



The Parergon

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The Parergon *

JACQUES DERRIDA

translated by CRAIG OWENS

I and the position which *The Origin of the Work of Art* grants to the *Lectures on Aesthetics* ("the most comprehensive reflection on the nature of art that the West possesses")¹ can be determined only within a certain historical topography beginning with the *Critique of Judgment*. Heidegger does not mention it by name in *The Origin*, but elsewhere he defends it against Nietzsche's reading. The *Lectures* rigorously specify what is valid in speculative dialectics in general: an essential affinity with the *Critique*, the only book—book three—that it can almost immediately reflect and appropriate. The first two critiques of pure reason (speculative and practical) opened an apparently infinite gulf. The third could, would, would have to, would have to be able to bridge it: that is, to fill, to fulfill, in infinite reconciliation. "Kantian philosophy not only felt the necessity of this point of juncture (*Vereinigungspunkt*) but recognized it in a precise way, by supplying its representation."² The third *Critique* was able to identify in art (in general) one of the middle terms (*Mitten*) to resolve (*auflösen*) the "opposition" between mind and nature, internal and external phenomena, the inside and the outside, etc. Still it suffered from a lacuna, a "lack" (*Mangel*), it remained a theory of subjectivity and of judgment (an analogous reservation is expressed in the *Origin*). Confined and unilateral, the reconciliation is still not effective. The *Lectures* must supplement this lack, structured, as always, as a recurrent anticipation. Reconciliation was promised, represented in the *Critique* only as a kind of duty, a *Sollen* projected to infinity.

And so it appears.

On the one hand, Kant declares himself "neither willing nor in a position" to examine whether "common sense" (here reinterpreted as an indeterminate

* This text is a translation of section II of the four-part essay entitled "Parergon" published in *La vérité en peinture* (Paris, Flammarion, 1978), to be issued in English translation by The University of Chicago Press; parts of this text originally appeared in *Digraphe* 2 and 3 (Paris, Galilée, 1974). Unless otherwise indicated, all footnotes are by the translator.

1. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York, Harper & Row, 1971, p. 79.

2. This citation has been translated directly from Derrida's French translation of Hegel.

norm, neither conceptual nor intellectual) exists as a constitutive principle of the possibility of aesthetic experience, or whether reason, as a regulative principle, commands us to produce (*hervorbringen*) it for loftier ends.³ This common sense is constantly presupposed by the *Critique*, which nevertheless withholds analysis of it. We could demonstrate that this suspense assures the complicity of moral discourse and empirical culturalism. A permanent necessity.

On the other hand, recalling the division of philosophy and all the irreducible oppositions determined in the first two *Critiques*, Kant projects the plan of a work that will reduce the enigma of aesthetic judgment and fill a crack, a cleavage, an abyss (*Kluft*): “Albeit, then, between the realm of the natural concept, as the sensible, and the realm of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible, there is a great gulf fixed, so that it is not possible to pass from the former to the latter (by means of the theoretical employment of reason), just as if they were so many separate worlds, the first of which is powerless to exercise influence on the second: still the latter is *meant* to influence the former. . . . There must, therefore, be a ground of the *unity*. . . . ”⁴ Further on, related metaphors or analogies: we are dealing again with the immense “abyss” that separates the two worlds and the apparent impossibility of throwing a bridge (*Brücke*) from one bank to the other. To call this *analogy* is still to have said nothing. The bridge is not an analogy. The recourse to analogy, the concept and the effect of analogy are or construct the bridge itself—both in the *Critique* and in the powerful tradition to which it still belongs. The analogy of the abyss and of the bridge over the abyss is an analogy which says that we require an analogy between two absolutely heterogenous worlds, a “third” for crossing the abyss, cauterizing the gaping wound, and binding the separation. In brief, a *symbol*. The bridge is a symbol, it moves from one bank to the other, and the symbol is a bridge.

The abyss elicits analogy—the active recourse of the entire *Critique*—but analogy succumbs to the abyss as soon as a certain artfulness is required for the analogical description of the play of analogy

L to do without the abyss: not only to spare ourselves a fall into its bottomless depths by weaving and folding back the fabric to infinity, textual art of the reprise, multiplication of parts within parts; but also to establish laws of reappropriation, to formalize rules that constrain the logic of the

3. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. C. Meredith, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1952, p. 85.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

abyss and shuttle between economy *and* extravagance, resolution *and* fall, the abyssal process that necessarily strives for resolution *and* within which collapse is repeatedly produced



what then is the object of the third *Critique*? The critique of pure theoretical reason presupposes the exclusion (*Ausschliessung*) of everything that is not theoretical cognition: the affect (*Gefühl*) in its two principal aspects (pleasure/displeasure) and the power of desire (*Begehrungsvermögen*). It carves out its field by cutting itself off from the interests of desire, by becoming disinterested in desire. Since understanding alone is capable of affording constitutive principles of knowledge, the exclusion bears simultaneously upon reason, which transgresses the limits of our possible knowledge of nature. The *a priori* principles of reason, if regulative with respect to the faculty of knowledge, are constitutive with respect to the faculty of desire. Thus the critique of pure theoretical reason excludes both reason *and* desire, desire's reason and reason's desire.

What is basically in question? The base.

Understanding and reason are not two disjunct faculties; they are articulated in a specific task and a specific number of processes, precisely those which set articulation, that is, discourse, in motion. Between the two faculties, in effect, an articulate member, a third faculty comes into play. This intermediary, which Kant rightfully calls *Mittelglied*, middle articulation, is judgment (*Urteil*). But what is the nature of the *a priori* principles of the middle articulation? Are they constitutive or regulative? Do they give *a priori* rules for pleasure and displeasure? Remember that regulative principles do not allow us to distinguish a *special realm* (*eigenes Gebiet*).

Since the *Mittelglied* also constitutes the articulation of the theoretical and the practical (in the Kantian sense), we are plunged into a space which is *neither* theoretical *nor* practical, or rather *both* practical and theoretical. Art (in general) or rather the beautiful, if it takes place, is inscribed here. But this here, this place, declares itself as a place deprived of place. If it had a place, it might not have a special realm. This is not however to deprive it of jurisdiction or foundation: that which has no special realm (*Gebiet*) or field (*Feld*), a “field of objects” which

defines its “realm,” may have a “territory” and a “ground” (*Boden*) with its own “jurisdiction.”⁵

The *Mittelglied*, intermediary member, must be treated as a detachable part, a separate part (*als ein besonderer Theil*). But also as a nondetachable part, a nonseparate part, since it constitutes the articulation between two others—we might even say, anticipating Hegel, an originary part (*Ur-teil*). It is in effect a question of judgment. The same paragraph recalls that a critique of pure reason, that is, of our faculty of judging according to *a priori* principles, would be “incomplete” (*unvollständig*) if a theory of judgment, of the *Mittelglied*, “were not dealt with separately.” But immediately afterwards, in the next sentence, that in a pure philosophy the principles of judgment would not constitute a *separate* part between the theoretical and practical parts, but might be connected, *annexed* (*angeschlossen*) to either. Kant thus seems to contradict himself: it is necessary to disengage the middle member as a detachable part, but it is also necessary to re-member the whole by reconstituting the nexus, the connection, the reannexation of the part to the two major columns of the corpus. We must not forget that we are dealing with judgment (*Urteil*), the function of the copula. Does it play a detachable role, its own part, or does it work to orchestrate reason, in concert with the practical and the theoretical?

Let us examine this paragraph in the preface to the third *Critique* more closely. It involves no contradiction. The separation of the part is not prescribed and forbidden from the same point of view. Within a critique of pure reason, of our faculty of judging according to *a priori* principles, the part must be detached and examined separately. But in a pure philosophy, in a “system of pure philosophy,” everything will be reconciled. The critique detaches because it is but one moment and one part of the system. Critical suspension—the *krinein*, the between-two, the question of whether the theory of judgment is theoretical or practical, regulative or constitutive—is the procedure of the critique. But a system of pure philosophy *will have* to subsume the critique and construct a general discourse which will rationalize the detachment. This system of pure philosophy is what Kant calls metaphysics. It is not yet possible. There is as yet no possible program outside the critique.

The question of desire, of pleasure and displeasure, is therefore also that of a *detachment* (neither the word nor the concept appears as such in the *Critique*) which will determine, dismember, or re-member itself: *detachment*—separation of a member—; *detachment*—delegation of a representative; sign or symbol charged with a mission (beauty as the *symbol* of morality, problems of hypotyposis, of the trace [*Spur*], of “coded writing” [*Chiffreschrift*], of the intermittent sign [*Wink*]; cf. for example paragraphs 42 and 59)—; *detachment*—disinterest as the essence of aesthetic experience.

To speak of the relationship between two possibilities (the present possibil-

5. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

ity of the critique and that to come of metaphysics), Kant proposes a metaphor borrowed from art, which has not yet been discussed, from the technique of architecture, from the architectonic: the pure philosopher, the metaphysician, will have to proceed *like* a good architect, like a good *technites* of edification. He will be a kind of artist. He must first secure the ground, the foundation, the fundamentals. “A Critique of pure reason, i.e., of our faculty of judging on *a priori* principles, would be incomplete if the critical examination of judgement, which is a faculty of knowledge, and, as such, lays claim to independent principles, were not dealt with separately. Still, however, its principles cannot, in a system of pure philosophy, form a separate constituent part between the theoretical and practical divisions, but may when needful be annexed to one or other as occasion requires. For if such a system is some day worked out . . . the critical examination of the ground for this edifice must have been previously carried down to the very depths of the foundations of the faculty of principles independent of experience, lest in some quarter it might give way, and, sinking, inevitably bring with it the ruin of all.”⁶

The proper level of the critique: the architect of reason excavates, sounds, prepares the terrain, in search of a solid foundation, the ultimate *Grund* on which all of metaphysics may be erected, but also of roots, of the common root which branches into the light of day, yet never submits to experience. In this, the critique attempts to descend to *buthos*, to the bottom of the abyss, not knowing whether it exists.

It is still too early to examine the general function of metaphor and analogy in the third *Critique*. This function may not be simply reflected by the theory which, in the book, subsumes it and is embedded there.

We have been dealing with the first “metaphor”: beginning of the Preface (*Vorrede*). However, at the end of the Introduction (*Einleitung*) which follows, as if to frame the entire prolegomenon, we encounter the metaphor of the bridge (*Brücke*) projected over the enormous abyss (*grosse Kluft*), the artificial work which assures passage over the natural chasm. Here philosophy, which in this book must conceive art—art in general and fine art—as part of its field or its edifice, *represents* itself as a part of its part, as an art of architecture. It re-presents itself, detaches itself, dispatches an emissary, one part of itself outside itself to bind the whole, to fill up or to heal the whole which has suffered detachment. The philosophy of art presupposes an art of philosophizing—major art—but also, in its preliminary critique, a minor one, that of the architect’s edifying erection (*érection édificatrice*). And if, as will be stated later, fine art will always be an art of spirit, then *Anthropology from the Pragmatic Point of View* will be likely to delegate a German to the critic’s post: the German spirit is manifested most often in the root, the Italian in the crown of leaves, the French in the flower, and the English in the fruit. Thus, if this pure philosophy or fundamental metaphysics

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

proposes to account for, among other things, desire, pleasure, and displeasure, it exposes itself at the outset, represents its own desire. Reason's desire is a fundamental desire, the desire for the fundamental, for *buthos*. Not an empirical desire, since it leads toward the unspecified, and what is given under the auspices of a determinate metaphor, the metaphor of reason, will have to make sense of all other metaphors. It would represent the being-desire of desire, the desire of reason as desire for a grounded structure. Edifying desire would be produced as the art of philosophizing, commanding all others and rationalizing all rhetoric.

"Considerable difficulties" arise. A theory of judgment as *Mittelglied* must be constructed. But there will be "considerable difficulties" (*grosse Schwierigkeiten*) finding *a priori* principles peculiar to judgment which at the same time maintain the theory of empiricism. We can only find *a priori* concepts in understanding. The faculty of judgment employs these, applies them, but there are no concepts proper to or specifically reserved for it. The only concept that it can produce is empty, as it were, and contributes nothing to knowledge. "Properly speaking," it "knows nothing." It provides a subjective "rule" of thumb which has no objectivity, no relation with the object, no cognition. The faculty of judgment regulates itself; otherwise it would have to call upon yet another faculty of arbitration, to infinity. Nevertheless, this subjective rule applies to judgments, to statements which claim to have a universally objective structure.

This is the difficulty, the constraint, the confusion, the *Verlegenheit*. It seems to confirm a certain Hegelian verdict, later confirmed by Heidegger: that this discourse on the beautiful and on art, by remaining a theory of judgment, is encumbered with the—secondary—opposition of subject and object.

The beautiful and art have not yet been questioned. Nothing up to this point in the Preface indicates that they ought to be. Here, however, Kant declares that the "considerable difficulties" of *principle* (subjective or objective) are "encountered" (*findet sich*) "chiefly" (*hauptsächlich*) in judgments "that are called aesthetic." They offer one example, a major occurrence of the "difficulties." They are actually the principal example, the unique specimen which confers meaning and orients multiplicity. The examination of this example, the aesthetic domain, constitutes the choice part, the "most important item" (*die wichtigste Stück*) of the critique of the faculty of judgment. Even if aesthetic judgments, as judgments, contribute *nothing* to knowledge, they arise from the unique faculty of knowledge, which is connected by them according to an *a priori* principle to pleasure or displeasure. The relationship between knowledge and pleasure is thus revealed in its purity: there is nothing to know. But such is precisely the enigma, the enigmatic (*das Rätselhafte*) at the heart of judgment. This is why a "separate division" (*besondere Abteilung*), a special cut, a detached part, a section constitutes the object of the third *Critique*.

We must not expect from the *Critique* what in principle, in its declared intention, it does not promise. This critique of taste is not concerned with production. Neither the "formation" nor "culture" of taste are relevant and they

are easily dispensed with. And since the *Critique* will demonstrate that we cannot assign conceptual rules to the beautiful, it will not be concerned with constituting an *aesthetic*, no matter how general, but with analyzing the formal conditions of possibility of aesthetic judgment in general, thus, of aesthetic objectivity in general.

In this transcendental ambition, Kant asks that we read him without indulgence. But, for the record, he recognizes the gaps, the shortcomings (*Mangelhaftigkeit*) of his work. Hegel uses the same word.

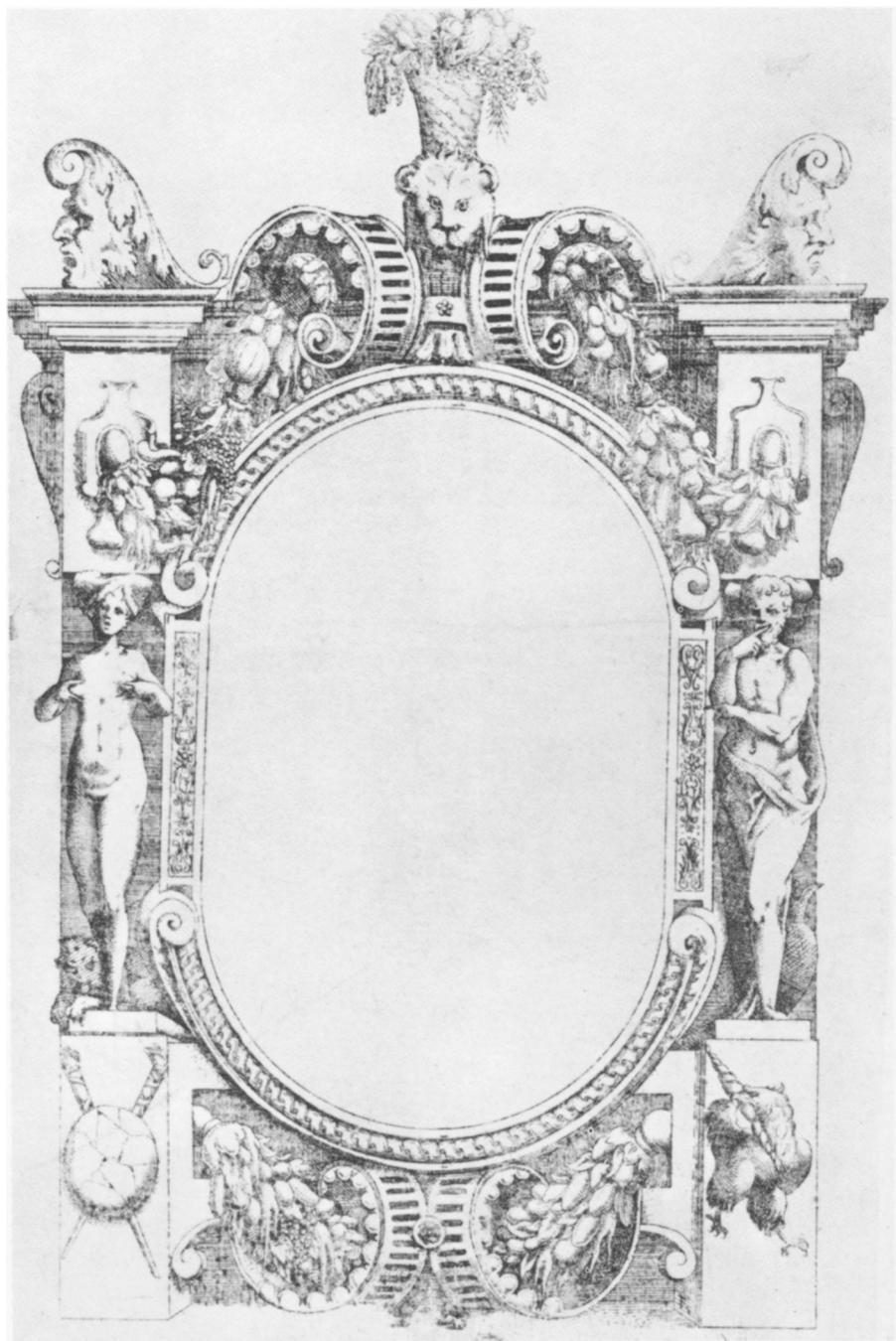
Where is the gap? What gap are we talking about?

And if it were the frame. If the gap constituted the frame of the theory. Not its accident, but its frame. More or less restated: if the gap were not only the lack of a theory of the frame, but also the place of the gap in the theory of the frame.

Edge/gap

According to Kant at least, the “shortcomings” of his work are due to the fact that nature has entangled, complicated, confused (*verwickelt*) the problems. The author’s excuses apply only to the first part of the work, to the critique of aesthetic judgment, and not to the critique of teleological judgment. Only the first part of the argument will lack the clarity and the distinction (*Deutlichkeit*) we have the right to expect of knowledge from concepts. Having lamented the fact that nature has tangled the threads, acknowledging the gaps and projecting a bridge over the abyss of the two other critiques, at the moment at which he brings his critical undertaking to completion (*Hiermit endige ich also mein ganzes kritisches Geschäft*), Kant mentions his age. He must gain time, not prolong the delay, press forwards toward doctrine

we are concerned with pleasure, pure pleasure, the being-pleasure of pleasure. The third *Critique* was written for pleasure’s sake, and so must it be read. A pleasure which is somewhat arid—without concept and without enjoyment (*jouissance*)—and somewhat strict, but it teaches us once more that there is no pleasure without restriction. In taking pleasure as my guide, in one movement I acknowledge even as I lead astray an injunction. *I pursue it*: the enigma of pleasure sets the entire book in motion. *I lead it astray*: by treating the third *Critique* as a work of art or as a beautiful object, which it was not simply meant to be, I act as if the *existence* of the book did not



matter to me (which, Kant explains, is a prerequisite of all aesthetic experience); I view it with an imperturbable detachment.

But what is the existence of a book?

1. *I pursue it.* The possibility of pleasure is the question. Demonstration: the first two paragraphs of the “First Moment of the Judgement of Taste: Moment of Quality,” First Book (“Analytic of the Beautiful”) of the First Section (“Analytic of Aesthetic Judgement”) of Part I (“Critique of Aesthetic Judgement”). Why call a judgment of taste *aesthetic*? Because in order to determine whether something may be said to be beautiful, I do not consult the relation of the representation to the *object*, with cognition in mind (the judgment of taste offers none), but to the *subject* and its affect (pleasure or displeasure). The judgment of taste is not a judgment of knowledge, it is not “logical,” but subjective and therefore aesthetic: relation to affect (*aisthesis*). Every relation of a representation, even a sensible one, can eventually be objective, but never pleasure or displeasure. Certainly aesthetic representations may give rise to logical judgments when they are related by judgment to the object; but when judgment itself is related to the subject, to the subjective affect—which is the case here—it is and can only be aesthetic.

The *Wohlgefallen*, usually translated as subjective satisfaction, the pleasure which defines aesthetic judgment, must, we know, be disinterested. Interest (*Interesse*) is always related to the existence of an object. I am interested in an object when its existence (*Existenz*) matters to me in one way or another. But knowing whether I may say that something is beautiful has nothing *intrinsically* to do with the interest I may or may not demonstrate in its existence. And the pleasure (*Lust*), that kind of pleasing known as pleasure, which I experience before that which I judge to be beautiful requires an indifference or, more strictly, an absolute lack of interest in the thing’s existence.

This pure and disinterested pleasure (not indifferent: Heidegger reproaches Nietzsche on this point for having misunderstood the nonindifferent structure of this *laissez-être*), this pleasure which directs me towards a nonexistence or at least towards a thing (but what is a thing? the need to graft the Heideggerian question arises) the existence of which does not matter to me, a pleasure of this sort defines the judgment of taste and the enigmatic relation of *mourning*—the work of mourning begun beforehand—with beauty. As in a kind of transcendental reduction, the *épochè* of a thesis of existence whose suspense liberates, under certain formal conditions, the pure feeling of pleasure.

We are familiar with the example: I stand before a palace. Someone asks me whether I think it is beautiful, or rather whether I can say “this is beautiful.” It is a question of judgment, of a judgment of universal validity, and everything must therefore be in the form of statements, questions, and answers. Even though the aesthetic affect is irreducible, judgment demands that I say “this is beautiful” or “this is not beautiful.”

Is the palace of which I am speaking beautiful? A variety of answers would miss the point of the question. If I say: “I do not care for things made for

rubbernecks," or rather, with the Iroquois *sachem*, "I prefer the pubs," or rather, *à la Rousseau*, "There stands a sign for the vanity of the rich who exploit the people in order to produce frivolities," or rather, "If I were on a desert island and had the means, I still would not take the trouble to have it imported," etc.—none of these answers constitutes an intrinsically aesthetic judgment. I have evaluated the palace as a function of *extrinsic* motives, in terms of empirical psychology, relations with economic production, political structures, technical causality, etc.

We must know of what we speak, what concerns the value of beauty *intrinsically* and what remains external to our immanent sense of it. This permanent demand—to distinguish between the internal or proper meaning and the circumstances of the object in question—organizes every philosophic discourse on art, the meaning of art and meaning itself, from Plato to Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. It presupposes a discourse on the limit between the inside and the outside of the art object, in this case a *discourse on the frame*. Where do we find it?

According to Kant, what I want to know when I ask myself whether I think this palace is beautiful or not is whether I find it *to be* beautiful, alternatively, whether it is the representation of the object—in and of itself—which pleases me, however indifferent (*gleichgültig*) I remain towards the object's existence. "It is quite plain that in order to say that the object is beautiful, and to show that I have taste, everything turns on the meaning which I can give to this representation, and not on any factor which makes me dependent on the real existence of the object. Everyone must allow that a judgement on the beautiful which is tinged with the slightest interest, is very partial and not a pure judgement of taste. One must not be in the least prepossessed in favour of the real existence of the thing but must preserve complete indifference in this respect, in order to play the part of judge in matters of taste. This proposition, which is of the utmost importance, cannot be better explained than by contrasting the pure disinterested delight [*uninteresserten Wohlgefallen*] which appears in the judgement of taste with that allied [*verbunden*] to an interest:—especially if we can also assure ourselves that there are no other kinds of interest beyond those presently mentioned."⁷ When the existence of the *agreeable* and the existence of the *good* are concerned, it is a question of interest

⁷ disinterested pleasure: the phrase is too familiar, too common, like the dismissal it

Ibid., pp. 43-4.

continues to provoke. The anger of Nietzsche and Artaud: disinterest or disinterestingness goes overboard. Heidegger's meditative murmur at the end of *The Origin*: pleasure is superfluous or insufficient.

But conclusions should never be hasty when pleasure is at issue. In this case, a pleasure which is pure and disinterested, which delivers itself up in the purity of its essence, without any contamination by externals. It no longer depends upon any empirical phenomenon, any specified existence of subject or object; my empiricity refers precisely to the existence of the beautiful object, or to the existence of my sensible motivation. To this degree, and considered intrinsically (but how to delimit the intrinsic, that which borders, *secus*, the internal limit), pleasure does not presuppose the pure and simple disappearance, but the neutralization, not simply the death but the entombment, of everything which exists insofar as it exists. This pleasure is purely subjective: in aesthetic judgment, it designates (*bezeichnet*) nothing objective. But its subjectivity is not an existence, it does not even refer to existence. It is an in- or nonexistent subjectivity rising over the tomb of the empirical subject and its entire world.

And which nevertheless enjoys. No, does not enjoy: Kant distinguishes pleasure (*Wohlgefallen, Lust*) from enjoyment (*Genuss*). Takes pleasure, then. No, because it also receives it. If the translation of *Wohlgefallen* with *pleasure* is not entirely rigorous, then with *satisfaction* it is even less; the *pleasing* risks identification with the agreeable and suggests that everything comes from the pleasing object. In *Wohlgefallen*, in fact, I *enjoy myself*, but without complaisance, I am not interested in myself, especially in so far as I exist, I enjoy *something*. Not something which exists, whatever it may be. *I enjoy my enjoyment of*—that which is beautiful. Insofar as it does not exist.

Since this affect of *enjoying something* remains thoroughly subjective, we may speak here of an autoaffection. The role of the imagination and thus of time in the entire discourse confirms this. Nothing which exists, as such, nothing in time and in space can produce this affect which affects itself with itself. And nevertheless, *enjoying something*, the *something* of *enjoyment* also indicates that this autoaffection extends beyond itself: it is a pure heteroaffection. The purely subjective affect is provoked by that which we call the beautiful, that which is said to be beautiful: *outside*, in the object and independent of its existence. From which, the indispensable, critical character of the recourse to judgment: the structure of autoaffection is such that it is affected by a pure objectivity about which we *must say*, “This *is* beautiful,” and “This statement has universal validity.” Otherwise there would be no problem—and no discourse on art. *The wholly other affects me with pure pleasure while depriving me of both concept and enjoyment.* Without this wholly other, no universality, no demand for universality, but for the same reason, no enjoyment (singular, empirical, existent, interested) of either the determinant concept or of knowledge. Of either the practical or the theoretical. Utterly irreducible heteroaffection inhabits—intrinsically—the most hermetic autoaffection: this is the “*grosse Schwierigkeit*”:

it does not install itself in the comfortable arrangement of the overworked subject/object couple, within an arbitrarily determined space. Nor in some machine oiled with *mimesis*, *homoiosis*, *adequatio*. We know that, at least at first, Kant rejects the value of imitation. As to *homoiosis* and *adequatio*, the issue is complicated, to say the least, since it is no longer a question of determinant judgment, but of reflective judgment, and since the *res* in question does not exist, or at least its existence as thing is not taken into account. It is at the end of a totally different itinerary that we will confirm the efficacy of these values (*mimesis*, *homoiosis*, *adequatio*) in Kantian discourse⁸

almost nothing is left (me): neither the thing, nor its existence, nor my own, nor the pure object, nor the pure subject—no interest whatsoever in anything that exists. All the same, I like; no that is still excessive, that still probably implies interest in existence. I do not like, but I take pleasure in that which does not interest me, at least insofar as it does not matter whether I like it or not. I do not take this pleasure which I take. Rather, I give it. I give what I take, I receive what I give, I do not take what I receive. And all the same I give it to myself. Can I say that I give it to myself? It is so universally objective—in the claim of my own judgment and in common sense—that it can come only from a pure outside. Inassimilable. At the limit, this pleasure which I give to myself or to which I give myself, by which I give myself, I do not even feel, if to feel means to experience: phenomenally, empirically, in the space and time of my interested and interesting existence. A pleasure impossible to experience. I never take it, receive it, give it, or give it to myself, since I (existing subject) never have access to the beautiful as such. I never have pure pleasure insofar as I exist.

And all the same it is there, pleasure, something remains; *it is there, es gibt, ça donne*, pleasure is what is given; for no one, but it remains and it is the best, the purest. And it is this remainder that gives rise to speech, since it is discourse on the beautiful that is primarily under consideration once again, discursivity within the structure of the beautiful and not only a discourse arising out of the beautiful.

8. “Economimesis,” in *Mimesis* (in collaboration with S. Agacinski, S. Kofman, Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, J.-L. Nancy, B. Pautrat). In the collection “*La philosophie en effet*,” Aubier-Flammarion, 1975. (Author’s note.)

2. *I lead it astray*: by treating the third *Critique* as a work of art, I neutralize or entomb its existence. But I cannot know whether, in order to do so, I must act on the authority of the *Critique*, since I do not know what the existence of a thing is, and thus what interest in the existence of a thing is. What is it to exist, for Kant? According to the conditions of a transcendental aesthetic, to be present, in space and time as an individual thing. Nothing is less aesthetic in this sense than the beautiful object which must not interest us as *aistheton*. But this aesthetic inexistence must affect me and this is why the word *aesthetic* is from the beginning justified.

When the (beautiful) object is a book, what exists and what no longer exists? The book is not to be confused with the sensible multiplicity of its existing copies. Thus the object *book* offers itself as such, in its intrinsic structure, as independent from its copies. But then what we call its ideality is not pure; an extremely fine analysis must distinguish it from ideality in general, from that of other types of object, and, in the case of art, from the ideality of other classes of book (novel, poetry, etc.) or from nondiscursive or nonbookish art objects (painting, sculpture, music, theater, etc.). In each case the structure of exemplarity (single or multiple) is unique, thereby prescribing a different affect. And in each example it remains to be decided what example is to be made of the example: is it to be dropped as extrinsic excrement or retained as intrinsic ideality?

Here is one example, but *en abîme*: the third *Critique*. How to treat this book. Is it a book. What makes it a book. What is it to read this book. How to take it. Have I the right to say that it is beautiful, and first of all even to ask —



for example, the question of order. The spatial, so-called plastic, work of art does not necessarily prescribe an order of reading. I can place myself in front of it, begin with the top or bottom, at times move around. Undoubtedly this possibility has an ideal limit. Let us say for the moment that the structure of this limit permits greater play than in the case of the temporal arts (discursive or not), unless a certain pulverization, a precise spatial staging (either effective or virtual) allows us to begin from several different places, so that the speed and the direction vary.

But a book. And a book of philosophy. If it is a work of metaphysics in the Kantian sense, thus of pure philosophy, we can rightfully open it anywhere: it is a kind of architecture. In the third *Critique* there is pure philosophy, and its plan is

drawn. Following the analogy (but how do we follow it), we must be able to begin everywhere and to follow no particular order, even if the quantity and quality, the strength of reading may depend, as with architecture, on point of view and a certain relation to the ideal limit—which constitutes the frame. But there never is anything but point of view: the solidity, the existence, the structure of the edifice do not depend upon it. Can we say the same of a book by analogy? We do not inevitably gain access to architecture by following the order of its production, from its foundations to its pinnacle. And here perception, analysis, penetration, utilization, even destruction, must be distinguished. But do we read a book of pure philosophy if we do not begin with the fundamentals and follow the prescribed order in which it was written. What is it then to read philosophy, and must we only read it. Certainly the prescribed order sustained by the fundamentals does not coincide with the order of its writing: for example, Kant wrote his Introduction after finishing the book, in an effort to reassemble the entire system of his philosophy, to legitimize his discourse, to articulate his critique with philosophy. The Introduction follows its preparation. But even if it were granted that, in Kantian metaphysics, it is necessary to begin with the foundation, the critique is not metaphysics: it is, from the beginning, a search for the foundation (therefore it in fact comes after), suspended like a crane or a dredger above a pit, scraping, excavating, clearing, in an effort to redeem some solid ground. In what order should a critique be read. The order in which it was written, or the rightful one. The *ordo inveniendi* or the *ordo exponendi*. All these different questions, subordinate to one another, no matter how densely interwoven, are generally valid for all critical texts

a supplementary complication forces us to reconsider the order of all these questions. The third *Critique* is not just one critique among others. Its specific object is a particular type of judgment—reflective judgment—which treats the example in a very singular way. The distinction, both familiar and obscure, between reflective and determinant judgment controls all of the book's internal divisions. I restate it in its most impoverished generality. The faculty of judging *in general* allows us to think of the particular as contained under the general (rule, principle, law). When the general is given first, the operation of judgment subsumes and *determines* the particular. It is determinant (*bestimmend*), it defines, narrows, comprehends,

compresses. In the opposite assumption, *reflective* (*reflectirend*) judgment begins with the particular and must return, retrace the way to the general: the example (what matters to us here) is given prior to the law, and may thus be revealed in its exemplary unity. Current scientific or logical discourse proceeds according to determinant judgments, the examples follow in order to determine or, in a didactic drawing, to illustrate. But in art and in life, any place where we must, according to Kant, proceed by means of reflective judgments and assume (by analogy with art: we will return to this rule later) an end whose concept is not given, *the example precedes*. The result is a singular historicity and (taking into account the simulacrum) a certain fixture (regulated, relative) of the theoretical

on the authority of this reflective break, I begin my reading of the third *Critique* with some examples.

Nothing as yet allows us to determine whether this obedience is perverse or not.

I begin therefore with some examples: not with the Introduction, which gives the laws, nor with the beginning of the book (the Analytic of the Beautiful). Nor with the middle, nor the end, but somewhere near the conclusion of the Analytic of the Beautiful, with paragraph 14, entitled "Exemplification" (*Eclaircissement par des exemples; Erläuterung durch Beispiele*).

Kant's obvious intention is to clarify the structure of "the proper object of the pure judgement of taste" (*den eigentlichen Gegenstand des reinen Geschmacksurtheils*). I am not even going to cite every example, only a few, and I provisionally set aside his extremely convoluted theory of color and sound, of drawing and composition, which comes between the two fragments which I translate here. Unless in the process it is broached. In any case, I will assume it has been read.

"Aesthetic, just like theoretical (logical) judgements, are divisible into empirical and pure. The first are those by which agreeableness or disagreeableness, the second those by which beauty, is predicated of an object or its mode of representation. The former are judgements of sense (material aesthetic judgements), the latter (as formal) alone judgements of taste proper.

"A judgement of taste, therefore, is only pure so far as its determining ground is tainted with no merely empirical delight [*Wohlgefallen*]. But such a taint is always present where charm [*Reiz*] or emotion have a share in the judgement by which something is to be described as beautiful.

... “All form of objects of sense (both of external and also, mediately, of internal sense) is either *figure* or *play*. In the latter case it is either play of figures (in space: mimic and dance), or mere play of sensations (in time). The *charm* of colours, or of the agreeable tones of instruments, may be added: but the *design* in the former and the *composition* in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgement of taste. To say that the purity alike of colours and of tones, of their variety and contrast seem to contribute to beauty, is by no means to imply that, because in themselves agreeable, they therefore yield an addition [*supplement*] to the delight in the form [*Wohlgefallen an der Form*] and one on a par with it. The real meaning rather is that they make this form more clearly, definitely, and completely intuitable, and besides stimulate the representation by their charm, as they excite and sustain the attention directed to the object itself.

“Even what is called *ornamentation* [*Zierathen*: decoration, ornamentation, adornment] (*parerga*), i.e. what is only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of an object, in augmenting the delight of taste does so solely by means of its form. Thus it is with the frames [*Einfassungen*] of pictures or the drapery on statues, or the colonnades of palaces. But if the ornamentation does not itself enter into the composition of a beautiful form—if it is introduced [*simplement appliqu *] like a gold frame [*goldene Rahmen*] merely to win approval for the picture by means of its charm—it is then called *finery* [*parure; Schmuck*] and takes away from the genuine beauty.”⁹

 the theory moves along smoothly 

 thus the drapery on statues—for example—would be ornamentation: *parerga*.

Elsewhere Kant explains the necessity of his recourse to archaic, scholarly languages. Here Greek confers something approximating conceptual dignity on the notion of the *hors d'oeuvre* which does not remain simply outside of the work, acting from the sidelines, next to the work (*ergon*). Dictionaries most often give

9. Kant, *Critique*, pp. 65-8.



“hors d’œuvre,” which is the most literal translation, but also “accessory, foreign, or secondary object,” “supplement,” “aside,” “remainder.” It is that which *should not* become, by distinguishing itself, the principal subject: the legal education of children (*Laws*, 766a), or the definition of science (*Theatetus*, 184a) *should not* be treated as *parerga*. In the investigation of causes or the knowledge of principles, *parerga* should not be allowed to take precedence over the essential (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098–30). Philosophical discourse is always *against* the *parergon*. But what is it *against*.

A *parergon* is against, beside, and above and beyond the *ergon*, the work accomplished, the accomplishment of the work. But it is not incidental; it is connected to and cooperates in its operation from the outside.

[. . .]

If the *parergon*, this supplementary hors d’œuvre, has something like the status of a philosophical concept, then it must designate a general formal predicative structure which may be carried over, either *intact* or *consistently* deformed, reformed, to other fields, where new contents may be submitted to it. Kant uses the word *parergon* elsewhere: the context is very different, but the structure is analogous and equally problematic. We find it in a lengthy note appended to the second and subsequent editions of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. The form in which it occurs is extremely important.

To what is the Note appended? To a “General Observation” which concludes Part Two.

What is the *parergon*? It is the concept of the observation, of this “General Observation,” insofar as it defines what augments *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* while being neither part of it nor absolutely extrinsic to it. Each Part includes a “General Observation” (*Allgemeine Anmerkung*), *parergon* on a *parergon*. Since there are four Parts, these four Observations on *parerga*, hors d’oeuvres, “adjuncts” which are neither internal nor external, effectively frame the work, but also square it.

At the beginning of the Note appended in the second edition to the first “General Observation,” the status of the Observation is defined as *parergon*: “This General Observation is the first of four which are appended, one to each Book of this work, and which might bear the titles, (1) Works of Grace, (2) Miracles, (3) Mysteries, and (4) Means of Grace. These matters are, as it were, *parerga* to religion within the limits of pure reason; they do not belong within it, but border upon it [*aber stossen doch an sie an*: they touch upon it, put pressure on it, press against it, seek contact, exert pressure at the boundary]. Reason, conscious of her inability to satisfy her moral need, extends herself to high-flown ideas capable of supplying this lack [*Mangel*], without, however, appropriating these ideas as an extension of her domain [*Besitz*: possession]. Reason does not dispute the possibility or the reality of the objects of these ideas; she simply cannot adopt them into her maxims of thought and action. She even holds that, if in the inscrutable realm of the supernatural there is something more than she can explain to herself,

which may yet be necessary as a complement to her moral insufficiency, this will be, even though unknown, available to her good will. Reason believes this with a faith which (with respect to the possibility of this supernatural complement) might be called *reflective*; for *dogmatic* faith which proclaims itself as a form of knowledge appears to her dishonest or presumptuous. To remove the difficulties, then, in the way of that which (for moral practice) stands firm in and for itself, is merely a by-work (*parergon*), when those difficulties have reference to transcendent questions.”¹⁰

“By-work” is the translation of *Nebengeschäfte*: secondary business or busyness, activity or operation from the sidelines or nearby. The *parergon* inscribes something extra, *exterior* to the specific field (here, of pure reason and *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*), but whose transcendent exteriority touches, plays with, brushes, rubs, or presses against the limit and intervenes internally only insofar as the inside is missing. Missing something and is itself missing. Since reason is “conscious of her inability to satisfy her moral need,” she has recourse to the *parergon*, to grace, mysteries, miracles. She requires a supplementary “by-work.” Certainly the adjunct is a threat. Its function is critical. It entails a risk and enjoys itself at the expense of transforming the theory. A damage, an injury [*prejudice; Nachteil*] corresponds to each *parergon* in *Religion*, and the four classes of prejudice correspond to the four kinds of *parerga*: 1. to supposed internal experience (effects of grace), fanaticism, 2. to supposed external experience (miracles), superstition, 3. to supposed light of understanding of the supernatural order, illuminism, 4. to supposed supernatural actions (through grace), thaumaturgy. Nevertheless, these four deviations or seductions of reason are also aimed at a particular pleasure: pleasure-unto-God [*gottgefälliger Absicht*].

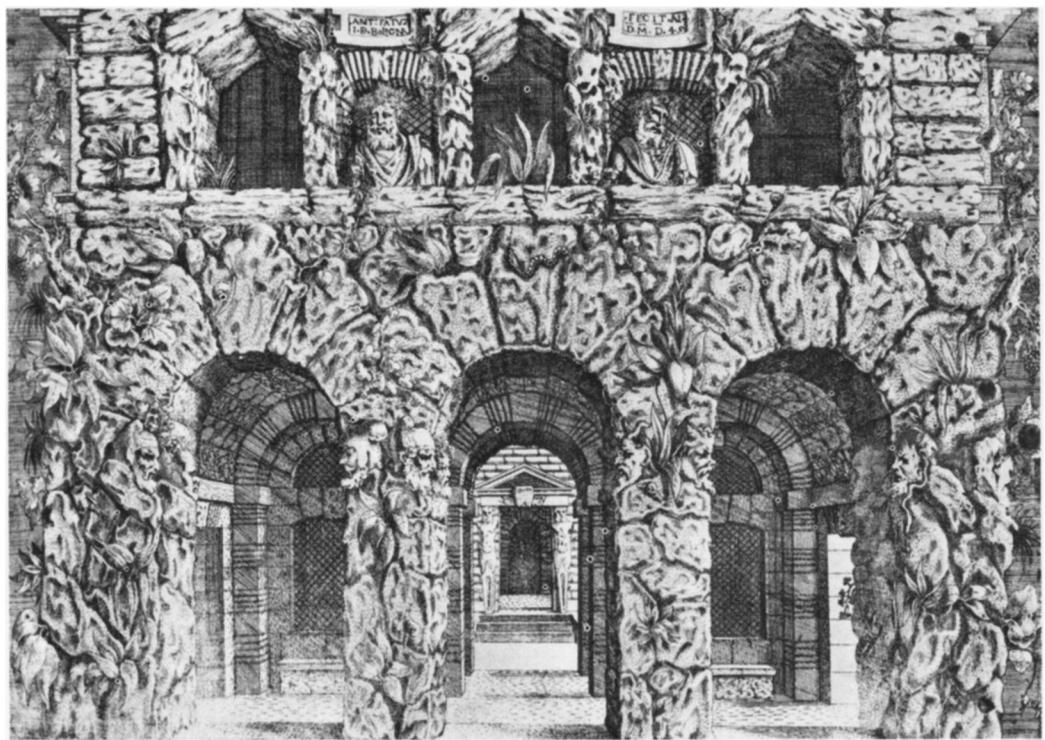
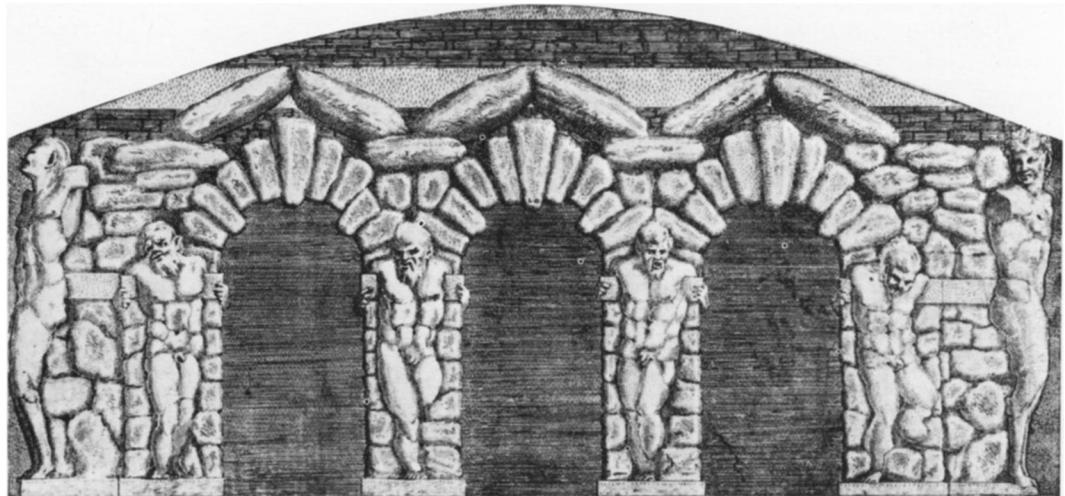
Thus, the drapery on statues, a privileged example, would function as *parergon*, as ornamentation. This means (*das heißtt*) precisely what is not interior or intrinsic (*innerlich*), in the sense of an integral component (*als Bestandstück*), to the complete representation of the object (*in die ganze Vorstellung des Gegenstandes*), but which belongs to it only in an extrinsic fashion (*nur äusserlich*), as a surplus, an addition, an adjunct (*als Zuthat*).

10. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson, New York, Harper & Row, 1960, pp. 47–9.

The drapery on statues, which simultaneously adorns and veils their nudity, is hors d'oeuvre clinging to the work's edges as to the body represented, but—so the argument goes—not a part of the representative whole. What is represented by the representation is the nude body, *au naturel*; the representational essence of the statue tallies with it; and only in it may the representation be beautiful—essentially, purely, and intrinsically beautiful, “the proper object of a pure judgement of taste.”

This definition of the center and of the integrity of the representation, of its inside and outside, may already appear peculiar. We may ask as well where the drapery begins. Where a *parergon* begins, and where it ends. Whether all drapery is *parergon*—G-strings and the like. What to do with absolutely transparent veils. And how to transpose the statement to painting. For example, Cranach's Lucretia holds nothing but a flimsy transparent veil over her sex: where is the *parergon*? Must we also consider a *parergon*—not part of her nude body, *au naturel*—the dagger which she points at herself and which touches her skin (only the point of the *parergon* touches her body, in the middle of a triangle formed by her two breasts and her navel)? Is her necklace also a *parergon*? It concerns the objectifying, representational essence, its inside and outside, the criteria used in this definition, the value attributed to the natural, and, either secondarily or principally, the privileged position of the human body. If every *parergon* is added, as proved in *Religion*, only because of a lack within the system it augments, then what deficiency in the representation of the body does drapery supplement? And what has art to do with it?

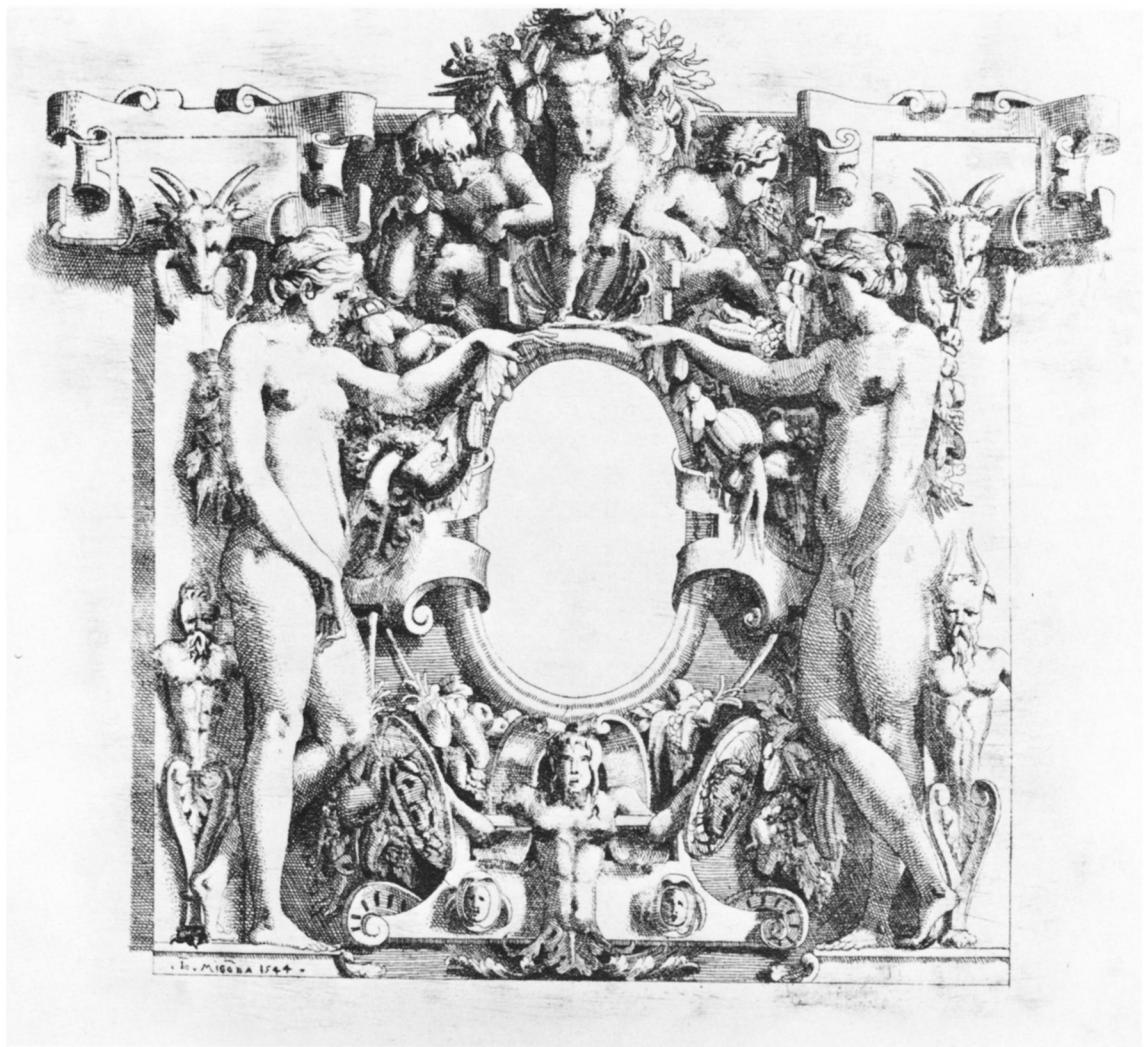
Our surprise at this paragraph has only begun. (*Parergon* also signifies the exceptional, the peculiar, the extraordinary.) I have somewhat too hastily torn “drapery” from the context of three examples, three *parerga* which are no less strange—first in themselves, and in relation to one another. The example which follows immediately is that of the colonnades of palaces (*Säulengänge um Prachtbäude*). These columns are also supplementary *parerga*. After drapery, the column. Why should the column be external to the edifice? According to what criterion, what critical organ, what *organon* of discernment? It is no less obscure than in the preceding case and presents yet another difficulty: in this case the *parergon* augments a work which *represents nothing* and which itself augments nature. We believe we know what is part and what is not part of the human body, what may be detached from it and what may not—even if the *parergon* is precisely a detachment which is not easily detached. But in an architectural work, the *Vorstellung*, the representation, is not structurally representational—or it is, but according to a detour so complicated that it would undoubtedly disconcert anyone who wanted to distinguish, in a critical manner, the inside from the outside, the integral from the detachable. So as not to complicate this even further, I set aside, provisionally, columns in the form of the human body supporting or representing the support of a window (and the window itself—is it part of the edifice? And a window in a painting of a building?), and which may be nude or draped and may represent either a man or a woman—a distinction to which Kant does not allude.



With the example of the colonnade, we encounter the entire problematic of inscription in a milieu, of distinguishing the work from a ground. It is always difficult to determine whether the ground is natural or artificial and, in the latter case, whether it is *parergon* or *ergon*. The ground, even if it is contiguous with the work, does not constitute a *parergon* in the Kantian sense. The natural site chosen for the erection of a temple is obviously not a *parergon*. Nor is an artificial site: neither the square, nor the church, nor the museum, nor the other surrounding works. But drapery or the column, yes. Why? Not because they are easily detached; on the contrary, they are very difficult to detach. Without them, without their quasidetachment, the lack within the work would appear or, what amounts to the same, would not appear. It is not simply their exteriority that constitutes them as *parerga*, but the internal structural link by which they are inseparable from a lack within the *ergon*. And this lack makes for the very unity of the *ergon*. Without it, the *ergon* would have no need of a *parergon*. The lack of the *ergon* is the lack of a *parergon*, of drapery or columns which nevertheless remain exterior to it. How do we determine the role of *energeia*?

May we attach the third example to this series of examples, to the question which they raise? The third is in fact the first—I have proceeded in reverse. It is, at least apparently, difficult to associate with the other two. It is the frames of paintings (*Einfassungen der Gemälde*). The frame: *parergon* like the others. This series may be surprising. How do we assimilate the function of the frame to that of drapery on (in, around, or against) sculpture, and to that of columns surrounding an edifice? And what about a frame which frames a painting representing a building surrounded by columns in the form of draped human figures? The incomprehensibility of the border, at the border, appears not only at the inner limit, between the frame and the painting, the drapery and the body, the column and the building, but also at its outer limit. *Parerga* have a thickness, a surface which separates them not only, as Kant would have it, from the body of the *ergon* itself, but also from the outside, from the wall on which the painting is hung, the space in which the statue or column stands, as well as from the entire historic, economic, and political field of inscription in which the drive of the signature arises (an analogous problem, as we will see later). No “theory,” no “practice,” no “theoretical practice” can be effective here if it does not rest on the frame, the invisible limit of (between) the interiority of meaning (protected by the entire hermeneutic, semiotic, phenomenological, and formalist tradition) and (of) all the extrinsic empiricals which, blind and illiterate, dodge the question.

The *parergon* is distinguished from both the *ergon* (the work) and the milieu; it is distinguished as a figure against a ground. But it is not distinguished in the same way as the work, which is also distinguished from a ground. The parergonal frame is distinguished from two grounds, but in relation to each of these, it disappears into the other. In relation to the work, which may function as its ground, it disappears into the wall and then, by degrees, into the general context. In relation to the general context, it disappears into the work. Always a



form on a ground, the *parergon* is nevertheless a form which has traditionally been determined not by distinguishing itself, but by disappearing, sinking in, obliterating itself, dissolving just as it expends its greatest energy. The frame is never a ground in the way the context or the work may be, but neither does its marginal thickness form a figure. At least, it is a figure which arises of its own accord.

What would Kant have said about a frame which frames a painting representing a building surrounded by columns (there are many examples) in the form of the draped human figure (the frescoes in the vault of the Sistine Chapel—what is their frame?—are paintings in which the represented, painted object is sculpture which itself represents, at Jonah's right for example, putti which form a column supporting a ceiling, etc. The same applies to the Persian sibyl, to Zachariah, who holds a book in his hand, to Jeremiah, and to the Libyan sibyl; it is hard to say whether these putti-columns are draped or not; they support drapery), and which is set on an easel—the whole thing represented in another painting.

I may appear to be taking unfair advantage by persisting with two or three possibly fortuitous examples from a secondary subchapter; it might be better to deal with parts less marginal to the work, closer to its center and its depth. Of course. But the objection presupposes that we already know what the center and the depth of the third *Critique* are, that we have already located its frame and delimited its field. Yet nothing is more difficult to determine. The *Critique* is a work (*ergon*) in several ways; as such, it must center and frame itself, delimit its ground by distinguishing itself, by means of a frame, from a general background. However this frame is problematic. I do not know what is essential and what is secondary to a work. Above all I do not know what this thing is which is neither essential nor secondary, neither proper nor improper, which Kant calls *parergon*, for example, the frame. What is the place of the frame. Does it have a place. Where does it begin. Where does it end. What is its inner limit. Outer. And the surface between the two limits. I do not know if the passage in the *Critique* which defines *parergon* is itself a *parergon*. Before deciding what is parergonal in a text which poses the question of the *parergon*, we must know what a *parergon* is, at least if one occurs in the text.

For my impatient critics, if they insist on seeing the thing itself: every analytic of aesthetic judgment presupposes that we can rigorously distinguish between the intrinsic and the extrinsic. Aesthetic judgment *must* concern intrinsic beauty, and not the around and about. It is therefore necessary to know—this is the fundamental presupposition, the foundation—how to define the intrinsic, the framed, and what to exclude as frame *and* beyond the frame. We are thus *already* at the unlocatable center of the problem. And since, when we ask, “What is a frame?”, Kant responds, “It is a *parergon*, a composite of inside and outside, but a composite which is not an amalgam or half-and-half, an outside which is called inside the inside to constitute it as inside.” And when he gives as examples of the

parergon, besides the frame, drapery and columns, we say to ourselves that there are indeed “considerable difficulties,” and that the choice of examples, as well as their association, is not self-evident.

All the more because the *parergon*, following the logic of the supplement, divides into two. At the limit between the work and the absence of the work, it divides into two. And this division gives rise to a sort of pathology of the *parergon*, whose forms must be named and classified, just as *Religion* specified four types of parergonal injuries or “prejudices.” Kant is in effect in the process of defining “the proper object of the pure judgement of taste.” But he does not simply exclude the *parergon* as such and in general. Only under certain conditions. Here the criterion for exclusion is a formality.

What is meant by formality?

The *parergon* (frame, drapery, column) may augment the pleasure of taste (*Wohlgefallen des Geschmacks*), may contribute to the intrinsically aesthetic representation itself, if it intervenes *by means of its form* (*durch seine Form*), and only by means of its form. If it has a “beautiful form,” it enters into the judgment of taste properly speaking, or in any case its intervention is essential. It is, if you will, the normal *parergon*. But if, on the contrary, it is not beautiful, purely beautiful, that is, formally beautiful, then it is mere finery (*parure; Schmuck*) and tarnishes the beauty of the work, detracts from it and is unfair to it. It is the analogue of the damage or “prejudice” (*Nachteil*) in *Religion*.

The example of the degradation into seductive finery of the simple *parergon* is again the frame, this time the gilded frame (*goldene Rahmen*), the gilding on the frame which calls our attention to the painting by means of its charm (*Reiz*). What is bad, therefore, and external to the pure object of taste is that which seduces by charm; and the example of that which diverts by means of its charm is a color, gilding, as nonform, sensible content, or matter. The deterioration of the *parergon*—the perversion, the allure—is the charm of sensible content. As drawing, the arrangement of lines and formation of angles, the frame is not alluring at all and is indispensable. But to retain its purity, it must remain without color, free from all sensible, empirical materiality.

This opposition form/matter dominates, as we know, the *Critique* as a whole, inscribing it within a powerful tradition. According to *The Origin of the Work of Art*, it is one of three determinations (*hypokeimenon/sumbe bekos, aistheton/noeton, eidos-morphé/hylè*) which encroach violently upon the thing. It provides a “conceptual schema” (*Begriffs-schema*) for every theory of art. We need only associate the rational within the formal, the irrational with matter, the latter with illogic, the former with logic, to connect the ensemble to the subject/object pair, to set up a *Begriffsmechanic* which nothing can withstand. But what is the region of origin of this determination of the thing as informed matter? Its wholesale usage by aesthetics allows us to conceive of an origin far beyond the realm of art. And the Christian creation myth contributes an “additional impulse,” a supplementary motivation to consider the form/matter complex as the

structure of every entity, *l'ens creatum* as the unity of *forma* and *materia*. Faith having disappeared, the schemata of Christian philosophy remain forceful. "Thus the interpretation of 'thing' by means of matter and form, whether it remains medieval or becomes Kantian-transcendental, has become current and self-evident. But for that reason, no less than the other interpretations mentioned of the thingness of the thing, it is an encroachment [*Ueberfall*] upon the thing-being of the thing. This situation stands revealed as soon as we speak of things in the strict sense as mere things [*blosse Dinge*, naked things]. The 'mere' [*bloss*], after all, means the removal [*Entblössung*] of the character of usefulness and of being made. The mere thing is a sort of equipment, albeit equipment denuded of its equipmental being. Thing-being consists in what is then left over. But this remnant is not actually defined in its ontological character . . ."¹¹

L and if the *Ueberfall* had the structure of the *parergon*? This violent superimposition which falls aggressively upon the thing, "insults" it, as the French translator strangely, but pertinently has it, enslaves it and, literally, conjugates it under matter/form—is this a contingency, an accident, or a necessity that remains to be examined? And what if, like the *parergon*, it is neither one nor the other? And what if the *remnant*, in its structure as remnant, might never be determined in itself, if it were no longer even necessary to scan this horizon

L the word *parergon* occurs precisely (paragraphs 13 and 24) at the moment at which Kant arrives at the distinction between *material* and *formal* judgments; only the latter are constitutive of judgments of taste in the proper sense. It is self-evidently not a

11. Heidegger, "Origin," p. 30.

question of a formalist aesthetic (it could, from another point of view, be demonstrated that the opposite is the case), but of formality as the space of aesthetics in general, of a “formalism” which, rather than representing a specific system, is confounded with the history of art and aesthetics itself. And formality always implies the possibility of a system of framing which is simultaneously imposed and effaced.

The question of the frame is already framed when it appears at this turn in the *Critique*.

Why framed?

“Exemplification” (paragraph 14) belongs to the “Analytic of the Beautiful,” Book I of the “Analytic of Aesthetic Judgement.” This analytic of the beautiful has four divisions, four sides, four moments. The judgment of taste is examined from four sides: 1. according to quality, 2. according to quantity, 3. according to relation to ends (here the *parergon* finds its accommodation), 4. according to modality. According to quality, the beautiful is the object of a disinterested *Wohlgefallen*; according to quantity, that which, without a concept, pleases universally; according to the relation to ends, the form of finality without the representation of an end (finality without end); according to modality, that which, without a concept, is recognized as the object of a necessary *Wohlgefallen*.

Such is the categorical frame of this analytic of the beautiful. Where does it come from? Who supplies it? Who constructs it? Where is it introduced from?

From the analytic of concepts in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. A brief reminder: this analytic of concepts is one of two parts of the transcendental analytic (transcendental analytic and dialectic, a division reproduced in the third *Critique*: analytic and dialectic of aesthetic judgment). The transcendental analytic comprises an analytic of concepts and an analytic of principles. The first decomposes the power of understanding in order to encounter the possibility of *a priori* concepts in their “country of birth,” that is, understanding, where concepts lie dormant and are held in reserve. Since (receptive) intuition alone is related immediately to the object, understanding is related to objects by the intermediary of judgments. Judgment is the mediated knowledge of an object. And we can “refer all acts of understanding to judgements, in such a way that understanding in general may be represented as a faculty of judging (*Urteilskraft*).”¹² The power to think as the power to judge. Thus we will find the functions of understanding by determining the functions of unity in judgment. The concepts are related, as predicates of possible judgments, to the representation of an object. Consequently, by considering the simple form of understanding, abstracting from it the content of judgments, we can establish the list of the forms of judgment under four headings and twelve moments (four times three: the four-times-three also constructs the table [*Tafel*] of the superior faculties at the end of the Introduction to

12. This citation from *The Critique of Pure Reason* is translated directly from Derrida's French translation of Kant.

the third *Critique*. In a note Kant answers those who object to his “threefold” [*dreiteilig*] divisions and his taste for “trichotomy”; and *three + one* informs the relation of the faculties required by the fine arts—imagination, understanding, soul—with taste: “the first three faculties are first brought into union by means of the fourth,” as the note to paragraph 50 specifies): *quantity* (universal, particular, singular), *quality* (affirmative, negative, indefinite), *relation* (categorical, hypothetical, disjunctive), *modality* (problematic, assertive, apodictic). *Table of twelve*. There are as many pure concepts of the understanding, originary and underivable concepts, as there are logical functions in judgment. From which one deduces the table of categories (as opposed to Aristotle’s supposed grammatical empiricism) beginning with the table of judgments.

Kant thus introduces this table, this tableau (*Tafel*), this *board*,¹³ this *border* into the analytic of aesthetic judgment. The procedure is legitimate, since judgments are concerned, but the transfer is not exempt from difficulties and an artful sort of violence: a *logical* frame has been transposed and forced upon a *nonlogical* structure, a structure which does not essentially concern a relation to the object as an object of cognition. Aesthetic judgment, Kant insists, is not cognitive judgment.

The frame doesn’t fit. The difficulty is perceptible from the first paragraph of the book, from the “First moment of the judgement of taste considered from the point of view of quality.” “The judgement of taste is aesthetic”: in which case, unique, not provided for by the analytic of concepts and of judgments in the other *Critique*; the judgment is not a “cognitive judgement.” Thus it does not belong to the transcendental logic from which the board was borrowed.

The violence of framing proliferates. It confines the theory of aesthetics within a theory of the beautiful, the theory of the beautiful within a theory of taste, and the theory of taste within a theory of judgment. These decisions might be called external: the delimitation has far-reaching consequences, but even at this cost a certain internal coherence may be retained. Another act of framing which, by the introduction of the border, violated the interior of the system and distorted its proper articulations, would not have the same effect. In looking for a rigorously effective grip, we must therefore first concern ourselves with this frame.

Thus in the course of the final delimitation (the theory of taste as the theory of judgment) Kant *applies* an analytic of logical judgments to an analytic of aesthetic judgments while at the same time insisting on their mutual irreducibility. He never justifies this framing, nor the restraint it artificially imposes upon a discourse which continuously threatens to exceed its boundaries. In the first note on the first page, Kant states that the logical functions of judgment have served him as a guide (*Anleitung*). This note alludes to a difficulty so decisive that it is unclear why it did not constitute the principal text for which it forms the fundamental bass, that is, the unwritten or underwritten space, the alleged scope

13. In English in the original.

of the harmonics: “The definition of taste here relied upon is that it is the faculty of estimating the beautiful. But the discovery [*entdecken*] of what is required for calling an object beautiful must be reserved for the analysis of judgements of taste. In my [intervention of the first person in a footnote] search for the moments to which attention is paid by this judgement in its reflection, I have followed the guidance of the logical functions of judging (for a judgement of taste always involves a reference to understanding). I have brought the moment of quality first under review, because this is what aesthetic judgement of the beautiful looks to in the first instance.”¹⁴

The reference to this note is in the title “First moment of the judgement of taste considered from the point of view of quality.” Thus the note in a certain way precedes the text of the argument, it is relatively detached from it. It is the same with the parenthesis which it includes: “(for a judgement of taste always involves a reference to understanding).” This parenthesis (inserted within a note which is neither inside nor outside the argument, neither inside nor outside its content) attempts to justify—and it is the only such attempt—the frame of the argument, that is, the analytic of judgment whose border was hastily introduced at the beginning of the argument.

Before the note and its parenthesis (before, if we scan the page from bottom to top, but after if we stick to that order which places the note at the top of the page, in the place of its reference), another, briefer parenthesis creates a pocket in the so-called principal text, *invaginates* it in some way: “If we wish to discern whether anything is beautiful or not, we do not refer the representation of it to the Object by means of understanding with a view to cognition, but by means of the imagination (acting perhaps in conjunction with understanding). We refer the representation to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure.”¹⁵

The two parentheses, *parerga* inside and outside the argument, have the same object, the same end: the (quite visibly embarrassed) justification of the frame introduced, the analytic imposed in order to transfer the table and to adjust the border, the unsupported claim of a hypothetical “liaison” with understanding, to which the judgment of taste, even if there is nothing logical about it, is “always” related.

Like a long-standing relationship which is difficult to break, or a second-hand frame which may be difficult to sell but which must at all costs be placed.

The frame of this analytic of the beautiful with its four moments was thus provided by the transcendental analytic for the single, unhappy reason that imagination, the essential resource in relation to beauty, may *perhaps* be linked with understanding, that some understanding may perhaps still reside within it. The relation with understanding, which is neither certain nor essential, provides the frame for the entire discourse and, within it, for the discourse on the frame.

14. Kant, *Critique*, p. 41.

15. *Ibid.*



Not to force the point, but to describe a certain forcing on Kant's part, we will say that the entire frame of the analytic of the beautiful functions, with respect to that which determines content or internal structure, like a *parergon*; it has all the right characteristics: neither simply interior nor simply exterior; not falling to one side of the work, as we might say of an exergue; indispensable to *energeia* to liberate surplus value because it confines the work (all contracts and first of all the contract of painting presuppose a process of framing; and to be effective here the work of deconstruction cannot dispense with a theory of the frame); summoned and assembled like a supplement because of the lack—a certain "internal" indetermination—in the very thing it enframes. This lack, which cannot be determined, localized, situated, *halted* inside or outside *before the framing* is, to borrow concepts belonging precisely to the classical logic of the frame, and to Kantian discourse, both *produced by* and *production of* the frame. If we apply to it the rule defined in "Exemplification," and if it becomes in its turn an example of what it allows us to consider as an example (frame described in the frame), we can take the content of the analytic of judgment as a work of art, a tableau whose frame, imported from the other *Critique*, plays the role of a *parergon* because of its formal beauty. If it were only a charming, seductive, amusing exergue which did not cooperate with the work itself, a pure depreciation of value and squandering of surplus value, then it would be mere finery. But it happens that this very analytic of judgment, in its frame, is what allows us to define the procedure of formality, the opposition of the formal and the material, the pure and the impure, the proper and the improper, the inside and the outside. The analytic *determines* the frame as *parergon*, that which simultaneously constitutes and destroys it, makes it hold (as in *hold together*, it constitutes, mounts, enshrines, sets, borders, assembles, protects—so many operations assembled by the *Einfassung*) and fall at the same time. A frame is in essence constructed and therefore fragile, this is the essence or the truth of the frame. If such a thing exists. But this "truth" can no longer be a "truth," it defines neither the transcendent nor the contingent character of the frame, only its character as *parergon*.

Philosophy wants to examine this "truth," but never succeeds. That which produces and manipulates the frame sets everything in motion to efface its effect, most often by naturalizing it to infinity, in God's keeping (to be confirmed in Kant). Deconstruction must neither reframe nor fantasize the pure and simple absence of the frame. These two apparently contradictory actions are precisely the systematically indissociable ones of that which is presently deconstructed.

If the procedures initiated, if the criteria proposed by the analytic of the beautiful depend upon this parergonality; if all the oppositions which dominate the philosophy of art (before and after Kant) depend upon it for their pertinence, their rigor, their purity, their propriety, then they will be affected by this logic of the *parergon* which is more powerful than the logic of the analytic. We could pursue the consequences of this infectious affection in detail. They cannot be local. The reflective procedure written on the frame (this is—written about the

frame): a general law which is no longer a mechanical or teleological law of nature, of the accord or harmony of the faculties (etc.), but a certain repeated dislocation, an irrepressible, regulated deterioration, which splits the frame in general, embeds it in the corners of its angles and articulations, renders its internal limit external, takes its thickness into account, makes us see the painting from the side of the canvas or the wood, etc.

To cite only the first consequence of this initial forcing, look at the end of the first note (another *parergon* which frames both the text and the parenthesis). Just as Kant cannot strictly justify the introduction from the analytic of judgment, he is unable to justify the *order* he follows in applying the frame, the four categories from the analytic of concepts. Like the transposition of the table (*Tafel*), that is, the frame, the order of the argument does not successfully rationalize Kant's interest in philosophic terms. His motivation is dissimulated behind arbitrary philosophic decree. Indeed, the argument begins with the two *mathematical* categories (*quantity* and *quality*). Why not begin with the two *dynamic* categories (*relation* and *modality*)? And why reverse the order of the mathematical categories in the original argument (quantity before quality)? This last reversal is surely explained by the fact that cognition is neither the end nor the effect of the judgment of taste: quantity (here, universality) is not the *first* aspect of a judgment of taste. At the end of the note: "I have brought the moment of quality first under review, because this is what the aesthetic judgement on the beautiful looks to in the first instance."¹⁶ Why first? Priority is not prescribed by the table, by the order of judgment, by the logic proper to the frame. Nothing in the (logical) analytic can account for this priority. But if a reversal of the logical order is produced here for reasons which are not logical, why not pursue this? What is the rule here, or the critical limit?

Quality (disinterest) is the very thing that determines the formality of the beautiful object: it must be free of all charm, all power to seduce, it must not provoke any emotion, allow any enjoyment. Thus the *opposition* between the formal and the material, between line and color (as nonform), between composition and sound (as nonform), the formal *parergon* and the material *parergon*, the opposition between the good and the bad *parergon* (which in itself is neither good nor bad) depends upon the framing of this quality, this framing-effect which we call quality, aspect of aspects, according to which, violently, everything appears to begin. Position: opposition: frame.

In "Exemplification" the discourse on sound and color develops, in similar fashion, within the angle of the two mathematical categories (quality and quantity), while the entire analytic of the beautiful undoes—incessantly and as if unwittingly—the work of the frame.

Actually, the frame warps as it works. As a locus of work, an origin structurally bordered with surplus value, that is, exceeded on both sides by that

16. *Ibid.*

which it exceeds, in effect it warps. Like wood. It splits, breaks down, breaks up, at the same time that it cooperates in the production of the product, it exceeds it and deducts itself. It never simply exposes itself.

The analytic of the beautiful warps, constantly undoing the work of the frame insofar as, while allowing itself to be cross-ruled by the analytic of concepts and the doctrine of judgment, it describes the absence of the concept in the activity of taste. "The beautiful is that which apart from concepts [*sans concept*] is represented as the object of a Universal delight [*Wohlgefallen*]."¹⁷ This definition (second moment, category of quantity) derives from the qualitative definition (disinterest). The object of a disinterested pleasure does not depend on an empirical inclination, but appeals to freedom and touches everyone in the place where everyone—anyone—may be touched. It is therefore universal. However in explaining why this universality must exist apart from concepts, Kant exhibits, as it were, the forcing—the imposition of an analytic of concepts upon a process without concepts—but justifies his operation with an argument which we may consider as the *constitution*, that by which the entire edifice of the third *Critique* stands and holds together between its two great wings (the critique of aesthetic judgment and the critique of teleological judgment). This is *analogy*. It operates everywhere in the book; its effect can be steadily checked. At this particular point in the argument—this crossing—it *assembles* the conceptless and the concept, universality *without* a concept and universality *with* a concept, the *without* and the *with*; in this way it legitimizes the violence, the occupation of a nonconceptual field by a conceptual force. *Without* and *with* at the same time (*ama*). As a result of its qualitative universality the judgment of taste *resembles* logical judgment, which in all strictness it can never be. The nonconceptual resembles the conceptual. This rather strange resemblance, a singular proximity or affinity (*Aehnlichkeit*) which, at some point¹⁸ to be determined later, extracts from *mimesis* an interpretation of the beautiful which firmly rejects imitation. It involves no contradiction that is not reappropriated by the economy of *physis* as *mimesis*.

Those who take a disinterested pleasure (without enjoyment and without concept) in the beautiful "will speak of the beautiful as if beauty were a quality of the object and the judgement logical (forming a cognition of the Object by concepts of it); although it is only aesthetic, and contains merely a reference of the representation of the object to the subject;—because it still bears this resemblance [*Aehnlichkeit*: affinity, proximity, paternity] to the logical judgement, that it may be presupposed to be valid for all men. But this universality cannot spring from concepts. For from concepts there is no transition to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure (save in the case of pure practical laws, which, however, carry an interest with them; and such an interest does not attach to the pure judgement of taste)."¹⁸

17. cf. "Economimesis." (Author's note.)

18. Kant, *Critique*, p. 51.

The discourse on color and on sound belongs to "Exemplification," which comes during the exposition of the third category: the dynamic category of finality. The judgment of taste is related to a purely formal finality, without any concept and without any end, without any conceptual, determinant representation of an end. Nevertheless the two mathematical categories are indispensable: sound and color are excluded as *alluring* only in their nonformality, their materiality. As pure form, sound and color may yield to universal appreciation, in conformity with the quantity of a judgment of taste; they can give rise to disinterested pleasure, in conformity with the quality of a judgment of taste. Sensations of color and of sound can "with good reason" be held to be beautiful insofar as they are "pure": this determination of purity concerns only the form, which alone can "with certainty" be "universally communicated."¹⁹ We have two means of access to formal purity: by a nonsensible, nonsensual reflection, by the regular play of reflections, "assuming with Euler" that colors are vibrations of the aether (*pulsus*) at regular intervals and assuming (formal analogy between sound and color) that sound consists in a regular rhythm of vibrating aether. Kant had the greatest difficulty deciding this point. However in this hypothesis we are not dealing with the material contents of received sensations, but with formal determinations. This is why the simple color is a pure color and thus belongs within the beautiful, giving rise to universally communicable appreciation. Composite colors cannot. The empiricist motif (that simple color does not give rise to a transmissible perception) seems to have been reversed, but here it is not a question of determinant perception, only of pleasure and of displeasure.

This ambivalence of color (valorized as formal purity or as relation, devalorized as sensible matter; beautiful on the one hand, alluring on the other, pure presence in both cases) is taken to the second power, squared when the color of the frame (*goldene Rahmen*, for example) is concerned, when the equivocal *parergon* of color is added to the equivocal *parergon* of the frame. What would be the musical equivalent of this square

it may be objected that frames are not always, have not always been, and will not always be square, rectangular, quadrangular—or even angular—figures. Tables and paintings (*Tafel*) as well.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

That is true: a systematic, critical, and typological history of framing appears possible and necessary.²⁰ But the angular in general, the quadrangular in particular do not simply form one object among others. Everything written here is valid for the logic of the parergonal border *in general*, but the privilege of the “cadre,” which seems more coincidental in Latin than the Germanic languages, is not fortuitous

a Kantian question: relation of the concept to the nonconcept (top/bottom, left/right), to the body, to the signature which is placed “on” the frame: actually at times; structurally always. The prosthesis

the third *Critique* no longer moves smoothly as soon as we concern ourselves with the example, with this example of the example which forms and is formed by the frame. If this does move smoothly perhaps it is because things are not going very well, because of an infirmity within the thesis which requires compensation by a prosthesis. The progress of the argument is assured only with the assistance of a wheelchair or baby carriage. Thus, that which cannot stand alone, which cannot be established in its process, is moved forward. Framing always sustains and contains that which, by itself, collapses forthwith, cont

20. When “The Parergon” was first published, I had not yet read Meyer Schapiro’s “On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs,” *Semiotica*, I, no. 3 (1969). More than one indication will be found there concerning the “history” of framing, its “late invention,” the “cultural” character of the “rectangular frame,” as well as “the frame that bends and turns inward into the field of the picture to compress or entangle the figures (the trumeau of Souillac, the *Imago Hominis* in the Echternach Gospels . . .).” I also refer—this is self-evident—to all of Jean-Claude Lebensztejn’s publications. [Lebensztejn was the French translator of Schapiro’s article—trans.] (Author’s note.)

this is demonstrated by example, by the problem of the example and of reflective judgment. What does the *Critique of Pure Reason* say? That examples are the wheels (*roulettes*) of judgment. French translators often say the “crutches” of judgment: but they are actually wheels (*Gängelwagen*), not skateboards but the little wheeled carriages for children, the aged, or the infirm, those who do not have enough judgment, good sense, that faculty of natural judgment that is most common (not the *sensus communis* of the third *Critique*) which Kant calls *Mutterwitz*. Those who do not have enough of this mother wit, the infirm, imbeciles, need wheels, examples. “Examples are thus the wheels of the faculty of judging, and are indispensable to those who lack this natural talent.” Nevertheless wheels do not replace judgment: nothing can replace mother wit, the lack of which cannot be supplied by any school (*dessen Mangel keine Schule ersetzen kann*). These exemplary wheels are thus prostheses which replace nothing. But like all examples (*Beispielen*), as Hegel will remark, they play, give rise to play. With the essence, beside (*beiher*) the essence, specifies Hegel. But in that case they can also reverse, become unbalanced, turn natural movement into parergonal movement, deflect the energy of the *ergon*, introduce chance and the abyss into the necessity of *Mutterwitz*: not a contrary order, but an aleatory separation which can with a single blow cause us to lose our heads, a Russian roulette if we introduce pleasure without enjoyment, the death instinct, and the work of mourning into the experience of the beautiful

the *parergon*—give it up for lost (*faire son deuil*). Like the wholly other of heteroaffection, in pleasure without *jouissance* and without concept, it elicits and delimits the work of mourning, work *in general as* the work of mourning

Self-protection/self-adornment

reserve, economy, parsimony, preserve—self-protection of the work (*ergon*), contained restrained energy (the “binding” [*Verbindung*] of energy, condition of

the “mastery” [*Herrschaft*] of the pleasure principle: the result “is not simple”—to be continued)

the self-protection of the work, of the *energeia* which only becomes *ergon* (because of) the *parergon*: not opposed to free, full, pure, unchained energy (the pure act and total presence of *energeia*, the Aristotelian prime mover), but opposed to what it *lacks*; not opposed to the lack as a posable or opposable negativity, substantial void, or determinable and contained absence (still verifiable essence and presence), but against the impossibility of fixing *differance* in its contour, of halting heterogeneity (*differance*) in place, of localizing, even in a metaempirical way, what metaphysics calls (we have just seen it) *lack*, to make it return, equal or similar to itself (*adaequatio-homoiosis*), to its proper place, following its own trajectory, preferably a circular one (castration as truth). Apparently opposed—or because opposed—these two bordering determinations of that against which the *parergon* works (the operation of free energy and pure productivity or the operation of the essential lack) are *the same* (metaphysics).

beyond the frame (the lethargy of the frame, its absolute value): naturalization of the frame. There is no natural frame. There *is* framing, but the frame *does not exist*.

The *parergon*—apotrope (allure, display) of the primary processes, of free energy, that is, of the “theoretical fiction.” (*Ein psychischer Apparat, der nur den Primarvorgang besasse, existiert zwar unseres Wissens nicht und ist insoferne eine theoretische Fiktion.*) Thus only a particular application of the theoretical fiction can warp and work (against) the frame, (make or allow) it to play (against) itself. But we must not forget that the *content*, the *object* of this theoretical fiction (free energy of the originary process, pure productivity) is metaphysics, onto-theology itself. The *application* of the fiction always runs the risk of believing it, or in

creating belief in it. The *application* of the fiction must therefore be careful not to palm off metaphysical truth once again under the label of fiction. There is fiction and fiction. Here, where there is play and work, we need an angle—diagonality—and to disclose the angularity of round frames (some do exist). Hegel: mind is linked to the apparition of the round form



everything will blossom beside a deconsecrated tomb: the free or vague (*pulchritudo vaga*) and nondependent (*pulchritudo adhearens*) beauty of the flower. This will be, an arbitrary example, a colorless, odorless tulip (even more securely than color, scent is lost for art and for the beautiful [paragraph 53]—try to frame a scent) which Kant undoubtedly did not pick in Holland but from a book by one Saussure, which he read frequently at that time. “A flower, on the other hand, *zum Beispiel eine Tulpe*, is regarded as beautiful, because we meet with a certain finality in its perception, which, in our estimate of it, is not referred to any end whatever”²¹



indeed

21. Kant, *Critique*, p. 80.

