Fine Art, Creativity, and Kant: Some Philosophical Reflections

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The present essay does not claim to be a contribution in any manner to the Kant scholarship. My attempt here is only to try and understand a small section in *The Critique of Judgment* in which he talks about fine art and the process by which it is brought off. So in what follows I will discuss what Kant means by fine art as also the nature of the process that makes such art possible. In dealing with this matter I will also focus on the art/ nature divide that Kant brings out for outlining the concept of fine art.

To begin with, two important points that Kant makes in his third *Critique*[1] are: (a) that the *aesthetic* is to be distinguished from the useful, and (b) that the beautiful is *without* a concept. The points add up to the view that works of art are not to be viewed as objects of utility, and that such works do not admit of any predetermined rules. In respect of works of art, Kant develops his view of "genius" which, according to him, "is a talent for producing that *for which no definite rule can be given*: and not an aptitude in the way of cleverness for what can be learned according to some rule; and that consequently originality must be its primary property."[2] Thus, Kant clearly maintains that making a work of art does not involve following some pre-given rule or formula. Creativity in the region of fine arts is an activity of the order that, far from being in line with *imitation*, is autonomous in the sense of being independent of any rule. The creative artist must produce something original the like of which has not been done before, a work that may be regarded as an "exemplar" that could not be copied, but is capable of inspiring other artists to create along the same lines.

Before we go on to understanding what Kant means by the nature of such creativity, let us put together his ideas about what he means by art. In the first place, art involves human skill or making by human effort. As he puts the matter, "where anything is called absolutely a work of

art, to distinguish it from a natural product, then some work of man is always understood."[3] But such skill must be distinguished from science in terms of the latter being in the nature of knowledge as opposed to what is practical skill or "technic". Knowledge of how the best shoe must be made is indeed quite different from being able to turn out one. Interestingly, Kant distinguishes art from science on one hand and also distinguishes art from nature, on the other. For example, the cells constructed by bees is a product of their nature because "no rational deliberation forms the basis of their labour".[4] This implies that some rational deliberation is involved in the making of art. Also, what comes about by accident or chance does not fall under such deliberate making. Kant also distinguishes art from handicraft or industrial art. He characterizes art as "free" and is "agreeable on its own account", whereas handicraft or industrial art involves labour "which on its own account is disagreeable (drudgery), and is only attractive by means of what it results in".[5] Also, for craft there is a definite end or purpose in view as also the rule by which such end may be achieved. For art there is no definite end, nor a rule to follow for the same.

What comes out of these comparisons is that, according to Kant, the domain of art is free and autonomous and is a product of genius. Hence, "fine arts must necessarily be regarded as arts of genius."[6] Its very possibility is linked to genius. "Fine art is only possible as a product of genius."[7] Significantly, Kant provides the framework for such genetic approach that seems necessary for an understanding of the nature of art and its distinction from other spheres of human endeavour. The question "How is art made?" rather than the question "What is art?" calls for consideration here. And we may look at the nature of creativity contrasting such activity to that of scientific knowledge or investigation.

> "So all that Newton has set forth in his immortal work on the Principles of Natural Philosophy may well be learned, however great a mind it took to find it all out...On the other hand no Homer or Wieland can show how his ideas, so rich at once in fancy and in thought, enter and assemble themselves in his brain, for the good reason that *he does not himself know, and so cannot teach other.*"[8]

A little reflection on these lines will bring out the message that the rules one operates with in the domain of Natural Philosophy or science are clearly known and are for that reason *teachable*. Learning here is no more than imitation; that is, knowing the rules and following them

out. On the other hand, there are no such rules for art. As Kant points out, one who creates art must have a *talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given*. This is quite different from having an aptitude for what can be learned according to some rule.[9] This is, however, not to say that art does not require *any* rule at all; for then it will be a mere product of chance. "For the thought of something as end must be present, or else its product would not be ascribed to an art at all, but would be a mere product of chance."[10] True, the thought of an end must be present though such thought is not to be equated to a definite specific end. According to Kant, such thought animates the mind of the artist and consequently that of the viewer. But this is not to say that such thought could be subsumed under a definite concept. This point needs to be clarified as it might otherwise seem a contradiction that for art there is no pre-given concept and yet it is not a product of chance either. The rule that goes into making art cannot be regarded as pre-given as it is in the case of science in which the rule can be learned by the practitioner and followed accordingly. In other words, in science there is a definite methodology that must be followed for the knowledge to be possible. On the other hand, "where an author owes a product to his genius, he does not himself know how the ideas for it have entered into his head, nor has he it in his power to invent the like at pleasure, or methodically, and communicate the same to others in such precepts as would put them in a position to produce similar product"[11]. The rule that goes into making art is what nature gives through genius. "Nature prescribes the rule through genius not to science but to art, and this also only in so far as it is to be fine art."[12] Earlier, Kant says, "*Genius* is the talent (natural endowment) which gives the rule to art. Since talent, as an innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to nature, we may put it this way Genius is the innate mental aptitude *through which* nature gives the rule to art."[13]

Thus, it would be quite natural to ask: What is it that goes on in artistic creation? Discussing the nature of creativity elsewhere John Hospers rightly says, "Creation is a kind of *activity*. But not all kinds of activity are creative."[14] For example, playing a game is also an activity, but such activity cannot be described as creative. A game is played according to a precise set of instructions or rules. In a creative activity, one does not know what the final product would be like. Hospers clarifies that if a poet "envisaged at the outset exactly what the poem would be like, with every word in its proper order, then he would already have

created the poem: the creative process would already be complete. Thus, the idea of an end-product that he has at the beginning can't be all that detailed; perhaps it is just a kind of potentiality, as the acorn is to the oak tree."[15] What Hospers says here seems to echo Kant's idea of creativity and lucidly brings out the crucial point in this regard.

A much more dominant sense in which creativity is understood and talked about is related to the act of doing or making something in a *physical* medium. Creative acts are a physical phenomenon about which it is possible to ask: Can such activity be explained in strict rationalistic terms? Does the artist have a blue print in his mind prior to making the work of art? Carl R. Hausman[16] points out that it is possible to distinguish two opposed standpoints to this central question: One, that believes that an explanation is possible along the lines of a rationalistic determinism; and, the other, refuting all such claim holds on to the conviction that a rational explanation is not possible, in principle. Housman's own suggestion is that creativity is "paradoxical" and that "a more adequate approach must be based on a view that makes room for a kind of understanding not bound by the demand that explanation include predictability."[17] Thus, in respect of painting, "creativity most obviously occurs when a different style appears, and a different style appears when there occurs a different pattern of visual or plastic qualities in the painter's product."[18] What we cannot explain is why the artist does the very things that he does.

Gotz, on the other hand, maintains that this way of characterizing creativity in terms of *originality* would not be acceptable because it makes sense to distinguish creativity as a process from originality that sometimes follow as a consequence. "Clearly, the *process* of making something new and original does not differ from the process of making something ordinary."[19] The question that arises in this context is this. Must every work of art be characterized by *originality* in the sense in which Kant means for it to qualify as a product of fine art so as to be an object of pure aesthetic judgment?

Kant does maintain that an object of fine art is what is created freely such that *originality* must be its primary property. But how does one determine what that originality consists in? Further, Kant holds the view that a product of fine art must please by its form alone, or rather by the *finality of its form*. Now it seems necessary to draw a distinction between these two conditions. The work of fine art that has the finality of form

may or may not be an original work of art. For example, a *fake* Picasso may please us by the finality of its form but cannot be regarded as original. Similarly, copies or variations of celebrated works of art would fulfill the condition relating to the finality of its form but would be far from being original. Further, it would seem to follow that for a pure judgment of taste to be made one would have to have a sense of history in order to determine which particular work can be regarded as an "exemplar" to have inspired a whole slew of similar works. True, by virtue of its form giving satisfaction each of these whole series of works would qualify as a work of art though the first among them in temporal sequence could only claim to be an exemplar. Given Kant's view of the matter there seems room for some confusion here. However, we may take up this matter a little later.

Before that, let us put together what we have discussed so far. (i) Products of art are of a special nature. They are not made quite the way in which objects of utility are made. The latter fall under the category of *mechanical* or *industrial* art in which there is not only *a definite purpose conceived beforehand* but also a set of definite *rule* following which the purpose can be achieved. The example of *handicraft* will also fall under the same class of objects. Art, or more appropriately, *fine art* must be distinguished from any of these, as there is neither a definite end in respect of art nor the rule that applies to its product given beforehand; nor can this be clearly formulated or for that matter taught to others. Also it has been pointed out, genius is the aptitude for making works of fine art without the help of some determinate rule that can be learned merely by imitation. The condition under which fine art is made is fulfilled only if the artist makes it by human labour and skill by responding to the rule that is provided to him by nature. (ii) So the artist who makes objects of fine art can neither clearly formulate the rule for himself nor can he teach the same to others. Yet he *does* apply some rule or else the work will not qualify as that of fine art. In this respect, a work of fine art is to be treated as an *exemplar* or model for some other artist of similar talent to understand the inherent rule and follow, though this rules out the possibility of anyone trying to *imitate* the work. (iii) The purpose for which works of fine art are made is not for providing *sensuous* pleasure. Nor is there any concept to which such work conforms. Rather, "the mere estimate of" it without a concept is capable of giving satisfaction. The expression "mere estimate of" stands for a *contemplative* mode of consideration which rules out the possibility

of applying any concept for responding to the work of art.

The last point needs some further elaboration. For this we may first attend to the following passage:

> "In painting, sculpture, and in fact in all the formative arts, in architecture and horticulture, so far as fine arts, the design is what is essential. Here *it is not what gratifies in sensation but merely what pleases by its form, that is the fundamental prerequisite for taste.* The colours which give brilliancy to the sketch are part of the charm. They may no doubt, in their own way, enliven the object for sensation, but make it really worth looking at the beautiful they cannot. Indeed, more often than not the requirements of the beautiful form restrict them to a very narrow compass, and, even where charm is admitted, it is only this form that gives them a place of honour.
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> 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 *design in the former and the composition, in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgement of taste."*[20]

Kant makes a clear distinction here between mere gratification of the senses and aesthetic pleasure in respect of the object that pleases by its form *alone*. In other words, what pleases aesthetically must be a complex whole by virtue of its "design" or "composition". For example, in a painting the colours by themselves may provide gratification for the senses, but its aesthetic value lies in the overall design or composition of the painting. Hence Paul Guyer,

> "Empirical or material judgments of taste are simply those which assert that objects are agreeable, and are grounded on feelings of pleasure ascribed to the physiological effects of objects on the senses. Pure or formal judgments of taste are those which ascribe beauty to an object, and must be founded on the attribution of the felt pleasure to the harmony of the faculties, and on the a priori imputation of pleasure so felt to other persons."[21]

Let us explain the matter in some detail. For Kant, aesthetic satisfaction results from the harmony between the understanding and the imagination that may be experienced by a competent viewer. On the other hand, the museum attendant, e.g., who is considering a large painting

for its transportation to another gallery would be making a logical judgment as to its size, weight etc. on the basis of the categories supplied by the understanding. He may finally be satisfied that the logistical problems involving its transportation could be taken care of with the available resources. But the lover of art who looks at the same work and is not concerned with its packing, transportation etc. would derive satisfaction only on account of its *form* alone which is conducive for the harmony between the faculties and for which conformity to any other consideration is not called for. To put the matter somewhat differently: The same work of art admits of at least two different ways of considering it. For example, when one considers the work as a gift to someone, or as an investment in security, or as an object that is to be transported across to another country and so on, the judgment so made in these cases would not be a *pure* judgment of taste. In each of these cases there is a definite purpose for which the work is put to use, and so it will make sense here to consider whether the *purpose* would be fulfilled: Whether it would be a good gift? Whether transportation could be carried out? Whether it would be wise to invest in this work? In response to any of these questions we may make the judgment, viz. "The work is good/ beautiful" meaning thereby that it fulfills the need as a gift, or as an investment in security or as a physical object that can be transported (e.g., a sand sculpture cannot be transported elsewhere, and so is not good for that purpose). Now Kant would argue that the judgment "This work is good/beautiful" in such cases would not be a *pure* judgment of taste, because we are considering the object here in terms of the definite purpose or concept of a good gift, good investment etc.

While making a pure judgment of taste the same work is responded to in terms of its *form alone* without consideration of any other extraneous factors mentioned above. Only in the event when we respond to it as a work of art *qua* art its "form" may be aesthetically so appealing as to be conducive for the harmony between the faculties resulting in the feeling of satisfaction. And when such satisfaction arises we claim the object to be a beautiful work of art. True, Kant also characterizes the resultant satisfaction as "disinterested", because our interest in any of its functions that are related to its actual existence is set aside or suspended – a condition that can be fulfilled only if the form alone is the focus of our attention. Indeed, there is thus a deliberate act of setting aside of all such extraneous factors, but this alone would not be a sufficient condition, for the "form" must be powerful enough to hold our

attention. Take, for example, an ordinary chair that I find across the table I am seated at. Suppose further that I am able to actually set aside all considerations about the chair that are related to its actual existence, such as, its market value, its ability to offer comfort etc. Now when I consider the chair, what do I see? I see the form of the chair, and I also see the finality of this form that has a purpose, say, that of providing comfort. This object cannot claim to be an object of pure aesthetic judgment, nor that of pure aesthetic delight. According to Kant, when satisfaction arising out of our consideration of an object is traced to the *purpose* for which it exists then such satisfaction is not aesthetic in nature. But when we look at a painting, say, Van Gogh's "Yellow Chair", the form alone arrests my attention and the satisfaction that arises results from the finality of its form though such finality is not connected to any definite purpose (say, that of giving physical comfort). This is comparable to the situation when we look at nature and make the judgment "This is beautiful". Nature too is characterized by the finality of its form that is given to our contemplation when we set aside all consideration of its use or exploitation. In other words, when the finality of its form is delinked from a definite purpose then the form by its sheer appearance gives us aesthetic delight that is expressed in the judgment "This is beautiful". Similarly, Van Gogh's "Yellow Chair" gives me satisfaction not because the chair is comfortable but because its form has the finality that is not linked to any such purpose. To explain the point further, the form by its sheer appearance enables the kind of harmony between the faculties that gives us aesthetic delight. Things that we say are beautiful are beautiful not because they serve some definite purpose, nor because they have some specific physical qualities, nor yet because they are made according to some pre-determined rule, but rather for exemplifying the finality of form conducive for the harmony between the faculties that gives us aesthetic delight.

The ideas we have been discussing in the context of our experience of the beautiful are (a) finality of form without a purpose, and (b) harmony between the faculties. It seems that for Kant the one leads to the other so as to enable us to derive aesthetic delight. This would hold good as much for nature as for objects made by human effort i.e., works of art. Just as in judging nature aesthetically or as an object of contemplation we must suspend all consideration about its use or utility so in the case of created objects (artifacts) for judging these as works of art any consideration of a definite purpose or utility must not interfere.

For Kant, even though nature and art are alike in this respect, art is further removed from nature, as it is a *representation* of it. Does it mean that for Kant representation of nature stands for copy or imitation of nature? Further, does it mean that only a painting that copies or imitate nature alone can claim to be a specimen of "free beauty"? We shall take up these questions a little later.

Now, to turn back to a consideration of what Kant terms as a pure judgment of taste, what would it mean to say that such a judgment of taste is made without any concept? A logical/scientific judgment is based on some concept that is provided by the understanding as it operates with the categories. A moral judgment too is based on the concept of duty. In other words, one is neither free while making a cognitive judgment of the sort "This X causes Y", nor is one free while making a moral judgment of the sort "This X is good" since in either case one is having to make the judgment as per some concept (causality, duty etc.). However, only in the case of the judgment of taste no compulsion of concept is operative since we do not judge, say, a rose as beautiful by applying some standard set of rule/ concept to it. There is neither any physical feature/qualities nor any function/ purpose by virtue of which the judgment, that this rose is beautiful, is made. The conditionality of "disinterestedness" that Kant refers to in the first moment is to highlight the need for renouncing or suspending any interest in the physical *existence* of the object of such judgment. Another way of putting the matter would be to stress the point that in the absence of our interest in the existence of the thing it cannot be an object of cognitive or moral knowledge. Only an *existent* object can prompt us to ask questions of the sort "What is it made of?" "What is its function?" "What are its qualities?" "What may it cause?" "Who or what has caused it?" "Is this action morally good?" "Is this done for the sake of duty?" and so on. Answers to all these questions could be elicited by the application of some concept that the faculty of understanding supplies in a routine fashion. But when we suspend our interest in the existence of the object we would be judging the object *freely or without the compulsion of any concept*. For example, when we judge the particular flower as beautiful we are not concerned with any of its existential qualities/ functions (say, in the case of a paper flower we are neither concerned with its qualities such as smell, softness, medicinal property etc.). Judging something to be beautiful, one also enjoys a sense of freedom that accompanies making of such a judgment. And just as we have no objective standards by which

to judge the beauty of a particular flower we have no objective standards for judging the beauty of a painting.

This is not to say that a cognitive judgment in respect of a flower or painting is not possible. One may ask questions such as those relating to the medicinal value of the flower or the exact dimensions, chemical composition of the pigments, weight etc. of the painting. Indeed all such questions would require answers that are based on some concept or standard. But once we decide to suspend these questions we get into a state of mind that would be gripped only the appearance or form of the flower. The cognitive apparatus would idle itself away but in doing so it may also feel a sense of satisfaction by freely attending to the form alone. This indeed is the state of aesthetic response that is not based on or regulated by the faculty of understanding in terms of its categories. Freed from all possible concepts, our response to the flower would be one of delight if the form or sheer appearance of it has finality though without a purpose. Now according to Kant, the aesthetic enterprise and the consequent sense of satisfaction would be the same in the case of a man-made object, say, a painting if it meets the same condition of the finality of form. The painting must appear *as* a painting, i.e., made by human effort (and not made by accident or as a product of nature) though its form must have the appearance of finality such as is the case in respect of nature.

An important point that merits attention here is as follows. Kant draws a distinction between "free beauty" and "dependent beauty" on the ground that the latter may serve some purpose for which it is made, and a judgment of taste in respect thereof would not qualify as a "pure" judgment of taste. In this case, utility or purpose for which the work is made would be the guiding concept for judging it. The object of pure judgment of taste would be without a purpose. Now when it comes to fine arts such as painting or sculpture it may be argued that a representational painting by virtue of its *purpose* of depicting or portraying some theme/ story would be a case of dependent beauty rather than pure beauty. It would then follow that a judgment of taste in respect of such a work of art (representational in character) would never qualify as *pure* judgment of taste such as to ascribe beauty to the work for the pleasure it might provide by its form alone. Shall we then say that on Kant's view only *non*-representational paintings (abstract works) would be proper objects of pure judgment of taste? Indeed, there seems to arise

some confusion in this regard. But as Guyer rightly points out:

> "... it is hardly obvious that to depict or mean something is the same as to serve a purpose, or that if objects which serve purposes must be excluded from the proper objects of pure judgments of taste, then so must representational objects or works of art with content.
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> ...The use of concepts to interpret the content or meaning of a work is not identical with the use of concepts for the evaluation of objects subsumed under them; yet it is only the latter use of concepts which Kant's explanation of aesthetic response must clearly exclude from aesthetic judgment. Why should Kant assume that representational art must be the object of less than pure aesthetic judgment"[22]

In other words, to *interpret* a work of art is not the same as to *evaluate* it; so in approaching a work of representational painting one might interpret it in terms of its purpose, that is, what it depicts, but its evaluation as a work of art (or beauty of art) is not parasitic on its interpretation. Such a work would be beautiful or not depending as it would on whether or not it pleases by its form alone that is the condition conducive for the harmony between the faculties. For example, when we say that Picasso's "Guernica"- a representational work, is a great work of art we do make a pure judgment of taste, notwithstanding the fact that the work *depicts* a definite theme that would be assumed as its purpose. But such judgment is based not on this purpose of depiction, but on the fact that it pleases by its form alone. Thus, the same work may be judged on the basis of its material content as well as for its formal beauty. It is only in the latter case that we view the work *qua* work of art to which pure judgment of taste would also apply. Thus for "Guernica" to be viewed as a work of art we must cut it loose from all considerations of its historical, sociological, biographical, economical etc. aspects.

In a representational work, when we judge whether it successfully fulfills its purpose as to what it depicts then such a judgment would be based on its material content, and so would not be a pure judgment of taste. On the other hand, the same work when judged, independently of such interpretation, on the basis of its formal "design" that pleases by its mere form then such judgment is a pure judgment of taste. The latter would be a judgment about *beauty* of art, and *not* on its material content,

that is, whether it has succeeded in depicting what it chose to.[23]

However, a nagging doubt still persists as to whether, according to Kant, fine art subsumes under it only representational works of art. While distinguishing between art and nature he says: "A beauty of nature is a *beautiful thing*; beauty of art is *a beautiful representation* of a thing."[24]The key term here is "representation" which, for Kant, necessarily characterizes art. Now a representation is always of or "about" something, object, or world. In other words, a painting must be *about* something that will act as an end, and as its causality will function as a concept that the painting must conform to. It follows that such a work can never claim to be an instance of *free* art and will remain only a case of mechanical art or that of dependent beauty. But as Mary A. McCloskey rightly points out: "Fidelity of depiction or representation, is never counted as a virtue of any work; and there is no reason at all why a non-depictive work could not be given a perceptual form suitable for setting imagination into harmonious free play and be used to express aesthetic ideas. In face 'a representation' is such a generalised notion in Kant's writing that it could be treated as making, in the passage under discussion, no more than the fact that the *artist makes, and does not find* or is not 'given', the object in question."[25] So, if the term "representation" is taken in the sense of something being made by human effort then the divide between representational and non-representational art will not be relevant in the context of the distinction between free and dependent beauty and its corresponding distinction between pure judgment of taste and material judgment of taste. Moreover, the term "representation" in the context of art must be understood as it stands in relation to what is also characterized by "originality", that is, as an "exemplar". Now, a representation such as is characterized by originality can never be imitative or copy of nature. So, even if it were a painting of nature (say, a landscape) it must have something more than nature to qualify as an *exemplary* work of art. Also, non-representational specimens of art such as abstract paintings may also be subsumed under the rubric of "representation" because of its not being imitative of nature and hence something quite different from it.

Perhaps another way of understanding this matter would be as follows. The term "representation" in the context of art could be regarded as a construct that the imagination makes out of its response to nature or world. From the phenomenological point of view, such representation

is "given" to consciousness without the attendant ideas of reality and existence. So we might regard it not so much a representation of nature, but rather as representation of "aboutness" i.e., the essence of contenthood. Even a landscape painting is not so much a copy or imitation of nature as it represents the essence of nature in the manner that it is given to consciousness. Thus, the distinction between representational and non-representational works of art would not seem to coincide with the distinction between "dependent" and "free" beauty.

The point is crucial to our understanding of Kant's dictum that works of fine art are works of genius. On the other hand, if the large numbers of representational paintings are not counted among products of free art then what Kant says about genius and the process of creativity will not apply to these paintings. While dealing with this matter Kant says:

> "it is imperative at the outset accurately to determine the difference between beauty of nature, which it only requires taste to estimate, and beauty of art, which requires genius for its possibility (a possibility to which regard must also be paid in estimating such an object)."[26]

Now how does genius produce art? Genius must have not only a wealth of rich "aesthetic ideas" but must also have the skill to put the ideas into a suitable form of expression. By the term "aesthetic idea" Kant means "that representation of the imagination which induces much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e. *concept*, being adequate to it, and which language, consequently, can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible. – It is easily seen, that an aesthetic idea is the counterpart (pendant) of a *rational idea*, which, conversely, is a concept, to which no *intuition* (representation of the imagination) can be adequate."[27]

Kant here distinguishes an aesthetic idea from a rational idea. The latter is in the nature of a definite concept that cannot subsume under it synthesis of perceptions; though it can be clearly stated in language, and for that reason can be taught. An aesthetic idea, on the other hand, is a synthesis of perceptions that cannot be subsumed under a concept; it cannot be stated in language, nor can it be taught as a concept can be. It is an intuition that is given to genius as a "representation of imagination". Thus, the divide between art and science can be outlined in terms of how the two activities can be carried out. For science, one

has to learn the rules and their application. But there are no such rules for the fine arts that can be learnt or taught. Only genius can have access to representations of imagination or aesthetic ideas that can then be given expression in suitable form. He goes on to clarify,

> "...genius properly consists in the happy relation, which science cannot teach nor industry learn, enabling one to find out ideas for a given concept, and, besides, to hit upon the expression for them – the expression by means of which the subjective mental may be communicated to others. This latter talent is properly that which is termed soul."[28]

Kant makes here an interesting point. It is about what makes a work of art worthwhile. Not only is it important for art to be beautiful, it should also be able to induce or communicate much thought in the mind of the viewer of art. So, for a piece of fine art to be worthwhile it must, besides being beautiful, be a source of thought though much of such thought cannot be subsumed under any definite concept. This is how an "exemplary" work inspires other kindred artists to create more works of art.

As for Kant's views on the division between art and science, it would be relevant here to mention almost a similar distinction Tagore makes between "the world of science" and "the world of reality"[29], and how the latter is grasped through art. The former represents the brute facts, which intrude upon our consciousness and are subject to the complex impersonal laws and principles known through science. On the other hand, the latter is realized only through man's personal relationship with the world. Man's endeavour to survive in a hostile world requires of him to discover the impersonal forces that govern and condition the world through the laws and principles so that he may organize his life on the physical plane. It is not perhaps within one's power to break, defy or ignore the laws that govern the world of facts. These facts represent "the other" which encroaches upon man's freedom. One feels a sense of deficiency, finitude or limitedness as one confronts the impersonal world. However, the quest for the infinite is ingrained in human consciousness. For this the artist turns to his world of feeling that he creates as a *construct* as the stranglehold of utility slips away and the presence of the "*Supreme Person*" is felt. For Tagore, this is the real world and everything that is experienced here is true for the creative self. Underlying this is his conviction that creativity itself is limitless as it

originates in man's response to what Tagore terms "the call of the Real". This stands for the construct that the artist creates by means of his emotions, and not reason.

In his essay "What is Art?" Tagore begins by remarking:

> "... I shall not define Art, but question myself about the reason of its existence, and try to find out whether it owes its origin to some social purpose, or to the need of catering for our aesthetic enjoyment, or whether it has come out of some impulse of expression, which is the impulse of our being itself." [30]

He then goes on to suggest that we would "try to ascertain what activity it is, whose exuberance leads to the production of Art". He traces this to "the region of the superfluous" which is related with man's personality.[31] The following point merits attention in this context: What Tagore offers as model of explanation for *creative activity* is schematic in nature throwing light on what it means for the human personality to burst forth into creative activity. What seems interesting here is to consider why the artist breaks off from set norms and conventions, as he often tends to do. A response to this question would surely help us to understand the general nature of creativity. When we turn to Tagore's own creative venture in the *pictorial* medium we find that he was a late-starter and that at a certain stage in his creative life he seems to have felt an irresistible impulse to break out into a medium of expression he had not tried on before. In a way this exemplifies how his personality *overflows* in a spontaneous burst to feel out the ever-widening horizons of creativity. Further, Tagore's reference to the principle of "rhythmic unity" in the context of creative expression anticipates a distinction between conventional rules and norms that generally apply to the artistic medium on one hand and the principle by which the creative process moves toward its concretion in terms of its structural unity, on the other. It is here that we find an interesting parallelism between the views of Tagore and Kant in respect of the nature of the creative process. When he refers to the principle of "rhythmic unity" Tagore seems to have in his mind a principle that transcends the set of conventional rules of art making necessary for the artist, though that alone is not sufficient for creating works of art.

Thus, the point that we are making is that what carries the creative process *forward* is not the set of conventional rules and norms that the artist learns to apply externally but rather the promptings from *within*

the process which makes for the structural unity of the finished work of art. The principle of "rhythmic unity" is immanent to the creative process unlike the conventional rules, which are transcendent to it. Kant, too, seems to have in his mind some such principle when he claims that nature gives the rule to art through genius though such rule can neither be clearly formulated by the artist nor can such rule be taught to others.

In support of this claim of Kant, it is interesting to note that though Tagore had no formal training in the art of drawing and painting he had developed a feel of the visual medium such that even the most insignificant things like scratches or cuttings in his manuscripts, when tied into rhythmic unity, would emerge as a living form invested with uncommon significance. He makes erasures or cuttings in his manuscripts in such a way as to usher in some interesting visual forms. Tagore's own words are revealing enough:

> "In the process of this salvage work I came to discover one fact, that in the universe of forms there is a perpetual activity of natural selection in lines, and only the fittest survives which has in itself the fitness of cadence, and I felt that to solve the unemployment problem of the homeless heterogeneous into interrelated balance of fulfillment is creation itself".[32]

It seems clear that what Tagore claims to "discover" is this internal principle of creation, and not the set of mere conventional rules that one learns to apply as part of the formal training in the pictorial arts. It is the principle of rhythmic unity that decides the fate of the lines (in a drawing), and not their conformity to some pre-thought arrangement. The work of art as an organic form evolves itself through a process in which that which is redundant to its essential unity must cease to be and when the artist acts internally in unison with this creative principle he has the experience of unbounded freedom.

Thus while the theory of rhythm is offered as general explanation of creativity, its application to specific works of art may lead to the infinite possibilities in which such rhythm or harmony may be created. The difference between the conventional rules and the internal principle of rhythm would seem to be that the former, though rigid in appearance, can be broken or defied whereas the latter, which can be grasped only intuitively, offers the very possibility of the condition for creating works of art.

Artistic activity, in essence, is such that it is not amenable to any deterministic analysis. Tagore's own life and works bear out the point. The artist moves along as though inexorably towards some unknown terminal goal which may come to him as a "discovery" with its attendant sense of joy. Again, in one of his letters, Tagore writes:

> "The art of painting eludes me like a shy mistress and moves along subtle ways – unbeknown to me. Her ways are such that I am reminded of what the Vedas say: Ko Vedah. Nobody knows – perhaps not even the Creator.... It is the tide of creation itself which bears it along its own current." [33]

And, further, in another letter he writes:

> "It is absolutely impossible to give a name to my pictures, the reason being that I never make a picture of any pre-conceived subject. Accidentally some form, *whose geneology I am totally unaware of,* takes shape out of the tip of my moving pen and stands out as an individual." [34]

One may add here that, in a sense, even the artist feels overtaken by the tide of the creative process. Thus spontaneity in creative activity presents a paradox because the unborn end product seems to operate as the final cause in the Aristotelian sense.

For Tagore, the world of reality, as opposed to the world of facts, calls for an emotional empathy with a personal world so that our participation in it would give us the feeling of infinite *freedom*. Again, as Kant maintains, the creative individual does not feel himself under the burden of impersonal laws that seem to control the world of facts. Taking to creativity helps one to break free from the everyday life of brute facts and forge ahead an emotional bond that encompasses everything in rhythmic unity. As Tagore points out, the principle of rhythmic unity, when internalized by the creative soul, is no longer felt law-like. Rather, the creative soul feels a sense of unity through the emotional empathy and moves about in the expanding world of freedom. For Tagore, to participate in the creative activity is to feel one with the Supreme Person – a transition from the sense of oppressive facts to the boundless sense of joy soaring up across the limitless sky of freedom.

A number of interesting points seem to emerge from this brief account of Tagore's view on art and creative activity. In the first place, Tagore insists on clarifying that while the world of science consists of

hard facts and impersonal laws artistic activity calls for creating a more intimate and satisfying relationship based on feeling rather than reason. In other words, impersonal rules or laws do not bind creative activity, and so the artist enjoys a degree of freedom that one does not in dealing with brute facts of the world of science. While the brute facts of the world are oppressive the creative soul seeks release from such a situation and wants to create a world in which he can inhabit freely. That there is a fundamental difference in the approaches of science and art is admitted both by Kant and Tagore. Art making is a kind of activity that does not brook external rule. This is however not to say that the creative process is chaotic. What goes on in such process is characterized by, as Tagore point to, its rhythmic unity. But the artist feels a sense of freedom as this unity being internal to the work is not imposed from outside. Without this sense of freedom no artist can create art. We have seen earlier that Kant too makes a distinction between science and art on the ground that the former has to do with strict rules that one has to learn and follow while for the latter there can be no such rules that either the artist could formulate or learn by imitating others. But then how does he go about making art? Or, what is it that goes on in his artistic activity? Creative activity is carried on according to the principle that is given to genius by nature. This principle, unlike any external rule or law, is an internal principle that the artist feels within. Thus, the artist has no inkling of what the finished product of art is going to be like. Tagore attests to this fact of personal experience on different occasions particularly in the context of his engagement with the pictorial art and refers to it as the principle of rhythmic unity. The point that seems important here is to understand that artistic creativity is of a nature that does not admit of predictive explanation. The artist himself often has a sense of "discovery" at the end of the creative process as he encounters the "commanding form". Not only does he seem to feel a sense of unity in the emergent form but perhaps is able also to identify himself with such unity at the affective level. He cannot teach this principle to others since he has not learned it either; learning of any rule involves imitating the rule when it is clearly formulated. The artist does learn some rules of a conventional nature as part of the process of apprenticeship as it were. But these alone are not sufficient to provide that higher principle by which creativity becomes possible. No doubt Kant clearly acknowledges that the process of creative activity is not of a kind that could be predicted or explained in terms of some pre-given rule. As an

afterthought we may perhaps add that every work that is produced by the artist is not a successful work of art. The artist knows of no formula or else it would become easily possible for him to turn out only masterpieces.

Now, while the process of making fine art seems so unpredictable, Kant seems quite clear as to what may qualify as fine art rather than a piece of handicraft or mechanical art. To my mind, this indeed is crucial to his intent in the third Critique, which is based on his insight that a pure judgement of taste *can* be made in respect of a specimen of fine art. He compares beauty of fine art with beauty of nature as both exhibit finality of form without a purpose, but the two cases are distinguished apart on the ground that fine art is a *representation of nature* – that is a step further removed from nature. This term raises some questions such as, notably, whether only works of non-representational nature alone are to be taken as specimens of fine art. If this line of argument is followed then no paintings of representational kind including Gogh's "Yellow Chair", Cézanne's "Still Life", Picasso's "Guernica", and so on, would count for specimens of fine art. For the same reason, no pure judgement of taste would be possible in respect of these works. The implication of this would be that these works are not capable of offering aesthetic delight. The latter is quite distinguishable from the pleasure one gets at the sensuous level. Thus the whole corpus of works of art that are commonly regarded as specimens of fine art will remain outside the domain of pure aesthetic delight. However, as we have argued earlier, the term "representation" in the context is to be taken in the sense of something being made by the imagination, and so does not refer to imitation of nature or fidelity to it. In other words, representation stands for a construct that the creative mind makes by giving form to the content, or rather to its contenthood. For the artist, material or content that Kant refers to is not sufficient to create a work of art; this has also to be given by the artist a *form* which must exhibit *finality without a purpose*. In this respect beauty of art and beauty of nature must be judged alike, though the former is man-made and the latter is not.

Further, Kant maintains,

> "Nature proved beautiful when it wore the appearance of art; and art can only be termed beautiful, where we are conscious of its being art, while yet it has the appearance of nature."[35]

And,

> "...the finality in the product of fine art, intentional though it be, must not have the appearance of being intentional."[36]

In the quotation above, the term "intentional" the appearance of which Kant refers to is not the individual artist's own intention but what is prompted to him by the work as it proceeds. So, there seems no contradiction in saying that the work appears to be intentional though no specific intention of the artist actualizes it. It is the work that somehow dictates its unfolding given the genius of the artist to respond to it, and fashioning it out according to the rule though not given beforehand. In other words, the work of art has an end for itself rather than the artist having an end for the work. Here, a distinction could be made between the intention of the artist as a plan given to him prior to the act of making on one hand and the "intention" or "end" that the *work* has as a logical possibility, on the other. This *logical possibility* of the work is the end that unfolds itself as a work of art. The unfolding or actualization of such possibility takes place only if the artist has the talent to realize it, and so the work of art is a product of genius as Kant puts the matter. For realizing its logical possibility no rule is given, nor can the artist formulate such rule. Rightly, then, genius is the capacity for giving such rule for the work to be realized. It seems clear that in respect of fine art the "end" that must be present is quite independent of the artist's will. Hence, Kant says "the thought of *something as end must be present*, or else its product would not be ascribed to an art at all, but would be a mere product of chance."[37]

In conclusion, while Kant's aesthetic formalism makes way for a special kind of attitude with which to view works of art the structural unity or internal coherence of the work is a matter that falls within the domain of the creative genius of the artist. As a pure product of genius the work is not only beautiful, but must communicate aesthetic ideas to the viewer. These aesthetic ideas, however, should not be conflated with rational ideas of depiction of one or other aspect of life and world. Admittedly, the same work of art may also be judged against a pre-given standard such as in terms of its economic, didactic, historical, representational, scientific value and so on. But none of this could claim to be its aesthetic value or worth. Looking at a work of art *qua* art consists in attending to the form rather than be concerned with any of the other aspects as referred to above. Now arguably every work of art must have its form that organizes the content or aesthetic ideas. Would

it follow that just by focusing on the form we would get aesthetic satisfaction? Though aesthetic attitude or an attitude of "disinterestedness" is indeed a necessary condition for responding to a work of art *qua* art, but this would not be the *sufficient* condition for aesthetic delight to arise. Kant puts another condition for such response whereby the form must also have the ingredient of "originality". He makes it clear that genius is the talent for creating art that may be looked upon as an "exemplar". What this means is the ability of the work of art to induce thoughts in the mind of the viewer, but as it has already been pointed out, such ideas (which Kant characterizes as "aesthetic ideas" as distinguished from "rational ideas") do not correspond to and are not subsumed under any concept. This indeed is the hallmark of a worthwhile work of art: The creative artist not only has access to the *representation of imagination* but has the talent for putting it forth in an appropriate form of *expression*. It seems clear that for Kant a work of fine art has to have many constituents, such as, finality of its form, its mode of expression, intentionality of the work, and finally, what we may call its "illusoriness" whereby the work would appear as if it wore part of nature even though we know it not to be so. Kant also seems to maintain that one who has the talent to accomplish all these by virtue of genius that gives rule to art needs best undertake the creative process. Indeed, there are no pre-determined rules for creating art. The closest approximation to Kant's view of creativity is perhaps to be found in Tagore's idea of "rhythmic unity" whereby the artist feels overtaken by the tide of the creative process as though inexorably moving towards an unknown terminal goal. This "end" must be understood as the unfolding of the logical possibility that the work "has" within it and not a mere wish or desire that the artist may have at the start of the work. Only genius can make it happen so that the intention of the artist would seem to be fused with the intentionality of the *work*.

Notes & References

[1] *All references to Kant's The Critique of Judgment are from the translation by James Creed Meredith, Oxford (The Clarendon Press),* 1973 *(Reprint) and will henceforth be referred to as CJ.*

[2] *CJ, p.* 168 *(Our emphasis)*

[3] *Ibid., p.* 163

[4] *Ibid*

[5] *Ibid., p.*164 *This distinction also comes close to the way Croce/Collingwood distinguish between art and craft.*

[6] *Ibid., p.* 168

[7] *Ibid*

[8] *Ibid., p.* 170 *(emphases added)*

[9] *Please see, Ibid., p.* 168 *as quoted earlier.*

[10] *Ibid., p.* 171

[11] *Ibid., p.* 169

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Ibid., p.* 168

[14] *John Hospers, "Artistic Creativity", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. XLIII,* No 3, *Spring* 1985, *p.*244

[15] *Ibid., p.*245

[16] *Please see, Carl R. Hausman, A Discourse on Novelty and Creation, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague,* 1975, *p.2*

[17] *Ibid., p.*3

[18] *Ibid., p.*9

[19] *Ignacio Gotz, "On Defining Creativity", Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. XXXIX, No.* 3, *Spring* 1981, *p.*298

[20] *CJ p.* 67-8 *(emphases added)*

[21] *Paul Guyer, Kant and the Claims of Taste, Harvard University Press,* 1979, 224

[22] *Ibid., p.* 243-4

[23] *As Guyer says: "Representing–as depicting–something would be an instance of representing –as serving–an end, namely, the end of depiction or mimesis. Nevertheless, it might still be argued that the exclusion of such art from the objects of pure judgments of taste is not a necessary consequence of Kant's aesthetic theory. First, Kant does not actually argue that art must serve the purpose of depiction; a fortiori, he does not argue for this thesis on the basis of any premises central to his theory of aesthetic response and judgment. Second, even if art not only is representational but has the purpose of representing, it still does not follow that our pleasure in its beauty is dependent upon consideration of this purpose.... Beauty and representation may be compatible but distinct features of a work of art." Ibid.,* 245

[24] *CJ p.,* 172

[25] *Mary A. McCloskey, Kant's Aesthetic, Macmillan,* 1988, *p.* 110-1 *(emphases added)*

[26] *CJ p.,* 172

[27] *Ibid., p.* 175-6

[28] *Ibid., p.* 179-80

[29] *Rabindranath Tagore, "What is Art?", in (ed) P. Neogy, Rabindranath Tagore On Art And Aesthetics, Orient Longmans,* 1961, *p.*12

[30] *Ibid., p.* 13-14

[31] *Ibid., p.* 15

[32] *Rabindranath Tagore, "My Pictures* (1)*", in (ed) P. Neogi, Op Cit. p.* 97

[33] *(ed.) P. Neogi, Op Cit. p.* 110

[34] *Ibid., p.* 105 *(emphases added)*

[35] *CJ p.* 167

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] *Ibid., p.* 171 *(emphases added)*