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## Two Powers, One Ability: The Understanding and Imagination in Kant's Critical Philosophy

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In his book, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*,<sup>1</sup> Henry Allison defends the transcendental deduction of the categories found in the second edition of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*<sup>2</sup> up to the decisive point at which Kant must establish the claim that the synthesis of imagination is governed by the categories. Here, where we would expect an argument for this connection, there seems to be a strange silence. Allison suggests that this lacuna is "the fundamental question raised by Kant's analysis."<sup>3</sup> With no adequate explanation of why Kant does not offer an explicit argument for the necessary connection between the categories and the imagination, the entire project of the deduction—and, by extension, the very foundation of Kant's critical writings—is threatened. Without such an explanation, the two independent sources of human cognition, the understanding and sensibility, will never be brought into a necessary relation with one another, thus undermining the very possibility of synthetic a priori judgments. Allison laments the silence found at this juncture, and makes a valiant attempt to provide the missing link.<sup>4</sup> His reconstruction involves a reversal of the direction of the argument in the deduction: Allison suggests that although it is impossible to move from the unity of apprehension, a purely analytic principle, to the unity of time (for the unity of consciousness does not entail the unity of time), it is possible to move in the opposite direction: from the unity of time to the unity of consciousness. This move may indeed be valid, yet, it is surprising that Kant himself avoided it. Furthermore, instead of such an argument, we find Kant attempting to *deny* the ultimate distinction between the understanding and imagination—a suggestion which, for Allison, is

Christopher P. Long has recently defended his dissertation, "The Legacy of ouisia."

fundamentally misguided.<sup>5</sup> Yet, this judgment seems somewhat premature. It would be surprising that Kant, after taking ten years to develop the argument of the deduction, and further, having rewritten the entire section for the second edition, would not have something decisively important in mind in his denial of the ultimate distinction between the understanding and imagination. He would certainly have been clear that the relationship between the understanding and sensibility had to be strongly linked, but not so strongly as to give rise to the claim that humans have intellectual intuition. Is there a way to make sense out of the claims Kant makes at this decisive point? And if so, are they clarified or undermined by his later critical writings? In what follows, I will develop the position that the productive imagination and the understanding are two aspects of one and the same ability (*Vermögen*),<sup>6</sup> and further, that their identity may be thought in such a way that, while understanding and sensibility are necessarily linked, they are not related to one another such that humans are granted the power of intellectual intuition. Finally, I will turn to the *Critique of Judgment*<sup>7</sup> in order to reinforce this interpretation by suggesting that the explicit thematization of the relation between the understanding and imagination found there is fundamentally consistent with and, in fact, deepens the position developed in the B-Deduction.

## ADUMBRATION OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE B-DEDUCTION

The following interpretation is based on a version of the two-steps-in-a-single-proof thesis first suggested by Dieter Henrich in 1969.<sup>8</sup> It therefore makes a number of assumptions about the structure of the B-edition-deduction which are neither self-evident nor uncontroversial. I will, however, limit my comments to a brief adumbration of these assumptions in order to layout the theoretical background underlying this interpretation. In a footnote found at the beginning of the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Kant distinguishes between two types of method: the one analytic, the other synthetic. He writes: "The analytical method, insofar as it is opposed to the synthetic, is something completely different than an aggregate of analytical sentences; it means only that one embarks from that which is sought, as if it were given, and proceeds to the conditions under which alone it is possible."<sup>9</sup> Kant goes on to name the analytic method "regressive," and the synthetic "progressive." The designation of a method as either analytic or synthetic names the manner in which the argument proceeds, and not the types of propositions it contains.<sup>10</sup> This distinction underlies the basic division of the two parts of the B-Deduction. The first part, §16–§20, is driven by

a regressive method according to which the nature of the understanding is analyzed in sequestration from sensibility in order to uncover the conditions for its possibility. Section 21 mediates between the two parts of the deduction, and suggests that it is appropriate to divide these parts along the analytic/synthetic distinction just mentioned. Immediately following a sentence that sums up the results of the analysis found in §§16–20, Kant writes:

In the above sentence, therefore, the beginning of a deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding is made, in which I, because the categories spring from the understanding alone, *independently from sensibility*, must abstract from the manner in which the manifold of empirical intuition is given, in order to see only the unity which enters into the intuition through the understanding, mediated by the categories. (KrV, B144)

This sentence suggests not only that the status of §21 is transitional—dividing the first and second steps of the deduction—but more importantly, that the preceding analysis had focused on the understanding alone, considered in isolation from sensibility. In the first part of the deduction, Kant's functional analysis of the understanding leads him regressively to the discovery that the condition for the possibility of the unity of intuition is the original synthetic unity of apperception (see §17 and §20). In the sentence following the one cited above, Kant indicates that the full goal of the deduction will only be reached in the analysis that follows (§§22–26), in which it will be shown that the synthetic unity of apperception is precisely that unity which subsumes the manifold of given intuition under the categories. Further, this will be done by focusing on the manner in which empirical intuition is given in sensibility. Therefore, there is a fundamental shift in the direction of the analysis: no longer does it simply involve a functional analysis of the understanding bracketed from sensibility, but rather, it will proceed progressively by focusing on the relation between the understanding and sensibility. The second step, thus, is meant to accomplish the main purpose of the deduction: to establish the necessary connection between the categories and the forms of human sensibility. Seen in this manner, the role of the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, because it is precisely that which accounts for this connection, is central to the goal of the deduction.<sup>11</sup> The precise manner in which the imagination is to be thought in the B-Deduction will be the focus of the next section; for now it is important to recognize that the version of the two-steps-in-a-single-proof theory to which my interpretation is committed claims that the first step limits itself to a functional analysis of the understanding considered in itself, while the second step enjoins the introduc-

tion of the productive imagination precisely to account for the manner in which understanding relates to sensibility.

## THE TRANSCENDENTAL SYNTHESIS OF IMAGINATION

The goal of the second step of the deduction is to account for the manner in which the categories are connected with the forms of human sensibility in order to establish the categories' objective reality, and, ultimately, to establish the possibility of human cognition.<sup>12</sup> In order to achieve this connection, Kant must show that a categorically governed synthesis is necessary if the understanding is to represent to itself the unity of space and time (the forms of human sensibility).<sup>13</sup> Therefore, in §24, Kant introduces a distinction between the purely intellectual synthesis and the "figurative synthesis" (KrV, B151). Both types of synthesis are transcendental in that they are conditions for the possibility of a priori knowledge. However, the figurative synthesis is to be distinguished from the merely intellectual by the name "transcendental synthesis of imagination." Not surprisingly, this distinction emerges as Kant considers time; that is, as he considers the manner in which the form of inner sense can be brought under the categorically governed understanding. It is prudent to cite the passage in which the imagination is introduced; for, here not only is its peculiar status between the understanding and sensibility manifest, but the key clue in interpreting this *between* status is suggested.<sup>14</sup>

Imagination is the ability [*Vermögen*] to represent an object [*Gegenstand*] which is not present in intuition. Now, since all our intuition is sensible, the imagination, because of the subjective condition under which alone it can give the concepts of the understanding a corresponding intuition, belongs to *sensibility*. However, insofar as its synthesis is an exercise of spontaneity, which is determining, and not, like sense, merely determinable, and which can determine sense *a priori* according to its form with respect to the unity of apperception, the imagination is thus far an ability to determine sensibility *a priori*; and its synthesis of intuitions according to the categories must be the transcendental synthesis of the *imagination* which is an activity [*Wirkung*] of the understanding on sensibility and the first application of the understanding—and at the same time the ground of all its other applications—to objects [*Gegenstände*] of our possible intuition. (KrV, B152)

One senses a certain ambivalence on Kant's part: does the imagination belong to sensibility or to the understanding? Although he gives credence to both possibilities, there are cer-

tain elements of the above passage which suggest that ultimately, the imagination does not merely belong to the understanding, but more boldly stated: it is, in fact, the understanding itself, considered with respect to its activity. Here a double strategy is manifest; for, as will be seen, Kant *both* remains faithful to *and* moves beyond the traditional concept of the imagination.<sup>15</sup> Ironically, in his attempt to transcend this concept, Kant returns to one of the most ancient of ideas. This idea is suggested by the little German word "*Wirkung*," a word that offers the decisive clue to the following interpretation. By thematizing the imagination in terms of the notion of activity (*Wirkung*), that is, as the activity of the understanding, and by employing this notion in order to account for the manner in which the identity of two things with radically distinct natures are to be thought, Kant places himself in a tradition dating back to Aristotle's *Physics*. A brief discussion of the core of this notion will prove vital to understanding the precise nature of the structure of the double strategy manifest here. Once this has been accomplished, the key to understanding the role the imagination plays in the second edition deduction will be at hand. From there, we will proceed to a brief investigation of the discussion of the relation between the imagination and the understanding as found at the beginning of the *Critique of Judgment* where this relationship is subtly developed in a manner that deepens the interpretation offered here.

## THE ACTIVE IDENTITY OF THE UNDERSTANDING AND SENSIBILITY

Book III of the *Physics* finds Aristotle grappling with the intriguing problem of motion. The question arises as to whether motion is to be located in the mover or in the object moved or in both. The answer to this problem is sought in terms of *energeia* and *dynamis*. Aristotle argues that motion is in the moveable, because it is the *actuality* of the movable caused by the mover. The mover, for its part, causes motion by *acting* on the movable. Thus, motion, as an actuality (*energeia*), must somehow be in both the mover and the moved.<sup>16</sup> What is meant here is that although the mover as active and the moved as passive are different, the act of movement and therefore the *act* of being-active and of being-passive are one and the same. Here identity is thought in terms of activity—the mover and the moved are *one* in act. This conception of identity, which I will dub "energetic identity," offers a way to think the identity between two essentially and irreducibly distinct terms without positing a third term between the two. Furthermore, it has the advantage of avoiding the necessity to relinquish the essential difference between the two terms; for as Aristotle suggests, they are one in act although

their formulae or definitions (*logoi*) are not the same.<sup>17</sup> Thus, a distinction between two conceptions of identity may be established. The one, which may be entitled "hierarchical identity" establishes a three-term relation according to which two distinct entities find their common essence in some third term. Hierarchical identity requires that the terms identified have precisely the same essence or definition based upon the third term which unites them. Broadly speaking, this concept of identity has had a hegemonic impact on the tradition of western thought. However, in his discussion of motion, and more profoundly, in his attempt to understand *ousia* as the identity of form and matter in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle opens up a space for another understanding of identity, one which is "difficult to grasp but capable of being."<sup>18</sup> This other notion of identity enjoins a two-term relation between the entities to be identified and thus avoids the necessity of positing some third term common to both. "Energetic identity" names that sort of identity endemic to things that enter into a dynamic relation with one another without giving up their distinct independence. On this conception, two things with heterogeneous essences may still be said to be fundamentally related. The thematization of this relation, however, must *never* entail a reification of the relation itself. Such a reification is the attempt to reduce energetic to hierarchical identity by subsuming two distinct objects under the scope of a third term independent of both. Such attempts indicate an unwillingness to hold the dynamic tension of the relation itself.<sup>19</sup>

It is not difficult to trace this understanding of energetic identity from Aristotle through St. Thomas Aquinas to the work of Meister Eckhart, when the Greek "*energeia*" is translated into Middle High German by the term "*gewürke*."<sup>20</sup> Thus, when Kant employs the term "*Wirkung*" in order to develop an account of the manner in which the imagination mediates between the understanding and sensibility, it should be understood within this long tradition which affirms a conception of energetic identity. If understood in this manner, the imagination may be situated within the scope of the understanding and, at the same time, it may be seen as that which mediates between the understanding and sensibility. For just as the mover works on the moved and actualizes the identity of the two, so too does the imagination—as the understanding at work (*im gewürke*) on sensibility—actualize the identity between the two without denying the independence of each. Because this conception of identity does not require subsuming two distinct terms under the same common third term, the understanding and sensibility retain the vital distinction Kant has established for them. This, in turn, avoids the danger of ascribing a sort of intellectual intuition to Kant's philosophy of mind. The understanding cannot give itself intuitions, but

rather, must actively work on them—and therein lies the vital importance of the *active* role the imagination plays in the deduction.

The feasibility of this reading may be reinforced with two brief textual considerations. First, it is clear that Kant has something like the distinction between actuality and potentiality in mind when he repeatedly thematizes the understanding and sensibility in terms of spontaneity and receptivity respectively.<sup>21</sup> This vocabulary lends itself to the conception of energetic identity insofar as it attempts to think both the distinction and relatedness of the two terms simultaneously; for the notion of receptivity (like that of potentiality), immediately implicates the notion of spontaneity (and actuality, respectively). Second, in §24 where the imagination itself is introduced, Kant makes a point of stressing the productive role of the imagination as the activity (*Handlung*) of the understanding (KrV, B153) by focusing on the necessity of drawing a line or a circle in thought in order to actually think it. Kant argues that time itself cannot be represented

save insofar as we attend, in the drawing of a straight line [...], purely to the activity of the synthesis of the manifold, through which we successively determine the inner sense, and therewith to the succession of this determination in inner sense. (KrV, B154)

Thus, it is only as the understanding acts on sensibility, by means of that synthesis which Kant dubs the "transcendental synthesis of the imagination," that *anything* can become representable for us.<sup>22</sup> The imagination plays such a vital role in the deduction because it is precisely this activity of the understanding.

Insofar as time itself requires the transcendental synthesis of imagination in order for it to be representable for humans, the imagination takes on a radically new importance in Kant; for it lies at the ground of the possibility of human cognition. This new importance, however, does not indicate an absolute break with the manner in which the imagination had been traditionally conceived. With Kant, as with his predecessors, the imagination is closely linked to the faculty of memory. In his initial definition of the imagination, Kant writes: "The imagination is the ability (*Vermögen*) to represent in intuition an object that is *not itself present*" (KrV, B151). The suggestion is that this power can bring Intuition<sub>1</sub>, which is present at Time<sub>1</sub> into relation with Intuition<sub>2</sub> present at Time<sub>2</sub>. Its function is in essence memory, for it can present an intuition that is in itself absent and thus is able to provide the requisite unity for the establishment of the flow of time. This is not, however, the determination of the given in time, but rather, *the determination*

of time itself. Thus, the productive nature of the imagination in Kant is manifest, and with it, the decisive move beyond the traditional conception of the imagination: it is precisely the transcendental synthesis of the imagination which *establishes* time itself as representable. With this, Kant's subtle double strategy comes into focus. By drawing on the traditional notion that the imagination is somehow linked to the power of memory, he takes a decisive step further by making the imagination itself that power by which time becomes representable and thereby discovers its fundamentally *productive* nature. Prior to this stage of the deduction, Kant had focused upon the intellectual synthesis—or more accurately: the synthesizing power of the understanding sequestered from the influence of sensibility. Here, under the name "transcendental synthesis of imagination," Kant emphasizes the same synthesis, though with respect to its function upon the given in sensibility. The imagination is the understanding at work on sensibility; and although these powers are nominally distinguished, they must be seen as two distinguishable, but not distinct, aspects of one ability: the ability of cognition (*Erkenntnisvermögen*).

The preceding account requires the acceptance of two basic points: first, that there are two approaches to the understanding found in the B-Deduction, the one considers its meaning (§§16–20), the other its application on sensibility (§§22–26). This corresponds to the division between the two parts of the deduction adumbrated above. Second, this interpretation requires a conception of identity that can account for the relation the imagination establishes between the understanding and sensibility, and further that would explain Kant's silence at the decisive point at which we expect an argument for the fact that the synthesis of imagination is itself governed by the categories. Just such a conception of identity, however, was suggested above; and, if this reading is correct, the silence that Allison bemoans at this point in the deduction, is in fact, an eloquent defense of not only the identity of the understanding and the imagination, but more importantly, of the fact that the synthesis of imagination, because it is simply the synthesis of the understanding at work on sensibility, is itself governed by the categories and is thus able to account for their objective reality.<sup>23</sup>

### THE IMAGINATION AND UNDERSTANDING IN THE THIRD CRITIQUE

In order to offer further justification for the above reading of the relationship between the imagination and the understanding in Kant, I turn now to the first Book of the *Critique of Judgment*, where Kant explicitly thematizes and further develops this relationship as he considers the nature of aesthetic

judgment. The following discussion is preliminary and will be limited to the Analytic of the Beautiful in which Kant establishes the vital distinction between logical and aesthetic judgments. Once this distinction has been explicated, it will then be argued that, while there are decisive and important differences between these two kinds of judgments, there are a striking number of similarities which have strong implications for the interpretation offered above.

There are two main hermeneutical presuppositions underlying the following interpretation of the *Third Critique*. The first, and perhaps most controversial, is that the project of the Analytic of the Beautiful, because it is both analytical and explanatory, employs a distinction between the imagination and the understanding which is fundamentally nominal. To be sure, the understanding and the imagination are treated here as two different powers, each with its own role to play in aesthetic judgments. However, this ought not to be understood as an attempt to reify the two powers into independently existing faculties. To the contrary, the analysis may be understood as the attempt to unpack precisely what happens in the mind during the act of judgment. Such an explication depends upon the possibility of distinguishing between the role of the understanding and that of imagination, but this distinction, strictly speaking, is merely formal and is employed only for the purposes of clarification.<sup>24</sup> A second presupposition of this reading is that the account given in the *Third Critique* is not only fundamentally consistent with that of the *First*, but also, that the analytic of aesthetic judgment is, in fact, the analysis of the ground for the possibility of all judgments *whatsoever*. As will be elucidated in the reading which follows, this means, that, in the Analytic of the Beautiful, the account of logical judgment found in the B-Deduction is fundamentally *deepened*, rather than undermined.

Much of the first book of the *Critique of Judgment* is dedicated to an elucidation of the differences between logical and aesthetic judgments. Because of this, however, there is a temptation to overlook the important similarities between the two. In what follows, I will first lay out three of these fundamental differences, in order, in a second step, to stress the basic similarities between these two types of judgment. In this manner, the extent to which Kant's discussion of aesthetic judgment found here can be applied to the interpretation of the B-Deduction offered above will be brought into focus. The three differences to be mentioned are the following: (1) aesthetic judgments are subjective, logical judgments are objective; (2) while logical judgments require subsuming given intuitions under *determinate* concepts, aesthetic judgments do not; (3) aesthetic judgments arise as a result of the free play of the understanding and imagination, while in logical judgments,

the imagination finds itself essentially determined by the understanding.<sup>25</sup>

## SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LOGICAL AND AESTHETIC JUDGMENTS

The first of these differences is indicated in the first sentence of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*:

In order to differentiate, whether something is beautiful or not, we relate the representation, not through the understanding to the object in order to give rise to cognition, but rather, through the imagination (perhaps connected with the understanding) to the subject and the feeling of pleasure or displeasure of the subject. (KU, 3-4)

The result of a logical judgment is cognition of an object. This is established by the work of the understanding as it is directed upon the given in intuition. In aesthetic judgment, on the other hand, cognition plays no role; rather, the imagination "perhaps" in conjunction with the understanding, presents an object with the result that a feeling of pleasure or displeasure arises on the part of the subject. This feeling, however, is purely subjective and does not give rise to an object of cognition. Immediately, it is clear that Kant has moved beyond, or beneath, the level of human cognition. This difference between logical and aesthetic judgments must be held; for it is here that both the limit and the importance of aesthetic judgments arise: while aesthetic judgments do not, and cannot, give rise to objects of cognition, they can, because they involve the play of the same two powers involved in logical judgments, teach us something vital about the nature of judgments in general. In this first passage, Kant hedges his bets—perhaps as yet unsure of precisely what the role of the understanding is supposed to be in aesthetic judgments, by employing the little word "*vielleicht*" ("perhaps"). The precise role the understanding, as the faculty of concepts, plays in aesthetic judgments is not, as yet, worked out. However, as Kant continues to elucidate the differences between these two forms of judgment, the role of the understanding comes into focus. The first difference, therefore, is that logical judgments are objective, resulting in the production of an object of cognition, while aesthetic judgments are purely subjective, resulting only in a feeling of pleasure or displeasure on the part of the judging subject.

This, in turn, suggests a second difference: because aesthetic judgments are not object constituting, but rather, are merely subjective, there is no requirement that the given in intuition be subsumed under determinate concepts. This is the fundamental reason why the imagination, as the power of pre-

senting (*Darstellung*),<sup>26</sup> is the primary focus of the analysis; for in contradistinction from the understanding, which is the power of concepts, it is that aspect of the power of representation (*Vorstellungskraft*) that presents intuitions without requiring that they be subsumed under determinate concepts. That said, it is vital to recognize that Kant only rarely makes the claim that aesthetic judgments rest on *no* concepts; far more often, he stresses the point that aesthetic judgments rest on *no determinate* concepts.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the entire distinction between the sort of liking (*Wohlgefallen*) that involves pleasure (*Lust*) and that which involves agreeableness (*das Angenehme*) rests on precisely this fact:

The liking of the beautiful must depend upon the reflection on an object, which leads to some concept or another (a concept which is indeterminate) and through this differentiates itself from the agreeable, which rests completely on sensation. (KU, 11)

In parentheses, Kant writes the decisive qualification: the liking involved in aesthetic judgment does *not* involve the absence of all concepts, but only the absence of *determinate* concepts. In logical judgments, intuitions are brought under determinate concepts, that is, the categories. In this manner, objects are constituted as cognizable for us. In aesthetic judgments, by contrast, reflection on an object is not brought under any determinate concept, and thus, its objects are not, strictly speaking, entities of cognition; rather, they stimulate either the feeling of pleasure or displeasure in the subject and are thus either beautiful or not. The precise manner in which this feeling of pleasure arises will be discussed in a moment when we turn to the nature of the free play of the understanding and imagination. At this point, however, it is vital to notice that Kant does *not* deny that the understanding plays a decisive role in aesthetic judgments, but rather indicates that this role is somewhat different than its role in logical judgments. In logical judgments, the understanding subsumes the given in intuition under determinate concepts, whereas in aesthetic judgments the imagination brings objects of reflection into relation with the understanding, which, for its part, refrains from subsuming them under *determinate* concepts, but cannot, as the power of concepts, refrain from bringing them under concepts in *general*, or perhaps better: under the general form of its own lawfulness.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the place of the understanding in aesthetic judgments comes into focus: the imagination cannot act completely on its own behalf, independently of the understanding. Indeed, one has the sense in reading the beginning of the *Third Critique*, that Kant, although he may have been tempted to grant radical independence to the imagination, held himself back from surrendering



the two powers in such a manner. This temptation, and the resulting abstinence, suggest that Kant knew that such a radical break between the two powers would topple his entire critical project. Thus, instead of sundering the two powers, Kant introduces the notion of the "free play" of the imagination and the understanding in aesthetic judgments precisely to reinforce the position that the imagination, even in its "freedom," cannot be unfettered from the understanding. In order to see this, a brief discussion on the notion of the free play of the powers of representation is required.

After claiming that aesthetic judgments involve a mental state in which the relation between the imagination and understanding refer a given presentation to cognition *in general*, and not to any determinate cognition, Kant writes:

The cognitive powers [*Erkenntniskräfte*], which, through this presentation, are set into play, are hereby in a free play, because no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition. (KU, 28)

The precise reason why Kant dubs the relationship between the imagination and the understanding a "free" play is here indicated: it is *because* no determinate rule of cognition, no category, determines the relationship. Thus, it is not as if the imagination is absolutely free of the understanding in aesthetic judgments. To the contrary, the understanding plays a vital role insofar as it allows the imagination, by refraining from determining its presentation by means of the categories, free reign over its presentational capacity. The decisive factor in aesthetic judgments is not this free play, but rather, the feeling that arises from it: the imagination and the understanding find themselves in their free play either in agreement or disagreement. The former results in pleasure, the latter in displeasure, and this pleasure or displeasure determine whether or not the presentation is beautiful or not respectively. The point, however, is that Kant's talk of the freedom of the imagination in the *Analytic of the Beautiful* does not entail its independence from the understanding. In fact, Kant is quite clear that the contrary is the case:

Now if, in a judgment of taste, the imagination must be taken in its freedom, it will, in the first place, not be taken as reproductive, where it is thrown under the laws of association, but rather, it will be taken as productive and spontaneous [...]; and furthermore, although in the apprehension of a given object of the senses the imagination is bound to a determinate form of this object, and to this extent, has no free play [...], it is still conceivable that the object could give it straight away the sort of form in the combination of the manifold, which the imagina-

tion, if it were left freely to itself, would design in harmony with the lawfulness of the understanding in general. That the imagination is alone free and yet lawful of itself, that is, that it carries its own autonomy with it, is a contradiction. The understanding alone gives the law. (KU, 69)

This passage is cited at length for two reasons. First, it indicates precisely the extent to which the imagination is free in judgments of taste. This freedom is by no means an absolute freedom, but rather, the sort of freedom that reveals itself when the imagination presents an object to the understanding that is already in accordance with the lawfulness of the understanding in general. The importance of the word "*überhaupt*" (in general) has already been mentioned—it indicates the fact that the understanding does not play the role of determinate lawgiver, but rather, it simply is the power of lawfulness in general. Second, this passage elucidates precisely the role that the understanding does in fact play in aesthetic judgments: the understanding simply gives the general law according to which harmony or disharmony arises between the two aspects of the ability to represent. Thus, the difference between logical and aesthetic judgments posited in the *Third Critique* does not entail the sundering of this basic ability. Kant is very careful to avoid this, perhaps because he recognizes that, in order for the categories to retain the objective reality that had been established in the B-Deduction, the imagination and the understanding had to be thought as identical in a very strong sense. This identity is not challenged in the *Third Critique*, even as the relation between the two is analyzed. Furthermore, there are a number of similarities between logical and aesthetic judgments which in fact lend support to the position that, rather than undermining the results established in the B-Deduction, the *Analytic of the Beautiful* actually reinforces and develops them.

### SOME SIMILARITIES BETWEEN LOGICAL AND AESTHETIC JUDGMENTS

Some of the similarities between logical and aesthetic judgments have already been touched upon. Chief among these is the fact that both types of judgment involve that aspect of the mind Kant sometimes dubs "the power to represent" (*Vorstellungskraft*) and other times as the "cognitive ability" (*Erkenntnisvermögen*), which, as has been argued, involves the interplay of two distinguishable, but not distinct, aspects: the imagination and the understanding.<sup>29</sup> This is perhaps the vital similarity for the purposes of the argument offered here. However, there are three other elements that further determine the nature of the relationship between the two types of judgment.

ment that should be mentioned: (1) the fact that both types of judgment involve a certain sort of universality; (2) the extent to which logical judgments are in fact grounded in aesthetic judgments; (3) in developing the meaning of both types of judgment Kant employs the term "*Wirkung*" at a decisive moment.

In discussing the fact that the two types of judgment are universal (1), insight is gained into the extent to which logical judgments are grounded in aesthetic judgments (2). The objective universal validity of logical judgments is secured by the table of categories. Logical judgments, because they involve subsuming the given in intuition under concepts—i.e., the categories, which all humans share—constitute objects of cognition which are universally valid for all. Kant opposes this of objective universality, which depends upon concepts, to a sort of universality endemic to aesthetic judgments. This he calls "subjective universal validity." He writes:

Now an objectively, universally valid judgment is also each time subjective, that is, if the judgment is valid for all that is contained under a given concept, it also is valid for everyone who represents an object through this concept to himself. But from a subjective, universal validity, that is, the aesthetic, which rests on no concept, it cannot be concluded that it has logical universal validity, for this sort of judgment in no way leads to the object. (KU, 25)

Kant draws upon the difference between aesthetic and logical judgments mentioned above—the first does not rest on determinate concepts, the second does—in order to establish the difference between subjective and objective universal validity. However, this difference betrays a fundamental similarity on two levels. First, both types of judgment are in fact universally valid: they are valid for everyone. While it is not difficult to apprehend the universality endemic to logical judgments due to its reliance on the table of categories which is the same for every human, it is more difficult to understand how there can be such a thing as universal subjective validity. However, given that all humans possess the same power of representation (*Vorstellungskraft*), a power that entails the relation between the two aspects of the understanding and imagination, such a subjective universality is possible: when presented with an object, the judgment of taste immediately feels either a harmony or disharmony between the understanding and imagination. This feeling gives rise to the judgment that the object is beautiful or not. Because, however, this is an aesthetic judgment and therefore does not rest on determinate concepts, there are no reasons or principles that could be used to argue that the object is in fact beautiful: either the subject

feels it or not. This judgment is in fact universally valid for all humans precisely because all human minds are essentially the same: the harmony between the understanding and the imagination one feels will be determined by the state of mind enjoined by the immediate presentation of the object, and this will be the same for everyone.<sup>30</sup> Second, as the above passage suggests, all judgments, whether logical or aesthetic, are subjectively universally valid, whereas not all judgments are objectively so. This brief comment suggests the extent to which what Kant develops in the *Third Critique* is an investigation into the ground of logical judgments—it suggests that the *Third Critique*, rather than undermining the results discovered in the *First* is an attempt to lend support to these results through an investigation into their underlying ground.

This grounding strategy is suggested in a passage in which the word "*Wirkung*" plays a decisive role (3). It therefore offers the possibility of bringing the discussion found in the *Analytic of the Beautiful* into relation with that found in the *B-Deduction*. In this passage, Kant focuses on the question of precisely how we can become conscious of the reciprocal harmony between the cognitive powers. There are two possibilities: either aesthetically, through inner sense and sensation, or intellectually, through a consciousness of the intentional activity by which we bring the imagination and the understanding into play.

If the given representation which prompts the judgment of taste were a concept which united the understanding and imagination in the judgment of an object so as to give rise to a cognition of the object, then the consciousness of this relationship would be intellectual (as it was treated in the objective Schematism of the *Critique of Pure Reason*). [...] An objective relation can, in fact, only be thought; however, insofar as it is subjective according to its conditions, it is nevertheless sensed in its activity [*Wirkung*] on the mind; and in a relation, which is not based upon a concept (as is the relation of the powers of representation to the ability to cognize in general), no other consciousness of this relation is possible, save through the sensation of the activity [*Wirkung*], which exists in the easy play of both mental powers (the imagination and understanding) through their enlivened reciprocal harmony. (KU, 31)

This passage finds its parallel in the passage mentioned above,<sup>31</sup> in which Kant, discussing the way in which a line is thought, claims that we must attend to the actual drawing of the line. Thus, even in logical judgments, in order to become conscious of the manner in which the imagination and the understanding are related, we must attend to the successive determination of inner sense. So too, in aesthetic judgments.



although the determination of inner sense is not established by being subsumed under determinate concepts, the activity of the play of the two mental powers must be focused upon (in this case, felt, in the former case, thought) if we are to become conscious of the harmony between these powers, and thus make a judgment about the beautiful. In both cases, Kant stresses the importance of attending to the activity (*Wirkung*) of the imagination and the understanding in the attempt to gain access to the nature of judgments. Even in logical judgments, it seems, there is a subjective moment that gives rise to the possibility of becoming conscious of the nature of the process of human cognition. If this subjective moment were not there, it would be difficult to imagine how Kant could claim to have access to the nature of the relationship between the imagination and the understanding. It seems, therefore, that the condition for the possibility of cognitive judgment is a sort of aesthetic judgment, and that this is the case because *before* intuitions are subsumed under determinate concepts and give rise to objects of cognition, they are brought by the imagination to the understanding considered only with respect to its lawfulness in general, and not with respect to its ability to bring intuitions under determinate laws, i.e., the categories.

## CONCLUSION

If this is correct, then the discussion of aesthetic judgment does indeed lend insight into precisely what Kant had in mind when he failed to give an explicit argument for the manner in which the imagination is governed, necessarily, by the categorical unity of the understanding. In fact, the entire discussion of the Analytic of the Beautiful may be seen as an attempt to unpack the ground of all judgments in general, logical as well as aesthetic. Here, as in the B-Deduction, Kant avoids sundering the imagination from the understanding, precisely, it is argued, because he recognized that such a decisive break between these two aspects of the power of representation would cut to the core of his entire critical project: if the imagination and the understanding were in fact distinct, and not merely distinguishable, the requirement that the imagination is necessarily governed by the categories would be destroyed, thus undermining the success of the B-Deduction and the attempt to account for the possibility of synthetic a priori judgments. The Analytic of the Beautiful finds Kant struggling to discover a vocabulary by which to discuss the different roles the imagination and the understanding play, without necessitating their complete separation. This vocabulary is suggested, rather than explicitly posited, perhaps because Kant found himself on virgin soil. Let me, in conclusion, suggest the manner in which I think these hints support the interpretation

that the imagination and the understanding are to be thought of as two aspects of a single ability.

Throughout the Analytic of the Beautiful, Kant employs two different words to refer to the understanding and the imagination.<sup>32</sup> The first he uses when he wants to suggest the difference between the two: here we find the term "*Kräfte*" in the plural.<sup>33</sup> The second, he employs when he treats the two considered in their unity: here we often find the term "*Vermögen*" in the singular.<sup>34</sup> I propose to interpret this distinction by means of the English "powers" and "ability" respectively. The point of this distinction is to give credence to the fact that the difference between the imagination and the understanding in Kant's critical writings is merely formal, and is grounded in the strict position that the two are distinguishable *aspects* of one and the same ability. In the interest of analyzing the nature of human cognition, Kant may distinguish between the two, for indeed, although they are part of the same ability, they may be thematized as having different functions in order to offer an explanation of how judgments are possible. This explanation, however, ought not to be taken in a reified form. Once the imagination and the understanding are reified into independently existing faculties, there is indeed a gaping hole in the center of Kant's critical thought: the B-Deduction fails because the transcendental synthesis of the imagination never obtains the objective reality it requires; and with the failure of the deduction, so fails Kant's entire critical revolution. However, if the imagination and the understanding are not thought of as reified faculties, but rather as two powers making up a single unified ability, then the synthesis of imagination retains its necessary link to the categorical synthesis of the understanding, and the possibility of the necessary unity of the given in intuition with the categories remains open. Where Allison sees a fundamental missing link in the B-Deduction and laments the lack of an explicit argument for the manner in which the imagination and the understanding are linked, I suggest listening with different ears, so as to hear the hint that Kant makes at that point, and developments in the *Third Critique*: the imagination and the understanding are one and the same.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983).
- <sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1990). All citations from the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* will be taken from this volume and cited within the text as KrV, followed by the edition letter and page number. All translations from the German are my own.

<sup>3</sup> Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 161.

<sup>4</sup> Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 162–ff.

<sup>5</sup> Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 163.

<sup>6</sup> I will use the term "ability" to translate the German "*Vermögen*" in order not to reify the concept in Kant as is done when it is translated as "faculty." Further, the German "*Kraft*" will be translated as "power" to distinguish it from "*Vermögen*."

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft Philosophische Bibliothek* No. 39a (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1990). References to this volume will be made within the text as KU followed by page references to the third original edition which appear in the margin of the Meiner edition cited here.

<sup>8</sup> D. Henrich, "The Proof Structure of Kant's Transcendental Deduction," *Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1969): 640–659. Allison agrees with Henrich insofar as the basic structure of the B-Deduction is to be understood as comprising two distinct steps in a single proof. See Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, and his later article, "Reflections on the B-Deduction," (*Southern Journal of Philosophy* 25 suppl (1986)). The following interpretation of the B-Deduction follows Henrich and Allison in the general assumption that the deduction is to be divided into two steps, but the specifics of my division differs significantly from Henrich—chiefly his adoption of the so-called "restriction thesis"—and attempts to clarify and move beyond the account offered by Allison.

<sup>9</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden kuenftigen Metaphysik* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1983), 276.

<sup>10</sup> Kant is clear to point out that the analytic method is not necessarily comprised exclusively of analytic propositions, for the example of mathematics shows that synthetic propositions can be employed in an analytic or regressive argument.

<sup>11</sup> Contrary to Heidegger's position, this interpretation of the imagination in the second edition deduction does not suggest that Kant retreated from a position which stresses its fundamental importance. Rather, the imagination plays the central role in the accomplishment of the deduction insofar as it is precisely that which accounts for the connection between sensibility and understanding. However, as will be suggested, the imagination is *not*, as Heidegger suggests, the common root of the understanding and sensibility, but rather, it is a name for the understanding at work on sensibility. See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 111. See also Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 163, for the argument that Heidegger's view should be rejected.

<sup>12</sup> Allison makes much of the distinction between objective validity and objective reality in *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 134–ff. He exploits the peculiar linguistic fact that in German there are two distinct words for the English "object": *Objekt* and *Gegenstand*. He goes on to claim that the two steps of the deduction may be thought in terms of this distinction—the first step concerning the establishment of the objective validity of the categories (and employing the term "*Objekt*"), the second concerning the objective reality of the categories (and employing the vocabulary "*Gegenstand*." Vital to this reading, and consistent with that offered here, is the fact that while Kant's demonstration of the objective validity of the categories claims that the categories make possible an objectively valid synthesis of representations, it does not require an appeal to an actual object, nor does it need to refer to an in-

tuition as given. Thus, because the first step of the deduction is dedicated exclusively to the understanding, the greatest accomplishment it can possibly achieve is the objective validity of the categories, and not their objective reality. This requires the participation of sensibility insofar as objective reality concerns objects (*Gegenstände*) taken in a more limited sense: as real entities or states of affairs. Thus, it is only in the second step of the deduction, where the issue at hand is the *relationship* between the categories and sensibility that the categories attain the status of objective reality—a goal towards which the entire deduction is aimed.

<sup>13</sup> Allison, "Reflections on the B-Deduction," 11.

<sup>14</sup> Further, this passage is decisive insofar as it illustrates Kant's thinking on the cusp—he not only links himself with a philosophical tradition in which the imagination played a vital role, but he demonstrates his own particular ability to think with and beyond this tradition, by stretching the traditional concept and pushing it to a new level of importance. In short, Kant breaks the imagination from its historical position as a primarily passive faculty reduced to the function of reproduction, and raises it to its far more profound status as a productive, and therefore active power. It is the nature of this active element which will ultimately provide the space for the interpretation offered here.

<sup>15</sup> Hume is an example of someone who accepted and fostered what is being called the "traditional concept of the imagination"—a concept which is closely linked with the faculty of memory. See, for example, David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 8–ff. "We find by experience, that when any impression has been present with the mind, it again makes its appearance there as an idea; and this it may do after two different ways: either when in its new appearance it retains a considerable degree of its first vivacity, and is somewhat intermediate betwixt an impression and an idea, or when it entirely loses that vivacity, and is a perfect idea. The faculty, by which we repeat our impressions in the first manner, is called *memory*, and the other the *imagination*." It may be added that all great thinkers, Hume included, both draw upon and move beyond the tradition into which they are born—even the most radical of breaks must recognize the legacy responsible for their possibility.

<sup>16</sup> See H. G. Apostle, *Aristotle's Physics* (Grinnell, Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1980), 202a13–23; and Apostle, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* (Grinnell, Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1979), 1066a27.

<sup>17</sup> Apostle, *Aristotle's Physics*, 202a13–23.

<sup>18</sup> Apostle, *Aristotle's Physics*, 202a3. I have focused on the "energetic identity" endemic to Aristotle's discussion of motion because it is somewhat more intuitive than the discussion of activity by which the identity of form and matter are thought in the *Metaphysics* (Apostle, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 1048b18–ff). However, it must be said that, in many ways, Aristotle's use of the terms "*energeia*," "*entelecheia*," and even "*praxis*," in this and other passages in *Metaphysics* IX are more appropriate to the present discussion; for there, the active identity of form and matter are thought as the condition for the possibility of *ousia*. For an in-depth discussion of this dynamic conception of ontological identity, see chapter 6 of my dissertation, "The Legacy of *Ousia*." To put the parallel I am attempting to establish bluntly: whereas Aristotle employs the term "*energeia*" to think the identity of form and matter as the condition for the possibility of *ousia*, Kant employs the term "*Wirkung*" to think the

identity of the understanding and sensibility as the condition for the possibility of objects of cognition.

<sup>19</sup> Thus, when Heidegger attempts to think the imagination as the "common but unknown root" (Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 110) of understanding and sensibility, he himself falls into a paradigmatic mode of thought—one is tempted to ironically say: a "metaphysical mode of thought"—which is itself essentially static. The understanding and sensibility require a notion of identity which is both strong enough to account for their necessary connection in the act of human cognition, but weak enough not to force Kant into a certain form of intellectual intuition. The notion of energetic identity does precisely this.

<sup>20</sup> See, B. Welte, "Meister Eckhart als Aristoteliker," in *Auf der Spur des Ewigen* (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1965), 198–ff who beautifully traces this genealogy.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, KrV, A51/B75; A68/B93; A97 and in the B-Deduction itself: B130, B132, B152, B157–8n.

<sup>22</sup> Kant seems to claim that the form of intuition gives only a manifold and must be unified in order to be representable. This seems to be the basis of the distinction between the *form* of intuition and the *formal* intuition which Kant develops in a footnote at B160–1. There he claims that the formal intuition gives unity of representation. The footnote continues: "I had explained this unity in the Aesthetic merely with regard to sensibility, only in order to emphasize that it precedes any concept, although indeed it presupposes a synthesis, which does not belong to sensibility, but through which all concepts of space or time first become possible. For since through this unity (in which the understanding determines sensibility) space and time are first given as intuitions [...]" Thus, the imagination may be understood as that synthesis which is capable of transforming the form of intuition into a formal intuition, and is therefore the decisive power that makes time and space—and thereby every possible object of human cognition—representable in the first place.

<sup>23</sup> The concept of active identity suggested by the little German word "*Wirkung*," is precisely what Kant needs in order both to avoid granting intellectual intuition to humans, and to establish a strong, indeed, necessary, relationship between the understanding and sensibility. One could perhaps argue that Kant follows to its conclusion a hint found in Descartes' *Sixth Meditation*: "[...] I notice quite clearly that imagination requires a peculiar effort of mind which is not required for understanding; this additional effort of mind clearly shows the difference between imagination and pure understanding" (Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], AT73). However, I suggest that Kant saw this "additional effort" as simply the application of the understanding on sensibility, and therefore *denied* the difference Descartes wanted to establish between the two.

<sup>24</sup> Here an appeal to Aristotle is again justified. For in his discussion of the nature of what has been called "energetic identity" he employs the example of the interval between point A and point B and that between point B and point A, and says that although these two intervals are numerically one—that is they are identical—their formula (*Logos*) is not one. Apostle, *Aristotle's Physics*, 202a20–22. I propose a similar conception of the understanding and imagination in the *Third Critique*, for

although they are numerically one—that is, together they are, as will be argued, the single ability which will become thematized in the *Third Critique* as the *Vermögen der Vorstellung* (ability of representation) there is still a sense in which these two aspects of the one ability, can be thematized separately; for they retain a difference in formula or definition.

<sup>25</sup> This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the differences between the two types of judgment, but rather, to bring out those differences which are particularly germane to the interpretation offered here.

<sup>26</sup> KU, 55 "[...] *das Vermögen der Darstellung ist die Einbildungskraft*."

<sup>27</sup> For an example of where he does say this without qualifying "concepts" with the adjective "determinate," see KU, 24. This must be understood as a loose expression made for the sake of brevity—it would have been better if, every time he made such claims, he used the qualifier "determinate"; for, as mentioned, it is clear in most places that Kant does not mean "no concept whatsoever," but rather, "no *determinate* concept."

<sup>28</sup> Cf. KU, 69.

<sup>29</sup> When Kant designates the part of the mind which makes aesthetic judgments the "*Erkenntnisvermögen*," (see, KU, 28 for example), this should not be taken to mean that the result of aesthetic judgments is an object of cognition. Rather, it simply is a way to refer to that ability which involves both the imagination and the understanding. Note that when he speaks of this ability in the plural, he often uses the term "*Erkenntniskräfte*" indicating the two aspects he is thematizing.

<sup>30</sup> One senses that Kant's entire discussion of subjective universality is framed within the basic Enlightenment assumption that all humans are in a certain sense the same—it is assumed that when an object stimulates the harmony of the understanding and imagination, it will do so in the same manner for all. Indeed, this is the reason why Kant is so insistent upon the fact that aesthetic judgments *cannot* involve interest of any kind. See KU, 5–ff.

<sup>31</sup> KrV, B154, 9 above.

<sup>32</sup> In what follows, I will focus on general trends rather than the consistent employment of the vocabulary suggested. This is, again, because Kant seems here to be probing for the proper vocabulary without settling on one strict set of usages.

<sup>33</sup> See, for a few of the many examples, KU, 28: "*Erkenntniskräfte*," 31: "*Gemütskräfte*," 66: "*Vorstellungskräfte*."

<sup>34</sup> See, for a few of the many examples, KU, 28: "*Erkenntnisvermögen*," 52: "*das gesamte Vermögen der Vorstellungskraft*," 5: "*das ganze Vermögen der Vorstellung*."