law of causation, which, as a consequence, concerns every single object of experience. In possible experience, every event and every act is seen by the understanding as conditioned by means of an identifiable cause. In other words, the understanding is the faculty of the conditioned, which makes it, in this aspect, different from the faculty of reason. The latter, as is well known, can be divided into two main roles, practical and theoretical reason. Here, in this text, the second one is, by far, that which receives most of the attention: according to Kant, when it comes to our discursive capacities, the boundaries of experience can be crossed. Actually, he argues, it happens continuously and has as a result what Kant calls, in the “Transcendental Dialectic” of the first *Critique*, transcendental illusion. This impulse is born in theoretical reason, which is the faculty that intends to go beyond the metaphysics the understanding presents us. It searches for an even broader and more complete unity, which aims at the first cause. In Kant’s words, “the proper principle of reason in general (in its logical use) is to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed”.⁴⁶ Theoretical reason is, therefore, the faculty of the unconditioned, also having a role in the systematization of *a posteriori* cognition.

1.4 *A posteriori* cognition

As I attempted to demonstrate earlier in this chapter, within Kant’s transcendental idealism, as far as our discursive capacities are concerned, the faculty of the understanding is the one responsible for guaranteeing *a priori* cognition, which provides a discursive structure shared

⁴⁵ Kant 1998, A132/B171; Kant’s marks; modified translation.

⁴⁶ Kant 1998, A307/B364.

by all human beings. Regardless of the sort of *a posteriori* content we can have access to by means of the faculty of sensibility, *a priori* cognition keeps being the same, since it is exclusively related to the nature of our cognitive faculties. However, when it comes to *a posteriori* cognition, the faculty of the understanding cannot guarantee the same certainty. Here, it is important to pay attention to a specific dichotomy: experience in general versus particular experience. The following passage of the “First Introduction” of the third *Critique* illustrates this issue very well:

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.⁴⁷

The notion of systematicity appears again as a touchstone, accompanying the acknowledgment that *a posteriori* cognition, in the eyes of the understanding, does not properly fit into it. In fact, in the “Introduction” of the first *Critique* Kant already gives an important clue to this matter. At the beginning of its second section, Kant attempts to establish the difference between *a priori* and *a posteriori* cognition. At first, he affirms that “[experience] teaches us, to be sure, that something is constituted thus and so, but not that it could not be otherwise”.⁴⁸ Right after that, he brings forward two criteria that one can use to determine if a cognition is pure, namely, necessity and strict universality. Explaining the them, he writes:

First, then, if a proposition is thought along with its necessity, it is an *a priori* judgment; if it is, moreover, also not derived from any proposition except one that in turn is valid as a necessary proposition, then it is absolutely *a priori*. **Second**: Experience never gives its judgments true or strict but only assumed and comparative **universality** (through induction), so properly it must be said: as far as we have yet perceived, there is no exception to this or that rule. Thus if a judgment is thought in strict universality, i.e., in such a way that no exception at all is allowed to be possible, then it is not derived from experience, but is rather valid absolutely *a priori*.⁴⁹

Simply put, *a posteriori* cognition is itself variable. A few pages later in the third *Critique*, Kant takes a step further:

[we] have seen in the critique of pure reason that the whole of nature as the totality of all objects of experience constitutes a system in accordance with transcendental laws, namely those that the understanding itself gives *a priori* (for phenomena, namely, insofar as they, combined in one consciousness, are to constitute experience). For that very reason, experience, in accordance with general as well as particular laws, insofar as it is considered objectively to be possible in general, must

⁴⁷ Kant 2002, 20:203; Kant’s marks.

⁴⁸ Kant 1998, B3.

⁴⁹ Kant 1998, B3-4; Kant’s marks.

also constitute (in the idea) a system of possible empirical cognitions. For that is required by the unity of nature, in accordance with a principle of the thoroughgoing connection of everything contained in this totality of all phenomena. 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.⁵⁰

Indeed, the notion of a system gains even more importance, given that it also explains ‘the whole of nature’, which is, ‘as the totality of all objects of experience’, lawful, an aspect that the transcendental laws enable; and this means that nature should behave as a system when it comes to its empirical forms and laws as well.

A posteriori cognition never disagrees with *a priori* cognition, given that experience is built on it. However, in the following paragraph, Kant reminds us:

it does not follow from this that nature even in accordance with empirical laws is a system that can be grasped by the human faculty of cognition, and that the thoroughgoing systematic interconnection of its phenomena in one experience, hence the latter itself as a system, is possible for human beings.⁵¹

Nature, considered as the whole of phenomena, as it actually is *a posteriori*, is far more complex than what the understanding can synthesize *a priori*. Therefore, Kant is admitting the understanding’s inability to systematize *a posteriori* cognition in the terms it does with *a priori* cognition, because the empirical forms of nature, from this faculty’s perspective, are unpredictably diverse. So, he explains:

unity of nature in time and space and unity of the experience possible for us are identical, since the former is a totality of mere phenomena (kinds of representations), which can have its objective reality only in experience, which, as itself a system in accordance with empirical laws, must be possible if one is to think of the former as a system (as must indeed be done). Thus it is a subjectively necessary transcendental **presupposition** that such a disturbingly unbounded diversity of empirical laws and heterogeneity of natural forms does not pertain to nature, rather that nature itself, through the affinity of particular laws under more general ones, qualifies for an experience, as an empirical system.⁵²

Then, although Kant definitely does not go as far as arguing that the diversity of nature in its empirical forms compromises the status of *a posteriori* cognition as such, he does acknowledge our need to presuppose *a priori* that it is also part of a complete, systematized whole, in order for us to make the endeavor to investigate nature. That is what Kant meant above by saying that ‘experience, in accordance with general as well as particular laws, insofar as it is considered objectively to be possible in general, must also constitute (in the idea) a system of possible empirical cognitions’. The ‘idea’ here would exactly be this *a priori* presupposition that must hold everything together.

⁵⁰ Kant 2002, 20:208-209; modified translation.

⁵¹ Kant 2002, 20:209; modified translation.

⁵² Kant 2002, 20:209; modified translation.

Kant will attempt to meet this demand with two different formulations and associate each one with a different discursive faculty: first, still in the first *Critique*, with theoretical reason; second, already in the third *Critique*, with the reflecting power of judgment. In the first *Critique*, the acknowledgment of the limits of the understanding, as far as *a posteriori* cognition is concerned, will more properly emerge in the “Transcendental Dialectic” and will be more fully discussed in its “Appendix”. In the “Introduction” to this division of the book, Kant starts to expatiate on the nature of theoretical reason, as the faculty of the unconditioned. At a certain point, he writes:

[if] the understanding may be a faculty of unity of phenomena by means of rules, then reason is the faculty of the unity of the rules of understanding under principles. Thus it never applies directly to experience or to any object, but instead applies to the understanding, in order to give unity *a priori* through concepts to the understanding’s manifold cognitions, which may be called “the unity of reason,” and is of an altogether different kind than any unity that can be achieved by the understanding.⁵³

This is probably the first passage where Kant fully argues on both the limitations of the understanding and on an aid provided by theoretical reason - the ‘unity *a priori* through concepts [given] to the understanding’s manifold cognitions’, that is to say, given to *a posteriori* cognition -, also conveying that they are assigned complementary labors. Indeed, Kant will argue that there is an immanent use of theoretical reason’s ideas, whose transcendent use is directly related to transcendental illusion. This regulative use, as he names it, would exactly be the theoretical reason’s contribution to the systematization of *a posteriori* cognition.

In the third *Critique*, though, Kant, as seen above, again acknowledges the limitations of the understanding, but now associating a possible solution with the power of judgment, which helps us both generate and systematize *a posteriori* concepts, among other tasks. In the “First Introduction”, right after identifying the cognitive demand for a transcendental presupposition of the empirical systematicity of nature, he writes: “[now] this presupposition is the transcendental principle of the power of judgment. For this is not merely a faculty for subsuming the particular under the general (whose concept is given), but is also, conversely, one for finding the general for the particular”.⁵⁴ Then, after commenting, again, on the limits of the understanding, he states: “[yet] the power of judgment, which is obliged to bring particular laws, even with regard to what differentiates them under the same general laws of nature, under higher, though still empirical laws, must ground its procedure on such a

⁵³ Kant 1998, A302/B359; Kant’s marks; modified translation.

⁵⁴ Kant 2002, 20:209-210.

principle”.⁵⁵ Kant will argue that this principle is that of the technique or purposiveness of nature, an *a priori* principle he puts forward in the *third* Critique and associates with the reflecting labor of the power of judgment, which the passages above briefly describe.

Indeed, the simple fact that Kant attempts two different answers to this issue, in two different books, involving two different faculties, is itself worthy of special attention. Nonetheless, in the end, all things considered, I will argue that, within the economy of the discursive faculties, all three of them, each one in its own manner, contribute to the cohesion of human cognition. Moreover, it is pertinent to point out that both the acknowledgment of this limitation of the understanding and the character of the solutions to this limitation work in accordance with Kant’s deflated metaphysics. I will look into each answer in a different chapter of my study, in order to give each of them close attention: the regulative labor of theoretical reason will be the theme of the next chapter; in the third chapter, then, I will examine the reflecting power of judgment.

⁵⁵ Kant 2002, 20:210.

2 Theoretical reason

In this chapter, I intend to take a closer look at the structure of the argument concerning the regulative use of theoretical reason, which is, according to Kant, the immanent and consequently legitimate use of this faculty and its concepts. This is his first attempt, still in the first *Critique*, to meet our demand, which he argues he identified, for an *a priori* presupposition that we can systematize *a posteriori* cognition. This chapter will also have four topics: first, explaining in more detail the nature of theoretical reason and its relation to transcendental illusion; second, discussing the nature of theoretical reason's transcendental ideas; third, more properly presenting the regulative function of theoretical reason and the role of transcendental ideas in it; and fourth, debating the transcendental deduction of these concepts, which will only be possible due to their regulative use.

2.1 Theoretical reason and transcendental illusion

The “Transcendental Logic” of the first *Critique*, as is well known, has two divisions: the “Transcendental Analytic” and the “Transcendental Dialectic”. In the former, where the understanding deserves most of the attention, Kant presents many central elements of his transcendental idealism, within the endeavor of both proving that humans produce synthetic *a priori* cognition and establishing its boundaries. In the latter, he will then attempt to demonstrate what happens when we cross these boundaries: one of its most striking themes is what he named transcendental illusion. The “Transcendental Dialectic” is the moment of the book where Kant will more properly present theoretical reason as a cognitive faculty of its own, with its particular characteristics, concepts and behavior. My aim here, in the first topic of this chapter, is to describe and analyze arguments that appear in its “Introduction”.

Among all five human cognitive faculties Kant describes, theoretical reason is maybe the most peculiar, because, when it comes to cognition, its pertinence is not as evident as those of the other four. After all, it is the only one that has no direct access to sensible representations. This is what he explains in the following passage of the “Introduction” to the “Transcendental Dialectic”: “[if], therefore, pure reason also deals with objects, yet it has no immediate reference to them and their intuition, but deals only with the understanding and its judgments, which apply directly to the senses and their intuition, in order to determine their object”.⁵⁶ Kant then conveys, with this description, theoretical reason as being an utterly discursive faculty.

⁵⁶ Kant 1998, A306-307/B363.

Theoretical reason will present the demand to expand one's knowledge, that is to say, to go further, higher than what possible experience can offer. In the "Introduction" to the "Transcendental Dialectic", Kant explains, for instance, that "[all] our cognition starts from the senses, goes from there to the understanding, and ends with reason, beyond which there is nothing higher to be found in us to work on the matter of intuition and bring it under the highest unity of thinking".⁵⁷ In this passage, among other things, he defines theoretical reason as a faculty that systematizes, working on the concepts produced by the understanding. However, he does not stop here. A little bit further, he will say that,

[as] in the case of the understanding, there is in the case of reason a merely formal, i.e., logical use, where reason abstracts from all content of cognition, but there is also a real use, since reason itself contains the origin of certain concepts and principles, which it derives neither from the senses nor from the understanding.⁵⁸

Now, it is more clear what Kant meant by associating theoretical reason with 'the highest unity of thinking': this faculty produces what would be, considering his epistemology, fictional concepts,⁵⁹ aiming at reaching a higher level of totality than that provided by the categories of the understanding, systematizing, at the same time, all concepts it has access to.

Indeed, this split between a logical and a real use, described by Kant, is crucial here, since it reveals an issue. After all, within his transcendental idealism, ascribing a real (transcendental) use to a faculty that has no direct contact with sensible representations raises a question: could it determine intuitions? He says: "[in] the first part of our transcendental logic we defined the understanding as the faculty of rules; here we will distinguish reason from understanding by calling reason the **faculty of principles**".⁶⁰ By using this terminology, Kant wants to convey that, while the understanding cognizes working on sensible material, theoretical reason does that working only on the concepts the understanding offers it. He then coins the expression "cognition from principles",⁶¹ which is a "cognition in which I cognize the particular in the universal through concepts".⁶² Needless to say, it imposes an obvious problem, given that, for him, cognition is always cognition of objects of experience. He admits: "that objects in themselves, as well as the nature of things, should stand under principles and be determined according to mere concepts is something that, if not impossible, is at least very paradoxical in what it demands".⁶³

⁵⁷ Kant 1998, A298-299/B355.

⁵⁸ Kant 1998, A299/B355.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, Lebrun 2002, chapter VIII.

⁶⁰ Kant 1998, A299/B356; Kant's marks.

⁶¹ Kant 1998, A300/B357.

⁶² Kant 1998, A300/B357.

⁶³ Kant 1998, A301-302/B358.

Theoretical reason, being a faculty that cognizes through concepts, works on inferring (its) principles from (the) rules (of the understanding) by means of prosyllogisms. Differently from the understanding, which is, so to speak, satisfied with possible experience, theoretical reason, aiming at expanding our cognition, will always attempt to go further, to take a higher step, looking for the first cause, the origin of it all, which would assumedly put all the pieces of the puzzle in their proper places. Indeed, according to Kant, this feature represents the fundamental principle of theoretical reason, enabling him to state the foundational difference between this faculty and the understanding: “we see very well that the proper principle of reason in general (in its logical use) is to find the unconditioned for conditioned cognitions of the understanding, with which its unity will be completed”.⁶⁴ Simultaneously, theoretical reason systematizes, ordering lower concepts under higher ones.

This is how theoretical reason’s logical use turns into its real use; or, in other words, this is how transcendental illusion emerges: theoretical reason’s cognition from principles goes beyond the boundaries of possible experience, treating its own fictional concepts as real ones. According to Kant, both truth and error can only be ascribed to judgments.⁶⁵ As he explains in the “Introduction” to the “Transcendental Logic”, truth, for him, “is the agreement of cognition with its object”,⁶⁶ and then it is necessary to establish the criterion to evaluate this agreement - which is, in his view, to be in accordance with the *a priori* conditions of possible experience. In the “Introduction” to the “Transcendental Dialectic”, Kant will then explain that error, the opposite of truth, can be generated by illusion. He identifies two kinds of illusion, the logical and the transcendental one. He first explains the former: “[logical] illusion, which consists in the mere imitation of the form of reason (the illusion of fallacious inferences) arises solely from a failure of attentiveness to the logical rule. Hence as soon as this attentiveness is focused on the case before us, logical illusion entirely disappears”.⁶⁷ In other words, it is logically inconsistent syllogisms that appear consistent, but that we can correct. Right after that, he explains the latter:

[transcendental] illusion, on the other hand, does not cease even though it is uncovered and its nullity is clearly seen into by transcendental criticism [...]. The cause of this is that in our reason (considered subjectively as a human faculty of cognition) there lie fundamental rules and maxims for its use, which look entirely like objective principles, and through them it comes about that the subjective necessity of a certain connection of our concepts on behalf of the understanding is taken for an objective necessity, the determination of things in themselves.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Kant 1998, A307/B364.

⁶⁵ Kant 1998, A293/B349-350.

⁶⁶ Kant 1998, A58/B82.

⁶⁷ Kant 1998, A296-297/B353.

⁶⁸ Kant 1998, A297/B353.

Therefore, in Kant the word ‘illusion’ means to see something as being something else; or, more properly, to misguidedly ascribe certain features to something, features it actually does not have: in the case of transcendental illusion, to grant theoretical reason’s concepts the same epistemological status as that of the concepts the understanding generates, handling them as if they were cognition; a state that, differently from logical illusion, ‘does not cease even though it is uncovered and its nullity is clearly seen into by transcendental criticism’. For him, there are no objects in possible experience that could be determined by or correspond to the concepts theoretical reason generates, which makes the way we handle them illusory. As he mentions, theoretical reason treats its own subjective demands as objective ones, overstepping possible experience.

Fundamentally, what happens is a misemployment of the categories of the understanding: we either apply to or incorporate them in the concepts of theoretical reason as if the latter were connected with possible experience. Related to this use of the categories, there is another important distinction made by Kant, that between transcendent and immanent principles. A transcendent principle is that “which indeed bids us to overstep [the boundaries of experience]”,⁶⁹ while immanent principles are “the principles whose application stays wholly and completely within the limits of possible experience”.⁷⁰ He will then classify theoretical reason’s principle as transcendent, since it tricks us into misusing the categories, which are paradigmatically immanent, entangled with its own fictional concepts, generating transcendental illusion.

In that regard, Kant will argue that

[the] transcendental dialectic will therefore content itself with uncovering the illusion in transcendental judgments, while at the same time protecting us from being deceived by it; but it can never bring it about that transcendental illusion (like logical illusion) should even disappear and cease to be an illusion. For what we have to do with here is a **natural** and unavoidable **illusion** which itself rests on subjective principles and passes them off as objective, whereas logical dialectic in its dissolution of fallacious inferences has to do only with an error in following principles or with an artificial illusion that imitates them.⁷¹

Then, according to him, transcendental illusion is inescapable (‘natural and unavoidable’) but manageable, to a degree that safeguards us against undermining the consistency of *a priori* cognition, being his aim precisely to help us not be ‘deceived by this illusion’, mainly by simply shedding light on it. In fact, as I will attempt to demonstrate later in this chapter, Kant will argue in favor of a possible immanent use of the concepts of theoretical reason, namely,

⁶⁹ Kant 1998, A296/B353; original phrase: “...which indeed bids us to overstep them...”.

⁷⁰ Kant 1998, A295-6/B352.

⁷¹ Kant 1998, A297-298/B354; Kant’s marks.

their regulative use, which will aid the faculty of the understanding with the task of systematizing *a posteriori* concepts. However, before I fully address this argument, it will be pertinent to start mapping theoretical reason's concepts and better understand their nature, an endeavor I will make in the next topic of this chapter.

2.2 Transcendental ideas

Right after the "Introduction", The first book of the "Transcendental Dialectic", named "On the concepts of pure reason", will debate in more detail, as its name already suggests, the nature of theoretical reason's concepts. One of the first things Kant concerns himself to do in this book is to give these concepts an original designation, related to their characteristics. He spends a few pages debating Plato's well known terminology concerning universals, which he, Plato, named ideas. Throughout this passage, Kant will frequently see strong similarities between Plato's ideas and theoretical reason's concepts as he, Kant, sees them. Therefore, as a means to both elevate their status within his argumentative economy and to terminologically differentiate them from the categories, Kant names them transcendental ideas.

According to Kant, transcendental ideas project themselves beyond possible experience, although they also encompass it, being the focal points along the path theoretical reason is taking, by means of inferences, toward the unconditioned. In his own words,

the transcendental concept of reason is none other than that of the **totality of conditions** to a given conditioned thing. Now since the **unconditioned** alone makes possible the totality of conditions, and conversely the totality of conditions is always itself unconditioned, a pure concept of reason in general can be explained through the concept of the unconditioned, insofar as it contains a ground of synthesis for what is conditioned.⁷²

Given that theoretical reason never truly reaches the 'totality of conditions', transcendental ideas are then the products of an endless discursive journey, the explanations at which theoretical reason can actually arrive, extensions of its principle. Although the understanding always presupposes a condition for an event, seeing everything as conditioned, it does not, by itself, seek for something beyond possible experience, which is exactly what theoretical reason does, searching for the unconditioned.

Although Kant addresses transcendental illusion as a serious issue, which demands careful attention, in the first book of the "Transcendental Dialectic" he sheds light on a surprising merit of theoretical reason's behavior: it shows that human beings are not satisfied with the cognition possible experience can offer, which is, by definition, limited. When commenting on Plato's ideas, Kant argues:

⁷² Kant 1998, A322/B379; Kant's marks.

Plato noted very well that our power of cognition feels a far higher need than that of merely spelling out appearances according to a synthetic unity in order to be able to read them as experience, and that our reason naturally exalts itself to cognitions that go much too far for any object that experience can give ever to be congruent, but that nonetheless have their reality and are by no means merely figments of the brain.⁷³

For Kant, then, as far as our discursive faculties are concerned, theoretical reason's behavior would represent our potential to defy limits, to not accept them and seek further explanations. He even seems to suggest that experience, limited to its empirical boundaries, would lack meaning, maybe not even deserving to be named as such.

From this perspective, the actual problem here, instead of being theoretical reason's behavior, is in fact the limited capacity of the understanding, since it cannot reach as far as it "should", that is to say, as far as theoretical reason allegedly announces human beings can reach. This is exactly the reason why Kant will present transcendental ideas as problematic concepts, as cognitions that impose a challenge on the understanding. In his own words, "[they] are not arbitrarily invented, but given as problems by the nature of reason itself, and hence they relate necessarily to the entire use of the understanding".⁷⁴ Therefore, what he describes is a tension between two cognitive faculties, between the unconditioned and the conditioned, between what human beings want and can actually have, a tension that more clearly appears in transcendental illusion. Indeed, as he reminds us, "the objective use of the pure concepts of reason is always **transcendent**, while that of the pure concepts of understanding must by its nature always be **immanent**, since it is limited solely to possible experience".⁷⁵

Kant will then attempt to explain in more detail the origin of these ideas and which exactly they are. He argues that, just as the functions of judgment generate the categories, the forms of syllogism, which are the structure of theoretical reason's behavior, will enable the generation of the transcendental ideas. Since the syllogism contains a major premise, which is, by definition, universal, this premise will be the natural place for theoretical reason's principles to occupy along its path through prosyllogisms toward the unconditioned. As it goes higher and higher, its fictional concepts will emerge and take their proper places within the fictional causal chain it is developing. Kant links the transcendental ideas to syllogisms that, in turn, he links to the categories of relation, which are the concepts of substance, causality and community: "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

⁷³ Kant 1998, A314/B370-371;

⁷⁴ Kant 1998, A327/B384.

⁷⁵ Kant 1998, A327/B383; Kant's marks.

third for the **disjunctive** synthesis of the parts in a **system**".⁷⁶ Right after that, he explains that

[there] are, therefore, just as many species of syllogism, and in each of them prosyllogisms proceed to the unconditioned: one, to a subject that is no longer a predicate, another to a presupposition that presupposes nothing further, and the third to an aggregate of members of a division such that nothing further is required for it to complete the division of a concept.⁷⁷

To summarize: first, the functions of relation of the understanding generate the categories of relation, which, second, make it possible for theoretical reason's prosyllogisms to emerge, which, third, will each create a related transcendental idea. A little bit further in the text, Kant will spell out:

[the] thinking subject is the object of **psychology**, the sum total of all appearances (the world) is the object of **cosmology**, and the thing that contains the supreme condition of the possibility of everything that can be thought (the being of all beings) is the object of **theology**. Thus pure reason provides the ideas for a transcendental doctrine of the soul (*psychologia rationalis*), a transcendental science of the world (*cosmologia rationalis*), and finally also a transcendental cognition of God (*theologia transcendentalis*).⁷⁸

The transcendental ideas theoretical reason generates will then be the *a priori* concepts of soul, world and God, which Kant will detailedly study in the second book of the "Transcendental Dialectic".

Theoretical reason's behavior, let's not forget, concerns an attempt to expand *a priori* cognition, which takes place by means of the search for its allegedly unconditioned sources. The question that motivates this behavior is: what lies beyond possible experience, that is to say, what is out there that the faculty of understanding has not grasped? This cognition theoretical reason seeks is in fact within an upward progression, through inferences, from where the understanding stopped. These unconditioned sources, then, are not isolated, random spots discovered by accident, but the products of a procedure that unfolded a systematized structure, encompassing the products of the understanding. This is the ambiguity inherent in theoretical reason's behavior: on the one hand, its tendency to carry us beyond possible experience, generating transcendental illusion; on the other hand, its contribution to the systematization of concepts, which is possible only due to its path of inferences toward the unconditioned. The crucial axis to deal with this ambiguity appears in the "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic", where, for the first time, Kant presents the contrast between a constitutive and a regulative use of transcendental ideas, being the former transcendent, generating transcendental illusion, and the latter, immanent, allowing an arguably safe

⁷⁶ Kant 1998, A323/B379; Kant's marks.

⁷⁷ Kant 1998, A323/B379-380.

⁷⁸ Kant 1998, A334-335/B391-392; Kant's marks.

systematization of *a posteriori* cognition. He also presents other concepts theoretical reason generates, mainly those of genus, species and of the form of the whole of cognition. Now, in the next two topics of this chapter, I will analyze his attempt to explain transcendental ideas' regulative use. This use indeed emerges as the first answer to our inner demand for the systematization of *a posteriori* cognition.

2.3 The regulative use of transcendental ideas

Kant's account of theoretical reason does not appear extravagant at all, since it represents concrete epistemological demands human beings have and, consequently, includes them in his theory of the faculties. When affirming that transcendental illusion is 'natural and unavoidable', he legitimizes theoretical reason's behavior, hinting that something good can actually come from it. Not by accident, this is one of the goals of the "Transcendental Dialectic": to present the pertinence of this faculty, despite its possible misuses. Accordingly, as early as its "Introduction", Kant starts elaborating on this alleged pertinence, shedding light on the capacity that theoretical reason has to systematize, a systematization of a different nature than that presented by the understanding. It is worth to quote the following passage again:

[if] the understanding may be a faculty of unity of appearances by means of rules, then reason is the faculty of the unity of the rules of understanding under principles. Thus it never applies directly to experience or to any object, but instead applies to the understanding, in order to give unity *a priori* through concepts to the understanding's manifold cognitions, which may be called "the unity of reason," and is of an altogether different kind than any unity that can be achieved by the understanding.⁷⁹

As alluded before, this is probably the first passage of the first *Critique* where Kant explicitly presents a contribution given by theoretical reason that meets an actual epistemological demand, namely, 'to give unity *a priori* through concepts to the understanding's manifold cognitions'. In fact, this is also probably the first time he acknowledges this demand. As Kant explains, "[in fact] the manifold of rules and the unity of principles is a demand of reason, in order to bring the understanding into thoroughgoing connection with itself, just as the understanding brings the manifold of intuition under concepts and through them into connection".⁸⁰ In other words, theoretical reason's capacities already anticipate *a priori* the limitations of the understanding concerning the manifold of *a posteriori* cognition, reinforcing the argument that the behavior of the cognitive faculties are complementary.

⁷⁹ Kant 1998, A302/B359; Kant's marks.

⁸⁰ Kant 1998, A305-306/B362.

At the end of the first paragraph of the “Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic”, which also starts off its first part, named “On the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason”, commenting on the results achieved so far in the “Transcendental Dialectic”, Kant affirms that

transcendental ideas are just as natural to [human reason] as the categories are to the understanding, although with this difference, that just as the categories lead to truth, i.e., to the agreement of our concepts with their objects, the ideas effect a mere, but irresistible, illusion, deception by which one can hardly resist even through the most acute criticism.⁸¹

However, at the beginning of the second paragraph, he shifts gears, arguing that

[everything] grounded in the nature of our powers must be purposive and consistent with their correct use, if only we can guard against a certain misunderstanding and find out their proper direction. Thus the transcendental ideas too will presumably have a good and consequently **immanent** use, even though, if their significance is misunderstood and they are taken for concepts of real things, they can be transcendent in their application and for that very reason deceptive.⁸²

Right after that, he reinforces this argument: “it is not the idea itself but only its use that can be either **extravagant** (transcendent) or **indigenous** (immanent)”.⁸³ Indeed, this is probably the necessary measure to validate transcendental ideas: to transfer the mistake associated with transcendental illusion from their very nature to the use that can be made of them; on their own, they would be neither transcendent nor immanent. Actually, Kant seems to suggest that both uses, given that transcendental illusion is ‘irresistible’, happen simultaneously, but that we can peacefully live with the transcendent one and at the same time profit from the immanent one.

This move made by Kant in the second paragraph will allow him to present in the fourth paragraph a crucial dichotomy, that between the constitutive use and the regulative use of transcendental ideas:

the transcendental ideas are never of constitutive use, so that the concepts of certain objects would thereby be given, and in case one so understands them, they are merely sophistical (dialectical) concepts. On the contrary, however, they 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 possible experience - nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension.⁸⁴

In other words, Kant argues that the fictions generated by theoretical reason, which go beyond possible experience, not only can, but also should serve as cognitive tools, given that they allegedly provide a discursive structure that enhances the labor of the understanding, a

⁸¹ Kant 1998, A642/B670; original phrase: “...transcendental ideas are just as natural to it...”.

⁸² Kant 1998, A642-643/B670-671; Kant’s marks.

⁸³ Kant 1998, A643/B671; Kant’s marks.

⁸⁴ Kant 1998, A644/B672; Kant’s marks.

structure that cannot be provided otherwise. It is easy to see the parallel: while their constitutive use is clearly transcendent, their regulative use is immanent.

In fact, in order to make sense of this discursive structure, Kant will present a new set of concepts, which does not include fictional objects. In the fifth paragraph, Kant mentions a transcendental idea that more specifically concerns the complete systematization of empirical cognition. He argues that,

[if] we survey the cognitions of our understanding in their entire range, then we find that what reason quite uniquely prescribes and seeks to bring about concerning it is the **systematic** in cognition, i.e., its interconnection based on one principle. 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 the others. Accordingly, this idea postulates complete unity of the understanding's cognition, through which this cognition comes to be not merely a contingent aggregate but a system interconnected in accordance with necessary laws.⁸⁵

Now the issue at hand is quite clear: for Kant, cognition is relational, which means that, if it were not possible to find a minimally stable place for a new concept in our discursive tree, we would not be able to use it properly. This fearful discursive mess is what Kant here names 'a contingent aggregate', the exact problem he claims the regulative use of theoretical reason avoids, a use that indispensably includes the idea 'of the form of a whole of cognition'. And this contingent aggregate bears its name due to the fact that it includes exclusively *a posteriori* cognition. This is precisely the first answer Kant attempts to give to our *a priori* need of complete systematization of this kind of cognition.

Kant's argument here is precisely that theoretical reason, by means of the *a priori* concept of the form of a whole of cognition, is able to provide an *a priori* discursive structure that will have a provisional but relatively stable spot for each of the *a posteriori* concepts of the understanding, a task the understanding cannot perform. Again, systematicity is the touchstone, as could be expected from Kant's epistemology. If, for example, one discovers a new color and names it red, one can properly use this concept without the need to discover all the other existing properties of objects, or even all the other colors. According to Kant, theoretical reason also envisions the possible relations among *a posteriori* concepts by means of two other ideas, namely, of genus and species:

[to] the logical principle of genera which postulates identity there is opposed another, namely that of **species**, which needs manifoldness and variety in things despite their agreement under the same genus, and prescribes to the understanding that it be no less attentive to variety than to agreement.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Kant 1998, A645/B673; Kant's marks.

⁸⁶ Kant 1998, A654/B682; Kant's marks.

As one might notice, Kant presents theoretical reason as a fertile faculty, multiplying concepts in accordance with its own demands. The concepts of genus and species predict, respectively, the similarities among empirical concepts and their rich diversity. Accordingly, the first one represents a mechanism that allocates concepts hierarchically, due to the level of universality they might present; the second one, on the contrary, allows concepts to be allocated in accordance with their multiplicity. Each principle then pushes systematization toward an opposite direction: either the more general or the more specific.

However, Kant does not stop here. A few pages later, he argues that these two ideas will unfold other three *a priori* concepts:

[reason] thus prepares the field for the understanding: 1. by a principle of **sameness of kind** in the manifold under higher genera, 2. by a principle of the **variety** of what is same in kind under lower species; and in order to complete the systematic unity it adds 3. still another law of the **affinity** of all concepts, which offers a continuous transition from every species to every other through a graduated increase of varieties. We can call these the principles of the **homogeneity**, **specification** and **continuity** of forms. The last arises by uniting the first two, according as one has completed the systematic connection in the idea by ascending to higher genera, as well as descending to lower species; for then all manifolds are akin one to another, because they are all collectively descended, through every degree of extended determination, from a single highest genus.⁸⁷

Actually, all these principles (namely: of the form of a whole of cognition, genus, species, homogeneity, specification, continuity) are the main theme of the first part of the “Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic”. They represent the logical structure that supports theoretical reason’s teleology, which *a priori* initiates a narrative that encompasses the products of the understanding, a narrative that has an unconditioned source, which this faculty allegedly discovered by means of prosyllogisms. This is indeed the foundational difference between theoretical reason and the understanding: while the latter reads nature exclusively in a mechanical manner, the former interprets it as having a telos. In order for a mechanical system to make sense, all of its components, as well as their respective functions, must be well known and precisely circumscribed beforehand, a need that disappears when it comes to a teleological system. After all, each of its elements serves a logical flow with a further goal, even if this goal and each of its steps are not completely understood. The principle of continuity, which is the actual novelty of this second classification, predicts that there is always something else out there to be found, that is to say, that cognition is never complete.

Thomas Wartenberg, although commenting exclusively on this set of ideas, sheds light on what he interprets to be an important outcome of the regulative use of the ideas of theoretical reason: its guidance on scientific practice. The main argument is that it is possible

⁸⁷ Kant 1998, A657-658/B685-686; Kant’s marks.

to read in Kant that these ideas work as guidelines for scientists to elaborate hypotheses that experiments will either confirm or deny. However, it does not mean that they are merely heuristic tools; scientists actually investigate nature presupposing *a priori* its empirical conformity to total systematicity, being the hypotheses they formulate directly dependent on this presupposition. Wartenberg explains:

[the] idea of a completely adequate system of scientific knowledge is what legitimates scientific experimentation. It provides reason with an idea that it seeks to realize by means of specific scientific theories. The theoretical ideas that it uses are guides to reason in its attempt to figure out what the systematic structure of our knowledge really is. They provide reason with a specific focus to use when it turns to the empirical world in order to produce the empirical regularities that constitute the basis of our empirical knowledge of the world.⁸⁸

Assuming to be in accordance with Kant, Wartenberg clearly puts theoretical reason in the spotlight, as the faculty that takes the lead when it comes to the empirical investigation of nature and, consequently, to science.

In the second part of the “Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic”, named “On the final aim of the natural dialectic of human reason”, Kant will then turn his attention to the three fictional objects that theoretical reason generated, namely, the concepts of soul, world and, more importantly, God. Indeed, it is the last one that deserves most of this attention. Eventually, he explains:

[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 field of experience, entirely new prospects for connecting up things in the world in accordance with teleological laws, and thereby attaining to the greatest systematic unity among them.⁸⁹

Therefore, the idea of God would supposedly be the origin of theoretical reason’s narrative, its primary, unconditioned source. This is what prompts Kant to speak in terms of a purposiveness of nature, as a project of the highest intelligence. The teleological system of theoretical reason is now fully displayed, and Kant frequently feels the need to remind us that not only is there no harm in the regulative use of theoretical reason’s ideas, but also that this use is actually beneficial. For instance:

[pure] reason is in fact concerned with nothing but itself, and it can have no other concern, because what is given to it is not objects to be unified for the concept of experience, but cognitions of understanding to be unified for the concept of reason, i.e., to be connected in one principle. The unity of reason is the unity of a system, and this systematic unity does not serve reason objectively as a principle, extending it over objects, but subjectively as a maxim, in order to extend it over all possible empirical cognition of objects.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Wartenberg 1992, p. 244.

⁸⁹ Kant 1998, A686-687/B714-715; Kant’s marks.

⁹⁰ Kant 1998, A680/B708.

And he continues:

[nevertheless], the systematic connection that reason can give to the empirical use of the understanding furthers not only its extension but also guarantees its correctness, and the principle of such a systematic unity is also objective but in an indeterminate way (*principium vagum*): not as a constitutive principle for determining something in regard to its direct object, but rather as a merely regulative principle and maxim for furthering and strengthening the empirical use of reason by opening up new paths into the infinite (the undetermined) with which the understanding is not acquainted, yet without ever being the least bit contrary to the laws of its empirical use.⁹¹

Thus, by means of these arguments, Kant seems to accomplish two goals: first, to guarantee an immanent use of the ideas of theoretical reason; second, to properly deal with our *a priori* demand for a complete systematization of *a posteriori* cognition. However, it is not that simple.

In the “Transcendental Dialectic”, Kant is frequently asking whether theoretical reason can actually be “a genuine source of concepts and judgments” or “only a merely subordinate faculty”,⁹² simply helping the understanding. When he arrives at the “Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic”, this problem is still to be solved. He will then attempt to provide a proper transcendental deduction for all its ideas, that is to say, to prove their transcendental status as regulative principles. Therefore, by means of a transcendental deduction, Kant intends to both guarantee theoretical reason’s status as ‘a genuine source of concepts and judgments’ and meet with an *a priori* solution our also *a priori* demand for a complete systematization of *a posteriori* cognition. Indeed, in the last topic of this chapter, I will more closely study this attempt.

2.4 The transcendental deduction of transcendental ideas

What this first response already implies is the fact that, for Kant, in order to be able to successfully navigate through reality, human beings need to bring together two different but complementary *a priori* ways of interpreting nature, namely, a mechanical, constitutive one, provided by the understanding, and a teleological, regulative one, provided by theoretical reason. Without the former, we lack the stable discursive structure from which our knowledge can develop; without the latter, we cannot properly make sense of the diversity of *a posteriori* cognition. Then, each one represents a distinct *a priori* approach to the manifold of sensibility: the understanding deals with the *a priori* manifold of intuition; theoretical reason, with the manifold of *a posteriori* concepts. They represent two different methods of

⁹¹ Kant 1998, A680/B708.

⁹² Kant 1998, A305/B362.

systematization, two different touchstones, corresponding to different aspects of human cognition.

At the beginning of the “Introduction” to the “Transcendental Logic”, Kant makes an important distinction, namely, that between general and transcendental logic. About the former, he writes, for instance: “[general] logic abstracts, as we have shown, from all content of cognition, i.e. from any relation of it to the object, and considers only the logical form in the relation of cognitions to one another, i.e., the form of thinking in general”.⁹³ A little bit later, regarding the latter, he writes the following:

[in] the expectation, therefore, that there can perhaps be concepts that may be related to objects *a priori*, not as pure or sensible intuitions but rather merely as acts of pure thinking, that are thus concepts but of neither empirical nor aesthetic origin, we provisionally formulate the idea of a science of pure understanding and of the pure cognition of reason, by means of which we think objects completely *a priori*. Such a science, which would determine the origin, the domain, and the objective validity of such cognitions, would have to be called **transcendental logic**, since it has to do merely with the laws of the understanding and reason, but solely insofar as they are related to objects *a priori* and not, as in the case of general logic, to empirical as well as pure cognitions of reason without distinction.⁹⁴

Kant’s goal, by means of this distinction, is quite clear: to establish the terms in accordance with which he will investigate if (and how) logic can determine objects and, more broadly, shape experience; an investigation that, as I earlier attempted to show, fundamentally involves the study of the interaction between understanding and sensibility, that is to say, between the forms of judgment and intuitions. This is exactly where the argument of the transcendental deduction comes in.

Not much further, in the second chapter of the “Transcendental Analytic”, named “On the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding”, Kant then makes another distinction:

[jurists], when they speak of entitlements and claims, distinguish in a legal matter between the questions about what is lawful (*quid juris*) and that which concerns the fact (*quid facti*), and since they demand proof of both, they call the first, that which is to establish the entitlement or the legal claim, the **deduction**.⁹⁵

The word ‘deduction’ will then be the name given by Kant to the necessary proof concerning the determination of objects of experience in general by the categories, which he names “pure use *a priori*” of these concepts.⁹⁶ According to him, “these always require a deduction of their entitlement, since proofs from experience are not sufficient for the lawfulness of such a use,

⁹³ Kant 1998, A55/B79.

⁹⁴ Kant 1998, A57/B81-82.

⁹⁵ Kant 1998, A84/B116; Kant’s marks.

⁹⁶ Kant 1998, A85/B117; Kant’s marks.

and yet one must know how these concepts can be related to objects that they do not derive from any experience".⁹⁷ Right after this explanation, he makes even another distinction:

I therefore call the explanation of the way in which concepts can relate to objects *a priori* their **transcendental deduction**, and distinguish this from the **empirical** deduction, which shows how a concept is acquired through experience and reflection on it, and therefore concerns not the lawfulness but the fact from which the possession has arisen.⁹⁸

Therefore, the transcendental deduction of the categories, as is well known, concerns the proof of their objective validity and, consequently, their transcendental status, that is to say, their necessity for the emergence of possible experience. Given the arguments Kant presents by means of all these distinctions, one can also notice the privilege of the categories: first, when compared to other *a priori* concepts; second, when compared to *a posteriori* concepts. So, the same procedure cannot be successful if applied to transcendental ideas, because, again, they cannot determine objects. Another kind of transcendental deduction needs to be developed.

The "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic" is the text where this issue more properly appears. Because each of its parts focuses on a different set of concepts, the argument about their pertinence is presented in increments, although its tenet is largely the same. Two passages of the first part, which focuses on the ideas of genus, species and completeness of cognition, display quite clearly Kant's endeavor. In the first one, he affirms that theoretical reason's principle, if considered, at first, as merely logical, will further claim its transcendental nature, given that otherwise theoretical reason would either be contradicting itself if nature behaved differently or simply empirically deriving it from experience, which it cannot do or would not grant it an *a priori* principle. Accordingly, he ultimately concludes:

[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; thus in regard to the latter we simply have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary.⁹⁹

A few paragraphs later, when commenting on the concept of genus, he explains:

[the] logical principle of genera therefore presupposes a transcendental one if it is to be applied to nature (by which I here understand only objects that are given to us). According to that principle, sameness of kind is necessarily presupposed in the manifold of a possible experience (even though we cannot determine its degree *a priori*), because without it no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Kant 1998, A85/B117.

⁹⁸ Kant 1998, A85/B117; Kant's marks.

⁹⁹ Kant 1998, A651/B679.

¹⁰⁰ Kant 1998, A654/B682; Kant's marks.

In both passages, Kant already presents arguments that will appear again, in very similar terms, in the third *Critique*. Although not yet explicitly speaking in terms of a deduction, he argues in favor of the transcendental status of the regulative use of theoretical reason's principles by means of claiming that, without this *a priori* presupposition, we would not be able to interpret *a posteriori* cognition as pertaining to a coherent whole, an interpretation that enables its proper use.

So, in the second part, which is focused on the fictional objects of theoretical reason, Kant writes:

[now] if one can show that although the three kinds of transcendental ideas (**psychological**, **cosmological** and **theological**) cannot be referred directly to any object corresponding to them and to its **determination**, and nevertheless that all rules of the empirical use of reason under the presupposition of such an **object in the idea** lead to systematic unity, always extending the cognition of experience but never going contrary to experience, then it is a necessary **maxim** of reason to proceed in accordance with such ideas. And this is the transcendental deduction of all the ideas of speculative reason, not as **constitutive** principles for the extension of our cognition to more objects than experience can give, but as **regulative** principles for the systematic unity of the manifold of empirical cognition in general, through which this cognition, within its proper boundaries, is cultivated and corrected more than could happen without such ideas, through the mere use of the principles of understanding.¹⁰¹

Again the path is precisely to elaborate on the contributions this faculty makes to the systematization of *a posteriori* cognition, without which human beings would allegedly only be able to interpret it as a contingent aggregate. At last, Kant relates nature's empirical order to the presupposed aims of a presupposed supreme being. In other words, according to him, human beings navigate through experience presupposing the actual existence of these fictional objects, that is to say, acting as if these entities were real. Indeed, here Kant makes this whole reasoning the transcendental deduction of theoretical reason's ideas.

Nevertheless, Kant's position, not only on the actual possibility of a deduction, but also on its proper terms, is not resolved immediately. In the first part of the "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic", when commenting on the ideas of homogeneity, specification and continuity, not yet envisioning a subjective transcendental deduction, he argues as follows:

[what] is strange about these principles, and what alone concerns us, is this: that they seem to be transcendental, and even though they contain mere ideas to be followed in the empirical use of reason, which reason can follow only asymptotically, as it were, i.e., merely by approximation, without ever reaching them, yet these principles, as synthetic propositions *a priori*, nevertheless have objective but indeterminate validity, and serve as a rule of possible experience, and can even be used with good success, as heuristic principles, in actually elaborating it; and yet one cannot bring about a transcendental deduction of them, which, as has been proved above, is always impossible in regard to ideas.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Kant 1998, A671/B699; Kant's marks.

¹⁰² Kant 1998, A663-664/B691-692.

However, in the second part, Kant argues otherwise, claiming that every *a priori* principle demands a transcendental deduction, again explaining that it would have to be of a different kind than that of the categories. He writes:

[one] cannot avail oneself of a concept *a priori* with any security unless one has brought about a transcendental deduction of it. The ideas of reason, of course, do not permit any deduction of the same kind as the categories; but if they are to have the least objective validity, even if it is only an indeterminate one, and are not to represent merely empty thought-entities (*entia rationis ratiocinantis*), then a deduction of them must definitely be possible, granted that it must also diverge quite far from the deduction one can carry out in the case of the categories.¹⁰³

This deduction, as quoted above, would then be possible as long as we consider these concepts ‘as regulative principles for the systematic unity of the manifold of empirical cognition in general’, because, by means of them, ‘this cognition, within its proper boundaries, is cultivated and corrected more than could happen without such ideas, through the mere use of the principles of understanding’.

Kant’s diagnosis concerning *a posteriori* cognition is precise. He needs to find a consistent *a priori* answer to the demand of a complete systematization of *a posteriori* concepts, because otherwise, considering his account of discursive cognition, human beings would not be able to use them properly. The first answer he gives is quite clear: we unavoidably presuppose *a priori* the existence of certain entities without being able to prove it, being these entities fictional concepts that enable human beings to interpret nature teleologically. This teleological, regulative mode, which is complementary to the mechanical, constitutive one provided by the understanding, would then allow us to navigate through experience without the need of explaining beforehand, by means of concepts and laws, all of its elements; and this procedure would be needed exactly because the understanding cannot fully explain nature *a priori*. Nevertheless, in the third *Critique* Kant will formulate another answer, namely, the reflecting labor of the power judgment. In the end, it is, I will argue, complementary to the first one. In the next chapter, then, this second solution will be studied, in order for me to prepare the ground for displaying the contribution of the judgment of taste to this reasoning.

¹⁰³ Kant 1998, A669-670/B697-698.

3 The reflecting power of judgment

In this chapter, I intend to present Kant's second answer to our *a priori* demand for the complete systematization of *a posteriori* cognition, namely, the reflecting labor of the power of judgment; or, more precisely, the proposal of the principle of the technique or purposiveness of nature, associated with this faculty. This chapter will also have four topics: first, a general description of the power of judgment, considering its two labors, focusing on the novelty of the reflecting one; second, a debate on the notion of reflection, considering both its transcendental and logical modes; third, more properly a study on the proposal of the principle of the technique or purposiveness of nature; and fourth, a comparison between the first solution, associated with theoretical reason, and the new one, associated with the power of judgment.

3.1 The power of judgment

In a first moment, at the beginning of the "Transcendental Analytic" of the first *Critique*, Kant associates with the understanding a role that, later on, it seems, he will ascribe to the power of judgment. In the "First Section" of the "Analytic of Concepts", after defining the former faculty as that of concepts and functions, he will argue that "[now] the understanding can make no other use of these concepts than that of judging by means of them".¹⁰⁴ After that, Kant elaborates on his notion of judgment and on how it is entangled with that of a concept, and vice versa, writing: "[we] can, however, trace all actions of the understanding back to judgments, so that the **understanding** in general can be represented as a **faculty for judging**. For according to what has been said above it is a faculty for thinking. Thinking is cognition through concepts".¹⁰⁵ In both passages, he clearly ascribes to the understanding the task of producing judgments, which are intrinsically related to the way it operates, considering its functions and the concepts it generates. It is, after all, 'a faculty for thinking'.

However, within the first *Critique*, one should not take this particular procedure as a surprise, since there Kant tends to explain the role of the discursive faculties by increments. It happened with his definition of theoretical reason and also happens with the power of judgment: from the beginning, they are both under the auspices of the broader notion of understanding. Indeed, it will be only in the "Analytic of Principles" that Kant will present the power of judgment as a separate faculty, with a proper task to perform. In its very first

¹⁰⁴ Kant 1998, A68/B93.

¹⁰⁵ Kant 1998, A69/B94; Kant's marks.

paragraph, commenting on general logic, he discusses what he names to be “the division of the higher faculties of cognition”.¹⁰⁶ He explains that

[these] are: **understanding, the power of judgment, and reason**. In its analytic that doctrine accordingly deals with **concepts, judgments, and inferences**, corresponding exactly to the functions and the order of those powers of mind, which are comprehended under the broad designation of understanding in general.¹⁰⁷

Here, Kant clearly assigned the task of generating judgments to the power of judgment, something that did not happen until this point in the text of the first *Critique*. A little bit later, he will present the “Analytic of Principles” as “solely a canon for the **power of judgment** that teaches it to apply to appearances the concepts of the understanding, which contain the condition for rules *a priori*”.¹⁰⁸ As is well known, what is at stake in this moment of the book is the transcendental schematism of the understanding, which concerns the application of concepts to sensible representations, a task that also involves the faculty of imagination. Then, at the beginning of the next section, the first definition of the power of judgment appears: “the faculty of **subsuming** under rules, i.e., of determining whether something stands under a given rule (*casus datae legis*) or not”.¹⁰⁹ Kant, on the one hand, argues that “the power of judgment is a special talent that cannot be taught but only practiced”;¹¹⁰ on the other hand, he will forcefully argue that guiding the power of judgment is one of the main contributions of transcendental philosophy. As he explains,

the peculiar thing about transcendental philosophy is this: that in addition to the rule (or rather the general condition for rules), which is given in the pure concept of the understanding, it can at the same time indicate *a priori* the case to which the rules ought to be applied.¹¹¹

What Kant might be implying is that judging is not always an automatic activity, but a voluntary one in many cases, which, however, can be well guided by the understanding, since its pure concept ‘can at the same time indicate *a priori* the case to which the rules ought to be applied’ and not simply provide these rules.

The scenario significantly changes in the third *Critique*. There, Kant will present the power of judgment as a full-fledged faculty, with a new definition, two clearly distinct labors, a new kind of judgment and an *a priori* principle — all of them associated with it. When it comes to presenting all these novelties, the “Introductions” play a central role. In the second section of the “First Introduction”, Kant will deliver a new description of the higher faculties

¹⁰⁶ Kant 1998, A130/B169.

¹⁰⁷ Kant 1998, A130-131/B169; Kant’s marks; ‘that doctrine’, here, is general logic.

¹⁰⁸ Kant 1998, A132/B171; Kant’s marks.

¹⁰⁹ Kant 1998, A132/B171; Kant’s marks.

¹¹⁰ Kant 1998, A133/B172.

¹¹¹ Kant 1998, A135/B174-175; Kant’s marks.

of cognition, only this time also naming it as a division “of our **faculty of *a priori* cognition through concepts**”,¹¹² or, which is the same, “of a critique of pure reason, but considered only with regard to its faculty for thinking”,¹¹³ explaining that

then the systematic representation of the faculty for thinking is tripartite: namely, first, the faculty for the cognition of the **general** (of rules), **the understanding**; second, the faculty for the **subsumption of the particular** under the general, **the power of judgment**; and third, the faculty for the **determination** of the particular through the general (for the derivation from principles), i.e., **reason**.¹¹⁴

Here, compared with the one given in the first *Critique*, this new definition of the power of judgment is definitely more broadened, not limiting it exclusively to the task of ‘subsuming under rules’.

Accordingly, in the third *Critique* Kant will not only give a proper name to the labor already ascribed to the power of judgment in the first *Critique*, but also associate with this faculty another one, namely, that of reflection. As Kant explains in the fifth section of the “First Introduction”,

[the] power of judgment can be regarded either as a mere faculty for **reflecting** on a given representation, in accordance with a certain principle, for the sake of a concept that is thereby made possible, or as a faculty for **determining** an underlying concept through a given **empirical** representation. In the first case it is the **reflecting**, in the second case the **determining power of judgment**.¹¹⁵

The second case, of ‘the determining power of judgment’, as it already involves working with a formed concept, connecting it, through determination, with ‘a given empirical representation’, quite clearly corresponds to the labor ascribed to this faculty in the first *Critique*. The first case is more complex. For Kant, the notion of reflection has at its core the procedure of comparison. Although it is not a novelty, already appearing in the “Amphiboly” of the first *Critique*, it is only in the third *Critique* that he associates it with the power of judgment, under the auspices of its reflecting labor. Reflection has two different modes: transcendental reflection, corresponding to the scrutiny that legitimizes cognition; and logical reflection, which contributes to the systematization of representations. As I will detail in the next topic, the principle involved in each case is the same.

Following the novelty of the reflecting power of judgment is that of the reflecting judgments, which can be either aesthetic or teleological. In the seventh section of the “First Introduction”, Kant will describe a reflecting judgment as follows:

¹¹² Kant 2002, 20:201; Kant’s marks.

¹¹³ Kant 2002, 20:201; as can be seen here, Kant also uses the term reason encompassing all our discursive faculties. Indeed, it happens in the first *Critique* as well (see, for example: Kant 1998, B19-20; Kant 1998, A82-83/B108-109). Not by accident, the term appears in its title.

¹¹⁴ Kant 2002, 20:201; Kant’s marks.

¹¹⁵ Kant 2002, 20:211; Kant’s marks.

[but] since in the mere reflection on a perception it is not a matter of a determinate concept, but in general only of reflecting on the rule concerning a perception in behalf of the understanding, as a faculty of concepts, it can readily be seen that in a merely reflecting judgment imagination and understanding are considered in the relation to each other in which they must stand in the power of judgment in general, as compared with the relation in which they actually stand in the case of a given perception.¹¹⁶

Here, Kant is clearly contrasting reflecting judgments with determining judgments, which are the paradigmatic result of cognition and involve the participation of the determining power of judgment. Then, in a reflecting judgment, what is at stake is not the production of concepts itself, with the accompanying relation of determination between them and intuitions, but the reflection on ‘the rule concerning a perception in behalf of the understanding, as a faculty of concepts’. In the case of aesthetic judgments, “understanding and imagination mutually agree for the advancement of their business”;¹¹⁷ in the case of teleological judgments, which may concern any *a posteriori* concept, “the power of judgment compares such a concept of the understanding with reason and its principle of the possibility of a system”.¹¹⁸ As I will detail in the next chapter, reflecting judgments have a subjective ground, instead of an objective one, which is the case of determining judgments.

However, the more important novelty of the book, which significantly broadens Kant’s theoretical framework, is the proposal of a new *a priori* principle, that of the technique or purposiveness of nature, which he will associate with the power of judgment, mainly with its reflecting labor. In one among many passages where Kant describes it in the “First Introduction”, he writes that

[the] principle of reflection on given objects of nature is that for all things in nature empirically determinate **concepts** can be found, which is to say the same as that in all of its products one can always presuppose a form that is possible for general laws cognizable by us. For if we could not presuppose this and did not ground our treatment of empirical representations on this principle, then all reflection would become arbitrary and blind, and hence would be undertaken without any well-grounded expectation of its agreement with nature.¹¹⁹

This new principle will be, as one might already be suspecting, the main axis of Kant’s second response to our *a priori* demand for completeness. It subjectively states that nature’s forms should be regular enough, in order for us to be able to compare them and, as a result, extract *a posteriori* concepts and laws that we can systematize. In other words, it presupposes that nature, as it actually is, is kind enough to have a modus operandi that we are able to grasp,

¹¹⁶ Kant 2002, 20:220.

¹¹⁷ Kant 2002, 20:221.

¹¹⁸ Kant 2002, 20:221.

¹¹⁹ Kant 2002, 20:211-212; Kant’s marks.

allowing us to develop at least a minimally stable discursive tree. Without this presupposition, ‘all reflection would become arbitrary and blind’.

Now it is already possible to perceive the argumentative density of the third *Critique*, how it opens doors that allow the articulation, within Kant’s critical project, of activities and modes of experience in ways that were not possible until its composition. Accordingly, in the next three topics of this chapter, I address two of these novelties. First, it is necessary to take a closer look at the notion of reflection, represented by the activities of transcendental reflection and logical reflection. Then, I will more closely examine the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment, its meaning, importance and the reason why it is the second response to our *a priori* demand for completeness. Finally, in the fourth topic, I compare the second response with the first one and evaluate a possible conciliation between these two proposals within Kant’s critical project.

3.2 Reflection

The text where transcendental reflection is fully addressed is, as I already mentioned, the “Amphiboly” or “Appendix to the Analytic of Principles”, in the first *Critique*, where Kant does not yet associate it with the power of judgment. Its very dense first two paragraphs are the most important ones, where Kant managed to present many features of reflection in general, mainly of its transcendental kind. Accordingly, they will get most of the attention in the remainder of this part of this chapter. Right at the beginning of the text, Kant will explain that

[reflection] (*reflexio*) does not have to do with objects themselves, in order to acquire concepts directly from them, but is rather the state of mind in which we first prepare ourselves to find out the subjective conditions under which we can arrive at concepts. It is the consciousness of the relation of given representations to our various sources of cognition, through which alone their relation among themselves can be correctly determined.¹²⁰

From this passage alone one can draw a few conclusions. First, as I already alluded to, it is a subjective activity, not concerning, at least not directly, the production of concepts and judgments. Second, it is, however, mainly concerned with the subjective grounds of objective products, such as determining judgments, which characterizes it as a transcendental activity. Third, it is at its core an activity of self-examination, which consists in a scrutiny of our inner representations, concerning their relation ‘to our various sources of cognition’, enabling us to establish relations among representations themselves as well. Moreover, Kant, at the beginning of the text, maybe because it is its main theme, does not bother to refer to this

¹²⁰ Kant 1998, A260/B316; Kant’s marks.

activity as being the transcendental version of reflection, although it will be clear that this description cannot refer to the activity of reflection in general, not being general enough.

Actually, if one considers the argument of this passage more carefully, what it seems to convey is that it is not obvious beforehand to us if a concept is *a priori* or *a posteriori*, if it is an idea of reason or a legitimate cognition. After all, as Kant forcefully argues throughout the first *Critique*, (*a posteriori*) intuitions and concepts are of opposite nature: the former, on the one hand, are sensorial, immediately related to the object and particular; the latter, on the other hand, are discursive, mediately related to the object and universal. Therefore, it should not be that difficult to find out if an inner representation is either sensorial or discursive, but, when it comes to the content of concepts and principles, and their relation to other representations, discursive and sensorial, it is possible to envisage that their examination is not as easy. Moreover, this examination should lead to another one, also crucial: that of the origin, *a priori* or *a posteriori*, of sensorial representations.

However, Kant will clearly state that transcendental reflection is not itself about verifying if propositions are true or false, but about precisely knowing the cognitive origin of their content. And it is by means of comparison, which is at the core of the activity of reflection in general, that transcendental reflection will be performed. Accordingly, a few lines further in text, Kant articulates these features, mentioning its full name for the first time:

[not] all judgments require an **investigation**, i.e., attention to the grounds of truth; for if they are immediately certain, e.g., between two points there can be only one straight line, then no further mark of truth can be given for them than what they themselves express. But all judgments, indeed all comparisons, require a **reflection**, i.e., a distinction of the cognitive power to which the given concepts belong. The action through which I make the comparison of representations in general with the cognitive power in which they are situated, and through which I distinguish whether they are to be compared to one another as belonging to the pure understanding or to pure intuition, I call **transcendental reflection**.¹²¹

More immediately, one is able to notice that Kant here might be more directly associating judgments with comparisons. However, what is more crucial, as far as transcendental reflection is concerned, is the full description of this activity, as a comparison of representations with faculties and/or other representations.

Now, in order to compare things, it is necessary to establish parameters, that is to say, to know what general characteristics the comparison is about. So, right afterward, Kant will explain that

[the] relation, however, in which the concepts in a state of mind can belong to each other are those of **identity** and **difference**, of **agreement** and **opposition**, of the **inner** and the **outer**, and finally of the **determinable** and the **determination** (matter

¹²¹ Kant 1998, A261/B317; Kant's marks.

and form). The correct determination of this relation depends on the cognitive power in which they **subjectively** belong to each other, whether in sensibility or in understanding. For the difference in the latter makes a great difference in the way in which one ought to think of the former.¹²²

These are, as is well known, the four pairs of concepts of comparison, which, according to Kant, will enable reflection. In the second paragraph, he will address an important feature of theirs: that they are closely related to the logical functions of judgment the understanding generates. He writes:

[prior] to all objective judgments we compare the concepts, with regard to **identity** (of many representations under one concept) for the sake of **universal** judgments, or their **difference**, for the generation of **particular** ones, with regard to **agreement**, for **affirmative** judgments, or **opposition**, for negative ones, etc. On this ground it would seem that we ought to call these concepts concepts of comparison (*conceptus comparationis*).¹²³

Indeed, here, Kant elaborates on how the use of specific pairs of concepts of comparison enables one to generate specific kinds of judgments, which are included in the table of functions of the understanding, then strongly suggesting that the former are intrinsically linked to the latter.

Right after that, Kant will begin to elaborate on the difference between the two kinds of reflection:

[but] since, if it is not the logical form but the content of concepts that is concerned, i.e., whether the things themselves are identical or different, in agreement or in opposition, etc., the things can have a twofold relation to our power of cognition, namely to sensibility and to understanding, yet it is this place **in which** they belong that concerns **how** they ought to belong to each other, then it is transcendental reflection, i.e., the relation of given representations to one or the other kind of cognition, that can alone determine their relation among themselves, and whether the things are identical or different, in agreement or in opposition, etc., cannot immediately be made out from the concepts themselves through mere comparison (*comparatio*), but rather only through the distinction of the kind of cognition to which they belong, by means of a transcendental reflection (*reflexio*).¹²⁴

Kant reinforces here that this other activity of reflection, which he has not named so far, completely ignores the relation that concepts might have with objects of experience. It apparently concerns only the ‘logical form’ of concepts, by ‘mere comparison’. By contrast, transcendental reflection, as already explained, does have the origin of our representations as its main concern.

Afterward, Kant will finally name this other reflecting activity:

[to] be sure, one could therefore say that **logical reflection** is a mere comparison, for in its case there is complete abstraction from the cognitive power to which the given representations belong, and they are thus to be treated the same as far as their seat in the mind is concerned; **transcendental reflection**, however, (which goes to the

¹²² Kant 1998, A261/B317; Kant’s marks.

¹²³ Kant 1998, A262/B317-318; Kant’s marks.

¹²⁴ Kant 1998, A262/B318; Kant’s marks.

objects themselves) contains the ground of the possibility of the objective comparison of the representations to each other, and is therefore very different from the other, since the cognitive power to which the representations belong is not precisely the same. This transcendental reflection is a duty from which no one can escape if he would judge anything about things *a priori*.¹²⁵

When Kant states that transcendental reflection ‘contains the ground of the possibility of the objective comparison of the representations to each other, and is therefore very different from the other’, he does seem to convey that this ‘objective comparison of the representations’ are the determining judgments, which establish objective relations between representations, relations that could be seen as comparisons, given that they are established in accordance with similarities. Indeed, as I alluded earlier, in Kant’s theory the notion of comparison might have even a broader sense than that conveyed by the activity of reflection. However, at least here he does not explain much more about logical reflection.

In the critical texts, compared to transcendental reflection, logical reflection gets much less attention, with erratic mentions here and there. Even in the third *Critique*, where it seems to be the version of reflection with which Kant more immediately compares reflecting judgments, and with which the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment seems to concern more directly, all definitions refer to reflection in general. One passage that is well known to be a detailed description of what would allegedly be the activity of logical reflection is in the *Jäsche Logic*, a compilation of some of Kant’s lectures. In its §6, he describes three “logical *actus* of the understanding, through which concepts are generated as to their form”: 1) the “*comparison* of representations among one another in relation to the unity of consciousness”; 2) the “*reflection* as to how various representations can be conceived in one consciousness”; and 3) the “*abstraction* of everything else in which the given representations differ”.¹²⁶ In the first note of this §, one reads:

[to] make concepts out of representations one must thus be able *to compare, to reflect, and to abstract*, for these three logical operations of the understanding are the essential and universal conditions for generation of every concept whatsoever. I see, e.g., a spruce, a willow, and a linden. By first comparing these objects with one another I note that they are different from one another in regard to the trunk, the branches, the leaves, etc.; but next I reflect on that which they have in common among themselves, trunk, branches, and leaves themselves, and I abstract from the quantity, the figure, etc., of these; thus I acquire a concept of a tree.¹²⁷

Then, first, it is interesting to notice that it conveys that logical reflection is not an automatic activity, but one that demands a certain effort to be successful. Second, and more importantly, it is now possible to more appropriately infer the contribution of logical reflection: this ‘mere

¹²⁵ Kant 1998, A262-263/B318-319; Kant’s marks.

¹²⁶ Kant, 1992, 94; all Kant’s marks.

¹²⁷ Kant, 1992, 94-95; Kant’s marks.

comparison' aims to find similarities among representations and, as a consequence, to help the generation of new concepts, systematizing them in the process. It is also worth mentioning that Kant here ascribes this task to the faculty of understanding instead of to the power of judgment. It might be the case because, at the end of the description, he does arrive at a new concept, that of tree, something that only the understanding can do. Moreover, let's not forget, it is also plausible to read, in Kant, the term understanding as a metonym for our discursive capacities in general.

Finally, as I showed earlier in this chapter, in the third *Critique* Kant will assign the labor of reflection to a proper faculty, namely, the power of judgment. In its "First Introduction" Kant prompts a robust definition of what the activity of reflection would be. He writes that

[to] **reflect** (to consider) [...] is to compare and to hold together given representations either with others or with one's faculty of cognition, in relation to a concept thereby made possible. The reflecting power of judgment is that which is also called the faculty of judging (*facultas diiudicandi*).¹²⁸

This definition is indeed in accordance with what I have described so far. However, one may interpret from the passage 'a concept thereby made possible' that it defines only logical reflection; but, looking more carefully, as I already argued, transcendental reflection has as its main goal to assess cognition. Then, without transcendental reflection, it would not be possible for human beings to ascertain the objective validity of any concept and legitimize its use. Certainly, from this perspective, transcendental reflection also makes concepts possible.

Moreover, it is important to think of this notion of reflection in light of the definition of the faculty of the power of judgment Kant gives in the third *Critique*, where he states that the power of judgment is 'the faculty for the subsumption of the particular under the general', a definition that should go along with that of the reflecting power of judgment and, as a consequence, of reflection; and not only does it accomplish this, but also sheds light on the most important aspect of this activity. Indeed, to compare particulars is to aim at something more universal that can come out as a result: in the case of logical reflection, to help systematize representations; in the case of transcendental reflection, to classify our representations within our entire cognitive structure. Unquestionably, Kant conveys them as complementary activities.

By associating both activities with the power of judgment, Kant definitely took a decisive step toward tying up some loose ends in his critical system. However, as I will attempt to show in the next topic of this chapter, this movement is not totally clear or obvious,

¹²⁸ Kant 2002, 20:211; Kant's marks.

and this association comes, to some extent, from interpretation of his texts. There is no doubt that, as far as Kant's epistemology is concerned, having a better grasp at the notion of reflection and, consequently, at both the activities that are under its aegis, allows one to fill in a few crucial gaps. After all, it does emerge as a solid bridge between the subjective and the objective in Kant and does make certain cognitive procedures more clear and explicit. In the next topic of the chapter, I will then explain the importance of the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment when it comes to helping fill in these gaps.

3.3 The *a priori* principle of the power of judgment

In the first section of the "First Introduction" to the third *Critique*, before introducing this new *a priori* principle, Kant will make a very important distinction, that between practical and theoretical/technical propositions. Here, he actually wants to circumscribe the use of the term 'practical proposition' within his theoretical framework, since, according to him, it is used in a much broader fashion in everyday life. So, he argues that not all propositions that concern human behavior can be regarded as pertaining to the moral realm. As is well known, Kant leaves the moral realm to the legislation of practical reason, which concerns the intelligible. Practical/moral propositions transcribe the ideal impartial subject, free from any interest. One of the main challenges within his critical project is to find a way to make this legislation effective in the empirical realm, which is the realm legislated by the understanding, by means of theoretical propositions. The empirical realm, Kant argues, is the realm of the conditioned. So, in the last paragraph of the section, for the sake of distinction, Kant gives a proper name to a certain kind of practical proposition:

[all] other propositions of practice, whatever science they might be attached to, can, if one is perhaps worried about ambiguity, be called **technical** rather than practical propositions. For they belong to the **art** of bringing about that which one wishes should exist, which in the case of a complete theory is always a mere consequence and not a self-subsistent part of any kind of instruction. In this way, all precepts of skill belong to **technique** and hence to the theoretical knowledge of nature as its consequences.¹²⁹

Kant will then call these propositions technical. They derive from theoretical propositions, with no moral content whatsoever. As he already hints, they will concern the most varied aspects of human life, explaining and conditioning most of human behavior. They express the cause-effect relationship between a concept, with which one is already acquainted and that represents a certain state of affairs, and the actions that one perpetrates to arrive at the results predicted by this concept. Therefore, technique is a notion that is, at its core, teleological.

¹²⁹ Kant 2002, 20:199-200; Kant's marks.

Right after that, Kant will, for the first time, mention reflecting judgments, although not yet naming them as such, but already associating them with the notion of technique:

[however], we shall in the future also use the expression “technique” where objects of nature are sometimes merely **judged as if** their possibility were grounded in art, in which cases the judgments are neither theoretical nor practical (in the sense just adduced), since they do not **determine** anything about the constitution of the object nor the way in which to produce it; rather through them nature itself is judged, but merely in accordance with the analogy with an art, and indeed in subjective relation to our cognitive faculty, not in objective relation to the objects.¹³⁰

As seems clear, Kant here brings forward a new kind of judgment, by means of which ‘objects of nature are sometimes merely judged as if their possibility were grounded in art’, judgments that are ‘neither theoretical nor practical’, but with a subjective ground, that is to say, without the aim to determine objects. Right afterward, the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment will be firstly alluded to, again associated with the notion of technique, again not mentioned explicitly:

[now] here we will not indeed call the judgments themselves technical, but rather the power of judgment, on whose laws they are grounded, and in accordance with it we will also call nature technical; further, this technique, since it contains no objectively determining propositions, does not constitute any part of doctrinal philosophy, but only a part of the critique of our faculty of cognition.¹³¹

Now, Kant here clearly associates this new kind of judgment with the power of judgment and its discovered technical, subjective laws, explaining that then these laws have no objective ambitions whatsoever, but that should be ‘a part of the critique of our faculty of cognition’. In other words, here he already argues that these laws correspond to a new *a priori* principle.

In the second section of the “First Introduction”, Kant reinforces the tripartite division of our higher faculties: reason, the understanding and the power of judgment. He argues the following:

[but] now if the understanding yields *a priori* laws of nature, reason, on the contrary, laws of freedom, then by analogy one would still expect that the power of judgment, which mediates the connection between the two faculties, would, just like those, add its own special principles *a priori* and perhaps ground a special part of philosophy, even though philosophy as a system can have only two parts.¹³²

Here, probably for the first time, Kant mentions the power of judgment as a mediating faculty, which would allegedly open a connection between the realms of reason and of the understanding; based on that, he argues that it would then be reasonable to admit that it also has its own *a priori* principle, although a peculiar one, since the other two already exhaust all possible domains that our faculties can legislate on. In the next paragraph, explaining that the power of judgment is “not at all self-sufficient”, “since it is a faculty merely for subsuming

¹³⁰ Kant 2002, 20:200-201; Kant’s marks.

¹³¹ Kant 2002, 20:201.

¹³² Kant 2002, 20:202; Kant’s marks.

under concepts given from elsewhere”,¹³³ he will present for the first time a full-fledged notion of its principle, writing that

[thus] if there is to be a concept or a rule which arises originally from the power of judgment, it would have to be a concept of things in **nature insofar as nature conforms to our power of judgment**, and thus a concept of a property of nature such that one cannot form any concept of it except that its arrangement conforms to our faculty for subsuming the particular given laws under more general ones even though these are not given; in other words, it would have to be the concept of a purposiveness of nature in behalf of our faculty for cognizing it, insofar as for this it is required that we be able to judge the particular as contained under the general and subsume it under the concept of a nature.¹³⁴

Now, by deploying this definition, Kant implicitly equates the notion of technique with that ‘of a purposiveness of nature on behalf of our faculty for cognizing it’. Actually, the notion of a purposiveness of nature, as it is put here, is a tricky one. On the one hand, Kant might be arguing that, when investigating nature, human beings presuppose that nature, when generating its forms, takes into account the cognitive capacities of our species, as some kind of benevolence; on the other hand, he might be simply implying that, in order to expend the effort of unraveling nature, human beings necessarily presuppose that it is regular enough for us to grasp, a reading that seems to be more plausible.

In the next paragraph, Kant continues on explaining the role of this new *a priori* principle. I should quote again:

[now] such a concept is that of an experience **as a system in accordance with empirical laws**. 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.¹³⁵

The same argument that appeared in the first *Critique* appears here: the system of our discursive tree, in order for cognition to be fully effective, must be minimally stable, that is to say, must have a proper place for each concept. Given that the understanding, whose approach to nature is mechanical, cannot grant, on its own, *a posteriori* concepts their proper place, the aid of another approach must occur, that of the power of judgment, which happens by means of an *a priori* principle that is both teleological and subjective.

A little bit further, in the same section of the “First Introduction”, Kant again presents the terms of art and of technique of nature, already mentioned in the first section, now more clearly, although not explicitly, relating them to that of the purposiveness of nature:

¹³³ Kant 2002, 20:202.

¹³⁴ Kant 2002, 202-203; Kant’s marks.

¹³⁵ Kant 2002, 20:203; Kant’s marks.

[the] concept which originally arises from the power of judgment and is proper to it is thus that of nature as **art**, in other words that of the **technique** of nature with regard to its **particular** laws, which concept does not ground any theory and does not, any more than logic, contain cognition of objects and their constitution, but only gives a principle for progress in accordance with laws of experience, whereby the investigation of nature becomes possible. But this does not enrich the knowledge of nature by any particular objective law, but rather only grounds a maxim for the power of judgment, by which to observe nature and to hold its forms together.¹³⁶

First of all, here Kant reinforces the subjective nature of this principle. Moreover, these three terms (purposiveness, technique, art) do not seem to be dealt with by Kant as if they were synonyms, since each term brings along a slightly different perspective on both the meaning and the role of this principle, which would make them complementary. To read them as being synonyms would therefore risk flattening Kant's arguments, a risk that one can envision when reading the "Second Introduction", where the term art is not used to explain this principle.

Then, in the fifth section of the "First Introduction", as I alluded earlier in this chapter, Kant finally explicitly argues that this new *a priori* principle is the principle that guides reflection. A little bit further, still in the fifth section, Kant associates this principle only with the logical activity of reflection:

[the] principle of the reflecting power of judgment, through which nature is thought of as a system in accordance with empirical laws, is however merely a principle **for the logical use of the power of judgment**, a transcendental principle, to be sure, in terms of its origin, but only for the sake of regarding nature *a priori* as qualified for a **logical system** of its multiplicity under empirical laws.¹³⁷

It is obviously understandable, given the nature of this principle and its role in Kant's argumentative economy, that he would more immediately associate it with logical reflection. After all, this is the reflecting activity that more directly helps him explain the pertinence of this principle. Although the general definition of reflection that Kant gives does encompass transcendental reflection, in the third *Critique* this activity is indeed a little bit further in the horizon. Therefore, in the end, it basically remains as a matter of interpretation to see transcendental reflection being encompassed in the text. A sound and solid reading, nevertheless.

Later, in the eighth section, where Kant more detailedly explains the novelty of aesthetic judgments, he will, in order to argue in favor of the subjective universality of the judgment of taste, give as its ground the autonomy of the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment, mentioning in the process the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, which is the product of the judgment of taste and defines it as an aesthetic judgment. However, the

¹³⁶ Kant 2002, 20:204-205; Kant's marks.

¹³⁷ Kant 2002, 20:214; Kant's marks.

autonomy of this principle happens in a different way than that of the principles of nature (understanding) and freedom (reason). Kant writes:

this autonomy is not, however (like that of the understanding, with regard to the theoretical laws of nature, or of reason, in the practical laws of freedom), valid objectively, i.e., through concepts of things or possible actions, but is merely subjectively valid, for the judgment from feeling, which, if it can make a claim to universal validity, demonstrates its origin grounded in *a priori* principles. Strictly speaking, one must call this legislation **heautonomy**, since the power of judgment does not give the law to nature nor to freedom, but solely to itself, and it is not a faculty for producing concepts of objects, but only for comparing present cases to others that have been given to it and thereby indicating the subjective conditions of the possibility of this combination *a priori*.¹³⁸

What is more important here, as far as this principle is concerned, is to notice the new term, ‘heautonomy’, which corresponds to the fact that ‘the power of judgment does not give the law to nature nor to freedom, but solely to itself’. Indeed, by coining this term, once again Kant reinforces the argument that both reflection and its principle have a subjective character, stating afterward that the power of judgment ‘is not a faculty for producing concepts of objects, but only for comparing present cases to others that have been given to it and thereby indicating the subjective conditions of the possibility of this combination *a priori*’. Clearly, here he restricts his description to the reflecting labor of this faculty.

Again, it is quite interesting to see Kant’s compromise, when it comes to the systematicity of *a posteriori* cognition, with teleology, obviously now in different terms than those he presented in the first *Critique*. The underlying argument again is that human beings read nature as developing a narrative that is compatible with logic. In other words, cognition is part of a story being told, as an event that is part of a causal chain. Therefore, human beings’ demand is actually to find for each concept its place in the plot. However, as Kant repeatedly states, this teleological reading can only be a subjective presupposition, given that it concerns particular experience, for which the legislation of our cognitive faculties cannot give any guarantees. Now, after describing the terms in which Kant presents this new principle, it is possible to compare it with the regulative use of the ideas of theoretical reason. This is the task I am going to undertake in the next and last topic of this chapter.

3.4 The reflecting power of judgment and theoretical reason

Many aspects of the first solution are also present in the second one. More notably, this new teleological layer of interpretation, which works intertwined with the mechanical layer provided by the understanding. Four significant similarities derived from Kant’s grasp on

¹³⁸ Kant 2002, 20:225; Kant’s marks.

teleology show up. The first one is the recurrence of the notions of genus and species, now obviously under the auspices of the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment. As I pointed out in the last chapter, these notions represent the fundamental criteria by which our teleological discursive tree structures itself. In the fifth section of the “First Introduction”, Kant explains that

[the] logical form of a system consists merely in the division of given general concepts (of the sort which that of a nature in general is here), by means of which one thinks the particular (here the empirical) with its variety as contained under the general, in accordance with a certain principle.¹³⁹

Right after that, he argues that

[to] this there belongs, if one proceeds empirically and ascends from the particular to the general, a **classification** of the manifold, i.e., a comparison with each other of several classes, each of which stands under a determinate concept, and, if they are complete with regard to the common characteristic, their subsumption under higher classes (genera), until one reaches the concept that contains the principle of the entire classification (and which constitutes the highest genus).¹⁴⁰

Following it, he mentions the notion of species:

[if], on the contrary, one begins with the general concept, in order to descend to the particular through a complete division, then the action is called the **specification** of the manifold under a given concept, since the progression is from the highest genus to lower (subgenera or species) and from species to subspecies.¹⁴¹

Then, in the third *Critique*, these notions help explain logical reflection, an activity directly related to teleology.

The second similarity concerns the notion of completeness of the system. In the following passage of the fifth section of the “First Introduction”, as in many more, Kant implies that the notion of a system involves that of completeness:

[now] it is clear that the reflecting power of judgment, given its nature, could not undertake to **classify** the whole of nature according to its empirical differences if it did not presuppose that nature itself **specifies** its transcendental laws in accordance with some sort of principle. Now this principle can be none other than that of the suitability for the capacity of the power of judgment itself for finding in the immeasurable multiplicity of things in accordance with possible empirical laws sufficient kinship among them to enable them to be brought under empirical concepts (classes) and these in turn under more general laws (higher genera) and thus for an empirical system of nature to be reached.¹⁴²

Therefore, our discursive tree is nothing but a system, which, in the terms Kant understands it, is structured in genera and species. To argue that is obviously also to argue that this pyramidal structure has a top and a bottom, although, as the notions of genus and species imply, the paths to reach both are virtually infinite.

¹³⁹ Kant 2002, 20:214.

¹⁴⁰ Kant 2002, 20:214; Kant’s marks.

¹⁴¹ Kant 2002, 20:214-215; Kant’s marks.

¹⁴² Kant 2002, 20:215; Kant’s marks.

The third similarity concerns the subjective nature of the principle. It appears as early as in the second section of the “First Introduction”, in the following passage, where he comments on the *a priori* nature of the principle of the power of judgment:

[philosophy], as a doctrinal system of the cognition of nature as well as freedom, does not hereby acquire a new part; for the representation of nature as art is a mere idea, which serves as a principle, merely for the subject, for our investigation of nature, so that we can where possible bring interconnection, as in a system, into the aggregate of empirical laws as such, by attributing to nature a relation to this need of ours. On the contrary, our concept of a technique of nature, as a heuristic principle in the judgment of it, will belong to the critique of our faculty of cognition, which indicates what occasion we have to make such a representation of it to ourselves, what origin this idea has, whether it is to be found in an *a priori* source, and also what the scope and boundary of its use are; in a word, such an inquiry will belong as a part to the system of the critique of pure reason, but not to doctrinal philosophy.¹⁴³

Many things can be said about this passage. First, Kant here already mentions the heautonomy of the power of judgment as far as reflection is concerned, although this term has not yet appeared in the text. Second, Kant again explains that the study of this principle ‘will belong as a part to the system of the critique of pure reason, but not to doctrinal philosophy’, because it is an *a priori* principle without a domain to legislate on. Third, he argues that ‘the representation of nature as art is a mere idea, which serves as a principle, merely for the subject, for our investigation of nature’, which seems to bring both principles closer as far as their character is concerned. Indeed, both are ideas in the sense that they cannot determine phenomena, something that only the concepts of the understanding are able to accomplish. They are both subjective principles, after all. However, what is more important here is to notice that Kant argues that the principle of the power of judgment is heuristic, just as he argued in the first *Critique* concerning theoretical reason’s principle: the notion of teleology is a discursive tool that helps us advance beyond *a priori* cognition, further and further, despite the fact that it is a principle that can never be proved objectively.

Paul Guyer argues that, given the similarities in character between the regulative use of the ideas of theoretical reason and the activity of the reflecting power of judgment, one could reasonably take the notion of a regulative principle as more broadly explaining both activities, and not just the first one. He identifies three main features regulative principles have, being two of them already mentioned here: to have completeness of a system as a goal; to be transcendental, and not just logical; and to be heuristic. He explains the second one this way:

Kant calls regulative principles transcendental and not merely logical because they presuppose assumptions about objective possibilities - that is, possibilities inherent in objects - and their real grounds. At the same time, he is insistent that there are

¹⁴³ Kant 2002, 20:205; Kant’s marks.

limitations on the *provability* of such assumptions: they do not rise to the status of constitutive principles of the possibility of experience itself, but they remain presuppositions of the rationality of our own conduct. They are entirely natural for us to make; they are not demonstrably false; they are indeed highly beneficial; and they are for those reasons rational for us to believe, but they are not otherwise provable.¹⁴⁴

Although Guyer here is still more directly explaining the regulative use of the ideas of theoretical reason, this description is indeed compatible with both activities.

However, in the “First Introduction” there are at least two arguments Kant deployed that split these solutions apart, despite their similarities. The first one appears at the end of the fifth section, where he explains that “[now] here arises the concept of a **purposiveness** of nature, indeed as a special concept of the reflecting power of judgment, not of reason; for the end is not posited in the object at all, but strictly in the subject and indeed in its mere capacity for reflecting”.¹⁴⁵ The second one appears further in the text, in the twelfth section, where he argues: “[...] what is at issue is the principle of the merely reflecting, not the determining power of judgment (such as grounds all human works of art), in which, therefore, the purposiveness should be considered **unintentional**, and which can therefore pertain only to nature”.¹⁴⁶ In these passages, by dealing with the notions of end and intention, Kant quite clearly wants to distance this new principle from the epistemological issues he faced in the first *Critique*. In the first case, he basically reinforces that it, which presupposes the existence of an end, is not a category and, as a consequence, cannot be used objectively, something theoretical reason attempts to do with its principle; in the second case, he reminds us that this presupposition does not need to involve a problematic one, namely, that of the existence of a higher and supposedly intentional intelligence as the first cause of nature, something, again, theoretical reason’s principle does.

Now obviously arises the question as to the conciliation between both solutions; more precisely, as to the ultimate place of the first solution in Kant’s theoretical framework. After all, given that he presents a second one, which does not bring out the tensions of the first one, it would probably not be absurd to speculate that, in the end, Kant intends to simply rule out the latter. However, this view does not take into account the place theoretical reason has in Kant’s theory of the faculties. As I argued in the last chapter, as far as our discursive faculties are concerned, it is exactly the place that accommodates the need to push boundaries, which is a typical trait of human behavior and obviously brings along epistemological tensions. By completely ruling this solution out, he would be cutting off a defining element of theoretical

¹⁴⁴ Guyer 1992, p. 11.

¹⁴⁵ Kant 2002, 20:216; Kant’s marks.

¹⁴⁶ Kant 2002, 20:251; Kant’s marks.

reason's behavior, a measure that could compromise the consistency of his argumentative economy. Indeed, in the third *Critique* Kant does not put forward the new principle as a substitute to the first one; it simply appears as an argument necessary to his theoretical framework, considering the tasks he associates with the power of judgment. To sum up: both faculties would then contribute to the systematization of *a posteriori* cognition. In the next chapter, I will finally study the judgment of taste as a reflecting judgment, in order to demonstrate how one can see it as an event that helps us comprehend the capacities and limits of our cognitive faculties and, as a consequence, cognition itself.

4 The judgment of taste

In this chapter I intend to shed light on a contribution to the debate on the completeness of systematicity, a contribution that might emerge from the study of the judgment of taste as a reflecting judgment. More precisely, I will argue in favor of the argument that the judgment of taste can be seen as a clue to the compatibility between nature, as particular experience, and our cognitive faculties. As I attempted to show so far, this compatibility can only be presupposed. This chapter will also have four topics. First, I will briefly describe what reflecting judgments are. Second, I will map the kinds of aesthetic judgments Kant mentions, among which he includes the judgment of taste. Third, I will more detailedly study the features of the judgment of taste as he explains it in the *Analytic of the Beautiful*. Finally, in the last part, I will then elaborate on how the judgment of taste helps us comprehend *a posteriori* cognition as Kant describes it.

4.1 Reflecting judgments

Reflecting judgments are one of the novelties that Kant presents in the third *Critique*. Generally speaking, they are judgments that do not determine objects; they actually instantiate, elicited by representations, certain inner relations between our cognitive faculties, generating subjective products that represent a new way to interpret nature. In order to start off the current study, I should again quote the passage of the first section of the “First Introduction” of the third *Critique*, where Kant, after elaborating on the notion of technical propositions, mentions reflecting judgments for the first time, although not yet using this term, presenting simultaneously, also for the first time, the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment:

[however], we shall in the future also use the expression “technique” where objects of nature are sometimes merely **judged as if** their possibility were grounded in art, in which cases the judgments are neither theoretical nor practical (in the sense just adduced), since they do not **determine** anything about the constitution of the object nor the way in which to produce it; rather through them nature itself is judged, but merely in accordance with the analogy with an art, and indeed in subjective relation to our cognitive faculty, not in objective relation to the objects. Now here we will not indeed call the judgments themselves technical, but rather the power of judgment, on whose laws they are grounded, and in accordance with it we will also call nature technical; further, this technique, since it contains no objectively determining propositions, does not constitute any part of doctrinal philosophy, but only a part of the critique of our faculty of cognition.¹⁴⁷

According to Kant, these newly identified judgments are grounded on a technical, teleological and also subjective interpretation of nature. Obviously, he explains, this teleology corresponds

¹⁴⁷ Kant 2002, 20:200-201; Kant’s marks.

to that inherent in the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment. However, the subjective character of reflecting judgments does not make them mere results of idiosyncrasies. In fact, they will strongly reveal universal ambitions human beings have, as beings capable of discursive knowledge.

Further in the text of the “First Introduction”, in its seventh section, Kant will more detailedly elaborate on what he will name reflecting judgments. The question that triggers this discussion follows a long debate on the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment, which took many sections. He finally asks: “[how] can the technique of nature in its products **be perceived?**”.¹⁴⁸ In other words, he now wants to initiate the discussion on the possible instantiations of this principle, precisely, the reflecting judgments. After briefly commenting, again, on the characteristics of the principle they instantiate, Kant announces the next theme to be explored: “[we] will shortly indicate the way in which the concept of the reflecting power of judgment, which makes possible the inner perception of a purposiveness of representations, can also be applied to the representation of the object as contained under it”.¹⁴⁹

However, before giving robust definitions, Kant feels the need to present a detailed description of the role of each faculty involved in cognition. So, in the following paragraph, he explains:

[to] every empirical concept, namely, there belong three actions of the self-active faculty of cognition: 1. the **apprehension** (*apprehensio*) of the manifold of intuition; 2. the **comprehension**, i.e., the synthetic unity of the consciousness of this manifold in the concept of an object (*apperceptio comprehensiva*); 3. the **presentation** (*exhibitio*) of the object corresponding to this concept in intuition. For the first action imagination is required, for the second understanding, for the third the power of judgment, which, if it is an empirical concept that is at issue, would be the determining power of judgment.¹⁵⁰

Here, he simply bothers to appropriately assign each cognitive faculty its task, as far as cognition is concerned, or, more precisely, concerning the act of determining representations, that is to say, of generating determining judgments.

This description also gives Kant theoretical tools that will help him explain reflecting judgments. Within them, reflection does not serve cognition in the way transcendental reflection or logical reflection do, despite the fact that they have important epistemological implications. Reflecting judgments are instead subjective experiences with their typical

¹⁴⁸ Kant 2002, 20:219; Kant’s marks.

¹⁴⁹ Kant 2002, 20:220.

¹⁵⁰ Kant 2002, 20:220; Kant’s marks.

products. Then, it is also worth to quote again the passage where he describes them for the first time, initially giving a general definition:

[but] since in the mere reflection on a perception it is not a matter of a determinate concept, but in general only of reflecting on the rule concerning a perception in behalf of the understanding, as a faculty of concepts, it can readily be seen that in a merely reflecting judgment imagination and understanding are considered in the relation to each other in which they must stand in the power of judgment in general, as compared with the relation in which they actually stand in the case of a given perception.¹⁵¹

Now, if Kant classifies them as being reflecting judgments, a defining characteristic of reflection should be found in them, namely, of them involving, at their core, an activity of subjective comparison and, as a consequence, a movement from the particular to the universal. Indeed, here it can be observed that there is a universal element on the horizon: an adequate behavior of our cognitive faculties, which is to be sought. When reflecting judgments are instantiated, our cognitive faculties are affected in some way by a representation, a behavior that is compared with the presupposition of a compatibility between nature and our cognitive faculties.

Then, according to Kant, there are two distinct kinds of reflecting judgments, namely, aesthetic judgments and teleological judgments. Aesthetic judgments, on the one hand, are characterized by having, as a result, the vivification of the faculty of pleasure and displeasure. Teleological judgments, on the other hand, subjectively ascribe ends to objects of nature. First, he provides a definition of aesthetic judgments:

[if], then, the form of a given object in empirical intuition is so constituted that the **apprehension** of its manifold in the imagination agrees with the **presentation** of a concept of the understanding (though which concept be undetermined), then in the mere reflection understanding and imagination mutually agree for the advancement of their business, and the object will be perceived as purposive merely for the power of judgment, hence the purposiveness itself will be considered as merely subjective; for which, further, no determinate concept of the object at all is required nor is one thereby generated, and the judgment itself is not a cognitive judgment. – Such a judgment is called an **aesthetic judgment of reflection**.¹⁵²

Aesthetic judgments of reflection, then, as Kant later explains, happen by means of the free harmony between the faculties of imagination and understanding, which is elicited by the form of an undetermined appearance with which one has had contact, and results in the vivification of the faculty of pleasure. Due to this achieved harmonious activity involving these two faculties, the object is regarded as purposive, and the faculties work toward maintaining this state of affairs, ‘mutually [agreeing] for the advancement of their business’.

¹⁵¹ Kant 2002, 20:220.

¹⁵² Kant 2002, 20:220-221; Kant’s marks.

Therefore, in the aesthetic judgments of reflection, a particular event is compared with an ideal one, namely, the agreement in general between these two faculties.

In the next paragraph, Kant will give a definition of teleological judgments:

[in] contrast, if empirical concepts and even empirical laws are already given in accordance with the mechanism of nature and the power of judgment compares such a concept of the understanding with reason and its principle of the possibility of a system, then, if this form is found in the object, the purposiveness is judged **objectively** and the thing is called a **natural end**, whereas previously things were judged as indeterminately purposive **natural forms**. The judgment about the objective purposiveness of nature is called **teleological**. It is a **cognitive judgment**, but still belonging only to the reflecting, not to the determining power of judgment. For in general the technique of nature, whether it be merely **formal** or **real**, is only a relation of things to our power of judgment, in which alone can be found the idea of a purposiveness of nature, and which is ascribed to nature only in relation to that power.¹⁵³

So, teleological judgments compare empirical concepts or empirical laws with the principle of theoretical reason, judging them as results of an intentional act of an intelligent agent, that is to say, as ‘natural end[s]’. It means that, by means of teleological judgments, natural forms are subjectively granted a specific, concrete function in a presupposed system, a procedure that is virtually temporary and has heuristic value. However, Kant makes it clear that a teleological judgment ‘is a cognitive judgment, but still belonging only to the reflecting, not to the determining power of judgment’.

The passage below, which is in the twelfth section of the “First Introduction”, contrasting both labors of the power of judgment, helps one elucidate the nature of reflecting judgments:

[now] the division a critique of the power of judgment (which faculty is precisely one that, although grounded on principles *a priori*, still never yields the material for a doctrine), 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*; that the former operates only **schematically**, under laws of another faculty (the understanding), while the latter operates only **technically** (in accordance with its own laws), and that the latter procedure is grounded on a principle of the technique of nature, hence on the concept of a purposiveness, which one must presuppose in it *a priori*; which indeed is necessarily presupposed, in accordance with the principle of the reflecting power of judgment, as only subjective, i.e., relatively to this faculty itself, but yet brings along it with the concept of a **possible** objective purposiveness, i.e., of the lawfulness of the things in nature as natural ends.¹⁵⁴

What Kant fundamentally does in the third *Critique* is to add a new autonomous and irreducible mode to our cognitive array: alongside the mechanical and the moral modes, now there is also the teleological/aesthetic (technical) mode. Accordingly, human beings can generate three kinds of judgments: cognitive, moral and reflecting judgments.

¹⁵³ Kant 2002, 20:221; Kant’s marks.

¹⁵⁴ Kant 2002, 20:248; Kant’s marks.

From what has been shown so far, one can reasonably conclude that, for Kant, the exercise of comparing is indeed one of our most elementary mental capacities, being the basic *modus operandi* of reflection on representations. The reflecting labor of the power of judgment even leads to the emergence of a whole new kind of judgment. However, its relevance does not end here. Particularly when it comes to judgments of taste, insightful proximities can be found between them and determining judgments, regarding the relations established between our cognitive faculties. These proximities, I argue, will point to an important normative aspect of judgments of taste, as far as cognition is concerned. In order to accomplish this more specific task, I will start, in the next part of the chapter, to more detailedly study aesthetic judgments.

4.2 Aesthetic judgments

According to Kant, not all aesthetic judgments are reflecting, but only those founded in a relation between cognitive faculties by means of reflection. Two kinds of aesthetic judgments fit this description: the judgment of the beautiful and the judgments of the sublime; the other kind of aesthetic judgment, the judgment of the agreeable, does not. Nevertheless, as I attempt to show, the definition of the judgment of the agreeable that he presents does encompass most of everyday aesthetic experiences human beings have, given that he associates it with personal idiosyncrasies. The term ‘aesthetic’ relates to two very different uses within Kant’s theoretical framework. The systematic need to establish this difference only comes up in the text of the third *Critique*, which is the book where Kant for the first time recognizes the theoretical relevance of aesthetic experiences. Beforehand, there was only one legitimate use of this term, which entitled the first part of the “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements” of the first *Critique*, namely, the “Transcendental Aesthetic”. There, as is well known, Kant debates the epistemological normativity of sensibility, which enables us to produce both *a priori* and *a posteriori* intuitions, which are, according to him, the only way human beings can have direct access to objects.

Then, at the beginning of the eighth section of the “First Introduction” of the third *Critique*, Kant argues that the expression ‘an aesthetic kind of representation’ can be ambiguous, given that it could come from either an aesthetic framework or an epistemological one. In Kant’s words,

[thus] there always remains an unavoidable ambiguity in the expression “an aesthetic kind of representation,” if by that one sometimes understands that which arouses the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, sometimes that which merely

concerns the faculty of cognition insofar as sensible intuition is found in it, which allows us to cognize objects only as appearances.¹⁵⁵

So, in order to avoid this ambiguity within his theoretical framework, Kant will restrict the adjective ‘aesthetic’ to judgments of taste. A few lines further, he gives a very concise and informative definition of what an aesthetic judgment would be:

[by] the designation “an aesthetic judgment about an object” it is therefore immediately indicated that a given representation is certainly related to an object but that what is understood in the judgment is not the determination of the object but of the subject and its feeling.¹⁵⁶

By resolving this ambiguity in these terms, Kant separates one’s feeling of pleasure and displeasure from typical sensorial representations; more precisely, as I am going to detail later, Kant will give the feeling of pleasure and displeasure the status of a mental faculty, whose vivification, as Kant explains in this definition, is the product that characterizes an aesthetic judgment.

A little bit further in the text, he then gives a more detailed definition of what would constitute an aesthetic judgment:

[an] aesthetic judgment in general can therefore be explicated as that judgment whose predicate can never be cognition (concept of an object) (although it may contain the subjective conditions for a cognition in general). In such a judgment the determining ground is sensation. However, there is only one so-called sensation that can never become a concept of an object, and this is the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. This is merely subjective, whereas all other sensation can be used for cognition. Thus an aesthetic judgment is that whose determining ground lies in a sensation that is immediately connected with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.¹⁵⁷

First of all, it is relevant to notice that Kant argues that an aesthetic judgment ‘may contain the subjective conditions for a cognition in general’. As I am going to more detailedly study later in this chapter, here he is particularly mentioning the judgment of taste, which involves, as in cognition, a well-succeeded relationship between the imagination and the understanding. However, what is more immediately important to shed light on is the fact that now Kant makes it clear about what makes the feeling of pleasure and displeasure different from intuitions: it is the ‘only one so-called sensation that can never become a concept of an object’, that is to say, that cannot be an object of cognition, but can only be experienced internally, when vivified.

Many pages earlier, in the third section of the “First Introduction”, Kant maps the three mental faculties he argues human beings have: “[we] can trace all faculties of the human mind without exception back to these three: the **faculty of cognition**, the **feeling of pleasure**

¹⁵⁵ Kant 2002, 20:222.

¹⁵⁶ Kant 2002, 20:223.

¹⁵⁷ Kant 2002, 20:224.

and displeasure, and the faculty of desire".¹⁵⁸ A few lines later, he will detailedly explain the differences between the three of them:

there is always a great difference between representations belonging to cognition, insofar as they are related merely to the object and the unity of the consciousness of it, and their objective relation where, considered as at the same time the cause of the reality of this object, they are assigned to the faculty of desire, and, finally, their relation merely to the subject, where they are considered merely as grounds for preserving their own existence in it and to this extent in relation to the feeling of pleasure; the latter is absolutely not a cognition, nor does it provide one, although to be sure it may presuppose such a cognition as a determining ground.¹⁵⁹

So, according to Kant, there are three ways in which our mental faculties can relate to representations: first, by means of the relation of determination; second, by means of acting aiming at a certain state of affairs; and third, by means of the maintenance of the vivification of the feeling of pleasure, a relation which is, indeed, entirely subjective.

In the next paragraph, Kant presents the need to find *a priori* grounds for the feeling of pleasure and displeasure as a part of the system of our faculties: "there is thus required for the idea of philosophy as a system (if not a doctrine then still) a **critique of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure** insofar as it is not empirically grounded".¹⁶⁰ Right after that, he writes:

[now] the **faculty of cognition** in accordance with concepts has its *a priori* principles in the pure understanding (in its concept of nature), the **faculty of desire**, in pure reason (in its concept of freedom), and there remains among the properties of mind in general an intermediate faculty or receptivity, namely the **feeling of pleasure and displeasure**, just as there remains among the higher faculties of cognition an intermediate one, the power of judgment. What is more natural than to suspect that the latter will also contain *a priori* principles for the former?¹⁶¹

In this passage, he associates the legislation of each cognitive faculty with a different mental faculty, then allegedly legitimizing the system of the human mind he proposed. Moreover, he will posit the feeling of pleasure as a mediating mental faculty, just as the power of judgment is a mediating cognitive faculty. He continues by more detailedly speculating about the connection between the former and the latter, which is a great novelty:

[without] yet deciding anything about the possibility of this connection, a certain suitability of the power of judgment to serve as the determining ground for the feeling of pleasure, or to find one in it, is already unmistakable, insofar as, while in the **division of faculties of cognition through concepts** understanding and reason relate their representations to objects, in order to acquire concepts of them, the power of judgment is related solely to the subject and does not produce any concepts of objects for itself alone.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Kant 2002, 20:205-206; Kant's marks.

¹⁵⁹ Kant 2002, 20:206.

¹⁶⁰ Kant 2002, 20:207; Kant's marks.

¹⁶¹ Kant 2002, 20:207-208; Kant's marks.

¹⁶² Kant 2002, 20:208; Kant's marks.

Therefore, according to Kant, given that the feeling of pleasure is strictly subjective, concerning only the relation of representations with the subject, not even being a potential cognition, and that the legislation of the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment is heautonomous, having the same subjective nature, it is reasonable to establish a connection between these faculties. He concludes:

[likewise], if in the general **division of the powers of the mind** overall the faculty of cognition as well as the faculty of desire contain an **objective** relation of representations, so by contrast the feeling of pleasure and displeasure is only the receptivity of a determination of the subject, so that 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 at all, it will be found only in the power of judgment.¹⁶³

By executing this maneuver, Kant then establishes as the *a priori* determining ground of the feeling of pleasure the notion of teleology of nature, which underlies the principle of the reflecting power of judgment and presupposes the compatibility between nature and our cognitive faculties.

In the seventh section of the “First Introduction”, Kant deploys the very first definition of the judgment of taste, well articulating the role of purposiveness within this judgment. I quote it again:

[if], then, the form of a given object in empirical intuition is so constituted that the **apprehension** of its manifold in the imagination agrees with the **presentation** of a concept of the understanding (though which concept be undetermined), then in the mere reflection understanding and imagination mutually agree for the advancement of their business, and the object will be perceived as purposive merely for the power of judgment, hence the purposiveness itself will be considered as merely subjective; for which, further, no determinate concept of the object at all is required nor is one thereby generated, and the judgment itself is not a cognitive judgment. – Such a judgment is called an **aesthetic judgment of reflection**.¹⁶⁴

First of all, it might catch one’s attention that this definition obviously does not include the judgments of the sublime, which are also reflecting judgments, a situation I am going to address soon enough. However, what is more immediately important is to realize that the representation that elicited the free harmony is taken as purposive exactly because a harmonious relationship between the faculties involved is what is expected of them; and what is expected of them is precisely the ideal relation with which an instantiation of the judgment of taste is compared ‘in the mere reflection’. In other words, what is expected of them is to be compatible with forms of nature, the compatibility that is presupposed by the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment. Therefore, it is not surprising at all that Kant identifies the

¹⁶³ Kant 2002, 20:208; Kant’s marks.

¹⁶⁴ Kant 2002, 20:220-221; Kant’s marks.

vivification of the feeling of pleasure as the product of the judgment of taste, given that the feeling of pleasure has this principle as its *a priori* ground.

Going forth to the eighth section of the “First Introduction”, one can now better explain a difference Kant gives there for the first time, namely, that between judgments of taste and judgments of the agreeable. Among other definitions he presents, he writes:

[the] aesthetic judgment of sense contains material purposiveness, the aesthetic judgment of reflection formal purposiveness. But since the former is not related to the faculty of cognition at all, but is related immediately through sense to the feeling of pleasure, only the latter is to be regarded as grounded in special principles of the power of judgment.¹⁶⁵

Here, then, Kant distinguishes ‘the aesthetic judgment of sense’ from the ‘aesthetic judgment of reflection’. The former, as the definition and name convey, is a feeling that is triggered as a more immediate response to the contact with a representation; the latter is also a feeling, but one that is related to the reflection on the free harmony between imagination and the understanding. By contrasting ‘material purposiveness’ and ‘formal purposiveness’, Kant conveys that, as he will more detailedly explain in the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, the judgment of sense has as a core element also a gratification triggered due to the existence of the object, while the judgment of taste simply concerns a purposive form, regardless of the existence of the object.

After one takes a look at Kant’s notion of the judgment of sublime, it is quite easy to understand why he did not include it in the general definition of aesthetic judgments he often gives in the “First Introduction”. At the beginning of the §23 of the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment”, which is the first § of the “Analytic of the Sublime”, Kant presents a concise and revealing distinction between both kinds of aesthetic judgments of reflection. He writes:

[the] beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in limitation; the sublime, by contrast, is to be found in a formless object insofar as **limitlessness** is represented in it, or at its instance, and yet it is also thought as a totality: so that the beautiful seems to be taken as the presentation of an indeterminate concept of the understanding, but the sublime as that of a similar concept of reason.¹⁶⁶

In other words, the sublime stands exactly for what cannot be grasped by the imagination, which makes the reflection on its representation be carried out in relation to the faculty of reason. Then, the judgment of the sublime does not confirm the presupposition of the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment; in fact, it does just the opposite, appealing to the unconditioned whole presupposed by reason. This characteristic renders its systematic place, compared with that of the judgment of taste, fairly marginal. As Kant explains a little bit

¹⁶⁵ Kant 2002, 20:224.

¹⁶⁶ Kant 2002, 5:244; Kant’s marks.

further, this characteristic will have an influence on the path that leads to the vivification of the feeling of pleasure:

[also] the latter pleasure is very different in kind from the former, in that the former (the beautiful) directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life, and hence is compatible with charms and an imagination at play, while the latter (the feeling of the sublime) is a pleasure that arises only indirectly, being generated, namely, by the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital powers and the immediately following and all the more powerful outpouring of them; hence as an emotion it seems to be not play but something serious in the activity of the imagination.¹⁶⁷

Therefore, differently from the judgment of taste, the judgment of the sublime, due to its particularities, does not directly vivify the feeling of pleasure.

Indeed, as I have already hinted, Kant grants the judgment of taste a crucial place in the argumentative economy of his critical project, since it is the reflecting judgment that directly vivifies the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. The importance of this characteristic comes from the fact that this vivification represents the instantiation of the presupposition intrinsic to the heautonomous principle of the power of judgment; after all, this principle is the *a priori* concept that grounds the feeling of pleasure as a faculty of the mind. Then, in the next two topics of this chapter, I will more detailedly elaborate on the systematic place of the judgment of taste, establishing a connection between it and determining judgments. The first and next step is to describe it in accordance with the four moments of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”.

4.3 The judgment of taste

The third *Critique*, as is well known, has two parts: the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment” and the “Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment”. Each part, as one can infer, concerns the debate on its respective kind of reflecting judgment and its subdivisions. The “Analytic of the Beautiful” is the first book of the “Analytic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment”, which is precisely the first section of the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment”. As is typical of Kant’s critical texts, the first part of the third *Critique* has another section, namely, the “Dialectic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment”. Moreover, the second book of the “Analytic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment” is the already mentioned “Analytic of the Sublime”, and this section also has a “Deduction of Pure Aesthetic Judgments”. The “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment” has a totality of 60 §§. The “Analytic of the Beautiful”, where Kant more detailedly describes the judgment of taste, contains 22 §§ distributed throughout four moments. Accordingly, each moment explains one

¹⁶⁷ Kant 2002, 5:244-245.

out of the four main features Kant ascribes to the judgment of taste. At the end of each moment, he provides a definition of the judgment of taste from the perspective of the feature he just described. After he presents all the moments, he gives a general remark.

Allegedly, each moment corresponds to a title of the table of functions of the understanding, as Kant argues in a footnote to the first moment of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”. There, after arguing that taste concerns the beautiful, he writes: “[in] seeking the moments to which this power of judgment attends in its reflection, I have been guided by the logical functions for judging (for a relation to the understanding is always contained even in the judgment of taste)”.¹⁶⁸ So, the first moment would be related to the title of quality; the second one, to that of quantity; the third one, to that of relation; and the fourth one, to that of modality. The first title of the table of functions is actually that of quantity, a fact that probably prompted Kant to end the footnote by explaining why he starts by the title of quality: “I have considered the moment of quality first, since the aesthetic judgment on the beautiful takes notice of this first”.¹⁶⁹ Supposedly, this moment debates the feature that is more paradigmatically related to the aesthetic, reflecting nature of the judgment of taste, namely, the lack of interest in the existence of the object. The other three features are, respectively: the lack of a concept as a product; the formal purpose of the object; the exemplary necessity of the judgment.

In the §1 of the “Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment”, which starts off the first moment of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, Kant basically summarizes what he explained about the judgment of taste in the “Introductions”, although not yet particularly approaching the feature of disinterestedness. In its first paragraph, he lines up three arguments: first, that the judgment of taste does not aim at cognition, but at the feeling of pleasure and displeasure; second, that, then, it is not a cognitive, logical judgment, but an aesthetic, subjective one; and third, that the relation of the representation with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure that is established in a judgment of taste cannot be taken objectively, that is to say, cannot be object of cognition. At the beginning of its second and last paragraph, he writes, reinforcing the arguments of the previous one:

[to] grasp a regular, purposive structure with one’s faculty of cognition (whether the manner of representation be distinct or confused) is something entirely different from being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition but only

¹⁶⁸ Kant 2002, 5:203.

¹⁶⁹ Kant 2002, 5:203.

holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state.¹⁷⁰

Here, Kant seems to contrast the judgment of taste with the teleological judgment, arguing that in the former one takes notice of a purposive form by means of the vivification of the faculty of pleasure and displeasure, something that does not happen in the latter, in which one grasps this form by means of one's faculties of cognition. The judgment of taste, then, 'contributes nothing to cognition', that is to say, does not generate new concepts, but works to maintain itself vivified. Moreover, Kant concludes this § by again solving the ambiguity of the term 'aesthetic', which dissipates when one uses it characterizing a judgment instead of a representation.

From §2 to §5, Kant addresses the feature of disinterestedness of the judgment of taste, contrasting it with both the judgment of the agreeable and the moral judgment, which concerns the good. At the very beginning of the §2, he already deploys the main argument:

[the] satisfaction that we combine with the representation of the existence of an object is called interest. Hence such a satisfaction always has at the same time a relation to the faculty of desire, either as its determining ground or else as necessarily interconnected with its determining ground. But if the question is whether something is beautiful, one does not want to know whether there is anything that is or that could be at stake, for us or for someone else, in the existence of the thing, but rather how we judge it in mere contemplation (intuition or reflection).¹⁷¹

So, Kant defines interest as being a kind of satisfaction, which is triggered by 'the representation of the existence of an object'. Accordingly, it has a core relation to the faculty of desire. With that in mind, he goes on to argue that, given that the judgment of taste is an aesthetic, reflecting judgment, it does not relate to the faculty of desire at all, concerning only 'how we judge [the thing] in mere contemplation'. In other words, one, when judging an object beautiful, does not trigger the interest in the existence of the object, but internally celebrates and maintains the subjective, aesthetic relation of its representation to oneself.

By contrast, as Kant already argued in the "Introductions", "[the] agreeable is that which pleases the senses in sensation".¹⁷² In order to explain this definition, he bothers again to distinguish between the terms 'sensation' and 'feeling': the former is the matter of an empirical sensible representation; the latter, a faculty of the mind that can be vivified in many ways. Later, he better elaborates on his definition of the agreeable:

[now] that my judgment about an object by which I declare it agreeable expresses an interest in it is already clear from the fact that through sensation it excites a desire for objects of the same sort, hence the satisfaction presupposes not the mere judgment about it but the relation of its existence to my state insofar as it is affected

¹⁷⁰ Kant 2002, 5:204.

¹⁷¹ Kant 2002, 5:204.

¹⁷² Kant 2002, 5:205; Kant's marks.

by such an object. Hence one says of the agreeable not merely that it **pleases** but that it **gratifies**. It is not mere approval that I give it, rather inclination is thereby aroused; and any judgment about the constitution of the object belongs so little to that which is agreeable in the liveliest way that those who are always intent only on enjoyment (for this is the word that signifies intensity of gratification) gladly put themselves above all judging.¹⁷³

Therefore, for Kant, the vivification of the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, in the agreeable, differently from the beautiful, relates to the fulfillment of a desire for something, ending up both pleasing and gratifying. Accordingly, it encompasses personal preferences, idiosyncrasies, such as one's favorite color, favorite dish, favorite song etc., then characterizing many aesthetic experiences one can have in everyday life. Moreover, since it is also an aesthetic, subjective judgment, it does not concern cognition.

The good, in turn, is that “which pleases by means of reason alone, through the mere concept”.¹⁷⁴ Right after this definition, he elaborates on it:

[we] call something **good for something** (the useful) that pleases only as a means; however, another thing is called **good in itself** that pleases for itself. Both always involve the concept of an end, hence the relation of reason to (at least possible) willing, and consequently a satisfaction in the **existence** of an object or of an action, i.e., some sort of interest.¹⁷⁵

In other words, when in contact with a representation whose concept relates to a good, which is a concept provided by reason, an interest in it is satisfied, and it pleases. Following this elaboration, Kant concisely compares these three judgments:

[in] order to find something good, I must always know what sort of thing the object is supposed to be, i.e., I must have a concept of it. I do not need that in order to find beauty in something. Flowers, free designs, lines aimlessly intertwined in each other under the name of foliage, signify nothing, do not depend on any determinate concept, and yet please. The satisfaction in the beautiful must depend upon reflection on an object that leads to some sort of concept (it is indeterminate which), and is thereby also distinguished from the agreeable, which rests entirely on sensation.¹⁷⁶

Then, differently from the other two judgments, the pleasure in the judgment of taste comes from reflection, and not from the fulfillment of the faculty of desire that takes place either by means of a concept of reason or of sensation. So, he concludes the first moment of the “Analytic of the Beautiful” by stating that “[**taste**] is the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction **without any interest**. The object of such a satisfaction is called **beautiful**”.¹⁷⁷

The second moment, which ranges from §6 to §9, concerns the lack of a concept as a product of the judgment of taste. The title of §6 is “[the] beautiful is that which, without

¹⁷³ Kant 2002, 5:207; Kant's marks.

¹⁷⁴ Kant 2002, 5:207.

¹⁷⁵ Kant 2002, 5:207; Kant's marks.

¹⁷⁶ Kant 2002, 5:207.

¹⁷⁷ Kant 2002, 5:211; Kant's marks.

concepts, is represented as the object of a *universal* satisfaction”.¹⁷⁸ Kant opens up §6 stating that this argument, which names it, should be deduced from the conclusion he arrived at in the first moment. Then, he explains why:

[for] one cannot judge that about which he is aware that the satisfaction in it is without any interest in his own case in any way except that it must contain a ground of satisfaction for everyone. For since it is not grounded in any inclination of the subject (nor in any other underlying interest), but rather the person making the judgment feels himself completely **free** with regard to the satisfaction that he devotes to the object, he cannot discover as grounds of the satisfaction any private conditions, pertaining to his subject alone, and must therefore regard it as grounded in those that he can also presuppose in everyone else; consequently he must believe himself to have grounds for expecting a similar pleasure of everyone.¹⁷⁹

Actually, despite the great length of the explanation, the core of the argument is relatively straightforward: given that the pleasure in the judgment of taste does not relate to any ‘private conditions, pertaining to his subject alone’, its source must be something universal that all human beings share. As a consequence, ‘he must believe himself to have grounds for expecting a similar pleasure of everyone’.

§9 relates to a crucial and complex issue in Kant’s theory of taste, namely, if pleasure is prior or posterior to the judgment of taste. Kant starts off this way:

[if] the pleasure in the given object came first, and only its universal communicability were to be attributed in the judgment of taste to the representation of the object, then such a procedure would be self-contradictory. For such a pleasure would be none other than mere agreeableness in sensation, and hence by its very nature could have only private validity, since it would immediately depend on the representation through which the object **is given**.¹⁸⁰

In one out of many passages where Kant explains it, he writes:

[the] animation of both faculties (the imagination and the understanding) to an activity that is indeterminate but yet, through the stimulus of the given representation, in unison, namely that which belongs to a cognition in general, is the sensation whose universal communicability is postulated by the judgment of taste.¹⁸¹

As I will detail in the next topic, the argument is the following: what grants the judgment of taste its subjective universality is precisely the fact that it concerns a harmonious but ‘indeterminate’ relation between our cognitive faculties (the state of their free play), which in themselves are universal. Hence the judgment of taste instantiates an activity that ‘belongs to a cognition in general’. This cause-effect relationship between free harmony and pleasure does not need to be taken as a chronological one: it is simply the case that, in the judgment of taste, the latter cannot exist, that is to say, be instantiated, without the former. The conclusion of the second moment is: “[that] is **beautiful** which pleases universally without a concept”.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Kant 2002, 5:211; Kant’s marks.

¹⁷⁹ Kant 2002, 5:211; Kant’s marks.

¹⁸⁰ Kant 2002, 5:217; Kant’s marks.

¹⁸¹ Kant 2002, 5:219.

¹⁸² Kant 2002, 5:219; Kant’s marks.

In the third moment, which ranges from §10 to §17, Kant debates the formal purposiveness inherent in the judgment of taste. Right at the beginning of §10, Kant gives a definition of an end:

[if] one would define what an end is in accordance with its transcendental determinations (without presupposing anything empirical, such as the feeling of pleasure), then an end is the object of a concept insofar as the latter is regarded as the cause of the former (the real ground of its possibility); and the causality of a **concept** with regard to its **object** is purposiveness (*forma finalis*).¹⁸³

This notion, although not explicitly, already appeared in the “Introductions”, where Kant distinguishes practical propositions from technical propositions. Every action aims at a certain state of affairs that is predicted by a concept, with which one is acquainted. The aimed state of affairs is then the end, the purpose of its concept, and the cause-effect relation established between them is one of purposiveness, being the concept the cause, and the aimed state of affairs, the effect.

A few lines later, Kant reinforces his definition of the faculty of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure:

[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; in contrast to which displeasure is that representation that contains the ground for determining the state of the representations to their own opposite (hindering or getting rid of them).¹⁸⁴

Therefore, the vivification of the faculty of pleasure, on the one hand, is a sort of celebration triggered by some benefit brought by one’s contact with a representation; displeasure, on the other hand, leads to the opposite direction: it makes explicit a hindering, a sort of frustration brought by the contact with a representation. By extension, the accomplishment of an end, that is to say, to be successful at implementing an aimed state of affairs, leads oneself to pleasure; and that the failure at this task, to displeasure.

Still in §10, Kant gives his definition of will: “[the] faculty of desire, insofar as it is determinable only through concepts, i.e., to act in accordance with the representation of an end, would be the will”.¹⁸⁵ The will, then, is the faculty of desire in motion, aiming at an end, which is established by a concept. Right after that, he explains that it is possible to think of a purposiveness without an end, that is to say, without a purpose. He writes:

[an] object or a state of mind or even an action, however, even if its possibility does not necessarily presuppose the representation of an end, is called purposive merely because its possibility can only be explained and conceived by us insofar as we assume as its ground a causality in accordance with ends, i.e., a will that has arranged it so in accordance with the representation of a certain rule. Purposiveness

¹⁸³ Kant 2002, 5:219-220; Kant’s marks.

¹⁸⁴ Kant 2002, 5:220; Kant’s marks.

¹⁸⁵ Kant 2002, 5:220.

can thus exist without an end, insofar as we do not place the causes of this form in a will, but can still make the explanation of its possibility conceivable to ourselves only by deriving it from a will.¹⁸⁶

As I pointed out, the notion of an end is not a novelty of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”. It is actually at the core of the notion of technique, which explains technical propositions and, obviously, also explains the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment, which does presuppose, in order for reflection to take place, an artistic, technical end or purpose in nature, one that is compatible with our cognitive faculties. It is to this extent that this principle establishes an analogy between objects of nature and results that could only be achieved from an intentional act, that is to say, derived ‘from a will’. This analogy, as Kant explains again, only goes as far as presupposing in nature an underlying principle that is compatible with logic. Kant concludes this argument by stating that

[now] we do not always necessarily need to have insight through reason (concerning its possibility) into what we observe. Thus we can at least observe a purposiveness concerning form, even without basing it in an end (as the matter of the *nexus finalis*), and notice it in objects, although in no other way than by reflection.¹⁸⁷

This is indeed a definition of the *a priori* principle of technique or purposiveness of nature, which, as Kant himself reminds us, governs reflection, and, as a consequence, is the kind of purposiveness that is at stake in the judgment of taste. Pertinently, along with deploying this definition, he makes it clear that it is exactly formal purposiveness that separates the power of judgment from reason, which always operates with a concept as an end.

Accordingly, Kant sees the vivification of the feeling of pleasure as a state of affairs on its own, that is to say, as an end that could allegedly be aimed at and, consequently, be sought. He concludes the §11 by stating the following:

nothing other than the subjective purposiveness in the representation of an object without any end (objective or subjective), consequently the mere form of purposiveness in the representation through which an object is **given** to us, insofar as we are conscious of it, can constitute the satisfaction that we judge, without a concept, to be universally communicable, and hence the determining ground of the judgment of taste.¹⁸⁸

So, an aesthetic judgment has subjective universality when it has the potential to be shared by everyone, without it being possible to make sense of how one can seek it, as is the case of the pure judgment of taste. Kant concludes the third moment as follows: “[**beauty**] is the form of the **purposiveness** of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it **without representation of an end**”.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Kant 2002, 5:220.

¹⁸⁷ Kant 2002, 5:220; Kant’s marks.

¹⁸⁸ Kant 2002, 5:221; Kant’s marks.

¹⁸⁹ Kant 2002, 5:236; Kant’s marks.

Finally, from §18 to §22, Kant presents the fourth moment of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, which debates the exemplary necessity of the judgment of taste. Right at the beginning of §18, he argues:

[of] every representation I can say that it is at least **possible** that it (as a cognition) be combined with a pleasure. Of that which I call **agreeable** I say that it **actually** produces a pleasure in me. Of the **beautiful**, however, one thinks that it has a necessary relation to satisfaction. Now this necessity is of a special kind: not a theoretical objective necessity, where it can be cognized *a priori* that everyone **will feel** this satisfaction in the object called beautiful by me, nor a practical necessity, whereby means of concepts of a pure will, serving as rules for freely acting beings, this satisfaction is a necessary consequence of an objective law and signifies nothing other than that one absolutely (without a further aim) ought to act in a certain way. Rather, as a necessity that is thought in an aesthetic judgment, it can only be called **exemplary**, i.e., a necessity of the assent of **all** to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule that one cannot produce.¹⁹⁰

This argument is an inference that one draws from what Kant has said so far in the “Analytic of the Beautiful”. The exemplary necessity of the judgment of taste comes exactly from its subjective universality. Such a necessity is, then, in Kant’s words, ‘a necessity of the assent of all to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule that one cannot produce’.

In the following §§, Kant articulates what he claims to be a subjective principle that accommodates the exemplary necessity of the judgment of taste. First, in the very brief §19, he explains:

[the] judgment of taste ascribes assent to everyone, and whoever declares something to be beautiful wishes that everyone **should** approve of the object in question and similarly declare it to be beautiful. The **should** in aesthetic judgments of taste is thus pronounced only conditionally even given all the data that are required for the judging. One solicits assent from everyone else because one has a ground for it that is common to all; one could even count on this assent if only one were always sure that the case were correctly subsumed under that ground as the rule of approval.¹⁹¹

Given that everyone has the same cognitive faculties, which operate exactly in the same way, one who has experienced a judgment of taste expects that everyone ‘should’ experience the same in the same circumstances, because it concerns the free harmony between understanding and imagination.

Then, in §20 Kant will deploy the name of this alleged principle:

[if] judgments of taste (like cognitive judgments) had a determinate objective principle, then someone who made them in accordance with the latter would lay claim to the unconditioned necessity of his judgment. If they had no principle at all, like those of mere sensory taste, then one would never even have a thought of their necessity. They must thus have a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity. Such a principle, however, could only be regarded as a **common sense**, which is essentially different from the common understanding that is sometimes also called common sense (*sensus communis*), since the latter judges not

¹⁹⁰ Kant 2002, 5:236-237; Kant’s marks.

¹⁹¹ Kant 2002, 5:237; Kant’s marks.

by feeling but always by concepts, although commonly only in the form of obscurely represented principles.¹⁹²

What Kant brings to light by articulating this new notion is a level of non-discursive intersubjectivity, which has normative force. He concludes §20 by arguing that

[thus] only under the presupposition that there is a common sense (by which, however, we do not mean any external sense but rather the effect of the free play of our cognitive powers), only under the presupposition of such a common sense, I say, can the judgment of taste be made.¹⁹³

Although within Kant's theoretical framework one cannot consider the common sense in the judgment of taste to actually be a principle, the expression does accommodate a crucial feature according to which human beings should equally share, in the same terms, a non-cognitive experience the cognitive faculties generate, namely, the judgment of taste. He concludes the fourth moment by stating that "[that] is **beautiful** which is cognized without a concept as the object of a **necessary** satisfaction".¹⁹⁴

Hence the four main features of the judgment of taste that Kant presented in the "Analytic of the Beautiful" follow a step by step argumentative thread. First, the argument that the judgment of taste is disinterested, which allows one to interpret that it is an unpredictable experience; second, the argument that, given that it is disinterested, it has subjective universality and is free from any concept, which will then characterize it as an aesthetic experience that involves the free play of our cognitive faculties; third, that this free play of our cognitive faculties instantiate a formal purposiveness that corresponds to the *a priori* principle of the faculty of the power of judgment, which also characterizes it as a reflecting judgment; and fourth, that the judgment of taste aims at an exemplary necessity, that is to say, at the claim that anyone would have the same aesthetic experience.

All the four main features of the judgment of taste that Kant described in the "Analytic of the Beautiful" reinforce its aesthetic, reflecting character, as well as its core link with the *a priori* principle of technique of nature. Most importantly, they lead to the discovery of the normativity of the judgment of taste, as long as it unpredictably instantiates the *a priori* presupposition of an autonomous principle. Obviously, its normative status is not objective, but, as I alluded above, does claim to be intersubjective. This is precisely the element of the judgment of taste that might be an important insight into the debate on the systematicity of *a posteriori* cognition, which I have rebuilt in the present text. Accordingly, it will be the theme of the next and also last topic of this chapter, where I present the main hypothesis of my work.

¹⁹² Kant 2002, 5:237-238; Kant's marks.

¹⁹³ Kant 2002, 5:238.

¹⁹⁴ Kant 2002, 5:240; Kant's marks.

4.4 Beauty and *a posteriori* cognition

Since the very first definition of the judgment of taste Kant provides in the third *Critique*, he hints at its normative force. As I intend to show in the next pages, this element arises from the acknowledgment that the free harmony of the faculties happens in the same terms of what he names ‘cognition in general’. I should again quote the first definition, which appears in the seventh section of the “First Introduction”:

[if], then, the form of a given object in empirical intuition is so constituted that the **apprehension** of its manifold in the imagination agrees with the **presentation** of a concept of the understanding (though which concept be undetermined), then in the mere reflection understanding and imagination mutually agree for the advancement of their business, and the object will be perceived as purposive merely for the power of judgment, hence the purposiveness itself will be considered as merely subjective; for which, further, no determinate concept of the object at all is required nor is one thereby generated, and the judgment itself is not a cognitive judgment. – Such a judgment is called an **aesthetic judgment of reflection**.¹⁹⁵

Here, the main argument does seem to be the fact that, in the judgment of taste, ‘the object will be perceived as purposive merely for the power of judgment’, establishing a ‘merely subjective’ relation of purposiveness between the object and the reflecting labor of the power of judgment. As Kant more detailedly elaborates in the third moment of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, what is at stake here is the formal purposiveness of the judgment of taste, which subjectively instantiates the *a priori* principle of the technique of nature. When an object of nature is deemed as purposive in behalf of the power of judgment, it is judged as favorable to its labors. Obviously, this favorability is established unpredictably, subjectively, within an aesthetic judgment of reflection. It has, of course, no objective validity whatsoever.

A further definition Kant presents is even more emphatic on the relevance of the judgment of taste for the comprehension of cognition. This definition appears in the eighth section of the “First Introduction”. He writes the following, comparing it with a determining judgment:

[every] **determining** judgment is **logical** because its predicate is a given objective concept. A merely **reflecting** judgment about a given individual object, however, **can be aesthetic** if (before its comparison with others is seen), the power of judgment, which has no concept ready for the given intuition, holds the imagination (merely in the apprehension of the object) together with the understanding (in the presentation of a concept in general) and perceives a relation of the two faculties of cognition which constitutes the subjective, merely sensitive condition of the objective use of the power of judgment in general (namely the agreement of those two faculties with each other).¹⁹⁶

Therefore, this passage explains that, in a judgment of taste, imagination and understanding work harmoniously, involving, on one side, the ‘apprehension of the object’ and, on the other,

¹⁹⁵ Kant 2002, 20:220-221; Kant’s marks.

¹⁹⁶ Kant 2002, 20:223-224; Kant’s marks.

‘the presentation of a concept in general’. It also helps explain the reflecting nature of this judgment: it is a subjective comparison between this harmony and the harmony that is necessary to cognition in general, a comparison that is hence well succeeded and, as a consequence, vivifies the mental faculty of pleasure. Obviously, it is the power of judgment that compares here, that is to say, that ‘perceives a relation of the two faculties of cognition which constitutes the subjective, merely sensitive condition of the objective use of the power of judgment in general’. Defining the judgment of taste this way, Kant does not intend to say that the aesthetic experience of the judgment of taste is a necessary previous step for cognition, nor even that it is a subordinate, secondary experience, although maybe not mandatory. In fact, Kant’s goal here is to argue that this state of free harmony, although subjective, claims universality, a universality of which we become aware by means of a feeling, instead of a concept.

In the §9 of the “Analytic of the Beautiful”, Kant elaborates on the free play of our cognitive faculties. First, after arguing that, if, in an aesthetic judgment, the pleasure comes before the judging, it cannot be a pure judgment of taste, he explains:

[thus] it is the universal capacity for the communication of the state of mind in the given representation which, as the subjective condition of the judgment of taste, must serve as its ground and have the pleasure in the object as a consequence. Nothing, however, can be universally communicated except cognition and representation so far as it belongs to cognition. For only so far is the latter objective, and only thereby does it have a universal point of relation with which everyone’s faculty of representation is compelled to agree. Now if the determining ground of the judgment on this universal communicability of the representation is to be conceived of merely subjectively, namely without a concept of the object, it can be nothing other than the state of mind that is encountered in the relation of the powers of representation to each other insofar as they relate a given representation to **cognition in general**.¹⁹⁷

Here Kant presents his criterion: the only way for a judgment to claim universality and, as a result, universal communicability is to involve a relation between our faculties that corresponds to cognition. However, in the case of a judgment of taste, which is subjective, this relation can only correspond to cognition in general.

In the following paragraph, Kant then more detailedly explains how the agreement of the cognitive faculties in a judgment of taste is related to their agreement in a determining judgment. He writes:

[the] powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition. Thus the state of mind in this representation must be that of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general. Now there belongs to a representation by which an object is given, in order for there to be cognition of it in general, **imagination** for the composition of

¹⁹⁷ Kant 2002, 5:217; Kant’s marks.

the manifold of intuition and **understanding** for the unity of the concept that unifies the representations. This state of a **free play** of the faculties of cognition with a representation through which an object is given must be able to be universally communicated, because cognition, as a determination of the object with which given representations (in whatever subject it may be) should agree, is the only kind of representation that is valid for everyone.¹⁹⁸

Therefore, Kant sheds light on the playful aspect of the judgment of taste, given that, when it is instantiated, understanding and imagination relate to one another not only in a harmonious, but also pleasant free play, elicited by the form of an object. And this relation is free precisely because ‘no determinate concept restricts [the powers of cognition that are set into play] to a particular rule of cognition’. In the next paragraph, Kant reinforces the whole reasoning:

[the] subjective universal communicability of the 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 the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a **cognition in general**): for we are conscious that this subjective relation suited to cognition in general must be valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable, just as any determinate cognition is, which still always rests on that relation as its subjective condition.¹⁹⁹

Paul Guyer sheds light on three features of the judgment of taste that help one comprehend it as a reflecting judgment. First, by interpreting that the universal agreement of our cognitive faculties that happens in the judgment of taste represents an attempt of the power of judgment to subsume a particular under a universal: “[in] attempting to make a judgment of taste about a particular object that is given to us, universal agreement in the otherwise utterly subjective response of pleasure is itself the universal that we seek”.²⁰⁰ Second, taking into account the tension between contingency and necessity that one sees in the judgment of taste, a tension that is typical of the activity of reflection:

[the] judgment that an object is beautiful is not determined by any particular concepts that apply to the object; thus, it is contingent relative to such concepts, but it can be seen to be necessary given the commonality of the fundamental cognitive capacities in which our response to a beautiful object is based.²⁰¹

And third, one can find the heuristic character of the judgment of taste, for example, in its third moment, which concerns its formal purposiveness. According to Guyer, Kant

takes evidence that our pleasure in an object is not connected with its subsumption under any determinate concept - of course, every object is subsumed under innumerable concepts, so our evidence that our pleasure in it is not connected with its subsumption under concepts will never be the sheer absence of such concepts - and is instead associated with its mere form as a ground for assigning the pleasure that we take in it to the universally valid free play of our cognitive faculties, and thus for judging that our goal of systematicity in aesthetic response has been achieved.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Kant 2002, 5:217; Kant’s marks.

¹⁹⁹ Kant 2002, 5:217-218; Kant’s marks.

²⁰⁰ Guyer 1992, p. 32.

²⁰¹ Guyer 1992, p. 33.

²⁰² Guyer 1992, p. 37.

Here Guyer is clearly mentioning the subjective instantiation of the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment, which the formal purposiveness of the judgment of taste explains. This heuristic aspect would then come from the fact that this subjective instantiation might work as a hint about the pertinence of the presupposition of this principle, which serves as a guideline for us.

Indeed, both these elements of the judgment of taste, namely, the free play of our cognitive faculties and a consequent heuristic aspect, help one better grasp the systematic importance of this judgment, as far as Kant's critical project is concerned: given its claim to universality, which is grounded on its correspondence to cognition in general, it interprets, by means of a feeling, a beautiful form of nature as being purposive, due to the fact that this state of mind agrees with the presupposition of the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment. In other words, the judgment of taste heuristically instantiates the principle of technique or purposiveness of nature, a subjective instantiation that one might see as a means of communication between nature and human beings, that is to say, as a clue to the validity of our attempt to systematize *a posteriori* cognition.

Conclusion

In this work, the argumentative path I have chosen regards the aim to locate Kant's theory of taste within the broader theoretical framework of his critical project, which is built on his epistemological theory. First, as I attempted to show in Chapter 1, Kant's take on our cognitive faculties accommodates our finitude, stating that any cognition that we might arrive at is incomplete, partial, concerning only possible experience. Human cognition is, indeed, discursive: human beings cannot have complete and/or direct access to objects, at least not in the way an omniscient, omnipresent being would have, so intuitions and concepts have to suffice. Moreover, Kant sees cognition as systematization, which means that to cognize is to order the manifold of experience by means of logic functions. For him, the notions of completeness and systematization are very close, a relation which, considering his theoretical framework, imposes an important issue: it is not possible for us to be sure that we are, or will be, able to fully order *a posteriori* cognition. To deal with this issue, he then elaborates the proposal of an *a priori* presupposition that this effort is rational, that is to say, that it can be successful. This presupposition takes form by means of an *a priori* principle. More precisely: there are two proposals, related to two different faculties, to two different principles.

Second, as I showed in Chapter 2, Kant's first attempt at a theory on this necessary *a priori* presupposition is to ascribe it to theoretical reason, by means of its concept of the unconditioned. Additionally to the mechanical approach to nature the understanding provides, Kant needs to add a teleological approach, which theoretical reason provides, an approach that presupposes, by means of the regulative use of its ideas, that nature's forms can be fully systematized, being them part of the whole of the unconditioned, which is the first cause of it all. In his theory of the faculties, theoretical reason accommodates the cognitive demand for going beyond possible experience. By following this path, theoretical reason systematizes the manifold of the understanding, namely, *a posteriori* cognition. However, the fictional objects (that is, those fictional concepts of objects) that theoretical reason generates as a result of this demand for the unconditioned can only be properly assigned a transcendental status exactly as far as this regulative use is considered.

Third, as I attempted to show in Chapter 3, in the third *Critique* Kant will present another solution to this issue, namely, the reflecting labor of the power of judgment, which happens under the auspices of its *a priori* principle, that of the technique of nature. Indeed, in the third *Critique* the power of judgment emerged as a much more important faculty, when it comes to Kant's theoretical framework, considering what he had written about it beforehand.

Both those elements (its reflecting labor and *a priori* principle) are novelties he presented in this book, and accommodate human beings' attempt to systematically decipher nature's forms. Now, this principle presupposes, as its name suggests, an underlying technique of nature, as if it had a teleology; and it supports the reflecting labor of the power of judgment, which helps systematize *a posteriori* cognition. When compared to the first one, this solution has two main differences: Kant both avoids the need to presuppose the existence of something that cannot be an empirical object and associates the teleological presupposition to a faculty that actually participates directly in cognition, namely, the power of judgment.

Fourth, as I attempted to show in Chapter 4, one can see the pure judgment of taste, which is the free harmony between the imagination and the understanding, as a means of communication between nature, considered as the whole of its particular forms, and human beings' cognitive faculties. It is another novelty presented in the third *Critique*, under the auspices of a new kind of judgment, the reflecting ones, which are generated within the reflecting labor of the power of judgment. This free harmony, Kant argues, shares fundamental similarities with the harmony that one can observe in determining judgments: mainly, both of them, in different ways, relate to nature's forms. In the case of the judgment of taste, its harmony determines not a concept, but the mental faculty of pleasure and displeasure: it is fortuitous, unpredictable, disinterested, aesthetic. It is also a judgment that claims subjective universality: anyone in the same situation should feel the same, given that it does not concern one's idiosyncrasies, but the way our cognitive faculties interact with each other. Therefore, one can conclude that the judgment of taste intersubjectively instantiates the principle of the technique of nature as a result of the disinterested contact one has with a form of nature. Those characteristics put the judgment of taste in a privileged position in Kant's system, given that it has got an intersubjective normative status, reminding us of the pertinence of the human endeavor of culture and science, that is to say, of the attempt to fully systematize *a posteriori* cognition.

Indeed, by presenting this presupposition in the terms he presented it, Kant does open a door, suggesting that nature — and, ultimately, the universe — might just be too much for us to handle, given its hugeness and complexity. However, Kant's argument is precisely that, against the odds, we successfully insist on moving forward, on deciphering nature; and this is exactly why this presupposition has such an important role in his critical project: after all, it helps us keep the hope alive, no matter how difficult the current task might be. Once again, this reasoning reinforces the relevance of the arguments presented in the third *Critique*, which

more properly allow us, once we make use of the theoretical tools Kant provides for us, to have a better grasp at our place in nature — and, ultimately, in the universe —, to better comprehend our abilities, limitations and potential.

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