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THE IMPLICIT COSMOPOLITANISM OF JUDGMENTS OF TASTE

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The roots of Kant's theory of cosmopolitanism in his practical philosophy is well-known.[1] The following considerations attempt to specifiy some of the notions and arguments on the potential of Kant's aesthetics for political theory. Certain elements of Kant's theory of judgments of taste indicate either the possibility of a political philosophy that fundamentally emerges from this particular aesthetics, or at least a set of thoughts which harmonize with Kant's cosmopolitanism as his finalized political theory. (One of the earliest – though not accurate[2] – interpreters of Kant's critique of taste as a work of political ideas (and ideals) on the universal human anthropology of mankind was Friedrich Schiller, especially in his work, *The Aesthetic Education of Mankind in a Series of Letters*, published in 1795. Thus the challenge to identify any systematic relationship between Kant's aesthetics and

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his political thinking had been on the agenda almost since as early as he was still alive.) The common thesis (if any) of those interpretations which attempt to identify such elements is that there is a clear relationship between Kant's critique of taste on the one hand and his works in which his political theory is explicit on the other.[3] I consider that beyond the controversies concerning this hypothesis, the moral/anthropological unity of mankind that Kant postulates in his cosmopolitanism is present in indeed his critique of judgments of taste.

There are two major types of such thought elements: the teleology of nature of which human realization is supposed to be the cosmopolitan existence as well as the idea of community as put forward in Kant's critique of taste in which the constitutive moments of judgments of taste entail a model of coping with the possible judgment of other people as well. With regard to teleology it is the concept of "purpose", in case of judgments of taste it is the concept of "*sensus communis*", "reflective judgment" and "enlarged mind" that have been considered as conceptual links between Kant's ideas of political philosophy and his aesthetics.

In paragraph 5 of *The Critique of Judgment,* we learn that "taste is the faculty for estimating an object or manner of representation through a delight or displeasure 'without any interest'"[4] In paragraph 40 he defines taste as "a kind of '*sensus communis*'".[5] He defines judgments of taste as judgments which refer to the "free play" between imagination and understanding:[6] "The cognitive powers brought into play by this representation are here engaged in a free play, since no definite concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition."[7] The free play occurs in this spontaneous organization of the sensual material into an intellectual form. This is the form of the subjective purposefulness that we discover in the free play of our own mental faculties while perceiving the object to be

judged in terms of its beauty or ugliness. The inner principle of this organization offers to the experience a closed teleology. This is what Kant calls as "purpose without purpose". Kant claims that it is the purposefulness as a heuristic principle of nature that we necessarily postulate in order to subsume the manifoldness we perceive under the laws of understanding, which in turn link our concept of nature to our concept of freedom, as the final purpose in nature. As a matter of fact the experience of the beautiful is the experience of the unique way in which the experienced object displays the presence of such a "purpose without purpose".

We learn from paragraph 31 ("Deduction of pure aesthetic judgments") that judgments of taste are both generally valid and generally un-coercive. This means that despite its general validity, a judgment of taste does not necessarily imply general agreement. This twofoldness of the individual and public element in the validation of judgments of taste has provoked controversies.[8] The problem is the logical tension between the individual character of judgments of taste on the one hand and the a priori foundation of their collective validity on the other.[9] Therefore what needs to be explained is how is it possible that something pleases merely in the act of judging, without sense perception and without a concept, being able at the same time as an individual judgment to rely on a rule of delight that can be generally valid.

The general validity in question cannot be based either upon how other people judge, or be deduced from concepts. Kant's specifies the following characteristics of these judgments: they are of **1.** a priori general validity which is not a logical generality based upon concepts but the appropriateness of the individual judgment to be generally valid; **2.** necessity which does not depend on a priori grounds upon which the delight in judgments of taste presupposed in everyone could also be

claimed from everyone; **3.** disinterestedness - the requirement which specifies the basic condition of the "purity" of such judgments, their independence of any kind of interest in the mere existence of the experienced object; **4.** communicability which – similarly to general validity – is not, an empirical requirement, but one that refers to the appropriateness of judgments of taste to be communicable. The reason why we can share our preferences in matters of taste with others (we can communicate them) is due to their partial conceptual character that is to say their relatedness to understanding. Latzel considers that in Kant's interpretation judgments of taste demand for recognition from anybody as true claims. Latzel argues that this requirement relies on Kant's assumption that there is something which all men share: understanding.[10] The public character of individual judgments of taste understood in this way opens up the relevance of this aesthetics for political theory. Paragraph 40 deserves special attention in this respect.

Paragraph 40 offers crucial definitions and clarifications concerning the notion of taste and "*sensus communis*":

> However, by the name 'sensus communis' is to be understood the idea of a 'public sense', i. e. a critical faculty which in its reflective act takes account (a priori) of the mode of representation of every one else, in order, 'as it were', to weigh its judgment with the collective reason of mankind, and thereby avoid the illusion arising from subjective and personal conditions which could readily be taken for objective, an illusion that would exert a prejudicial influence upon its judgment.[11]

The idea of a "public sense" is further clarified as follows:

> This is accomplished by weighing the judgment, not so much with actual, as rather with the merely possible, judgments of

> others, and by putting ourselves in the position of every one else, as the result of a mere abstraction from the limitations which contingently affect our own estimate.

The passage is a clear explication of the hypothetical, "distanced" nature of judgments of taste that is to say, their non-sociological, indirect way of taking other people's possible judgment into consideration. It is precisely "the collective reason of mankind" that has to be considered rather, than the contingent, subjective individual judgment of the other person. Therefore it is the mere fact of the subjectivity of the other person (as well as one's own) that has to be taken into consideration rather than the actual content of each subjective perspective.

The general requirement of taking the judgment of the other person into account is distinct and superior to just being influenced by the actual judgment of the other person. Kant puts forward at this point a philosophical model which postulates the fact of the presence of the others. Accordingly the judgment the individual anticipates from the others is not supposed to be an actual judgment but a possible one. The passage further teaches us that by having in mind "the collective reason of mankind" while judging, we can eliminate the lasting effect of the contingency of our momentary condition; and Kant adds something interesting, namely that in fact we eliminate the "illusion" of taking the influence generated by our subjective condition as something objectively valid.

The paragraph indicates the possibility of a broadly understood judging that potentially links aesthetic, moral and political judging to "*sensus communis*". The transfer lies where Kant explains how the process of self-restriction through which we can get rid of our contingent, particular determinacy is actually carried out: "This is accomplished by weighing the judgment, not so much with actual, as rather with the merely possible, judgments of others, and by putting

ourselves in the position of every one else, as the result of a mere abstraction from the limitations which contingently affect our own estimate."

It is the second part of this passage that Hannah Arendt links to the notion of imagination, as the act through which we can make present something that what is absent. A further element that Arendt explores in her reconstruction of Kant's aesthetics as an implicit political philosophy, is the main idea of this passage namely the requirement of the reversed perspective. It is this reversed perspective that finally links the epistemological description of the mechanism of "sensus communis" to its normative aspect which gradually develops into the final link between the meaning of judging as aesthetic, moral and political judging.

The a priori uniformity of the act of judging serves as the transcendental ground for the social validity and "communicability" of the judgments of taste. In Kant's system aesthetics or more precisely the aesthetic phenomena appear to be the bridge between nature and freedom.[12] The possibility of a general cosmopolitan existence is deeply present in the spirit of the third *Critique*.[13] One could even argue that, as a matter of fact the aesthetic spectator and the political spectator ("Weltbetrachter") from the same ideal of world-community. The image of such a final development of history which is supposed to the fulfilled state of moral maturity ("Mündigkeit") appears in Kant's hopes, also as an ethical community – as the final end of nature. The idea of the final end of nature is in turn part of the aesthetics which is implicit in the teleology of the world.

Höffe highlights that the human development from nature to morality and finally toward culture is systematically placed within the entire system of teleology, and he especially refers in this respect to paragraphs 83 and 84 in which Kant, by the

end of his elaboration of the teleological judging returns to morality as the final development of the entire teleological world order.[14] But even though the "teleologia rationis humanae" by showing the place for human autonomy within nature bridges the gap between nature and freedom, it is still a question, whether the causal order of nature satisfies the purpose of morality. The problem of the discrepancy between culture and morality is the line of thought along which Ricouer engages into discussing the task of teleology and its relevance for Kant's political thinking.

Ricouer's contribution to the understanding of Kant's notion of teleology is the analysis of its overlapping meaning between Kant's aesthetics, his philosophy of history and the implicit political thought this notion entails. It is in this last respect that Ricouer takes a look on Arendt's incomplete interpretation of Kant's aesthetics as an implicit political philosophy. Ricouer's starting point is the relationship between aesthetic and historical teleology. He claims that Kant's political philosophy is much more elaborated in his philosophy of history than anywhere else. He extends Kant's conception of teleology into the direction of a theory of political judgment as he calls it.[15] In the end Ricouer comes up with an examination of Kant's notion of teleology on three pillars: aesthetics, philosophy of history and political philosophy. He identifies a certain notions which form a bridge between Kant's aesthetics and Kant's political philosophy.

Ricouer identifies the examplarity as the first link between aesthetics and political judgment. In his explanation the retrospective nature of exemplarity gives a prophetic perspective to "reflective judgment" for aesthetics and hope in history. The reason for this is that exemplarity runs against natural finality. And although there seems to be a tension between the visionary stance of historical teleology and the retrospective stance of reflection in aesthetic judgment Ricouer claims

that the solution lies in the hope embedded in the particular example. This is the critical distancing inherent in "reflective judgment". Accordingly the lesson we obtain from works of art as well as from historical events is only conceivable because of the examples. Ricouer observes that "disinterestedness" and "communicability" go together in the third *Critique* and constitute the "enlarged mind" in paragraph 40 and the final realization of the "enlarged mind" is the cosmopolitan point of view – the merge of the aesthetic and the political spectator. His concluding idea is based on a quote from the eights thesis of the *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* which reflects Kant's all-embracing vision of teleology: the hope that finally a universal cosmopolitan condition will emerge. Ricouer's conclusion is that the teleological and the aesthetic judgment ally in an unwritten political philosophy. This could even be read as the final conclusion never written by Arendt.

Arendt identifies the following topics of *The Critique of Judgment* as significant for political theory:

> … the particular, whether a fact of nature or an event in history; the faculty of judgment as the faculty of man's mind to deal with it; sociability of man as the condition of the functioning of this faculty, that is, the insight that men are dependent on their fellow men not only because of their having a body and physical needs but precisely for their mental faculties - these topics, all of them the eminent political significance - that is, important for the political - were concerns of Kant long before he finally, after finishing the critical business (*das kritische Geschäft*), turned to them when he was old.[16]

The leading step in her interpretation of the relationship between the aesthetic and the political realm in the third *Critique* is to consider judgment as a distinct capacity of the

mind. Arendt clarifies her claim by highlighting the fact that we don't arrive to judgments as results of logical inferences.[17] For instance, by judging something as beautiful, our mind doesn't operate in the same way, as by inferring from the premises that all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, hence Socrates is mortal. In her interpretation of judgment Arendt points out, that the epistemological background of the term as it appears in the third *Critique* relies on the distinction Kant makes in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: "subsuming under a concept" and "bringing to a concept". This distinction is equivalent to the one made in the third *Critique* between *determinant judgment* and *reflective judgment*. Contrary to *determinant judgment* which subsumes the particular under the general rule, *reflective judgment* derives the rule from the particular.

"Judging" was meant to be the title of the third chapter of Hannah Arendt's volume *The Life of the Mind* which due to her sudden death had remained unfinished.[18] Therefore regarding her fundamental ideas on the relationship between aesthetics and politics in Kant's third *Critique* the posterity can only rely on her unfinished book, as well as on her lectures on Kant's political philosophy, which were supposed to be parts of the completed book. Arendt highlights that the main topic of the third *Critique* is *reflective judgment*. This idea is crucial for her argument on the third *Critique* as Kant's book in political philosophy.

The most comprehensive source left as a testimony regarding Arendt's reading of Kant is the volume published in 1982, which collects her lectures delivered in 1964 at the University of Chicago, as well as in 1965, 66 and 70 at the New School for Social Research. The second most important source of reconstruction is the unfinished volume *The Life of the Mind*, of which third, finally unwritten part was entitled *Judgment*. There is a widespread view that this last part of the

book was supposed to become the final development of her understanding of the relationship between the aesthetic and the political dimension of Kant's philosophy. It is especially the closing chapter of the first part entitled *Postscriptum* which offers clues to grasp how Arendt had conceived the reconstruction of this relationship meant to be developed in the last part of the volume.[19] In her reconstruction of the relationship between the political and the aesthetic phenomena Arendt mainly relies on *The Critique of Judgment*. It was first in 1961 when she stated in an article entitled *Freedom and Politics*, that *The Critique of Judgment* carries the seeds of a political philosophy on grounds, which are different from the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

Curtis highlights that the leading element in Arendt's inquiry concerning the relationship between the category of the beautiful and the political sphere is the concept of the public. According to this neither the concept of the beautiful, nor that of the political can be meaningful without two major aspects of thinking: the relationship to others as expressed by the Kantian idea of the *enlarged mind* that is to say, the human attempt to situate oneself into the perspective of the other; and the act of judgment on what is good, evil, beautiful, and ugly.

Beiner points out, that the relationship between aesthetics and politics in *The Critique of Judgment*, as well as in Arendt's interpretation of it, can be further decomposed into the triadic relationship between the aesthetic, the ethical and the political realms, because as a matter of fact, the role taste plays in Kant is of moral nature. Beiner argues that through the concepts of communication, intersubjective approval and common taste, Arendt identifies the possibility to fill the gap caused by the inexistence of any kind of objective morality, in the moral function of taste.[20] This function is made possible by the fact that judgments of taste are individual and intersubjective at the same time. A similar path is taken by Kristeva by her consideration

that in its Kantian context Arendt's approach on judgment is mainly based upon her idea of plurality.[21] It is the spectator who sees the whole scene, and whose position is fundamentally impartial, because he is not involved in the actual events. The actor's goal is to achieve the good opinion (*doxa*) of the spectator. The fact that the public sphere is made up by the spectators follows from their permanently being judged by each other in their individual judgments: the spectators are in the meantime potential spectators of each other. This state of mutual experience is what gives birth to *common sense*, as opposed to the *private sense* – egotism, which also appears in Kant as insanity, the loss of common sense which means the loss of the capability to judge as spectators. Socrates' neighbor referred to by Arendt expresses the destiny of the thinking man to be always together with somebody: with the neighbor, who is his own consciousness. The cognitive fact of the inherent plurality of the thinking man is the genuine model of plurality as such, to cope with each other's existence. According to Nordmann's interpretation on the implicit political role of imagination in Arendt's Kant-reception, the experiment of situating oneself into the perspective of the other one is the fundamental model of dialogue.[22]

Arendt has been criticized first of all for her apparent aestheticization of politics.[23] Some of her critics argue from the perspective of the consensual communicative politics, others argue from the perspective a conception of agonistic performative politics. Whereas the consensualists only instrumentalize Arendt for their consensual-universalist ends,[24] the other part only observes in her work the element of "agonistic subjectivity" namely, the political ideal of distinctness, that of particularity, as against to the political environment of the homogenizing rule. Mary Dietz questions Arendt's political theory in its aesthetic dimension. Criticizing Arendt for the aestheticism

and sentimentalism of her theory, Dietz points put, that since Arendt does not elaborate an action-coordinating theory, she doesn't supply applicable answers to the potential question of "what is to be done" in politics.[25] Further charges questioned the clarity of her elaboration of the relationship between individual expression and dialogue,[26] as well with the neglect of Kant's theory of right as an established element of political theory in his works.[27] Beyond the controversial answers to the quest for the elements of Kant's political thinking in his aesthetics, a minimalist approach could possibly state that the critique of judgments of taste would be inconceivable without the same teleology of which final realization is the cosmopolitan state and without the anthropological vision of a society of moral adults capable of "enlarged mentality".

NOTES

1 Costas Douzinas: *Human Rights and Empire. The political philosophy of cosmopolitanism*, Routledge-Cavendish, Abingdon, UK, 2007. p. 160.

2 Paul Guyer: "The dialectic of disinterestedness: II. Kant and Schiller on interest in disinterestedness", in *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992. p. 120-30.

3 Thomas Mertens: „Zweckmässigkeit der Natur und politische Philosophie bei Kant", in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 49, 1995. p. 220-40.

4 Immanuel Kant: *The Critique of Judgment*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992.

5 Kant: *Ibid.*: p. 150.

6 See especially paragraphs 8, 19, 34 and 35 in the third *Critique*.

7 Kant: *Ibid.*: Paragraph 9, p. 58.

8 Christel Fricke: *Kants Theorie des reinen Geschmacksurteils*, Berlin, New York, Walter De Gruyter, 1990. p. 177.

9 Wolfgang Wieland: *Urteil und Gefühl: Kants Theorie der Urteilskraft*, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, Göttingenm 2001. p. 240-57.

10 Sigbert Latzel: "Die ästhetische Vernunft", in: Klaus L. Berghahn (Ed.): *Friedrich Schiller. Zur Geschictlichkeit seines Werks*, Kronberg/Ts, 1975. p. 244.

11 Kant: *Ibid.*: p. 151.

12 Klaus Düsing: "Der Übergang von der Natur zur Freiheit und die ästhetische Bildung bei Kant", in Johannes Schurr, Karl Hein Broecken, Renate Broecken (Eds.): *Humanität und Bildung*, Georg Olms Verlag, 1988. p. 87-100

13 Julia Kristeva (Ed.): *Hannah Arendt*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2001. p. 227.

14 Otfried Höffe: *Immanuel Kant*, Beck, München, 2000. p. 273.

15 Paul Ricoeur: "Aesthetic Judgment and Political Judgment According to Hannah Arendt", in *The Just*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2000. p. 94-109.

16 Hannah Arendt: *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, p. 14.

17 *Ibid.*: p. 4.

18 Ronald Beiner: "Introduction", in Ronald Beiner (Ed.): *Hannah Arendt: Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982. p. vii-viii.

19 *Ibid.*: p. 89-156.

[20] *Ibid.*: p. 144.
[21] Kristeva: Ibid.: p. 220, 222.
[22] Ingeborg Nordmann: *Hannah Arendt*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, New York, 1994. p. 108-23.
[23] Kimberley F. Curtis: „Aesthetic Foundations of Democratic Politics in the Work of Hannah Arendt", in *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics*, Craig Calhoun and John McGowan (Eds.), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London, 1997. p. 28, 29.
[24] Jürgen Habermas: "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power", in *Social Research*, 44, 1977. p. 22-4.
[25] Curtis: *Ibid.*: p. 30.
[26] Seyla Benhabib: *Hannah Arendt. Die melankolische Denkerin der Moderne*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/Main, 2006. p. 200, 204.
[27] Birgit Recki: "Arendt nach Jerusalem", in *Merkur. Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken*, Stuttgart, Oktober, 2011.

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