

**Grundtvig Learning Partnership 2012 - 2014:
ART-AGE, Art based learning and active ageing**



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

ART-AGE SEMINAR
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Third Presentation:

Aesthetic Learning
with reference to Kants Critical Philosophy

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The background

2

Aims of our project

1. To take stock of current methods
2. To choose or develop a method
3. To test the possible method

The lack of words

An example from the Danish Folk High Schools

Examples from the field of Voluntary Arts

Possible explanations

The Zeitgeist of instrumental rationality

The main stream political agenda of the competitive state

The theoretical agenda since the 60ies – the death of the subject

Our challenge

The lack of Bildung discourses in Pedagogy– lifelong learning

The lack of Aesthetic discourses in Arts – Voluntary arts



Guidelines

The need for an aesthetic theory with reference to

- The Enlightenment and Bildung tradition (human autonomy)
- A well esteemed systematic philosophy that include the foundation of aesthetics as well as moral and science
- Modern roots for main critical philosophies in the 20th century and especially art theories.

Back to Immanuel Kant 's Critical Philosophy

The prime philosopher of modernity

- Human freedom and autonomy was pivotal (not throne, alter or tradition) *
- Differentiated knowledge in epistemic, moral and aesthetic discourses (separated domains for the truth, goodness and beautiful)

*) *“Have courage to use your own reason .. that is the motto of enlightenment”*

An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?, 1784



Kant – the modern philosopher

4

Biography:

Kant (1724 – 1804) Born and lived in Königsberg (Kaliningrad)

The bon vivant changes to a clockwork - the race against death

Bibliography:

The pre-critical phase - before 1770 (became professor finally in 1769)

The silent phase - until 1781 (he withdraws from the festivities)

The mature critical phase - from 1781 to 1790 included the three Critiques:

Kritik der reinen Vernunft (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 1781)

Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (*Critique of Practical Reason*, 1788)

Kritik der Urteilskraft (*Critique of Judgment*, 1790)

The three critiques corresponded to a differentiating of

- **Knowledge** in epistemic, moral and aesthetic discourses
- **Judgements** of the truth, goodness and beautiful

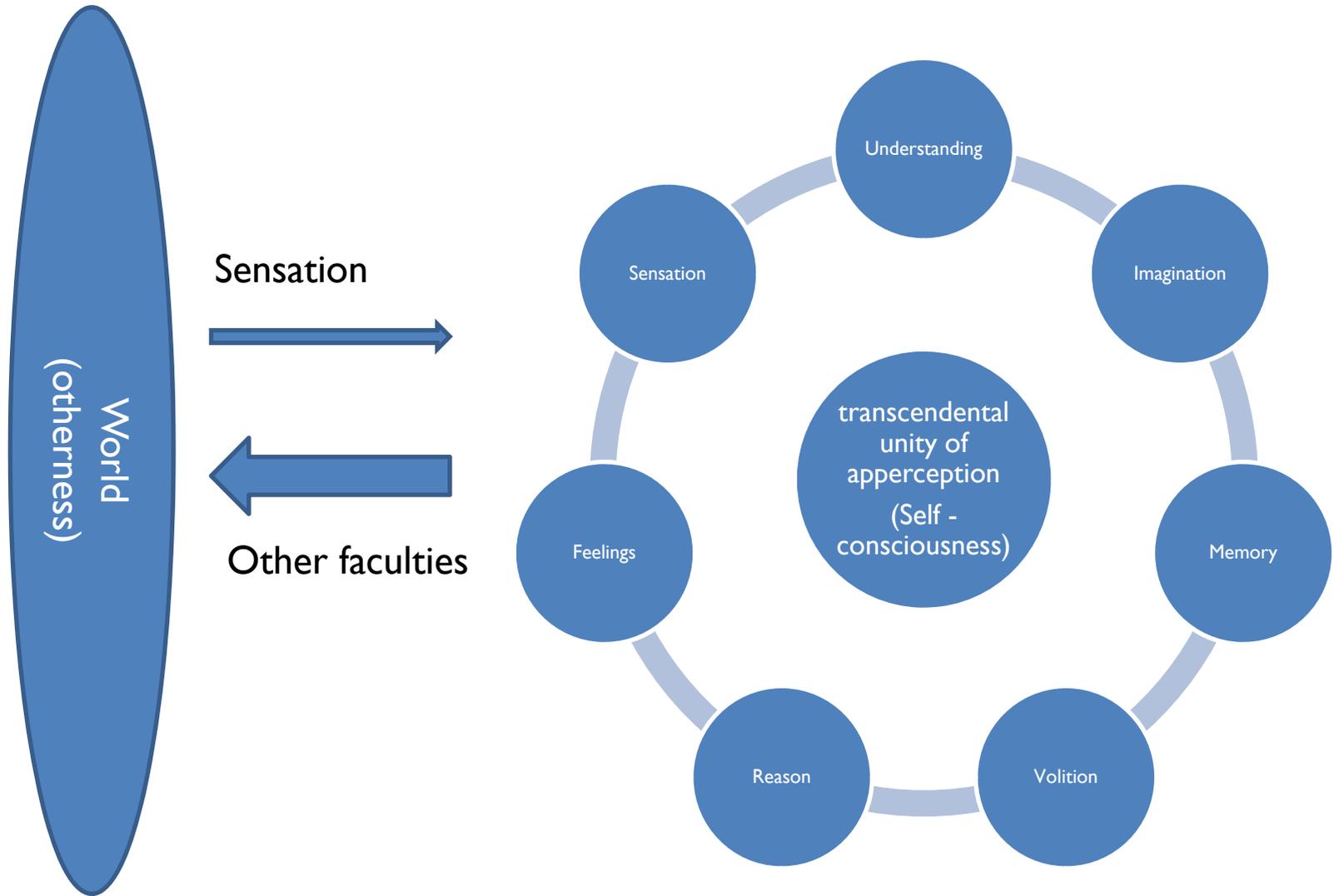
Kant's philosophy is entitled **Critical Philosophy**

(because of these titles and their critical encounter of all former philosophy)



Experience - relation world and human faculties

- our mind is programmed to process sense data



First Critique: Theoretical reason

- epistemic discourse

Kant provided a "Copernican Revolution" in epistemology:

- Placed the human subject at the center of knowledge
- The structure of our mind imposes order on our knowledge
- We cannot experience things independently of how they are for us

Our sensuous experience is structured a priori by

- Forms of Intuitions (time and space)
- Categories (twelve apriori concepts) such as causality, substance

Critical Philosophy – against dogmatic rationalism and naïve empiricism

*"Thoughts without (sense) content are empty,
(sense) intuitions without concepts are blind."*



Second Critique: Practical reason

- moral discourse

The moral law is an a priori principle of human reason.

Its foundation is freedom

- The human will is above the determinism of nature
- Humans have moral autonomy

A free will must be acting under laws that it gives to *itself*.

Categorical imperatives are such universal laws:

1. Act only according to a maxim whereby it could become a universal law ('Golden Rule': "Do not impose on others what you do not wish for yourself")
2. Act in such a way that you treat humans, never merely as a means but at the same time as an end.
3. Every rational being must act as if he were a legislating member in the universal kingdom of ends.

"Everything has either a price or a dignity. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity."

Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, 1785



Third Critique: Aesthetical Judgement

- aesthetic discourse

The Third Critique seek to solve weaknesses in the two previous critiques, which

- Lacked attention on the importance of feelings for our cognition
- Inner tension between the laws of Nature and the laws of Human Freedom

*“Two things fill the mind with ever-increasing wonder and awe, .. :
the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”*

(a third thing to mention could be our experience of Beauty in the world)

Aesthetic as mediator of nature and freedom

- We transcend the mechanistic causal framework of nature; but at the same time our relation to nature is enriched
- Here nature is a stimulus for, rather than an obstacle to, freedom (morality)
- We experience – as IF – nature express a higher order of things (our home)
- Aesthetic opens / discloses a possible moral image of the world



Experiences of Beauty

9

1. Presuppose a pure aesthetic experience

- Disinterested relation
The sunrise is beautiful – even though we cannot own it, sell it, eat it or fuck it.
It is not a mean for us to control, but an end in itself
- Presenting unity and purpose without a determinate concept or rule
Purposiveness without a purpose - an experience of generosity or surplus

2. Providing a peculiar subjective feeling of pleasure caused by

- The free play of our faculties (between sensation, imagination and understanding)
- Surplus of aesthetic attributes and ideas (open meanings)
- Reflective aesthetic process of judgements

3. Motivated by objective qualities of the art work (or art-based activity)

- Objective qualities gives more intense free play of our faculties.

4. Resulting in a judgement of taste

- This object (natural or art work) is beautiful / has aesthetic excellence
- The judgement claims universal validity and is communicable
- Because all humans share the same “Sensus Communis”



Architecture of human mind

Main capacities	Knowledge	Volition	Feelings
Domains	Natural laws (Determinate laws)	Human will (Final purpose)	Beauty & Sublimity (Purposiveness)
Our relation/ interests	Instrumental/control	Duty/freedom	Disclosure/disinterested
Discourses	Epistemic (is a fact)	Moral (ought to be)	Aesthetic (sense of beauty)
Cognitive powers	Understanding (What and How)	Reason (Why)	Taste (Pleasure)
Applied faculties	Senses & imagination serve Understanding	Imagination & feeling serve Reason	Understanding (reason), senses, imagination and feelings interact in a free harmonious play <i>NB: gives a cognitive / spiritual pleasure</i>



Basic forms of judgement

Determinate judgement	Reflective Judgement	Aesthetic reflective judgement
A universal is given by understanding or reason	Universal missing (concept, rule or law)	Universal missing (concept, rule or law)
The sensed particular (a thing, an act) is subsumed under a given universal. Reproduce a meaning	The imagination must invent a new universal for this unknown thing or act. Produce a new meaning	No final universal can be found by imagination The sensed particular express an unfinished or open unity with a multitude of meanings.
“This is a cat” “You must not lie”	“We call it an UFO”	“This is beautiful – I feel pleasure”
The understanding (or reason) use sensation and imagination as servants to find a clear (closed) meaning.		The free play between understanding and imagination create new and open meanings



Aesthetic attributes and ideas

12

Definitions of concepts, ideas and aesthetic ideas

- Understanding provides concepts that determine a sensory manifold / define an empirical identity. e.g. “a dog”, “a young girl”
- Reason provides ideas that refers to something beyond the bounds of sense intuitions, e.g. “Love”, “Spleen”
- The free play of imagination and understanding/reason provides a multitude of aesthetic attributes seeking a unity of an aesthetic idea (attunement)

The pleasures of aesthetic Idea:

- A coherent whole of an unspeakable wealth of thought without a determinate concept.
- Creating a "quickenning" of the cognitive faculties by producing a “train of thoughts” containing a "wealth of material" from the aesthetic attributes
- Prompts the imagination to spread over a multitude of kindred presentations that arouse more thought than can be determined by words.

The universality of judgement of taste

- Even though our assessment of the object’s aesthetic quality is grounded on our subjective feeling of pleasure, our judgement claims to have objective validity
- Because only objects with a high potential for aesthetic ideas can provide the feeling of pleasure (attunement of the human mind)

The non-beautiful object does not initiate aesthetic ideas

- makes the mind dull and dissatisfied with itself,
- because its aesthetic attunement to the object is contra-purposive.



Primordial significance of aesthetic experience

The primordial significance of the aesthetic experience and judgement,

- Basic cognitive capacities which are **essential to judgement *per se***, are brought into a free and mutually stimulating interaction
- Like a repetition of the **ontogenesis** of experience
(Ontogeny: development of a single organism – phylogeny: evolutionary development of the species)

An infant interacts with its environment on the basis of playful curiosity

- Searching out and exploring different patterns of relation and order
- Playing with possibilities of order in a non-determined manner
- Creating a systematic calibration of understanding and imagination
- Which enable a personal sense of reality (and self-consciousness)

Aesthetic learning *exemplifies*

- a mode of experiential free formation, which reaches back into our primordial formation as individuals
- The pleasure of aesthetic learning may be the same for infants, grown-ups and elder / re-establishing the experiential free formation.



Aesthetic as the Sundays of experiences

Paul Crowther: English philosopher, professor at University of Ireland

The Kantian Sublime: From Morality to Art, 1989

Critical Aesthetics and Postmodernism, 1993

Art and Embodiment: From Aesthetics to Self-Consciousness, 1993

Defining Art, Creating the Canon: Artistic Value in an Era of Doubt, 2007

Normal specificatory (determined) judgements - the everyday of cognition

- Is tightly directed by a relevant concept, and functions in a 'reproductive' way.
- Exist in a *discursively rigid context* involving definite concepts to definite objects
- On the basis of definite practical interests or physiological needs

Pure aesthetic (reflective) judgement – Sundays of cognition

- Brings the cognitive powers into a free play, since no definite concept restricts them
- Lets *the cognitive powers* interact in loose, experimental, explorative ways
- On the basis of an existential openness to the world (pure disinterest)

We have cognition *in the making*

- Imagination and understanding rediscover their free formative power through creating possibilities of conceptualizability.
- The very fabric and impetus of cognitive life in its primordial sense is renewed and replenished



Sense of Life – transcendence

The freedom of the aesthetic life domain
contrast the rigidity of the epistemic and moral domains.

In ordinary epistemic and moral existence,

- Our freedom is channelled into the *means* / end nexus routines of daily life
- Our existential freedom is caught up and hidden by the everyday structures

The extraordinary “disinterested” aesthetic activity

- Can be felt as a release and a renewal.
- Returns us to something fundamental, even if we cannot find words for it.
- The intrinsic and pure pleasure of the activity leads us to an intuitive sense of its having a higher significance (as gates to transcendence)

The aesthetic can be interpreted as

- both a mode of pleasure inherent in the fabric of self-consciousness itself,
- and one which (however vaguely or intuitively) discloses and deepens our sense of free-belonging to the world.
- It strengthens our feeling of life - our feeling of being at home in the world, and amongst other people.

It bridges the Gap between Nature and Freedom. It makes Life worth living.



Methodological guidelines

Quotes from the project application:

“We know that active learners in amateur culture have an important outcome, and they can also put many words on it – for example

- Pleasure, joy, passion, unity, sense of life
- Self-awareness, authenticity, autonomy, freedom,
- Elaborated interpretation register, improved communication ability, developed imagination, more distinctive emotions, better sense of moods and sensual expressions,
- Elaborated taste, improved judgement of artistic quality”

However, these many words need

First - to be explained and justified from a more systematic learning discourse (such as Kant’s aesthetic philosophy)

Second – these theoretical distinctions must be transformed to an operational documentation method for empirical research (using questionnaires or interview guides)

This presentation has tried to outline a possible approach to the first step.

