

The background of the entire cover is a repeating pattern of small, teal-colored, eight-pointed stars or snowflakes arranged in a grid-like fashion.

Irony and Singularity

Aesthetic Education from Kant to Levinas

GARY PETERS
University of the West of England, UK

ASHGATE

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*This book is for my wife Fiona, and my children Isabelle,
Francis and Laurie*

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Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Gower House
Croft Road
Aldershot
Hants GU11 3HR
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
Suite 420
101 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05401-4405
USA

Ashgate website: <http://www.ashgate.com>

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Peters, Gary

Irony and singularity : aesthetic education from Kant to Levinas

1. Aesthetics—Study and teaching—History

I. Title

111.8'5'07

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Peters, Gary, 1952-

Irony and singularity : aesthetic education from Kant to Levinas / Gary Peters.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7546-3811-1 (hardback : alk. paper)

1. Aesthetics—Study and teaching. I. Title.

BH61.P37 2005

111'.85'071—dc22

2005011197

ISBN 0 7546 3811 1

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Printed and bound by Athenaeum Press, Ltd.,
Gateshead, Tyne & Wear.

Acknowledgements

Given its militantly anti-dialogical slant, this book has been written, appropriately no doubt, in a rather a solitary manner. In direct contravention of all spoken and unspoken academic conventions, the thoughts presented here are not the product of discussion, debate and dispute with friends, colleagues and enemies, but, rather, something far more intangible, something that has emerged almost imperceptibly (and certainly silently) over many years of teaching. Teaching, in spite of, or (as I see it) *because of* the proximity of the other, is itself an extraordinarily solitary activity, and for all the pedagogical structures endlessly put in place to direct or draw into the open the movement of the teacher and the trajectory of his or her thought, a fascination remains (for the teacher, for their thought, for their movement) that is irreducible to all theories of teaching and learning no matter how popular or influential they may be. So it is within this context that I acknowledge, not so much the support, as the *presence* of Greg Bright who has over many many years constituted an imaginary audience of one for this writing.

I would also like to thank Chris Frayling and Ian Jeffrey for giving me the opportunity to research and teach irony respectively, as a kind of 'ironist in residence'; and Sally Morgan for suggesting it might be a good idea to write as well as speak (now you have to read it!).

Thanks are due to my wife, Fiona, for proof reading the text and offering invaluable suggestions at the final stage.

More formally, I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the research committee, in the Faculty of Art Media and Design, at U.W.E, which allowed me to have one semester's teaching relief, thus moving things on a little at one stage of the project.

Lastly I would like (perversely, no doubt) to express my gratitude to the A.H.R.B. for ensuring that I was able to maintain my intellectual self-respect and credibility while writing this book.

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Preface

This book attempts to save aesthetic education from itself, that is to say, from its humanism, its bourgeois utopianism and its ultimate radicalism at the hands of the sixties generation. Who reads Friedrich Schiller today? With the *Aesthetic Education of Man* struggling to remain in print in the English speaking world it would seem fewer and fewer readers are prepared to engage with (or be educated by) this once influential aestheticization of the world; and as for Marcuse on Schiller, or the young(er) Frederic Jameson on Schiller and Marcuse, they too seem to be speaking from another era, an ancient time when the humanist utopian promise could still be taken seriously. Promises are made to be broken of course, especially the *promesse de bonheur*, but are we right to feel betrayed by the assorted Schillerians who so passionately raised our hopes, only to fall silent when they were so comprehensively dashed? Perhaps betrayal is putting it too strongly, but the fact remains that we seem to have ended up with a notion of aesthetic education that educates nobody, not even those within art education who need it more than most. But then perhaps the whole notion of aesthetic education as a promise is itself fundamentally flawed, the product of a political reading—the politicization of the aestheticization of the world—that casts the lessons of the aesthetic into the future rather than engaging with the *event* of the artwork as it erupts in a 'now' which is aporetic in the extreme, and thus ill-equipped to radicalize the un-radical mind or mobilize the immobile.

In the chapters that follow it is the *aesthetic* that is given primacy, not politics or ethics, the aesthetic as a past and present—an inheritance and a predicament—rather than a future riddled with lack and desire. Such a strategy is not intended to dialectically counter the absence of the future with the presence of the 'now', but, as will become apparent, is more concerned with scrutinizing what might be called the ontological absence at the heart of *all* aesthetic experience while resisting the urge to ennoble this absence with a moral 'ought' (*sollen*) or political praxis. The result is a book that is much less ambitious in its promotion of aesthetic education than has often been the case in the past, and much more circumspect in the claims made for a barely-graspable pedagogy that must constantly attend to the possibility of its own impossibility: this is not a 'guide for teachers'.

Throughout these pages the past of the aesthetic will be thought in Kantian terms, not only because Schiller directly acknowledges Kant as the past of his own aesthetic, but because, following Paul de Man's account of the 'occurrence' of Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, the failure of the history of aesthetics to receive the 'dislocation' and 'disarticulation' of this thought into its institutional body, has left us with a model of aesthetic education that is ill-equipped to engage with the predicament of the artist. Kant is discussed, but passed over; present as a name but absent as a critical movement that, at best, can only interrupt the hegemonic pedagogical patterns that inform and direct art education and the practice it fosters. To attempt to introduce the past 'event' (as Derrida might call it) of Kant's

aesthetics into the current event of art production, and the subsequent translation of such production into the thought and language of pedagogy is a central ambition in the following text, but it is one that is fraught with difficulties, an event in itself that cannot be held still, thus precluding from the outset the presentation here of anything resembling a 'new model' of education. Indeed, the 'disarticulation' and 'dislocation' identified in Kant should be evident throughout the following pages, as his thought, and radicalizations of it, are actively encouraged to interrupt and disable the formulation of theoretical structures that might arrest the necessary movement of aesthetic judgement, production, critique and reception: the subject of this book.

The re-aestheticization of aesthetic education requires us to think (experimentally) outside of the moral, political, religious and, indeed, pedagogical structures that both contextually frame and ideologically delimit it, thus allowing it to be *taught*. The resulting alterity-aesthetics and accompanying pedagogical exteriority demands the identification of some ground or territory for the aesthetic, one that both acknowledges its unteachability within the stasis of any one site, but which, nevertheless begins to configure a space within which the productive movement of the aesthetic is able to be traced. Without this, alterity will descend into an unproductive and pedagogically sterile mysticism that is worse, in its hazy insubstantiality, than the cultural substantiation it is trying to escape, if only temporarily. For this reason, each of the chapters to come, in spite of the diversity of material that emerges within them, follows Kant, in chapter one, in thinking of the aesthetic in terms of *spatial transition*, not of a territory but, rather, as the *movement* within a territory, more 'de-territorialization' than territorialization, to use a more recent vocabulary.

With Schiller in chapter two, initially as seen through the eyes of Paul de Man, we witness a chiasmic space, a place of interminable crossing from one pole to another in an unproductive (because undialectical) oscillation that is belied by the emancipatory message contained within his version of aesthetic education. Schiller's perceived entrapment raises questions (taken up again in chapter three) about the suitability of the aesthetic as an emancipatory force, thought morally and politically; it also raises the more specific issue of the relationship between dialectics and education, a subject which also has political consequences that, it has to be said, are not pursued very far in the current text. Of interest on this occasion is the consideration of a pedagogical space that, following the example of the aesthetic, is thought first undialectically and, then as a *positive* rather than a negative dialectic. In both cases, it is the aesthetic that leads us to these different dislocated locations outside of the negative dialectics that continue, it is argued, to dominate academic education and characterize university life.

Once again in chapter three, which offers an in-depth reading of Hegel's aesthetics, the past and present of the aesthetic is at issue: art has no future for Hegel. Reading his *Aesthetics* against the grain as a phenomenology rather than a philosophy of art, the *predicament* of the artist, working *within* aesthetic forms rather than magisterially surveying them from above, in becoming the central concern, requires what might be called a spatialization of Hegel's temporal aesthetic model. Where the philosopher, speaking from beyond the 'death' of art, is

occupied with tracing the speculative history of superseded aesthetic forms and styles, the artist is engaged in a productive process where the event of the artwork takes place within, and contains within itself, a space where forms and styles (falsely separated by the dialectical philosopher) *coexist*, rendering the work both aporetic and ironic. Interestingly, although Hegel is the sworn enemy of irony, it is his aesthetic thought that, if read against itself, offers by far the most sophisticated account of the ironic position, a position that (as will become evident) dominates the perspective of the current book throughout. As the most extended and intensive consideration of irony, this chapter, while intrigued by Gillian Rose's promotion of a 'new severity' that harnesses irony to a political dynamic intent on introducing substance into the 'pleasing' vacuity of postmodern art, ultimately arrives at a point where irony (having run wild) unravels all faith in this particular mode of seriousness. Pedagogically speaking, the formal and stylistic hybridization evident in the artwork, its severity, ideality and desire to please (to use Hegel's terminology), presents the teacher with a complex and, perhaps, contradictory space within which to teach, one that, it is argued, demands the ironic agility identified by Friedrich Schlegel as the movement necessary to keep the artwork open and 'becoming'.

Chapter four looks, achronologically, at the thought of Franz Rosenzweig and Nietzsche as related to the sensation of seeing and hearing. Of particular import is their differing but overlapping synaestheticization of the aesthetic, where sight and sound are entangled in a manner that allows each of them to suggest a spatial exteriority irreducible to direct communication or the communicative community assumed by the university (Derrida's 'field of listening'). For Rosenzweig, the necessary 'silence' of art places it 'alongside' the world, outside of the 'listening of the eye' that characterizes the false dialogics resisted throughout the current book. Equally anti-dialogical, Nietzsche situates art outside of the university while, at the same time, demanding its entry into education, not as an additional form of knowledge or mode of communication but, rather, as a means of *disciplining* the student. Admittedly a problematic concept, discipline is here separated from the power of the master and situated in the rhetorical force of language and (for our purposes) the artwork. This raises the question of rhetoric and its relationship with irony which, in turn, allows us to further develop and refine the exemplary nature of the teacher/student relation originally introduced within Kant's account of the pedagogical relation in chapter one.

Finally, the fifth chapter broaches more directly the problem of intersubjectivity assumed by most pedagogical models. Beginning with the symmetrical assumptions of Husserl's phenomenology, where bodies are 'paired' within an empathic reflective (literally mirrored) space, his ultimate failure, in for example the last of the *Cartesian Meditations*, to offer a convincing account of the other, is read affirmatively (or perversely) as a positive anti-dialogical sign. Using Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the teaching situation as a way of breaking with the empathic model, it is phenomenological dissymmetry, as it figures in the work of Maurice Blanchot and Emmanuel Levinas, that emerges as the crucial pedagogical issue in this chapter. Once again, it is the dislocation of *space* between self and other, teacher and student, between one 'face' and an other that problematizes the

cherished assumptions still so enthusiastically embraced within educational theory and practice today. Having said that, it is the differences that emerge between the aesthetic and ethical pedagogies of Blanchot and Levinas respectively, and, in particular, Levinas' recoil from his early aesthetics and subsequent retreat into the ethics of his maturity that allows a final consideration of the radical irresponsibility of aesthetic education, one every bit as serious as any rhetoric of moral responsibility, ironized long ago by Nietzsche.

Within our current moral (moralizing) climate this is not likely to go down too well, nor is it intended to. The purpose of this book is not to challenge hegemonic educational models, how could it, it is not a model. Indeed, the thoughts presented here have no singular purpose or goal other than the incessant dislocation and disarticulation (through the affirmation of difference rather than contradiction and negation) of the space and all-too-familiar language of teaching and learning: the 'permanent parabasis' that figures large in what follows.

Chapter 1

Teaching the Unteachable: Method and Manner in Kant's Aesthetics

In a word, science (critically undertaken and methodically directed) is the narrow gate that leads to the true doctrine of practical wisdom, if we understand by this not merely what one ought to do, but what ought to serve teachers as a guide to construct well and clearly the road to wisdom which everyone should travel, and to secure others from going astray.¹

Kantian critique and metaphysics are inseparable from modern teaching. They 'are' this teaching, that is to say that they 'are' teaching forms untried until now...Kantian philosophy is elaborated and structured as a teaching discourse. More precisely, that of a professor in a state University.²

If, as Kant and Derrida, respectively, both seem to agree, the critical philosophy of the former is primarily a *teaching*, a mode of reflection intended for a professional audience of philosophers employed by or attending the State educational system, then the publication in 1790 of the *Critique of Judgement* would represent a writing of the aesthetic into the university curriculum, an event of some importance. But what is an event? Derrida again:

Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an 'event'...What would this event be then? Its exterior form would be that of a *rupture*...³

And its interior form would be a certain movement of *play*, one not limited by the immobility of a structural centre which, while allowing and controlling playfulness, is always intent on putting itself 'beyond play'⁴ but, rather, a play that *really* plays. In *Writing and Difference*, as a guide, Derrida offers the names of

¹ Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, New York: Dover, 2004, p. 172.

² Derrida, Jacques. *Who's Afraid of Philosophy?*, trans. Jan Plug, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 51.

³ Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*, trans. Geof Bennington and Ian McLeod, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 278.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

some players: Nietzsche and Heidegger to be precise. One suspects that by the time of writing *The Truth in Painting* he would have added Kant's name here too.

Derrida's friend, Paul de Man, does exactly that when he uses this same thought to return to what he describes as the 'occurrence' of Kant's third *Critique*, an event which 'interrupted, disrupted [and] disarticulated' aesthetics thanks to the critical rigour of the thought contained therein.⁵ As de Man describes it, the history of the reception of Kant's aesthetics from the valorization of art in Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* onwards, is guilty of repeatedly attempting to 'domesticate' ⁶ the more threatening insights of this thought often, indeed, in the name of education and teaching.

Pedagogically then, the productive force of the *Critique of Judgement* has largely failed to enter the space of the university, disabled, ironically, by a mode of reception that has promoted it precisely as a *model* for education. As will be discussed below, Lyotard's reception of Kant's aesthetics presented, significantly perhaps, as a series of 'lessons',⁷ argues for a break with this dominant model of the model, but, as will be seen, this itself creates other difficulties which themselves threaten to undermine aesthetic education *tout court*. As a consequence, a firmer grasp of Kant's central notion of 'exemplification' will be necessary if his own more dynamic utilization of the model is to be saved from domestication and radicalization respectively: this will be dealt with below.

In the meantime, if de Man is correct, the *Critique of Judgement* remains not only outside of the university but also outside of history:

One could say, for example, that in the reception of Kant, in the way Kant has been read, since the third *Critique*—and that was an occurrence, something happened there, something occurred—that in the whole reception of Kant from then until now, nothing has happened, only regression, nothing has happened at all. Which is another way of saying there is no history, which is another way of saying...that reception is not historical, that between reception and history there is an absolute separation...⁸

Paul de Man will be returned to later, but it might be worth noting that the 'regression' he perceives in the ahistorical process of reception is one that is evident in Kant's *own* reception of his aesthetic thought as is apparent in the structural borrowings from the *Critique of Pure Reason* in an effort to delimit the play of the aesthetic already noted. Derrida describes this as an act of framing and reframing:

⁵ de Man, Paul. *Aesthetic Ideology*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 134.

⁶ Ibid., p. 130.

⁷ Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

⁸ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, p. 134.

Kant thus imports this table [of categories]...into the analytic of aesthetic judgement...it is a transportation which is not without its problems and artful violence: a *logical* frame is transposed and forced in order to be imposed on a *nonlogical* structure...The frame fits badly. The difficulty can be felt from the first paragraph of the book... The violence of the framing multiplies. It begins by enclosing the theory of the aesthetic in a theory of the beautiful, the latter in a theory of taste, and the theory of taste in a theory of judgement. These are decisions which could be called external: the delimitation has enormous consequences, but a certain internal coherence can be saved at this cost.⁹

To rupture this frame, to put Kant's aesthetics back into play, back into the openness and movement of what de Man identifies as its repressed performativity is one of the main aims of the following reflections. This will require from the outset a shift of emphasis away from the dominant reading of the *Critique of Judgement* as a reception aesthetics (for academics with 'taste') to one more attuned to the productive moment of both the art *work* and the restless movement of reflective judgement eternally caught up in the working of this work. The allusion to Heidegger here is deliberate; during the aforementioned (non)history of aesthetic reception where, it is true, nothing much has happened, he alone poses the essential question: what is the *origin* of the work of art? Not, what is art? The so-called 'ontological' question that clogs up so many academic textbooks on aesthetics. Who cares what art *is*? An expression, intention, label, institution, ideology or joke, it doesn't matter, it is how art comes into being that is the real ontological question, the *movement or transition* from the unmarked to the marked space, to use Niklas Luhmann's words,¹⁰ the rupture, the 'cut', the occurrence of art as a work prior to work. As we will see, Maurice Blanchot describes it as the work of a 'worklessness' at the centre of art, Heidegger famously expresses it the following manner:

The artist is the origin of the work of art. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other. Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work *are* each of them by virtue of a third thing which is prior to both, namely that which also gives artist and work of art their names—art. As necessarily as the artist is the origin of the work in a different way than the work is the origin of the artist, so it is equally certain that, in a still different way, art is the origin of both artist and work. But can art be an origin at all? Where and how does art occur?¹¹

Art, then, is not an object, it is not even the *experience* of an object, in spite of the familiar 'Kantian' reading of Kant, it is, as Heidegger rightly insists, an

⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McCloud, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 69.

¹⁰ Luhmann, Niklas. *Art as a Social System*, trans. Eva Knodt, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, p. 24.

¹¹ Heidegger, Martin. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, New York: Harper and Row, 1975, p. 17.

occurrence, an event, indeed a 'rupture' prior to the partitioning of being into subject and object, artist and work, thus rendering all aesthetic reception too late and the *Critique of Judgement* literally out of time, suspended between the inscrutable singularity of production and the unattainable universality of reception. So, to be clear, the aforementioned shift of emphasis from reception to production is not intended as a crude inversion of the 'standard' reading of Kant, thereby unproblematically offering something 'better'; on the contrary, Kant's 'disarticulation' of the aesthetic is here taken seriously. In this sense, the *Critique* will not, *cannot*, be read, and as a consequence, as Kant himself recognized, in essence it cannot be taught. It is precisely here that Derrida's account of the frame is at its most suggestive:

This critique of taste does not concern production, it has in view neither 'education' nor 'culture', which can very well do without it...he admits the lacks, the lacunary character of his work...

What does the lack depend on? What lack is it?

And what if it were the frame. What if the lack formed the frame of the theory. Not its accident but its frame.¹²

But, to the extent that the absence of the productive moment frames or inscribes the limit of the marked space of the third *Critique*, it is very much Kant's concern, not, to be sure, in order to 'educate' or 'cultivate' (and I retain Derrida's inverted commas), something totally alien to Kant's aesthetics, but to teach nonetheless. Indeed, the separation of education and teaching, evident in Kant's distinction between 'method' and 'manner', is perhaps one of the most important tasks in the following reflections, and one that differentiates many of the arguments presented here from those to be found within educational theory and philosophy.

The Work of Art

If aesthetics is to have a substantial, even constitutive role within the university it must be able to engage with the *work* of the artwork as an ongoing and ontologically open productive enterprise. The reception of the artwork as a completed thing or act and the aesthetic judgement necessary to take pleasure in the contemplation of it is largely irrelevant to the day-to-day work of the aesthetic producer. Rarely do the tutor or student stand before a work that could be claimed to have reached completion or achieved, what might be called, finality. On the contrary, in most cases an essential aspect of teaching practice is precisely to *resist* the impending closure of the work through a critical engagement which challenges the student to consider and reconsider the aesthetic possibilities of given forms

¹² Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p. 42.

within a situation of infinite reflection. Given this, it is important at the outset to consider Kant's notion of finality *without end*.

So we may at least observe a finality of form, and trace it in objects—though by reflection only—without resting it on an end.¹³

Whenever an end is regarded as a source of delight, it always imports an interest as determining ground of the judgement on the object of pleasure. Hence the judgement of taste cannot rest on any subjective end as its ground. But neither can any representation of an objective end, i.e. of the possibility of the object itself on the principles of final connection, determine the judgement of taste...¹⁴

Echoing his famous description of art as 'purposiveness without purpose', here the Kantian relation between finality and endlessness turns attention away from the art object, and the objective judgement determined by it, to the reflective process whereby the *act* of aesthetic judgement has primacy as that which acts upon the pleasure attending finality in the manner of a tracing to be traced and retraced by the receiver. But does this account of the playful enjoyment of our faculties and their beautiful attunement not obscure or distract us from the pure and immediate desire of the aesthetic where the concatenation of production *and* reception, *within the creative moment* demands from the artist an interest in the ownership of, and responsibility for the work, as well as an absolute (one might say obsessive) commitment to the *work* of art—the *labour* of the aesthetic? In this regard, the positing of a 'purposiveness without purpose', while facilitating a particular mode of aesthetic reception, overlooks the extent to which, *at the moment of production*, purposiveness is *itself* the purpose, is the primary interest. Reading Kant in this light, the following statement has an unusual significance.

A judgement upon an object of our delight may be wholly *disinterested* but withal very *interesting*, i.e., it relies on no interest, but it *produces* one.¹⁵

Any teaching of Kantian aesthetics which allows the disinterestedness of reflective judgement to obscure or deny the ever-present *interest* in work prior to the work will not only be seen as irrelevant to most working artists, but will also cut Kant's thought adrift from its very real engagement with the aporias of interest/disinterest, production/reproduction and the infinite transition from heteronomy to autonomy (the work and workspace of reflective judgement) under consideration below. As already mentioned, such a passage is described by Niklas Luhmann as being from the 'unmarked' to the 'marked'; he writes:

¹³ Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1952, p. 62.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43 (footnote).

A primary intention is necessary to pass from the unmarked to the marked space; but the act of traversing this boundary—an operation that *produces* a distinction (delimits a form)—cannot itself *be* a distinction, except for the observer who observes (creates, delimits) this distinction...Even the artist can see what he wanted to do only upon realising what he has done.¹⁶

Here it is the 'distinction' *between* un-form and form that allows the terrain of production to be identified, or negatively marked, as an unobservable absence which, as pure emergence, allows the presence of the work to represent itself, thus satisfying the work's desire to *be* a work.

There is a question of proximity here. In order to separate aesthetic pleasure from desire Kant must separate the receiving subject from the force of production, the will-to-form. There must be opened a distance between the judge of taste and the object of delight, and from the artist and his/her work, not only to protect the receiver from the un-aesthetic temptation to (figuratively speaking) consume the object but, more importantly, in order to offer a vantage point whereby the work can *become available* for aesthetic experience and judgement.

The pedagogical challenge of Kantian aesthetics can be located here in the irresolvable dialectic of production and reception, marking, as it does, the polarization of heteronomy and autonomy respectively and the terrain of reflective judgement understood as a transitional zone between the two.

Before turning to a more detailed account of the pedagogical dimension of Kant's aesthetics rooted, as it is, in the notion of exemplification, it might be useful to signal an important issue at this juncture that will be taken up again below with reference to the status of the 'model' in reflective judgement. The claim to be made here is that by utilizing in a specific way the four Kantian notions of 'rule', 'following', 'model' and 'illustration' (by coupling them) we can begin to identify two equally legitimate, but parallel, logics of teaching, both of which allow the aporia of art to be *taught*, albeit, it has to be said, in an aporetic way.

Following a rule is central to Kant's version of aesthetic education, indeed, is central to the whole critical philosophy; in this sense, he demands that art education should be academic.

...there is...no fine art in which something mechanical, capable of being at once comprehended and *followed in obedience to rules*, and consequently something *academic*, does not constitute the essential condition of art.¹⁷

This does not only concern the 'mechanical' aspect of aesthetic production but also, more importantly, the casting of aesthetic judgements which must scrupulously *follow* the rules laid down (or identified) by Kant in the *Critique of Judgement* if they are to *count* as the exemplification of taste. A problem that arises for the teacher here is that on the one hand Kant insists that 'learning is nothing but

imitation'¹⁸ while on the other he is equally clear that *following a rule* must be distinguished from imitation. To teach aesthetic judgement then requires the teacher to promote an academic culture of *self-legislation* guided by the idea of an autonomy that is peculiarly Kantian in its simultaneous demand for obedience. This recalls his famous statement in *An Answer to the Question What is Enlightenment?* 'Argue as much as you want and about what you want, but *obey!*'¹⁹

To the extent that the producer *judges* the artwork, he or she, through this *reproductive* act, provides a rule to be followed. However, the pre-judicial *productive* moment remains inaccessible to the producer who is, consequently, described by Kant as a mediator rather than a creator, a distinction that requires some engagement with Kant's discussion of genius and its relationship to the production/reception dichotomy. As Kant writes:

For *estimating* beautiful objects, as such, what is required is *taste*; but for fine art, i.e., the *production* of such objects, one needs *genius*.²⁰

Genius is the talent 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 attitude *through which* nature gives the rule to art.²¹

What is significant in the above is that Kant describes the talent of the genius as *belonging to* nature, understood as that which precedes the work and can only be experienced as an incommunicable anteriority. Kant continues:

...he [the genius] does not himself know how the *ideas* for it [production] have come into his head, nor has he it in his power to invent the like at pleasure, or methodically, and communicate the same to others...²²

It is, thus, the productive origin of the work that evades the self-legislated rules of aesthetic judgement in that, as the 'natural' determinant of the singular feeling necessary for such judgement, it grounds the judicious reception of the work but in such a way that its ultimate inscrutability and incommunicability eternally blocks the achievement of the universal consensus demanded by Kantian aesthetics.

It is at this juncture that one might consider introducing Kant's notion of the 'model' as a pedagogical means of 'illustrating' to the student the *aesthetic predicament* of the artist when confronted by the sublimity of his/her own 'nature'. Such a strategy does, of course, shift the emphasis of aesthetic education away from

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁹ Kant, Immanuel. 'An Answer to the Question What is Enlightenment', in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983, p. 45.

²⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 172.

²¹ Ibid., p. 168.

²² Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁶ Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*, p. 24.

¹⁷ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 171 (my emphasis).

reflective judgement in one sense but, in reality, only in order to deepen the understanding of this mode of judgement by indicating and inscribing its limits. What is more, instead of merely 'clipping the wings' of the artist through the discipline of reflective judgement, a strategy which risks *intensifying* the desire for aesthetic flight and unnecessarily mystifying the sublimity or alterity of production, an exemplary model would allow a teaching to be enacted that at least made (to coin a Kantian phrase) the incomprehensible comprehensible as that which must remain incomprehensible: a 'critical' incomprehensibility.

The Aesthetic 'Manner' of Teaching

We turn now to a more detailed account of the pedagogical dimension of Kant's aesthetics. Clearly, the reflective judgement of taste is, for Kant, at the heart of his aesthetics but, as he himself recognized, the teaching of judgement is deeply problematical. An initial issue to consider at the outset is the dialectic of singularity and universality. As Kant describes it, judgements of taste are logically *singular* while, at the same time, being aesthetically *universal*. This can be explained as follows: an aesthetic judgement, based, as it is for Kant, on feeling alone, is only valid to the extent that it brings to consciousness formal finality not as a conceptual structure but rather as a direct experience of the pleasure accompanying the free play of human faculties as a moment of an individual life. Each individual aesthetic experience and each independent judgement of that experience, while communicable, is, at the same time, ultimately unknowable to others.

Here the representation is referred wholly to the subject, and what is more to its feeling for life—under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure—and this forms the basis of a quite separate faculty of discriminating and estimating, that contributes nothing to knowledge.²³

In addition, Kant requires that aesthetic judgement be 'independent' as well as singular, a conjunction which represents a serious challenge to the very teaching of aesthetics, denying, as it does, the possibility of 'instruction' in the matter of taste. What is more, the demand for universal consensus as regards aesthetic taste, based upon the idea of a '*sensus communis*' compounds further the difficulty for the teacher. Where, in the one case, teaching or instruction is seen to endanger the all-important 'independence' of the student; in the other, the recognition of a '*sensus communis*', while underwriting the universal communication of the judgement of taste, itself jeopardizes the teaching situation in that such an assumed commonality and intersubjective attunement threatens to render it redundant or superfluous.

Thus we should be reminded of Kant's repeated claim that aesthetic judgement does not have an objective realm of its own but, rather, '*renders possible the transition*' from the laws of nature (heteronomy) to a self-legislated freedom

²³ Ibid., p. 42.

(autonomy).²⁴ The possibility of teaching will be dependent on the effective occupation of the zone *between* singularity and universality. It is important to note the centrality of this, the terrain of judgement, and the judicious and pedagogical movement it frames, given the widespread impression (promoted, for example, by Pierre Bourdieu and others) that Kant's is a 'bourgeois' perspective offering an autonomous, 'pure' aesthetic allergic to the 'vulgar' and the 'facile'.²⁵ Contrary to this extraordinarily static reading of the third *Critique*, it is crucial to understand, *especially for the teacher*, that a 'pure' aesthetic of disinterested contemplation would be virtually worthless within the context of an aesthetic education involved in guiding students along a path of reflection that eternally oscillates between the body and the mind, feeling and thought, vulgarity and purity. A movement, to return to Blanchot, never finished or unfinished. As a consequence, aesthetic education must, in a sense, mobilise itself in order to engage with this oscillating dynamic of reflective judgement which endlessly transports the judging subject away from the necessary pleasures of the embodied self, through the acknowledgement of the other towards the absolute futurity of a final end guaranteeing freedom and 'consistency' (forever denied); only to return again, albeit differently. Kant introduces three maxims to mark out this terrain:

1. think for yourself [understanding]
2. think from the standpoint of everyone [judgement]
3. think consistently [reason]²⁶

What is important here is that the act of judgement, drawing, as it does, the subject out of itself towards alterity, is, for Kant, indicative of an 'enlarged mind' and, more actively, an 'enlarged thought'.²⁷ The difficulty of placing this developmental thought, central to teaching, alongside what Lyotard calls the recurring 'infancy' of reflective judgement poses one of the key problems for teaching, but before dealing with this, the way in which such a 'transition' is taught requires, as Kant insists, a clear distinction being made between a method (*modus logicus*) and a manner (*modus aestheticus*) of teaching, arguing that fine art teaching is mannered rather than methodical.²⁸ Exemplars, then, are presented not as part of a method of instruction but, rather, as *singular* manners 'of carrying the [aesthetic] idea into execution in a product of art...' ²⁹

As already mentioned Kantian aesthetic education is, in principle, imitative, it seeks to offer the student *rules* (not concepts) of aesthetic production that exemplify the *manner* in which the artist, through the feeling of pleasure and the

²⁴ Ibid., p. 38.

²⁵ Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984, p. 486.

²⁶ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 152.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 182.

²⁹ Ibid.

freedom of the imagination, yet in conformity to self-legislated laws, produces fine art. These aesthetic rules are understood by Kant to be both singular in that they are the unique product of the artist, and yet universal to the extent that they demonstrate the means by which others can, equally, excite their own imagination to produce art.

In *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* Lyotard makes increasing use of Kant's notion of 'manner', identifying it as the 'secret'³⁰ procedure of not only aesthetic education but of the critical philosophy as a whole, understood in reflective terms. For him the 'dwelling place of a judgement's legitimation'³¹ is the terrain where a suspension of knowledge is required in order for reflective thought to 'linger' and open itself to a subjectively *felt* orientation, thus allowing a form of (non-teleological) progression. By knowingly shifting the emphasis away from the teleological thrust of the *Critique of Judgement*, Lyotard offers a reading that allows him to pursue the idea of autonomy *without* relying on the metanarrative of freedom against which his philosophy as a whole is pitched. He writes:

The mode of critical thought should by definition be purely reflective... moreover, aesthetic judgement reveals reflection in its most 'autonomous' state, *naked*, so to speak. In aesthetic judgement, reflection is... stripped of its objective, teleological function.³²

For Lyotard, then, 'reflection finds in aesthetic judgement the most autonomous model for its 'manner',³³ a claim that is grounded in his conjoining of autonomy and singularity. This conjunction should, however, be treated cautiously by teachers, removing, as it does, Kant's notion of the 'model' from the pedagogical process of exemplification at the heart of aesthetic education.

This attraction to a particular juridical autonomy can be traced through Lyotard's career from his discussion of recurrent singularity in his *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, where, significantly, a subjective state of 'infancy'³⁴ is proposed, right back to the 'pagan' dialectics of *Just Gaming* and its Aristotelian claim 'that a judge worthy of the name has no true model to guide his judgements'.³⁵ In both cases the 'nakedness' and recurring 'infancy' of reflective judgement is positioned *prior* to education, something Jean-Loup Thebaud (JFL's interlocutor in *Just Gaming*) perceptively raises as an important issue.

JLT: Yes, but I am a little bemused by the fact that in making reference to Aristotle, you are pretending to forget the other elements of his framework... for example, *hexis*, or education. To be sure, Aristotle's judge does judge without criteria, does judge without

³⁰ Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, p. 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³⁵ Lyotard, Jean-Francois and Thebaud, Jean-Loup. *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 26.

any theoretical purport that permits the fixation of the just, but that is because he has been educated, because there is a habit, because there is a pedagogy of the soul.³⁶

If Thebaud is right to resist Lyotard here, his intervention raises the vexed question of *how*, if at all, can Kantian aesthetics be taught and, more importantly, how can his critical thought *itself* provide an exemplary model for teaching?

The first thing to say here is that *any* teaching, not only the teaching of aesthetics, will have difficulty (to say the least) with Lyotard's notion of an infinitely recurring infancy. Teaching is about nurturing, development and maturation, of taking the naked and cultivating it, precisely through example, as Kant recognized, *contra* Lyotard.

There is no employment of our powers... not even of reason itself (which must create all its judgements from the common *a priori* source), which, if each individual had to start afresh with the crude equipment of his natural state, would not get itself involved in blundering attempts, did not those of others lie before it as a warning.³⁷

In this regard, to return to the aesthetic, the necessary singularity of reflective judgement must somehow be thought alongside a more dynamic notion of the judging self—a self that can be *taught*. To think this, however, demands a very careful consideration of the Kantian notions of 'feeling' and 'pleasure'—at the heart of singularity—in the light of a transformation of what might be called the structure of attunement from which they arise. This transformation is neither the work of the teacher nor of the student directly but, rather, the consequence of an educational process which, in a sense, works in tandem with, or (better) comes to inhabit the oscillatory rhythm of reflective judgement itself.

What is being suggested here is that the eternal transition of aesthetic judgement from a singular feeling of pleasure to a communicative universality, and then back again, will only return to its singular origin—its infancy—if teaching is absent or ineffective. In other words, the teacher's role is to ensure that a student is not locked into an unproductive circularity devoid of difference and transformation. This, of course, is not achieved through the direct intervention of 'instruction' (outlawed by Kant within the aesthetic), but, rather, by overseeing a pedagogical process of exemplification which is absolutely dependent on precisely the notion of a model denied by Lyotard.

It is here that Lyotard's understanding of reflective judgement as being productive rather than merely reproductive becomes problematical pedagogically in that such a view, in seeing reflective judgement as 'naked' production, is insensitive to the manner in which judgements are always cast in the light (or perhaps shadow) of the other. By emphasizing transition and the 'enlargement' of the mind Kant's account of aesthetic judgement is careful to avoid the promotion of singularity as a productive origin. So while Kant is quite correct to insist on the

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, p. 138.

'independence' of the singular judge from interference or 'instruction' by those who would claim authority, it would be quite wrong to identify such independence with autonomy as Lyotard appears to do. On the contrary, singularity is always *heteronomous* precisely because it *must* be under the yoke of feeling, the most pleasurable form of determination.

The question for the teacher here is not, then, how to teach aesthetic judgement to one who must necessarily remain independent, but, rather, how to establish and sustain a pedagogical process of exemplification which through the provision of 'models' comes to inhabit the other as a felt certitude, thereby—and this is the crucial thing—transforming and 'enlarging' aesthetic pleasure from within. In other words, aesthetic education trusts that the pleasure experienced in the production and reception of art is felt within an *expanding* field of attunement where the play of the self's faculties is, through the necessary demands of universal communication, brought, in fact, into a *dissonant* relationship with the judgement of others. Thus failing to actualize the posited '*sensus communis*', this play nevertheless introduces difference and irreducible plurality into the aesthetic realm which inevitably, if surreptitiously, feeds back into the *now renewed* feelings of singular pleasure. This is why our taste changes, to the degree that we *learn* to feel pleasure experiencing those things that, prior to our education, only others could enjoy.

As promised, we will now return to Kant's maxims of 'common understanding' used by him to elucidate the fundamental propositions of what he calls the 'critique of taste'. It will be recalled that they are as follows: (1) to think for oneself; (2) to think from the standpoint of everyone else; (3) always to think consistently.

Thinking for Oneself

The production of art requires an initial act. As seen, such aesthetic action contains within it an ontological passivity that quite properly acknowledges the exteriority of the work as a product of 'nature'. That said, there is another, improper passivity that can only be detected and removed by a prior critique of all illegitimate determinations. Kant calls the consequent emancipation from prejudice 'enlightenment', placing this at the heart of his first maxim and at the beginning of the transition from heteronomy to autonomy. The *notion* of a spontaneous act without prejudice, then, must inform this teaching, even though, by definition, the act *itself* cannot be legislated by the teacher without re-introducing prejudice and heteronomy. Once again, we confront the entanglement of the beautiful and the sublime within the teaching situation.

Kant's critique of passivity in the face of the other might suggest a subject-centred activism were it not for the crucial moment of negativity within his concept of enlightenment which demands, as will be shown, the transition to the second maxim and the introduction of alterity. In this regard, to think for oneself is, for Kant, to be 'never passive'; instead he demands a regime of self-legislation that, if it is to transcend the 'easy' adaption of the self to the knowledge of its own ends,

must work through the 'difficult and slow realisation' of enlightenment 'proper'.³⁸ Such genuine enlightenment is the product of a 'negative attitude' that continually drives the self beyond itself and the limitation of its own common understanding as well as the dubious assurances of the other who would direct curiosity back into heteronomy.

Here can be witnessed again the irresolvable, but productive, dialectic of Kant's aesthetics. The aesthetic judgement necessary to produce art must be compelled by the irrefutable aesthetic experience of the attunement of cognition and objective form, untainted by the dubious assurances of the other. Yet, at the same time, this compulsion must be directed *towards the other* in an effort to transcend the *narrowness* of the self, trapped within the cramped 'subjective personal conditions of his judgement'.³⁹ Within this dialectic, heteronomy is doubled, being both the heteronomy of the *other* prejudicing the autonomous acts of the self, as well as the heteronomy of the *self*, enclosing judgement within the static realm of self-certainty.

Thinking the Other

The necessary consideration of the other's standpoint, as part of the act of judgement, does not compromise or dilute aesthetic production but, on the contrary, *intensifies* it. Indeed, Kant's claim is that the enlargement of our minds is a necessary prerequisite for the production of works of 'magnitude' and 'intensity'.⁴⁰ It would be a mistake, however, in spite of his terminology, to understand Kant's second maxim as either expansive or integrative. To teach a student to detach him/herself from the narrow commitment demanded by the first maxim instigates an infinite process of reflection which, in going out to the other, demands both a recognition of commonality *and* difference—attunement and dissonance—which, respectively, allow aesthetic feeling to become communicative *and* intense as art. That is to say, the '*sensus communis*', as the fictional articulation of the 'possible', rather than the 'actual' judgements of others, is in reality characterized by irresolvable difference, albeit measured against the ideal of consensus. It is the desire, and yet the 'failure' to transcend such difference that introduces intensity into aesthetic production; achieved consensus would instantly remove this edge.

To consider this in more detail it is instructive to turn briefly to Kant's moral philosophy before relating this back to his notion of reflective judgement and the manner in which its particular nature intensifies aesthetic production. In this, the ethical domain, the territory of aesthetic judgement is reduplicated as a 'kingdom of ends'. Within this kingdom, the self reaches out to the other in a moral act that dignifies rather than values, thereby recognizing the other as 'person' rather than 'thing', 'end' rather than 'means'. Such is the familiar account of Kant's moral

³⁸ Ibid., p. 151.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

philosophy. However, a closer reading of the texts would suggest a more complex position, one that, in fact, retains within a productive tension the above polarities, thus protecting the alterity necessary for both moral conviction and aesthetic intensity.

To explain; it is clear from the wording of Kant's practical imperative concerning the kingdom of ends that it is, in actuality, both a kingdom of ends *and* means. He writes:

Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, *never simply* as a means, but always *at the same time* as an end.⁴¹

The tension here is between a moral thought that, requiring self-legislation to be compelled by the standpoint of the other as an end in itself, nevertheless must outstrip the dignified personality of both self and other as a *means* of sublimely raising personality above itself. A kingdom of ends *alone* would be a realm of friendship and love closer to the dialogical position of Martin Buber's 'I/Thou' than Kant's 'practical' philosophy, where the incomprehensible and, thus incommunicable, reverence for the moral law shatters such familiarity.

The same duality of ends and means characterizes the reflective judgement of taste which, in the absence of a concept, does not have the epistemological authority to deny the validity of the other's judgement and, thus, must consider each singular judge as an end in him/herself. And yet, concurrently, the intolerance of contradiction or difference driven by the conviction to universally communicate aesthetic value, demands that the standpoint of the other be, *at the same time*, considered a *means* to an ideal end outside of failed consensual communication. To this extent, the standpoint of the other does not simply 'enlarge' the mind in the additive sense of broadening experience through the accumulation of other perspectives, but also, and on the contrary, does so by *subtracting* from experience the certainties that would allow the mind to come to rest within the confines of an unduly undifferentiated notion of 'common sense'. That is to say, one where the assumed cognitive attunement of subject and object, and subject and subject, blocks the development of a deeper understanding of the inherent alterity within sensation. Understood in this way, the infinite reflection characteristic of aesthetic judgement, while recognizing the 'dignity' of the other as end, must also 'value' the other as the means by which, in the transcendence or overflowing of their standpoints, an exteriority enters sensation as a felt absence; as *intensity*.

Thinking Consistently

The consistency of thought associated by Kant with reason, while unattainable for art, does, nonetheless, have a role to play in aesthetic judgement and production in

⁴¹ Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton, London: Hutchinson, 1948, pp.66-7 (German pagination, my emphasis).

the form of a certain resolve and vigilance committed to ensuring that the aesthetic realm retains the sublime flight associated with the productive imagination, *as well as* the reflective rigour of judgement necessary for aesthetic representation. This co-existence of pre-judicial creation and consistent estimation demands of the artist and the teacher, what might here be called, a consistency of pre-judice that is self-aware enough to recognize this aporetic structure as both the fate of art and aesthetic judgement, and their promise.

Without a method, the consistency necessary to teach aesthetics can only develop through the necessarily dynamic occupation of the transitional terrain of the aesthetic where the fictional finality of form directs the infinity of traces we call the artwork and the art of judgement. Such an occupation of the aesthetic *creates the conditions* for the assessment of an artwork *as a work* (the labour of the aesthetic itself) as it renders productive the unresolvable dialectic of heteronomy and autonomy discussed above.

As stated at the outset, it is the *work* of the artwork that is at the heart of teaching and not the dubious finality of the art object which, more often than not, represents a closure of the teaching situation. It is the aesthetic structure of this work, as described by Kant, that needs to be presented to the student as an exemplar to ensure that the discipline required to remain consistent within a realm without methods or concepts comes to be understood and accepted as the primary demand. That is to say, a severe attitude that can critically identify each moment of production as a groundless point of concentration and intensity which must be protected against any pre-given totality that would foreclose its configuration of an unattainable autonomous productivity; an aesthetic attitude capable of renunciation and denial, willing to refuse the pleasures of the final object for the sake of the infinite work necessary to trace and re-trace finality *without end*.

A Guide for Teachers?

The reading of Kant's aesthetic thought offered here has tried throughout to remain faithful to this notion of teaching as a necessarily dynamic enterprise consistent with, and equal to, both the fundamentally transitory nature of aesthetic judgement as well as the sublime 'flight' of artistic production. This notwithstanding, it is difficult to conclude with a set of specific recommendations appropriate and applicable to all teaching situations. Certainly, teaching aesthetics in the way described has less to do with developing in the student an appreciation of the artwork or an ability to judge its 'quality' or 'value' as an aesthetic object than it does with problematizing most of the cherished assumptions that accompany aesthetic production and reception. It is perhaps precisely the fact that Kant's *Critique of Judgement* says so very little about specific works that allows the inscrutability of the *work and worklessness* of art to emerge as a challenge to the typical convictions of the art student, thereby allowing an aesthetic education proper to get underway. Individuality, independence, feeling, communication, identity, sociality, the aesthetic *itself* are all uprooted by this mode of reflection

thereby having consequences far beyond the insularity of the institution of art. But, then again, it is precisely the insularity of the 'academic' context that, through the imposition of a certain discipline and consistency, marks out, so to speak, the 'unmarked space' of an absent productivity which, from out of this exteriority, goads the artist into reconsidering the very nature of production.

If any of this can be *taught* it will not, as Kant sometimes appears to think, primarily be through the reception of exemplary artworks ('classics') which, as Nietzsche argued so forcefully,⁴² are just as likely to *stifle* creativity as excite it; nor will the introduction of the *Critique of Judgement* into the curriculum in itself transform the learning experience of art students, although it's not a bad idea! In truth, it is not the teaching of aesthetics (Kantian or otherwise) that is the crucial issue but, rather, the *aesthetics of teaching*, a thought that returns us, in conclusion, to the '*modus aestheticus*', the 'manner' of teaching.

In effect, it is the degree to which the substance of Kant's aesthetics, and in particular its aporetic dynamism, is *fed back* into pedagogy, and its enactment within the day-to-day teaching situation as a particular 'manner', that will provide the measure of its effectiveness educationally. It is above all, then, the *teacher* who must, to the extent that he/she becomes fully engaged in the infinite work of reflective judgement, and 'comprehends' the incomprehensibility of sublime 'worklessness', provide the 'model' that will 'illustrate' to the student the manner in which they too can proceed. For this reason it is imperative that teaching practice *itself*, in its *felt* existential being, brings an *intensity* to the student's educational experience that is exemplary for their own practice and which is recognized as having value as a means rather than dignity as an end in itself.

But this return to the language of Kant's ethics should not blind us to the fact that an aesthetics of teaching as described here does nevertheless represent a radical disruption of a conception of morality that, as Kant affirms, is 'methodically directed' and which leads to the 'true doctrine of practical wisdom'. Without method and without a doctrine, Kant's aesthetics suggests a pedagogy that, if followed, would break with the ethical model that continues to dominate educational thinking. Throughout the following chapters, this break will be thought and re-thought as the critical moment of aesthetic education, a thought that, it would appear, remains largely unthinkable.

⁴² See Nietzsche, Friedrich. 'The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. G. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Chapter 2

Aesthetic Education or Aesthetic Ideology? Schiller and de Man

In spite of the question mark placed above aesthetic education by Kant's account of judgement, production and reception, the aestheticization of education, famously returns in the post-Kantian world in a 'series of letters' by Friedrich Schiller proposing a radical reconfiguration of both subjectivity and objectivity based upon a particular reading of the *Critique of Judgement*. It would be difficult to exaggerate the impact of Schiller's humanist project on 19th and 20th Century thought, just as it would be futile to deny his spectacular fall from grace with the increasing ascendancy of antihumanism in all its late 20th and early 21st Century variants. One way of tracing this decline would be through a reading of Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* followed by Paul de Man's *Aesthetic Ideology*. And yet in the latter, in an essay entitled *Kant and Schiller*, after a comprehensive deconstruction of Schillerian aesthetics, de Man makes the following quite extraordinary statement.

Whatever writing we do, whatever way we have of talking about art, whatever way we have of teaching, whatever justification we give ourselves for teaching, whatever the standards are and the values by means of which we teach, they are more than ever and profoundly Schillerian. They come from Schiller and not from Kant. And if you ever try to do something in the other direction and you touch on it you'll see what will happen to you. Better be very sure, wherever you are, that your tenure is very well established, and that the institution for which you work has a very well-established reputation. Then you can take some risks without really taking many risks.¹

What is, perhaps, even more extraordinary than the statement itself is the fact that, during the published 'discussion' that immediately follows this lecture, the gathered academics (whether content Schillerians or well-established tenure-track faculty) utterly fail to take up the pedagogical challenge thrust, quite brutally, in their faces by de Man. Indeed, it is both laughable and depressing to witness here the spectacle of a highly sophisticated philosophical and exegetical debate being conducted seemingly oblivious to the insult at the very heart of the paper under discussion. What is more, it is a double insult, one directed at those on *both* sides of the intellectual divide marked out throughout the essay.

¹ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, p. 142.

On the side of Schiller (the majority), are to be found, according to de Man, those who retreat from the 'critical incisiveness'² of Kant's account of the aesthetic. His own terminology is strong and direct, Schillerian thought constitutes a 'regression', an attempt (obviously very successful) to 'domesticate' the threatening 'occurrence' of Kantian aesthetics in the name of a 'unifying category' and exemplary model of education and the state that represents a betrayal of Kant, all the worse for being in his name. At its climax, de Man's lecture is downright abusive, accusing Schiller and, by implication, the assembled epigoni, of 'a total lack, an amazing, naïve, childish lack of transcendental concern...an amazing lack of philosophical concern.'³ The fact that the ensuing discussion did not react to this accusation speaks volumes on the current state of aesthetic education.

On the side of Kant (the minority), are to be found those who are well enough 'embedded' (to use the current political terminology) in the educational establishment to be able to play at taking risks without really taking any at all, an engaging piece of self-irony on de Man's part. What exactly these risks are, however, (whether real or merely academic) is not made clear by de Man who, while signalling this 'other direction', is himself content to dramatize this unknown 'it' waiting to happen as little more than a threatening absence within the all-too-familiar forum of academic exchange. Indeed, it is precisely here, in the hegemonic dialogism of the university, that we witness the absence of this absence in the blithe reception of de Man's provocative and insulting remarks.

In a gesture that reverses Marcuse, the pedagogical challenge posed by de Man requires the *de-realization*, rather than the realization of Schiller's utopian vision of aesthetic education. Instead of inscribing the aesthetic within the chiasmic, tropological thinking that dominates, indeed, *constitutes* educational discourse, thus repeating Schiller's own 'reinscription'⁴ of Kant after the latter had 'interrupted, disrupted, disarticulated' that same project, the 'other' pedagogical direction would represent a *de-inscription*, an erasure, that would seek to wipe clean the atemporal, ahistorical space between the 'event' of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and now.

To reiterate: for de Man, as already seen in the previous chapter, nothing has happened since Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. Schillerian regression and domestication are not aesthetic events, a fact that effectively denies Kantian aesthetics a history. Instead of a history there is only the 'reception' of Kantian aesthetics, understood by de Man as a recurring 'relapse' of the performativity of the third *Critique* back into the tropological system, one finding its perfect articulation in the triadic structure of Schillerian aesthetic education.

To the extent that tropological systems, into which the aesthetic endlessly collapses, are 'masterable',⁵ they are able to ground a history of aesthetic education promoting a teaching capable of, indeed intent upon, holding still the disruptive

² Ibid., p. 130.

³ Ibid., p. 141.

⁴ Ibid., p. 134.

⁵ Ibid., p. 144.

movement of the aesthetic itself. In de Man's view this amounts to a removal of the philosophical from aesthetics for the sake of the 'masses' and the state.

Philosophy isn't taught in an aesthetic education, Kant is not taught. Schiller would be taught, because it is a popularization...of philosophy. As such the aesthetic belongs to the masses. It belongs...to culture, and as such, it belongs to the state...and it justifies the state.⁶

To go in the 'other direction', towards a genuinely philosophical aesthetics, to take that 'risk' is de Man's challenge not only to those present at his lecture but to all who sense the need for another pedagogy outside the domesticity of state education. Here we 'touch on' what needs to be touched if that which is waiting to happen (to us) has any chance of happening. But what should be done? And what *will* happen?

What Should be Done? What Happens?

One certainty is that there are no certainties here; but, having said that, there is something to be gained from using de Man's language as an initial guide, especially as his terminology is careful to avoid any suggestion that the aesthetic might be taken possession of, grasped or held firm. Instead, and to reiterate, he speaks of 'touching on' something, something that has always already happened, and which, outside of its reception, continues to happen, incessantly and irreversibly. This happening, this 'occurrence', this 'event' of the aesthetic, while linked here to the performative as opposed to the tropological is, as he correctly recognizes, not in opposition to anything at all. It is, rather, a *certain transition* from one regime to another, an infinite movement that always retains an irreducible difference (and distance) from the polarity that configures but nevertheless fails to overdetermine it. As de Man argues emphatically during his 'discussion' of *Kant and Schiller*, this transition is dialectical, an infinite motion that disturbs and ultimately sacrifices its own tranquillity to the 'labour of the negative.'⁷ To touch on *this* dialectic, one that in its infinity is quite different to Hegel's, is to touch upon something risky indeed, but what does it mean to touch upon this? Again, it might prove instructive to use de Man's own actions as a guide given that, thanks no doubt to his considerable eminence as a scholar, and the consequent security of his employment arrangements, he is in an excellent position to take the (risk-free) 'risks' he speaks of.

What does he do? On the face of it, he offers yet one more reading of Kant's aesthetics. It is undeniably a masterful account, offering some brilliant and fascinating insights into the disruptive complexity of Kant's thinking-through of the aesthetic, but it is, ultimately, just another reading delivered in lecture form, from notes, to his peers and students within the (Schillerian) State university

⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

⁷ Ibid., p. 157.

system. Clearly, de Man touches on something in Kant, something important, but what happens? What exactly is being 'risked' here? Is *anything* being disrupted or has de Man's own polarization of the Kantian and the Schillerian resulted in himself 'relapsing' into the very tropological system he is seeking to think outside of? There does not appear to be any location for de Man's own much-celebrated mastery outside of the 'masterable' tropological systems he continues to inhabit. Witness also how comfortable his respondents are and how willingly they enter into the reassuring forms of debate, forms in place to allow a collective exhibition of mastery or counter-mastery in spite of, to return to the beginning, the insult that remains unaddressed, and is, perhaps, unaddressable within this particular forum. In short, nothing has happened, nothing has *continued* to happen and will continue not to happen until a way is found to address the real critical challenge of Kant's particular dialectic.

A fist-fight would have been better, a knock-down bloody brawl spilling out into the street beyond the university boundaries, disrupting and disturbing the orderly procession of the non-academics outside with the ugly (but sublime) spectacle of pure intellectual violence. Instead we are left with a 'discussion', one that leaves everything as it is.

So what *should* have happened when de Man confronted his audience with their 'amazing philosophical naivety'? Or, at the very least, what *could* happen to so jeopardize the tenure of those courageous enough to touch on this other direction? Amongst all these uncertainties one thing is certain, the risk de Man speaks of is a *professional* rather than a philosophical or theoretical risk. It is about having and *keeping* a job rather than *doing* one, security of employment is the crucial issue here. Losing one's job is what could happen.

Considering this for a moment, it is clear that the 'return to Kant' suggested by de Man is not in fact likely to bring the institution down on the heads of those courageous enough to step outside of their Schillerian domesticity (if that were the case the current book would be out of the question!). Such a 'return' has, if anything, proved to be something of a hallmark of much contemporary thought becoming, as a consequence, a mainstay of university education, invigorating rather than jeopardizing current pedagogy. But it is precisely here that the problem lies, the 'risk'. It is de Man's problem, but it is also Kant's problem, one that we all, as teachers, inherit but leave unaddressed. It is *the* problem of this book, not because it demands a different mode of teaching, a disruption, a dislocation, and a consequent re-evaluation, but because it *denies* teaching, it renders teaching, to quote Blanchot, 'truly impracticable'.⁸ that is the risk: *redundancy*.

The 'return to Kant' returns us not only to the interruption of the aesthetic but, in a more concrete way, it returns us to a critical interruption of aesthetic education, one that has already been witnessed in the last chapter within the analytic of the beautiful and which is implicit throughout de Man's sustained engagement with the Kantian sublime. Indeed, to go further still, the *Critique of Judgement*, as de Man is keen to demonstrate, can in no way be seen

⁸ Blanchot, Maurice. *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982, p. 6.

unproblematically as the unification of the first two *Critiques*, on the contrary, its critical power is *dis*-integrative rather than integrative, it is, as has been emphasized thus far, a work of *dis*-location, one that removes the aesthetic from the false sites that would claim it: the object, the 'mind', self/other, reception/production. In so doing it *threatens* rather than 'completes' the whole structure of the critical philosophy by opening up an 'aesthetic dimension' that is emphatically *not* a utopian liberatory space, as Herbert Marcuse would have it (one that does promise a certain aesthetico-political resolution) but is, rather, a 'territory' of infinite transition that is neither autonomous (claimed by Kantians and Marcuse) nor heteronomous, (claimed by non/anti-Kantians) but the necessary *movement* between these terms, a movement that is incessant, irresolvable and infinite. The possibility of aesthetic education will itself, then, depend upon either the success with which it can resist the above dis-integration or initiate its own pedagogical rhythm capable of incessantly moving out beyond its own measure, a form of discontinuous self-overflowing to be considered below.

As is well known, the first two *Critiques* are concerned with drawing boundaries, identifying horizons and imposing limits on the epistemological and ethical domains. Demarcation is the central thrust of this, still the most familiar, version of Kant. The third *Critique* is, however, rather different. While it is true that Kant is rigorous in his delimitation of aesthetic judgement throughout the aesthetic part of the overall text, it is clear, nevertheless, that this is a peculiar kind of delimitation, one that fastidiously marks out a terrain that is doubly (beautifully and sublimely) unable to contain its contents in the face of what Levinas would call infinity:

The relation with infinity cannot, to be sure, be stated in terms of experience, for infinity overflows the thought that thinks it. Its very *infinition* is produced precisely in this overflowing.⁹

The self-overflowing of Kant's aesthetics, what might be called the *infinition* of the *Critique of Judgement*, where thinking consistently out-thinks itself, is identified by de Man as a form of critical 'motion' that perpetually disrupts the dubious stability of ideological systems, '...a motion whose cause resides...within itself, within the substance of its own being'.¹⁰ The essence of transcendental thinking, this movement, within the specific context of an aesthetic realm housing judgements without external legitimating concepts, is driven by the motor of reflection itself ('reflective judgements') with a purposeless purpose analogous to the artwork's own end-less structure. Such reflective movement, as de Man observes, quickly 'saturates' the tropological field leaving a 'residue' or excess that resists (and thus demands) the ideological re-inscription of Schillerian aesthetic education. In his account this can be most clearly seen in Kant's 'unaccountable' transition from the mathematical to the dynamic sublime:

⁹ Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969, p. 25.

¹⁰ de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, p. 72.

...the relationship between them, between the mathematical and the dynamic, is a discontinuity. It is not a dialectic, it is not a progression or a regression, but it is a transformation of trope into power, which is not itself a tropological movement, and which cannot be accounted for by means of a tropological model. You cannot account for the change from trope into performative, you cannot account for the change from the mathematical to the dynamic sublime in Kant...¹¹

The inability to account for the transition to the dynamic sublime, or, indeed, the dynamism of the transition itself, signals a pedagogical limit that has to be seriously addressed if aesthetic education is to continue to account for the aesthetic. As de Man demonstrates, more or less conclusively, Schiller's re-inscription of the discontinuous duality of the Kantian sublime into the pragmatics of fear and tranquillity, while pedagogically efficacious, actually, and ultimately, produces an absolute idealism incapable of sustaining an aesthetic education of any substance. The same can be said for Schiller's pragmatics of humanism which, in the *Aesthetic Education of Man*, at a crucial moment, allows (or compels) him to introduce the concept of 'humanity' as a modality of 'closure' in the face of the disturbing ontological openness of his own psychological model of the drives, struggling, as it is, with sense and form understood as absolute, undialectical difference. Observing this, de Man is able to augment further the critical sub-plot or counter-theme that has been identified in his remarks to the gathered academics. He writes:

Humanity, which then has to be itself the composite of those drives, is then equated with a balanced relationship between necessity and freedom, which Schiller calls free play, and which then becomes the determining principle of the human...hence the need, which follows, for a free and humanistic...education, which is called an aesthetic education, and which is still the basis of our liberal system of humanistic education.¹²

He says 'our' but he means 'your' system of education, you, the gathered Schillerians responsible for closing down the aesthetic in the name of a transcendent ideal of the human illegitimately suspended above and out of reach of the critical force of the Kantian transcendental aesthetic. At stake here is the status of the dialectic within Kant and Schiller and, as a consequence, the question of the hegemony (or not) of dialectical pedagogy within aesthetic education.

Schiller: Dialectical or Chiasmic?

As already mentioned, the issue of the dialectic is immediately raised in the 'discussion' of 'Kant and Schiller' when M. H. Abrams objects to de Man's reading of Schiller as an utterly non-dialectical thinker; this is a curious exchange for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is noteworthy, and perhaps surprising that de Man's turn (or return) to Kant is not driven by an appetite for deconstruction (in

¹¹ Ibid., p. 137.

¹² Ibid., p. 150.

spite of his close links to Derrida) but by a desire to 'touch upon' a certain dialectic. Not, to be sure, the triadic dialectic of Hegel, which, as he rightly observes, is weak in Kant, but, rather, the open and infinite negativity of transcendental thought itself, something closer, perhaps, to Adorno's 'negative dialectic' or 'logic of disintegration' encapsulated in the following:

...such dialectics is no longer reconcilable with Hegel. Its motion does not tend to the identity in the difference between each object and its concept; instead, it is suspicious of all identity. Its logic is one of disintegration: of a disintegration of the prepared and objectified form of the concepts which the cognitive subject faces, primarily and directly.¹³

It is clearly the manner in which it risks disintegrating the whole 'critical' Kantian edifice that attracts de Man to the *Critique of Judgement* and which draws him repeatedly in his later writings to the 'analytic of the sublime' therein. However, the 'labour of the negative' identified by de Man as working through the third *Critique*, while having considerable deconstructive force, differs from deconstruction precisely because of its negativity. As Derrida never tires of saying, deconstruction is *affirmative*, deconstruction says 'yes', thus transforming contradiction into contradistinction, dialectics into difference/différance. Given the important presence of Nietzsche's affirmative thought within his own, as well as his well-known proximity to Derrida, it is somewhat surprising to discover such a powerful presence of negation in de Man's reading of Kant and Schiller, a presence, he claims, not to be found in Schiller and thus, by implication, not to be found in the thought and the pedagogical practice of those around him at the time of speaking. Aesthetic education, then, hegemonic education (if de Man is to be believed) is non-dialectical; on the contrary—dialectics again!—it is, a static binarity that illegitimately imports spurious notions of the human, humanity and humanism as a way of short-circuiting rather than dialectically working through the aporias of Kant's disintegrative and dislocating aesthetics: such is the claim. It is a claim that is immediately invalidated by the ensuing 'discussion' which is more or less dialectical from beginning to end, commencing with Abrams' attempt to negate de Man's attempt to negate the familiar dialectical reading of Schiller from Hegel to Marcuse.

There is a complex confusion here that needs to be disentangled. To begin with, de Man, although persuasively chronicling the retreat and closure of education in the face of disruption, dislocation and disintegration, incorrectly equates this with a retreat from dialectics and the labour of negation. Even the most cursory glance at virtually any academic text or any academic journal will confirm that the spirit of negation continues to dominate research culture and, thus, the state education system that supports, sustains and, indeed, demands it. Above and beyond all subject specifics, to be educated is to be trained in the art of critique, critical analysis, critical reading, of 'falsification', contradiction and counter-claim: the art

¹³ Adorno, Theodor. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton, New York: The Seabury Press, 1973, p. 144.