

**The Aesthetic Supplement in Willy Apollon (in relation to Kant, Hoffmann, Freud)**

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Thoughts without contents are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind [*Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer; Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind*]  
— Immanuel Kant<sup>1</sup>

Beautiful is what is at once charming and sublime  
[*Schön ist, was zugleich reizend und erhaben ist*]  
— Friedrich Schlegel<sup>2</sup>

The anxiety about one's eyes, the anxiety of going blind, is often enough a replacement for castration anxiety [*Die Angst um die Augen, die Angst zu erblinden, [ist] häufig genug ein Ersatz für die Kastrationsangst*]  
— Sigmund Freud<sup>3</sup>

And so, finally, Freudian psychoanalysis and its philosophical attractiveness is positioned within a prevalence of therapeutics that grew out of a growing crisis in aesthetics [*Und so ist schließlich Freuds Psychoanalyse selbst und ihre philosophische Attraktivität Position innerhalb einer durch wachsende Krise der Ästhetik wachsenden Konjunktur der Therapeutik*]  
— Odo Marquard<sup>4</sup>

1 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft. Werkausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 98.

2 Friedrich Schlegel, "Athenäums-Fragmente," in *Schriften zur Literatur* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972), Fragment 108, 36.

3 Sigmund Freud, "Das Unheimliche," in *Studienausgabe*, vol. 4, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich et al (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982), 254.

4 Odo Marquard, "Über einige Beziehungen zwischen Ästhetik und Therapeutik in der Philosophie des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts," in Odo Mar-

Psychoanalysis has always seemed as if it should be compatible with, and supportive of, the aesthetic but turns against or abandons — blinds itself to, and empties itself of—the aesthetic in crucial and disappointing ways.<sup>5</sup> How is this simultaneous proximity to, and distance from, the aesthetic on the part of psychoanalysis to be understood, and what should one think and do about it? Approaching this enormous problem, as is necessary here, in a narrowly specific way, I would like to present and situate in relation to the history of ideas and discourses about aesthetics what I consider to be a particularly rigorous and interesting contemporary (post)Lacanian psychoanalytic formulation — that of Willy Apollon — on the place and importance of the aesthetic. I will argue that Apollon's is a metapsychological account in which the aesthetic dimension emerges as an *immanent completion* of — or *supplement* to — the psychoanalytic one. The aesthetic comes to occupy here an emphatically crucial place both in the trajectory of the cure and the life of any subject (and the being of the human). In order to situate and gauge this contemporary (post)Lacanian formulation in relation to, on the one hand, autonomous aesthetics in the Kantian mode, and on the other hand, Freudian reflection on the aesthetic (to both of which it alludes, despite the tensions between them), I will prepare the way for its examination with a series of three syndecdochic snapshots in the history of the aesthetic: from the culmination of Enlightenment aesthetics of the beautiful and sublime in Immanuel Kant, to the German Romantic aesthetics of the uncanny in E.T.A. Hoffmann, to the Freudian incorporation and appropriation of this aesthetics of the uncanny.<sup>6</sup> Despite

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quard, *Schwierigkeiten mit der Geschichtsphilosophie: Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), 103. English translation: "Several Connections between Aesthetics and Therapeutics in Nineteenth Century Philosophy," in *The New Schelling*, eds. Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman (London: Continuum, 2004), 24.

<sup>5</sup> See Leo Bersani, "Psychoanalysis and the Aesthetic Subject," in *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Winter 2006): 161-174.

<sup>6</sup> On the tension between Kantian and Freudian approaches to the aesthet-

its radically condensed and incomplete character, such a fragmentary anamnesis will help us to see how the resurgence of the aesthetic within the psychoanalytic in Apollon's recent work relates to, and differs from, the tradition of late neoclassical autonomous aesthetics and of its displacements in Romanticism and Freudianism, and to see also something of what has been at stake in these displacements all along.

To start delineating the stakes, and so to frame this piecemeal narrative, I take as my point of departure a learned and suggestively insightful essay by the German philosopher Odo Marquard, "Several Connections between Aesthetics and Therapeutics in Nineteenth Century Philosophy."<sup>7</sup> Marquard argues with reference to the history of philosophy, science, and medicine, that, during and after the development of romantic aesthetics and nature-philosophy, there emerges in Europe a tendency to replace aesthetic discourses with therapeutic ones.<sup>8</sup> The reason for this is relatively simple: *death* — which includes the death of reason. Once secularizing operations expose the human

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ic, see Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 9-13 et passim.

<sup>7</sup> See note 4. Marquard develops some strands of his argument further in "Zur Bedeutung der Theorie des Unbewußten für eine Theorie der nicht mehr schönen Kunst," in *Die nicht mehr schönen Künste. Grenzphänomene des Ästhetischen*, ed. H.R. Jauß (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1968), 375-392. I discuss Marquard's thesis on aesthetics and therapeutics in the nineteenth century in "From the Pantheism Panic to Modern Anxiety: Friedrich Schelling's Invention of the Philosophy of 'Angst'," in *The Palgrave Handbook of German Romantic Philosophy*, ed. Elizabeth Millán Brusslan (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 535-572, especially 536-539.

<sup>8</sup> Marquard both sketches the continuous trail that leads from Schelling to Freud by way of a genealogy of influence and instruction across the nineteenth century and examines the systematic connections between the two thinkers. Concerning the therapeutic turn in philosophy, we can still see this as late as Wittgenstein's "therapeutic" conception of philosophy.

being to death without recourse to religious salvation, nature comes to present a serious threat to our feeling of safety on the earth. The attempt to tame nature by idealizing it in an aesthetic modality — whether as beautiful or sublime — comes to seem increasingly implausible, however, over the course of the development of romanticism, and so in various thinkers we see a turn to the hope for a therapeutic protection against the dangers of nature. In the art of genius nature seems, for a time, as if it can successfully be rivaled by human imagination, since the genius imitates the creative force of mother nature. But as Marquard perspicaciously points out, because consciousness alienates us — as the Romantic and Idealist philosophers theorize — from nature *qua* object, the genius will have access to nature only as past and as unconscious. Here, indeed, the notion of the unconscious is born within Romantic discourse. But even if the genius in this period is seen as capable of accessing an unconscious nature in order to imitate its creative productivity, he remains nonetheless exposed to death and, all too often, to madness. Here is where philosophical aesthetics tends to turn toward medical and therapeutic discourses for solutions. As the romantic cult of aestheticized nature gradually begins to appear to constitute a disavowal of nature's deadly and irrational force, aesthetics moves — of course in some cases, not in all — to ally itself with, and even in some instances to disappear *into*, therapeutics (as secular salvation). Therapy becomes a supplement of aesthetics that tends to supplant it. While Marquard does not detail these developments extensively or nuance his account sufficiently concerning exceptions and divergences — nor can we here — his suggestion can nonetheless both usefully orient examinations of the vicissitudes of aesthetic discourses in relation to therapeutic ones since the early nineteenth century, and also shed helpful light on the resurgence of the aesthetic from within psychoanalytic discourse today.<sup>9</sup> His viewpoint prompts us to consider

9 Of course, one has to qualify Marquard's account by considering non-therapeutic directions in the development of post-Romantic aesthetics, notably decadence, whereby art turns away from nature and maintains its

that perhaps in such a resurgence we see precisely the historical manifestation of the limits of the ascetically anti-aesthetic, therapeutic rationalization and attempted transcendence of separation and mortality.<sup>10</sup> The aesthetic discourse that was incorporated by psychoanalysis now reemerges within it, in a new form, as its explicit completion.<sup>11</sup>

We have to begin with Immanuel Kant, however, because —

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priority over nature. But even and already in *À Rebours* we see that this solution leads the protagonist into illness, and that he is faced with both medical and religious options in the end.

10 In Freud's own work, in addition to writings such as "The Uncanny," where the aesthetics of the uncanny becomes the aesthetics of psychoanalysis, one can also see in "The Question of Lay Analysis" (1927) the positing of a limit to the medicalization of the discourse of the unconscious, and so a refusal to allow psychoanalysis to absorb the aesthetic into the therapeutic, even if Freud does not quite explicitly draw all of the consequences for the status of the aesthetic within psychoanalysis.

11 The principal aesthetic tradition absorbed by Freud himself is, I would argue, German Romanticism — as manifested by Freud's appropriation of this aesthetic tradition first in his book on *Witz*, and then again in his essay on the "Uncanny," of which I will only consider the latter here — albeit as inflected by the realism that is the literary equivalent of Freud's empiricist commitments. An early version of a re-emergence of the aesthetic within psychoanalysis as its central dimension is Winnicott's theory of play — the notion of play having been central to the aesthetic in Kant and especially Friedrich Schiller around 1800 — as an instance of the transitional phenomenon, and with perhaps a lesser level of explicitness, play therapy in child analysis. An even more important re-emergence of the aesthetic from within psychoanalysis, too complex to treat here, is the phenomenon of surrealism as an aesthetic movement, arising as it did largely from psychoanalytic theory. This re-emergence is followed then by the re-entry of (surrealist) aesthetics, art, and poetry into psychoanalysis through Lacan, but in that case into a psychoanalytic discourse that explicitly begins to differentiate itself from therapy per se.

completing the Enlightenment and bringing it to an end — Kant not only establishes the conceptual framework for aesthetics that remains fundamentally decisive for all aesthetics after him, from Romanticism through modernism and beyond, but also already contributes — e.g., in his “Essay on the Sickesses of the Head” — to early modern psychopathological discourse in terms that echo those of his aesthetic theory. As we will see, Hoffmann and (through the mediation of Romantic motifs) Sigmund Freud too are still bound up with Kant’s architectonics, albeit in ways that trace aspects of its inner ruination rather than its stability. And finally, we will see that also Willy Apollon makes reference to the central categories in Kantian aesthetics — in the turn from Enlightenment toward its displacement into Romanticism — and we will want to ask about the contemporary significance of this reference in the age Apollon characterizes persuasively as that of *mondialisation*.

*Beauty as Harmony of Imagination and Understanding in Kant*

To begin by mentioning only the most crucial traits of Kantian aesthesis: in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant needs to show both how *Verstand* (the faculty of the understanding) and *Vernunft* (reason), which are responsible for epistemology and ethics respectively, belong to the same unity of consciousness, and also how the isolated individual maintains some relation with organic nature as well as with the collective. Kant thus tries to show how the faculty of reflective judgment is the “intermediate member” [*Mittelglied*] between understanding and reason, and to show how aesthetics and teleology (the subjective and objective forms of reflective judgment, respectively), with their guiding notions of beauty and sublimity (in subjective reflection) and organic life (in objective reflection), provide the mediation between knowledge and morals. This project is a life-or-death matter for the subject, in the face of a nature that the subject can only transcend in ethics. For if its ethical autonomy and its natural heteronomy cannot be brought together in some way, the subject will have been disarticulated; if the

subject is isolated from the others, its experience will have no meaning; and if the subject is isolated from nature, then it will be lost to its own environment, but if it simply belongs to nature as an object in a world of mechanical objects, it is already dead. In the absence of a God of salvation that can be an object of experience, the constitution of the aesthetic-teleological unity is a high stakes affair indeed.

Given the topic of the present Special Issue, I focus here primarily on the beautiful rather than the sublime, but before considering its principal characteristics, and in light of the importance of nature here, it is necessary to begin with a word on the reversed mirror image of *aesthetic* judgment, namely *teleological* judgment, which Kant characterizes as the “objective” form of what remains nonetheless a mere reflective (and not determinant) judgment. The teleological judgment is the judgment of “life” rather than “beauty,” the determination that something is an organic being, and thus a “natural purpose” or a “purpose of nature.” Such an organic being is an objective purpose to some degree, but still one that we only construe on the basis of an analogy that the mind half creates and half observes between the workings of the human mind, as an end-positing capacity, and the way an organic being seems to function. For like the will, an organic being seems to operate in terms of ends, or final causality, where each part serves all the others and the whole as end (as well as means), since each is there “for the sake” of each of the others and “for the sake of” the (henceforth living) whole. The analogical link between humanity and organic nature that the reflective teleological judgment establishes serves the subject-world totalization goal of reflective judgment as a whole in two different respects. First, it supplements the link between individual and collective humanity that aesthetic judgment posits, as we’ll see in a moment. Second, it supplements the positive link between nature and humanity that is present in aesthetic judgment insofar as natural beauty, by revealing a subjective harmony between human and natural, provides the human being with reason to hope that, one day, he might unite with his surroundings in a more fully harmonious way than currently, in knowledge and action. When we come to Hoffmann and Freud, we’ll see however that the *conflation* of the terms of the Kantian

distinction between aesthetic and teleological judgment, the *confusion* of the beautiful with the living, or their *collapsing* together (in all senses of “collapsing”), becomes a phenomenon of pointed interest for romantic proto-modernism. In Hoffmann, the encounter with organic nature will become a traumatic encounter insofar as organic nature will be indistinguishable from mechanical nature (or artifice), as in Freud a rendezvous with eros will never be able to be certain that it is not a meeting with the death-drive.

To consider now the four main characteristics of the beautiful in Kant, first of all, the pleasure in the beautiful is *disinterested*, which means that it is distinct from the agreeable [*Angenehmes*] and from the conceptually determined. It is distant from the interests carried by the sensuous and conceptual realms. Somewhere between the two, it consists in the *harmonious interplay of the imagination and the understanding in reflective judgment*. The beautiful involves a free play of images and concepts, in which images are related to concepts (they are not *without* concepts) and concepts related to images (they are not *without* images), but in both directions these relations remain indeterminate, multiple, in abeyance. In terms of the epigram from Kant, in the *aesthetic* realm the images are both blind and seeing, the concepts both full and empty, dissonantly, a point Hoffmann and Freud bring out more strongly than Kant himself, in whom dissonance is primarily relegated to the sublime and overcome therein by the discovery of the supersensuous destiny of man.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, because the pleasure [*Lust*] in the beautiful is disinterested, the judgment that something is beautiful has a universality about it (for one is abstracting from one’s particular interests), but a *subjective* universality (since one is operating on the level of feelings rather than concepts per se). Third, the pleasure in the beautiful is only *subjectively purposive* — we feel it as purposive for us, but it has no definite purpose outside of itself. And fourth, it is *subjectively* necessary: we feel that there could be no other response to this thing we find beautiful, but we can’t anchor this feeling of the necessity of our judgment

12 See Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft, Werkausgabe*, vol. 10, §23-29.



(which is the feeling itself) outside of that judgment (i.e., that feeling) itself. These, then, are the four main traits of the beautiful as Kant lays it out. If these traits are not sustained, the beautiful will not establish between the subject and nature a relationship of harmony, wherein the subject remains harbored from the two forms of death or otherness that are sensuality and conceptuality.

*Taste as Sensus Communis: "Putting Oneself in the Place of every Other"*

What enables consciousness to access this dimension of the beautiful? Kant writes that we access the experience of the beautiful in the movement of (suspended) judgment whereby — searching for the law of what we are feeling and of the formal play of our reflection — we abstract from ourselves. This movement is what Kant calls that of “common sense.” Common sense — in this hitherto unheard-of sense of “common sense” as “taste” — is what makes it possible for the judgment of beauty to possess subjective universality and subjective necessity, by linking the individual subject indirectly to all other human subjects. A figuration of the regulative universalization of the individual subject, this radically new formulation of “common sense” centers the universalization not on the understanding or reason, as was (precisely) common in Kant’s day, but on the *aesthetic* sense, something halfway between religion and thought, God and mechanism, pure life and pure death. As “taste,” Kant claims that the faculty of reflective judgment is not just a common but more emphatically a “communal” sense [*gemeinschaftlichen Sinnes*]. In this role, reflective judgment has to mediate between the religion of reason and the nihilism of the mechanical understanding. Kant’s articulation privileges the religion of reason, whereas Hoffmann’s and Freud’s responses, as we will see, recall its nihilistic flip side.<sup>13</sup>

13 The immediate historical occasion of Kant’s redetermination of “common

Common sense is *communal* because:

in its reflection, it takes into consideration the mode of representation [*Vorstellungsart*] of each Other, in its thoughts (a priori), in order *as it were* [*gleichsam*], to hold its judgment [*Urteil*] against [*an*] the whole of human reason, and thereby to escape the illusion which, on the basis of subjective private conditions (that could easily be taken for objective), would have a disadvantageous influence on the judgment [*Urteil*].<sup>14</sup>

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sense” was the eighteenth century polemical exchange between Moses Mendelssohn (a Jewish member of the rationalist Enlightenment) and Thomas Wizenmann (a late 18th century German Protestant philosopher), which concerned precisely “common sense.” The context was the *pantheism controversy*. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi had accused the rationalist Enlightenment (in the persons, especially, of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and his Jewish protégé and friend, Mendelssohn) of adhering to Spinozism, which was then generally considered not just pantheism, but therefore atheism, as well as determinism with a Kabbalistic (Jewish) flavor. Jacobi claimed further that Spinozism was, in fact, the apex of reason, and that, as such, Spinozism proved reason to be atheistic. Therefore, reason needed to be supplanted anew by faith and feeling. Mendelssohn replied to the Counterenlightenment by saying: a) that Spinoza was not necessarily an atheist; b) that it is possible to follow speculative reason, rather than faith, without thereby losing faith, so long as one monitors and evaluates the movements of reason from the higher, more reliable standpoint of common sense. Wizenmann responded to this exchange by arguing that Mendelssohn’s “common sense” was just faith in another guise — i.e., a point of reference *outside* of reason — and so, that Mendelssohn had not provided any significant defense of reason in the face of Jacobi’s appeal to faith. Throughout this debate, “common sense” remained in its basic meaning equivalent to the “healthy understanding,” a faculty of *knowing* in a general epistemological sense. Here Kant steps in, introducing a radical displacement.

14 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, *Werkausgabe*, vol. 10, 225. Subse-

In order to accomplish this, one holds one's judgment against the merely "possible judgments" of Others, and "puts oneself in the place of every other" [*sich in die Stelle jedes andern versetzt*] (225). (We return below to this specific figure of thought when considering both Hoffmann and Freud, as well as Apollon.) One accomplishes such a self-displacement in that one "abstracts from the limitations that could by chance adhere to our own judging" (225). This act of abstraction involves leaving out, as much as possible, the matter or sensation [*Materie, d.i. Empfindung*] in one's representational state [*Vorstellungszustand*], and attending only to the "formal characteristics" [*formalen Eigentümlichkeiten*] of that state. "In itself," Kant writes, "nothing is more natural than to abstract from what charms and moves, when one seeks a judgment that is supposed to serve as a universal rule" (226). As the context in the pantheism controversy makes clear, the aesthetic sense replaces at once knowledge and faith, in Kant the understanding and reason, as the heart of the subject in its individual and (subjectively) universal dimensions.

The "indefinite" and "ideal norm" of the "common sense" as a disinterested aesthetic sense is *presupposed* by all of our judgments of taste, Kant writes, because they include the claims to necessity and universality, even though they are based only on a feeling. If we claim necessity and universality (for a judgment of beauty), this indicates that we silently and in fact presuppose the existence of an aesthetic sense common to all. "This indefinite norm of a common sense is actually presupposed by us" [*Diese unbestimmte Norm eines Gemeinsinns wird von uns wirklich vorausgesetzt...*] (159). The notion of such a sense, however, remains regulative, or aspirational, performatively posited by an act of the mind as an expectation of assent (or *Beistimmung*). In accordance with this aspirational performativity, Kant puts the positing of the *sensus communis* in the form of a "maxim" of the force-of-judgment: "*An der Stelle jedes andern denken*" [To think in the place of every other]. He

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quent references will appear parenthetically within the text.

characterizes this maxim as that of the “extended” [erweiterten] “way of thinking” [Denkungsart]. The *sensus communis* remains therefore doubly aspirational: on the one hand we posit its practice in our own reflection as an aspiration, and on the other hand we posit this practice of abstraction and imitation of possible other judgments in others in the form of a hope that it will exist, a hope on which aesthetic judgments are predicated. We try to put ourselves in the place of each other, and we hope that these places will be, like our own, evacuated of all interests, both particular and general. The tension between different viewpoints of judgment reappears, however, in the tension between “thinking for oneself” (the maxim of understanding) and “thinking in the place of every other,” a tension that only the maxim of reason, “thinking consistently,” can strive to overcome. This is a goal that reason can only infinitely strive for, or desire. The tension between me and the others within the aesthetic realm, which Freud and Hoffmann will underline, is displaced here into an internal tension of reason with itself.

If we recall now Marquard’s argument about the relationship between aesthetic experience and nature, asking whether or not Kant’s aesthetics fits into Marquard’s schema, it appears that the operations of the aesthetic common sense in Kant place the human being in a relationship with nature — Kant is explicitly focused on *natural* beauty — precisely from the *safe distance* of *disinterest*. The Kantian aesthetic transcendence of natural danger is even more manifest, of course, in the case of the overwhelming *sublime* spectacle, which exceeds representability and threatens our lives, a spectacle we overcome by identifying with the “supersensuous destiny” announced by our very capacity to enjoy such a spectacle, e.g., by identifying with our existence on the level of the noumenal, as announced by the ethics of the categorical imperative. In both the beautiful and the sublime, then, Kantian aesthetic experience provides us with a safe relationship to nature in which nature either harmonizes with our minds or occasions our transcendence of its own material dangers onto the level of the supersensuous.

*Hoffmann: Finding and Losing One’s Place with Some Others*

Like other German romantic writers and thinkers, E.T.A. Hoffmann explores the interstices of Kantian distinctions and differentiations, and asks about their limits, experimenting fictionally with what happens when they are transgressed or break down.<sup>15</sup> His story, “The Sandman,” Freud’s principal example of the literary uncanny in his essay on that aesthetic mood, illustrates amply Hoffmann’s particular version of this more general Romantic subversion or perversion of Kant. By playing with the conflation of aesthetic and teleological judgment, by caricaturing false disinterestedness, by raising questions about purposiveness, necessity, universality, and taste itself, as in other ways, Hoffmann’s “Sandman” story at once invokes and contorts, and so narrates the contingent failure of, the experience of beauty in Kant’s sense. And yet Hoffmann’s tale does not invoke the sublime without further ado. This means that it points to the impossibility of an aestheticization of nature that would conjure the dangers of nature — radical separation and mortality — out of existence.

To recall quickly the plot: a young man, or more precisely an adolescent, Nathanael, gradually forgets all about his beloved and enlightened fiancée, Klara, having been himself seduced by a beautiful woman who turns out to be an automaton designed by his evil and perverse Physics Professor — Spalanzani by name. The latter is working in league with a mysterious, ugly, evil lawyer/chemist who seems to take on shifting social identities, chiefly two. Under the name “Coppelius,” this evil lawyer first traumatized Nathanael’s entire family during Nathanael’s childhood by inducing Nathanael’s father to participate in some murky and diabolical experimentations somewhere between alchemy and robotics, which eventually led to the kindly but weak fa-

15 The epigram from Friedrich Schlegel, the principal theorist of early German Romanticism, illustrates this approach to Kant in a very different style: To say “Beautiful is what is at once charming and sublime” is to invoke and subvert Kant’s key distinctions in one gesture.

ther's death. Coppelius takes on for Nathanael in his childhood the identity of the "sandman" because, whenever Coppelius arrives for his nocturnal sessions with the father, the boy's mother gets the children to bed by saying "the sandman" is coming. Many years later, during the young man's university studies, Coppelius reappears enigmatically in Nathanael's life under the name "Coppola" and in the new persona of an Italian mechanic, optician, and salesman of glasses and telescopes. He then drives Nathanael to madness and ultimately suicide, by manipulating his scopophilia and naiveté so as to induce him to fall in love with the automaton girl without realizing that she's not a living being at all, but a machine.

So what is Hoffmann doing with Kantian reflective judgment here? Certainly, one of the most prominent traits of the story in relation to Kant's concept of reflective judgment is that the main character confuses the *inorganic* (or mechanical) with the *organic* and purposive, and that he is misled by a certain kind of beauty to imagine that it contains life and mind when it does not. That is, he objectifies the subjective version of reflective judgment, placing objectivity where only subjectivity is to be found. And furthermore, he treats reflective judgment as if it were determinant, treating a regulative teleology as if it could be dogmatically asserted. And finally, he confuses efficient with final causality. This *collapsing together* and misconstrual of aesthetic and teleological judgment is stressed by the repeated motif of Nathanael having given his eyes to Olimpia, as well as the various scenes when looking at her enlivens her gaze from his point of view. Freud will read this as a symbol of castration, fused with narcissism; in Kantian terms, it evokes the blindness of intuitions without concepts, or an excess of imagination to the detriment of judgment. Teleological judgment replaces aesthetic judgment here, with the result that the dead is confused with the living. This confusion leads to the madness and actual death of the protagonist. Strikingly — and also humorously, in accordance with Hoffmann's signature combination of the satirical with the gothic — Nathanael considers Olimpia to be a living woman, while he considers his actual, living fiancé, Klara, a lifeless automaton, and calls her such when she fails to mirror back to him his own negatively

inflected enthusiasms.

Not surprisingly, we can also see in the story a twisted and curtailed version of Kantian “taste,” i.e., “common sense.” What approached an aspirational identification with the symbolic order in Kant reveals itself here to be more akin to an imaginary formation. This revision of “common sense” appears first of all in the play of different perspectives on the events in the story as articulated by its principal protagonists Nathanael, Klara, and Lothar. Here, the multiplication of standpoints is — as in Kant — a crucial element. Indeed, Klara’s position of reasonable bourgeois pragmatism is no more immune to critique within the story than Nathanael’s at once ridiculous and scary, deluded passionate excesses. And more specifically, if we see Nathanael as a figure for excessive *imagination* while we see Klara as an embodiment of the conceptual *understanding*, the tension between their mutual dissonance and their mutual harmony itself appears as both portraying and evoking in the reader the Kantian *Übereinstimmung* of imagination and understanding. The nontrivial difference, of course, is that here the dissonance, tension and incompatibility outweigh the harmony, yet without exactly evoking sublime elevation in the Kantian sense, because the characters are also brought down to earth by their ridiculous conventionality. Beyond this double perspective, which condenses and disrupts Kantian aesthetic harmony, the thematization of multiple perspectives occurs in a witty and ironically distanced manner through the interludes in which the narrator discusses the opinions of others. These interludes concern first the opinions of diverse others about Klara herself, and then the events that have culminated in Nathanael’s collapse into madness after he encounters Spalanzani and Coppelius/Coppola fighting over the inanimate body of the automaton.

In the former discussion, where the narrator recounts the views of various people concerning Klara’s beauty (or not) and character, he underlines in a funny way the fact that everyone was reading her in terms of their own perspectives, interests, and points of view. The implication seems to be that putting oneself in the place of every other is first of all impossible because one can consider only a finite number of others. And further, the maxim of common sense seems to teach

here only the “realistic” lesson that nobody manages to see clearly beyond their own perspective. But of course, this is also the ambiguous German word *Perspektiv*, the word for the telescope Coppola sells Nathanael that mediates his falling-in-love with the machine. So the individual’s perspective is shown here to be not only hard to escape but potentially quite heteronomous. The question of whether or not one can either escape one’s own perspective or attain to it is a doubly vexed one in this text. The possibility of Enlightenment in this sense is in doubt, even though it is still presented as being potentially worth aspiring to. Everyone here seems to look through their own (conventional) lenses. We seem far from the subjective universality Kant envisions optimistically for the aesthetic.

In the narrator’s summary of the various community members’ views of Nathanael’s in-sane passion for the doll, Olimpia, Hoffmann provides another instance of the satirical presentation of the “positions of each Other” within extreme limitations, ranging from societal indignation, to professorial pomposity, to paranoia, and to the reasonable and proto-feminist affirmation of the value of intelligence in women. The reader is thus led to consider the judgments of the others, but only a few are represented, and they neither coincide nor take each other into account. Open reflection is not much in evidence. The harmony of views is overwhelmed by dissonance and dispersion. The question of whether imagination and conceptual meaning will ever marry each other and overcome their differences remains doubtful, at least in light of the fact that Klara (again, a figure for the understanding) marries someone else later on and Nathanael, like the imagination in the sublime, collapses into himself and falls into an abyss, but here without giving way to the transcendent discovery of a supersensuous destiny.<sup>16</sup> Hoffmann—unlike Kant in his theorization of “sensus communis”—hardly encourages one to believe in the possibility of a capacity to ab-

16 Kant writes, for example, that in the mathematical sublime “the imagination reaches its maximum and in the struggle to extend it, sinks back into itself” [*in sich selbst zurück sinkt*] (174).



stract from one's own perspective in order to attain to a disinterested judgment that would constitute a site of safety and a harmonious relationship both with nature and with the rest of humanity. Aesthesis in Hoffmann remains fraught with dangers and anxieties, and verges always on madness.

Accordingly, it's necessary in this context to consider the dimension of Nathanael's *madness*, if only because in broaching this distinction between madness and reason, Hoffmann may seem to be departing utterly from the problematic of aesthetics. There is, after all, a difference between the question of the beautiful/ugly and the question of the sane/insane. However, Kant articulates the aesthetic realm within a broader critical-reflexive determination of the limits of reason, and for Kant wherever these limits are transgressed, whether in the name of an irrationalist or a rationalist ideology, one enters something like the domain of madness in the general sense, a kind of "ordinary psychosis" *avant la lettre*. The aesthetic dimension is in Kant a place for the irrational within the rational, or at least on its margins. But the failure of the (aesthetic-teleological) faculty of judgment thus also amounts to a failure of rationality — and so to madness. When we look at what Kant has to say about madness, we see that he defines the three principal forms of serious mental illness in terms of dysfunctionalities of the three main "faculties" of knowledge (in the broadest sense of capacities of consciousness). The result will be that Nathanael's madness and his disruption of (and failure to adhere to) Kantian aesthetic judgment coincide, although Hoffmann will characteristically complicate the Kantian model he also seems to invoke.

In his early "Essay on the Sicknesses of the Head," Kant categorizes the main three "frailties of the disturbed head" in facultative terms: "first, the reversal [*Verkehrtheit* — also a kind of backwardness or twistedness] of the concepts of experience in *derangement* [*Verrückung*], second, the power of judgment brought into disorder [*die in Unordnung gebrachte Urteilskraft*] in this experience in *dementia* [*Wahnsinn*], third, reason that has become reversed with respect to more universal judgments in insanity [*Wahnwitze*]."<sup>17</sup> *Verrückung* — a disturbance of

17 Immanuel Kant, "Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes," *Werkaus-*

empirical *understanding* — involves belief in things that are not present, but seem to be perceived — i.e., what we call hallucinations. *Wahnsinn*, which affects not just our empirical *concepts* but the forms and patterns of our *judgment*, involves what we call “ideas of reference,” or paranoia. Finally, *Wahnwitz* involves a disturbance of *reason*, where the mind “errs in a nonsensical manner in imagined more subtle judgments concerning universal concepts,” a disturbance that can coexist with genius (898).<sup>18</sup>

While the “case” of Nathanael invites us to consider the first two of these disturbances (since his narrative also contains potentially hallucinatory scenes), it principally involves the second, *Wahnsinn* — a *judgment* disorder (as one might phrase it today in a DSM-like idiom). And yet the observation that he is paranoid turns out not to be incompatible with the fact that the Other is indeed after him, as the saying (almost) goes — which means that his disturbed judgment is also functioning better than one may have surmised, except perhaps in matters of love, where he projects an intentionality into his beloved doll where it is absent. In sum, when he is paranoid, his judgment is correct, and when he is not paranoid — with respect to the girl and later, to Coppola — his judgment is incorrect. Judgment awry turns out to be judgment in order, while judgment in order is judgment awry. As the (Kantian) borderline-neoclassical categories of aesthetic judgment are preserved, displaced, and placed in question in Hoffmann’s story, so the categories of madness — and especially madness as a disturbance of judgment, or taste — are both maintained and questioned here. For Nathanael, and even more generally in his story-world, a *harmony* of imagination and understanding is hard to come by. The continuing interplay between the two, like that between Nathanael and Klara, who represent them allegorically (says *this* professor), put them in mutual conflict, missing each other (in more than one sense), and switching places in different moments and aspects of their attitudes and behavior. In such a situa-

*gabe*, vol. 2, 893.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 898.

tion, madness, as a double excess of imagination and understanding, blindness and emptiness, involving something like the experience of ugliness and ridiculousness, is hard to distinguish from sanity, as the mutual proportionality of these faculties, their availability for mutual attunement signaled by the pleasure in the beautiful. The uncanny is the result of these developments.

*Freud on the Uncanny Doubling: Finding the Alien Ego in the Place of one's Own*

What does Freud then say about the uncanny, concerning its psychic content and its relation with traditional aesthetic notions, in particular with reference to Hoffmann's "Sandman?" Ultimately, he points not just to the castration problematic, which he initially tries to privilege, but also to the problematics of the Oedipus and narcissism (e.g., loving one's mother-image as oneself) as sources of the uncanny, dimensions of the repressed whose return can induce this species of anxiety in which there is also some kind of aesthetic pleasure or enjoyment. Although Kantianism nowhere explicitly enters into Freud's essay, Freud can be seen here as redeploying and reinterpreting Kant's facultative aesthetic terms. For the narcissistic dimension, including magical thinking *qua* "omnipotence of thoughts," plausibly (if not without remainder) translates the realm of "imagination," here in forms that Kant, but also Freud, would consider excessive. And in turn, the (bad) paternal instance of castration, in the Hoffmann text as read by Freud, occupies something like the zone of the (Kantian) understanding, somewhere between alchemy and modern science.<sup>19</sup> In this sense, Freud reinterprets the harmonious interplay between *imagination* and *understanding* in the Kantian experience of the beautiful as a (dis)harmonious interplay between (Oedipalized) *narcissism* and *castration* (where "castra-

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Coppélius, the evil lawyer figure, recalls the Kantian approach to philosophy altogether.

tion” is supposed to oppose narcissism and induce the “Downfall of the Oedipus”) in the experience of the uncanny, *mutatis mutandis*. While radically at odds, the two terms are articulated together as closely as possible through Hoffmann’s narrative. For example, the *castration* as figured in the loss of eyes (literal and/or figural), and as induced by the trickery of the evil paternal figure(s), Coppélius/Coppola and Spalanzani, is immediately linked with the imaginary identifications of a *narcissistic* sort, of Nathanael with Olimpia (which is also Oedipal), and also with the paternal figures themselves. The interplay of excessive imagination and excessive understanding here is an undecidability of incompatible terms. What’s (uncannily) beautiful in Hoffmann’s text is what castrates you (and blinds you) paradoxically by evoking your deluded narcissistic identification, and what you identify with takes you away from yourself. Intuitions remain blindly capable of sight here, as thoughts remain full of an empty content, in a space of judgment that is dominated by a sense that is deluded, or the sense of a delusion (a “*Wahn-sinn*”).

Freud’s displacement of the “harmonious agreement” (or “con-vocation” — *Zusammenstimmung*) of the imagination and the understanding into the undecidable clash and skewing of narcissism and castration also takes *nolens volens* the form of the displacement of the Kantian figure of taste as “common sense.” Following Hoffman’s lead in the emphasis on human finitude and sociopsychological materiality, and yet going further in the direction of the secularization of evil and death, Freud reveals the flip side of the maxim of the “broadened” judgment, the side that Kant ignores or at any rate excludes from the aesthetic. This is the side whereby the ego-subject finds itself not expanded — or empathically inflated, as one might say (in a later idiom) — toward universality, in identifying with and replacing the infinite totality of the others, but reduced, indeed replaced by an endless series of “alien” egos. Although Freud doesn’t say so here, these egos must remain alien — according to *Massenpsychologie und Ichanalyse* — because they will be based on alien ideals. The castration that narcissism paradoxically entails, then, finds itself inscribed by Freud, in his reading of Hoffmann, into the structure of (Kantian) aesthetic taste and expe-

rience as the uncanny dimension of the experience of Kantian beauty itself, which still adheres in many respects to neoclassical ideals. Olympia, after all, is named for the neoclassical ideal. This inscription occurs as follows in Freud's text, where the aspirational investment in the *sensus communis* in terms of the Kantian maxim of "*sich in die Stelle jedes anderen versetzen*" [putting oneself in the place of every Other] appears almost word for word but inverted and in a darker, more anxiety-ridden light.

The context is Freud's discussion of the *doppelgänger*-motif and its various "intensifications," alongside which Freud considers the "return of the same," and — here is the key passage — "identification with another person, so that one gives up on one's ego, or puts the foreign ego into the place of one's own" [*die Identifizierung mit einer anderen Person, so daß man an seinem Ich irre wird oder das fremde Ich an die Stelle des eigenen versetzt*]. Freud then summarizes these dimensions in terms of their different modifications and disruptions of the ego: "ego-doubling, ego-splitting, ego-confusion" [*Ich-Verdopplung, Ich-Teilung, Ich-Vertauschung*] (257). His characterization of identification thus implies in our context — although he is, to be sure, not explicitly thinking of Kant — that the Kantian aesthetic capacity involves a kind of uncanny imaginary ego-confusion, even an infinite or unending ego-confusion, tending toward totality but always remaining incomplete.

In terms of aesthetic history, as I indicated above, Freud's remark suggests in our context that the Romantic and post-Romantic literature and arts of the uncanny reveal the anxiety-inducing ego-doubling, ego-splitting, and ego-confusion that are part and parcel of the most advanced Enlightenment articulation of the aesthetic sense (and experience) in its universalizing potential. While Kant speaks of putting oneself in the place of every other, he does not make explicit that in doing so, one replaces the others with oneself, on the one hand, and on the other hand, puts each other in one's place. And yet, these two aspects of *sensus communis* are evidently contained in his conception; otherwise, abstraction in reflection would constitute either a narcissism that colonizes the Other, or an attempt to imitate the pleasure of the others (which Kant criticizes as the mere cultural pseudo-enjoyment of

the aesthetic). Kant's hope seems to be that the two forms of violence — violence against the Other, violence against the self — counter-balance each other, at least if everyone follows this maxim. Indeed, this is how we get a self-consciously subjective universality. The flip side of this hope, however, is the fear that the abstraction of taste enacts both violence against the Other — narcissistic self-expansion — and violence against the self, self-contraction in the face of the others — castration. That is, the fear that these two violences simply accompany each other without canceling each other out. The copresence of this feared violence and this hopeful love is perhaps the core of the uncanny mood or feeling that, in a sensibility such as that of Hoffmann or Freud, seems — in communication with wit — to supplement both beauty and sublimity as the fundamental aesthetic mood. The Romantic displacement of neoclassical aesthetics, and its further Freudian secularization in turn, are not, then, negations from without so much as manifestations of the flip-side, the other side, contained within neoclassical aesthetics (to which Kant still adhered even as he was preparing its Romantic displacement). After all, if reflective judgment suspends the application of thought to intuition, then in aesthesis one is at once blind (imbued with imaginative intuitions lacking concepts) and empty (full of voided concepts unattached to intuitions), just as one sees and thinks by means of momentarily conceptualized intuitions or images. This contradictory state, properly characteristic of the (Kantian) experience of the beautiful but left unsaid in Kant's unfolding of the aesthetic, is also uncanny in the sense (or senselessness) that together Freud and Hoffmann bring out as losing and finding oneself in one incessant motion.

How, then, does Freud's appropriation of the Romantic uncanny relate to the historical tendency, identified by Marquard, for aesthetic discourses to transform themselves into therapeutic ones across the nineteenth century, in response to the failure of aesthesis to overcome the danger a secularized nature poses both to the rationality and — more scarily — to the very life of the human being? First, Freud's proof-text for the aesthetics of the uncanny is the tragicomic story of a young man who goes incurably mad, but for good reason, and ends

up dead. His cure by Enlightenment means (which is attempted by his fiancé, Klara, and his friend Lothar) — the original CBT — fails miserably.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, the uncanny, and its anxiety, are not cured by being absorbed into therapeutics here. Indeed, when Freud explains that the uncanny effect is produced by the return of the repressed, the implication is that the uncanny mood is the mood proper to the psychoanalytic process.<sup>21</sup> In addition to this, it is important to recall that Freud does not claim to have exhausted theoretically all the mysteries of the uncanny. The aesthetics of the uncanny, then, does not so much become absorbed into psychoanalysis as color it with its mood. Nor of course is the danger of death in any respect conjured away by such a mood, even if the anxiety becomes also there a source of enjoyment. The danger of the confusion of life with death remains, moreover, at the very core of Freudian psychoanalysis, for which Eros and Thanatos are but two sides of the same drive-structure. For this, it clearly offers and claims to offer no therapeutic cure.

*Apollon: The Aesthetic in Psychoanalysis — Beyond the Therapeutic*

Having considered three snapshots of the position of the aesthetic in Kant, Hoffmann, and Freud — or to be less anachronistic, in the case of Kant and Hoffmann, paintings (not snapshots) — we can now attempt to situate a contemporary (post)Lacanian position in relation to this tradition. In trying to make sense of Willy Apollon's recent approach

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20 Indeed, the original Enlightenment-style demystification of the sandman as being merely the lawyer Coppelius fails with the child Nathanael, who interprets the clarification as meaning that the lawyer is actually the sandman, and not the reverse.

21 This conclusion also emerges from a close reading of the section of "The Uncanny" on the difference between the uncanny of life and the uncanny of fiction.

to the aesthetic domain by inquiring into the relationship between this approach and the tradition of aesthetic reflection since Kant, one may be struck by Apollon's embrace of the terms, *beautiful* and *sublime*, and ask oneself why Apollon emphasizes this aesthetic couple, given its historical associations with eighteenth and early nineteenth century aesthetics.

1. How does this emphasis jibe, for example, with modernist and/or post-modernist developments in and around psychoanalysis? Of course, such an emphasis finds significant support for its contemporaneity in the relatively recent post-structuralist and postmodernist returns to Kant, and to the sublime, and in the importance of the motif of the nonrepresentable in abstract modernist art, but there are also tendencies that diverge from the idealist implications and vocabulary of the beautiful and the sublime.<sup>22</sup> Why, for example, do motifs such as the uncanny, or the aesthetics of ugliness, or of the disgusting, not play a larger role here?<sup>23</sup>

2. And maybe more importantly, how does this emphasis on the categories of the beautiful and the sublime comport with Apollon's claim that cultures and civilizations are today encountering their limits, given that these categories are very much part of Western civilizations? Are aesthetic notions that are strongly marked by their neoclassical and romantic provenience for some reason particularly appropriate to the age of *mondialisation*? And how have these notions been displaced, in Apollon's

22 See, for example, Jacques Derrida et al, *La faculté de juger* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1985), Jean-François Courtine et al, *Du sublime* (Paris: Éditions Belin, 1988), in English: *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question*, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993).

23 See Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: The Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, trans. Howard Eiland and Joel Golb (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003).



thinking, from their early-modern origins?

As we have seen, Freud negates neither the beautiful nor the sublime as possible aesthetic modalities (even incorporating the latter—in a displaced form—into his theory of Humor), but he does pursue the aesthetic most extensively in the direction of an emphasis on the psychoanalytic privileges of what he calls marginal aesthetic categories, primarily *wit* and the *uncanny* (as moods proper to the return of the repressed).<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the uncanny — from which wit is not absent — combines the anxiety of the sublime with the homey quality of the beautiful, and yet remains distinct from each. How, then, do we get from here to the reinscription of the aesthetic categories of the beautiful and the sublime, without explicit reference to either wit or the uncanny, in Apollon's structural metapsychological model? To answer these questions — because I will argue that they do indeed have answers — we need to retrace that model and situate the aesthetic within it.<sup>25</sup>

We begin with the (pre)human being *qua* organism in its natural environment, or as an imaginary identity in what is often referred to traditionally as the “second nature” of society. The (pre)human “psyche” becomes properly human then precisely by virtue of what Apollon designates as “Real” castration by the “spirit,” which he defines as the capacity to imagine and think, to desire and to create the new. With some similarities, on the one hand, to both the “productive imagination” and the “causality of the will” in the Kantian thought-universe, and, on the other hand, to what goes beyond the pleasure principle

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24 See the way in which Freud, in “Der Humor” from 1927 (*Studienausgabe*, vol. 4, 275-282), situates in the humor that makes light of death a sublime transcendence, although Freud does not name it as such in this text.

25 In what follows I am drawing on Apollon's unpublished lecture and schema on the “8 concepts fondamentaux de la métapsychologie,” from July 17, 2020, and on his lecture on “Le Sujet de la quête,” from 2017. [Editor's Note: See the English translation by Daniel Wilson, published in this issue of *Penumbra*(a).]

in Freud, death-drive as Faustian negativity, this human “spirit” — a post-hierarchical and immanentist trope on traditional notions of genius — is at odds with the existence of the psyche. The psyche would appear in this regard to be something akin to the understanding (with its reproductive imagination and its determinant judgment) in Kant and the reality-ego in Freud, *mutatis mutandis*, all three instances linked to the task of survival through conformity to the demands and pressures of reality. The relationship between the psyche and the spirit is distantly akin to the relationship between imagination and an object that turns out to be reason, which Kant describes as the sublime situation, since in the sublime the imagination finds itself *overwhelmed* by an “object” that takes it beyond itself. Alternatively, one might see the spirit as *uncannily haunting* the psyche, as an internal externality, an extimacy, to use the Lacanian term that, according to Mladen Dolar’s plausible presentation, is Lacan’s equivalent for the German term, *das Unheimliche*, itself.<sup>26</sup> To imagine, however, that there could be a simple and beautiful *harmony* between psyche and spirit, or imaginary and real dimensions, would be, for Apollon, to console oneself with an illusion, like the illusion Freud sees in religion. Because the interaction of psyche and spirit will always be one in which the latter in some sense *breaks in on*, or *intrudes upon*, *disrupts* and *unsettles* the former. And yet, although the experience of this relationship is not yet exactly or immediately what Apollon designates as any kind of “aesthetic” experience, we can see in it a childhood precursor of such experience.

As aesthetic experience in Kant presupposes the existence of certain (transcendental-facultative) structures of consciousness, so in

26 Mladen Dolar, “I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night: Lacan and the Uncanny,” in *October* 59 (Autumn 1991): 5-23. One might, however, also add that “wit” is crucial, beyond Freud’s own aesthetic tradition, as I suggested above, not only to Lacan’s reading of Freud (in the Seminar on *Formations of the Unconscious*) but to all of Lacan’s own discourse: the incessant play with homonymy, the oblique clowning around. In this respect, one could say that Lacan adopts the Freudian double aesthetics of uncanny wit.

Apollon's thinking it presupposes the presence of certain further subjective-structural elements. At least three major elements, which represent as many phases in the unfolding of a process — for the structure of the subject is also a process — need to be involved: the letter, language, and desire, as follows.

1. Apollon suggests that the creative spirit disrupts organic corporeality. Put in an idiom more powerfully immunized against suspicions of idealism: humans are naturally artificial and create culture that is at odds with its organic origins. This untreatable and incorrigible creative spirit then leaves traces: the spirit (death drive as creative envisioning of the new) is a stylus that writes itself upon the organism. And these traces of a self-traumatization — which constitute erogenous zones whose functioning combines the pleasure principle with its disruptive beyond, and which Apollon calls the *letters* of the body — remain the forever open wounds in which the drives bleed out into our experience. The drives — somewhere between the traumatized organism and the conscious life of the subject in representations — threaten both the survival of the organism in the (second) nature it inhabits and the survival of that (second) nature itself. The singular subject needs to be roped ever and again back into the nature (of society), then, because the spirit of singularity, or the singularity of the spirit, threatens at the level of the erotic body to mobilize the subject against the collectivity — of which the individual subject also makes up a part.

2. *Language* intervenes at this point to domesticate the nomadism of the drives (associated with the letters of the body), to reduce their radical dispersion and multiplicity to homogeneity and unity. Language — both around 50,000 years ago when it first appears and again when we each learn it — opposes itself to the exile and diaspora of the subjectively experienced, i.e., erotogenically charged and lived, body. Across childhood, and especially in the years of latency, in general the human being works

hard to accommodate to each Other the singular letters of the driven body and the general conventions of culture, and to conform its feelings to the civilizationally defined belief system in which he or she is inscribed. In this time marked by the upholding of repression by the parental Other, the aesthetic dimension in its adult form is still in preparation. For it is only against the background of the sensed failure of language and the letters of the body to accommodate each other or harmonize, a failure of the universal to accommodate the singular and vice versa, that aesthetic experience as such can appear. As Kant stressed, such experience involves the paradox — the impossibility — of subjective universality. This is no doubt why, although Apollon acknowledges a kind of proto-aesthesia of childhood, he stresses also that the aesthetic per se is conditioned by adolescence, as the moment when the defect of language — and the prevalence of empty speech in society — becomes undeniable and pressing in the face of drives accompanied by the increased capacities for independent realization.

3. Apollon structurally links this level of development to *desire*, as the result of the partially failed intervention of symbolic castration in the erotogenic body. But desire here, which Apollon designates as the “quest of desire,” in an interestingly doubled genitive — objective and subjective — is evidently also the desire of desire, or the quest of quest, a desire that is itself in search of itself as (also) of its unknown object. The reflective structure of this formulation strikingly links it to the reflective structure of aesthetic experience in the Kantian tradition. In such experience, the pleasure is “disinterested,” that is, without investment in the existence of any determinate object. It is a pleasure that is, however, also a desire — *Lust* contains both meanings in Kant as in Freud — in the sense that it is a desire — an endless desire — to find its own law as the law of the form of its nonobjective occasion. A desire to find itself as the other, *qua* aesthetic subject-object. Strikingly, it is in Apollon just this

reflective desire (of desire) [*quête du désir*], to which the partial failure of language to contain the erotic body gives rise, that in turn opens the subject onto an *aesthetic* dimension, which has two aspects, two experiential aspects of the same structure, the *beautiful* and the *sublime*.

Apollon defines the *beautiful* not — as did Kant — in terms of the pleasure of a facultative interaction occasioned by an object's form, but quite differently as a “witness to or of the manifestation” [*témoin de la manifestation*]. One wants, he writes, to “preserve” [*conserver*] the beautiful witness.<sup>27</sup> But to what manifestation does the beautiful bear witness? The beautiful bears witness or testifies to the manifestation of the unconscious or “out of language” — *hors langage* (a characteristic of the creative spirit or libidinal energy that anticipates and forestalls language both phylogenetically and ontogenetically). And this manifestation occurs on the margins of, and as a disruption to, the sphere of language (including the socioculturally given conventions of any definite art, as modernism would agree).<sup>28</sup> Instead of a harmony of imagination with understanding, or a (dis)harmony of narcissism with castration, responsive production or genially suspended judgment in aesthetic speech makes a space for — expresses or evokes — singularly driven erotogenesis along the edges of — *à même* — a universalizing language, where the former fleetingly appears. The harmony of the beautiful remains, however, conditioned by, and simultaneously present with, the disharmony in the sublime, its immanent and always imminent other.

27 This motif of wanting to preserve the beautiful coincides with Kant's assertion that we wish to dwell upon or with [*verweilen bei*] the beautiful, a motif that Schopenhauer and later also Heidegger extend.

28 One can also hear echoing here the Hegelian determination of beauty as the “sensuous shining of the idea,” but in Apollon the “idea” is replaced by the letter of the body, and the “sensuous shining” is replaced by the indirect manifestation in a social language under the pressure of creative displacement.

As for this *sublime*, in Apollon's formulation, it "articulates the being to the human beyond the stakes of civilization."<sup>29</sup> This involves a universalization of *singular* striving that is directed toward possibilities hitherto unarticulated for humanity. (An affirmation of the letters of the *others*.) This universalization is based on the experience of the rift between language and the felt body, a displaced version of the excess of mind beyond the collapse of representation in the Kantian sublime. The experience of this rift implies the community of those with nothing in common — i.e., universal solitude, and gives rise to the responsibility to protect that truth.<sup>30</sup> The letters of the body in Apollon here replace the rational will in Kant, as defective language in the former stands in for the collapsing imagination as faculty of (re)presentation in the latter. Apollon describes this experience as a kind of acceptance and affirmation of the breaking-in — i.e., of the *failure* of the manifestation, the *difference* between the letter and language, their incommensurability, insofar as this failure and this difference take us beyond the ego and open us to the care for the human ("*souci de l'humain*" in Apollon's consistently employed phrasing), outside of the false universality of social conventions or even any given civilization. Similarly, in the Kantian sublime one experiences the overwhelming and collapse of the imagination in the face of a nontotalizable image or a spectacle of the destructive powers of nature. And this collapse takes one in some regard beyond oneself, disconnected from the concerns of the ego. What collapses in Apollon with the ego is the civilizational surround as a belief system whose task is to shore up language and feeling-patterns in the attempt to contain erotogenic excess. And more to Apollon's point about where we stand in history, the ego is collapsing today *because* the given civilizational context is. Kant conceives of the collapse of imagination as issuing in the discovery of the rational will as our supersen-

29 "L'humain en question." Psychanalyse et mondialisation Conference, May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

30 For this view of community, see Jean-Luc Nancy, *La communauté désœuvrée* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1986).

suous destiny. Apollon figures it, in more romantic and post-romantic terms, as acquiescence and access to the *act* (our own, and not our own, yet entirely our responsibility) of what is outside-of-language in us, the experience of which he characterizes as *jouissance*. Like the Kantian sublime, Apollon's re-articulation of Lacanian *jouissance* is an experience "beyond the pleasure principle," albeit one that is not so separable from the materiality of the body as Kant seemed to wish both the beautiful and the sublime feelings to be. Both terms — sublime, *jouissance* — share, however, a further crucial implication of the experience of the infinite, as of that which has no determinate limit.

In this realm of aesthetic experience, which combines the beautiful and the sublime, as two radically opposed sides of the same coin, the subject re-establishes a kind of solidarity of difference, beyond any organic community, with the others at the far end of the traversal of symbolic castration. What is shared by the human here is ultimately situated not on the level of reflective thought (in the symbolic) nor on the level of ego-identifications (in the imaginary), but on the level of the real of the unconscious. The aesthetic in this psychoanalytic formulation involves in this displaced sense something like the Kantian *sensus communis*, as solidarity in the real. Moreover, like the aesthetico-teleological experiences of reflective judgment in Kant, the aesthetic here involves a way of coming to terms with radical separation and mortality, albeit in the form of the affirmation of the death drive (not without some uncanny enjoyment of anxiety) as identical with the creative source of the new, without regard for the organic life of the individual and beyond the limits of the therapeutic. As we suggested at the outset, the partial absorption of the aesthetic into the therapeutic, and into some dimensions of psychoanalytic discourse across the history of psychoanalysis, is resisted, reversed, and undone here insofar as the aesthetic becomes the realm in which the analytic experience completes itself.

But why, then, to return to my initial questions, this particular approach to the aesthetic in relation to the analytic structure and process? More specifically, why go back to the terms of the beautiful and the sublime, which organize Western aesthetics from antiquity to neo-

classicism and extend into Romanticism, but become subject to radical displacements and replacements in aesthetic theory and practice after around 1800, as illustrated here by the romantic uncanny and its Freudian appropriation for psychoanalysis? The response has a clinical as well as a historical dimension.

On the level of the clinical, which is, in general in the Lacanian tradition, and explicitly again in Apollon distinguished from the therapeutic (understood as serving adaptation), the traversal of (symbolic) castration in the trajectory of an analysis leads the analysand to a place in which the instance of the law in all of its various connotations and modalities, as linked to the regime of the signifier, is no longer accessible, determinable, useful, or interesting as previously. The question arises as to how the subject will orient itself from this point on. It is no longer exactly a question of “*Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?*” [What does it mean: to orient oneself in thought?] unless we consider “thought” to include unconscious thought, but rather — to some degree as in the *Critique of Judgment* — the question is precisely: how will one orient oneself on the basis of certain intuitions or feelings — especially perhaps anxiety which, according to Lacan, does not mislead — in the absence of any determinate law, in order to judge and therefore also act, without concept?<sup>31</sup> One might ask: how is the necessary decisionism of the subject to be maintained without veering into pure violence? As each subjective position maintains a particular type of relation with the instance of the law, so each analysand must engage with this fading of the importance and reliability of the law in the course of their analysis, and psychoanalysis must formulate itself in terms equally applicable to the different positions. At this point in any analysis, then, as with the beginning of adolescence in any subject’s development, some form of an aesthetics of the beautiful — where the subject finds (and loses)

31 Cf. Jean-François Lyotard’s extensive efforts to mobilize Kantian aesthetics for political thinking, as well as Hannah Arendt’s last lectures on the judgment: *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).



itself hovering in half-blindness and half-emptiness between the imaginary and the symbolic dimensions, in an essential relation with the real — becomes of particular relevance and indeed necessity, if a necessity of a subjective sort. If the paradoxical manifestation in language of what remains outside of language is beautiful here, then this is a beauty that is — in continuity with Freud in this regard — not without its uncanny dimension, as the most intimately interior becomes manifest in a veiled form. The sublime dimension of the life of feeling supplements the experience of beauty as the recognition of being outside of the imaginary-symbolic self, such that one's cares take on despite one's intentions a universally human application, even if one that remains subjective, because here, as in the beautiful, we do not accede to a conceptual objectification of the law — an Other — that can guarantee what would be good for all in this situation. There is some “not-all” — some incompleteness — that remains in the universality asserted in this sublime experience.

On the level of history, Apollon's appeal to the aesthetic is indeed linked, in a way that is perhaps not obvious, to his view of the period in which we live as that of *mondialisation*. If both cultures and civilizations are gradually — or suddenly — crumbling and interpenetrating around us and within us, then what *may* be capable of emerging with greater clarity is the *humanity* we share beyond these particularisms. Such a hope shares with Enlightenment optimism, in a sense, its universalism, even if as chastened by 200 years of intermittent and often justified attacks on humanisms and universalisms of various sorts. The appeal to aesthetic motifs that come out of *neoclassical* aesthetics within a discourse that claims — plausibly in my view — to be witnessing the radical conflict between — and mutual placing in question of — particular cultures and civilizations is therefore perhaps surprisingly apt. And of course, as I have sketched above, this appeal includes manifold displacements of the historical Enlightenment's discursive coordinates. In addition, insofar as the motifs of the beautiful and the sublime are sustained in much *Romantic* discourse, the appeal to these motifs is obviously in accord with the emphasis in psychoanalysis on the importance of the *irrational* dimension. The investment in the language of

the beautiful and the sublime further implies here an investment in the importance of the *continuities* between the romantic and the modernist movements. Finally, the *subjective universality* of the aesthetic dimension and more especially of beauty according to Kant, i.e., its universality without universality, suits the position of the subject of *mondialisation* rather well.

In closing, I'd like to return to the Kantian epigram above. In terms of Apollon's development and displacement of Lacanian analysis, we might reformulate it as follows: the letters of the body, without language, are blind; language, without the letters of the body, is empty. Aesthetic speech — speech as an aesthetic act and aesthetic activity as a mode of speech — passing between the letter and language in the modalities of the beautiful and the sublime, participates in the *fullness and emptiness of language* as the language of both the collective and — resistently — all the other singularities. Simultaneously, aesthetic speech participates in the *blindness and the clear-sightedness of the drives* as localized and dispersed in *the letters of the body*, which can never be said and which nonetheless address themselves through such speech, in what will have been language, to the others. There is, in and for such speech, some beauty and sublimity, as well as some uncanniness, and yes no doubt also some ugliness and horror.

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analysis in a form that is appropriate to the material situations and the singular experiences — the desires, drives, fantasies, and forms of *jouissance* — of human subjects (subjects of speech) in the age of cultural globalization (*mondialisation*) that is our own.