

Interests in the Beautiful [#41-42]

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41: Empirical Interest in the Beautiful

K: JB cannot be determined by an interest: the existence of an object cannot cause the pleasure felt; but an indirect interest [a pleasure in the existence of an object] can arise in connection with merely contemplative pleasure

K: these interests are of two types: 1) empirical interest [we are interested in the existence of beautiful objects because of an inclination to sociability inherent in human nature: that is, we want beautiful objects around because then we can share them with others: thus beautiful objects are used as conversation pieces {41}]; 2) intellectual interest [we are interested in the existence of beautiful objects because our will can be determined a priori by reason: that is, we want beautiful objects around because they hint at a possible co-operation of nature with freedom {since they seem designed, so that nature seems malleable to design by a God we can further practically determine as moral author of a universe compatible with moral action} {42}]

K: taste furthers sociability, which is a natural inclination in humans, bcs. it provides something to talk about in judging beautiful objects. we can test this w/ isolation case. isolated people would not adorn themselves or their hut, for purposes of appearing refined to others [allow they may very well admire natural beauty--a sign of moral feeling--they would not use beauty for other purposes]. The desire to share in feeling of the beautiful is as it were an "original contract dictated by humanity" or the [essential] "beginning of civilization"; however, in the temporal beginnings of human life, charms were judged important in society, but there has been historical progress toward refinement as wanting to share pure pleasure. Here we see a classic Euro-teleology: historical progress = getting back to the "original contract", that is, allowing essence of humanity to come out as ability to overcome sensory pleasure in favor of pleasure in pure contemplation. Hence the savages bound to sensory pleasures are inessentially human, while pure pleasure of contemplation reached in/as civilization is the realization of the essence of man.

K: now we cannot treat this desire for empirical communication provided for by our taste as *sensus communis*--a desire that makes us use beauty as a conversation piece--as what mediates a transition from sense enjoyment [agreeable] to moral feeling [good], because this desire is still an inclination, even if a refined, civilized one, and thus "easily fuses" with other inclinations and passions we find in society, thus muddling the searched-for transition. So now we must turn to another way of investigating pure taste: intellectual interest.

42: Intellectual Interest

K: some propose that any interest in the beautiful is a sign of good moral character; however, the "virtuosi of taste" are notorious for being vain, etc.. So we are tempted to the preliminary conclusion that interest in beauty is difficult to reconcile with interest in the good. [but showing such a connection of interests is what K wants to do in this section].

K: will admit interest in beautiful art is no proof of moral inclination; but a direct interest [not just taste] in beautiful nature is a "mark" of a good soul. remember though that this must be a pure pleasure, not a charm.

K: solitude reveals direct interest in nat B [cf. 41, where solitude revealed social basis of indirect interest in the beautiful {desire for approval as having taste}]; this interest is also intellectual, since it based on form [w/o purpose], not charm.

K: must be genuine natural B, not clever imposture [this would be merely clever copying of natural patterns in reproduction w/o difference {mere numerical difference}, not genius' modification / deviation from example]

K: we do in fact associate direct interest w/ nat B w/ moral feeling: how can we account for this?

K: a very complex argument here: 1) AJ yields universally valid feeling; 2) pure PR also yields universally valid moral feeling, but this one also gives rise to an interest [that is, we desire the existence of the good]; 3) reason has an interest that nature should give hint that it is harmonious w/ disinterested liking [moral feeling; that is, that nature harmonizes w/ freedom]; 4) natural beauty shows a harmony w/ our aesthetic/judging nature [is subjectively purposive]; 5) this harmony resembles the harmony of nature w/ practical reason; 6) hence moral interest is aroused by nat B [harmony of nat B w/ aesthetic pleasure is sign of, or resembles, the harmony of nature and freedom]; 7) therefore, interest in nat B is a sign of already grounded moral feeling.

K: defense of the above argument from charge of being "rather too studied": 1) direct interest in nat B is not common, but peculiar to the good; 2) analogy between pure JT and MJ [both concern a priori valid feelings] is not subtle; 3)

purposiveness w/o purpose of nat B is referred to our moral vocation, since it has no objective purpose [what could nature as mechanism have to gain by its extravagant beauty?].

K: B art does not arouse a direct interest: 1) either it imitates nat B; or 2) we can see it is intentionally aimed at our liking, so that we could have only an indirect interest in its producer and his or her purposes, not in the art itself.

K: natural charms, as sensuous, are not what we're after.