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## Kant's Postmodern Aesthetics

Dealing with a topic as incongruous as *Kant and postmodern aesthetics*<sup>1</sup> would seem to presuppose a double knowledge of two almost incompatible objects of study, as well as a peculiar skill for combining them, even if their confrontation can and should shed new light on or offer deeper comprehension of their nature, significance or function. On the one hand, we have *postmodern aesthetics*, an ensemble of recent ideas about art, a trend characterized by stylistic pluralism, appropriation, eclecticism, blurring of oppositions (for example between high and low art), playfulness, fragmentation, ephemerality, critique of unity, universality, autonomy, purity, authority, etc., in literature and architecture first, starting already in the 1950s, then expanding into philosophy, namely in so-called French poststructuralism, with figures like Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze or Lyotard, and so on. And on the other hand: a more ancient aesthetics, the well established theory of an XVIIIth-century or Enlightenment philosopher, with emphasis on form, universality, autonomy and disinterestedness of aesthetic experience, on the fine arts, and in general on old values of truth, reason and progress. Between them, between these two seemingly disparate domains of thought and culture, there may still be links, relationships, and connexions waiting to be recognized, revealed or emphasized. If this were the case, I would now be proposing yet another chapter of the history of contemporary aesthetics. But the historiography of aesthetics cannot be reduced easily to such traditional schemes of knowledge and research, it is not just a chapter in the history of ideas. In other terms, I will not tell you what needs to be known about the announced topic, but, as a philosopher, will try to share a few reflexions, not about Kant and postmodern aesthetics, as though we already knew both what they are and mean, but rather in search of Kant, of aesthetics, and of the

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<sup>1</sup> A first version of this work in progress was presented at the CRPLA (Centre for Research in Philosophy, Literature and The Arts) Seminar of the University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom in October 2019. Its announced topic and title was *Kant and Postmodern Aesthetics*.

postmodern. Perhaps this would have been a more appropriate, but admittedly more awkward title.

Let us begin with the search for the postmodern. The term seems to have appeared just after the second World War to characterize a new style in architecture, then, little by little, from postmodernism as an artistic movement to Jean-François Lyotard's *La condition postmoderne* (of 1979 – *The Postmodern Condition*, published in English in 1984), it invaded most domains of culture to become an epochal concept. Postmodernity has become the age in which we live. Of course, time moves so fast that some have already announced the end of postmodernity and the replacement of postmodernism with... post-postmodernism, or post-truth, or altermodernism, metamodernism, post-humanism, etc. But all these new formulations retain an attachment to the prefix *post* and to modernity, as if they were unable to detach themselves from the postmodern they seek to reject, just as the word postmodern refers always to modernity. Whether postmodernism as a movement and manifesto is deemed dead or not, we still live in *post* as well as in *modern* times, even if these times may only be specters of modernity. After modernity there is, still, post-modernity; after postmodernity there is, still, post-postmodernity, and so on. A new quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns (*des Anciens et des Modernes*) seems now absolutely impossible: becoming *post*, succeeding themselves, the Moderns will never become ancient.

To think the postmodern, we thus need to understand what modernity is, and what *post* means, how and if there can be something after modernity. When I was a student, which, in the scale of history, is rather recent, history, i. e. the teaching of history was divided in three or four main periods: antiquity, the middle ages, modern history, and contemporary history. Contemporary history meant the twentieth century, but only until the end of WWII, so it was just in fact the end of modern history. There was of course no mention of a possible postmodernity, in which we had nevertheless begun to live. Modern history was supposed to begin after the Middle Ages, thus with the Renaissance, but since the emphasis was mostly on French history, it started in fact with the XVIIth century, if not in 1789 with the French revolution: it was the period of the construction of the French modern state. At the

time I began studying philosophy, things were even simpler: there were ancient philosophers, from the Presocratics to the Roman Stoics, medieval and Renaissance philosophy almost did not exist, and modern philosophy started with Descartes and ended with marxism or phenomenology. Only in unusual institutions like the Ecole Normale Supérieure or the Collège de France, where the traditional curriculum was not followed, could one be exposed to postmodern philosophy: these were the places where Derrida, Lyotard, Serres, Deleuze, Foucault or Barthes taught.

Stepping back from these anecdotal peculiarities, we ought nonetheless to remember that such a periodization of history had been conceptualized, when history entered philosophy: during modern times via Hegel and then again at the dawn of postmodernity via Heidegger. Without revisiting each of the moments of the development of the Spirit, let us simply remember that the Hegelian system or the realization of Absolute Knowing, from the beginning of thought to the end of art and the evening of philosophy, from antiquity to the most recent modernity, is also the historical, that is, the dialectical movement by which substance becomes subject. And surprisingly perhaps, in spite of the numerous disagreements separating the two thinkers, Heidegger's philosophy of history leads to the same conclusion, though expressed in somewhat different terms: what characterizes modernity is that Being is no longer thought as *hypokeimenon* but as *subjectum*.

Of course, in moving from Hegel to Heidegger, we shift gears: we go from the history of reason to the history of Being, and perhaps from the history of metaphysics to various and questionable attempts to overcome metaphysics, a question we will temporarily leave open (although such a temporality is none other than that of the postmodern itself). But are we really entering a new era? Whereas Heidegger still considers Nietzsche's thinking of the will to power as the accomplishment of metaphysics in spite of Nietzsche's own appeals to an overcoming of metaphysics, one can wonder whether Heidegger himself does not call for a new epoch which his thought remains unable to move us into, merely announcing a postmodernity that is bound to remain caught within the modernity it

cannot keep from denouncing. For all these themes are already present in Heidegger's definition of modern times.

What exactly is modernity for Heidegger? It is the epoch when Being is thought mainly no longer as substance, but as subject, which constitutes what he calls the modern metaphysics of subjectivity. Its first representative, its emblem so to speak, was Descartes, but it is clear that Descartes's philosophy marked only the beginning of modernity, his *ego* was still a *res cogitans*, and he was still obsessed with truth, a truth that quickly needed to be protected from the fiction of the *malin génie* and reestablished and guaranteed by the existence of a veridical god. The main representative of what Heidegger called the modern metaphysics of subjectivity was Immanuel Kant. Contrary to Descartes, whose thought still relies on the existence of God, Kant is the philosopher who demonstrated that any demonstration of the existence of god is doomed to failure, which consequently also puts into question the very existence of truth. The passage from Descartes to Kant, the accomplishment of modern philosophy is in a way already a passage from truth to a certain post-truth, that of an empirical realism founded on transcendental idealism. We can no longer have true ideas, even clear and distinct ones, of a reality faithfully corresponding to our representation, there is no more accord, adequacy or correspondance between the intellect and the thing, as in the old Latin definition of *veritas* (truth): truth has been replaced by knowledge, and reality by objects, that is constructions of the subject. If metaphysics still aims to be a science, it will have to evolve into a science, that is renounce its claims to truth in favor of objectivity, which presupposes a certain discipline of reason, not the contemplation of the real, be it Ideas or things in themselves. In this sense Kant's critique and transcendental philosophy do represent the epitome of modernity in philosophy. Modernity only happens with and after the advent of the famous Copernican revolution.

Kant himself did not exactly coin the expression, but did use the term revolution when, in the second Preface (of 1787) of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he described his gesture as a philosopher in comparison to that of Copernicus:

“Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us. This would be just like the first thoughts of **Copernicus**, who, when he did not make good progress in the explanation of the celestial motions if he assumed that the entire celestial host revolves around the observer, tried to see if he might not have greater success if he made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest. [...]

“Now the concern of this critique of pure speculative reason consists in that attempt to transform the accepted procedure of metaphysics, undertaking an entire **revolution** according to the example of the geometers and natural scientists. It is a treatise on the method, not a system of the science itself; but it catalogs the entire outline of the science of metaphysics, both in respect of its boundaries and in respect of its entire internal structure.”<sup>2</sup>

What this famous text describes, however, if examined closely, is that the Kantian or modern revolution is in fact the reverse of a Copernican revolution. Copernicus started with a conception of the sky or cosmos centered on the observer, and had to de-center the subject (the observer) in order to explain the celestial motions: he “made the observer revolve” around the objects, and paradoxically “left the stars at rest” to explain their motions. Going from physics to metaphysics, Kant does the opposite: he inversely puts the subject in the center, “assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition” in order to make possible “an *a priori* cognition of them”, thus “undertaking an entire **revolution** according to the example of the geometers and natural scientists”. According to their example: Kant is not repeating or aping what they have done, he is imitating or reproducing their gesture (a reversal of perspective, revolutionizing their revolution itself), not following a doctrine but inventing a method, as would an artist at the genius’s school. Therefore his own

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<sup>2</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of pure reason*, translated and edited by Paul Guyer & Allen W. Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.109-113.

genius can do the reverse of what other geniuses like Copernicus have taught him. Such is the famous Copernican revolution, which is at the origin of modern – but not yet postmodern – philosophy.

The Copernican revolution is the work of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which marks the advent of modernity as the epoch of the metaphysics of subjectivity. To go beyond the modern to the postmodern, something more is needed, something which cannot be found in the first Critique, or for that matter in the second, the *Critique of Practical Reason*; this missing link between the modern and the postmodern is something that almost did not exist or survive, it is what would have to be called the aesthetic. The search for the postmodern is none other than the search for the aesthetic. Not aesthetics, or an aesthetics (a doctrine or a theory, in the plural in English or in the feminine in French), but the aesthetic (in the neutral). But this is going perhaps a little too fast...

For one could of course immediately object that there is aesthetics in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which even starts with an aesthetics (two of the three Critiques by the way begin with aesthetics). Kant does in fact introduce aesthetics in the very first paragraph of the first Critique:

“I call a science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility the **transcendental aesthetic**.<sup>\*</sup> There must therefore be such a science, which constitutes the first part of the transcendental doctrine of elements, in contrast to that which contains the principles of pure thinking, and is named transcendental logic.”<sup>3</sup>

The table of contents of the *Critique of Pure Reason* mostly follows a series of binary divisions, the first one being between a doctrine of elements and a doctrine of method. The doctrine of elements is then divided between aesthetic and logic, as is announced at the end of this first paragraph of the book. Transcendental aesthetic (in the feminine singular, without s, to match the German word *Ästhetik*) is thus Kant's name for the science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility, which in fact come down to two: space and time. The *Critique of Pure Reason* begins then with

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

sensibility, the sensible, *sensibilia* in Latin, *aisthētá* in Greek — not with *aisthētá* in general, or with sensation (*Empfindung*), but with intuition (*Anschauung*), and even pure intuitions, i. e. without the matter of sensations. It begins with space and time as the two pure forms of sensible intuition, the *aisthēton* without *aisthētá* so to speak, detached from everything that belongs to sensation, which is, let us not forget, Kant's great discovery or philosophical novelty: that there is something *a priori* not only in reason and understanding, but also in sensibility, i. e. in all faculties of the mind, the *Gemüt*. This redefinition or reconfiguration of the mind places the subject, not the object, at the center of the cognition process, ultimately solving all problems of ancient metaphysics, announcing even its end and replacement with transcendental philosophy. Pure reason needs to be submitted to the critique so that it can take into account the existence of pure representations that are nevertheless non-conceptual. Modernity as defined by the Copernican revolution finds here its first expression in the very invention of transcendental aesthetic.

Kant, however, is aware that he is naming this new science with an admittedly modern or recent word, but one which he did not invent and whose connotations may be misleading, and therefore he immediately adds a note, the first note, again, of the first *Critique*:

“\* The Germans are the only ones who now employ the word "aesthetics" to designate that which others call the critique of taste. The ground for this is a failed hope, held by the excellent analyst Baumgarten, of bringing the critical estimation of the beautiful under principles of reason, and elevating its rules to a science. But this effort is futile. For the putative rules or criteria are merely empirical as far as their sources are concerned, and can therefore never serve as *a priori* rules according to which our judgment of taste must be directed, rather the latter constitutes the genuine touchstone of the correctness of the former. For this reason it is advisable again to desist from the use of this term and to save it for that doctrine which is true science (whereby one would come closer to the language and the sense of the ancients, among whom the division of cognition into *áistheta kai noeta* was very well known).”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

What is suggested at the end of the note is paradoxically that the word or the thing may be older than initially thought. By using the term *Ästhetik* as he does in the Critique, Kant would remain more faithful, closer to the ancients, to Aristotle in particular, who makes the distinction between *aístheta* and *noetá*, (“existing things are either sensibles or understandable”), in his *De Anima* III, 8, 431 b 22. Yet the note (as well as the Aristotelian context) suggests that he did not find it directly in Aristotle, but more likely in Baumgarten, “the excellent analyst” to whom he pays an emphatic homage. Kant is no more playing here the Ancients against the Moderns than he is lambasting Baumgarten for his wrong use of the word “aesthetics” or the Germans for not doing like the French who speak of critique of taste instead of aesthetics (which does not exist at all for example in Diderot’s and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*). On the contrary, Kant wants to “save” the term for a “true science”, because as a German he still nourishes the hope shared by Baumgarten of some kind of rational discourse on the beautiful. Yet he calls it a “failed hope”, *eine verfehlte Hoffnung*, also translated as an “abortive attempt”<sup>5</sup>, and a futile or vain effort. As a science of taste and of the beautiful, aesthetics is doomed to failure, it may and should be allowed to fade, wilt, wither and die of its own death (*eingehen lassen*), like the cut tulip of the third Critique (remember Derrida’s analysis of the “without of the pure cut”, *le sans de la coupure pure*). Kant is very exactly describing in this initial note the fate of the aesthetic, its inescapable tendency, and why, like Baumgarten and the Germans, in 1781, and still in 1787, he is modern, why his philosophical work personifies modernity even as it announces the postmodern. Three years later, in 1790, he will publish his third Critique, whose first paragraph will be entitled: *The judgement of taste is aesthetic*.

What happened during this three-year interval, we may never know exactly, but it is the time it took postmodernity to be born from modernity, or aesthetics to experiment a new abortive attempt, followed in the same book by a series of other rebirths and failed hopes. Put differently, there is no such thing as aesthetics as a science of the beautiful, as a discipline that would have been invented in the XVIIIth century by Baumgarten or Kant. For we cannot establish precisely its date of birth.

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<sup>5</sup> See A21/B 35f, trans. Norman Kemp Smith.

Is it 1735, date of Baumgarten's thesis (his *Philosophical Meditations on some things pertinent to the poem*, or *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus*, also translated in English under the title *Reflections on Poetry*), where aesthetic appears in the next-to-last paragraph and only as an adjective? 1750, date of his *Aesthetica*, followed by a second volume in 1758? Or 1790, date of publication of the *Critique of Judgement*? These dates of birth are at one and the same time dates of rebirths and abortions. From its advent, aesthetics is essentially, irreducibly plural.

Again, let us take a step back. The ancients' "division of cognition into *áistheta kai noeta*" was merely a point of departure. If "existing things are either sensibles or understandable", all their effort has been to make the sensible understandable, to transform the *aístheta* into *noeta*, which the modern metaphysics of subjectivity will treat as objects of knowledge. Such a transformation went as far as to take the extreme form of a brutal exclusion of the *aístheta*, in a tradition that goes from Parmenides ("For it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be") to platonism and neoplatonism, in its reduction of everything to the One. Opposed to such extremism, Aristotle tried to include the *aístheta* into the *noeta*, developing a theory of substance (*hypokeimonon*) in order to account for (*rendre raison*) sensible phenomena or appearances. This accounting for the sensible evolved into modern reason while the substance became subject, a metamorphosis accomplished with Kant's Copernican revolution. However, accounting for the sensible is not quite thinking the sensible, it is always already reducing it to some kind of intelligibility which allows it to be known, and not completely ignored or forbidden in the pure domain of thought, itself reduced to the unity of a principle. Even after having rejected appearances and expelled the poets from the Republic, Plato still faced the problem of the multiplicity of Ideas which he had to do away with by imposing the unique Idea of the Good, disqualifying at the same time ontology in favor of henology, but making it even more impossible to account for the sensible. Aristotle, on the contrary, did tackle the problem of the multiple, recognizing that "existing things are either sensibles or understandable" or, in other terms, that "being is said in many ways", hence the plurality of categories, which cannot be reduced to one.

His efforts did not lead to a proper aesthetics, but at least opened a way toward a more effective accounting of the sensible.

Modernity inherited the problem of the multiple which the ancients never successfully resolved. The Copernican revolution solved so many metaphysical problems that Kant's *Critique* can rightly be considered as marking the end of metaphysics, but it still copes with the irreducibility of the multiple as opposed to the unity of science and knowledge. The subject may have replaced substance at the core of the modern conception of the world, but it is no longer simply a subject, sub-jected to appearances or subject of knowledge, it is now thought in terms of synthesis, at all levels. It is now a *will* to synthesis, to use a term that will have a future in modernity (with Schopenhauer or Nietzsche). Synthesis does not only mean putting together, but bringing the various or the manifold to the unity of a form, a scheme, a rule, a concept, a law, a principle, an idea, a theory or a system — all terms which more or less sum up the successive parts of Kant's first *Critique*. But all these ways of synthesizing the multiple continue to escape the complete synthesis of a system, which in Kant remains an Idea, never to be realized. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel will try in their own ways to deduct, one from the other, each of the elements of transcendental philosophy in order to generate a perfect and finished system (that of subjective, objective, and absolute idealism, respectively), they will try to put the final touches on modernity, thus remaining Moderns. On the contrary, Kant's thought retains some unfinished or incomplete aspect that Heidegger will interpret as its finitude, as a thinking of finitude, insofar as the Kantian subject cannot be reduced to one concept or Idea, not even to the famous « original » or rather « originally synthetic unity of apperception » of transcendental deduction, but remains a collection of frames, a multiplicity of structures, a juxtaposition of elements, pure certainly, but sensible as well as intelligible (like the table of the categories of understanding). Even if a system of the Ideas of reason could be constructed from that table of categories it would not exhaust subjectivity, since Kant introduced the sensible into the subject itself. Building a system of pure reason would mean renouncing transcendental aesthetic, and the very idea of a critique, whose first elements are precisely aesthetic. One could go as far as saying that the unfinished structure of the *Critique of Pure Reason* already expresses

something of the finality without end which will become one of the main characteristics of aesthetic judgement in the third Critique.

Again, the faculty of synthesis, of bringing the multiple to a certain unity, which defines the modern subject, begins with the aesthetic, but it cannot continue in that vein, since it would too quickly lose again the sensible by reducing it to the intelligible. To continue along that route, paradoxically, multiplying syntheses to reach the maximum of unity (and of understanding, comprehension or systematization) would mean definitely renouncing any thinking of the sensible, any aesthetic. The movement or tendency toward global synthesis needs to be interrupted as soon as possible if philosophy does not want to lose sight of its object or forget its purpose, its main *raison d'être*. Now this interruption is the very definition of the aesthetic, not a failure or an abortion, but the very condition of possibility of a thinking of the sensible and of the multiple: not the submission to a more and more restrictive unification, homogenization and final reduction to the one, but the multiplication of the attempts, rebirths or reopenings of territories invaded for too long by the will to knowledge and the imperialism of the concept. Therefore Kant was not only *not* criticizing Baumgarten for his failure, but was constrained to make another attempt, several attempts in fact, at aesthetics in a new Critique, which he named *Critique of Judgement*.

It is of course to this work that most postmodern theorists refer when they recognize their debt to Kant, in particular to his theory of the sublime, which has become one of the main categories of the postmodern, almost its banner, its *signe de ralliement*. I have tried elsewhere to show, with Lyotard for example, that the reflexion on the sublime does not exclude and in fact hides or is necessarily accompanied by a return to the beautiful or to the initially aesthetic in Kant's work. Putting too much emphasis on the sublime is also risking to forget too quickly the aesthetic, which is at the origin of the postmodern, and to miss the articulation of the modern and the postmodern within Kant's thought. It is with a few words on this articulation that I will conclude these unfinished reflections.

To refer to Kant's theory of the sublime without respect to its context and as almost the only part of his work that from a postmodern perspective deserves to be saved amounts to a similar kind of ignorance of the text to that of traditional Kantians who overvalue the first two Critiques and thus consider the third one as a marginal work, whose only purpose is to solve problems raised by the first two, or simply to extend their domains of application. I am of course thinking here of the interpretation according to which the sole purpose of aesthetics and teleology is to provide a bridge or bridges across abysses, the main one being that which separates the domain of nature from the domain of freedom, knowledge and science from morality, politics and action in general, theoretical from practical philosophy. Aesthetics becomes then no more than a supplement or a superfluous appendix to a doctrine in which it is destined to lose its place because deemed fundamentally non-essential.

I have attempted to show on the contrary that the aesthetic is in fact the point of departure of Kant's entire critical enterprise, that it is what makes him the first modern philosopher, as well as the first postmodern philosopher, insofar as the third Critique begins with another attempt at aesthetics, which he will have to revive several times, until little by little he is forced to allow it to wilt and die. Postmodern thinkers have on the whole imitated Kant's philosophical gesture when they tried to develop an aesthetics or rather to think the aesthetic or the multiple from a postmodern perspective, as I have analyzed in the course of recent seminars dedicated to texts by Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Bernard Stiegler and Jacques Rancière, among others.

Reading Kant is time-consuming, and I have already spent perhaps too much time on the beginning of the first *Critique*. The third *Critique* requires even more attention since considerably more passages in it try to think and rethink the aesthetic, beginning with the very first paragraph, or even the first sentence, arguably the most important one of the whole book.

“In order to decide whether or not something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition, but rather

relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste is therefore not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground **cannot be other than subjective**. Any relation of representations, however, even that of sensations, can be objective (in which case it signifies what is real in an empirical representation); but not the relation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated, but in which the subject feels itself as it is affected by the representation.”<sup>6</sup>

The analysis of the beautiful, of the judgement of taste, is even more focussed on the subject than the analysis of knowledge and sensibility at the beginning of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: it starts in fact with the paradoxical affirmation of a judgment that relates representation only to the subject, whereas a representation (*Vorstellung*) is always supposed to be the representation of an object for a subject. How can that be possible? The first Critique established that there can be no objectivity without subjectivity, that all knowledge is the construction of a subject: this constituted its modernity. We are in the third Critique exposed to something else: judgments or representations without objects, which designate nothing, are only related to a subject which is affected by them without knowing anything about them, and feels only itself. But such a subject without object can therefore no longer be a subject. The analytic of the beautiful will decompose (deconstruct, analyze) it into faculties, which, unable to create new syntheses, can now begin playing with one another — a play, or movement, that will become the new definition of the aesthetic.

We have reached here the point where extreme modernity suddenly flips into postmodernity: within three years Kant has gone from a central subject (founding the objectivity of knowledge) to the mere subject, freed from the will to synthesis which seemed to be its nature, a subject without object, thus also without subject: from the metaphysics of subjectivity to an aesthetics of the post-subject, for lack of

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<sup>6</sup> Kant, Immanuel. "First Section, First Book: Analytic of the Beautiful." *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Ed. Paul Guyer. Trans. Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000, p. 89.

a better term, of the play of faculties instead of the domination of one faculty over another (which the sublime usually cannot avoid). But since it is so difficult, in fact almost impossible to maintain such a position, to resist the pressure of metaphysics over time, the aesthetic element will inevitably start to fade away, except when Kant succeeds in giving it new life by adding a new moment or a new fresh reflexion. The plural is again the only appropriate form: the third *Critique* does not constitute Kant's aesthetics or aesthetic doctrine (feminine singular), but offers Kant's series of ceaseless attempts at regenerating the aesthetic or *æsthetica* (plural neutral). In their resistance to the modern metaphysical tendency towards subjectivity and systematicity, his *æsthetica* are resolutely postmodern.

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