

THESIS

BEAUTY AND OPENNESS:
KANT'S AESTHETIC JUDGMENT OF TASTE, YOGĀCĀRA,
AND OPEN PRESENCE MEDITATION

Submitted by

Kate Brelje

Department of Philosophy

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Fort Collins, Colorado

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Master's Committee:

Advisor: Jane Kneller

Co-Advisor: Matthew MacKenzie

Kathleen Kiefer

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ABSTRACT

BEAUTY AND OPENNESS: KANT'S AESTHETIC JUDGMENT OF TASTE, YOGĀCĀRA, AND OPEN PRESENCE MEDITATION

This paper provides a comparative analysis of Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste and Open Presence meditation interpreted through a Yogācāra philosophical framework. I begin with an expository analysis of Kant's cognitive and aesthetic judgments, highlighting the presence of attention, form of reflection, and structure of purposeless purposiveness in the judgment. Next, I address the Buddhist idealist Yogācāra philosophical tradition. Through this theoretical lens, I examine Open Presence meditation, with an emphasis on meditative non-dualism, attention, and meditative goals. In the final chapter, I tie together the groundwork laid in the first two chapters into a comparative analysis identifying points of compatibility and contention within the general areas of judgment, attention, purposeless purposiveness, and transformation. Finally, I suggest that, given the results of this analysis, Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste might benefit from being construed as a type of meditation.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my pater and mater, Jon and Val Brelje.

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INTRODUCTION

Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste is a calm contemplation of the form of an object. In judging an object as beautiful, the subject expresses her subjective feeling of harmony and urges others to participate in this harmonious state of mind. This aesthetic moment could be likened to a form of meditation. As Antonio Raffone, Angela Tagini, and Narayanan Srinivasan suggest in their neuro-philosophical analysis of meditation, meditation can be defined as "a family of complex emotional and attentional regulatory practices in which mental and related somatic events are affected by engaging in a specific attentional set."¹ In this paper, I argue through comparative analysis that Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste could be construed as a type of meditation, using Yogācāra philosophical theory and Open Presence meditation.

I begin with a thorough examination of Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste. After first examining Kant's theory of cognitive judgment, I build in a further expositional analysis of the aesthetic judgment of taste. Showing the difference between these two types of judgments highlights what the aesthetic judgment of taste actually does as a reflective judgment. It also allows for the comparative work with Yogācāra philosophical theory and Open Presence meditation in the second and third chapters. Within the aesthetic judgment of taste, I highlight three areas that are particularly important for comparison work with Open Presence meditation: attention, reflection, and purposeless purposiveness.

In the second chapter, I transition to the Yogācāra philosophical tradition and Open Presence meditation. Yogācāra is an idealist Buddhist philosophical tradition that connects well with Kant's transcendental idealism. I utilize Jay Garfield's comparative analysis of Yogācāra

¹ Antonino Raffone, Angela Tagini, and Narayanan Srinivasan, "Mindfulness and the Cognitive Neuroscience of Attention and Awareness," in *Zygon*, 45 no. 3 (September 2010), 633.

and Kantian cognitive theory to help clarify the similarities and differences between the cognitive theories underlying the aesthetic judgment of taste and meditation. Then, to extend the analysis into a practical model of meditation, I explore Open Presence meditation (as interpreted through a Yogācāra framework.)² Again, I highlight areas that will be used in the comparative analysis in chapter three: meditative non-duality, attention, and the goals of meditation.

In the final chapter, I tie together the groundwork laid in the first two chapters into a comparative analysis. I identify points of compatibility and contention within the general areas of judgment, attention, purposeless purposiveness, and transformation. The use and presence of judgment in each practice is overall quite similar, though differences in the presence of reflective judgment (expressive judgment) are apparent. The types of attention utilized in judgments of beauty and Open Presence meditation vary. The former primarily engages in focused attention, while the latter is more compatible with open monitoring. Both exhibit purposeless purposiveness from the subjective vantage point of the practitioner. In the moment of practice, both seem to experience a harmony and calm, while not consciously isolating an immediate goal during practice. Finally, the transformations undergone by practitioners of judging beauty and meditation have some similarities. Both have a residual feeling of calm and connectedness after practice. Other transformations are more disparate (i.e., soteriological motivations and goals.) While there are areas of contention, most of the comparative analysis reveals a good number of compatible elements.

Given this, I suggest that Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste might benefit from being construed as a type of meditation. Using the language developed in meditative and neuroscience literature could strengthen the legitimacy of the judging of beauty as a beneficial practice. It also

² It is important to note that the philosophical backdrop of various meditative practices can change depending on practitioner.

offers a largely secular type of contemplation that is available to all humans with a well-functioning cognitive system.

CHAPTER ONE: CONTEMPLATION OF THE BEAUTIFUL

The Subject-Object Relationship within Kant's Aesthetic Judgment of Taste

For the judgment of taste consists precisely in the fact that it calls a thing beautiful only in accordance with that quality in it by means of which it corresponds with our way of receiving it.³

Introduction

In this chapter I will be working through Kant's account of the subject-object relationship within the aesthetic judgment of taste. I begin in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, parsing out both Kant's primary definitions of subject and object and their relation as identified through the unity of apperception. I then move on to Kant's *Remarks* in the *Observations of the Feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime* and *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* to distinguish what the unique subject-object relationship expresses in the aesthetic judgment of taste. After establishing the relationship in the aesthetic judgment of taste as the primary area of interest in this analysis, I will closely examine three facets of the subject-object relationship in this judgment: attention, reflection, and purposeless purposiveness; each of which will be utilized in the following chapters.

³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, ed. Paul Guyer. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5:282. On a technical note, the pagination provided for the Kant citations are according to Akademie collection of Kant's works (the authoritative collection of Kant's works.) Accordingly, the numbers cited correspond to the work (the first number) and the page number in the Akademie collection. The only exception is the *Critique of Pure Reason* which also includes an (A) for the first edition and (B) for the second edition. You'll find that there are a few passages I cite that include both the pagination for the (A) and (B) editions. The texts used here are the *Critique of Pure Reason* (designated by an A or B), the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (designated by 5), the "First Introduction" to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (designated by 20), *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and Sublime* (designated by 2), and *Remarks* in the *Observations* (also designated by 20.)

1.1 Judgment

Judgment is the bridge spanning the gulf between subject and object. It is the culmination of their interaction. For Kant, judgment is not solely a tool for determining the moral worth of a given action or person, as in its colloquial sense in English. Rather, it lies at the very base of all experience. The possibility of every experience includes judgment at a fundamental level.

Paul Guyer explains the role of judgment in Kant's project in the "Introduction" to the first *Critique*⁴:

But in its "Concluding Reflection" Kant touches on one theme that will be crucial for both the formulation as well as the solution of virtually all the philosophical problems dealt with in the Critique. This is the claim that the fundamental notion in formal logic and in the analysis of the powers of the human capacity for cognition is the notion of judgment. Concepts, he argues, which link predicates to one another, can become distinct only by means of judgments; and inferences, which might have been thought to call upon additional powers of mind beyond the power of judgment, are in fact complex or iterated judgments. Thus Kant concludes that "understanding and reason, that is to say, the faculty of cognizing distinctly and the faculty of syllogistic reasoning, are not different fundamental faculties. Both consist in the capacity to judge..."

The recognition that judgment is the fundamental form of all cognitive acts will be crucial to the Critique... Kant's insistence on the primacy of judgment in human thought is a first step toward all these critical theses.⁵

According to Guyer, judgment has a place of supreme importance in Kant's project.

But as the "fundamental form of all cognitive acts,"⁶ judgment occurs in different forms. For example, Guyer identifies two types of judgment that Kant describes within the first *Critique*: judgments of perception and judgments of experience.

Thus, Kant argues that while mere "judgments of perception," which make no claim to necessary objective validity or the agreement of others at all, but only report how things seem to a single subject, use the logical forms of judgment, "judgments of experience," which do make claims to objective validity necessary for all, can only derive their

⁴ Paul Guyer, "Introduction," from Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁵ Ibid 28-9

⁶ Ibid

universal and necessary validity from their use of a priori categories to make the otherwise indeterminate use of the forms of judgment determinate.⁷

The character of each judgment is different – one lays claim to a type of “necessary objective validity” while the other is merely subjective, pertaining to the particular subject that makes the judgment.

Cognitive, determining judgments are judgments of experience. The relationship between subject and object in determining cognitive judgments is one of constitution and interaction. There is something that occasions the object’s constitution by the subject. But what that something is cannot be identified. It is beyond the phenomenal sphere, that which we are able to experience. We are bound by our cognition, and the prompting of this process outside of sensation eludes our cognitive powers. This is not entirely a problem, however. In some sense, it’s intuitive. That which is beyond the conditions that make human experience possible, given in time and space through the categories of the understanding, cannot be experienced.

Now, however, all unification of representations requires unity of consciousness in the synthesis of them. Consequently the unity of consciousness is that which alone constitutes the relation of the representations to an object, thus their objective validity, and consequently is that which makes them into cognitions and on which even the possibility of the understanding rests.⁸

The synthetic unity of consciousness is therefore an objective condition of all cognition, not merely something I myself need in order to cognize an object but rather something under which every intuition must stand in order to become an object for me, since in any other way, and without this synthesis, the manifold would not be united in one consciousness.⁹

A cognitive judgment, then, is the application of the categories of the understanding to the object of experience that occurs within the subject (i.e., unified consciousness) in

⁷ Ibid 69

⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), B137.

⁹ Ibid B138

apperception. This application is objective, in the sense that these categories of the understanding appear the same in every well-functioning, human-like cognitive system. They are also applied in the same spontaneous, necessary manner. The cognitive judgment determines the manifold in experience through the categories. This is an immediate type of judgment distinct from reflective judgments.

In reflective aesthetic judgments, the “concept” of aesthetic quality is not the same type of concept that the understanding spontaneously applies to determining judgments. For example, in determining cognitive judgment, when one observes a bonsai tree, she may judge (determine) the object to be a tree, with green leaves, at a certain height. It is temporally and spatially situated as an experiential object. Aesthetically judging the same tree, however, is a reflective process. Roughly, it is only through the play of the imagination and understanding that the judgment is made. The cognitive faculties engage in reflection on the subject-object interaction and the pleasure which arises from it. This allows a judgment to be made that this is indeed an aesthetic judgment, rather than a strictly cognitive one.

The power of judgment can be regarded either as a mere faculty for reflecting on a given representation, in accordance with a certain principle, for the sake of a concept that is thereby made possible, or as a faculty for determining an underlying concept through a given empirical representation. In the first case it is reflecting, in the second case the determining power of judgment. To reflect (to consider), however, is to compare and to hold together given representations either with others or with one’s faculty of cognition, in relation to a concept thereby made possible. The reflecting power of judgment is that which is also called the faculty of judging (*facultas diiudicandi*).¹⁰

A reflective judgment does involve an “empirical representation,” and so relies on the fundamental determining judgments of cognition. Reflection is indeterminate, that is, it is more a judgment that assesses either a series of representations, as in the case of teleological judgments, or a representation’s relationship with the subject’s cognitive faculties, as in

¹⁰ 20:211 (This is the First Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*)

aesthetic judgments. It does not explicitly use the concepts of the understanding as an immediate determination. Rather, the activity of the cognitive faculties when sparked by the representation gives rise to the concept that is then applied. For example, in aesthetic judgment, an object, e.g., a bonsai tree, is deemed “beautiful” through the interaction of its form and the subject’s way of receiving it.

Reflecting (which goes on even in animals, although only instinctively, namely not in relation to a concept which is thereby to be attained but rather in relation to some inclination which is thereby to be determined) in our case requires a principle just as much as does determining, in which the underlying concept of the object prescribes the rule to the power of judgment and thus plays the role of the principle.¹¹

The reflecting power of judgment thus proceeds with given appearances, in order to bring them under empirical concepts of determinate natural things, not schematically, but technically, not as it were merely mechanically, like an instrument, but artistically, in accordance with the general but at the same time indeterminate principle of a purposive arrangement of nature in a system....¹²

Thus, reflective judgments involve a type of indeterminacy compared to determining judgments. There is no “objective” concept that completes the judgment.

1.2 The Unity of Apperception: The Subject and Object in Cognition

The nature of the subject-object relationship within determinate and indeterminate judgments relies on the framework constructed in the first *Critique*. The transcendental deduction is where we first encounter Kant’s definitions of subject and object in basic cognition, as well as their general relationship. The deduction is a type of explanatory defense of our right to use certain *a priori*,¹³ synthetic concepts in his framework.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² 20:213-4

¹³ The focal point of this project is not necessarily Kant’s synthetic a priori concepts. But, since he identifies aesthetic judgments of taste as a sort of synthetic a priori judgment, it is useful to give a quick, clear explanation of what those are. Synthetic, distinct from analytic, is a type of judgment that expands or adds to prior, self-contained concepts. While analytic judgments are largely self-contained judgments characteristic of identity claims, synthetic judgments expand the concepts and build connections with other concepts. “A priori” is roughly simply prior to

Jurists, when they speak of entitlements and claims, distinguish in a legal matter between the questions about what is lawful (*quid juris*) and that which concerns the fact (*quid facti*), and since they demand proof of both, they call the first, that which is to establish the entitlement or the legal claim, the deduction.¹⁴

In this defense, he is providing his justification for using synthetic *a priori* concepts in describing this system of human cognition.

Among the many concepts, however, that constitute the very mixed fabric of human cognition, there are some that are also destined for pure use *a priori* (completely independently of all experience), and these always require a deduction of their entitlement, since proofs from experience are not sufficient for the lawfulness of such a use, and yet one must know how these concepts can be related to objects that they do not derive from any experience. I therefore call the explanation of the way in which concepts can relate to objects *a priori* their transcendental deduction....¹⁵

This matters to the subject-object relationship because Kant's goal in the transcendental deduction is “to make comprehensible this relation of the understanding to sensibility and by means of the latter to all objects of experience...”¹⁶ The relation between sense perceptions and cognition offers a defense for the principles, or categories, which Kant claims govern experience. In this process, cognition is active. Together, the cognitive faculties - sense, imagination, and understanding - actively constitute objects of perception.¹⁷ This is not in a sense of total generation of “exterior” objects, like Berkeley’s idealism, but rather these faculties actively give form and order to the objects of experience. Taking the data of the sensory manifold that somehow arises from sensation, the imagination unifies in a process that Kant calls an art in the “depth of the soul.”¹⁸ Kant does not deny that there is something beyond the subject. His claim is that it can only be cognized as a representation, within the phenomenal experience of the subject.

experience. It does not rely on experience (*a posteriori*). In Kant’s framework, *a priori* judgments are the conditions of experience itself. *A priori* forms of intuition, space and time, and the *a priori* concepts of the understanding, confine and structure experience.

¹⁴ A84-5/B117-8

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ *Ibid* A128

¹⁷ *Ibid* A115

¹⁸ *Ibid* B181

The subject has no access to the “thing-in-itself.”¹⁹ Rather, the object of experience is constituted (or conditioned) by these cognitive faculties, as a representation. This quick overview will provide a very basic structural outline of the backdrop of the subject-object relationship in cognition, as we can delve further into more exact definitions of both subject and object of experience.

Subject: The “I” of experience

Kant’s subject, the “I,” is ultimately reducible to a simple, unified consciousness²⁰ in which cognition occurs. It is the unifier of experience. This consciousness (subjectivity), for Kant, is a type of self-consciousness. It presents both inner and external representations. It is “the standing and lasting I”:

For the standing and lasting I (of pure apperception) constitutes the correlate of all of our representations, so far as it is merely possible to become conscious of them, and all consciousness belongs to an all-embracing pure apperception just as all sensible intuition as representation belongs to a pure inner intuition, namely that of time.²¹

The subject of experience is simply the locus of apperception, the consciousness within which cognitive processes occur and representations are constituted. This subject is not a representation itself. Unlike representations, it cannot be experienced or conceptually constituted in cognitive determining judgment. The subject, were it to be thought of as a representation, would be “empty.” There’s no intuition or manifold which would comprise the subject of experience by itself.

¹⁹ Ibid B178/A139

²⁰ In Chapter 2, I will liken this to a type of consciousness to “root consciousness” present in the Yogacara philosophical tradition.

²¹ Ibid A123-4

For through the I, as a simple representation, nothing manifold is given; it can only be given in the intuition, which is distinct from it, and thought through combination in a consciousness.²²

And yet, there is something in apperception that is an activity within this unified consciousness that claims to have “self-consciousness.”

Now this principle of the necessary unity of apperception is, to be sure, itself identical, thus an analytical proposition, yet it declares as necessary a synthesis of the manifold given in an intuition, without which that thoroughgoing identity of self-consciousness could not be thought.

An understanding, in which through self-consciousness all of the manifold would at the same time be given, would intuit; ours can only think and must seek the intuition in the senses. I am therefore conscious of the identical self in regard to the manifold of the representations that are given to me in an intuition because I call them all together my representations, which constitute one. But that is as much as to say that I am conscious a priori of their necessary synthesis, which is called the original synthetic unity of apperception, under which all representations given to me stand, but under which they must also be brought by means of a synthesis.²³

This ‘I’ is the “through-going identity of self-consciousness.” This means that Kant’s ‘I’ is a basic consciousness that includes both awareness (and constitution) of representations and the self. Through this apperception representations are unified.²⁴ Let’s turn now to these representations, objects of experience.

Object: The representation in experience

These representations are the objects of experience. Kant’s definition of object is fairly straightforward: “An object, however, is that in the concept of which the manifold of a given

²² Ibid B135-6

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Reflexivity will be covered again in-depth in the next chapter. For now, I will merely mention that the type of self-consciousness Kant identifies here is unclear. There are elements of reflexivity (self-referential awareness without objectification of the self.) Because this is not a primary focus of the aesthetic judgment, I won’t spend much time here talking about this reflexivity. For more information on this, reference Robert Howell’s “Kant, the ‘I-think,’ and Self-Awareness” in *Kant’s Legacy: Essays in Honor of Lewis White Beck*, ed. Lewis White Beck, Predrag Cicovacki, (Rochester: University Rochester Press, 2001), 117-140.

intuition is united.”²⁵ In apperception, the product of cognitive activity of the determining judgment is the object. The object of experience is constituted by the concepts of the understanding which further unify the manifold of an intuition unified by the imagination. These objects appear in time and space. Though inner objects may only need to appear in time,²⁶ outer objects require both temporal and spatial bounds for their existence.²⁷

The object is restricted in a sense, because we do not have a purely “objective” or “god’s-eye-view” of the object. The subject is not capable of knowing the object as it is in itself. The human subject is restrained in its experiential capacity to that which it is possible for her to experience; a type of “god’s-eye-view” is not possible given our cognitive capacities. When I see a bonsai tree, for example, it appears in a way that is determined through the *a priori* principles organizing human experience. The judgment that it is a tree with a given height, on a Saturday in the middle of the afternoon is objective. Its appearance in space and time is a cognitive judgment of experience. I can defer to another human being with functioning cognitive capacities who can affirm or deny the appearance of the object at said time and place. Again, though, this is a representation, not the object as it is in itself, since humans only have access to the object through human cognitive faculties.

With this preliminary background into Kant’s subject and object of experience, at this point that we may transition into a greater investigation into aesthetic judgment. I will begin by distinguishing the subject and object of aesthetic experience. Then I will examine three distinct parts of the aesthetic judgment of taste: attention, reflection, and purposeless purposiveness. This will provide the foundational information about the beautiful for the comparative analysis.

²⁵ Ibid B137

²⁶ Ibid B50

²⁷ Ibid A26/B42

1.3 The Engaged Subject and the Beautiful Object: Kant's Aesthetic Judgment of Taste

In the aesthetic judgment of taste, Kant proposes an intricate explanation for how a subject comes to determine an object as beautiful. While Kant never calls this interaction an aesthetic experience, for the sake of our work here we will take up this phrase occasionally and call this interaction “aesthetic experience.”²⁸ One could interpret the aesthetic judgment of taste as a dynamic relationship between the subject and the form of the object.

The Subject of Aesthetic Experience

The subject of aesthetic experience appears similar, if not identical to, the subject of experience presented in the unity of apperception. The same cognitive faculties (sensation, imagination, and cognition) are in play in aesthetic judgment. The difference in the aesthetic judgment however, from the vantage point of the subject, lies primarily in her “way of thinking” or way of receiving the object of aesthetic experience. In this way, the subject’s “frame of mind” or practice of cognitive receptivity must be different than that of purely cognitive or spontaneous judgments. But it does not seem that the subject herself is uniquely distinct from the subject of experience in judgments explicated in the first *Critique*. As we delve more into the nature of the subject-object relationship within the aesthetic judgment of taste, we will see how it is the uniqueness of this interactive and inter-dependent relationship, not simply a difference of identity of subject and object, which distinguishes the aesthetic judgment of taste from others.

²⁸ Kant’s conceptual framework for having an experience is strict and perhaps excludes aesthetic appropriation as a legitimate type of experience. This has an interesting connection with our comparative work with meditation. In certain forms of meditation, the object of experience simply “drops out” and the subject is left “experiencing” a state of consciousness that is not object directed. In such a case, Kant would surely claim that there is no experience, since experience relies on a subject and an object, at least in time if not also in space. Much more could be said about this, but unfortunately it is outside the scope of this paper.

The Object of Aesthetic Experience

The object of aesthetic experience is the beautiful.²⁹ The feeling element in the judgment of taste is an indeterminate concept; there is no concept determination for the aesthetic judgment. The object in the judgment of taste is the representation of the object that is available to the sensory modalities as a unified intuition. But the aesthetic judgment itself does not rest solely on a conceptual representation of the object. The basic cognitive judgments about an object allow for the aesthetic judgment to be made. Without the fundamental judgments discussed in §2, there would be no object to judge as beautiful. However, it is crucial to notice the subtle distinction: while the aesthetic judgment is allowed or supported by apperceptive activity and cognitive judgments, the aesthetic judgment itself is not beholden to the same form. It is a reflective judgment (discussed further in the proceeding sections), not a spontaneous one. The object of aesthetic judgment is a representation, similar to objects of cognitive judgments, and yet a quality in its form makes it distinct from phenomenal objects in general.

Kant repeatedly refers to the form of the object as holding some quality which is received by the subject and creates a feeling of pleasure within her. How this process occurs between a subject and object is difficult to articulate. In his early popular work, the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime with Remarks*, Kant begins analyzing the aesthetic subject-object relationship. Although more of a rhetorical work, this text provides an interesting commentary on this relationship. The contrast between feelings of the sublime and beautiful also offers a glimmer of developments to come.

²⁹ The beautiful is defined by the four moments, which we will explore in greater depth later in this essay. The beautiful is not strictly speaking a physical object, and yet there is something of the beautiful that is related to the physical object which occasions the judgment. This distinction between the beautiful and the physical object – has yet to be analyzed, but will be addressed farther along in the paper.

The finer feeling that we will now consider is preeminently of two kinds: the feeling of the sublime and of the beautiful. Being touched by either is agreeable, but in very different ways. The sight of a mountain whose snow-covered peaks arise above the clouds, the description of a raging storm, or the depiction of the kingdom of hell by Milton arouses satisfaction, but with dread; by contrast, the prospect of meadows strewn with flowers, of valleys with winding brooks, covered with grazing herds, the description of Elysium, or Homer's depiction of the girdle of Venus also occasion an agreeable sentiment, but one that is joyful and smiling. For the former to make its impression on us in its proper strength we must have a feeling of the sublime, and in order to properly enjoy the latter we must have a feeling for the beautiful.³⁰

Kant then applies 'beautiful' and 'sublime' as adjectives to nouns.

Lofty oaks and lonely shadows in sacred groves are sublime, flowerbeds, low hedges and trees trimmed into figures are beautiful. The night is sublime, the day is beautiful.³¹

Kant's use of nouns that qualify objects as beautiful and sublime perhaps suggests that objects can be either sublime or beautiful. But in his mature aesthetic theory, he denies that this is the case. The distinction between having a feeling *of* the sublime and *for* the beautiful is telling of these later developments of the interiority and exteriority present in the judgments. The sublime is internal; it occurs within the subject and is of the subject's own mind. Though it is prompted by phenomenal experience, perhaps seeing a mountain or storm on the sea, the judgment of the sublime is interior. It is a frame of mind, rather than a quality found and identified within the object that prompts the frame of mind. The judgment of the beautiful, however, is more directed towards an object. It is interconnected with the object in a meaningful way that is not apparent in judgments of the sublime. Taste is *for* something; it extends, in part, beyond the subject and into the world.

How taste does this is not entirely clear in the *Observations and Remarks*, but later in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant more clearly articulates this relationship. Kant's

³⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feelings of the Beautiful and Sublime and Other Writings*, ed by Patrick Frierson and Paul Guyer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2:208-9.

³¹ Ibid

deduction of aesthetic judgment³² in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* begins with this critical distinction between taste and the sublime. If you recall from §2, a deduction provides justification for the use of *a priori* concepts, “since proofs from experience are not sufficient for the lawfulness of such a use, and yet one must know how these concepts can be related to objects that they do not derive from any experience.”³³ Only the aesthetic judgment of taste warrants a deduction because it involves an object of experience. Both judgments refer to the subject, but only taste employs the object in a continuous way. The aesthetic judgment of the sublime rests primarily on the manner of thinking of the subject, while the aesthetic judgment of taste is ground in the relation between the subject and object.

In the aesthetic judgment of taste, once a representation is noticed, the faculties of the imagination and understanding then engage in a state of ‘free play,’ a continuous harmonious reflective interchange, which produces a sense of pleasure. The objective sensations of the object are provided in the perceptual process, providing the subject with the form, color, etc. of the object. But the subjective sensation of pleasure only happens upon reflection, in the state of ‘free play.’ The pleasure resulting from the reflection is not “objective,” but the result of subjective reflection.

The Relation of Subject and Object in Aesthetic Judgment

While explaining the uniquely subjective nature of this judgment, Kant notes that it is a mistake to think of beauty only as an aesthetic property belonging to the object. The judgment of taste is not simply about the object, but the relation between the subject and the object.

Now what should one infer from this except that the beauty must be held to be a property of the flower itself, which does not correspond to the difference of heads and so many

³² 5:279

³³ A84-5/B117-8

senses, but to which instead the latter must correspond if they would judge it. And yet this is not how it is. For the judgment of taste consists precisely in the fact that it calls a thing beautiful only in accordance with that quality in it by means of which it corresponds with our way of receiving it.³⁴

It is a correspondence between the object, or its form, and the subject's reflective "way of receiving it." Resisting a strict formalism that might identify all aesthetic quality solely with a property of the object, not the subject, Kant instead offers a reflective subjective account. This still heavily employs the phenomenal object in the judgment, but does not constrain it to holding any specific, cognitive property. And yet there is something about the object that prompts the initial occasioning for the aesthetic feeling and continues to hold the subject's attention, keeping her in a rapt state of pleasure.

Aesthetic judgments of taste, unlike the sublime, require justification because these judgments heavily employ the form of object. In Kant's deduction of pure aesthetic judgment, he explains:

The claim of an aesthetic judgment to universal validity for every subject, as a judgment that must be based on some principle *a priori*, needs a deduction (i.e., a legitimation of its presumption), which must be added to its exposition, if, that is, it concerns a satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the form of the object. The judgments of taste concerning the beautiful in nature are of this sort. For in this case the purposiveness has its ground in the object and its shape, even if it does not indicate the relation of the object to others in accordance with concepts (for judgments of cognition), but rather generally concerns merely the apprehension of this form insofar as it shows itself in the mind to be suitable to the faculty both of concepts and of the presentation of them (which is one and the same as that of apprehension.)³⁵

The Judgment of Taste has a special relation to the object: the object grounds the apparent purposiveness (goal-oriented appearance) of the judgment, which will be discussed further later in this chapter. The judgment relies on the form of the object. In section thirty-two of the deduction, Kant again addresses the relationship of the form of the object and the subject. Beauty

³⁴ 5:282

³⁵ 5:279

is not strictly a mere objective property of an object, but the correspondence of object's form and the subject's "way of receiving it."

For the judgment of taste consists precisely in the fact that it calls a thing beautiful only in accordance with that quality in it by means of which it corresponds with our way of receiving it.³⁶

The beautiful is not purely grounded in concepts. Again, cognitive ascriptions (i.e., tree, painting, etc.) might be involved in aesthetic judgments but the relation of the object's form to its subjective reception is what really determines the judgment of beauty.³⁷

It is an empirical judgment that I perceive and judge an object with pleasure. But it is an a priori judgment that I find it beautiful; i.e., that I may require that satisfaction of everyone as necessary.³⁸

This requirement is grounded on the unique form of the judgment. The relation between subject and object produces a feeling in the subject universalized, from the form of the object and the subject's reception. The importance of the object in this judgment is clear. The beautiful is the object. It is not identical with the mere frame of mind of the subject or wholly reducible to her mental powers. The judgment of taste is prompted by and relies on the form of the object for continued support in the maintenance of the pleasure.

This provides a solid fundamental understanding of subject-object relationship within Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste. Now, in preparation for the comparative analysis, we will turn to three specific areas within the aesthetic judgment of taste's subject-object interaction: attention, reflection, and purposeless purposiveness.

³⁶ 5:282

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ 5:289

1.4 Attention

One key element of the subject-object relationship in the judgment of taste absent in the judgment of the sublime is the object's ability to maintain the attention of the subject. In Kant's early work, this is a less apparent distinction. In his *Remarks in the Observations*, he states that the sublime demands attention while the beautiful promotes a type of peaceful harmonious engagement.

Beautiful and sublime are not the same. The latter swells the heart and makes the attention fixed and tense. Therefore, it exhausts. The former lets the soul melt in a soft sensation, and, in that it relaxes the nerves, it puts the feeling into a gentler emotion, which, however, where it goes too far, transforms into weariness, surfeit and disgust.³⁹

The beautiful is either engaging or pretty.⁴⁰

The quality of the subject-object relationship is different in the sublime and beautiful. The beautiful object *engages* the subject. While the object prompting the sublime almost violently captures the attention of the subject, the latter maintains attention in an enticing, light way. This engagement however is not merely a matter of charm as Kant demonstrates in the *Critique of Judgment*.

We linger over the consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself, which is analogous to (yet not identical with) the way in which we linger when a charm in the representation of the object repeatedly attracts attention, where the mind is passive.⁴¹

In this passage, the contemplation of the object, rather than any one property in the form of the object, is an act that "strengthens and reproduces itself." There is something in the form of the object that the mind is receptive to, but also the mind actively reflects upon and engages with the form to maintain attention.

³⁹ 20:19

⁴⁰ 20:37

⁴¹ 5:222

This harkens back to our previous discussion of the curious nature of the subject-object relationship in the aesthetic judgment of taste. The attention held is not conceptual or intellectual. The lingering is the result of the cognitive faculties at play. It is not simple perception of an attractive object, like a charm which one beholds and wants to own or obtain. Rather it is an intuition of an object (its form or representation) which engages the subject's understanding in a sustained dance back and forth. The play "strengthens and reproduces itself," sustaining the engagement with the object's form through reflection.

1.5 Reflection

The reflective process in Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste engages the subject in reflection on either the object's form or her own mental processes. Paul Guyer finds two nuanced types of reflection present in the Third Critique. The first is "the mental act which compares a given representation to the subject's cognitive powers and in doing so produces a harmony between imagination and understanding."⁴² The second is the "reflection upon the sources of one's feelings of pleasure."⁴³ Both of these interpretations most centrally address the subject as the powerhouse of reflection. Before inquiring further into these two types of reflection present in the third *Critique*, let's look at the passages that Guyer utilizes in his defense for his two-tiered reflection thesis. The first is as follows:

When the form of an object (not the material of its representation, as sensation), in simple reflection on it, without the intention of deriving any concept from it, is estimated as the ground of a pleasure in the representation of such an object, then this pleasure is also judged to be necessarily connected with such a representation, that is, as (so connected) not merely for the subject which apprehends this form, but also for every judging

⁴² Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste 2nd Edition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 100.

⁴³ Ibid 101

(subject) in general. The object is then called beautiful; and the faculty of the judging by means of such a pleasure (and thus with universal validity) is called taste.⁴⁴

It is clear in this passage that both the form of the object and the subject play roles in the reflective process. While the subject receives the form of the object in the right frame of mind and engages in “simple reflection on it, without the intention of deriving any concept from it,” the form of the object is present not just for the prompting of the pleasure, but also for the maintenance of the aesthetic experience.

This next selection from Kant’s Introduction eloquently explains the reflection-pleasure relationship in the subject-object engagement.

One who feels pleasure in simple reflection on the form of an object without regard to a concept rightly makes claim to everyone’s agreement, even though that judgment is an empirical and singular judgment: for the ground of this pleasure is to be met with in the universal though subjective conditions of the reflective judgment, namely, the final harmony of an object (whether it be of nature or art) with the mutual relation of the cognitive faculties (imagination and understanding) which is required for every empirical cognition. In the case of a judgment of taste, the pleasure is, to be sure, dependent on an empirical representation and cannot be connected a priori with any concept (one cannot determine a priori which object will accord with taste, or not: one must test it); but it is yet made the determining ground of this judgment only insofar as one is conscious that it rests merely on reflection and on the universal, although merely subjective, conditions of harmony of reflection with the knowledge of objects in general, for which the form of the object is final.⁴⁵

As Guyer extracts from Kant, the pleasure rests on the empirical experience of the harmony of the cognitive faculties. This harmony rises from reflection, rather than immediate, spontaneous judgment.

Regardless of whether Kant does allude to or more directly propose a two-tiered reflective process, as Guyer argues, the more important issue for the purposes of our work here is the role of the subject and object in the reflective process. Whether the reflection is a mental act engaging the form of the object producing pleasure through the harmony within the subject’s

⁴⁴ Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, 100

⁴⁵ Ibid 101

cognitive powers or a further reflection on the origins of the pleasure produced by the internal harmony of the subject's cognitive powers, both rest on the initial interaction between the subject and form of the object.

Reflection allows for engagement to occur. Yet, though this engagement appears highly subjective, there is a universal element which allows the judgment of beauty to extend forth from the particular aesthetic experience between a particular subject and object to any well-functioning subject with the same working cognitive faculties in the same situational engagement with the form of the object. In this way the subject, through reflection, is freed from merely subjective, empirical judgments of agreeableness into a larger, universal world of connection with others. This is the part of the aesthetic judgment that prompts the subject to share her experience with others and encourages them to have a similar experience.

Universality often occurs within Kant's philosophical framework when asserting concepts to objects. However, without forcing a purely conceptually driven relationship present in perception, where a subject applies a concept to the form of an object, aesthetic reflection produces the pleasure that the subject experiences when engaged with an object's form, because of the internal harmony of the imagination and cognition. This is a good place to turn to the nature of this pleasure and the purposeless purposiveness of aesthetic experience.

1.6 Purposeless Purposiveness

Near the beginning of section ten, the first section of the judgment of taste addressing purposiveness, Kant addresses the subject's state of pleasure in the scope of purposiveness.

The consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject for maintaining it in that state, can here designate in general what is called pleasure in contrast to which displeasure is that representation that contains the ground

for determining the state of the representations to their own opposite (hindering or getting rid of them).⁴⁶

Pleasure is at the heart of aesthetic purposiveness. So, to begin the discussion of purposeless purposiveness, we will first address the nature of the pleasure that arises from the harmony of the imagination and cognition in aesthetic experience. This lengthy selection from the “First Introduction” to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* provides a basic definition of pleasure.

... the resolution of the aesthetic judgment of reflection will display the concept of the formal but subjective purposiveness of the object, resting on an a priori principle, which is fundamentally identical with the feeling of pleasure, but which cannot be derived from concepts, and to the possibility of which in general the power of representation is related when it affects the mind in reflection of an object.

An explanation of this feeling considered in general, without regard to the distinction whether it accompanies sensation, reflection or the determination of the will, must be transcendental. It can go like this: Pleasure is a state of mind in which a representation is in agreement with itself, as a ground, either merely for preserving this state itself (for the state of the powers of the mind reciprocally promoting each other in a representation preserves itself), or for producing its object. If it is the former, then the judgment of the given object is an aesthetic judgment of reflection; however, if it is the latter, then it is an aesthetic-pathological or an aesthetic-practical judgment. It can be readily seen here that pleasure or displeasure, since they are not kinds of cognition, cannot be explained by themselves at all, and are felt, not understood; hence they can be only inadequately explained through the influence that a representation has on the activity of the powers of the mind by means of this feeling.⁴⁷

Kant qualifies aesthetic pleasure as a state of mind. Rather than a purely subjective physical sensation (for example one’s particular sensation of the taste of vanilla ice cream), aesthetic pleasure of reflection has no specific object. It simply results from the “representation in agreement with itself,” the form of the object being disinterestedly received by the subject. The state of mind seeks to preserve itself, to prolong the pleasure though not for the sake of any object or single purpose or goal.

⁴⁶ 5:220

⁴⁷ 20:231-2

Were there an empirical object, aesthetic experience might more closely resemble cognition. In such a case, as Kant points out, the aesthetic experience could be understood rather than felt. But that is not the case. Instead, aesthetic experience is grounded on feeling rather than a particular concept or cognition. The feeling of aesthetic pleasure must be experienced and cannot merely be explained in a way that it can then be understood. Aesthetic experience is communicable, but through the common sense, not cognitions. Aesthetic common sense creates communicability between individuals not merely through conceptual sharing of experience, but through shared felt experience. Kant's framework demands that any particular human being with a well-functioning cognitive system would be able to derive aesthetic pleasure from any experience where another functioning subject had a similar aesthetic experience.

To further explain the quality of this state of mind, let's turn to Kant's description of pleasure in the agreeable, the beautiful, and the good.

The expressions appropriate to each of these (the agreeable, the beautiful, and the good), by means of which one designates the pleasure in each of them, are also not the same. Agreeable is that which everyone calls what gratifies him; beautiful, what merely pleases him; good, what is esteemed, approved, i.e., that one which he sets an objective value.⁴⁸

Aesthetic pleasure is set apart by the lack of an objective goal or purpose. The agreeable gratifies and the good has objective value; however the beautiful merely pleases. It seeks to maintain itself. This footnote from the previous selection defining pleasure found in the introduction of the third *Critique* helps to explain further.

Kant often repeated this characterization of pleasure solely in terms of its effects... However, he also frequently departed from the claim that pleasure and displeasure can be explained only by their effects and explained pleasure as the feeling of the promotion of life and displeasure as the feeling of a hindrance to life...⁴⁹

⁴⁸ 5:210

⁴⁹ Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, footnote 24 p.361

The effect of aesthetic pleasure of the beautiful is simple maintenance of the pleasure, the continued free play of the faculties as reflection on the form of the object perpetuates. This pleasure is also sometimes called the feeling of the promotion of life. The ‘promotion of life’ is an elusive term that Kant uses throughout his work. Present in both the *Observations* and the third *Critique*, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact meaning of this term. It is tempting to view the aesthetic judgment as promoting and finding a base in a type of exuberance. Again, to draw a contrast with the sublime, instead of pulling one further inside one’s self and her own reason, taste pulls the individual out of herself. She is integrated into a more complex community of individuals and finds pleasure in her connection and harmonious relation with both her own functioning cognitive faculties and the world around her. However, this promotion is not merely a function of pure happiness or bliss, for the promotion of life does not merely lie in vague yet intense positive emotions. Instead, perhaps it is the contentment and joy of finding one’s self in a life-affirming practice. One’s interactions with the world are engaging in such a way that the subject perceives harmony rather than discord, and makes connections rather than destructive complications.

Within this simple aesthetic interaction with the form of the object, the subject is both actively practicing a type of cognitive harmony and larger harmony with her community.

There is intention present from her “frame of mind” and a receptive “form” that harmoniously responds to her calling. It is a cultivation of the subject’s consciousness.

To grasp a regular, purposive structure with one’s faculty of cognition (whether the manner of representation be distinct or confused) is something entirely different from being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the

given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state.⁵⁰

“Regular, purposive structure” is much different than formal purposiveness ground in aesthetic pleasure. In general, purposiveness is the appearance an object having an end or goal.

An object or a state of mind or even an action, however, even if its possibility does not necessarily presuppose the representation of an end, is called purposive merely because its possibility can only be explained and conceived by us insofar as we assume as its ground a causality in accordance with ends, i.e., a will that has arranged it so in accordance with the representation of a certain rule. Purposiveness can thus exist without an end...⁵¹

The form of the object plays a crucial role in this part of the judgment, because it gives the appearance of causality, being a product of a will, without explicitly providing a single purpose or end. This formal purposiveness is “purposive without a purpose.”

Thus where not merely the cognition of an object but the object itself (its form or its existence) as an effect is thought of as possible only through a concept of the latter, there one thinks of an end. The representation of the effect is here the determining ground of its cause, and precedes the latter. The consciousness of the causality of a representation with respect to the state of the subject, for maintaining it in that state, can here designate in general what is called pleasure...⁵²

Thus we can at least observe a purposiveness concerning form, even without basing it in an end (as a matter of the nexus finalis), and notice it in objects, although in no other way than by reflection.⁵³

Reflection enables the subject to both experience aesthetic pleasure and observe purposiveness within the aesthetic judgment.

Another potentially fruitful interpretation of purposeless purposiveness would be in the context of a practice. Some practices, like crafts or the development of manual labor skills, aim at perfecting an aptitude which produces one aim or goal. For example, take the practice of knitting. An artist may seek to create a specific material product, a pair of socks

⁵⁰ 5:204

⁵¹ 5:220

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

or a scarf. Or she may seek to develop better knitting skills to eventually produce a better material product. There is one goal that one might point to as the primary aim of the action. An observer can isolate the purpose of the knitter's actions. However, when an aesthetic judgment is made and a subject has an aesthetic experience, one can't isolate one goal or aim of her action. It is not to obtain the beautiful object. It is not to simply apply a spontaneous conceptual description. Rather, it is a cultivation of the mind. It does not specifically aim at any one goal. In the process, the practice of engaging in aesthetic experience, one benefits tremendously, from feelings of pleasure and the broadening of one's imagination. But these are all byproducts of the judgment that do not serve as the goals or aims of the practice. This will be a point of contact between aesthetic judgment of taste and meditation that we will discuss further in the third chapter.

1.7 Conclusion and Interlude: Bridging the Beautiful and the Meditative

The work covered here lays the foundation for our comparative exploration in the following two chapters. We have taken an in-depth analysis of the subject-object relationship in the aesthetic judgment of taste as articulated by Kant. Especially important in our understanding of this relationship are the highlighted facets of attention, reflection, and purposeless purposiveness. In the following chapter, we will transition to Yogācāra and Open Presence meditation.

Envision the moment of an aesthetic judgment of taste. The subject of experience in taking an object into her gaze, engages her attention, releases the reflective play of the cognitive faculties, and judges the activity to be purposive, though she cannot isolate a single goal for her mental activity. This object makes her pause. In this instance, the subject is simple; a unified consciousness, full of cognitive and reflective activity. As the free play time of engagement

draws to a close, the subject judges the object as beautiful. Kant describes this state as calm and disinterested: "... the taste for the beautiful presupposes and preserves the mind in calm contemplation..."⁵⁴; "... the pleasure in the aesthetic judgment... is merely contemplative and does not produce an interest in the object..."⁵⁵

This calm, disinterested contemplation might appear similar to the calm, disinterested contemplation of meditation. The experiences of practitioners in some meditative practices appear on the surface similar to the experience Kant describes in the aesthetic judgment of taste. The subject is simple consciousness. She takes an object, directs her attention toward it, not in rapt excitement, but in disinterested engagement. Her cognitive faculties are at work, not judging the object as such, but holding the object in soft attention. Eventually, the practice comes to a close and the subject ends her meditation session, going on about her day.

Some types of meditation and Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste also have a number of practical similarities. In both cases, attention is cultivated and central to the experience. Also, though the immediate attentive engagement of both experiences eventually draws to a close, there are residual effects that extend beyond the instance of experience. In the aesthetic judgment of taste, there is a lingering life affirming pleasure, and for some types of meditation, a sense of connection and loving kindness towards others. Both experiences are practices.⁵⁶ Further practice leads to greater cultivation of attention, receptivity, and residual transformation, similar to other practices.

⁵⁴ 5:247

⁵⁵ 5:222

⁵⁶ It is also interesting that though they can be construed as practices which require time for proper cultivation (a type of necessary habituation), both aesthetic experience and meditation could happen only singularly. This means, perhaps a person could only have one aesthetic experience in her lifetime. Likewise, she may only meditate once. The philosophical literature on practice is rich and large. Since it is out of the main purview of this paper, the actual essence of practice or what defines practice as such, I will use the term somewhat generically here.

In this cross-cultural analysis, I aim to be honest to each tradition. As Edward Said's work on Orientalism shows, there is a long history of misinterpretation and misappropriation when engaging in intercultural discourse.⁵⁷ And as Jay Garfield expresses in his comparative chapter on Kant and Yogācāra Buddhism, I hope that what follows is "an example of comparative philosophy done right – providing a reading that sheds light from one tradition to another."⁵⁸ The goal here is neither to unnecessarily mystify or aestheticize one tradition, nor to misinterpret one tradition for the sake of molding it into or filtering it through the other. Rather, the aim is to bring Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste into honest conversation with Yogācāra Buddhist theory and Open Presence meditation. Doing so may result in identifying useful similarities, and important differences that might help to illuminate each framework.

With that in mind, I would like to introduce the second chapter. Similar to the first chapter, I'll begin with a theoretical framework for experience and cognition in general. I chose the Yogācāra Buddhist philosophical tradition for this analysis, since it is an idealist school that emphasizes non-dualism and subject-object relations. Then the conversation will move from Yogācāra theory to Open Presence meditation. Open Presence meditation contains several steps, initially engaging a type of subject-object experience to overcome subject-object duality, which will be fruitful in dialogue with Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste.

⁵⁷ For more information on Edward Said's Orientalism, see his book: Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage, 1979)

⁵⁸ Jay Garfield, *Empty Words: Buddhist philosophy and cross-cultural interpretation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 168.

CHAPTER TWO: MEDITATIVE CONTEMPLATION

Yogācāra Idealism and Open Presence Meditation

Introduction

The theoretical framework provided by the Yogācāra philosophical tradition⁵⁹ seems like a natural comparative companion with Kant's transcendental idealism. As an idealist tradition, Yogācāra shares some assumptions about the subject and object of experience with Kant. Also, the Yogācāra idealist theory provides a good framework for understanding the phenomenal accounts of meditative experience. For the meditation piece, I'll be looking at Open Presence meditation, in particular. My aim is not to argue the development of idealism from meditative experience, but rather to interpret meditative experience through this theoretical framework. The process of deconstructing the subject-object duality appears to line up nicely for a comparative analysis with Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste. After introducing Vasubandhu and the philosophical positions of the Yogācāra tradition, I will examine Open Presence meditation in light of Yogācāra theory. In the process, I will highlight non-duality, attention, and the goals of meditation. These provide points of compatibility and contention between this Buddhist meditative framework and Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste addressed more explicitly in the third chapter.

⁵⁹ Yogācāra is also referred to as "'Vijñānavāda', 'Cittamātra' and 'Vijñaptimātra'." Mark Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 147.

2.1 Vasubandhu and Yogācāra Theory

The Yogācāra philosophical tradition occurs within the Mahāyāna Buddhist school. Its founders, Asanga and Vasubandhu, worked primarily in the mid-fourth century CE.⁶⁰ Vasubandhu was a scholarly Buddhist monk who was ‘converted’ to Yogācāra by his brother, Asanga.⁶¹ His work details the positions of several Buddhist philosophical traditions and their orthodox Hindu interlocutors. The Yogācāra tradition is historically known for developing Buddhist idealism. While some contemporary scholars⁶² deny that Yogācāra is an idealist tradition, many Tibetan and (historical) Buddhist scholars contend that it is indeed idealist. I will address the idealism articulated by Jay Garfield and extracted from his translation of Vasubandhu’s *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* (*Treatise on the Three Natures*),⁶³ as well as look briefly to Mark Siderits’ reconstruction of Yogācāra idealism.

The Three Natures: The Object of Experience in Yogācāra Idealism

Vasubandhu’s *Treatise of the Three Natures* “introduces the fundamental doctrine of Buddhist idealism”⁶⁴ and delineates three natures of all phenomena (phenomenal objects): “the imagined, the other-dependent and the consummate.”⁶⁵

The imagined nature (*parikalpita-svabhāva*) addresses the constructed nature of phenomena. It makes both an epistemological and metaphysical claim. Epistemologically, all

⁶⁰ Ibid 146

⁶¹ Jonathan C. Gold, "Vasubandhu," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2012 Edition, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/vasubandhu/>.

⁶² Garfield mentions Kalupahana, Kochumuttom, Dunne, Lusthaus, and Powers to name a few. He also includes excerpts from their work to exhibit their positions on Yogācāra as a non-idealist school (p. 155-6). While a comprehensive argument addressing whether or not Yogācāra is an idealist school is outside the confines of this paper. For our purposes, we will assume it is an idealist school and look to Garfield and Siderits’ interpretations of Yogācāra idealism

⁶³ This follows the work of Jay Garfield and his interpretation of the text. Garfield 128

⁶⁴ Ibid 116

⁶⁵ Ibid 117, trans. Garfield, Vasubandhu’s *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa*.

objects present to the mind are phenomenal objects. We only have access to them and knowledge of them through the mind and its operations. Though they seem to point to knowledge of externally existent entities, they only grant knowledge of the phenomenal object. Vasubandhu also argues for the metaphysical claim that objects beyond the phenomena are ultimately non-existent. Though the phenomena appear to point to an enduring object external to the phenomena, this assertion is false.

It is important to note that *parikalpita-svabhāva* is a difficult term to translate. Translated by Garfield as ‘imagined,’ *parikalpita-svabhāva* carries an illusory tone that can be easily misinterpreted to mean that phenomena are merely imaginary. It could also lead to misappropriation of a false ontological status to the phenomena themselves. As Garfield explains, ‘imagined’ “connote(s) construction by the mind, more than... nonexistence.”⁶⁶ If you think of *parikalpita-svabhāva* in this constructive way, it sounds quite similar to Kant’s idealism. The faculties of the mind are employed in the presentation and construction of the phenomena. The point where imaginary may differ from Kant is the positing of the non-existence of the independently existing “thing-in-itself” outside of the representation. Garfield explains:

To have such a nature is to be merely imaginary. More precisely for Vasubandhu insofar as any phenomenon is ideal, its status as an external object is merely imagined. We see physical objects, and even our mind as an object of introspection, as existing external to us. But that status is illusory. These things therefore, conceived as external to the mind, are imaginary.⁶⁷

This imagined nature includes inner and outer phenomena, basically any object that is taken as an object of consciousness. The “mind as an object of introspection” faces the similar temptation afflicting other mental objects or representations. The representation of the mind does not point to anything metaphysically existent beyond that representation. The objects pointed to

⁶⁶ Garfield 117

⁶⁷ Ibid 159

by inner and outer phenomena are ultimately metaphysically empty beyond the representation itself. It is important to remember that there is the reflexive awareness implicit in all experience that functions as the field of awareness in which objects (phenomena) occur.

The other-dependent nature of paratantra-svabhāva reflects this relationship between the phenomenal object and the mind. The phenomena and the mind are separate, since the former is dependent on the latter. As Garfield so eloquently puts it:

... for an object to be ideal is for it to exist in dependence upon the mind. If a thing were independent of mind, it would fail to be ideal in the requisite sense. This aspect of Vasubandhu's idealism emphasizes the fact that while an object of consciousness may be imaginary qua external, independent object, it is a real object of consciousness and has a kind of existence. It exists as a mental act, or as the intentional – though not distinct and independent – object of a mental act...⁶⁸

Metaphysically, the phenomenal object does indeed exist. It simply is not the independent, external object that one might assume the representation points to, i.e., something existing outside of the phenomenon itself. The subject has direct epistemological access to and knowledge of this dependently existent, phenomenal representation.

The consummate nature rectifies non-duality and duality. The consummate takes a seeming dualism (the non-existence of an object outside of the representation and the apparent existence of the representation as representation) and construes it in a non-dual way.

But that nonduality really exists. That is the final nature of the cup. And in this sense, the consummate nature embraces both existence and non-existence – the nonexistence of the cup as dual is its true existence as nondually related to the mind apprehending it.⁶⁹

So the duality is resolved in rejecting the existence of objects external to the phenomenal representation, and accepting them as mental representations. Consciousness is a type of mental faculty and function. Phenomena are mental representations and nothing more. There is not a mental substance and a physical or external substance; it is all mental.

⁶⁸ Garfield 159

⁶⁹ Ibid 142

The Subject of Experience in Yogācāra

There are eight aspects⁷⁰ or layers of consciousness that comprise Vasubandhu's theory of mind. The first five types of consciousness are the separate awarenesses associated with five senses. The sixth is also designated as sensory but is more closely associated with the internal objects of the mind. The seventh consciousness is the *kliṣṭa-manas*, the consciousness that produces the "sense of self." Note that this is not an ontologically real or robust existing self, but merely a consciousness that produces a sense of self. While the *kliṣṭa-manas* is not inherently evil, it does tend to lead individuals astray, since it gives a feeling of self, though no-self ultimately exists for Buddhists. It leads to false attachments and feelings of ownership that the individual then acts on and takes to be real. The eighth consciousness is the "foundation consciousness," *ālaya-vijñāna*.

In the first aspect, to which Vasubandhu refers as the "foundation consciousness" (*ālaya-vijñāna*, *kun gzhi*), the mind functions as the condition of the appearance of phenomena, and hence as the ground of the possibility of the imagined and other-dependent natures. But in its second aspect – the "emerged consciousness" (*Pavṛtti-vijñāna*, *jug pa'i shes pa*) – the mind exists as the object of introspection and is conditioned both by external phenomena that appear in perception and by its own phenomena... The "seven aspects" to which Vasubandhu alludes are the five sensory consciousnesses, the introspective consciousness apprehending the self as object, and the reflective consciousness of the transcendental subject of experience.⁷¹

As Garfield notes, this subject of experience, *ālaya-vijñāna*, is "prescient of Kant, distinguish(ing) the mind in its role as transcendental subject for its role as object, as it appears to itself."⁷² This simple, base consciousness underlies and is simultaneously co-existent with the other consciousnesses. The objects of each field of consciousness appear within the separate spheres of awareness. For example, when the subject of experience perceives a tree, the *ālaya-*

⁷⁰ Garfield 138

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Ibid

vijñāna underlies the seven other consciousnesses, perhaps similar to Kant’s consciousness underlying and supporting cognition. Within the smell-consciousness, objects of soil-scent and leaf-scent appear. Within the sight-consciousness, shapes of green and splotches of grey-brown appear.

Ālaya-vijñāna, as root consciousness, can in some vague sense be construed more on the side of subject than object. As Garfield explains: “the root (mula, rtsa ba), “consciousness” (the same as the foundation consciousness), is not only the subject of all experience. It is also the repository of all the latencies, or potentials, more often called the seeds, which, when actualized or ‘ripened,’ become actual phenomena – objects of experience.”⁷³ On its own, the ālaya-vijñāna is reflexively aware of itself, meaning that it is aware of itself without taking itself as an object, without the duality of subject and object. When the root consciousness is objectified (when it is taken as an object, i.e., “grasped as the storehouse of all latencies”) by the kliṣṭa-manas, it is no longer simply the root consciousness itself, but an object of consciousness. This gives the underlying consciousness a false objectification that provides a “sense of self,” where the mind starts to identify the ālaya-vijñāna as an enduring, robust self or enduring point of subjectivity on which the mind can pin its identity.

Reflexive awareness is consciousness that is implicitly self-consciousness while conscious. This consciousness may be object directed, or have objects appear in the field of awareness. But regardless of whether an object is present, the consciousness itself can be (and is) reflexively aware of itself (self-aware.) Reflexive consciousness illuminates itself as it illuminates an object. The visual example often used is a lamp. The lamp lights itself as it lights the objects external to it. Reflexive awareness can be object directed and simultaneously subject (in this case, the consciousness itself) aware. If the ālaya-vijñāna has no ripened objects of

⁷³ Garfield 139

experience in its field, it is still aware of itself; it is reflexively conscious of itself without making itself an object.

It is important to note that the *ālaya-vijñāna* does not entail a strict “sense of self.” This means that the sense of the ‘I’ that refers to a particular self (soul or body) at a particular time, or a particular self (soul or body) enduring throughout a lifetime, is not *ālaya-vijñāna*. This “sense of self” often carries with it a feeling of ownership and robust egological identity, enduring throughout a given time. Yogācāra metaphysics does not propose that the *ālaya-vijñāna* is an enduring consciousness (or subject of experience) that extends through time. Like the other layers of consciousness, *ālaya-vijñāna* occurs momentarily, in a type of trope metaphysics. It is similar to an instance of base-consciousness-occurring-here-now. It can occur simultaneously with the other types of consciousnesses. The type of meditation covered in section three will exhibit the focusing of attention on this base consciousness specifically, the reflexive structure present within all consciousness. But for now, let’s turn to an analysis of the points of contact between Yogācāra and Kantian idealism.

2.2 Yogācāra and Kant: Idealist Comparison

The nature of Yogācāra idealism is somewhat comparable, but also disparate from Kantian idealism. Garfield uses Vasubandhu’s *Trisvabhāvanirdeśa* as a lens through which to view the progression of Western idealism. He finds that the three natures are present in varying extents within the idealism of Berkeley, Kant, and Schopenhauer. For Berkeley, the first two natures (imagined and other-dependent) are conflated in his naïve idealism. Kant seems to offer a further progression by incorporating the first the imagined and dependent as distinct parts of his idealism. But Schopenhauer, according to Garfield, most completely incorporates all three

natures (imagined, dependent, and consummate) into his idealism. I'll be highlighting Garfield's analysis of Kant under the framework of Vasubandhu.

Garfield finds Kant's analysis compatible with Vasubandhu's framework as far as the imagined and other-dependent facets of phenomena are concerned.

The two natures Kant distinguishes – empirical reality and transcendental ideality – are quite naturally mapped on to the imagined and the other-dependent nature as these are articulated by Vasubandhu. The empirical reality of objects as characterized by Kant, and hence the reality of space and time themselves, is a merely represented reality and no part of the objects themselves. When seen from a transcendental point of view – a God's-eye view, as Kant himself would put it, and hence from the standpoint of omniscience – such objects and space and time themselves are “nothing at all.” On the other hand, the kind of reality they do have for Kant is reality qua representation, and that gives them a kind of “objective validity.” That is, as objects of the mind, as things dependent upon us, they are in fact real. Even God would assent to that. But that reality does not guarantee that the reality they appear to have is in fact actual. Hence, for Kant, their dependent nature is a deeper fact about phenomena than their imagined nature.⁷⁴

As mentioned before, Kant's idealism offers a type of constitutive account of the mental processes involved in constituting objects of experience. These objects of experience are in turn dependent on the mental processes, since the mental processes constitute them. Similarly, Vasubandhu argues for the imagined (constitutive) nature of all phenomena and their other- (mind-) dependence.

But why doesn't Garfield conclude that Kant's idealism exhibits all three of Vasubandhu's natures of objects of experience? This question leads us to the thing-in-itself (or the external reality outside of the object of experience.) Garfield finds Kant's explanation of the thing-in-itself as problematic because it is inconsistent and does not seem to have much bearing on the object of experience.

Sometimes, consistent with the remainder of his critical theory, he asserts that the thing-in-itself is unknowable and uncharacterizable, not even subject to categories such as unity, plurality, or existence... At other times he asserts that things-in-themselves exist,

⁷⁴ Garfield 163

and that each phenomenon is an appearance of a thing-in-itself, in manifest contradiction of the framework of the *Critique*.⁷⁵

The object of experience is to a certain extent, independent of the object-in-itself. The representation that we cognize is not the object-in-itself. Similarly, Vasubandhu designates the existence of the representation as distinct from any object external to it. But Vasubandhu's consummate nature declares that the mental representation is all that there is. There is no representation/externally-existent object dualism. Garfield finds Kant's lack of clarity on the object-in-itself problematic for ascribing this third nature to his idealism. And even were Kant's discussion to be taken as clear and coherent, the object-in-itself doesn't have any bearing on the object of experience. So, consummate nature would not have a role in Kant's object of experience that is similar to Vasubandhu.

Yogācāra has an interesting link with meditation. Mark Siderits speculates as to the connection between meditation and Yogācāra metaphysics:

What seems likely is that Yogācāra metaphysics grew out of speculations concerning the content of yoga or meditation. Here it is important that the higher stages of meditation involve focused awareness of purely mental objects. Since meditation is recognized as playing a key role in attaining enlightenment, perhaps it seemed to some meditation-masters that the ignorance that must be overcome to attain nirvana has to do with our belief in things existing independent of consciousness, physical things. Perhaps they thought that if we could come to see the world as only impressions, then the temporary surcease from suffering that is attained in meditational trance states could be extended to our daily lives.⁷⁶

While this selection is primarily conjecture, it does lay a plausible path between the theoretical idealism of Yogācāra and meditative practice.

Given the great diversity of meditative practice, I will be focusing on Open Presence meditation. Open Presence has a clear four phase process. Over the course of the four phases, the seeming subject of experience (inner representation), object of experience (outer representation),

⁷⁵ Ibid 164

⁷⁶ Siderits 147

consciousness (reflexive awareness), and their relation are covered in-depth. The structuring allows for a clearer analysis in Yogācāra theoretical terms. While the final phase seems to step beyond Yogācāra theory, it will still be useful for explaining the limits and claims of Yogācāra while examining the subject-object relationship in meditative experience.

2.3 Open Presence Meditation

Open Presence's overarching goal is awareness of consciousness itself.⁷⁷ As explained briefly above, this is the reflexive awareness of consciousness. It is not a consciousness that takes consciousness itself as its object, asserting some type of duality, but instead, is reflexively aware of itself, regardless of the object (if any) it directs itself towards. Lutz et al. succinctly explain the theoretical goal of Open Presence: "This practice differs from other meditations, however, in that theoretically it is taking an implicit aspect of all cognitions – a fundamental form of reflexivity and making it phenomenally accessible to the practitioner."⁷⁸ The goal is to attend to the reflexive awareness of consciousness within the meditator's phenomenal experience. The "implicit aspect of all cognitions" is present in all the eight types of consciousness.

⁷⁷ Antoine Lutz, John D. Dunne, and Richard J. Davidson, "Meditation and the Neuroscience of Consciousness: An Introduction," in *Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness*, ed. by P.D. Zelazo and E. Thompson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 514. Another important and potentially useful meditative practice that also initially engages an object is Pure Consciousness meditation. In Pure Consciousness, a practitioner focuses her attention on an object. This phenomenal object may be abstract, a mental representation or image, or concretely physical, her breath (511). As the practitioner flows into a deeper attentive awareness of the object, other objects, mental events and perceptual information begins to fade. Her awareness becomes fully directed toward the object. When she has reached a high enough level of skill, the phenomenal object simply "drops out" and the subject is only aware of awareness itself (Matthew MacKenzie, "Reflexive Awareness, Subjectivity, and Self-Skepticism: A Cross-Traditional Engagement with the Work of Dan Zahavi," 14). This is a pure consciousness event, in which consciousness is (solely) aware of consciousness itself. Because the goal is to be conscious only of consciousness itself, Open Presence might be a better fit for this paper's comparative analysis.

⁷⁸ Lutz et al. 514

Open Presence meditation attains this goal by de-identifying with the contents of one's conscious awareness without cutting them out or directing focused attention on one object.

One then employs techniques that cultivate an awareness of subjectivity in a manner that de-emphasizes the object. In doing so, one gains phenomenal access to the reflexive awareness that is thought to be invariant in cognition. One then de-emphasizes subjectivity as well so as to move to the point where the invariant aspect of awareness is realized fully in meditation.⁷⁹

It is not the dulling of awareness, but the calculated focusing of it that allows the attention to shift from the contents to the awareness itself. Open Presence is similar to clouds passing through the sky. The sky is the “invariant aspect of awareness,” consciousness itself, and the clouds are the objects that happen in the field of consciousness. In this form of meditation, the practitioner is attempting to find the base structure of experience.

Whatever may be the philosophical merits of such an analysis, Chag-zog (Open Presence) practitioners are thus aiming to understand the nature of experience – that which is essential to any instance of experience, regardless of the accidental and changing features of the objects or subjectivities involved... the point is that the invariant element in is experience is that which, from a phenomenal standpoint, makes it possible for the subject-object relation to be presented in experience.⁸⁰

This “invariant element” is a feature of consciousness present in the actual field of consciousness itself. It occurs in all eight types of consciousness as a basic structure of consciousness itself.

Accessing this reflexive awareness is basically a four-phase process in Open Presence. The first phase focuses on highlighting the object of experience, while de-emphasizing the subject (subjectivity) and the reflexive consciousness. The second phase then shifts attention to the subject and reflexive awareness. The third phase shifts again to the reflexive awareness, this time turning away from the subject. It might help to think of this subject as the objectified consciousness. The underlying reflexive character of consciousness is the base subjectivity present in experience. But the subjectivity being turned from here is the more robust, objectified

⁷⁹ Lutz et al. 515

⁸⁰ Ibid 514

subject of experience. Finally, in the last stage, the meditator strongly emphasizes reflexive awareness itself, without directing focus to the object or subject. The object and subject, in fact, are absent in this final phase. On some philosophical accounts, at this final phase, all duality between phenomena and consciousness itself evaporates. The contents of consciousness are identified with consciousness itself.

This style of practice generally begins with the development of Focused Attention (i.e., concentration on a particular object as described previously). Initially retaining some focus on the object, one then cultivates attention to the state of the subjectivity observing the object.⁸¹

So a practitioner begins by cultivating attention, initially focused on an object. After a strong attention is developed with the object, the practitioner is able to extend the attention to the subjectivity of the experience as well. She is highly focused on the objectivity and subjectivity of the experience.

The move to an emphasis on subjectivity is further encouraged by dropping any deliberate focus on an object. As a sensory content or mental even occurs, one observes it (sometimes along with the momentary use of a discursive strategy), and then one releases any focus on it. ... A much subtler indication of grasping, however, is simply the fact that, in phenomenal terms, the appearance or event seems separate from the subjectivity in the experience. Thus, when one “releases” objects, one must do so with the understanding that the objects actually are not separate from awareness itself, of which the subjectivity is also just a facet.⁸²

The practitioner then shifts attention from the object to the subjectivity itself. She is also aware of the reflexive consciousness, but not exclusively. Also, it’s important for Open Presence that the object does not simply “drop out” of the practitioner’s attention. Rather, the attention extended to it is de-emphasized. The practitioner is still aware of the object (or objects), just not focusing her attention exclusively or especially on it (them).

Having become adept at emphasizing subjectivity – attending to the state of one’s own awareness without construing its contents as separate from the subjectivity – the next

⁸¹ Lutz et al. 516

⁸² Ibid 516

stage of practice involves techniques that de-emphasize subjectivity itself. ... advanced meditators are thought to eventually induce a particular phenomenal experience: the experience's content does not appear as an object over against a subject, and the experience also does not involve a sense of subjectivity that is articulated by conceptual or linguistic structures, even if those structures are only implicitly. It is worth reiterating, however, that in de-emphasizing both the object and subject, the aim of the practice is not to become withdrawn from experiences, whether perception or mental. Instead, the aim is for experiences to continue to occur even though the state deemphasizes the particularity of the object and subject. It is in this way that, according to Chag-zog theorists, one will become aware of the invariant feature of all states of consciousness.⁸³

Again, a further shift occurs away from subjectivity to reflexive consciousness itself. But, similar to the last shift, subjectivity and the object(s) do not simply drop out of awareness. They are held in de-emphasized awareness. It is not until the last phase, rarely reached by meditative practitioners, that they are absent. Open Presence is often associated with this third phase, of maintaining objects (including the objectified subjectivity) in an awareness that transcends subject-object duality. It is a meta-awareness of the illusory, non-essential subject-object duality.

These non-essential features of objects and subjects are important for identifying the illusion that such meditation seeks to dispel. The claim is that most substantial characteristics identified with a common sense notion of self (endurance through time, robust psychological identity, etc.) slowly disintegrate upon further phenomenological examination in these meditative states. The same occurs for objects that the representation of self is oriented towards.

Consciousness is able to distinguish between the accidental and essential features of objects and subjects, and clearly designate their place within experience.

Awareness contrasts with features that are accidental (i.e., not essential) to any given cognition; namely the particular features of the object and subject occurring within the cognitions. ... What is accidental about the subject is, for example, its temporal location in the narrative of personal identity or the particular emotional state that is occurring with the subjectivity.⁸⁴

⁸³ Lutz et al. 517

⁸⁴ Ibid 514

The mental contents of consciousness, phenomenal objects, are merely accidental qualities. This includes, similar to Kant, both inner and outer objects (the inner representation of self and the outer representations of objects outside the mind or inner realm, i.e., the human body, the bonsai tree, etc.) The emphasis is on consciousness itself.

For the meditator a persistent way that the sense of “I” manifests would be in the form of a thought, such as, “I am meditating.” Such a thought involves conceptual and linguistic structures that connect to a sense of “I” located in the past and the future. And because that way of locating subjectivity – essentially as a narrative agent – changes from one cognitive content to the next, it is a type of subjectivity that is thought to obscure the invariant feature of consciousness.⁸⁵

The subjectivity at this level is not a substantial “narrative agent,” or self. But what subjectivity, if any, exists at this depth of meditation? Buddhist philosophical tradition might answer that subjectivity may simply be the reflexivity implicit in consciousness. This reflexivity might provide a thin subjectivity that can carry the reports of practitioners.

Meditative Non-Duality

One problem with providing a complete theoretical analysis of the consciousness present in meditation is the linguistic limitations of reports. Reports from practitioners seem to deny that this fundamental consciousness, or subjectivity, is linguistically conveyable.

Advanced meditators are thought to eventually induce a particular phenomenal experience: The experience’s content does not appear as an object over against a subject, and the experience also does not involve a sense of subjectivity that is articulated by conceptual or linguistic structures, even if those structures are only implicit.⁸⁶

Eventually, the subject loses a sense of robust, self-objectifying subjectivity. It is difficult to determine what type of subjectivity, if any, exists at this and the final stage of such meditation,

⁸⁵ Lutz et al. 516

⁸⁶ Ibid 517

“a point where no elements of objectivity or subjectivity – whether in the form of conceptual structures, categories of time and space, or some other feature – remain in the experience.”⁸⁷

It is unclear what this experience, outside of time and space, with the loss of subject and object, would be. One important thing to keep in mind is that mental categories, unlike those in Kant’s idealism, are not as fixed or permanent in their form for Buddhist theorists. And saying that the phenomenal experience of these states is “outside time and space” isn’t clear enough to show whether the actual experience is outside of the bounds of times and space or if time and space are experienced in a non-typical way. The former seems highly implausible, since the meditator eventually emerges from this state, and time has passed.⁸⁸ The latter explanation would need more examination. What would it mean for time and space to be so drastically modified or molded? This remains unclear and begs for further investigation. Another issue alluded to earlier is the existence of tropes within Buddhist metaphysics. If this consciousness is a trope, it needs to be explored whether all tropes are temporally situated or merely logically situated through causation. One might argue that causal relations need not appear in time. If tropes do not necessarily exist or appear within time, then positing an experience outside of time and space (assuming the same is true for space), may not be a problem for Buddhist metaphysics or phenomenology. Nonetheless, the issue of an *experience* existing entirely outside of time and space is still unlikely.

The problem of the loss of subject and object is also apparent. Experience seems to entail a subject. After all, what is experience beyond what something is like *for* something?

Experiences appear to depend on, to some extent, a subject having them. It is unclear if something like a pain could happen or occur without a subject experiencing it as hers. As

⁸⁷ Lutz et al. 517

⁸⁸ I would like to thank Dr. MacKenzie for this and many other points in this chapter illuminated through our conversations.

Wolfgang Fasching explains, “Experiences do not just lie about like stones or chairs, equally accessible in principle to everyone: Experiences only exist in being subjectively experienced, and that seems to mean: in being experienced by a respective subject.”⁸⁹ Proponents of the disintegration of the subject might argue that there are many types of subjectivity. Under reflexive awareness, the field of awareness is in some sense subjectively aware of itself and the objects within the field. Perhaps this type of subjectivity could provide a substantial enough subject of experience to remember and report as best she can on the meditative experience.⁹⁰

Through the lens of Yogācāra , the underlying subject of experience may indeed simply be the reflexive characteristic of consciousness. Subject-object duality disappears at certain meditative states; the representations of subject and object bear more similarities than directional differences. And yet, at these heightened meditative states, phenomena still appear in the field of consciousness. Unlike other types of meditation (for example, pure consciousness – see footnote 77), the higher states of meditation do not seek to have the phenomena “drop out” altogether, but rather to allow them to come and go out of the field of awareness, like clouds in the sky. They are non-dual in that both the consciousness and the phenomena are mental. Under a Yogācāra theoretical framework, however, the sky (i.e., consciousness) is not identical with the clouds (i.e., phenomenal objects.) There still seems to be some type of dualism present.

⁸⁹ Wolfgang Fasching, “‘I Am of the Nature of Seeing’: Phenomenological Reflections on the Indian Notion of Witness Consciousness,” in *Self, No Self? Perspectives from Analytical, Phenomenological, and Indian Traditions*. Ed by Mark Siderits et al, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 197.

⁹⁰ This might be a point at which, despite the accounts of practitioners that language fails to convey phenomenological experience. This is one of many challenges one encounters when using meditative techniques to evaluate phenomenological claims about the self. Training practitioners in philosophic or neurological language might bias their experience, yet this gulf seems difficult to effectively overcome. Especially if the meditative practitioners claim that the experience is not linguistically communicable.

Attention

Attention is crucial to Open Presence meditative practice and proper execution. I've already briefly addressed the various shifts in attention that occur within Open Presence (from object to subject to reflexive awareness), but now let's address the quality. Attention in Open Presence is not a desirous or attachment laden type of attention. Rather, it is an attention that seeks to be disinterested (unattached to the object) and stable. Stability is a core aspect of meditative attention. The practitioner wants to stabilize her attention and cultivate a higher quality of control and sensitivity to the focus of that attention.

In Open Presence, the attention is not necessarily direct solely at one object. Rather, it is ushered or directed towards different parts of conscious experience without shutting out phenomena. The phenomena still occur (or pop up) outside of the control of the practitioner. This is another reason why stability of attention is important, since the phenomenal landscape is always potentially in flux. The allowance of phenomena to come and go in the field of awareness requires the strength of stable attention, amidst changes in the phenomenal landscape.

Also important in attention is motivation and intention. Motivating meditators is some goal or reason for continuing practice. Meditation is incredibly difficult. It's likely that the motivation, or desire to continue practicing, is not at the forefront of the practitioner's consciousness at the time of practice. Such highlighted desires would foil her practice. Rather, the desire might pop up as she loses focus or attention. The desire to continue ushers her attention away from the straying path which it wanders down back to the appropriate focus for the phase or session she has aimed towards.

Intention is also implicit in attention. It guides and redirects attention, transitioning from one phase to the next (object-focused, subjectivity-focused, etc.) This intention, like meditative

attention in general, is soft but strong. It engages with focus, not in a violent, domineering way, but in cooperation. The strength of intention is necessary for successfully re-directing attention and transitioning to new phases of meditative practice.

2.4 The Goals and Fruit of Meditation

At this point, let's expand the purview of meditation to see what the general goals and benefits of the practice are. Most forms of meditation have the goal of transformation. This is a broad goal, and can be construed differently for each practice or setting. This transformation can happen on different time-scales. Some transformations occur throughout a single sitting, while others take days, months, years, or a lifetime.

For some, the overarching goal of meditative practice over the long term is attainment of nirvana (the cessation of suffering and the cycle of rebirth). This involves overcoming the illusion of samsara (the cycle of suffering caused by illusion, the dual, imagined characteristics of phenomena). The transformation here might be the cultivation of identifying with the non-dual base consciousness, rather than with the dual, imagined characteristics of phenomena, both inner (e.g., soul or self) and outer (e.g., body, bonsai tree, etc.) In this state, beyond the illusion of duality, one is free from suffering.

Another less soteriologically loaded transformation is the cultivation of attention and awareness in general. As one practices, awareness grows. This may have an ethical or quality-oriented bent. For example, in some meditative practices, the practitioner's goal is to develop discerning mindfulness. This allows the practitioner to discern wholesome thoughts and mental objects from unwholesome ones, and promote the wholesome. Other types of attention cultivation are non-judgmental. For example, in meditation-based stress reduction, the practitioner attends to objects (emotions, memories, etc.) without judging them. By developing

an awareness of these mental objects and events, the practitioner is able to reduce her reactivity to them.

It is also important to note, though, that there are points in meditation where one is allegedly not supposed to have a goal or not to be actively conscious of the goal. Some non-dual forms of practice are referred to as non-meditation, since meditation is too overtly goal-directed. In non-meditation, one is not to keep the goal of enlightenment in mind. One meditates without goal or purpose. The practice itself transforms the practitioner, but not the practice with a specific goal or aim in mind, consciously or “unconsciously.” Also, within each “step” or phase of meditation that is more explicitly goal oriented (as in the case of Open Presence), the overarching goal is not present in the consciousness of the meditative state. If a practitioner has it on the fore-front of her mind that she will attain awareness of reflexive consciousness, she most likely is not actively engaging in the deeply embedded phases that she must undergo to reach that goal. So while the behavior of meditating may seem to be purposive, or goal-oriented, and though it is in some sense, there is another sense in which at the level of phenomenal experience, the meditating subject is not aware of that overarching goal while she is meditating.

There are also a number of benefits that spring from meditation that may not be the explicit goal of the practice. While some meditation is explicitly aimed at cultivating loving kindness, others without that goal may also cultivate a residual loving kindness for others. Another benefit is the development of attention that continues outside the meditative session. Another especially interesting benefit for our analysis is the aestheticization of phenomena post-meditative sitting. Within the meditative state, perception (which Dharmakīrti refers to as yogic perception) of phenomena present to the mind appear vivid.⁹¹ John Dunne likens the vividness of

⁹¹ John D. Dunne, “Realizing the Unreal: Dharmakīrti’s Theory of Yogic Perception,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 34 no. 6 (2006): 500.

these states to a type of vividness present in hallucinations brought on by grief or other heightened emotional/mental states..

2.5 Conclusion

In closing, the Yogācāra philosophical tradition addresses many themes that will be useful for our final comparative analysis. The type of idealism is importantly similar and different from Kant's transcendental idealism. Vasubandhu's three natures play an interesting role both in explicating phenomena and Open Presence meditative experience. The process of Open Presence distinguishes many possible points of intersection with Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste. We will now turn to the areas of intersection and conflict in the remaining chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: COMPARATIVE CONTEMPLATION

Kant's Aesthetic Judgment of Taste and Open Presence Meditation

Introduction

How do our discussions of aesthetic judgment and meditation come together?

Throughout the previous two chapters, I attempted to provide an analysis of each tradition from a fairly insular vantage point. Now, I will work on identifying threads of connection and points of disagreement between Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste and Open Presence meditation as interpreted through a Yogācāra philosophical framework.

I'll begin with an examination of judgment and how it plays a role in both experiences. This is an area of compatibility and contention, as the mental processes of judgment are somewhat similar, but the expressive nature of Kant's aesthetic judgment provides an area of contrast. Next, I'll turn the focus to the attention present in Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste and Open Presence meditation, identifying similarities and differences as they arise in the examination of motivation, intention, and focus. Then moving on, I'll identify parts of Open Presence that are compatible and incompatible with Kant's purposeless purposiveness. This will lead to a discussion of transformation in both practices. I will conclude with suggestions of further areas of research that emerge from this modest attempt at bringing these two traditions into discourse.

3.1 Judgment: Concepts and Objects of Experience

The issue of judgment is important for both Kant and meditative practitioners. On the face of it, the issue of judgment appears to be a point of contention between beauty and

meditation. There are some forms of meditation that aim to be explicitly non-judgmental and non-conceptual while the aesthetic judgment of taste is just that, a judgment. But this is a point where unspecific terminology is creating a problem for the comparative conversation.

There is a slight difference between the uses of ‘judgment’ and ‘concept’, as addressed in the discussion of Kantian judgment in the first chapter. A very simple and important type of judgment is implicit in phenomenal experience. Every time I perceive the object appearing before me as a computer screen, or another as a bonsai tree or cup of tea, I am making a conceptual judgment. Even less conceptually complex judgments (e.g., “red,” “4 feet tall,” etc.) are still cognitive, conceptual judgments that occur within space and time, through the categories of the understanding. These conceptual judgments are in some sense judgmental and conceptual.

Non-judgmental meditation aims not so much at halting conceptual judgment, but rather refraining from judging the mental contents of one’s mind evaluatively. The contents of the mind (or objects of experience) pop up into consciousness. If one is practicing Open Presence meditation, she does not further judge these representations to have various values or qualities (i.e., to be good or bad). Rather, she non-judgmentally observes the contents of her consciousness, attuning herself more towards the reflexive character of the consciousness in which they appear.

This may mean refraining from making cognitive judgments in general, at the upper phases of meditation, when subject and object are no longer present in the phenomenal field. (But as I mentioned before, this step is arguably outside the bounds of Yogācāra philosophical tradition and lays claim to another Buddhist philosophical tradition.) So, turning our attention to the first three phases, let’s look at the structure of the contents that appear in the field of consciousness. As you recall from Chapter two, the Yogācāra philosophical tradition has an eight

consciousness framework for the mind. The five sensory fields have simple phenomena (e.g., color splotches and basic, un-cognized shapes for sight, etc.) The phenomena from these fields interacts with the sixth field of consciousness (that of inner representations) together with the eighth field (the *ālaya-vijñāna*) to cognize (in Kantian terms, apply a concept to) the phenomena. Through this complex, albeit spontaneous, interaction, phenomena are cognized.

In Open Presence meditative experience, phenomena appear throughout the first three phases. The focus on the various fields and objects may shift, but phenomena do pop up. The processes of the mind do not cease. Instead, they continue to occur throughout the field of consciousness. Perhaps not until the final phase do the cognitive processes involved with constructing (or constituting) inner and outer phenomena cease, so that the only thing available or apparent to the field of awareness is the reflexivity implicit in awareness itself. During the first three phases, though, does cognition continue throughout the shifting of focus from objectivity to subjectivity to awareness? If the phenomena merely appear at will, outside the intention and motivation of the subject of experience, it seems like the cognitive processes conceptualizing them would also continue. After all, her intention and motivation are directed at attending to various contents and structures within consciousness. She is witnessing and focusing rather than deliberately controlling or manipulating the layers of consciousness themselves. Cognitive judgment is present throughout the first three phases of Open Presence meditation.

Judgment about beauty is qualitatively different than conceptual judgments. It is reflective, rather than immediate and “is neither grounded on concepts nor aimed at them.”⁹² While the judging about my tea cup is spontaneous, my judging about the cup as beautiful is reflective. This reflective judgment is more of an expression of pleasure and harmony, than an assertion of a conceptual property present in the object. It occurs after the pleasure has arisen and

⁹² 5:209

free play of the cognitive faculties has occurred. Aesthetic experience is still in space and time, though the judgment of aesthetic taste does not follow the spontaneous, goal-driven form of these spontaneous cognitive judgments. Kant explains:

Hence, the judgment of taste is merely contemplative, i.e., a judgment that, indifferent with regard to the existence of an object, merely connects its constitution together with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. But this contemplation itself is also not directed to concepts; for the judgment of taste is not a cognitive judgment (neither a theoretical nor a practical one), and hence it is neither grounded on concepts nor aimed at them.⁹³

This aiming at concepts plays an important role in both purposeless purposiveness and drawing a connection to Open Presence if meditation allows for conceptualization to occur without being the focus or goal.

Given this background on judgments, the judgment of beauty now sounds quite compatible with meditative accounts. For example, look at this explanation of meditative awareness from Henepola Gunaratana:

When you first become aware of something, there is a fleeting instant of pure awareness just before you conceptualize the thing, before you identify it. That is a state of awareness. Ordinarily, this state is short-lived. It is that flashing split second just as you focus your eyes on the thing, just as you focus your mind on the thing, just before you objectify it, clamp down on it mentally, and segregate it from the rest of existence. It takes place just before you start thinking about it – before your mind says, “Oh, it’s a dog.” That flowing soft focused moment of pure awareness is mindfulness.... That original moment of mindfulness is rapidly passed over. It is the purpose of vipassana meditation to train us to prolong that moment of awareness.⁹⁴

In Gunaratana’s quote, the awareness is pre-conceptualization (“before your mind says, ‘Oh, it’s a dog.’”) The awareness itself includes basic cognitive judgments (i.e., the phenomena appearing in consciousness, without being further judged as a thing.) Similarly, the aesthetic judgment itself allows for background judgments, but the aesthetic moment is not aimed at or grounded on conceptual judgments. Conceptual judgments are better understood as ancillary to judging the

⁹³ 5:209

⁹⁴ Henepola Gunaratana, *Mindfulness in plain English* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2002) quoted in Bhikku Bodhi, “What does Mindfulness Really Mean?” *Contemporary Buddhism* 12 no. 1 (May 2011), 27-8.

beautiful. Both judgments of the beautiful and meditative awareness rest in non-conceptualization but do not inhibit background conceptual judgments.

Ideal meditative awareness under Gunaratana's reading would be best described as non-conceptual. And even if our discussion of the possibility of conceptualization in the first three phases of Open Presence is correct, remember that the ultimate goal of Open Presence (or the final desired state of meditation) is free from subject and object phenomena. So, while the presence of conceptual judgments in the background does not pose a problem for the aesthetic judgment of taste, it may be undesirable in the final states of meditation. Some meditative traditions even resist designating meditation itself under a conceptual framework. These schools prefer to call it "non-meditation" to stress the non-conceptual and ineffable nature of meditation. Perhaps after emerging from a meditative state, it is useful to have names and concepts for various states, but the goal is not explicitly to form a judgment in the state or about the state. Rather, the practitioner practices the state, without further need to judge the state or contents of the phenomena.

[Remember, though, that this is specifically in reference to Open Presence meditation. There are other judgmental forms of meditation that do seek to judge the contents (or phenomena) of the mind as wholesome or unwholesome. Even beyond this judging, the practitioner seeks to increase or amplify the wholesome while diminishing and extinguishing the unwholesome. Within the confines of our discussion – Open Presence – such techniques are not explicitly used or sought after.]

Aesthetic experience culminates in a judgment (albeit, a reflective, non-cognitive judgment.) As and after the free play of my cognitive faculties ensues, the form of the object is reflectively judged "beautiful." This reflective judgment is almost more of an expression of one's

feeling combined with a normative demand for another's agreement. This isn't a conceptual assertion of the fact of an independently existing property. Instead, the judgment is expressing the pleasure and harmony of one's experience. This expression perhaps points to a possible point of contention with meditation. While the aesthetic judgment of taste doesn't apply a conceptual judgment to an object, it does have an expressive function. The judgment is a form of reaching out to others and connecting with them and their experience. It is also a source of encouragement to engage in a similar state of mind that would allow them to experience this pleasure of harmony. This expressive function, while the expression of a personal and self-enclosed feeling, is different from the apparent non-expressive meditative practice. While the pleasure experience within meditation, the calm and the harmony of mind, is highly subjective and personal, there doesn't seem to be a component of socialibility or expression. The meditator practices for herself, and her own reasons and goals, without needing to express her pleasure or beckon others to join her. While there may be some such impulse in a meditator, it doesn't seem to be a crucial part of meditation itself.

One last important note is the ineffability that both traditions report. The elusiveness of words for describing aesthetic ideas in Kant and for completely describing the interaction between subject and object in the judgment is evidence of this. In meditation as well practitioners find it difficult to articulate the phenomenal experience of higher states of meditation. The experience seems difficult to translate into words. This, as mentioned before, is a problem for reports of being "outside of time and space." It might be better to think of these reports of being beyond the bounds of time and space as reports of the malleability of time and space. The aesthetic and meditative experiences occur in such a way that makes the passing of time and the inhabiting of space qualitatively different, or re-structured. The uniquely non-conceptual

character of both of these practices lends itself to being difficult, if not nearly impossible, to describe at all in colloquial (or even technical) terminology.

3.2 Attention Revisited

As discussed in the first chapter, the attention present in the aesthetic judgment of taste is a type of engagement. The subject and form of the object are interactive in the judgment; there is something in the form that beckons the subject, and something in the subject's frame of mind that attends to the form of the object. The ensuing attention is light, calm, and engaged. It is not an intense attention that tries to grasp or obtain the object, but rather causes the subject of experience pause.

The attention present in Open Presence meditation is slightly different. While it shares the calm engagement present in the aesthetic judgment of taste, there is nothing specially beckoning in the form of the object. Perhaps one could argue that the objective and subjective qualities of some phenomena guide the subject's attention throughout the phases of open presence, but that is quite different than a particular, ineffable quality in the form of a type of object causing the subject to pause and engage with it.

Focused-Attention and Open-Monitoring are two terms from the mediation and neuroscience literature that might be useful in structuring this part of the analysis. Focused-Attention (FA) is "... a process that focuses on a particular location in space, a specific object, or a feature of a whole object."⁹⁵ The subject engaging in FA has a more intentionally directed focus on attention on a particular thing. The subject develops vivid and stable perception of this particular object or feature. This is very intentionally directed and maintained.

⁹⁵ Raffone et al. 629

The active engagement of the judgment of beauty is a form of FA. It focuses on a particular object (the form that is harmonious with the aesthetic frame of mind.) The subject engages with that object and takes pause for a moment in the harmonious interaction. In the aesthetic moment, the subject remains focused on that particular form, in calm contemplation.

Open-monitoring (OM) is a more dispersed attention. It disinterestedly addresses the field of awareness itself.

Open monitoring (OM) meditation does not involve an explicit attentional focus and therefore does not seem to be associated with brain areas implicated in sustained or focused attention. Instead it involves brain regions implicated in vigilance, monitoring, and disengagement of attention from sources of distraction from the ongoing stream of experience (Lutz et al. 2008).⁹⁶

“The ongoing stream of experience” is highlighted and attended to in OM. The explicit attentional focus is what distinguishes OM from FA. Though attention is guided in Open Presence, there is not a particular object or focus of attention. Rather, attention is dispersed throughout the field of awareness.

Raffone et al. goes on to make this connection between OM and Open Presence explicit:

OM practices are based on an attentive set that is characterized by an Open Presence and a nonjudgmental awareness of sensory, cognitive, and affective fields of experience in the present moment, and involves a higher-order (meta-) awareness of ongoing mental processes (Chan and Polich 2006). The cultivation of this reflexive awareness in OM meditation is associated with a more vivid conscious access to the rich features of each experience and enhanced metacognitive and self-regulatory skills (Lutz et al. 2008).⁹⁷

Clearly Open Presence meditation is a form of OM. OM seems almost formulated from Open Presence styles of meditation.

To gain a better appreciation for the attention involved at each stage of aesthetic judgment and meditation, let’s look to the initial focusing of attention, the ensuing attention during practice, and the release of attention out of the aesthetic and meditative practices. Prior to

⁹⁶ Raffone et al. 636

⁹⁷ Ibid

the moment of free play, there is this open receptivity as a backdrop for the aesthetic judgment of taste. The frame of mind of the subject is receptive to beautiful (or ugly or sublime) forms. It is a type of passive awareness, latent in daily experience, waiting to be awakened for the aesthetic moment. For the Open Presence meditator, the backdrop of consciousness prior to meditation is a type of normal consciousness or awareness. If the practitioner is a long-time meditator, this normal state of consciousness is already heightened and more vividly aware of the constant functioning of the mind.⁹⁸

The beginning focus of meditation and the judgment of taste are slightly different. Open Presence meditation seems intentionally directed. The meditator decides when to meditate and intentionally embarks on a given behavior and mindset. Open Presence meditation seems to elicit a type of initially active focusing of attention, followed by active engagement with the object. The mind might appear passive, simply observing while objects come in and out of the field of awareness. But it is still active in its observation.

The initial focus of the aesthetic judge is more passive. The subject has more of an open receptivity that is latent throughout all experience. In the midst of experience, with this receptive backdrop, the form of an object catches her attention. The intention involved with cultivating that frame of mind (receptivity to beautiful forms) is more latent in experience in general. The form of the beautiful object is what awakens or sparks the particular instance of aesthetic judgment. Once the form appears, the mind is vigorously active in engaging with the object.

This ensuing active engagement is quite similar between Open Presence meditation and judgment of the beautiful. Once the beautiful object catches the attention of the subject of experience, she holds a calm, stable attention on the object. Likewise, the active engagement in Open Presence meditation is calm and stable. Both are disinterested in obtaining or controlling

⁹⁸ Raffone et al. 637-8

the phenomena. Rather, they rest in awareness of the object (or field of consciousness, as the case may be for Open Presence.)

Both of these practices cultivate a type of open receptivity, or a receptive mindset. Open Presence meditation is less focused on specifically aesthetic forms, and more interested in phenomena in general. Though, it is interesting to note, that as OM cultivation continues, the phenomena become more vivid in general.⁹⁹ Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste cultivates a type of open receptivity to forms, but specifically aesthetic forms. This increases the amount of phenomena that the subject finds beautiful, but it could likewise increase the frequency of interaction with ugly forms and sublime forms. In both cases, it appears that regular (or increased) practice of aesthetic judgment or Open Presence meditation increases one's phenomenal sensitivity and receptivity to various forms.

At the close of a meditative session or judgment of the beautiful, both practices are followed by a type of disengagement. Perhaps this would be better explained as a "return to the world." The practitioner eventually returns to phenomenal experience outside of the focused, engaged attention of the aesthetic judgment or Open Presence meditative session. The free play of the cognitive faculties eventually stops. Attention eventually wanes, and the subject leaves the beautiful object for her daily life. She leaves the lily to continue walking to her meeting, or continues through the art gallery after pausing at the Monet. Open Presence meditative practitioners also have designated meditative sessions, and eventually wrap up their meditative practice to embark on other tasks throughout the day. This of course is not to say that these attentive sessions do not have some bearing on the life-as-lived outside of the practices. The open receptivity cultivated continues after the session. For Open Presence meditators, this may mean the increased vividness of everyday phenomena. For the Kantian judge of the beautiful,

⁹⁹ Raffone et al. 636

this may mean the increase of aesthetic experiences throughout the day. Though it is interesting to note that for the Kantian this is much more selective than for the Open Presence meditator; the meditator has a type of universal heightened vivid awareness of phenomena, while the Kantian is more selectively aware of beautiful (or ugly or sublime) forms.

3.3 Purposeless Purposiveness Revisited

Turning our attention to purposeless purposiveness, let's quickly reiterate Kant's explanation of this facet of aesthetic judgment. Purposiveness is the quality of being goal or purpose directed. For example, in conceptual judgments, the process of judging is very clearly goal-directed. The mental faculties interact in such a way as to apply a concept to an object. The process, observed from the outside, clearly has one goal or purpose. Purposeless purposiveness has the structure of goal-orientation – the process has the form of being aimed at a goal or purpose. However, a single goal or purpose is not identified. In this way, it is purposeless (no clear or specific goal) and purposive (has the form of goal-orientation.)

What this means in the aesthetic judgment of taste is fairly straightforward. When making an aesthetic judgment, the way that the faculties of the mind interact appears purposive – the faculties of the mind and their activity of free play seems to be goal oriented. The pleasure of harmony produced has a structure of goal-orientation. However, unlike conceptual cognitive judgments, in reflective judgments no immediate or spontaneous concept can be applied (i.e., no clear goal of the activities of these mental faculties can be identified.) Some might interpret the pleasure that arises in the aesthetic judgment of taste as a goal, but Kant explicitly denies that this is the case. The pleasure is not the goal; rather, it simply arises in the aesthetic experience. One could see where this pleasure is desirable. Think of it though like the pleasure resulting from exercise or meditation. The harmonious feeling of one's body working well together or of the

mind resting in awareness is pleasurable. But unlike the pleasure of eating ice-cream or other interested forms of pleasure, it's not a pleasure that one really owns or can be firmly attached to. It's a pleasure that arises, and that one would like to readily engage in again, but it has a quality of being disinterested: there is no impulse to consume or subsume the pleasure.

Other things beyond this disinterested pleasure arise too – an open receptivity to aesthetic forms, an increased sociability, and eventually the judgment that the form is beautiful. Though these benefits arise, Kant argues that they are not the goals of the aesthetic experience itself. They are benefits of engaging in the practice, but not the specific goal of the practice. One is not genuinely in the aesthetic mindset if she is consciously aware of wanting to gain open receptivity or increased sociability as a result of the aesthetic experience. Her preoccupation with these desires prevents her from engaging in aesthetic experience. Simply being in the experience results in these benefits, but they are not the conscious or explicit goals of the practice. In this way, the aesthetic judgment of taste is purpose-lessly purposive.

How could this possibly relate to Open Presence meditation? It seems clear that in some sense meditation is very goal oriented. Within open presence, there are four distinct phases, all contributing to an overall transformation of the mind. This transformation culminates in phenomenal access to the structure of consciousness itself, reflexivity. This “outside” or objective view of meditation shows a clearly goal-oriented process. In other forms of meditation, the goal varies. Some focus on cultivating attention or detachment in order to free the practitioner from suffering. Others cultivate loving kindness. And the goal from a Yogācāra vantage point would be overcoming the illusion of dualism.

From an internal, subjective vantage point of experience, though, perhaps Open Presence could be construed as having an element of purposeless purposiveness. When one is meditating,

intention is present, as we discussed before. But this intention isn't explicitly focused on the grander or overarching goal of meditation. Rather, the subject is supposed to be aware of the moment that she is meditating in, and simply rest in active awareness. From the view of the practitioner, no goal is evident. Many things arise out of this practice (greater cultivation of attention, perhaps the unintentional development of loving kindness, a greater physiological calm and stress reduction), but these are not the goals of the practice. The immediate focus of the practice is simply to engage in the practice. The pleasure, if any, that arises in this state of awareness is more an incentive of sorts to engage in the practice again, but in the moment of meditation, this is not at the forefront of the practitioner's mind, and it is likely not what is driving their experience.

This is similar to the aesthetic judgment of taste. At the moment of aesthetic experience, the subject may not be mindful of having an aesthetic experience. Rather, she's caught up in the experience itself, in the play of her mental faculties. The pleasure from this harmony arises disinterestedly. She rests in the free play, and is not distracted by further thoughts of future attainment of aesthetic pleasure or the goals of cultivating open receptivity. From the subjective vantage point, in both practices, moment-to-moment, within the aesthetic or meditative experience, there seems to be a dimension of purposeless purposiveness.

Turning briefly to this feeling of the promotion of life that could be misconstrued as the goal of aesthetic judgment, let's examine how this shows up in both the judgment of the beautiful and Open Presence meditation. Recall from the first chapter the discussion of the feeling of the promotion of life. Guyer notes in footnote twenty-four of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*:

Kant often repeated this characterization of pleasure solely in terms of its effects... However, he also frequently departed from the claim that pleasure and displeasure can be

explained only by their effects and explained pleasure as the feeling of the promotion of life and displeasure as the feeling of a hindrance to life...¹⁰⁰

This feeling of the promotion of life likely flows from the harmony between subject and object (as well as cognitive faculties) felt in the judgment. Some interpret this feeling of harmony as a type of overcoming of dualism. The subject feels herself in accord with the object (and perhaps, to extrapolate even further, the world or nature) outside of her. She is not at odds with the object (or nature) but rather harmoniously coexistent. This harmonious compatibility reinforces an interpretation of the feeling of the promotion of life that encourages the subject to continue living in accord with the outside object (the world or nature.) The pleasure might also convey a type of harmony of living in the world. This is life affirming, because the subject's existence is not at odds with the object (the world or nature.) The subject feels as if her existence and life were essential for keeping the harmony present in the aesthetic moment.

Is this similar to Open Presence meditation? A practitioner may experience a feeling of calm or harmony in her meditative state. But a pleasurable feeling does not seem to be as central to meditation as it does for aesthetic judgment. The feeling in some sense signals or comprises the aesthetic judgment of taste. The feeling of harmony with life is a stereotypical association made with Buddhist meditators. But looking closer at actual research conducted with these meditative states, it seems that reports differ depending on the type of meditation studied. For example, a study conducted by Antoine Lutz in 2004 on long term loving-kindness meditation practitioners found a greater “high-amplitude pattern of synchrony in the gamma oscillatory band.”¹⁰¹ This means that their brain functions were more harmonious than short-term practitioners. This may account for a feeling of connectedness or harmony, but research on gamma oscillation is still in progress. So, in some sense, there is a resulting harmony from

¹⁰⁰ Guyer, *Critique of Pure Reason*, footnote 24 p. 361

¹⁰¹ Raffone et al. 638

meditation, but it might be too broadly sweeping to say that all meditators experience a feeling of the promotion of life or harmony with the world outside of them.

3.4 Transformation

Transformation is evident in both the aesthetic judgment of taste and meditation. Transformation in the meditative context is more explicitly a goal of the practice, while transformation happens primarily as a by-product of aesthetic experience. Let's look first to the transformation that occurs in aesthetic experience.

The overall transformation undergone by people cultivating and engaging in aesthetic judgment is positive. An increased communal tie with other humans develops. This is the sociable part of the judgment. While the aesthetic judgment of taste seems highly subjective, dependent on an individual's frame of mind, others are able to cultivate this same sensitivity and receptive mindset. Since all humans have the same cognitive faculties, there is a type of universal potential ability. Those that develop this ability (receptivity to beautiful forms) are able to share in an appreciation with others. Two people may not find the same form beautiful, and Kant might attribute this to a difference in cultivation or maturity of aesthetic receptivity. Were each person to have the same subjective stand-point, the same aesthetic frame of mind, then the expectation would be that both would be able to find the object beautiful.

This receptivity, or frame of mind, then is also something that transforms over one's practice of aesthetic judgment. As one engages more and more with beautiful forms, her receptivity continually opens to find more forms beautiful (or ugly or sublime, as the case may be.) This openness allows for more occurrences of aesthetic experiences.

In Open Presence meditation, there are a few clear ways in which the subject transforms over the course of meditating. Her ability to attend to the phenomena in her mind greatly

increases. The attention has greater stability and control, as her practice progresses. There is also an increased perceptive sensibility with general perception. Other forms of meditation, more explicitly directed towards cultivating proper discernment (mindfulness) and loving-kindness, do produce these in practitioners.

Between these two types of transformation, there are clear differences. The first is the overarching soteriological concern that drives many practitioners of meditation. Many meditators meditate to find a release, either from stress or the suffering produced by the cycle of samsara. There is a soteriological element running through the practice – that through this practice, one might be freed from her demons, as it were. Kant’s aesthetic judgment does not have such clear soteriological ends in mind. In some sense, the aesthetic judgment of taste “saves” one from the monotony of everyday life and constant conceptual cognition. One momentarily finds a symbolic salvation from the endless pressures of life. But this goal is not a driving force behind the judgment itself. One does not always engage in aesthetic judgment to escape the suffering or monotony of the world. For, just as one could be engaging with beautiful forms, she could just as easily be engaging with ugly and sublime forms: forms that challenge and repulse her. So, the soteriological element seems to not be as strong of a factor in aesthetic transformation.

Another important difference between the two is the expressive element of Kant’s aesthetic judgment. The aesthetic judgment of taste is a reflective judgment. Though it is not grounded in nor directed towards concepts, there is still an expressive impulse that designates it a subjective judgment. Meditative awareness cultivated in Open Presence instead seeks to have awareness without culminating expressive judgment. The social and expressive element isn’t as necessarily present for the meditation practitioner.

Some meditative traditions do incorporate judgments, but these are of the evaluative type discussed earlier. For example, there are meditational traditions that seek to evaluate the contents of one's mind. They discern wholesome and unwholesome phenomena, and try to increase the wholesome while reducing the unwholesome. The meditator seeks to make evaluative judgments within the meditative experience. Perhaps, similarly, the aesthetic judgment evaluates the aesthetic qualities of a form, and eventually passes judgment on the object's form.

Another crucial difference is the move away from the focus on an object in Open Presence and the clear, constant subject-object dichotomy in the aesthetic judgment of taste. Kant's overall cognitive theory seems to fit nicely with Yogācāra non-dualism since Kant also allows for a subject to be objectified and posits a self-conscious field outside of space and time in which all cognitive activities occur within. Still, in the aesthetic judgment of taste, there is a seemingly clear and constant dichotomy between subject and object, the subject's frame of mind and the object's form. And it is this one object that engages the subject. Others fall out of purview.

One might interpret the harmony produced by aesthetic feeling as signaling an overcoming of subject-object dichotomy. The harmonious interplay of the faculties symbolizes and presents a feeling in the subject that she fits well with the object, or the world outside of her, or nature. Perhaps this interpretation would be more similar to the shift going on in Open Presence. In Open Presence, the subject begins by assuming a type of subject-object dichotomy. By focusing on the object of experience, she assumes the role of subject. She does not question explicitly her identity and assumptions as "subject" yet. Instead, the focus is cast on the object and objectivity. Then, in the second phase, she shifts her focus to the notion of subjectivity, the objectified subject of experience. In her third phase, she shifts again away from both object and

subject to the reflexive awareness structurally implicit in all consciousness. At this point, both subjectivity and objectivity are objective notions that seem one and the same. The dualism of the subject-object dichotomy is in some sense averted, but acknowledging and observing the objectified subject and object as essentially the same in form (objectified phenomena.) The underlying reflexivity is perhaps the actual subject-of-experience. It provides self-awareness and awareness of the objects in any of the seven fields of consciousness. This shift to a different subject still seems to point to a difference in subject as structure of the field of consciousness and object as the phenomena within that field.

The main dualism Yogācāra seeks to dispel is the outer existence of things beyond the phenomena, the representations present in the field of awareness. If this were the case, and some semblance of subject-object duality (in the form of reflexive awareness and phenomena within the field of awareness) would remain. While the ontological issue of anything beyond the phenomena is still not clear in comparing Kant with Yogācāra theory, it is clear that putting those issues aside, perhaps a similar duality between Kant's posited unified consciousness and all of the phenomena that result from the cognitive processes therein exists. There are of course issues with this reading of Kant. Some might argue with the ontological point, which I think would be best to simply table for this part of the discussion.

Others might point out the important problem of Kant's unified consciousness that underlies all phenomena and cognitive processes and the Yogācāra momentary consciousness tropes. If Kant's underlying subject-of-experience is this unified consciousness that allows cognitive processes to occur, it's not completely clear what he could mean by unified. This consciousness would be outside of time and space, since it is not a phenomenal object and allows for the intuitions of time and space to take part in constituting the phenomena. So, it would not

necessarily need to extend throughout time and space, in that sense unified throughout time or existing in space. Still, something seems to be different from the momentary tropes of consciousness and any type of unified conception of consciousness. The tropes also do not extend throughout time and space. But there is nothing in their description about being unified. The only unifying factor, perhaps, is the reflexive structure that underlies all of the conscious tropes. Regardless of how one interprets Kant's underlying unified consciousness, it seems to be at odds, even if only subtly, with the Yogācāra conception of consciousness.

3.5 Concluding Analysis

My hope is that this has proven a useful study for bringing Open Presence meditation, the Yogācāra philosophical tradition, and Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste into conversation. The fruit of this conversation can be used to further press practical and theoretical issues for both Kant and Open Presence practitioners and theorists.

The primary claim that I draw from this comparative work is the usefulness of interpreting Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste as a type of meditative practice. This is not to say that Kant's judgment of taste is simply a form of Open Presence meditation (or any other developed form of meditation for that matter.) The judgment of beauty certainly couldn't simply collapse into other established meditative practices. Rather, I mean to suggest that Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste might be conceived of as a type of practice similar to meditation. The practical similarities between judging the beautiful and meditation seem clear: similar attentive functions are employed, similar benefits arise from practice, similar transformations take place during and after practice, etc.

At the points of contention with Open Presence meditation identified in the above analysis, the contentious areas revealed not that the aesthetic judgment of taste is not meditative

in kind, but rather that it seemed at odds with Open Presence meditation specifically. For example, the conclusion reached in the section addressing attention reveals that there is a difference between the FA of aesthetic judgment and OM of open presence. FA is still a type of attention utilized in other meditative practices. This difference does not bar the aesthetic judgment of taste from being construed as a form of meditation; it just reiterates my point that the judgment should not simply be collapsed into an existing form of meditation. To do so would be to needlessly disrespect both traditions by conflating them.

Looking at and engaging in the aesthetic judgment of taste as a form of meditation would be beneficial. As a secular practice, it is available to religious (or spiritual) and non-religious (or non-spiritual) practitioners alike. As a practice that relies on having adequately functioning cognitive faculties, it is open to a variety of people (educated and non-educated, for example.) This allows for a greater expanse of practitioners. And the fairly low requirements for practice (having a frame of mind that is receptive to harmonious interaction with an object's form), a person can easily participate and cultivate her aesthetic awareness. This brings beauty back down to daily life. Throughout one's day, she can have moments of aesthetic judgment that bring her calm contemplation and renewal. Using meditative terms reflects the judgment's practical aim and identity. Kant was arguing for a more common understanding of beauty, far from the annals of art criticism and formalism. To integrate this into daily life, as a practice, would seem to naturally flow from his aim.

3.6 Further Considerations

The initial conversation begun here will hopefully be useful in opening more veins of research. An important one would be a comparative analysis between Kant's aesthetic judgment of the sublime and meditation. Sublime judgment is a judgment prompted by mental discord, not

harmony. The imagination fails in its attempt to unify the form of an object. This failure prompts the ideas of reason to step beyond the bounds of sense perception (and experience) to assert the individual's power of reason against nature, in both the dynamically powerful (quality) and ultimately great (magnitude.) This appears at first to be contrapurposeful, since the imagination fails and creates a feeling of pain. However, there is an over-arching purposiveness at work. In the end, the subject experiences pleasure, after she has triumphed over the vastness of nature and the inadequacies of her own imagination with her powers of reason.

Also the latter pleasure is very different in kind from the former, in that the former (the beautiful) directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life, and hence is compatible with charms and an imagination at play, while the latter (the feeling of the sublime) is a pleasure that arises only indirectly, being generated, namely, by the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital powers and the immediately following and all the more powerful outpouring of them; hence as an emotion it seems to be not play but something serious in the activity of the imagination. Hence it is also incompatible with charms, and, since the mind is not merely attracted by the object, but is also always reciprocally repelled by it, the satisfaction in the sublime does not so much contain positive pleasure as it does admiration or respect, i.e., it deserves to be called negative pleasure.¹⁰²

This process also might broaden and stretch her imagination and exercise her ideas of reason, strengthening her cognitive powers. Yet, Kant's sublime also draws the individual further inside herself.

This pulling within one's self and internal strengthening of powers does not necessarily engage one with the outside world. In fact, it has the opposite effect. Perhaps one could interpret the practice of the sublime as a type of hermit-like activity. It is a judgment "of the sublime," reaching within, contained within, and cultivated within an individual. Especially provoking the hermit-imagery, one might easily associate this with meditation, where the subject is understood as drawing within one's self to gain a clearer understanding of ultimate reality.

¹⁰² 5:244-5

Another potential research area that I was sorry not to be able to address is the ethical intersections of both the aesthetic judgment of taste and meditation. The increased socialibility cultivated within the aesthetic judgment of taste and the pleasurable “feeling of life” that results from the free play of the faculties have ethical ramifications, about which Dr. Jane Kneller has written extensively.¹⁰³ There are also fascinating practical and theoretical ethical accounts within several different meditative traditions. This would be a fruitful project to embark on.

Finally, I also think a more in-depth study of the transformations that occur both within the aesthetic judgment of taste and within several types of meditation would be a fruitful endeavor. Due to time and space limits, I was only able to briefly address the transformations within Kant’s aesthetic judgment of taste and Open Presence meditation. With a greater project, perhaps one could research a myriad of meditative practices and underlying philosophical theories to create a more comprehensive analysis of both practical and theoretical transformations.

3.7 Conclusion

In closing, this analysis has been a comparison between Kant’s aesthetic judgment of taste and Open Presence meditation interpreted through Yogācāra philosophical theory. I sought to highlight areas essential to both practices: judgment, attention, purposeless purposiveness, and transformation. The use and presence of judgment in each practice is overall quite similar, though differences in the presence of reflective judgment (expressive judgment) are apparent. The types of attention utilized in judgments of beauty and Open Presence meditation varied. The former primarily engages in focused attention, while the latter is more compatible with open

¹⁰³ For example, see Dr. Jane Kneller’s “Imagination and the Possibility of Moral Reform in the ‘Critique of Aesthetic Judgement,’” in the *Proceedings of the Seventh International Kant Congress* (Bonn, 1991), 665-675.

monitoring. Both exhibit purposeless purposiveness from the subjective vantage point of the practitioner. In the moment of practice, both seem to experience a harmony and calm, while not consciously isolating an immediate goal during practice. Finally, the transformations undergone by practitioners of judging beauty and meditation have some similarities. Both have a residual feeling of calm and connectedness after practice. Other transformations are more disparate (i.e., soteriological motivations and goals.) While there are areas of contention, most of the comparative analysis reveals a large number of compatible elements.

Given this, I suggest that Kant's aesthetic judgment of taste might benefit from being construed as a type of meditation. By using language and terminology developed in meditative and neuroscience literature, it could strengthen the legitimacy of the judging of beauty as a beneficial practice. It also offers a largely secular type of contemplation that is available to all humans with a well-functioning cognitive system.

The conversation started here has many directions it can go from here. On the Kant-side of things, another comparative analysis could be done between the sublime and meditation. The sublime has a completely different feeling and prompting than the judgment of beauty, and as such would fit into a meditative framework differently than beauty. More attention could also be paid to the specific transformations that occur within the aesthetic judgment of taste and meditation.

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