

Essay on subjective and objective aspects of beauty

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



Introduction

" Critique of Judgment " is a fundamental work of Kant which develops aesthetic theory. This work is divided into two parts: The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and The Critique of Teleological Judgment. The book also contains an overview of the entire Critic system of the author.

In the " Critique of Judgment" Kant explores the reflective power of judgment which is manifested, in particular, in the judgment of taste or aesthetic judgments. Aesthetic pleasure, according to Kant, is pure (disinterested) pleasure derived from an object. Therefore, the aesthetic should be distinguished from the feeling of pleasure.

Kant stated that although the judgment of beauty possesses subjective nature, it still claims universal validity that implies an objective character of beauty. In the following essay, I would like to explore Kant`s understanding of the nature of the beauty as well as to analyze the correlation and interdependence of its subjective and objective aspects.

Analysis of the idea of beauty

One of the great discoveries of Kant is that he conceived the indirect nature of the perception of beauty. It was believed that beauty is given to man directly through the senses. It is enough to be sensitive to beauty and to have certain aesthetic senses. Meanwhile, it is the " aesthetic sense" that is described as a complex intellectual ability. The ancient cultures noticed that a supersensible beauty is possible. To enjoy the beauty of the object we must be able to evaluate its merits. Sometimes it happens momentarily and sometimes it might take time and intellectual effort. The more complex the

object, the more complicated its aesthetic evaluation. In order to understand the beauty of a mathematical formula one must possess artistic culture, but above all - the knowledge of the math. The universality of aesthetic judgment is not in its immediate accessibility but in the fact that after spending time and effort anyone can get to it. And the artistic culture is not always given after birth but rather needs to be brought up.

Kant's analysis of the beauty is constructed according to the classification of judgments based on four attributes - quality, quantity, relation and modality.

The first definition states: beauty is what you like, without any interest.

Evaluation of the pleasant is associated with interest and arises from the feeling. We appreciate goodness with the help of concepts; feeling of joy is associated with interest. Evaluation of the beauty is free from the senses and mind.

The second definition of beauty outlines a broader approach to the problem. This is a quantitative description of aesthetic judgment. The requirement of universality of the judgment of taste is put forward - good is what everyone likes without the mediation of concepts. But if there is no concept can we talk about universality? As the feeling is individual, it serves as the basis for pleasure and does not claim to be universal. It turns out that the pleasure of beauty is derived from "free play" of cognitive abilities - the imagination and the mind hence, the subjective universality of beauty. If the pleasure is primary, then the problem of universality is removed: pleasure cannot be transferred to another person, nothing can be communicated to everybody but knowledge. A man cannot use concepts, but he has certain "mental state", which can be corresponded with "general knowledge." This is a state

of " free play of cognitive abilities." As a result, without a specific concept, through the free play of imagination and understanding a certain assessment emerges that precedes the feeling of pleasure, as well as generates and provides a universal characteristic to the aesthetic judgments. The concept of " free play" is particularly noteworthy. Kant included this concept into the aesthetics that soon became one of its central ideas. The " game" contains a contradiction: at all times the game is positioned in two areas - imaginary and real. The ability to play is in understanding of the duality of the game. The art possesses the same duality. In the most plausible picture, the viewer (or reader) not for a moment forgets that he contemplates the imaginary world. When a man loses the sight of one of the aspects of the art, he appears to be outside the scope of its influence. The enjoying of the art is the participation in the game.

Aesthetic pleasure is defined without the concept but at the same time it represents something that communicates with everyone and can be defined only as subjective expediency. This expediency lies in the representation of the subject matter that has neither subjective nor objective purpose. The beauty that brings pleasure out of pure judgment of taste Kant defines as being free. Free beauty does not depend on any notion of perfection. The notion of perfection always implies not only the " form", but " matter" . It is impossible to think only in the form of perfection without any clue as what that perfection should correspond to. Kant argues that taste is always a personal capacity. According to Kant, the ideal of beauty could be the object that has the purpose of existence in itself, i. e. a person. Only a man can determine his goals through the mind. Therefore, only a man is an ideal of

beauty and, in his face, only the mankind can be an ideal of perfection. On the same basis, Kant considers it necessary to distinguish between the ideal and the idea of beauty standard. An idea of beauty standard is applicable not only to man but also, for instance, to a horse or a dog. However, the ideal is possible only in relation to the human figure. The ideal of a human figure is to express morale. The objective of this expression, according to Kant, is the most sublime, but at the same time the most difficult for art. This expression requires spiritual goodness, purity, strength, etc. , i. e. that our mind connects with the morally good in the idea of the highest expediency and to make it visible in bodily terms. For this reason, it is necessary to connect the ideas of mind with the great power of imagination. In other words, the third definition states that beauty is a form of expediency of the object as it is perceived in it without an idea of the purpose. It is particularly important to make a reservation related to this definition. Kant, along with the " pure" beauty, introduces the concept of accompanying beauty . First example - flowers, the second example - the beauty of men, buildings, etc.

Accompanying beauty implies a concept of purpose that defines the essence of the thing. It turns out that only in the " accompanying " beauty an aesthetical ideal is implemented. One cannot imagine the ideal of beautiful flowers. The ideal of beauty, according to Kant, is in the expression of moral. Kant says that the true beauty is a symbol of moral goodness; at this point it is a sphere of human behavior.

All of the four definitions of beauty are summarized in one statement. " Beauty in general (whether it is the beauty of nature or beauty of the art) can be defined as an expression of aesthetic ideas." Aesthetic idea is a

representation which gives rise to a lot of thinking, but which may not be adequate to any concept. And, therefore, we are not able to comprehend it fully. Beauty, according to Kant, is impossible without truth. Thus, Kant believes that "delight in a pleasant" and "delight in a good" are connected with interest, while the delight of beautiful, which determines the judgment of taste or aesthetic judgment, is free from any interest. Kant identifies two kinds of beauty: free or pure beauty, characterized only on the basis of form and pure judgment of taste, and accompanying beauty based on a destination or purpose of the object. Objects that are endowed with pure beauty should not be "strictly right", they usually contain something natural that causes a free play of imagination. In ethical terms, Kant considers beautiful as symbol of goodness. In this perspective, he puts an understanding of beauty of nature above the beauty of the art. Beauty in nature "has a higher sense" than in the art.

Basing on the analysis of Kant's aesthetic theory, we can outline four points of the subjective perception of beauty:

1. beauty is free from practical interest;
2. beauty is universal and valuable for everyone;
- 3 . Beauty is a form of expediency of the object as it is perceived in it without the notion of purpose;
- 4 . Beauty is that which pleases without the concept, as the object of necessary admiration. Kant separated aesthetic not only from the sphere of knowledge, but also from the ethical sphere. Aesthetic is completely autonomous and independent.. Aesthetic judgment for Kant always

expresses its claim as the value not only for a separate person - the one who articulates this claim - but for all. When I define a certain thing as wonderful my evaluation always assumes that every other person who perceives the same thing will find it wonderful too. When we call a thing beautiful, we're talking about it as if its beauty was objective property of the object itself, and judgment about it was a logical assumption based on knowledge through the concept. According to Kant's explanation, "universality" of aesthetic judgment can never arise from concepts. There is no transition from concepts to the feeling of pleasure that fosters aesthetic appreciation. The peculiarity of the judgment of taste is that its "universality" is not based on objective properties of the object: it has only a subjective meaning. Kant's doctrine of universal communicability of aesthetic judgment contains an important aspect. The essence of that aspect is in the effort to put the aesthetic appreciation above the pleasure which is delivered by the mere feeling, judgment of taste - above judgment, based on the enjoyment of a pleasant. Pleasure from the enjoyable is the kind of subjective, which eliminates any possibility of dispute. If, under the taste, we understand the assessment of the subject as a pleasant feeling, then this statement remains relatively faithful to the old Latin saying: "Tastes should not be argued." But if we understand the taste as an aesthetic appreciation of the subject, i. e. assessment of it as beautiful, in this case the dispute is not entirely meaningless. It is based on a completely legitimate claim that the judgment of taste has implications for everyone, i. e. on the claim of its universality. Thus, in the subjectivity of aesthetic judgment lies prerequisites of supra subjective, suprapersonal aesthetic meaning. It is what elevates it above

itself. Here, in the doctrine of universal communicability of aesthetic judgment, Kant makes a step leading from the subjective to the objective idealism.

Conclusion

In his work Kant argues that our aesthetical judgments are primarily based on our personal and subjective perception which appears to be a result of the so-called “ free play” of mind and imagination. This ‘ game’ forms an individual judgment of beauty. It is fair to assume that although our perception of beauty bears strictly subjective character, the mechanism of perception itself is universal to all men: even if our tastes differ we all possess a common sense of beauty and beautiful. This fact indicates the universal and thus, objective aspect of the beauty. Subjective and objective aspects constitute integral and inseparable phenomena that can be equally unique and common at the same time.

Works Cited

1. Kant, Immanuel. The Critique of Judgement. Raleigh, N. C: Alex Catalogue, 1990. Internet resource.