

Kant's System of Pleasure

JEAN-LUC NANCY

Here we are proposing only a programmatic remark on the systematic position of 'pleasure' in the organisation of the ensemble of the Kantian edifice. This remark is sustained by a commentary on the first sections - but essentially the third - of the First Introduction to the Critique of the Faculty of Judgement.¹

It is, in fact, under the auspices of [*à l'enseigne de*] 'system' that this whole introduction is engaged and concluded: system 'of philosophy', 'of the powers of the mind' and 'of experience'.¹ The 'system of powers' is what allows 'experience as a system' to be thought, that is to say, what allows a final organisation to be conferred upon experience, a final organisation that was lacking to the mere cognition [*connaissance*] of an object, as this was defined in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Thus a correlation will be able to be assured between 'theoretical philosophy', which posits objects without an end, and 'practical philosophy', which posits an unconditioned end without an object (p. 195). The systematic knot therefore, in knotting the end in general with experience in general, must assure the end of philosophy itself, that is to say, 'the system of rational knowledge by concepts' (p. 195). Critique has only prepared the conditions for such a system by disengaging and delimiting the two major concepts of 'nature' and 'freedom', one in relation to the other. The 'end' or 'finality' is what assures the connection of the two, without in any way passing beyond their strict reciprocal delimitation.

This delimitation is, from the point of view of the 'powers of the mind', that of the understanding and reason. It is here that the determination of the powers, and their distribution on both sides of the strict limits of critique, takes on all its importance: the transcendental operation demands that principle consideration be given to the powers (= faculties) as such, that is to say, both to their capacities [*puissances*] and to the domains of their legitimacy, therefore to their circumscription, and therefore to their reciprocal division, and so precisely the powers must be considered in the

¹ Trans. Werner S Pluhar in *The Critique of Judgment* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978), pp. 383-443. Unflagged references are to the First Introduction pagination in the *Akademie* edition, reproduced in this translation.

plural. This plurality gives unity to pure reason, is the condition of its systematicity.

The system of powers must therefore be assured not by an immediate unity of the type *intuitus originarius* (which would not in fact be a ‘power’ in the strict sense, but an act executing its power all at once, suppressing any potentiality in it), but rather by another power. A third power is therefore introduced, which signifies from the onset both the possibility of a connection of the two others, and the maintenance of their reciprocal delimitation by what one could designate as a supplementary delimitation: neither cognitive [*connaissante*] nor imperative, and therefore separated from these two ways of imposing a law in general, the faculty of judgement has simply to supplement the absence of a legislation of ends which would give *a priori* content to this end. It is therefore responsible for thinking ‘experience as a system in terms of empirical laws’, that is to say, an experience that would not only be of the object, but that of the ‘necessity of the whole’ of nature in the diversity and ‘considerable heterogeneity’ of its formations (p. 203). The ‘necessity of the whole’ is nothing other than the connection of nature, which is given [*donné*], with freedom, which is demanded [*ordonné*], and this connection presents itself as finality.

Nevertheless, here it is only a question of the ‘higher cognitive powers’ which are themselves ‘at the basis of philosophy’ (p. 201). As such, they designate and circumscribe the diverse registers of: the cognition of the object (understanding), freedom (reason) and ends (the faculty of reflective judgement). But these registers of philosophical knowledge [*savoir*] are still not modes of apprehension of representations. A mode of ‘the mind’ corresponds to each register: that of ‘cognition’ in the strict sense, that of ‘desire’ and that of ‘the feeling of pleasure and displeasure’ (pp. 205-6). It therefore follows from this that, in its systematic unity, philosophical knowledge [*savoir*] will only be called ‘cognition’ in an extended sense, a sense that it is above all not self-consistent in its own connection. Either it is a question of the (‘theoretical’) cognition of the object (which through cognition cognises itself as limited to experience), or it is a question of the (‘practical’) cognition of the will (which through cognition recognises itself as freedom), or it is a question of a third kind of relation to representation, of ‘the feeling of pleasure and displeasure’.

Only the first two ‘powers’ are here called ‘powers [*Vermögen*]’, and the third is called a ‘feeling’, something that, from the outset, confers upon it, through the very term, and by the dissymmetry of the nomination, a

distinctive tonality, that we shall refer to in short as ‘passive power’. Thus, the tripartite distinction that Section III of the First Introduction presents is immediately treated by Kant as a bipartite distinction. On the one side are representations ‘referred only to the object and to the unity of consciousness’ (p. 206), as well as representations treated ‘as the cause of the actuality of the object’, (p, 206) and which are therefore treated in accordance with that other ‘unity of consciousness’, that is, the will (or desire). In general, this side is that of the object related to the subject. On the other side, it is a question of representations ‘referred only to the subject’ (p. 206), that is, the feelings of pleasure and displeasure. Here the representations are not mine just because they are representations of an object, and are only valid for this object (nature or freedom), but are rather valid only as mine. This boils down precisely to being valid only for themselves, since this ‘mineness’ does not refer back to any substantial subject of appropriation. Here the representations ‘are themselves the bases only for preserving their own existence’ (p. 206). The feeling of pleasure is the maintenance of the representation for itself, without any relation either to the object (of cognition or action), or to the subject (of cognition or of action).

(It should be added that, as a feeling of displeasure, it must be the refusal of rejection of this same maintenance, and that still without any consideration of cognition or of action. It is doubtless not a matter of indifference that Kant only characterises this feeling as pleasure, suddenly forgetting or suppressing the symmetrical ‘and of unpleasure’. But we cannot dwell here on the investigation that this observation demands. For the purposes of the present note, we will, from now on, speak simply: sometimes of ‘feeling’ (since in fact Kant generally brings the *Gefühl* in general back to the *Gefühl der Lust und Unlust*) and sometimes of ‘pleasure’ (since Kant restricts himself to this). But the examination that we wish to conduct here will also show how delicate this simple affair of nomination turns out in the end to be: what are we actually talking about?)

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According to the whole of the assemblage that we have just briefly outlined, it would be appropriate for the feeling to remain carefully separated from the two other powers. In fact, as we have seen, it is presented as so distinct and separated that it does not even have the right to be called a ‘power’, and ‘neither is nor provides any cognition at all’ (p.

206). It is the non-cognitive way that representations are combined, which is, at the same time, non-legislative (no law is given to it, be it from the understanding or from reason).

In fact Kant emphasises that, even if it is easy to recognise ‘empirically’ a ‘connection’ (p. 206) between cognition (or will) and feeling, it is nevertheless not possible thereby to recognise anything that might be *a priori*. That knowledge or the will can please or displease me is contingent, and therefore, the organisational allure that is found in this pleasure is not ‘based on any *a priori* principle’ and yields ‘no system, but only an aggregate’ of the faculties (p. 206).

Nevertheless, in this same passage, Kant feels obliged to make it clear that ‘it is true that we do succeed in uncovering an *a priori* connection between the feeling of pleasure and the two other powers [= faculties]’ (p. 206). He goes on to explain that it concerns the connection of our *a priori* cognition of freedom with the will as its principle, a connection that is none other than that given in the form of the categorical imperative. So ‘we can then find [*es gelingt ... anzutreffen*] in this objective determination [objective because it has a cognitive object, and it simultaneously demands the realisation of this object in experience] something subjective as well: a feeling of pleasure’ (pp. 206-7). But Kant immediately clarifies this by saying that this pleasure does not precede the will: it either follows it, or ‘perhaps is nothing other than the sensation of this very ability of the will to be determined by reason’ (p. 207). Consequently, there is not, strictly speaking, a new *a priori* principle here, even though that is just what is needed to establish the autonomy of the third ‘higher power’.

Many issues in this merit attention. First of all, the exceptional ‘case’² that Kant pretends to discover only, in the same moment, to refuse it is constituted in a unique way, since it invokes, on the side of the first power, an ‘*a priori* cognition’ that is not the cognition of an object, but that of freedom. But, as we know, this cognition is a knowledge [*Wissen*] without perception of comprehension [*Einsehen*].³ It is not of the same order as objective cognition (even though it is also the cognition of a fact of

² *A propos* the ‘case’ generally in Kant (and despite the fact that the word ‘case’ - *Fall* - does not explicitly appear in the German text). We refer the reader to Simon Zavadil’s work in progress, of which a fragment has appeared in an edition of the *Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg*.

³ See *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1956), p. 4.

experience, and as such knowable [*scibile*]).⁴ Kant cannot therefore affirm that the first power is at issue without a certain distortion. If it is at issue, then it is as the power of a paradoxical ‘cognition’, because it lacks an object, or only has one through the coming-to-be of its very object (nature under the law of freedom). The first power is at issue in this at best in an amputated form, limited to the cognition of a concept without an intuition, or rather the cognition of a concept whose intuition would have a very peculiar character, unresponsive to the conditions of space and time ... In any case, nothing (theoretical) is cognised through this cognition except the practical determination of reason.

Nonetheless, if, for there to be any cognition at all, there is something like an intuition, if there is something that would be grasped, perceived or felt [*eingesehen*], it could be of the order of the feeling that Kant introduces at this point. But he makes it clear that this feeling does not intervene in the *a priori* constitution of the practical determination of reason (if it did, this would be contrary to the autonomy of this determination). So, the ‘connection’ of the first two powers remains, at the very least, incomplete, or, as it were, unilateral, and it is far from being the case that this connection itself could be ‘connected’ with the third power (it is noticeable that Kant uses the work *Verknüpfung* in both cases, whereas the French translation uses *connexion* and then *lier*).ⁱⁱ

That feeling which can only follow from the moral law is, as we know, respect. What Kant says here about its secondary status is in agreement with what he says in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (‘The Incentives of Pure Practical Reason’). Nevertheless, he then also said that this feeling ‘of reason ... is the only one which we can know [cognise, *erkennen*] completely *a priori* and the necessity of which we can discern [*einsehen*].’ⁱⁱⁱ In Kant’s hesitation over the nature of this feeling (‘or perhaps it is ...’), the *einsehen* seems to become somewhat blurred and murky. Moreover, it is not [yet] called respect, and the allusive periphrasis (which can nevertheless only designate respect) leaves us unsatisfied, because it is a question of a ‘feeling of pleasure’,^{iv} a quality that the *Critique of Practical Reason* energetically refuses for respect. ‘Respect is so far from being a feeling of pleasure that one only reluctantly gives way to it as regards a man.’ But there is equally ‘so little unpleasure in it’ that, before the law ‘we cannot ever satisfy ourselves in contemplating the

⁴ Cf. in particular § 91 of the *Critique of Judgement*, which demands a long commentary.

majesty of this law'.^v

Be that as it may, respect is in any case [*bel et bien*] the pure incentive of pure practical reason. Here, the anonymous feeling that doubles it or supplements it is simply the appreciation or approbation of a 'capacity',^{vi} and does not constitute a 'particular type of feeling'.^{vii} From one to the other there is a displacement, even a discordance. On the other hand, although respect (as an incentive) is foreign to both pleasure and unpleasure [*peine*], it nevertheless produces an 'interest that we call moral',^{viii} and this pure interest depends immediately on the fact that the feeling 'depends on the representation of a law simply as to its form, and not on account of any object of the law'.^{ix} Respect behaves like or is structured like a pleasure, that is to say like the relation to self of a representation that finds the basis of its maintenance in itself ...

In the very body of the *Critique of Judgement*, at § 37, Kant presents a somewhat displaced version of the same argument designed to exclude all determining apriority from feeling:

For I cannot connect *a priori* a definite feeling (of pleasure or unpleasure) with any representation, except in the case where an underlying *a priori* principle of reason determines the will; but in that case the pleasure (in moral feeling) is the consequence of that principle, and that is precisely why it is not at all comparable to the pleasure in taste. (English translation slightly modified)

The incomparable character of the two pleasures does not detract from the identity of their denomination which implies at the very least a close community of nature. At § 12, Kant tries another embarrassed variation, describing respect as a 'special and peculiar modification of this feeling that does not exactly correspond with the feeling of pleasure or unpleasure that we receive from empirical objects'.^x The 'modification' in fact implies some community of substance.

But this community is that of a very peculiar apriority, one that is made explicit in § 12. The *a priori* impossible in the connection of feeling and representation is that of causality. That a feeling is the effect of a representation 'can never be cognised otherwise than *a posteriori*' (and this corresponds both to the agreeable in the pathological order and, in the moral order, to an 'intellectual representation of the good' ['*principe intellectuel du bien représenté*'] about which we know that it can only come down to a 'postulate'). On the other hand, there is a feeling which,

without being the effect of a representation, is nothing but this representation itself, relating itself to itself through an ‘internal (final) causality’. This is ‘the state of mind in which the will is determined by anything’ (English translation modified), and therefore *par excellence* the state of the categorical imperative. This state is ‘already in itself a feeling of pleasure’, although it is not the cause of an indifferent affection. Pleasure is always the *jouissance de soi* of a representation, that is to say of a ‘state of mind’ according to its pure form. But this pleasure can be either ‘purely contemplative’ or ‘practical’. This is to say that the form of the representation can be either that of ‘a purely formal finality in the play of the faculties of cognition’, or that of the will.

Nothing differentiates the two ‘*a priori* pleasures’ except the two forms or states of mind, which are themselves only two manners of relating to self: the representation as an end in itself, or the representation as the cause of its own actuality [*réalité*]. At this point the two pleasure do indeed form a system, and in the strongest sense: a system of the cause and end of reason for itself.

But it is just now that a rigorous distinction must again be invoked, a distinction to which Kant never ceases to return as if to exorcise the possible contamination of one pleasure by the other or rather, despite everything, a contamination of the pure will by a pure affection. This distinction demands the affirmation that the apriority of respect is not comparable with what resembles it the most. What is in the end incomparable is that everything happens in respect just as in pleasure (and unpleasure [*peine*]) but pleasure and unpleasure [*peine*] must not be produced in respect. Respect has the form or structure of pleasure, but not the taste or the savour.

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To cut short these analyses that should be indefinitely refined,⁵ we will state that pleasure certainly does not find itself connected *a priori* to the power [*pouvoir*] of desire, but rather that it finds itself (and this is both more and less) included *a priori* in it as pleasure refused or forbidden, or as the unique pleasure that is born (in reason) of the *a priori* banishing of

⁵ Going by way (amongst others) of the rest of the *Critique of Judgement* and by way of the pleasure mentioned in the *Introduction to the Metaphysics of Morals* and in the *Anthropology* (§ 64 sq.).

pleasure itself.

So Kant's complicated and embarrassed discussion of the eventuality (itself immediately withdrawn) of an '*a priori* connection' plays a completely ambiguous role. It gives (secretly) with one hand what it takes back with the other: something *of* pleasure, or to be daring, something of a 'pleasure principle', is not foreign to the pure reason's power [*pouvoir*] of desiring. There is a trace of the third power in the second.

Nevertheless, we have at the same time seen that the cognitive power is only present in this connection in a constrained and doubtful way. At the very least, it only concerns the cognition of freedom which is knowledge without objective content (and the only one of this type). But, it so happens that this time, by turning away from the side of the first power, we can also find an indication in Kant himself of another type of the trace of pleasure.

In the Second Introduction to the *Critique of Judgement*, we read that:

in the union of perceptions with laws in accordance with the universal concepts of nature (the categories) we do not come across, nor could come across, the slightest effect on our feeling of pleasure, since in this the understanding necessarily proceeds unintentionally and merely according to its nature.⁶

This is also because [*c'est aussi que ...*] this 'union with the laws' is a simple *Zusammentreffen*, that is, in the end, an encounter, and not a *Zusammenhang*, an internal organisation (this is the special *leitmotiv* of the First Introduction). Kant also writes:

The discovery of the possibility of unifying two of more empirical laws of a heterogeneous nature under one principle that comprehends them both will be the basis for a quite noticeable pleasure, often for admiration, and even for an admiration that does not stop, even when one has sufficiently cognised its object.^{xi}

The motif of a supreme pleasure in finality is thereby announced, a pleasure that, by the name of 'admiration' in effect permeates the last moments of the *Critique of Judgement*,⁷ at once the support for and the

⁶ Section VI.

⁷ Cf. in particular the General Comment on Teleology.

supplement of a thought of ends that does not, certainly, make of this admiration ‘the ultimate purpose [*le but final dernier*], but which still has in it ‘something that resembles a religious feeling’,⁸ and which, by dint of this, ‘seems first of all to act by a sort of judgement, analogous to moral judgement, on moral feeling’.

Cognition may therefore be promised a specific pleasure, doubtless contained within the limits of the conditions of reflective judgement though which ends are posited, and passing from there to beyond the theoretical in order to exercise (still analogically) a kind of reinforcement of ‘moral feeling’ and consequently of the pure incentive of practical reason, as if something of the ultimate purpose was given to cognition for the determination of the will. This something would, assuredly, not be the uncognisable freedom, but would not be opposed to it either, and would therefore have to be knowledge of freedom as knowledge enjoying itself [*jouissant de lui-même*].

This simple representation is at once final and a representation of such a pleasure under an analogical (or symbolic) condition. But it could not even be represented as an enjoyment [*jouissance*] of cognition if cognition did not in some way contain its germ from the beginning. This, at least, is what the rest of the Section in the Second Introduction (Section VI) states:

We do not doubtless any more experience noticeable pleasure before the incomprehensibility of nature and before the unity of its division into genera and species (it being only by means of these that empirical concepts are possible that permit us to cognise it in its particular laws). But this pleasure certainly did exist once, and it is only because even the most everyday experience would be impossible without it, that it has little by little merged with simple cognition and is no longer particularly noticeable.

There was therefore, there must necessarily have been, a primitive pleasure of cognition. Of course here Kant only means cognition by ‘empirical concepts’ and ‘particular laws’ and not the cognition by ‘universal concepts’ that he recalls a few lines before. But the one is not purely and simply separable from the other. Besides, one can see how much Kant’s text hesitates: because he equates the ‘comprehensibility of nature’ (that may be supposed to correspond to a general cognition of the

⁸ Note the General Comment on Teleology.

same type as the understanding) and the ‘unity [of its] division into genera and species’ (which no longer refers only to the understanding, and which is, on the contrary, the business of, at least, the *Critique of the Faculty of Judgement*). At this point, mathematico-physical cognition is not separate either from the chemico-biological or from that of culture and taste, and the analogy links up [*enchaîne ... sur*], in some way, determination.

If, from the point of view of the object, the cognition produced by determinant judgements has nothing to do with those that proceed from reflective judgement - no more than mechanism has to do with finality - , it is not any the less the case that the final unity [*unité finale*] of nature presupposes as its minimal condition the unity of a nature in general, that ‘*a priori* unity without which no unity of experience, and, consequently, no determination of the objects of experience, would be possible’.⁹

So the ‘most everyday experience’ that Kant refers to is not in itself, in its generality and in its principle, divisible into *a priori* experience and *a posteriori* (into ‘possible experience’ and the empirical). At this point, it is, on the contrary, a question of what, in the *a priori*, at the same time and from the outset *intends* the *a posteriori* as such: the donation of the material sensible manifold [*divers sensible matériel*], of its heterogeneity and of the problematic character of its unity insofar as it is a final unity. This aprioricity (which is neither that of the forms of intuition, nor that of concepts, nor even of the schematism) is the supplementary aprioricity of feeling: of enjoyment for itself of a representation of unity in general. Without this we would not even have begun being the subjects of any experience. Even if the most general condition of the cognition of the understanding was the synopsis of intuition joined to the categorial synthesis,¹⁰ it is still necessary to presuppose something (which the *Critique of Pure Reason* did not concern itself with) like an incentive for the activity of cognition.

To be sure, this incentive can be found only in the activity of cognition itself, and ultimately in the relation of cognition to itself, that is to say, in the relation to self of representation insofar as it is a connection [*liaison*], or relation to self of the connection [*lien*] of representations. But there must be an incentive there, that is to say that it is not enough that experience be possible, the mind must still set itself in motion in order to

⁹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, General Remark on the Analogies of Experience [A216; B263].

¹⁰ [A] Deduction ..., Section 2 [A97].

realise this possibility. And this movement can only take place by - or as - a feeling, and not only as the exposition of the principles of the possibility of experience.

Everything therefore happens here as if the *Critique of Judgement* discretely furnishes the mobiliser, so to speak, of that for which the *Critique of Pure Reason* had only established the *a priori* conditions of possibility, with their limits of legitimacy. Everything also happens therefore as if, on the one hand, the critical concern for the demarcations of cognition had left the incentive or energy [*ressort*] of the act of cognition in the shade; but, at the same time, and on the other hand, as if the question of such energy (rarely posed for itself where theory and not freedom was the 'keystone of the whole system of reason')¹¹ arose here, both below and above a simple critique of possible cognition. If there is therefore also a trace of pleasure in the first of powers of the mind, this trace is not simply a residue, it is rather an index of reason's destination, that its *Trieb* in effect pushes toward an enjoyment beyond cognition: enjoyment of self.

It is, in this sense, astonishing that Kant, announces as he does, the fact that 'the understanding in proceeding according to its nature and unintentionally' cannot experience 'any feeling of pleasure'. This seems inattentive to the fact that this proceeding of the understanding, implying the simple conformity of its activity with itself, presents exactly the conditions of accord with self that produces pleasure. ... But this is perhaps just what he detects when he refers to a forgotten, lost or frozen pleasure.

We must still ask ourselves if it would be possible to find, on the side of theoretical pleasure, the symmetry of what practical pleasure presented to us as connection with theoretical representation, concerning which we will note that imagines the first power as limited to a concept without an intuition. Doubtless this symmetrical surety is found in the universal communicability of aesthetic pleasure.¹² This sensible and pragmatic universal is, if not strictly practical, like a universal of the understanding, but of an understanding that has, this time, had its own legislation

¹¹ *Critique of Practical Reason*, Preface [p. 4].

¹² Cf. in particular *Critique of Judgement* § 60 and § 83, where, moreover, Kant writes: 'the fine arts and the sciences [...], which render man, if not more moral, at least more civilised, thanks to a pleasure that can be communicated to all, and thanks to the politeness and refinement for society ...'.

amputated.

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Once this presence - at once active and counteractive [*contrariée*] - of pleasure has been recognised in the two powers properly said to be of reason, it is possible to understand better and in all its significance the 'transcendental definition' that Kant gives of it (once, that is, he has established that aesthetic judgement as 'the relation [...] of a representation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure' p. 222):

A definition of this feeling - taken generally and without regard to the differences that obtain when it accompanies the sensations of sense, reflection or the determination of the will - must be transcendental. It can be formulated like this: pleasure is a state of mind in which a representation is in agreement with itself, as the basis [*raison / Grund*] either simply of maintaining it as such [...] or of producing its object. In the first case, the judgement on a given representation is an aesthetic judgement of reflection; in the second case, it an aesthetic-pathological judgement, and/or aesthetic-practical judgement. (pp. 230-2)

This tripartite distinction of judgement will have been abandoned - at least for its third term - by the time of the *Critique of Judgement* proper. And again this testifies to the difficulties that Kant experiences in trying to grasp both a strict critical demarcation of the 'powers' and what is none other than the singular and most intimate energy [*ressort*] of reason, its *Trieb* itself as the *Triebfeder* (incentive) of its supreme destination as *Grund*, in fact, of its very being as reason.

Pleasure is therefore - as it appears in the *Critique of Judgement* - less a third power than it is the exhibition for itself of an active principle (even the only really active and mobilising principle) at the heart of the two theoretical and practical powers. In an isolated state, pleasure manifests only the form (agreement with itself, conservation and enjoyment of itself) of the intimate and ultimate incentive of reason in its double agency [*instance*]. This form is active in theoretical reason (but it only appears as effaced or lost in habit) just as it is in practical reason (but there it only appears as bridled by or sublimated into obedience). Or rather, pleasure is active *as* theoretical reason and *as* practical reason, but this very activity

demands that it not be admitted in the one case, and forgotten in the other; ultimately, this activity demands that it be gradually repressed in two different but parallel ways. This repression of pleasure is necessary if primary critical precaution is to be assured, that is, if reason is not immediately to enjoy itself in metaphysical *Schwärmerei* and the pretension that it can attain the Good and the Kingdom of Ends. This double repression is that condition that makes possible and necessary the exhibition of pure pleasure as the pure principle of the third faculty, which is responsible both for maintaining a critical separation of the two others (this is what is at stake in ‘merely reflective judgement’) and also for, so to speak, mobilising the only incentive [*mobiliser le mobilisateur unique*] of reason through a kind of pleasure that is irresistible both one and manifold, identical to itself in its foreignness to itself.

Or, if the concept of repression runs the risk of too exterior a meaning, and poses (without answering) the question of a repressing agency [*instance*], let us speak of an ungrasping [*dessaisissement*]. Kantian reason ungrasps itself, or is ungrasped, of its enjoyment of itself, but this is as if to show that its destination is just that, in the act of enjoyment that Spinoza could still call ‘beatitude’ or ‘joy’ and that is first announced here as division of self, into self.

Pleasure is therefore right at the heart of the system, organising it. Or, more exactly, the heart of the system, what joins it up and makes it work [*jouer*], what allows it to be in agreement with itself and with the internal finality that makes it a true system,¹³ is itself the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. This is to say that, if pleasure is always the value of an ultimate destination, its deep structure is from the outset that of a relation-to-self, and relation-to-self (in so far as it is not given, but in some way mobilises itself only for itself) carries with it and in an essential way, the ambivalence of a permanent possibility of disagreement or disharmony [*désaccord*]. To be pleasing or not to be pleasing to itself: Kantian reason finds itself prey to this disquiet. This is why so much of what is at stake in it can be summed up in the final formula of the *Critique of Practical Reason*: ‘the starry sky and the moral law’ are the double object and the double spring [*ressort*] of an ‘always renewed admiration that everything both ‘destroys, so to speak, my importance, insofar as I am an animal creature that must surrender back to the planet the material out of which it is composed’ and at the same time ‘elevates my value infinitely, as that of

¹³ Cf., of course, the Architectonic [*Critique of Pure Reason* A832ff.; B860ff.].

an intelligence, through my personality in which the moral law shows me a life independent of animality'.¹⁴

This disquiet can appear narcissistic, and doubtless it is, but not in the sense of a complacent vanity, or of an auto-eroticism. Rather in the sense in which narcissistic identification is necessary, and in which the absence of such identification (itself of the *intuitus originarius* type) dramatically founds Kantian reason in a double ungrasping (forgotten and forbidden) of its enjoyment of itself, of its principle and its end.

Translated by Alistair Welchman

¹⁴ *Critique of Practical Reason*, Conclusion [p. 166].

Translator's Notes

- ⁱ Nancy is alluding in a compressed way to the titles of §§ 1, 3, and 4 of the First Introduction.
- ⁱⁱ The English translation renders *Verknüpfung* with connection in both cases.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See *The Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1956), p. 76.
- ^{iv} *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- ^v *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- ^{vi} See *ibid.*, p. 83: 'the capacity [Fr. *capacité* not *aptitude*; Gr. *Fähigkeit*] of taking such an interest in the moral law ... is really moral feeling'.
- ^{vii} See *ibid.* p. 77: 'no kind of feeling may be assumed [Fr. *Il ne faut admettre ... une espèce particulière de sentiment*; Gr. *keine Art von Gefühl ... angenommen werden darf*]'.
- ^{viii} *Ibid.*, p. 83.
- ^{ix} *Ibid.* (translation modified; the main verb in the citation is actually *anhängen* [to connect] which Beck ignores, suspending the previous verb [*gehen ... auf*], and which the French translator renders as *dépendre*, probably misreading *abhängen*).
- ^x English translation modified.
- ^{xi} *Critique of Judgement*, Introduction, Section VI.