PART I

Kant, Romantic irony, Unheimlichkeit

CHAPTER 1

Border crossings in Kant

1 CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT

If Hegel is the thinker of overcomings and supersession whereby dialectical negation erases the boundaries between inside and outside, self and other in the synthetic unity of consciousness, Kant is the tracer of borders and limits, the thought-surveyor par excellence. Not only was Kant's critical enterprise a careful navigation between the extremes of empiricism and abstract metaphysical speculation in which clear limits were set for the capacities of human reason, but each of his three Critiques is characterized by the establishing of defining boundary-lines between it and the two others, such that cognition, morality, and aesthetic taste occupy, or seem to occupy, clearly delimited separate spheres.

Within Kant's system there is a very precise architectonics of interaction, an elaborate scaffolding of the "faculties" which, according to the treatise they happen to occupy, assume a dominant or subservient role. The three Critiques are "about" three different areas of human capability, and in this sense, up to a point, can be read as self-enclosed texts. The temptation to do so has long been a staple of Kant criticism, since, until relatively recently, scholarly consensus had it that the first and most massive of these volumes to appear, the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), was by far the most important of the three – that the other two might be viewed, despite their considerable intrinsic merit, as secondary or ancillary.[1] Yet it is apparent that Kant intended the three works to be a system, and that this intellectual goal of his was achieved once he found a way to integrate the Third Critique with the first two.

That it was, in fact, difficult for Kant to effect such an integration is of no small importance in the history of philosophy and of aesthetics as a branch thereof. Somehow the domain of the aesthetic (conceived of as the territory within which judgments of taste, *Geschmacksurteile*, are elicited) is problematic, its expanse difficult to measure with assurance.

For Kant, given the structure and terms of his system, the problem could be summed up in the following way: whereas in the first two Critiques one faculty held sway and "legislated" over another, subordinate faculty, in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790) there is no one faculty that dominates. This is because the attitude of aesthetic disinterest can only uphold itself in what might be called an initial suspension of all established categories – a suspension that presupposes the freeplay of the faculties among themselves. Gilles Deleuze puts it this way:

> The three Critiques present a complete system of permutations. In the first place the faculties are defined according to the relationships of representation in general (knowing [*Critique of Pure Reason*], desiring [*Critique of Practical Reason*], feeling [*Critique of Judgment*]). In the second place they are defined as sources of representations (imagination, understanding, reason). When we consider any faculty in the first sense, a faculty in the second sense is called on to legislate over objects and to distribute their *specific* tasks to the other faculties: thus understanding legislates in the faculty of knowledge [in the *Critique of Pure Reason*] and reason legislates in the faculty of desire [in the *Critique of Practical Reason*]. It is true that in the *Critique of Judgment* the imagination does not take on a legislative function on its own account. But it frees itself, so that all the faculties together enter into a free accord. Thus the first two Critiques set out a relationship between the faculties which is determined by one of them; the last Critique uncovers a deeper free and indeterminate accord of the faculties as the condition of the possibility of every determinate relationship. (*Kant's Critical Philosophy*, 68)

Just as Kant reversed the commonly accepted way of thinking about cognition (for him, we should think of objects as conforming to our modes of knowing rather than the other way around),[2] so Deleuze is inverting the usual way of reading the three Critiques as a philosophical unity. He is proposing that the *Critique of Judgment*, far from being a work that is merely rich and complex but, finally, not susceptible of integration into the critical system, is in fact the cornerstone, the "condition of possibility" of that very system. Without the Third Critique, the other two certainly would have constituted admirable argumentative structures on their own, but *the structure of the structure*, so to speak, would have remained blind to itself. The *Critique of Judgment*, in Deleuze's view, would be the work by which the system comes to know itself as system; the aesthetic would no longer be relegated to secondary or tertiary status, but would be that subterranean province that underlies the others, and, in the very indeterminacy of its freeplay, opens up the possibility of lawful relations, both theoretical and practical.

From an historical point of view, the *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790, not only closes off Kant's system as the end toward which Enlightenment thought had always tended, but also, in Deleuze's interpretation, inaugurates Romanticism. In the preface to *Kant's Critical Philosophy*, Deleuze finds that the free and unregulated play of the faculties among themselves, "where each goes to its own limit and nevertheless shows the possibility of some sort of harmony with the others," represents nothing less than "the foundation of Romanticism" (xi–xii). He does not mean, in the context of French literature, the sentimental Romanticism of Lamartine, Musset and the early Hugo, but rather the revolutionary poetics of Arthur Rimbaud, whose evocation of "the disorder of all the senses" (*le désordre de tous les sens*) pushes Romanticism to its extreme limits and ushers in the movements of French Symbolism and European Modernism. The idea, then, is that whereas the first two Critiques position Kant as the grand synthesizer of the *Aufklärung*, the *Critique of Judgment* is a work of open boundaries whose complexity and polysemic possibilities make it a modern work.

What is intriguing, however, and of essential importance to any reader who wishes to respect the guidelines Kant himself traces between and among the three critical works, is the fact that the Third Critique also functions as an intermediary, as a bridge-text between the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), in that its primary agent, reflective judgment, is, in Kant's words, "the mediating link between understanding and reason" (introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, 16).[3] More precisely, the faculty of judgment is capable of bringing about a "transition from the pure cognitive power, i.e., from the domain of the concepts of nature, to the domain of the concept of freedom, just as in its logical use it makes possible the transition from understanding to reason" (*CJ* 18). According to this formulation, aesthetics is not the endpoint of the system, but rather its articulating *middle*, its mediating drive, that which might be, or should be, capable of overcoming "the great gulf [*die große Kluft*] that separates the supersensible from appearances" (*CJ* 35; *KU* 33). The faculty of judgment is such a bridge because it, and it alone, furnishes the concept of the finality of nature, a teleological structure within which aesthetics as such occupies its appropriate place:

> It is judgment that presupposes [the final purpose of nature] a priori, and without regard to the practical, [so that] this power provides us with the concept that mediates between the concepts of nature and the concept of freedom [*gibt den vermittelnden Begriff zwischen den Naturbegriffen und dem Freiheitsbegriffe*]: the concept of a *purposiveness* of nature [*einer Zweckmäßigkeit der Natur*], which makes possible

the transition from pure theoretical to pure practical lawfulness, from lawfulness in terms of nature to the final purpose set by the concept of freedom [*von der Gesetzmäßigkeit nach der ersten zum Endzwecke nach dem letzten*]. For it is through this concept that we cognize the possibility of the final purpose [*die Möglichkeit des Endzwecks*], which can be actualized only in nature and in accordance with its laws. (*CJ* 36–37; *KU* 34)

In the original German text, Kant's argument is woven around a play on the word *Zweck* – goal or purpose. We are reminded that *Gesetzmäßigkeit*, or the lawfulness of nature, is the domain of the First Critique. *Zweckmäßigkeit*, or the purposiveness of nature, is developed in the Third Critique as a "bridge" toward the *Endzweck* of the Second Critique, the final purpose of man, which can only emerge in the supersensible territory of the law, of the "ought" which traces the boundaries of the province of morality and exercises its rule in accord with our freedom. In this scheme, which Kant elaborates carefully but quite confidently in the final section of his introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*, it is manifest that, in some fundamental sense, the aesthetic as such points toward the ethical, that the ethical stands as the *Endzweck* of the aesthetic. In this precise sense, then, the endpoint of the Kantian system is its middle, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the place in which the moral law instantiates itself. As we proceed now to an analysis of the points of intersection between the Second and Third Critiques, it is important to keep in mind the double position of the aesthetic in Kant: it is, through the free and unregulated play of the faculties it allows, the limit toward which the Kantian system pushes and exhausts itself; and it is also, in its mediation between pure and practical reason, the passageway through which the ethical makes its appearance, shines forth.

There are three paragraphs in the *Critique of Judgment* which deal quite explicitly with the modality of the relationship between the beautiful or the sublime, on the one hand, and the ethical, on the other. They occur after the initial section, entitled the "Analytic of the Beautiful," in which judgments of taste per se are discussed and the domain of the beautiful is assigned its boundaries. They are: "On the Modality of a Judgment upon the Sublime in Nature" (par. 29); "On Intellectual Interest in the Beautiful" (par. 42); and "On Beauty as the Symbol of Morality" (par. 59). The first two of these paragraphs occur within the section called the "Analytic of the Sublime," and the third, which is the penultimate paragraph of the "Critique of Aesthetic Judgment," concludes the "Dialectic of Aesthetic Judgment." I think it is best to

begin with paragraph 59, since it encapsulates the previous remarks Kant has made on the relation of the aesthetic to the moral or ethical (the domain of *Sittlichkeit*). It is both the clearest and the most complicated statement Kant makes in his writings about this relation.

On a first reading, paragraph 59 seems clear enough in that its argument leads toward a ringing assertion which defines the beautiful as "symbol of the morally good":

> Now I maintain that the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good [*das Schöne ist das Symbol des Sittlich-guten*]; and only because we refer the beautiful to the morally good (we all do so naturally and require all others also to do so, as a duty [*Pflicht*]), does our liking for it include a claim to everyone else's assent [*Beistimmung*], while the mind is also conscious of being ennobled [*sich . . . einer gewissen Veredlung und Erhebung . . . bewußt ist*], by this [reference], above a mere receptivity for pleasure derived from sense impressions, and it assesses the value of other people too on the basis of [their having] a similar maxim in their power of judgment. The morally good is the *intelligible* that taste has in view [*worauf . . . der Geschmack hinaussieht*], as I indicated in the preceding section; for it is with this intelligible that even our higher cognitive powers harmonize [*zusammenstimmen*], and without this intelligible contradictions [*lauter Widersprüche*] would continually arise from the contrast between the nature of these powers and the claims that taste makes. (*CJ* 228–29; *KU* 213)

The passage as a whole is characterized by two primary images: that of the harmonizing of voices (*Beistimmung*, *zusammenstimmen*) as opposed to the dissonance of contradiction (*lauter Widersprüche)*; and that of the ennobling elevation beyond the senses in the direction of the intelligible (*Veredlung*, *Erhebung*, and the expression *worauf . . . der Geschmack hinaussieht*). The notion of a harmonizing accord among the faculties confirms the position of the *Critique of Judgment* as endpoint of the critical enterprise, whereas the image of ennobling elevation places the aesthetic in a mediating role, defining it as that which *points beyond itself* toward the supersensible domain of the ethical. It would appear, in this strong declarative moment, that Kant wishes to grant to the aesthetic both a final and a mediating function, and that the interplay of imagery he uses here constitutes a stylistics of synthesis – in the image of a resolved harmony of elevation, where horizontal and vertical planes join each other in a logically arduous but rhetorically effective merger. Thus the superficial clarity of the declarative statement hides a complex rhetorical weave, in which the reader discovers Immanuel Kant as stylist, whose words function not merely as the transparent conveyors of a philosophical argument, but also as elements in a tropological discourse.[4] Such a passage does

not simply "point beyond" the aesthetic in the direction of the moral; it points toward itself as text.

This involutedness serves to complicate considerably the overt message of the passage, which, in asserting that the beautiful tends toward the moral in "symbolizing" it, brings the text dangerously close to the frontier at which the beautiful effaces itself *in favor of* the moral, at which there is a moralization of the aesthetic. Kant's style, his poetics of harmonization and elevation, in which the ethical *becomes beautiful* in its "noble" loftiness, performs the opposite: namely, a rhetorically subtle aestheticization of the moral. In other words, Kant anticipatorily but only momentarily succumbs to the temptation to which Schiller will yield massively, perhaps completely: that of bringing together the aesthetic and the ethical in a dialectical play whereby "moral beauty" as such occupies the final, synthetic moment.[5]

It is not a coincidence, I think, that the declarative and somewhat emphatic passage I have just discussed exceeds, by its rhetorical complexity, the straightforward assertion it (also) makes. Preceding this excerpt in the earlier part of paragraph 59 is a development on the notion of symbolization per se in Kant's own technical terminology (we learn that symbolism is, along with schematism, one of the two types of what Kant calls *hypotyposis*), whose cryptic qualities have engendered reams of critical commentary. The central problem for an understanding of paragraph 59 as a whole lies in the problem of indirect language and, specifically, *analogy*. In differentiating between schemata and symbols, Kant writes:

> Hence, all intuitions supplied for a priori concepts are either *schemata* or *symbols*. Schemata contain direct, symbols indirect, exhibitions of the concept [*indirekte Darstellungen des Begriffs*]. Schematic exhibition is demonstrative. Symbolic exhibition uses an analogy . . . Thus a monarchy ruled according to its own constitutional laws would be presented as an animate body [*durch einen beseelten Körper*], but a monarchy ruled by an individual absolute will would be presented as a mere machine (such as a hand mill); but in either case the presentation is only *symbolic*. For though there is no similarity between a despotic state and a hand mill, there certainly is one between the rules by which we reflect on the two and on how they operate [*ihre Kausalität*]. This function [of judgment] [*Dies Geschäft*] has not been analyzed much so far, even though it very much deserves fuller investigation; but this is not the place to pursue it. (*CJ* 227; *KU* 212)

An analysis of this passage may be helpful in shedding light on the critical debate surrounding the formula "the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good." Kant specialists from both the Continental and

the Anglo-American tradition divide rather neatly into two camps: the "weak analogy" group, which finds in the comparison between the beautiful and the morally good a tenuous, inessential linkage;[6] and the "strong analogy" contingent, which considers that the comparison functions as a solid bridging device.[7] Underlying these critical divergences is a certain belief or non-belief in the capacity of the *analogon* to evoke its intended referent, of the image to translate its concept with clarity, as well as a trust or distrust in the epistemological possibilities of such a translational movement (*Übertragung*, or metaphorical transport, is the word Kant uses in par. 59, *CJ* 228; *KU* 213). Before one can ask the question "Is there a strong analogy *or* a weak analogy between the beautiful and the morally good," one needs to ask "What is an analogy?" Are analogies, in and of themselves, weak or strong? Are they capable, in their assigned role, of presenting the concept adequately, convincingly?

Perhaps the best way to undertake such an inquiry is to begin with Kant's own examples in this passage: the monarchical state as represented by a living body; and a despotic state as symbolized by a "mere machine" such as a hand mill. If the analogy is to function effectively, the representational images must conjure up, presumably without ambiguity or confusion, the concepts to which they refer: should they not succeed in doing so, they must be viewed as failed or improperly symbolizing symbols. Kant concedes that "there is no similarity between a despotic state and a hand mill," but he says, in a remarkably obscure statement, that "there certainly is one between the rules by which we reflect on the two and on how they operate." What are these rules? Where do they come from? Are they universal for all sentient beings? Is logic itself, and even that most slippery form of "logic," the rhetoric of analogy, a rule-bound domain? Kant not only does not answer these questions, but concludes the above passage with the brutal disclaimer: "this is not the place to pursue [this matter]." One wonders: what *better* place than precisely here, when so much is at stake? For the beautiful to be the symbol of the morally good, it is necessary that analogy as such function well and not be suspect in its structure or constitution. One is tempted to wonder if Kant was convinced by the validity of his own examples – and exemplarity, it goes without saying, is central to all philosophical discourse, since the example must stand in a relation of metaphorical synecdoche to that which it exemplifies, i.e., no part of it can exceed the bounds of the whole to which it belongs.

The basis or ground (one can speak of analogies only by using metaphorical language) of Kant's comparison, and of his comparative

analogies, is the superiority of a monarchical state governed by laws over a despotic state ruled by one person's absolute (and therefore arbitrary) will. How can this concept of superiority in the territory of politics be represented in an image or images? Kant chooses an "animate body" for the law-based monarchy and a hand mill for the despotic system presumably because an animate body will be recognized by all readers of Kant's text as superior to (i.e., *nobler than*) a hand mill, and because a functioning that is merely mechanical and simply serves as a means toward a culinary end does not evoke the same kind of dignity as that of a living body (in the German, *ein beseelter Körper* – literally, a "soul-infused" body). Leaving aside for the moment that the analogy can only work given a traditional humanistic framework (once one undermines the "dignity of man," one can have surrealist imagery, in which a hand mill and a "soul-infused body" might appear as equally uncanny "objects"), it is necessary to remark that Kant's analogy works best when *we already know both terms of the analogical relation*. Unlike the poet, who only gives the reader an image, from which that reader must discover the represented concept, Kant gives us both sides of the *symbolon*, thereby de-activating the process of interpretation. Kant's analogy is, in fact, a logical illustration in the form of an image, not an image whose analogical structure invites disclosure in an interpretive reading.[8] His conclusion – that "this function [of judgment] [*dies Geschäft*] has not been analyzed much so far" – is, unfortunately, not just a general admission concerning the incomplete state of scholarship in the field of rhetoric, but an implicit admission of his own failure to confront directly and examine thoroughly the figural dimension of discourse, including that of philosophical exposition.

Kant retreats in the face of the aesthetic *as indirect discourse*. Indirection, which Kant himself says is the essential characteristic of the symbol, is also that which poses the greatest threat to his own critical enterprise, to his own *Geschäft* – a term we shall encounter later, in the context of his ethical writings. Could it be that there are, in fact, two *Geschäfte*, two forms of "business": that of philosophy, on the one hand, and that of literature, on the other? Philosophy, classically conceived, would be that discourse which avoids indirection even when encountering it and defining it, which flees the very territory (the figural minefield of aesthetics) it sets out to map. The philosophical transit and level are based upon clearly definable geometrical principles, upon mathematical laws, whereas what lies within aesthetics, the indirect realm of analogy, is subject to rules no one has discovered, rules that each work of art, on its own, must discover for itself. Could it be that between philosophical aesthetics and

works of art in their praxis there resides a fundamental, foundational "antinomy" in the literal Greek sense (a conflict of laws or rules), an antinomy no amount of dialectical manipulation can overcome? This is the direction in which the indirection of analogy has led. Beyond the immediate Kantian context in question here, the problem is as follows: in what ways can a theorizing discourse, a discourse of generalizing concepts, contain what I should like to call the *inside of the aesthetic*, i.e., its elusive figural dimension, when that inside is the indirect translational movement of analogy, the tending-toward the to-be-discovered concept which the reader must pursue in a series of individual and repeated interpretive efforts?

What I am calling Kant's retreat from the territory of the aesthetic in paragraph 59 serves to clarify, retroactively, a number of his most important and celebrated propositions concerning the beautiful and the sublime. Thus, his observations on artistic design in paragraph 14 of the "Analytic of the Beautiful," which have led critics to attack him or defend him for his "formalism," can be seen as the philosopher's defensive reaction against the tortuous workings of art in its praxis: one attaches oneself to the outward form when the artwork's inner force is too strong, too threatening, to be encountered on its own terms. What is interesting in Kant, however, and also emblematic for formalist appreciations of art in general, is that the fear of what constitutes or founds the work in its innermost recesses – namely, its figural *déviance* – finds expression in the philosopher's manifest distaste for what he/she represents, metaphorically, as the farthest reaches of its "outside" – namely, the seductive raiment in which the work of art clothes its design (color, sound, rhetorical ornament).[9] Because the labyrinthine inside of the work of art is threatening in its very indirection, the philosopher/theorist *re-configures* the work of art, presenting it as an aesthetic object and emphasizing its form rather than its dangerous content. The philosopher then tells us that this form is enveloped in a pleasing outer envelope, which is deemed to be seductive in its appeal to the senses. It is easier to peal back the envelope and reveal the geometry underneath than it is to encounter seductiveness *as danger* within the workings of poetic language, in the byways of indirect discourse. Kant's most emphatic pronouncement on the fundamental importance of form, on the superiority of form over the "charm" of color, is to be found in paragraph 14:

> In painting, in sculpture, and in all the visual arts – including architecture and horticulture insofar as they are fine arts [*sofern sie schöne Künste sind*] – *design* is what