

*That delight which we connect with imagining
the real existence of an object is called interest.
Such a delight, therefore, always involves
a reference to the faculty of desire [. . .].*

– Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (1790)¹

*Kant was the first to achieve the insight, never
since forgotten, that aesthetic comportment
is free from immediate desire; he snatched
art away from that avaricious philistinism that
always wants to touch it and taste it.*

– Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (1970)²

Interest, Immanuel Kant will insist in the *Critique of Judgment*, is irrelevant to questions of taste; that is, any ontological concern with the actual existence of an object interferes with our ability to contemplate freely its beauty. Proper aesthetic response demands instead that we bracket off “the faculty of desire” – that “appetitive faculty” (*Begehrungsvermögen*) through which we wish to incorporate the world into ourselves, to consume and consummate it – and see the object as a representation only, to be approached and judged in a spirit of disinterestedness.³ By refusing to take account of the

object as actually existing, we separate questions of the aesthetic or of beauty from any practical life context. As Peter Bürger has written, Kant's insights "presuppose the completed evolution of art as a sphere that is detached from the praxis of life."⁴ Disinterestedness is the guarantor of art's autonomy, in other words; it ensures, in Theodor W. Adorno's memorable phrase, "the emancipation of art from cuisine or pornography."⁵

Kant recognizes, however, that such autonomy is not universally acknowledged and that some spectators will not set aside extraneous ontological concerns when confronted with questions of aesthetic judgment. So, when asked "whether I consider that the palace I see before me is beautiful," the eighteenth-century bourgeois social critic misses the point and inveighs "with the vigor of a Rousseau against the vanity of the great who spend the sweat of the people on such superfluous things."⁶ Such a reply is inappropriate, Kant tells us, its assessment based on the palace's status as a manifestation of an oppressive feudal power rather than on the disinterested contemplation of its architectural form. Others might simply reply, "I do not care for things that are merely made to be gaped at" – voicing a kind of unwillingness even to engage in the act of detached reflection itself. But perhaps the most surprising counterexample offered by Kant, and the one that proves most recalcitrant to the spirit of disinterestedness, is that of the Iroquois sachem who, when asked about the palace, "said that nothing in Paris pleased him better than the eating-houses."⁷ Here, the "appetitive faculty" is quite literally at play – what is the pleasure of contemplating a palace next to that of dining in one of the city's restaurants? What is aesthetic delight in a building's external

form, this surprising Iroquois asks, when compared with the sense pleasure afforded by what might be found inside?

This decidedly *interested* response of a mythical Iroquois sachem aligns the perception of the aesthetic with the faculty of desire, reorienting the question of judgment around “the immediate satisfaction of needs.”⁸ Kant’s decision to illustrate this point with a tale of an indigenous inhabitant of the forests of North America transposed to eighteenth-century Paris warrants some consideration. His Iroquois is indeed fictitious, but not entirely invented; he based it on a French chronicle’s brief mention of a visit to the city by a group of Native Americans:

Iroquois who went to Paris in 1666 and who were shown all the royal houses and all the beauties of this great city admired nothing of this and would have preferred the villages to the capital of the leading monarchy of Europe if they had not seen the Rue de la Huchette, where they were immensely pleased with the grill-stalls that are there festooned with every kind of meat all the time.⁹

Indeed, in the seventeenth century the street that so pleased these visitors, the rue de la Huchette, was known as a district of grill-shops and caterers located just across the Seine from Notre-Dame.¹⁰ Yet the Iroquois’ favoring of this quarter and their demonstrative insensibility to the glories of Louis XIV’s Paris were perhaps not as naïve as the chronicler suggests; after all, this group was in Paris precisely as part of a diplomatic exchange during peace negotiations between France and the Five Nations of the Iroquois in the wake of a devastating offensive on the part of the colonizing Europeans in the autumn of 1666.¹¹ These sorts of exchanges were common diplomatic tools for the French, who

encouraged “chiefs and headmen to come to court in order to strengthen alliances” by awing them with the glories of their civilization – a strategy that, however, mistakenly assumed its targets were rather more credulous than proved to be the case.¹²

In Kant’s retelling, these emissaries fully participate in the dialectical conception of the “noble savage” outlined by Hayden White, whereby the representation of Native Americans simultaneously could serve two contradictory ends: on one hand denouncing, in their “naturalness,” the claims of European aristocracy to a natural superiority; and on the other figuring, in their “savagery,” the very negation of European civilization.¹³ The *Critique of Judgment*, despite placing the Iroquois reaction to Paris alongside a Rousseauian rejection of feudal ostentation, nevertheless leans heavily toward this second end, what we could call the negation trope, with the Iroquois sachem displaying precisely that “avaricious philistinism” that aesthetic autonomy had been meant to banish. There is a curious over-coding here, with racial otherness compounding the failure of aesthetic response – what reads as a willful refusal to detach the aesthetic from practical life contexts. Touching and tasting, we might say, return to the fore in the experience of what Pierre Bourdieu by extension called “barbarous taste.”

Indeed, the semi-mythical Iroquois of Kant’s text appears to stand in for a whole host of otherwise invisible spectators behind in which we find lurking the figure of the popular, of the working class. As Bourdieu wrote in this context, referring to Kant’s distinction between the beautiful and the merely agreeable:

The taste of the working classes is defined [. . .] by the refusal or the impossibility (one should say the refusal-impossibility) to distinguish between “that which

pleases” and “that which gratifies” and more generally, between “disinterestedness,” the sole guarantee of the aesthetic quality of contemplation, and “the interest of the senses” which defines the “agreeable” or “the interest of Reason.”¹⁴

Kant criticizes the Iroquois sachem precisely because his unwillingness / inability to bracket the hungering, needful body renders aesthetic contemplation impossible. The utilitarian and the appetitive are insurmountable barriers to the exercise of taste.¹⁵

It is difficult not to conclude that, for Kant, the utilitarian and the appetitive – these manifestations of the “faculty of desire” – were somehow profoundly and troublingly tied to the social upheavals of the later eighteenth century and, ultimately, with the claims of the French Revolution, whose outbreak more or less coincided with the publication of the *Critique of Judgment*. We sense it in his choice of the Rousseauian social critic and the Iroquoian noble savage as counterexamples to his ideal of disinterestedness, choices that certainly had particular resonance at the time of their initial articulation – and this despite Kant’s avowed support of the Revolution itself.¹⁶ For what could be lauded in the political sphere in the form of the advance of Enlightenment rationalism is to be decried when imported into that of the aesthetic. But there were others writing in the wake of the Revolution who saw things otherwise, who, we might say, adopted the stance of the Iroquois sachem and his “barbarous taste” when considering the place of art. Their conjoining of interest and aesthetics can clearly be heard in Pierre-Joseph Proudhon’s posthumous *Principle of Art*, in which the nineteenth-century anarchist insists that the inexorable course of progress leaves an ever-shrinking place for artistic embellishment:

But what about the incessant movement of ideas, this unlimited extension of our knowledge? Something for the artist to ponder deeply: ideas becoming more and more idealized, so to speak, by their determination, there comes a time when, for a multitude of things, the ideal coincides with the idea to the point that art seems out of work, and the artist dried up.¹⁷

Just as, in the courtroom, the “science and logic” of a lawyer’s argument should count for more than its “style and eloquence,” so too the artist’s task becomes akin to any other vocation or craft as rationality pushes beauty aside: “where the idea is the ideal, there remains no room for art: it becomes a profession (*métier*).”¹⁸

Already the engineer – that hero of twentieth-century productivism’s attacks on art as a social institution – represents for Proudhon the primary instance of this art-as-*métier*:

The engineer admires the power, the strength, the economy of aims in a machine: in a word, the idea; some moldings added to the parts, some expense for elegance and embellishment – like those figures put on the bows of ships – mean nothing to him. The accuracy of the formula, its exact and happy application – that is his ideal. Go to the industrial expositions, which have become so brilliant they overshadow the expositions of painting and sculpture: what is the ideal of those industrious men, those manufacturers, those metalworkers, whose enterprises, by their splendor and immensity, today truly have some right to hold the poverty of contemporary art in disdain?¹⁹

His answer lies at the opposite pole from Kantian disinterest. “For them, the ideal is summed up in the union of these two terms: superior quality of the *product* and

minimization of production *costs* – terms whose synthesis is WEALTH.” Now Proudhon will admit that wealth is not identical to art, while nevertheless insisting that it too should be considered “an aesthetic element” and that “confused artists, dreaming of making quick fortunes from their little games, have something to learn from the industrious,” not least that “wellbeing is just as difficult to create as the ideal.”²⁰ Proudhon’s error, in Kantian terms, is to have mistaken the beautiful for the good, that is, for “what is ESTEEMED (approved); i.e., that on which he sets an objective worth.”²¹ With this *bien-être*, the interest of reason “extorts” – the term is Kant’s – its approval.

Something similar is at work in Herbert Marcuse’s “aesthetic turn,” appearing a century after the publication of the *Principle of Art*, a renewal of Proudhon’s insistence that art would become *métier*. In 1967 he notes that “the historical locus and function of art are changing. The *real, reality*, is becoming the prospective domain of art, and art is becoming technique in a literal, ‘practical’ sense: making and remaking things, rather than painting pictures.”²² He spoke repeatedly in these years of “the possibility of the artistic Form becoming a ‘reality principle’,” which only *seems* to contradict the arguments he had previously made in *Eros and Civilization* – namely, that humanity has gradually replaced the pleasure principle with the reality principle and, in our own time, with what he calls “the performance principle,” enshrined in a society oriented toward profit, competition, and continuous expansion. According to this model, the pleasure principle – the joys of the body, the poetry of sexual love – was posed against the reality principle as a force of liberation. But what is true for society at large must be reformulated when considered in the aesthetic realm, where pleasure has served only as compensation; here, then, it is the

intrusion of reality – or what Kant calls “interest” – that would serve as a means of liberation. Art would be put in the service of a new reality principle and “technique would then tend to become art, and art would tend to form reality.”²³ Such prognostications echo Proudhon, of course, but also a long line of subsequent leftist thought on the integration of art into life praxis, such as Leon Trotsky in 1924, writing of how “the wall between art and industry will come down” and “the great style of the future will be formative, not ornamental.”²⁴

But what of the interest of the senses? What of the extortions of the cook and the pornographer and the gratifications of touching and tasting? What of the transplanted sachem eyeing the Parisian grill-stalls? Perhaps here we are closer to Marcuse’s strategy of aesthetic “revocation” – a term he adopts from Thomas Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, in which the fictional composer Adrian Leverkühn aims to “revoke” Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, the acme of beauty and idealism in Western culture. What has become intolerable, Marcuse explains, is the entirety of that “higher” or “established” culture, with “its affirmative, sublimating, and justifying magic.”²⁵ His choice of language here is significant; in a modern world governed in its economic, juridical, and political aspects by the inexorable logic of Weberian *Entzauberung*, he claims that the realm of culture has remained atavistically apart in its continued enchantment. It was of course Sigmund Freud who had most closely explored the connections between the spheres of magic and art; in *Totem and Taboo* he described how the “omnipotence of thought” and animism so pronounced in both neurotic patients and so-called “primitive” societies lived on in modern cultural production: “Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by

desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects – thanks to artistic illusion – just as though it were something real.”²⁶ While Freud would likely have seen this as part of art’s essential nature, the radical left refused to exclude the aesthetic realm from the same processes of development to which psychic and social life alike were subject; from an initial narcissism and animism, art too would have to pass to a “scientific phase,” renouncing the fantasies of the pleasure principle and turning to the external world for the objects of its desires. This was precisely the logic of Marcusean “revocation” in the face of art’s lingering magical wish fulfillments.

Revocation is also a matter of collapsing distances. Kantian taste, after all, is predicated on the maintenance of a proper distance, that of the disinterested spectator, and even the Freudian conception of the artwork still assumes that its magic works across a determinate spatial divide. But dragging the artwork into life praxis necessarily entails the abolition of such separations and a radical curtailment of its aloofness. For the avaricious philistine, art is to be tasted and touched. This requires a fundamental rethinking of the work’s relation to reality. Formerly, as Marcuse has it, “the tension between the actual and the possible is transfigured into an insoluble conflict, in which reconciliation is by grace of the oeuvre as *form*: beauty as the ‘promesse de bonheur.’”²⁷ That is, in their translation into aesthetic form, given social conditions were once, prior to the advent of late capitalist culture, compelled to show themselves for what they were: the artwork subverted everyday experience, refuting and refusing the established order. But today the artwork is called upon to fulfill what it once could only promise. A small assemblage from 1960 by the

French *nouveau réaliste* Arman plays upon this ambivalent transformation: a collection of pill bottles displayed in his characteristic manner, piled up under glass in a shallow wooden box. Today, in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, it bears the rather innocuous title *Valetudinarian* – making it something of a portrait of illness or of the hypochondriac. But previously it bore a rather different title, which conferred upon it a rather different meaning; that title derives from a small slip of paper pasted on the glass in its upper left-hand corner, on which we read: “‘La beauté n’est que la promesse du bonheur.’ (Stendhal)” On one hand, we can see this as the height of irony, the utopian prefiguration of the artwork collapsed into the tinselly promises of the drugstore, happiness reduced to pharmacological relief. On the other, however, we might read in it the eradication of that continual postponement of (bodily, sensuous) pleasure enforced by the artwork-as-form in Western high culture. As Adorno reminds us, “the consciousness of people, especially that of the masses who in an antagonistic society are separated by cultural privilege from consciousness of such a dialectic” – of, that is, the artwork as simultaneously promising happiness and breaking that promise – “holds fast to the promise of happiness; rightfully so, but in its immediate, material form.”²⁸ If for Adorno this opens the artwork to the commodified realm of the culture industry, we can also see it as demand for an art that might answer to the faculty of desire. Arman’s assemblage evokes the promise of such immediate satisfaction in its revocation of the merely metaphorical pleasures of the artwork, drawing us near and inviting us to taste.

Indeed one could write a history of neo-avant-garde attempts over the course of the 1960s to abolish the disinterestedness at the heart of Kant’s *Critique* and replace it

with modes of response oriented around tasting and touching. Perhaps, as a pendant to Arman's pill cabinet, we might position Valie Export's 1968 *Tap and Touch Cinema*, in which the artist appeared in public spaces with a curtained box strapped over her bare torso; visitors to this miniature "cinema" – passersby on the street – were invited to touch her breasts as they looked into her face. *Tap and Touch Cinema*, realized a number of times in different cities, is a remarkable intervention into film, but in this context we might draw attention to a single aspect, emphasized in Export's own description of the work: "To see (i.e. feel, touch) the film, the viewer (user) has to stretch his hands through the entrance to the cinema. At last, the curtain which formerly rose only for the eyes now rises for both hands. The tactile reception is the opposite of the deceit of voyeurism."²⁹ Unlike commercial film, which she understood to provide its spectators mere surrogate visual pleasures, here something was truly offered – the artist's own body, available to feel and touch. If one route toward utility passed via technology and reason – the artwork integrated into life praxis as a means to shape reality – then this other, less considered route passes via the senses and desire. It is the route of the Iroquois sachem, the route of a "barbarous taste" that draws the artwork near and consumes it in a demand for gratification. Such an avaricious philistinism proposes a fundamental transformation of artwork and spectatorship alike, pointing us toward an aesthetic of touch and of taste.

ENDNOTES

¹ "Critique of Judgment," trans. James C. Meredith, in *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant's Moral and Political Writings*, ed. Carl J. Friedrich (New York: The Modern Library, 1949), 285.

² Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 10.

³ Disinterestedness is a prominent thematic in studies of Kant's aesthetics; perhaps the best treatment is to be found in Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), 167-206.

⁴ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 26.

⁵ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 12.

⁶ "Critique of Judgment," 285.

⁷ "Critique of Judgment," 285.

⁸ Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 43.

⁹ From Pierre-François-Xavier Charlevoix, *Histoire et Description générale de la Nouvelle-France* (1744), quoted in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, "The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant," 2000), 367n5.

¹⁰ See for example the annotations in Jacques Hillairet, *Connaissance du vieux Paris* (Paris: Rivages, 1993), "Rive gauche & les îles," 52.

¹¹ See Matthew Dennis, *Cultivating a Landscape of Peace: Iroquois-European Encounters in Seventeenth-Century America* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 213-256.

¹² Olive Patricia Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1984), 205.

¹³ See Hayden White, "The Noble Savage Theme as Fetish," in *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, vol. 1, ed. Fredi Chiappelli (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 121-135.

¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Malden, MA and Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 40. For the Kant, see "Critique of Judgment," 291.

¹⁵ In this I follow the characterization of Dave Beech and John Roberts, "Tolerating Impurities," in *The Philistine Controversy*, ed. Beech and Roberts (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 158.

¹⁶ On Kant's vocal support of the Revolution, see Manfred Kuehn, *Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 340-343.

¹⁷ P. J. Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art et de sa destination sociale* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1865), 176.

¹⁸ Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art*, 179 and 181.

¹⁹ Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art*, 181.

²⁰ Proudhon, *Du principe de l'art*, 181-182.

²¹ "Critique of Judgment," 291.

²² Herbert Marcuse, "Art in the One-Dimensional Society," in *Radical Perspectives in the Arts*, ed. Lee Baxandall (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1972), 65. On Marcuse's late aesthetic thought, see Barry Katz, *Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation* (London and New York: Verso, 1982), 193-214.

²³ Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 24.

²⁴ Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1957), 249.

²⁵ Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*, 46.

²⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Totem and Taboo," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 13, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 90.

²⁷ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 61-62.

²⁸ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 311.

²⁹ Valie Export, quoted at Media Art Net, accessible at <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/tapp-und-tastkino/>.

One of the most fascinating arguments for the existence of an all-perfect God is the ontological argument. While there are several different versions of the argument, all purport to show that it is self-contradictory to deny that there exists a greatest possible being. Thus, on this general line of argument, it is a necessary truth that such a being exists; and this being is the God of traditional Western theism. The ontological argument, then, is unique among such arguments in that it purports to establish the real (as opposed to abstract) existence of some entity. Indeed, if the ontological arguments succeed, it is as much a contradiction to suppose that God doesn't exist as it is to suppose that there are square circles or female bachelors. Since stylistics is interested in all the aspects of language, it should be subdivided into the same branches as in linguistics in general, to wit: stylistic semasiology; stylistic lexicology; stylistic syntax; stylistic phonetics. Stylistics, with all its subdivisions, reveals a peculiar approach towards language: it compares the sub-systems for the purpose of finding out the so-called styles. What is style? Every type of speech uses its own lingual sub-systems: not all the forms comprising the national language but only a certain number of forms. It can also be an object with physical existence (i.e. person, car) or conceptual existence (i.e. company, job). Attribute An attribute is a particular property that describes entity (i.e. person name company name). Attribute Value Attribute values are major data stored in the database. Relationship Instance Relationship Instance is an association of entities, where the association includes exactly one entity from each participating entity type. The participation constraint specifies whether the existence of an entity depends on its being related to another entity via the relationship type. 3.9 Under what conditions can an attribute of a binary relationship type be migrated to become an attribute of one of the participating entity type? An entity is an object in the real world with an independent existence that can be differentiated from other objects. An entity might be. An object with physical existence (e.g., a lecturer, a student, a car). An object with conceptual existence (e.g., a course, a job, a position). Entities can be classified based on their strength. An entity is considered weak if its tables are existence dependent. That is, it cannot exist without a relationship with another entity. They are used to connect related information between tables. Relationship strength is based on how the primary key of a related entity is defined. A weak, or non-identifying, relationship exists if the primary key of the related entity does not contain a primary key component of the parent entity.