Chaouli, Michel

Thinking with Kant's Critique of Judgment

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Introduction, title, and methodology

Any work with a claim to originality puts its audience in a peculiar position—the more original a work is, the less prepared the audience is for receiving it. After all, defying the audience's expectations is precisely what makes the work original in the first place. There are several features of Michel Chaouli's *Thinking with Kant's* Critique of Judgment that defy expectations, one of which is to have approached Kant's third *Critique* itself as a deeply original work, not one simply about artistic genius but itself a product of genius. An immediate consequence of treating Kant's work this way is that it is by no means obvious what one is supposed to do with this text; what is it one should be doing when one is reading the third *Critique* in the right way? And already on the title page Chaouli takes a stand that is simple and bold: the readers ought to find themselves "Thinking with Kant's *Critique of Judgment.*"

But surely this praise of boldness is overblown. The title is trite. What else might a reader be doing other than "thinking with" the text? One of the remarkable features of the third *Critique*, one I think Chaouli picks up on, is that Kant actually answers this question. In his treatment of genius, Kant sees that the producer of an original, creative work is confronted with the odd task of having to teach the audience how to receive a work for which there is no precedent. "How that is possible," Kant says with little hint of irony, "is difficult to explain" (5:309).[1] But he does go on to say, "The artist's ideas arouse similar ideas in his apprentice if nature has provided the latter with a similar proportion in his mental powers." Thus the apprentice, or readers in this case, must strive to inhabit a similar state of mind, or rather in

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[1] Kant's works are cited according to the volume and page number of the *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, e.g., (5:240). Quotations of the *Critique of Judgment* are from the Pluhar translation (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987.)

Chaouli's formulation, to "think with" the artist. With the attitude expressed in the title of his book, Chaouli is signaling that he intends to read Kant in the way Kant taught us to read original works.

But, again, this kind of admiration seems overdrawn. What reading of Kant's third *Critique* wouldn't "think with" the text? And, again, a remarkable feature of the third *Critique* is that it answers this question by dividing reception or inheritance into good and bad forms. The bad form of inheritance is what Kant calls *Nachmachung* (5:309), a kind of thoughtless "imitation" that blends into *Nachaffung* (5:318), a mindless "aping," when it strives to reconstruct the mechanical production of the work, flaws and all, without any critical discernment of what it means to be in the grips of an original thought. By contrast, Kant describes a good form of inheritance not as imitation but as an emulation, *Nachahmung* (5:309) and later *Nachfolge* (5:318). But simply playing good *Nachahmung* off of bad *Nachmachung* threatens to replace logical distinctness with shallow wordplay. How is emulation supposed to be different than imitation? Whereas an imitator mechanically reproduces the production process, as though it were a rule one was obliged to follow, an emulator by contrast strives to inhabit the spirit or *Geist*, the animating principle that enlivens the mind of the artist (5:313)—which gave rise to the rule. It is from within this frame of mind that, Kant says, the emulator "is aroused by [the example of the artist] to a feeling of his own originality" (5:318). What I am, then, not-so-subtly suggesting is that the imitation/emulation distinction which Kant deploys in an aesthetic context actually provides a working hermeneutical standard, a standard moreover that applies to Kant's own texts. If a first accomplishment of Chaouli's book is to have approached it as an original work of genius, a second accomplishment is that it strives to emulate the spirit rather than imitate the letter of the text.

This is all a highly academic way of making a pretty straightforward point: by endeavoring to "think with" Kant, Chaouli's book manages to defy expectations. Expectations can create a space in which a meaningful conversation occurs, but they can also devolve into bad habits, habits to which Kant scholarship is not entirely immune. The bad habits, in my estimation, include foreclosing certain questions about just what it is one has on hand when presented with a canonical work in the history of philosophy and what is it one should be doing

when reading it. It is possible to see the third *Critique*, like any philosophical work, as an artifact of a certain kind: a record of an attempt to provide a convincing answer to a clear problem. With *that* kind of object in hand, it seems obvious what a reader should be doing with the text: either (i) critically evaluating the validity of the argument, possibly reconstructing it in its best possible terms, or (ii) filling in the historical context to get an ever sharper view of problem the author understood himself to be solving.

Both of those projects are unarguably important and legitimate intellectual endeavors. But the problem in this case is that each leaves the third *Critique* in pretty bad shape. The number of inconsistencies, multiplicities, false starts, bald assertions, non-sequiturs, and suppressed premises gives insiders an interminable supply of busywork (as Paul Crowther put the point),[2] but it leaves an impression among outsiders that by the time of the third *Critique* Kant was no longer in full possession of his philosophical powers. Despite the best efforts of insiders, judged according to the expectations of outsiders, the *Critique of Judgment* remains a bust.

By contrast, Chaouli's hermeneutical openness to "think with" Kant allows him to approach the notoriously crossed and complex text in a somewhat unorthodox way: not as sloppy and confusing writing about a clear problem but rather as clear writing about a confusing problem. That is, I'm suggesting that Chaouli approaches the third *Critique* as a different kind of artifact: not a dead record of an established position but rather the occasion of Kant's own attempt to *think through* a set of issues and problems, problems that may have been less clear and controlled than Kant expected. Chaouli is thus inviting his reader not to "think about" the third *Critique* but literally to "think with" Kant, to feel the force of a problem, to follow its unexpected twists and turns, and to see how the pursuit of one problem can open in unexpected ways on to others.

Again, this is an indirect way to say that Chaouli's book is doing something different from what we've come to expect of monographs on the *Critique of Judgment*. Reading his book will not be worth one's while if it is viewed as trying but failing to meet those expectations rather

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[2] Paul Crowther, *The Kantian Aesthetic: From Knowledge to the Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1.

than succeeding at doing something else. That "something else" is to see the text of the third *Critique* as a different kind of object than a storehouse of arguments to be mined for their philosophical currency or to fill in gaps in the historical record. Rather, for Chaouli the text of the third *Critique* is a kind of space: an opportunity, a place to exercise our mental faculties, an occasion "to deepen our understanding of aesthetic experience" as he writes in the first sentence of the first chapter (3).

But treating a text as opening up a space for thought text may be beside the point. What matters, one might think, are results. The relevant question ought to be, what does one find in this space? What does this way of approaching the text tell us that we didn't already know? The virtue of Chaouli's book lies in its several good answers to this question, but first we should acknowledge that there is quite a bit that this method of reading won't tell us. That is, there is quite a lot of relevant and interesting information that is simply not there to be inferred or squeezed out of the text by a patient, open reading. For instance, one thing one can't learn through patient reflection on the text itself is its historical context: who was Kant influenced by, who is he responding to, and do his positions represent an improvement in any important ways compared to other alternatives available in the late 18th century? Surely Kant himself was "thinking with" others just as we find ourselves "thinking with Kant," and that implicit conversation with others must shape the text in ways that may not be transparent. While Chaouli does have an eye towards historical context, by design the book is not a dedicated work of historiography in the sense of aiming to provide a genesis of the third *Critique*. It is located, as it were, downstream not upstream of the text as we find it.

Something else a close and thoughtful reading of a text can't tell you is whether it offers resources for current scholarly concerns. How might Kantian tools solve philosophical problems currently in circulation? Nor does this style of reading directly equip one to take sides on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various interpretations on offer in the scholarly literature about Kant. While Chaouli's book is informed by an impressive array of contemporary philosophical resources, it is not preoccupied with positioning its various interpretations within the current debates among Kant scholars.

To be clear, I think careful historiography and the status of contemporary debates are valuable concerns that a dedicated reader of the third *Critique* would want to attend to. There are also important themes in the *Critique of Judgment* that Chaouli's book doesn't dedicate itself to thinking through. For instance, I would have benefited from a more sustained attempt to think through the sublime. And I do think there are times that the project of "thinking with Kant" could have been improved by situating itself more concretely in the current scholarly literature. That is, there were times when I as a reader suffered a kind of phantom pain in the absence of a move to the contemporary literature. For example, I think the discussion of the nature of "aesthetic ideas" or the active role of the "productive imagination" would have been stronger if situated in current scholarship. But that is not because jockeying one's own view against rival interpretations is a serious standard for professional philosophy but rather because there are intellectual resources on offer in the literature that would have improved the ability to think with Kant on such issues. In other words, a project dedicated to "thinking with Kant" is improved by "thinking with others," and I sense there were some missed opportunities to think through an issue together with a community of like-minded scholars. The first sentence of the "Preface" is "We—you and I—are setting out to think with the *Critique of Judgment*" (xiii), but a sensitive reader may begin to worry that the "we" is an unwanted chaperone getting in the way of an intimate dialogue between the author and Kant.

However, on the whole I don't regret the absence of a dedicated historiography, direct engagement with recent debates, or equal focus on all topics. Of course, every book can only do so much and not more, and an author has to make decisions about how to make room for those topics that deserve to be explored in depth. In addition, treatment of those themes Chaouli doesn't emphasize are widely available elsewhere. Chaouli's book enters into field that has been well cultivated, and the discussion wouldn't be particularly well served at this point by another systematic survey or literature review. In fact, at this point one may begin to worry that the terrain has been so heavily cultivated that it can no longer bear fruit. And that is where I think Chaouli's distinctive methodology yields fresh produce. So while the trade-off of following the spirit of a text where it leads is that it crowds out some features that a systematic, scholarship-

focused, introductory historiography would have covered, the pay-off is that it manages to find several fascinating novelties in a text that had been combed over inch by inch.

Before going into the novelties, I want to pause to emphasize that Chaouli's having discovered something new in a canonical text is not unrelated to his method. It is, I think, because his methodological commitment to "thinking along with" the spirit of the text is a different form of attending than the usual mode of scholarship that he ends up exposing features of the text which have been overlooked. In fact, it is, I take it, a deep point of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* that different subjective forms of attending will disclose different features of the objected attended to. So while it is the attention to these features that for me was the real substantial and original contribution of the book, those dividends cannot be separated from the distinctive methodology (which is partly an excuse for me going on at such great lengths about what is in effect the title.).

Original claims

So on, then, to the substance. The main positive philosophical and scholarly payoff of *Thinking with* <u>Kant's Critique of Judgment</u> for me was attention to a series of concepts that, by and large, have eluded serious attention. I have in mind investigations into falling (31-5), money (127-30), and snow (251-7). To these to these one could add other themes like *Stimmung* (63-4), existentialism (233-5), and baby-walkers (66-70). What is peculiar about these themes, which Chaouli notices and takes the time to explore, is that they really shouldn't be there at all if Kant was simply trying to establish principles of pure aesthetic judgments and teleological judgments. That is, if you were to take it as a given that the serious philosophical activity in the *Critique of Judgment* concerns whether Kant establishes that judgment is an independent mental faculty with its own *a priori* principle, snow or money are precisely the kinds of thing that are going to appear trivial and unphilosophical. At best they would be mere examples—the "baby-walkers [*Gängelwagen*] of judgment" for the assistance of "those lacking in natural talent" (*CPR* A134/

B173)—but not themselves "exemplary" of serious, adult philosophical activity (e.g., 5:308).[3] But Chaouli's methodological principle is to attend first and foremost to what the text does, not to what it says it does, and therefore Chaouli slows down at places where others speed past. And the result is that we see something new.

To be sure themes like money or snow are not dominant themes for Kant, nor are they for Chaouli. Thus Chaouli's investigations into them comprise sections, not whole chapters. And I don't mean to suggest that the meaning of the *Critique of Judgment* turns on a snowflake or that that Chaouli attributes to them a special, systematic status. Rather what Chaouli does, which is different from typical readings, is to acknowledge their presence and then take time to wonder out loud why it is that these issues arise when they do. Rather than brushing past them with a shrug of his shoulders he stays with them and thinks them through. It's a luxuriating style, but one that pays off with concrete results.

Let me say something briefly about why I think it is philosophically significant that Chaouli takes time to stop and smell the roses, so to speak. (The phrase is apt: Chaouli actually does follow a line of inquiry [144-5] about whether tulips and roses have a special status in Kant's aesthetics). I'll elaborate with some comments on an early section titled "Freedom, Favor, Falling" (31-35) where Chaouli notes and wonders about the presence of words related to the English term "falling." Chaouli points to the nouns for "pleasure" *Gefallen* and *Wohlgefallen* and the verb *gefallen*, the active verb for "to please" actively and the passive verb "to be pleased." There's also *Zufall* for an unintended consequence. (Couldn't we also add *Beifall* for the acclaim or approval of a work of art, for instance?) The prevalence of "fallen" verbs has not to my knowledge been remarked upon before. But that may be for a good reason—perhaps there's really nothing there of scholarly substance, just indulgent word play. Chaouli, however,

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[3] It is to his credit that Chaouli notices a tension between Kant's treatment of examples in the first *Critique* and exemplarity in the third *Critique* (66-75), although here is an occasion where engagement with recent scholarship could have sharpened the discussion. One detail the scholarship wouldn't have sharpened, though, is Chaouli's literal translation of the Kantian term *Gängelwagen* as "baby-walker." Although I am not aware of anyone else mentioning this point, the importance of this literal meaning is confirmed by its use in the "Enlightenment" essay where Kant is explicit that the ability and willingness to "think for oneself" (that is, without a *Gängelwagen* of others' direction) is the mark of having left behind immaturity (8:35). The image of the "baby-walker" is again invoked in "Conjectural Beginning of Human History" as the image of the condition directly opposite to rationality (8:115).

patiently helps us see why there is something of philosophical substance at issue. Here in his own words:

> If we follow the path shown by the words themselves, we arrive at the conclusion that the pleasure taken [in judgments of beauty] is an intensification of falling. And does falling not capture a dimension of aesthetic experience? Does it not describe the feeling that, no matter how much favor I might show, the experience itself does not come reliably but is something that befalls me? While the idea of 'mak[ing] for ourselves an object of pleasure out of something' rightly foregrounds the active dimension of aesthetic experience, it risks suggesting that I can make for myself aesthetic pleasure the way I make myself a sandwich. The sense of falling that resonates in *Gefallen* can help provide us with a more aptly ambiguous sense of making, a making that sets the stage for a possible falling. (34-5)

Let me say more about why I think lingering upon cluster of "falling" words is philosophically significant—why it shows us something we are otherwise missing about the text and argument. Aesthetic judgments, on Kant's account, occur in a peculiar no man's land between activity (the kinds of things I do and for which I can be held responsible) and passivity (the kinds of things that happen to me). Like the activity of applause, judgments of taste don't just happen to me but require an activity I must sustain. And yet aesthetic judgments are not the kind of thing I can fake or force as an agent; they are dependent on an affective response, specifically that of pleasure. Not unlike being tickled, they are not something I can do to myself. They must happen to me passively as a patient. You may be smitten by a beautiful song or tickled by a funny joke, but if I am not so moved, I can't make them please me. I can be in the full presence of a work of art, see all there is to see, but the pleasure might just not be happening for me. I can try the experience again or lie about it, but I can't actively force what I must passively undergo.

Chaouli intones a theme in the Preface (xv) that he'll return to throughout his book that aesthetic judgments for Kant are both an active making *and* a passive undergoing. It sounds paradoxical to say that taste is a learned activity of passively undergoing an experience, as if the *Zufall* or accident of falling was something I somehow had to learn how to do. But that is really no more mysterious than saying that when it comes to "falling asleep" one has to learn how to let

go of one's worries or when "falling in love" there is a difference between being smitten by anyone who happens to come along and falling for the right person. A considerable amount of our lives is spent trying to master the craft of falling. And identifying words that broach or straddle the active/passive distinction is crucial if one believes that a key philosophical contribution of Kant's aesthetics is to have moved together what are thought to be separate domains of passivity and activity such that there is overlap between them—enough overlap that in some cases one can be responsible for what happens, how things happen, how things appear, how one feels, and so on.

It is by no means clear what we are supposed to do with this Kantian move of integrating activity and passivity, but it is clear, to this reader at least, that doing so is one the crucial consequence of the text. If one "thinks with the *Critique of Judgment,*" one will inherit this problem. So it is a testament to Chaouli's dedication to "thinking with" the text that he finds himself in the thick of this issue and that he sees the ways the warp and weave of the text itself should have the readers' thoughts falling in this direction if they let go of certain expectations and feel the pull of problems as they arise.

What goes for Chaouli's examination of "falling" can also be said about other concepts Kant deploys along the way: snow, money, roses, existential dread, *Stimmung*, baby-walkers. Again these are not central themes for Kant nor are they for Chaouli. Rather the point is that they are there at all, and readers would do well to ask themselves why. That Chaouli does so, that he has the patience and fortitude to do so, is in my opinion what sets this book apart.

Friendly amendments

While I admire the practice of taking Kant's hints and openings seriously and trying to think them through, that doesn't mean that I think Chaouli always pursues them in the right direction. I want to end by exploring two such cases. Since neither case affects a central pillar of the book but concerns the details and nuance in working through a rich problem, I hope both interventions can be seen as opportunities for friendly amendments. The first concerns Kant's denial that judgments of taste are interested and, more specifically, his assertion that one "must be entirely indifferent" to the "existence of the [beautiful] thing" (5:205). Early on Chaouli

worries (23) that "disinterestedness" in the existence of the beautiful object is an awkward encumbrance on Kant's position, and he soon returns to defend the importance of the existence of the aesthetic object ("Being Indifferent to Existence," 35-41). However, I think the Kantian position needs no such corrective, not because I think Kant was right that existence of the aesthetic object doesn't matter but because I think it is wrong to attribute such a view to Kant.

First of all, we know that for Kant judgments of taste are object dependent: "the pleasure in a judgment of taste is indeed dependent (*abhängig*) on an empirical presentation … (we cannot determine a priori what object will or will not conform to taste; we must try it out) …" (5:191).[4] So, as long as one cares about judgments of taste, and judgments of taste are object dependent, one cares about the objects of taste. Whatever Kant means by saying that taste is disinterested in the object, it can't be that it doesn't matter if the object exists or not. And yet, it's not so easy to dismiss the appearances of a paradox: given that taste is in an obvious sense invested in the object's existence, why would Kant say judgments of taste aren't concerned with their existence?

The first, simplest, and most correct answer is that in the context of §2 where Kant says judgments of taste are not interested in the object's existence he means "interested" in the two specific senses of "interest" he immediately lays out in §3 and §4 of the text. That is, in §3 judgments of taste are not interested in objects in the way desires or appetites are interested in them, the end result of which is to annihilate the difference or distance between one's self and the object, for instance, by eating it. Turning around the direction of fit in §3, Kant also thinks judgments of taste are not interested in bringing about an aesthetic object through an act of willful, purposive activity in the way the way a blueprint for a house might motivate us to build a house or the image of a just state should interest us in working to bring about a moral world. Judgments of taste are not interested in either of those two senses, and that is all Kant needs (or means) to show.

[4] Also: aesthetic judgments remain "tied to a determinate form of [an] object" (5:240); in the visual context we must "submit the object to our own eyes, just as if our liking of it depended on that sensation" (5:216); and in a gustatory case "I shall try the dish on *my* tongue and palate, and thereby (and not by universal principles) make my judgment" (5:285).

But it does certainly look like Kant means to be claiming more when he asserts taste is "indifferent to the existence of the object." So let me attempt a second and somewhat more speculative response which concerns *what* exactly one is judging in a judgment of taste.[5] Clearly one is engaged with an object—but not in the straightforward manner of a cognitive judgment. That is, one is not concerned to say *what* the object is but rather to note something *about* the object, something about its manner or "form" that is not exhausted by its spatio-temporal shape. We might say, for instance, that a regular square appears squat, stolid, and visually staid but the same shape rotated 45 degrees becomes a regular diamond with pointed edges which can have a visually arresting effect. Surely there is a phenomenological difference between the square and the diamond. Road signs that serve to warn or caution are very often diamond-shaped (Steep Grade, Deer Crossing) whereas square signs are reserved for orders (Do Not Enter, No U-Turn). Traffic engineers sense that there is something about the way we pose, position, or orient ourselves with regard to objects that accounts for distinctive aesthetic or phenomenological properties the objects will exhibit. But what kind of difference is this?

One and the same object oriented in two different ways can yield two entirely different aesthetic experiences. A square is not a diamond, aesthetically speaking, but what about ontologically speaking? Suppose one were to ask of a rectangle with sides of equal length, what *is* it, *really*? *Is* it a square or diamond? How *is* the object in itself, ontologically considered, independent of our subjective orientation towards it? Is it really, in itself, a diamond with a right

[5] In light of the extensive back-and-forth on this issue at the APA session, I want to suggest a more simple and natural reading of the "indifference" claim, namely, that Kant means to be contrasting "existence" to "representation" (*Vorstellung*). In that case, Kant is making a fairly straightforward point, albeit a weighty one. When it comes to beauty one attends to the appearance *as an appearance* and does not seek to make any moves beyond the phenomena to any "thing itself." In other words, Kant's point is not about the importance or unimportance of artworks per se but the importance of appearances, representations, and phenomenality. Unlike cognition or morality, aesthetics remains with the appearances themselves rather than move beyond the representation to that which is being represented. In short, for Kantian taste the matter concerns not the *what* but the *how* of representation not unlike the way Hume argues that tragedy can present events that are, as a matter of fact, truly awful but still manage to do so in a beautiful *way*. This way of putting the point spares a Kantian position from the strange criticism that it is somehow indifferent to artworks; in addition it has the philosophical leverage to be seen as offering a powerful rejoinder to a Platonic demotion of art as merely mimetic. By insisting on the value of the representation in itself, in its phenomenality, Kant's aesthetics anticipates the Nietzschean view that the phenomenal, the apparent, is itself a source of meaning and value without having to underwrite that value with anything deeper or behind the appearances. Kant's "indifference to existence" is a call to be superficial out of profundity.

angle at its apex or it is it really a square with a flat horizontal plane at the top? Well, what kind of question is this "existence" question?

I think one way of reading Kant's denial that we care about existence of aesthetic objects is as shorthand for saying that when it comes to the ontological status of aesthetic properties, such questions are idle, or rather vacuous. My five-year-old son this past Christmas time, concerned about exactly how far Santa Clause would have to travel get to our house, asked if the North Pole was at the top or the bottom of the planet. I told him that we usually say it is at the top, but it really depends the way you look at it while floating around in outer space. You could just as easily say it is at the bottom. Turning then to his mother, my son persisted, but which *is* it *really*? I think Kant is trying to get us to see there is something naïve or misguided about questions concerning the ontological status of orientational properties. My suggestion, then, is that the ontological status of orientational properties is something like the status we should afford to aesthetic properties. That, anyways, is a way of interpreting Kant's claims about the dependency and indifference to aesthetic objects that makes them consistent, intelligible, and even insightful.

A second friendly intervention concerns Chaouli's worries about whether Kant's linking of aesthetic ideas to the outward expression or communication of mental states puts Kant's aesthetics on a slippery slope to expressionism (188-92). The problem begins when Kant claims that artistic genius consists in "hitting upon the expression for…[a] subjective disposition of the mind that…can be communicated to others" (5:317). Chaouli worries that passages like this one are most easily read as Kant claiming that "art is essentially an *expression* of ideas lodged in the artist" (189). The problem with expressionism as an aesthetic theory for Chaouli, if I am following correctly, is that it runs afoul of some version of Wittgenstein's "private language argument" by giving an artist access to her own private mental state prior to and independently of the medium by which she would communicate or publicize this state to others. In crude form, an artist would be fully aware that she is in the grips of a peculiar and particular emotional state for which concepts like "sad" are far too imprecise. On this view, an artistic genius, though, manages to dislodge that subjective mental state, insert that mental content into an aesthetic

form, and thereby transmit the mental state to others. Chaouli then offers a refined reading of the text that inoculates Kant from this noxious form of expressionism.

I think Chaouli is right to inoculate Kant from a view in which the goal of art is to express or make public a prior, private mental state of the artist; but I think his execution shows why he is wrong to even burden Kant with the threat of such a problem and the need for inoculation in the first place. That is, I think Chaouli is right to deny that a Kantian account, properly understood, has any room for the purported prior, private, interior mental state out of which "private language" type fallacies arise. On my view, though, he pursues a wrong strategy by making the idea to be communicated a "consequence" of the artwork or a subsequent product that only emerges in the wake of the artistic production, not one lodged in the mind of the artist prior to its embodiment in an aesthetic production. Here is one passage picked out of a dense and rich discussion:

> What is communicated to others, then, is a subjective disposition, and the means of this communication is an expression—the artwork. But note that this to-be-communicated subjective disposition of the mind arises *as a consequence* of the felicitous expression genius hits upon [i.e., the artwork]; it is not available beforehand. (191, italics in original)

Thus Chaouli proposes to save Kant from a bad form of expressionism by denying that Kant thinks that the artistic genius has any private idea that guides the making of the artwork. When it comes to the idea that the artwork communicates, artists themselves are in the same position as the audience. They are just as surprised as the rest of us about their artwork because the idea to be communicated only exists as a result of the object created. Hence there is no room for a "private language" problem to arise.

Clearly the issues here are fraught, and I think one can raise concerns about the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of art that result when an artist has no inkling what she is doing until after she has done it. Wouldn't this strategy jump out of the frying pan of expressionism and into the fire of romanticism by making artistic activity totally unconscious? However, Chaouli's brief exploration of "the analogy between aesthetics and psychoanalysis" concerning "unsought and unintentional" activity (166-7) does give some important hints about how one might mollify these concerns.

My specific concern, however, is that this strategy misconstrues in the direction of interiority and privacy what it is Kant means by the "subjective dispositions of the mind" which geniuses are said to have a talent for communicating. If you think of a "subjective mental disposition" as a private interior state that artists have immediate, private, privileged access to the way hungry people might be said to have private access to their own hunger pangs, then you are going to find yourself with a familiar kind of worry; and then you might be tempted to elude this worry by making the interior mental state succeed rather than precede the artwork. However, it won't look like Kant even induces this worry if you think of the "subjective disposition of the mind" less as a pang and more like a perceptual *grip*, a distinctive way of taking in or getting a handle on something already external and in the public domain.

Here the question concerns what, exactly, Kant understands the "imagination" (*Einbildungskraft*) (and in particular the "productive imagination") to be. And, to put it mildly, the issue is far from settled. One way of construing it is as a kind of capacity for forming mental pictures in the way you might "imagine yourself on a beach." If that is the original and, as it were, most fully actualized exercise of imagination, you can quickly find yourself with "private language" kinds of concerns. However, that construal of the imagination's activity is not obligatory, and I think it is not well supported by the text. The text of the third *Critique* in particular offers a different way of conceiving an act of the imagination not as a kind of picturing but rather as a kind of choreography, as it were, between our perceptual and conceptual capacities. In that case the imagination in its most original mode consists in an activity of mediating between various ways of perceiving and different ways of conceiving the empirical world. On this view, the imagination is not an anterior and interior state in need of an external means of transmission but is inherently a relational activity deeply engaged with the external world.

On the view which generates the worry about expressionism, the imagination in its original activity is an abstract, interior capacity of confabulating fantasies. In that case the communication or expression problem seems particularly acute because the content of the imagination is cut off from the external and public world. While Kant doesn't deny that fantasizing is a possible function of imagination, I think he sees that abstract mode of pure

interiority as a *derivative* function, not its primary function. Rather in its primary mode the imagination just is an engagement or negotiation with the external world. It is a mode or manner of posing or arranging it in various possible ways.

In that case, the expressivist task of genius for Kant is *not* to communicate a certain something which one sees, with particular trouble if what one sees is a private state. That is not the "subjective disposition of mind" at issue. Rather the expressivist task is to communicate *how* one sees, the particular choreography of perception, so to speak. The "what" of expression remains public: a pair of clogs, lilies on a pond. The question at issue concerns "how" to perceive the scene, how to "take in" the objects, what to "make" of them. On this view, the "subjective disposition of mind" concerns a distinctive perceptual choreography, and the peculiar talent of a genius is to create objects the engagement with which requires or elicits a similar perceptual choreography in the audience. Once the actualization of the imagination is construed less as a private mental picturing and more as a distinctive perceptual choreography, then worries about how to express the imagination's interiority start to look like worries about what solitary genius invented the tango and how she ever managed to teach it to anyone else. Of course one can simulate the dance steps by oneself, if so inclined, but the tango in the first instance is a relational, external activity.

My hope is that this view of the "subjective disposition of mind" not as mental picture but as a perceptual choreography is not even much of a friendly amendment since Chaouli elsewhere is at pains to insist on the "irreducible co-implication of the subject in the object world…with which we are entangled" (265). And so both cases where I disagree with moves Chaouli makes are object lessons in why I remain impressed with the project of *Thinking with Kant's Critique of Judgment*. While an open and sincere attempt to think through the problems that arise in the third *Critique* may from time to time depart from the letter of the text, it will not stray far as long as it remains devoted to inhabiting its core spirit. And the core Kantian spirit that emerges from Chaouli's text is importantly different from what we've come to expect. It is one that finds a source of philosophical ingenuity in snow, money, and baby-walkers. It communicates an originality of thought, one that I think is worthy of emulation.

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