

Becoming Heautonomous: Exercising Judgment

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Abstract – In this article I aim to show how the *sensus communis* grounds – with the use of its maxims – the possibility of reflection, endowing the subject with a duty, that of becoming human, where becoming human presupposes self-education. Self-education entails on one hand overcoming one’s self interest or private feelings – that is what an aesthetic judgment demands: To love something other than one-self; on the other hand, and more fundamentally, self-education entails to place one-self under the indeterminate idea of humanity. Like all ideas and ideals of reason, the idea of humanity places an unrealizable demand upon the subject, to become part of an idea, in this case, that of humanity; this demand can never be met. Nevertheless, it is the strive to meet such a demand that motivates the human being to become human. To do so the subject will need to reflect appropriating thus the world through the exercise of its judgment.

Keywords – Kant, Reflection, Heautonomy, Sensus Communis, Self-cultivation, Judgment

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1. Introduction

Kant claims that a human being becomes human through education. As a result of this education, the human being becomes (1) disciplined, (2) cultivated, (3) civilized and (4) moralized.¹ “To civilize”, according to Felicitas Munzel, is “to cultivate taste [...], while to moralize is to cultivate reason”.² The cultivation of taste is tantamount to preparing the human being to enter society on the one hand and to becoming rational or moral on the other; we can thus regard cultivation as a preparatory stage that occurs prior to that of becoming moral or free, that is, autonomous. Nevertheless, the cultivation of taste (or civilization) retains a value of its own – regardless of its obvious reference to morality. This value relates to appropriateness (*Zweckmäßigkeit*)³ as the a priori transcendental principle pertaining to

¹ *Päd.*, p. 450.

² G.F. Munzel, *Kant’s Conception of Pedagogy*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2012, p. 209.

³ In this context I interpret *Zweckmäßigkeit* as appropriateness – not “purposiveness”, as Guyer and Matthews have it in their translation of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Cambridge, Cambridge University

judgment per se, where the subject becomes heautonomous rather than – and prior to becoming – autonomous. This means that the subject, through judgment or reflection, prescribes a law to itself – not to nature or freedom.

Heautonomy is simply the law that the power of judgment prescribes to itself, not to nature or freedom; it is a faculty not for producing concepts of objects but for comparing present cases to others that have been given to it, thereby indicating the subjective conditions of the possibility of this combination a priori.⁴ Although subjective, it is necessary and universal since it is a law that we presuppose to be valid for every human subject. This law allows us to appropriate or comprehend the world as a unity and, more importantly, as fit for our cognition. When comprehending nature, we feel a certain pleasure or satisfaction, but we also feel part of a common world – although it will require study to make the subject attentive to the appropriateness of nature to our understanding in our judging.⁵

By appropriating the world (prescribing a law to itself by which it comprehends the world) the subject makes sense of the world – *i.e.*, the world is beautiful (taste) or it has a purpose (teleology). And this sense is disclosed as communal – something that all subjects have in common. The world thus is common. To acknowledge however the communal sense of the world the subject is required to transcend its narrow or limited point of view; in other words, the subject is required to reflect and upon reflection the subject discloses the a priori possibility of becoming part of a common (human) world, it discloses the *sensus communis*.

The *sensus communis* endows the subject with a responsibility or a duty: to exercise its judgment or reflect under the maxims of common sense, thus transcending its narrow or limited point of view.⁶ Under reflection and in accordance with the maxims of common sense, the subject participates in a common world that presupposes in turn the idea of humanity, and in particular the idea of the supersensible substratum of humanity:⁷ only as being human has the world sense and the world becomes human under the presupposition of the idea of humanity.

The indeterminate idea of the supersensible substratum of humanity establishes the possibility of appealing to grounds for our judgments that do not have a merely private validity

Press, 2000). I have chosen appropriateness because I would like to retain the hermeneutical association with comprehension; to appropriate is to comprehend or make sense of something, while “purpose” has teleological connotations that I feel obscure the meaning of the term.

⁴ EE, p. 225; KU, p. 186.

⁵ KU, p. 187. This point – along with the fact that we appeal to the *sensus communis* as the possibility of the universal communicability of our cognition in general (KU, p. 329) – appears to validate the absurd conclusion, as Rind (*Can Kant’s Deduction of Taste be Saved?*, in “Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie”, 84, 2002, pp. 20-45) maintains, that we find everything beautiful, or if not beautiful then at least satisfactory. Contrary to Rind, however, who finds the above conclusion absurd, this actually appears to be Kant’s point; to attain some aim or to comprehend something offers a satisfaction or a feeling of pleasure, or, as he puts it, “the attainment of every aim is combined with the feeling of pleasure” (KU, p. 187).

⁶ KU, § 40.

⁷ KU, § 56.

but are valid for everyone. Such grounds need not be such that everyone *accepts* or agrees with them; rather, they make it possible to argue under a common presupposition.⁸ In other words, when such grounds are invoked, it makes sense to argue, even if we can never settle our arguments, disclosing thus the world as common or human. We are part of a common human world if we are able to participate in it. We thus presuppose an idea of reason, that is, the supersensible substratum of humanity, and the characteristic marks that pertain to humanity per se, that is communication and participation.⁹ To be able to communicate however we presuppose the *sensus communis*. It is thus the *sensus communis* that discloses the idea of humanity providing, at the same time, the means, that is reflection under its maxims, by which we become part of it.

I will first address the problem of reflection in its relation to heautonomy; I will then briefly consider the importance of beauty and judgments of taste regarding the meaning of a human being that recognizes itself, through the *sensus communis*, as part of the idea of humanity. Finally, I will enquire into the notion of an indefinite, or more fundamental, unrealizable idea of reason – the supersensible substratum of humanity – as the possibility of reaching agreement (consensus being the purpose or end) through argument (as the means of reaching consensus). As I will try to show, arguing under reflection presupposes that the subject is exercising his or her judgment under the maxims of common sense.

2. Reflection and heautonomy

Reflection is interwoven with the critical project in that it ascribes each representation to its appropriate faculty, safeguarding us from the illegitimate use of our concepts. We should thus conceive of reflection as a compass orientating our thinking to its appropriate *topos*.¹⁰ I am here referring to the act of transcendental reflection and the transcendental topology,¹¹ where the task or duty of transcendental reflection is nothing but the *consciousness of the relation of given representations to our various sources of cognition*. To reflect is thus to orientate oneself in thought by asking, *prior to all further treatment of our representations: In which cognitive faculty do these representations belong?*

To be able to orientate oneself in thought, one needs a map. For Kant, this map is constituted by an overview of the system of the unity of cognitions,¹² which is an idea of reason. Kant presupposes the systematic unity of the understanding's cognitions as a problem

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ KU, p. 338.

¹⁰ I follow Makkreel (*Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1995, p. 165), who relates transcendental reflection to orientation, thus ascribing a critical function to reflection.

¹¹ KrV, A, p. 260; B, p. 316.

¹² KrV, A, p. 647.

or hypothesis, an idea or a logical principle¹³ – one that serves, albeit problematically, as a universal rule under which judgment subsumes a given cognition.¹⁴ Kant further elaborates on this point in the KU, focusing on the act of judging, in which judgment assumes reason's function.¹⁵ Here, he enquires into whether the faculty of judgment possesses transcendental principles, in line with how the understanding has categories and reason has ideas; Kant discloses the a priori transcendental principle of the power of judgment in the reflective act of our judgment, where the *universal is only problematically assumed* and the particular is given.¹⁶ This principle is called 'appropriateness'.

Appropriateness is not an objective concept; yet while it may be subjective, it is nevertheless universal and necessary, that is, valid for all subjects, allowing us to comprehend or make sense of nature *as if* it formed a systematic unity.¹⁷ Under the principle of appropriateness, we can thus extend the map or topology of the act of transcendental reflection to include the totality of cognition – concepts and faculties. In this case, orientation involves orientation in thought in general, serving both a negative and a positive function. Negatively, it is a criterion preventing the misuse of our concepts; positively, it is a way of facilitating comprehension not only of nature as a system but, ultimately, of ourselves.

The transcendental topology thus serves a further (positive) function: Not only does assigning each concept to its appropriate *topos* prevent us from misusing our concepts, but at the same time, and more importantly, perhaps, it secures space for a number of notions that would otherwise have to be rejected (such as God, the soul and, of course, freedom) on the basis that they transcend the possibility of experience. We cannot apply the understanding's concepts to the soul or freedom, or again, we cannot treat the notion of 'a purpose' as being constitutive of nature. Nevertheless, we do apply the notion of 'purposiveness' to nature and the notion of 'causality' to freedom; that is, we secure a legitimate use for them. We may not *know* what freedom or beauty are – that is, we may have no way to settle the *truth* of the matter (since we cannot refer freedom or beauty to a concept of an object) – but they make sense to us as human beings. We accept them *as if* they were objective.

Securing a legitimate use for notions such as freedom and beauty advances something more fundamental than knowledge, however; it advances reason's – and subsequently our – self-knowledge. *It is not thus enough to have knowledge of more sciences but what is important is to have self-knowledge of understanding and reason.*¹⁸

¹³ KrV, A, p. 648.

¹⁴ KrV, A, p. 646.

¹⁵ Cfr. B. Brandt, *The deduction of the critique of judgement*, in E. Förster (ed.), *Kant's Transcendental Deductions: The Three Critiques*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1989, pp. 177-192; P. Guyer, *Reason and Reflective Judgment*, in "Noûs", 24/1, 1990, pp. 17-43.

¹⁶ KU, p. 179.

¹⁷ KU, p. 181; EE, pp. 201-202.

¹⁸ *Anthr.*, p. 395.

Knowing oneself is therefore not simply about limiting one's aspirations; more importantly, it is about comprehending oneself as being part of an idea that supersedes both knowledge and, as we shall see, our private interests and feelings. This is the idea of humanity. Self-knowledge thus refers to the idea of humanity as supplementing science or knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) – as providing the scientist “with one more eye allowing him [*i.e.*, the Cyclopes, that is, the scientist] to gaze at his object from the perspective of another. On this ground the humanity of the sciences is given, that is, on the ‘eunoia’ (*Leutseeligkeit*) of judgment, through which one subjects one's judgment to the judgments of others”.¹⁹

In light of the above, orientating oneself in thinking entails more than thinking for oneself or becoming enlightened – a task that, according to Kant, is quite easy to ground in individual subjects through their education, through which young minds are accustomed to this kind of reflection from early on.²⁰ In addition, orientation entails becoming part of humanity.

Judgment and its reflective character are thus more than a mere correction of reason; they are a demand that the subject imposes on itself, the duty to become human. Critique thus becomes a duty of the self-cultivation or self-education of the subject that is not simply animal or rational but rather *human*, partly animal and partly rational. It refers to heautonomy rather than autonomy, that is, a rule the subject imposes on itself.²¹ Heautonomy can be – and indeed is – understood as a preparatory stage prior to that of becoming autonomous or rational, but it also stands as an important stage in its own right, grounding the idea of humanity as disclosing a law under which the subject appropriates the world and itself as part of this (human) world.²²

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ WDO, p. 146.

²¹ KU, p. 186; EE, p. 225.

²² Makkreel (*Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*, cit., p.161) proposes that we relate reflective judgment to hermeneutics and reflection to an act of orientation within the human world, a world that already has a given sense. On this view, reflecting on this common sense ultimately reveals our common world – the *sensus communis* (a thought that can also be found in F. Kaulbach, *Ästhetische Welterkenntnis bei Kant*, Würzburg, Königshausen-Neumann, 1984). However, Makkreel does not address the problem of reflection in its relation to critique or the subject's self-cultivation. Although he interprets the *sensus communis* as establishing our common world – identifying common sense with a common tradition – he fails to appreciate the critical aspect of reflection in its explicit relation to the maxims of common sense. Reflection, for Makkreel, is thus an act that discloses our communality, but this is only one aspect of the *sensus communis*. This aspect does not refer primarily to a common tradition, even if we do interpret our sense of justice, truth, beauty, etc., as a common tradition. Rather, it refers to the critique itself: Under reflection, we are required to exercise our judgment to free ourselves from prejudices – a point that Makkreel acknowledges – but, more importantly, to assume the standpoint of others if we are to become human.

3. On the clue to the discovery of the human being: Beauty

In judgments of taste or aesthetic judgments, we find an example of a reflective judgment par excellence: “Aesthetic judgment, as a special faculty, must be regarded as comprising under it no other faculty than reflective judgment”²³ – the other example of a reflective judgment being a teleological judgment. I will confine my inquiry to the judgments of taste insofar as beauty discloses a fundamental aspect of what it means to be human, that is, a being in a process of self-cultivation or self-education.

In beauty (or rather taste), the subject discloses itself as a human being. “Beauty”, Kant writes in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, “is valid only for human beings, *i.e.*, animal but also rational beings, but not merely as the latter (e.g., spirits), rather as beings who are at the same time animal”.²⁴ Between nature and freedom there is thus the human being: a being that must rise above its nature and respond to its vocation, that is, become rational and autonomous. To do so, however, it must first become human.

The study of aesthetic judgment discloses the fact that in comprehending nature we not only *feel* pleasure, as is the case with judgments of taste, but also presuppose that all subjects feel what we feel, ascribing thus to our judgments of taste a universal and necessary validity. In other words, in proclaiming that something is beautiful, we proclaim a rule that we take to be valid for everyone:

If the aesthetic judgment carries such a claim with it [*i.e.*, a claim to be necessary and universal], then it also makes a claim that its determining ground must lie *not merely in the feeling* of pleasure and displeasure in itself alone, but *at the same time in a rule* of the higher faculty of cognition, in this case, namely, in the rule of the power of judgment, which is thus legislative with regard to the conditions of reflection *a priori*, and demonstrates *autonomy* [meaning: Heautonomy].²⁵

Both notions, that is, feeling and rule, refer to the *sensus communis* that grounds the possibility of communicating our feelings. Under this presupposition, we expect that everyone will feel pleasure like we do and, more importantly, that everyone will agree with our judgment of taste. This demand does not, however, compel anyone to actually agree with us (or experience the *same* feeling for that matter); it is only akin to an *ought* – a request. What we ultimately presuppose is not just the hope of agreement but the possibility of the universal communicability of our feelings, thus pointing beyond our private inclinations towards humanity, a common human world: “Further, each expects and requires of everyone else a regard to universal communication, as if from an original contract dictated by humanity itself”.²⁶ This is how we rise above our nature towards humanity. Self-education is nothing

²³ EE, pp. 248-249.

²⁴ KU, p. 210.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

more than becoming part of humanity, that is, communicate, participate or, as I will try to show, be able to argue or measure our judgments against the judgment of others.

4. The *Sensus Communis* as a clue to the disclosure of the supersensible idea of humanity²⁷

What does humanity mean?²⁸

Humanity means on the one hand the universal *feeling of participation* and on the other hand the capacity for being able to *communicate* one's inmost self universally, which properties taken together constitute the sociability that is appropriate to humankind, by means of which it distinguishes itself from the limitation of animals.²⁹

Both traits of humanity, however, relate explicitly to the *sensus communis*.

To communicate our innermost feelings, we presuppose the *sensus communis* as the possibility of communication. We are able to communicate our feelings because we presuppose a communal sense, the fact that we share a world that makes sense. The world makes sense not only as beautiful but as just, or true, etc.³⁰ This does not mean that we agree on what the beautiful (or the true or the just) is. We require or hope for agreement, but this is not tantamount to actually agreeing; we cannot *know* what beauty or justice are because they do not correspond to a concept of an object. Nevertheless, we feel that we share these notions; they are like the ideas of reason, or like ideals such as that of government and education; they regulate our thought, orientating us in thinking.

Kant says the following about education:

An outline of a theory of education is a noble ideal, and it does no harm if we are not immediately in a position to realize it. One must be careful not to consider the idea to be chimerical and disparage it as a beautiful dream, simply because in its execution hindrances occur. An idea is nothing other than the concept of a perfection which is not yet to be found in experience – as is the case of a perfect republic governed by

²⁷ Although there is a rather obvious relation between the supersensible substratum of humanity and the *sensus communis*, it is nevertheless hard to establish what this relation might be. Gershon Weiler, for example, maintains that the two notions are obviously interrelated, but he does not elaborate on what this interrelation might be (see G. Weiler, *Kant's "Indeterminate Concept" and the Concept of Man*, in "Revue Internationale de Philosophie", 16, 1962, pp. 432-446).

²⁸ The question concerning the human being is, according to Kant, the ultimate question of the critique (I. Kant, *Metaphysik L₂ (Pölitz)*, in AA, Bd. XXVIII, pp. 533-534), to which all other questions – what can I know?, what ought I to do?, what may I hope? – refer (see also: KrV, A, p. 805).

²⁹ KU, § 60, p. 356.

³⁰ KU, § 40, p. 293.

rules of justice. Is the latter therefore impossible? If our idea is only correct, then it is by no means impossible, despite all of the obstacles which stand in the way of its execution.³¹

But then how can we settle such ideas or ideals? The answer is: We do not settle them; we may argue, but we cannot dispute, for to dispute is to settle the matter by appealing to proofs or objective concepts.³² Unable to appeal to an objective concept, we should allow for these notions to remain open or a matter of debate. And this is what the *sensus communis* as a communal sense secures: “By ‘*sensus communis*,’ must be understood the idea of a communal sense, *i.e.*, a faculty for judging that in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else’s way of representing in thought, in order as *it were* to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole”.³³

When using our communal sense, we are asked to think in place of everyone else. To think in place of everyone else is to retain a broadminded way of thinking and to acquire a universal standpoint, or, as Munzel says, the standpoint of humanity. Does this entail reaching agreement? The answer must again be *No*. We can only entertain the *hope* of reaching agreement (although this hope may very well be unrealizable, like all ideas of reason). And because we have hope of reaching agreement – more importantly, because it is possible to communicate on a priori grounds (the *sensus communis*) – it makes *sense* to argue about taste or – why not? – to argue about all ideas and ideals of reason.³⁴

The fact that it makes *sense* to argue refers only indirectly to the *sensus communis*; in the *Antinomy of Taste*,³⁵ Kant never explicitly revisits the *sensus communis*, but the fact that it makes *sense* to argue discloses that we share something in common; we are already situated within the world, as Kaulbach maintains.³⁶ But if the world is to acquire a truly communal sense, we are required to reflect on this sense. Under reflection we become civilized or educate ourselves; that is, we become able to think in place of everyone else. This does not necessarily equate to adopting another person’s point of view; rather, it equates to weighing one’s judgment against other judgments (in public). In other words, it equates to arguing.

If the *Antinomy of Taste* – reason’s necessary and unavoidable conflict with itself – is to be resolved, Kant needs to appeal to an idea (not just a feeling or a norm or an ideal – like the *sensus communis*):

But now all contradiction vanishes if I say that the judgment of taste is based on a concept (of a general ground for the subjective purposiveness of nature for the power of judgment), from which, however, nothing can be cognized and proved with regard to the object, because it is in itself indeterminable and unfit for

³¹ *Päd.*, p. 444.

³² KU, § 56.

³³ KU, p. 293.

³⁴ See also: T. de Duve, *Art, Ethics, Politics in Aesthetics at Large*, vol. I, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2019, p. 197.

³⁵ KU, § 56.

³⁶ F. Kaulbach, *Ästhetische Welterkenntnis bei Kant*, cit., *passim*.

cognition; yet at the same time by means of this very concept it acquires validity for everyone (in each case, to be sure, as a singular judgment immediately accompanying the intuition), because its determining ground may lie in the concept of that which can be regarded as the supersensible substratum of humanity.³⁷

The *sensus communis* can thus *only* point towards the idea as the clue for disclosing it.

5. The Sensus Communis

The *sensus communis* appears in § 20 of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* as the necessary and universal – albeit subjective – principle or presupposition under which our judgments of taste acquire necessity and universal validity. It is a rather ambiguous notion;³⁸ indeed, Kant characterizes it as a feeling,³⁹ a communal sense,⁴⁰ an indeterminate norm,⁴¹ a principle,⁴² an ideal⁴³, an idea,⁴⁴ and a faculty of judging.⁴⁵ All of these different aspects converge in the *sensus communis* as the possibility of communicating our feelings and cognition in general. This sense does not refer exclusively or primarily to our common subjective constitution, the fact that we are sentient discursive beings endowed with the powers of understanding, reason and judgment; if this were the case, then we should expect unanimity regarding our judgments of taste. Unanimity, however, is nothing but a *demand that only reason can make*.⁴⁶

There is an interesting evolution in Kant's thought concerning the notion of communication, from the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* to the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. The possibility of communicating in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* presupposes some external ground; that is, it presupposes the concept of an object, thus objective knowledge.⁴⁷ In the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, the ground of the possibility of communication is no longer external but internal. Communication in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* presupposes the *sensus communis*.

Although the human world and its affairs – taste being one of many examples – may never be settled and remain uncertain, lacking the possibility of objective knowledge, it does abide by a priori principles. These principles do not ground objective knowledge, but they do retain a universal and necessary (albeit subjective) character, thus acquiring the subjective/objective

³⁷ KU, p. 340.

³⁸ For an attempt to delimit the various meanings of the *sensus communis*, see G. Felten, *Die Funktion des sensus communis in Kants Theorie des ästhetischen Urteils*, München, Fink, 2004. See also Z. Zhouhuang, *Der sensus communis bei Kant*, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 2006.

³⁹ KU, p. 238.

⁴⁰ KU, p. 293.

⁴¹ KU, p. 240.

⁴² KU, p. 239.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ KU, § 40, p. 293

⁴⁶ KU, p. 240.

⁴⁷ KrV, A, pp. 820-821; B, pp. 848-849.

status of the “*als ob*”, that is, a necessary and universal ground of conviction (*Überzeugung*). We are not, after all, aiming at objective proof (κατ’ ἀλήθειαν) but rather at subjective conviction (κατ’ ἀνθρώπων), *dictated by principles that hold for us* (humans in general)⁴⁸ as if they were objective.

Conviction – in both the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* and the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* – is not objective but rather subjective. In the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* conviction – along with persuasion – is *externally related to the possibility of communication*,⁴⁹ its common ground being the object. Agreement and truth thus depend solely on the concept of an object.⁵⁰ Although in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* Kant points to the objective character of conviction⁵¹ relating conviction to all who have reason, nevertheless when grounded on the *particular subjective constitution*, conviction is called *persuasion (Überredung)*.⁵² Persuasion grounds thus a judgment *which lies solely in the subject* and it is nothing but *semblance (Schein)*. In the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* Kant further qualifies ‘persuasion’ as a rhetoric device for deceiving.⁵³ But what about conviction? Having disclosed the a priori constitution of the subject Kant grounds conviction to the subjective constitution, that is, he grounds conviction in the concept of the subject, not an object. Conviction in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* is a belief that we hold and might, upon reflection, investigate or test⁵⁴ under the presupposition of the *sensus communis*. In other words, conviction becomes *integral to the subjective power of judgment*, thus acquiring a necessary and universal – albeit subjective – status: the status of the “as if”.⁵⁵

Ercolini relates conviction and communication to the notion of the “as if” in the context of rhetoric: “The criterion of conviction rests neither on empirical nor intersubjective grounds. It has to be communicable, to take the form ‘as if’ it was universally valid, in other words emanating from the common ground of common (not private) reason”.⁵⁶ In other words, it emanates from the *sensus communis*; as the possibility of communication, however, the *sensus communis* establishes precisely a common intersubjective or human world. The “*als ob*” discloses itself only after we have become human – after we have acquired, under reflection, a communal sense – but for this to be possible we presuppose the exercise of our judgment according to the maxims of common sense.⁵⁷ “The power of judgement, when what

⁴⁸ KU, p. 463.

⁴⁹ KrV, A, pp. 820-821; B, pp. 848-849.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ KrV, A, p. 820; B, p. 848.

⁵² *Ibidem*.

⁵³ KU, p. 237.

⁵⁴ See also, I. Kant, *Logik (Jäsche)*, in AA, Bd. IX, p. 73.

⁵⁵ KU, p. 282.

⁵⁶ See G.L. Ercolini, *Kant's Philosophy of Communication*, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 2016, p. 37.

⁵⁷ D.V. Hoffman (*Gewißheit des Fürwahrhaltens*, Berlin-New York, De Gruyter, 2000, pp. 209-216) also suggests that the *sensus communis* becomes the indeterminate norm or idea by which we measure our

is noticed is not so much its reflection as merely the result of that, is often called a sense, and there is talk of a sense of truth, a sense for propriety, for justice, etc.”⁵⁸

Reflection thus becomes possible under the *sensus communis*, where by *sensus communis* “must be understood the idea of a *communal* sense, *i.e.*, a faculty for judging that in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else’s way of representing in thought”⁵⁹ What we are asked to do, in other words, if we are to become human, is to exercise our judgment.

6. Exercising our Judgment

The greatest concern of the human being is... to rightly understand what one must do in order to be a human being.⁶⁰

The human being can only become human through education.⁶¹

Becoming human entails education.⁶² What is in question here, however, is not education but rather a task or duty that the human being sets for itself. Robert Louden calls this “self-reflection” because it refers to the subject, not just its education.⁶³ According to Louden, the subject has a duty to *think for itself*; as we saw before, however, this is a rather uncontroversial claim that Kant associates with education.⁶⁴ We can instruct (educate) the subject to think for itself. What we cannot do, however, is to instruct the subject as to how to use or exercise its judgment, for *the power of judgment is a natural talent, after all*: “that cannot be taught but only practiced. Thus this is also what is specific to so-called mother-wit, the lack of which cannot be made good by any school; for although such a school can provide a limited understanding with plenty of rules borrowed from the insight of others and as it were graft these onto it, nevertheless the faculty of making use of them correctly must belong to the student himself, and in the absence of such a natural gift no rule that one might prescribe to him for this aim is safe from misuse”⁶⁵.

judgments against the judgments of others. Furthermore, it becomes a criterium of truth, or rather, of “holding-to-be-true” (*Fürwahrhalten*).

⁵⁸ KU, p. 293.

⁵⁹ KU, 293-294.

⁶⁰ EE, p. 41.

⁶¹ *Päd.*, p. 443.

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ See R. Louden, *Kant’s Human Being*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 73.

⁶⁴ WDO, p. 146.

⁶⁵ KrV, B, p. 173. – Kant’s appeal to a talent or the exercise of judgment describes the limits of education; although we can educate or instruct a subject to reflect (WDO, p. 146), even educating it to the *humaniora* (KU, p. 355) – both being important to the cultivation of the human being – nevertheless education still falls short as

Kant rejects the possibility of instructing the power of judgement out of fear of multiplying to infinity the rules that would have to pertain to the use of judgement in every case: there cannot be rules for judging *every* particular case.⁶⁶ But even if we cannot instruct the power of judgement, we can nevertheless exercise it, that is, judge in concrete cases or use examples as means of *sharpening* our judgement.

An unwillingness or inability to exercise judgment is tantamount not only to stupidity (*Dummheit*),⁶⁷ but more importantly to *narrow mindedness*⁶⁸ or *egoism*,⁶⁹ that is, the limiting of one's judgment within one's subjective and private conditions. What reason demands and duty requires is that we rise above *our* nature, that is, above our limited nature. Our duty is thus to reflect the acquisition of a communal sense.⁷⁰

When making a judgement of taste, I request that my judgement become an example, or a rule, an ideal norm for everyone else to agree with;⁷¹ I claim to speak in a universal voice and demand universal assent – but this is not yet a duty. It becomes a duty when – besides presupposing the *sensus communis* as a feeling or the possibility of communicating my feeling – I am asked to think in the place of everyone else. It thus becomes a duty when I reflect upon sense as being communal, according to which I am able to take a priori account of everyone's possible judgment,⁷² that is, to *hold my judgment up to human reason as a whole*.⁷³

To be able to assign such a duty to myself is to utilize the maxims of common understanding in exercising my judgment. Under these maxims, we are urged to *think for ourselves* beyond our *prejudices*; we are asked to think *in every-one else's place* and, finally, to think *according to reason*.⁷⁴ This is how we exercise our judgment.⁷⁵

Thinking for oneself involves rising above our prejudices; thinking in the position of everyone else or thinking with others is related to humanity;⁷⁶ to think in accordance with oneself or reason is to think consistently, that is, *to combine the first two, where frequent observance of them has made them automatic*⁷⁷ – a point Kant repeats in his *Lectures on Logic* as well.⁷⁸ Kant ascribes the first maxim to the understanding, the second to the power of

far as judgment is concerned. To judge is to exercise one's judgment, and this cannot be taught; it is rather a natural talent.

⁶⁶ *Anthr.*, p. 199.

⁶⁷ See KrV, B, p. 173, footnote.

⁶⁸ KU, p. 295.

⁶⁹ *Anthr.*, pp. 129-130.

⁷⁰ O. O'Neill, *Constructions of Reason*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 299.

⁷¹ KU, p. 238.

⁷² KU, p. 293-294.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁴ K. Deligiorgi, *Universalisability, Publicity, and Communication*, in "European Journal of Philosophy", 10/2, 2002, pp. 143-159.

⁷⁵ KU, pp. 294-295.

⁷⁶ G.F. Munzel, *Kant's Conception of Pedagogy*, cit., p. 154.

⁷⁷ KU, p. 295.

⁷⁸ I. Kant, *Logik*, in AA, Bd. XVI, p. 12.

judgment, and the third to reason.⁷⁹ If the understanding secures the *negative element in the manner of thinking (Denkungsart)* that enlightenment presupposes,⁸⁰ thus securing *liberation from superstition and prejudices* while delimiting the use of our concepts, and if the power of judgment situates us within the human world, demanding that we think in the place and in communication with everyone else⁸¹ (*i.e.*, acquire a universal standpoint or the standpoint of humanity), then how is reason related to consistency? It is not enough to refer to non-contradiction as the characteristic mark of consistency; nor is it enough to elucidate consistency by connecting the way we think to the use of the previous two maxims – this is rather obvious. Reason places much stronger demands on us.

Not only does reason demand that we overcome our self-love, interest and partiality, but it purports to prepare us – through beauty – to love something other than ourselves. Furthermore, reason elevates us above the sensible towards the supersensible, that is, towards freedom and ideas or ideals, setting an almost impossible task for us: that of striving to realize them while acknowledging them as unattainable. The notion of an idea of reason serves as a regulative principle, a guiding line or compass for orientating ourselves towards our final purpose or vocation. It is *the concept of a perfection* that, although unrealizable, pertains to reason and grounds an ideal.⁸²

To strive to realize an idea, however – in the context of our human conduct – is to settle with the fact that we place our individual existence and efforts under that of the species, aware that life is too short to realize reason's purposes and ideas: "In the human being (as the only rational creature on earth), those predispositions whose goal is the use of his reason are to develop completely only in the species, but not in the individual. That is, *each generation transmits its enlightenment to the next*".⁸³

To be consistent with reason is thus to strive to realize an idea that reason dictates as a duty for every subject – even though we are aware that this idea may be an unrealizable end.

We overcome our prejudices to become enlightened, we think in the place of/with others, and, finally, we subject ourselves to a purpose higher than us – *if we wish to find sense or meaning in the idea of the human being as the goal of our endeavors*:

Otherwise the natural predispositions would have to be regarded for the most part as in vain and purposeless; which would remove all practical principles and thereby bring nature, whose wisdom in the judgment of all remaining arrangements must otherwise serve as a principle, under the suspicion that in the case of the human being alone it is a childish play.⁸⁴

We are, after all, the only beings that can set and realize purposes.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁰ KU, p. 294, footnote.

⁸¹ *Anthr.*, p. 200.

⁸² *Päd.*, p. 444.

⁸³ *laG*, p. 19.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*.

In the context of our investigation, the idea that we strive to realize is humanity, or the supersensible idea of humanity dictated by reason and in accord with the maxims of common sense. But how does one realize an unrealizable idea, the idea of universal consent, or the universal voice that we claim for ourselves?⁸⁵

7. Reprise: arguing about taste. The *Sensus Communis* as a clue to disclosing the means of grasping the idea of humanity

In the *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, Kant writes that the human being is torn between two *propensities*: the *unsocial sociability of human nature*, or *antagonism*, and *sociability*, or the inclination to become “socialized”.⁸⁶ This, according to Kant, is nature’s means of bringing forth our natural predisposition to humanity. If we are to transform this being from a *rude* and *natural to a human being, a member of society*, we need to change our way of thought (*Denkungsart*).⁸⁷ We must thus become human, that is, conduct ourselves within the human world,⁸⁸ and to bring this about we must first exercise our judgment according to the maxims of common sense, in particular, the maxim of a *broad way of thinking*: thinking not only *in place of others* but *with others* and *against others*.

To think *with others* is to think within a common (human) world, or to subject our judgments to the public; to think *in place of everyone else* or to acquire a *universal standpoint* is to examine our judgment under other viewpoints. Interpreted thus, the universal standpoint should not be equated with agreement. Although we demand or request that everyone agree with us when expressing a judgment of taste, and although we hope to reach agreement, what we are asked to do is to measure our judgment *against* that of others.⁸⁹ Only in this way can we transcend our narrow point of view and become broadminded.

We cannot dispute matters of taste because there is no objective concept to settle our dispute – there is no proof or concept of an object to settle truth. This does not mean, however, that we should abandon matters that truth cannot settle, like ideas or ideals. What we ought to do is argue, that is, express our judgment, make it public. Although we cannot

⁸⁵ KU, p. 235.

⁸⁶ IaG, p. 21.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁸ *Anthr.*, p. 130.

⁸⁹ Interpreting the agreement as actual leads one to conclude, with Nehamas (*A promise for happiness*, in “The Tanner Lectures on Human Values”, 23, 2002, p. 209), that *Kantian judgments of taste are rigid rules that compel us to conform where any deviation is to be regarded as a deficiency*. Interpreting agreement as a request, a hope or a possibility, however, salvages the indefinite character of beauty, thus establishing the possibility of arguing about taste – something that Kant establishes in the *Antinomy of Taste*. A judgment of taste is thus an *invitation*, as Nehamas readily acknowledges, although he fails to appreciate this aspect of Kantian Aesthetics.

invoke the notion of truth, we can nevertheless *hope to come to mutual agreement*.⁹⁰ This hope does not compel us to agree; rather, it establishes the possibility of arguing. It makes sense to argue or as Kant says in the *Antinomy of Taste*:

It is easy to see that between these two commonplaces [that is, the two propositions of the Antinomy], one proposition is missing, which is not, to be sure, a proverb in general circulation, but which nevertheless everyone has some sense of: *It is possible to argue about taste* (but not to dispute).⁹¹

Katerina Deligiorgi points out this aspect, that is, arguing or *dissent*, as an embodied practice pertaining to communication and the public use of reason, juxtaposing it to the *sensus communis*.⁹² According to her, the *sensus communis* establishes a merely possible, not an actual practice; this is, after all, the way that Kant elaborates on the meaning of the communal sense.⁹³ But the *sensus communis* discloses the possibility of an actual practice – if agreement is nothing but a hope or a request, that is, a purpose or an end of reason, then argument and our way of thinking are the means, the embodied practices, that serve the purpose of agreement. We *feel* or have a *sense* that we can argue because we presuppose the possibility of communication. Thus, arguing may very well be a cultivated or a civilized unsociability or antagonism.⁹⁴

There is thus a way to establishing a public or political community under the guiding principle and possibility of the *sensus communis*, as Hanna Arendt maintains.⁹⁵ What Arendt never addresses, however, is the possibility of arguing next to our *Denkungsart* that is appropriate to the use of judgment and reflection. Subjecting our judgment to the public involves being willing to persuade and to be persuaded; prior to establishing a political community, however, we need to become human, perhaps like the young poet, who comes to acknowledge, after subjecting his work to the judgment of others, that his poetry is not a work of genius after all – an acknowledgment, however, that he ought to come to of his own free will:

Hence a young poet does not let himself be dissuaded from his conviction that his poem is beautiful by the judgment of the public nor that of his friends, and, if he does give them a hearing, this is not because he now judges it differently, but rather because, even if (at least in his view) the entire public has a false taste, he nevertheless (even against his judgment) finds cause to accommodate himself to the common delusion in his

⁹⁰ KU, § 56, p. 338.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*.

⁹² K. Deligiorgi, *Kant and the Culture of Enlightenment*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 90.

⁹³ KU, p. 294.

⁹⁴ The universal standpoint demands that, when expressing our judgment, we take everyone else's viewpoint into consideration. This is the broadminded mode of thought that is contrasted to the egoist. If we are to transcend our private feelings, then what is at stake is a pluralistic – not an egoistic – way of thinking. Arguing establishes this possibility.

⁹⁵ H. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1992.

desire for approval. Only later, when his power of judgment has been made more acute by practice, does he depart from his previous judgment of his own free will, just as he does with those of his judgments that rest entirely on reason. Taste makes claim merely to autonomy [meaning Heautonomy].⁹⁶

8. Concluding remarks

What I have tried to show is how reflection prescribes a law to the subject that allows him or her to appropriate the world, to make sense of it. To make sense of the world, however, the subject needs to reflect under the maxims of common sense, thus disclosing the sense of the world as communal. In other words, if one is to become human, one needs to exercise judgment; this is what the meaning of self-education entails, after all.

Exercising one's judgment involves reflecting on the sense of things, such as beauty, justice and truth, under the maxims of common sense. What I have tried to show, however, is that exercising one's judgment involves being able to argue about notions – such as beauty, government, education – that, as ideas or ideals, elude definite answers. As ideas or ideals, they are perfections that guide our worldly conduct, although they are – and must remain – unrealizable. These ideas reveal a fundamental hope, that of coming to agreement. What they establish, however, is the possibility of dissensus, as the means of striving to fulfill our hope for agreement. This striving ultimately discloses the meaning of freedom: “For whatever might be the highest degree of perfection at which humanity must stop, and however great a gulf must remain between the idea and its execution, no one can or should try to determine this, just because it is freedom that can go beyond every proposed boundary”.⁹⁷

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⁹⁶ KU, p. 282.

⁹⁷ KrV, B, p. 374. – I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of this paper whose comments helped – I hope – clarify some points. I am, of course, responsible for any oversights, mistakes or ambiguities.

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