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Edited by Dan-Eugen Ratiu and Connell Vaughan

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Aesthetics as Politics:
Kant's Heuristic Insights Beyond Rancière's Ambivalences

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ABSTRACT. In this article I aim to show that, despite having coined the phrase “Aesthetics as Politics”, Rancière fails to fulfill the heuristic prospects of this concept, mainly because he addressed this topic on the ground of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art”. Firstly, I argue that the reduction of Aesthetics to the sole domain of Art appears all the more prejudicial when the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is at stake, since it confines Aesthetics to a micropolitical level instead of a cosmopolitical one. Secondly, I show that Rancière’s interstitial bias, resulting in the failure of the promise of emancipation embedded in “Aesthetics as Politics”, led to the postmodernist “aesthetic break” and to Rancière’s “sublimization” of the Kantian Beautiful which fails to grasp Kant’s heuristic insights of “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics”. Finally, I argue that the free pleasure in the Beautiful, inasmuch as it fits both the apriority of its universal validity and the “universal without concept”, grounds Kant’s freedom-based conception of “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics”.

1. Introduction

Jacques Rancière coined the phrase “Aesthetics as Politics” in his essay *Aesthetics and its discontents*². My claim is that Rancière, by addressing this topic on the ground of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art”, did not fulfill the promises of this heuristic phrase which, consequently, must be rethought from a different perspective.

In order to clarify the philosophical grounds that will support my theses, I must specify two points. First of all, by Politics I shall mean the freedom-based conception of Politics according to Arendt’s view when she

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² Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, Polity Press, 2009.

said: ‘the *raison d’être* of politics is freedom³. I shall take into account, secondly, Hannah Arendt’s heuristical attempt of paving the way to a political reading of the Kantian judgement of taste⁴, highlighting its cosmopolitical dimension⁵. Given these two presuppositions, it is possible to understand “Aesthetics as Politics” in this way: the point of Aesthetics is to provide a universal access to a freedom-based conception of Politics, expanded to the cosmopolitical dimension of the world citizen.

Kant reframed Aesthetics in such a way that freedom is at the core of the pure judgment of taste based on the enlarged mentality which makes us able to face Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics. However, “Aesthetics as Politics” is still fundamentally unnoticed, although more than two centuries have now passed since Kant wrote his third *Critique*.

As it is impossible to consider all the factors of this denial, I shall focus on two criteria. My first claim is that the regrettable temptation to reduce Aesthetics to the sole domain of Art appears all the more prejudicial when the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is at stake. I shall analyse, secondly, why the postmodernist tropism for the Sublime at the expense of the Beautiful has been prejudicial to the understanding of Kant’s contributions to a freedom-based conception of Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics. Finally, I shall try to advocate that Kant’s heuristic insights go beyond Rancière’s ambivalences as far as the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is

³ See Hannah Arendt, *Freedom and Politics: A lecture, Chicago Review*, Vol.14, N°1 (Spring 1960), 28.

⁴ The fact that H. Arendt paved the way of the political reading of the Kantian judgement of taste is fundamental. But it does not mean that I adopt all the elements of her political reading of Kant. In the previous Congress of ESA organized in Portugal (*cf.* “What Taste and Perfume add to the political interpretation of the Kantian aesthetic judgment by Arendt and Deleuze“ in ESA Proceedings 2012), I was dealing with the blind spot of Arendt’s reading of Kant as far as its incidences upon taste and perfumes are concerned. In my own reading, the political incidences of Kant’s judgment of taste are anchored in the political dimension of the culture of taste which goes back to the role of the reflecting judgment in the Greek symposium.

⁵ See Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (Edited by Ronald Beiner), The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 75-76: ‘one is a member of a world community by the sheer fact of being human; this is one’s “cosmopolitan existence.” When one judges and when one acts in political matters, one is supposed to take one’s bearings from the idea, not the actuality, of being a world citizen’.

at stake.

2. “Aesthetics as Politics” Irreducible to Rancière’s “Aesthetic Regime of Art”

2.1. The Ambivalences of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art”

There is a blind spot in Rancière’s posture ensuing from his choice of addressing “Aesthetics as Politics” on the grounds of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art”. According to Rancière, the “Aesthetic Regime of Art” would be the tension between two attitudes, namely “the becoming-life of art” and the “autonomy of art”. This tension would be what ‘threatens Aesthetics as Politics but also what makes it function⁶. ‘The finality [that the becoming – life of art] ascribes to art is to construct new forms of life in common, and hence to eliminate itself as a separate reality⁷. By contrast, ‘The second [attitude – the one of the “autonomy of art”] encloses the political promise of aesthetic experience in art’s very separation, in the very resistance of its form to every transformation into a form of life⁸’.

In his essay “Aesthetics and its discontents”, Rancière’s ambivalence goes so far as to say: ‘I do not intend to decide in favour of one or another of these two attitudes⁹. Concerning art as a separate reality, Rancière is ambivalent too. He seems to be in favour of the promise of a ‘community that is free insofar as it /.../ no longer experiences art as a separate sphere of life¹⁰. But, on the other side, he wants ‘to preserve the material difference of art apart from all the wordly affairs that compromise it¹¹. The problem is that these ‘wordly affairs’ from which art would need protection are also the only ones which have a ‘worldwide dimension’ according to Rancière. In Rancière’s interstitial perspective, the scope of the egalitarian perspective of

⁶ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, 44.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

Politics is bound to be spatially and temporally limited, as opposed to the worldwide scope and continuity of the Police¹². That is why Rancière himself emphasizes his pessimistic prospect: ‘Politics is thus the name of nothing. It cannot be anything other than policing, that is, the denial of equality¹³.’

Given this pessimistic mood, the prospect of a worldwide scope for Aesthetics could only result in its globalization under the reign of Police. But Jacinto Lageira opposes to this “aesthetic globalization” the requirements of “cosmopolitical aesthetics”:

The hypothesis is thus the one of cosmopolitical, critical, universalist aesthetics as opposed to the mainstream of globalization in the arts /.../ Against globalization /.../, we must choose /.../ difference and diversity, cosmopolitism, because there is only one world.¹⁴

By contrast to these recent researches partially based on Kant’s insights¹⁵, Rancière doesn’t help to pave the way to the necessary difference between a “cosmopolitical aesthetics” and the damages of globalization. His dissensual and interstitial bias fails to give even the possibility for a freedom-based “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics” to offer an alternative as opposed to the worldwide unequalitarian reign of the Police. In his view, the interruptions of Politics can only make a tear in the unequalitarian web of Police.

¹² See Ruben Yepes, « Aesthetics, Politics and Art’s Autonomy: a Critical reading of Jacques Rancière », in *Eventual Aesthetics*, 3, N° 1 (2014), 42: ‘To understand this, we must first outline the difference that Rancière draws between police and politics. In *Disagreement Politics and Philosophy*, Rancière reconceptualizes the habitual sense of the term “politics” to avoid the kind of “politics” subsumed under the practices of contemporary liberal democracies. /.../Practices and institutions referring to ‘the aggregation and consentment of collectivities, the organization of powers, the distribution of the places and functions, and the system of legitimization of that distribution’ are not political but merely police.’

¹³ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, translated by J. Rose, University of Minnesota Press, 2004, 35.

¹⁴ Jacinto Lageira, *L’Art comme Histoire*, Editions Mimèsis, 2016, 279 ; 284. [my translation]

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 271: ‘By his founding texts, he [Kant] is clearly the one whose influence continues to enlighten us about our “cosmopolitical condition”.’ [my translation]

2.2. *Plato's Negative Influence on Rancière*

The cost of this pessimistic view is the capacity of “Aesthetics as Politics” of reaching freedom. We must decipher the reasons for this reductive aspect of Rancière’s model. My claim is that the reason lies within the influence of Plato’s *Republic* upon Rancière’s reduction of Aesthetics to the “partition of sensible”.

Rancière first recalls that in the Platonic Republic there is ‘a partition of the sensible that at once excludes both art and politics¹⁶’. He scrutinously specifies that ‘The famous exclusion of poets is often interpreted as the mark of a political proscription of art. However, the Platonic gesture also proscribes politics¹⁷’. But one may feel uneasy with his following statement: ‘Theater and assembly: these are two spaces /.../that Plato was obliged to repudiate at the same time in order to constitute his republic as the organic life of the community¹⁸’. The connotations of this ‘Plato was obliged to’ seem to exonerate Plato of this exclusion. Moreover, the following argument, while matter-of-fact, ultimately fails: ‘The other way consists in the simple observation of their material incapacity to occupy the space-time of political things – as Plato put it, artisans have time for nothing but their work¹⁹’. But if this were true, why would Plato’s Republic be led to consider the artists as so dangerous for the artisans that they have to be exiled? What holds the artisan in his proper place (which is supposed to have no part in political affairs) is not lack of time but acceptance of an inherited system of casts. This system forbids each member of the Republic their escaping the place chosen for him. This is the reason why the artists, the mimeticians, are dangerous.

In Theater, mimeticians put themselves in the place of any other man. But, in so doing, they may give to the public the desire and capacity of escaping their place. In Kantian terms, we may say that mimeticians pave the way to the *sensus communis* under which ‘we must include the idea

¹⁶ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, 31.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

.../of a faculty of judgment which .../ takes account .../ of the mode of representation of all other men .../. This is done .../by putting ourselves in the place of any other man²⁰. If Plato's Republic exiled mimeticians, it is due to their contagious power. The counter power to Plato's Republic is the spread of the dyonisiac contagion which was supported by Nietzsche, and later on by Samuel Weber, whom I quote:

knowing one's place. Or rather, having a place that is stable enough that it can be known. It is such stability of place and of placing that the theatrocracy profoundly disturbs. In this respect, its perverse effects are only the culmination of Plato's worst fears concerning mimesis in general .../ For in the theater, everyone tends to forget their proper place²¹.

In Rancière's model, it is quite the reverse: Art has renounced its contagious power. The obsession of Art is, on the contrary, to protect itself from the contagion of ordinary life.

2.3. *Aesthetics, Art and Play within Limits*

In the light of Roger Caillois²², we may say that Art is much more like Play than like Sacred according to Rancière. In Caillois's definitions, Sacred needs to be confined within hermetic frontiers, because its contagious power is considered to be dangerous for ordinary life, while Play must be confined within limits in order to protect itself from the contamination of ordinary life. Rancière doesn't exclude the promise of the possibility of an art which would destabilize the places in ordinary space²³. But he favours the model

²⁰ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, § 40. (J.H. Bernard translation, New York: Hafner, 1951)

²¹ Samuel Weber, « Displacing the body (The question of digital democracy) », Los Angeles, May 2, 1996. (www://hydra.humanities.uci.edu/weber/displace.html)

²² Roger Caillois, *L'Homme et le sacré*, idées/Gallimard, 1980.

²³ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, 23-24: 'In 'relational' art, the construction of an undecided and ephemeral situation enjoins a displacement of perception, a passage from the status of spectator to that of actor, and a reconfiguration of places.'

of Art as an exception²⁴ which is localized in a specific place²⁵, protected, as Play, from ordinary life²⁶.

Rancière's interpretation is misleading when he pretends to amalgamate²⁷ with his own definition of play (compatible with that of Caillois) Schiller's conception of play and, a fortiori, Kant's one. But the major problem is that Rancière pretends to define Aesthetics by reducing it to the same local specific dimension as Art: 'there is no art without a specific form of visibility and discursivity which identifies it as such. There is no art without a specific distribution of the sensible tying it to a certain form of politics. Aesthetics is such a distribution²⁸'.

Rancière's choice of addressing "Aesthetics as politics" on the sole ground of the "Aesthetic Regime of Art" led him to forbid a worldwide dimension of Politics, able to face the worldwide domination of the Police. In Rancière's view both Aesthetics and Politics (and consequently "Aesthetics as Politics") are deprived of a worldwide dimension. On the contrary, Simondon²⁹ conceives Aesthetics as the reticular power of webbing links between all the places in order to build something that can be felt as a world, or a universe. Given the bias of the "Aesthetic regime of Art", Rancière's conception of Aesthetics reduces its scope to the localized

²⁴ Ibid., 25: "both register the same logic: that of 'politics' of art which consists in suspending the normal coordinates of sensory experience."

Ibid., 23; 25; 26: 'What the term 'art' designates in its singularity is the framing of a space of presentation by which the things of art are identified as such. /.../art and politics /.../are two forms of distribution of the sensible, both of which are dependent on a specific regime of identification.'

²⁶ Ibid., 19;27: 'Art's radicality here, then, is /.../ the power that tears experience from ordinariness./.../the *medium* at issue is /.../ a sensible milieu, a particular sensorium, foreign to the ordinary forms of sensory experience./.../As a sensory form, it is heterogeneous to the ordinary forms of sensory experience /.../. It is given in a specific experience, which suspends the ordinary connections'.

²⁷ Ibid., 30: 'It is precisely this new form of distribution of the sensible that Schiller captures with the term 'play'. Minimally defined, play is any activity that has no end other than itself, that does not intend to gain any effective power over things or persons. This traditional sense of play was systematized in the Kantian analysis of aesthetic experience'.

²⁸ Ibid., 44.

²⁹ For a more detailed study of Simondon's conception of Aesthetics, see Isabelle Rieusset-Lemarié, "Du réseau comme monde: dépasser l'abjection de la technique", in *Travail médiologique* n°1, Juillet 1996.

space of Art. However, Rancière was on the verge of suggesting that the singularity of the autonomy of aesthetics is irreducible to the autonomy of art: 'For aesthetic autonomy is not that autonomy of artistic 'making' celebrated by modernism. It is the autonomy of a form of sensory experience. And it is that experience which appears as the germ of a new humanity, a new form of individual and collective life³⁰. But he did not develop the consequences of this fundamental difference, as it was highlighted by Ruben Yepes:

If the autonomous aesthetic experience produced by art is relational, contingent upon the spectator-subject's discursive and sensible disposition, then art's political effect is not a broad, structural one but rather one that occurs at a micropolitical level. It does not seem to me that art can aspire (as the avant-gardes did) to produce a major, structural redistribution of the sensible as if it were the leading field of human endeavor in which politics are played out. Rather, art's political effect is localized, contingent, and always precarious. /.../it runs the risk of being reabsorbed into the dominating sensorium /.../. When Rancière states³¹ that the object of the autonomous aesthetic experience is "aesthetic" insofar as it is not art, we must identify a fundamental suggestion: the effects that the autonomous aesthetic experience produces /.../ are in relation to a specific circumstance or configuration that does not necessarily appertain to the discourses of the regime of art. /.../ It is a shame that Rancière, invested in maintaining art's autonomy, does not develop the insight he offers when referring to the object of the autonomous aesthetic experience³².

Hence my conclusion of the damages of the reduction of Aesthetics to the

³⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its discontents*, 32.

³¹ See Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, (London: Continuum, 2004), 116-117: 'First, the autonomy staged by the aesthetic regime of art is not that of the work of art but that of a mode of experience. Second, the "aesthetic experience" is one of heterogeneity such that, for the subject of that experience, it is also the dismissal of a certain autonomy. Third, the object of that experience is "aesthetic" insofar as it is not, or at least not only, art.'

³² Ruben Yepes, « Aesthetics, Politics and Art's Autonomy: a Critical reading of Jacques Rancière », in *Eventual Aesthetics*, 3, N° 1 (2014), 57.

sole domain of art (and a fortiori to the sole domain of the “autonomy of art”) which prove all the more prejudicial when the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is at stake, and which reduce the perspectives of “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics” to a localized, micropolitical level.

3. Ambivalences of the Postmodern Influence on Rancière

3.1. Rancière’s Evolution from the “Aesthetic Regime of Art” to the “Aesthetic Effect”

The author who helps to support my claim is, paradoxically, Rancière himself, in another essay untitled « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art ³³». In this essay, Rancière goes so far as to criticize, not only the politicization of art ³⁴, but the pretension of Art itself to be the sole candidate, or even the best candidate, in order to fulfill the political aim of emancipation. The “aesthetic effect” would be the best candidate instead of Art:

What works out are processes of dissociation : the break in a relation between sense and sense - between what is seen and what is thought, what is thought and what is felt. Such breaks can happen anywhere at any time. But they can never be calculated.³⁵

I decipher this quotation as Rancière’s avowal of the irreducibility of “Aesthetics as politics” to Art. These things which can happen anywhere, at any time, are not matters of the separated realm of Art but are matters of Aesthetics which can be faced in any place and not only in spaces which have been calculated for Art’s sake. Rancière could have quoted here the Kantian opposition between free beauty (mainly related to Nature) and

³³ Jacques Rancière, « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community: Scenes from the Aesthetic Regime of Art », in *Art & Research*, Volume 2, N°1, Summer 2008.

³⁴ Ibid., 5: ‘The same reason that makes the aesthetic ‘political’ forbid any strategy of ‘politicization of art’.’

³⁵ Ibid., 6.

adherent beauty (mainly related to Art)³⁶. In Kant's view, "adherent beauty" (which is calculated 'in relation to the internal purpose that determines its possibility'³⁷) has nothing to do with the Beautiful and, consequently, with the pure aesthetic judgment. But, at this moment of his essay, Rancière's focus is not on the Beautiful but on what he calls the "aesthetic break".

Rancière's tropism for this "aesthetic break" echoes the postmodern mood. On that score, it is not so much the question of a presumed influence of Lyotard or Derrida that counts but the fact that Rancière addresses his own topics on the ground of an implicit debate with these philosophers. Postmodernity and Deconstruction function as the common ground of a worldwide intellectual debate in which Rancière seeks not only to participate but also to value his difference. But, from a second level of reading, it is not so much the divergences (either minor or not) that count than the very fact to nourish this debate as if it were the common space in which you are required to display the signs of your intellectual identity. In that aim, one of the means which prove efficient consists in trying to change the very terms of the debate in order to shift the focus. Rancière tries to show that the reduction of the debate to the simplistic (in his view³⁸) opposition between Moderns and Postmoderns results into a blind spot

³⁶ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 114: « There are two kinds of beauty: free beauty (*pulchritudo vaga*) or merely adherent beauty (*pulchritudo adhaerens*). The first presupposes no concept of what the object ought to be; the second does presuppose a concept and the perfection of the object in accordance with it.»

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 115: 'Now the satisfaction in the manifold in a thing in relation to the internal purpose that determines its possibility is a satisfaction grounded on a concept; the satisfaction in beauty, however, is one that presupposes no concept /.../. Now if the judgment of taste in regard to the latter is made dependent on the purpose in the former, as a judgment of reason /.../ there is no longer a free and pure judgment of taste.'

³⁸ See Jacques Rancière, « Artistic Regimes and the Shortcoming of the Notion of Modernity », *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Translated with an Introduction by Gabriel Rockhill, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004, 20: '- *Certain of the most fundamental categories used for thinking about artistic creation in the twentieth century, namely the categories of modernity, the avant-garde and, for some time now, postmodernity, also happen to have a political meaning. Do these categories seem to you to have the slightest interest for conceiving, in precise terms, what ties 'aesthetics' to 'politics'?* - I do not think that the notions of modernity and the avant-garde have been very enlightening when it comes to thinking about the new forms of art that have emerged since the last century or the relations between aesthetics and politics.'

which prevents the grasping of the fundamental grounds of the debate:

This is what mimesis means: the concordance between the complex of sensory signs in which the process of poesis is displayed and the complex of the forms of perception and emotion through which it is felt and understood /.../ Because there was a language of natural signs, there was continuity between the intrinsic consistency – or the ‘autonomy’ – of the play and its capacity of producing ethical effects in the minds of the spectators in the theater and in their behaviours out of the theater. /.../ The stage, the audience and the world are taken in one and the same continuum. Most of our ideas about political efficiency of art still cling to that model. /.../ Modern or post-modern as we purport to be, we easily forget that the consistency of that model was called into question as soon as the 1760s or the 1780s. Rousseau first questioned that supposed straight line between the performance of the actors on the stage, its effects on the minds of the spectators and their behaviour outside the theater in his *Letter on the spectacles*.³⁹

Sharing the deconstructionist tropism of calling in question the dual oppositions, Rancière applies this critical posture to the very opposition of Moderns and Postmoderns. Rancière tries to exonerate himself of this binding opposition by supporting a third choice. What either moderns or postmoderns have missed would be Rousseau’s critic of the mimesis.

While pretending to ground his third choice upon Rousseau’s critic of Theater (and, especially, of actors), Rancière goes back to his tropism for Plato’s conceptions. Rancière pretends to escape the Modern/Postmodern debate by going back to Plato. But, in doing so, he echoes the postmodern posture. As Paul Allen Miller⁴⁰ highlighted, notwithstanding their different

³⁹ Jacques Rancière, “Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community”, 7.

⁴⁰ Paul Allen Miller, *Postmodern Spiritual Practices / The construction of the subject and the recipient of Plato in Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault*, The Ohio State University Press, 2007, 1;7; 10; 17; 21: ‘This book argues that a key element of postmodern French intellectual life has been the understanding of classical antiquity and its relationship to postmodern philosophical inquiry. /.../ As my argument unfolds, it will become clear not only that Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault’s knowledge of ancient literature is broad and detailed, but also that their understanding of Platonic philosophy is central to their theoretical project and the debates that animated them. /.../ Postmodernism represents not

positions about Plato, the postmodern philosophers revealed one fundamental aspect of their multifaceted conception by their shared posture consisting in giving a new importance to Plato's heritage.

Echoing the platonician negative apprehension of the actors on the basis of their plurality of roles that he assimilates to duplicity, Rancière reactivates the negative connotations of the word 'hypocrite'⁴¹ which, initially, designed the actor⁴². The underlying assumption would be that if you refuse to be confined in only one role (assigned to one place) you would automatically adopt a duplicitous posture. The actors, as the paradigmatic mimeticians⁴³, would not only be guilty of embodying the fundamental lie of the mimesis. Rancière goes further than Plato on that point since he makes the actors responsible for the failure of theater concerning its pretension of producing real effects upon the minds of the spectators. This pretension would be what Rancière means by mimesis and what Rousseau stigmatizes as a false pretense. According to the implicit faith accredited by mimesis, what is being performed on stage could have metaphorical (or metonymical) effects upon spectators thanks to a continuum between the real world and the realm of Representation. What is at stake in Rancière's "aesthetic effect" is the break of this continuum. Rancière does not only apply the postmodernist deconstruction of faiths to the mimetic effect. The scope of the "aesthetic effect" is broader and more radical:

What is broken is the continuity between the thought and its signs on the bodies, between the performance of the living bodies and its effects on either bodies. Aesthetics first means that collapse; it first

the rejection of the classical tradition but precisely its revitalization as a living means of thought. /.../Finally, it is precisely this pursuit of a thought from the outside that separates the postmoderns and their use of antiquity from that of their great modernist predecessors. /.../ It is also perhaps this shift to a humanism of self-fashioning, as opposed to the existential humanism of the fully constituted Cartesian cogito, that explains the postmodern focus on Plato.'

⁴¹ Jacques Rancière, « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community », 7: 'How can the theater unveil the hypocrites since what they do is what defines its own essence: showing the signs on human bodies of thoughts and feelings that are not theirs.'

⁴² See υποκριτης (hypocrites) which means, in ancient Greek, actor.

⁴³ See μιμος (mimos) which also means, in ancient Greek, actor.

means the rupture of the harmony that allowed the correspondence between the texture of the work and its efficiency. /.../Aesthetic efficiency means a paradoxical kind of efficiency that is produced by the very break of any determined link between cause and effect. It is precisely this indetermination that Kant conceptualized when he defined the beautiful as ‘what is represented as an object of universal delight apart from any concept’⁴⁴.

In Rancière’s view, what he had conceptualized as the “aesthetic effect” would be equivalent to what Kant conceptualized as the Beautiful. But this claim needs to requalify the Beautiful in postmodern terms. Now we must decipher the consequences of the postmodern influence on Rancière in his very singular conception of the Beautiful which forbids him to grasp Kant’s heuristic insights about “Aesthetics as Politics”.

3.2. *The “Sublimization” of the Beautiful by Rancière*

It is as if Rancière felt like a trauma the suspicions of the postmodernists:

My inquiry in the constitution of the aesthetic regime of art has often been suspected of proposing a return to the fairy times and fairy tales of aesthetic utopias and aesthetic community, which either have brought about the big disasters of the 20th century or, at least, are out of steps with the artistic practices and the political issues of the 21st century.⁴⁵

Rancière never stopped to try to exonerate himself from those postmodernist suspicions. It sounds as if he has adopted the postmodernist vocabulary, in order to make his claims more acceptable. But, in so doing, he did not only adopt the vocabulary but also part of the ideology of postmodernism. That explains Rancière’s tropism both for the “aesthetic break” and, more generally, for the “disagreement” and the “dissensus”. In this postmodernist perspective, what matters is to stigmatize everything that echoes Consensus,

⁴⁴ Jacques Rancière, « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community », 7-9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

and even Harmony. In Rancière's view, that is why postmodernists (especially Lyotard) favoured the Sublime at the expense of the Beautiful. Hence his task has become to reframe the Beautiful in order to adapt it to the postmodern tropism for dissensus, break, conflict, all that echoes some sort of rupture:

Lyotard's reading of Kant's *Analytic of the Beautiful*, which in his later work will make him turn to the sublime anyway, first and foremost focuses on the promised reconciliation or a future 'marriage' even of the two incompatible and divorced stems of understanding and imagination. In contrast to that, Rancière aims at their tension and conflict.⁴⁶

If its conflictuous nature eventually made him turn to the Sublime, Lyotard did not make a false interpretation of the Beautiful and respected its Kantian definition in which the free play of Imagination and Understanding 'is the ground of this pleasure in the *harmony* of the faculties of cognition'⁴⁷.

On the contrary, Rancière reframed the Beautiful by conferring to it a characteristic which belongs to the Sublime *as opposed* to the Beautiful. This "sublimization" of the Beautiful is consistent with Rancière's conception of 'Disagreement' on the ground of which his 'aesthetic regime of art' is based. For Rancière the relation of the two faculties is a 'conflict' not only for the Sublime but for the Beautiful as well (while according to Kant it is conflictuous – but 'harmonious even in their contrast'⁴⁸ - for the

⁴⁶ Stefan Apostolou – Hölscher, « The Hanging Garden: Community, Beauty, and Dis-identification in Rancière, Talk at (retro-) Avantgardes, HU Berlin, 3.

⁴⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 103. [my emphasizing]

⁴⁸ Ibid., 141-142 : 'The mind feels itself moved in the representation of the sublime in nature /.../ This movement /.../ may be compared to a vibration, i.e., to a rapidly alternating repulsion from and attraction to one and the same object. /.../ Even in this case, however, the judgment itself remains only aesthetic because, without having a determinate concept of the object as its ground, it represents merely the subjective play of the powers of the mind (imagination and reason) as harmonious even in their contrast. [my emphasis] For just as imagination and understanding produce subjective purposiveness of the powers of the mind in the judging of the beautiful through their unison, so do imagination and reason produce subjective purposiveness through their conflict [my emphasizing]'.

Sublime as opposed to ‘harmonious’ for the Beautiful).

Rancière wants to support the Beautiful, as opposed to Lyotard’s tropism for the Sublime. At a first level, this choice is consistent with Rancière’s own tropism for equality, since on Kant’s avowal, the Sublime is not the best candidate for equality because it would require certain qualities which are not shared by all:

There are innumerable things in beautiful nature concerning which we immediately require consensus with our own judgment from everyone else and can also, without being especially prone to error, expect it; but we cannot promise ourselves that our judgment concerning the sublime in nature will so readily find acceptance by others. For a far greater culture, not merely of the aesthetic power of the judgment, but also of the cognitive faculties on which that is based, seems to be requisite in order to be able to make a judgment about this excellence of the objects of nature. /.../In fact, without the development of moral ideas, that which we, prepared by culture, called sublime will appear merely repellent to the unrefined person.⁴⁹

But a scrutinous reading of Rancière shows that his very way of addressing the topic of equality vs inequality echoes the postmodern tropism for the Sublime more than the Arendtian favor for the Beautiful:

While sharing with Lyotard the suspicion towards the idea of a totalizing consensus, Rancière locates politics precisely in the local attempts to resolve a “wrong”. Rancière agrees that it would be impossible to politically overcome the gap altogether (e.g. by creating a perfect society without a miscount of parts), as this would necessarily constitute nothing else but another form of a police-like attempt to distribute the sensible. However /.../Rancière fails to see that his local attempts to approach the gaps of inequality are inherently characterised by the Kantian sublime. The distance to the sublime taken by Arendt is, at the very least, comprehensible. After all, she has good reasons to avoid its disruptive elements, as they would be

⁴⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 29, 148.

potentially detrimental for her political reading of *sensus communis*. The same, however, cannot be said about Rancière, as his idea of politics lays emphasis on dissensus and disagreement as a radical disruption of the sensual order- a striking resemblance to the Kantian sublime⁵⁰.

Rancière can't bear to support a notion linked with harmony, since it could nourish the suspicion of his supporting modernist utopias. Then, on the ground of his misreading of the Kantian Beautiful that he reframes as conflictuous, he can value this aesthetic notion since it is leading now to the unavoidable 'break':

Aesthetic efficiency means a paradoxical kind of efficiency that is produced by the very break of any determined link between cause and effect. It is precisely this indetermination that Kant conceptualized when he defined the beautiful as 'what is represented as an object of universal delight apart from any concept'. That definition has often been aligned with the old definition of beauty as harmony and it has been contrasted with the break of the sublime that would give the formula of modern rupture with representation. I think that this view dismisses the radical break with the representational logic that is entailed in the 'apart from any concept'. /.../Art means the implementation of a set of concepts, the beautiful has no concepts⁵¹.

In this statement, we are facing Rancière's paradoxical relation to Kant. Rancière needs to misread the Kantian Beautiful, in order to give it a kind of postmodernist aura. It sounds as if Rancière gave to himself the right to support Kant, under the condition that he produced evidence that he had a postmodern conception of Kant. But, in my view, this pseudo postmodernist vision of Kant fails to grasp the heuristic power of Kant's insights as far as the incidence of the "universal without concept" upon "Aesthetics as Politics" is at stake.

⁵⁰ Daniel Tkatch, 'Transcending Equality: Jacques Rancière and the Sublime in Politics', *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* (Edited by Fabian Dorsch and Dan-Eugen Ratiu), Volume 7, 2015, 15.

⁵¹Jacques Rancière, « Aesthetic Separation, Aesthetic Community », 8-9.

4. Kant's Heuristic Insights: Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics

4.1. Freedom as the "Res Communis"

I argue that Kant's third *Critique* (and especially the "universal without concept") grounds Aesthetics as Politics, although the rationale I offer for this claim differs from Rancière's attempt of requalifying the Beautiful on the pattern of the Sublime. Contrary to Rancière's promise of emancipation which is bound to fail, on his own avowal, under the reign of the Police, Kant's third *Critique* gives us grounds for considering Aesthetics as Politics while adhering to the assumption that 'the raison d'être of politics is freedom'⁵². Moreover, Kant's third *Critique* has another major implication, that of opening this freedom-based conception of Politics to the worldwide dimension of the world citizen. But this freedom-based conception of Cosmopolitics could not have been granted without Kant's demonstration of the universal validity of a special kind of judgment, the particularity of which is to be grounded upon a "universal without concept".

Concerning the pure judgment of taste, the challenge of the third *Critique* is twofold: first, it must fulfill the requirement of the apriority of its universal validity; second, it must fulfill the requirement of the universal without concept. Up to the third *Critique*, these two requirements seemed contradictory⁵³. But Kant provides a solution which fulfills both validity *a priori* and universality without concept thanks to the free play of imagination and understanding⁵⁴. The polemics about the apriority of the

⁵² See Hannah Arendt, 'Freedom and Politics: A Lecture', *Chicago Review*, Vol.14, N°1 (Spring 1960), 28.

⁵³ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9 "Investigation of the question: whether in the judgment of taste the feeling of pleasure precedes the judging of the object or the latter precedes the former", 102: 'Nothing, however, can be universally communicated except cognition and representation so far as it belongs to cognition. For only so far is the latter objective, and only thereby does it have a universal point of relation with which everyone's faculty of representation is compelled to agree.'

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 102: 'Now if the determining ground of the judgment on this universal communicability of the representation is to be conceived of merely subjectively, namely without a concept of the object, it can be nothing other than the state of mind that is encountered in the relation of the powers of representation to each other insofar as they relate a given representation to cognition in general. /.../ Thus the state of mind in this

pure judgment of taste often lie in the confusion between its universal or common validity⁵⁵ and its universal communicability⁵⁶. However, Kant clearly explained that the latter is the consequence of the former⁵⁷.

Most of the so-called obscurities of the third *Critique* vanish if you take into account the fact that the mediating role of the third faculty (the feeling of pleasure) is opposed to a law-driven or a concept - driven model. Compared with the second *Critique*, Kant's conception of freedom has changed: freedom is no longer law-driven and is even presented as opposed to the constraint of its command:

For where the moral law speaks there is, objectively, no longer any free choice with regard to what is to be done; and to show taste /.../is something very different from expressing one's moral mode of thinking ; for the latter contains a command and produces a need, while modish taste by contrast only plays with the objects of satisfaction.⁵⁸

Kant's aim in the third *Critique* is to apprehend universal validity and communicability with freedom as their ground. Hence the only good candidate is the pleasure in the Beautiful since it can require the universal communicability of its satisfaction without the mediation of a concept:

The satisfaction in an action on account of its moral quality is by contrast not a pleasure of enjoyment, but of self-activity /.../. *This*

representation must be that of a feeling of the free play of the powers of representation in a given representation for a cognition in general'

⁵⁵ *Allgemeingültigkeit*

⁵⁶ *allgemeine Mitteilbarkeit*

⁵⁷ Ibid., 103: 'The subjective universal communicability (*allgemeine Mitteilbarkeit*) of the kind of representation in a judgment of taste, since it is supposed to occur without presupposing a determinate concept, can be nothing other than the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and the understanding (so far as they agree with each other as is requisite for a cognition in general): for we are conscious that this subjective relation suited to cognition in general must be valid for everyone and consequently universally communicable (*allgemein mitteilbar*), just as any determinate cognition is, which still always rests on that relation as its subjective condition'.

⁵⁸ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 5, 96.

feeling, however, which is called moral, requires concepts; and does not exhibit a free, but rather a lawful purposiveness, and therefore also cannot be universally communicated other than by means of reason, and, if the pleasure is to be of the same kind in everyone, by means of very determinate practical concepts of reason. /.../ By contrast, the pleasure in the beautiful is neither a pleasure of enjoyment, nor a lawful activity /.../but of mere reflection. /.../ This pleasure must necessarily rest on the same conditions in everyone, since they are subjective conditions of the possibility of a cognition in general /.../. For this very reason, one who judges with taste /.../may also require the subjective purposiveness, i.e., his satisfaction in the object, of everyone else, and may assume his feeling to be universally communicable, even without the mediation of concepts⁵⁹.

This has deep consequences for the *sensus communis* and the cosmopolitical perspective.

H. Arendt was right in delivering a heuristic political interpretation of the third *Critique*, especially of the *sensus communis*. But she used the notion of a “common world” which can be misleading. Instead of trying to prove that Kant’s third *Critique* fits a traditional conception of politics, which gives rise to objections, Arendt should have highlighted that the conception of politics embedded in the third *Critique* is radically new. The political aim of the third *Critique* is not to build something common between men, either at a local or international scale. The aim of the third *Critique* is that freedom becomes the “*res communis*”. The aim of Kant in the third *Critique* is neither to find any common denominator to be shared by everyone nor to build a “common world” at any cost. The challenge at stake is to find a *free* common denominator on which a cosmopolitical perspective, if not a “common world”, may be shared by everyone with freedom as its ground.

Freedom is the most precious thing which is “received as one’s share” by any human and which has the vocation to be shared as a pleasure with every world citizen.

⁵⁹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 39, 172-173. (my emphasis)

4.2. *The Intrinsic Political Incidences of the Free Pleasure*

This free something resting “on the same conditions in everyone⁶⁰”, able to be shared by all, is the specific pleasure in the Beautiful. But this pleasure could not have been free if it had been ‘established (empirically and psychologically) from the natural tendency of human beings to sociability⁶¹’. This pleasure is free because its universal validity fits the apriority of the pure judgment of taste:

For I cannot combine a determinate feeling (of pleasure or displeasure) *a priori* with any representation, except where my ground is an *a priori* principle of reason determining the will; for then the pleasure (in the moral feeling) is the consequence of it, but precisely on that account it cannot be compared with the pleasure in taste at all, since it requires a determinate concept of a law, while the judgment of taste, by contrast, is to be combined immediately with the mere judging, prior to any concept. Hence all judgments of taste are also singular judgments, since they combine their predicate of satisfaction not with a concept but with a given singular empirical representation. Thus it is not the pleasure but *the universal validity of this pleasure* perceived in the mind as connected with the mere judging of an object that is represented in a judgment of taste as a universal rule for the power of judgment, valid for everyone. It is an empirical judgment that I perceive and judge an object with pleasure. But it is an apriori judgment that I find it beautiful, i.e., that I may require that satisfaction of everyone as necessary⁶².

In order to facilitate the acceptance of her unusual political interpretation of the third *Critique*, H. Arendt often focused on empirical aspects⁶³. But,

⁶⁰ Ibid., 173.

⁶¹ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9, 103.

⁶² Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 37, 169.[Editor’s emphasizing]

⁶³ For a study of the limits of Arendt’s standpoint in her political interpretation of the judgment of taste see Isabelle Rieusset – Lemarié, « What taste and perfume add to the political interpretation of the Kantian aesthetic judgment by Arendt and Deleuze », International Conference of ESA (European Society for Aesthetics), Braga, Portugal, in *ESA Proceedings* 2012.

presented as such, the political incidence of the third *Critique* may appear as a peripheral by-product. On the contrary, if we admit with Arendt that freedom should be the main purpose of politics, and if we take into account the fact that freedom is the fundamental common thread of the third *Critique*, then its political incidences are parts of its intrinsic meaning. But, in that case, we also must admit that this freedom – based conception of politics is intrinsic to Aesthetics too. This is why my claim is that “Aesthetics as Politics” is the underlying motto of the third *Critique*.

This political result is anchored in the free pleasure. Beatrice Longuenesse highlighted the link between ‘an *a priori* ground to/.../the aesthetic pleasure of reflection⁶⁴’ and ‘an *a priori* grounded community of judging subjects⁶⁵’. She says that this link is based on the demonstration of the third *Critique* that ‘the peculiar kind of pleasure that is aesthetic pleasure is the very fact that it is universally communicable, or makes a claim to the possibility of being shared by all human beings⁶⁶’. The only word missing in this quotation is *free*: this peculiar pleasure is to be shared by all precisely because it is *free*. If the pleasure in the Beautiful has its universal validity (and consequently communicability) on *a priori* grounds it is because, contrary to the pleasure in the agreeable, it is free:

For since it is not grounded in any inclination of the subject (nor in any other underlying interest), but rather the person making the judgment feels himself completely *free* with regard to the satisfaction that he devotes to the object, he cannot discover as grounds of the satisfaction any private conditions, pertaining to his subject alone, and must therefore regard it as grounded in those that he can also presuppose in everyone else; consequently he must believe himself to have grounds for expecting a similar pleasure of everyone.⁶⁷

It means that freedom is closely related to the *a priori* grounds both of the

⁶⁴ Béatrice Longuenesse, *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, 271.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶⁷ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 6, 96-97.

pleasure in the pure judgment of taste and of the community which can be grounded on it. Hence the *sensus communis* and the community which results from the pure judgment of taste possess the crucial singularity to have freedom as their ground. This is one of the main upshots of the third *Critique*.

In the *Preliminaries to Perpetual Peace* Kant suggests that you can reach perpetual peace and the cosmopolitical perspective thanks to the mere mechanism of nature, but in that case this aim will be reached by ‘very unpleasant means’ (especially war). This pessimistic perspective springs from Kant’s doubts concerning the ability of human beings to act according to moral law. According to *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, the path of duty leads to failure, since it would require a feeling of pleasure of which it is impossible to define the apriority:

In order indeed that a rational being, who is also affected through the senses, should will what reason alone directs such beings that they ought to will, it is no doubt requisite that reason should have a power to infuse a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction in the fulfillment of duty/.../ But it is quite impossible /.../ to make it intelligible *a priori*, how a mere thought, which in itself contains nothing sensible, can itself produce a sensation of pleasure or pain⁶⁸

The third *Critique* led Kant to bypass the impossibilities of *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. The revolution of the third *Critique* lies in the linkage of a feeling of pleasure both with apriority and with freedom. Kant is the only philosopher to have fulfilled this aim. But the third *Critique* goes a step further since this free pleasure fulfills the achievement of *sensus communis* on which the cosmopolitical perspective is grounded. It means that even when the moral law doesn’t work for men, we are not bound to the cosmopolitical perspective as described in the pessimistic plot developed in the *Preliminaries to Perpetual Peace*. We are not bound to be treated as mere means both by political moralists and by Nature itself.

⁶⁸ Kant, « On the Extreme Limits of all Practical Philosophy », Third Section, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Thanks to the third *Critique* which discovered a specific pleasure for which an *a priori* ground can be found, it is possible to apprehend a cosmopolitical future that is not subordinated to the mere mechanism of Nature and which has freedom as its ground. The third *Critique* proved that there is an alternative path: a cosmopolitan organization can be conceived as ‘a whole /in which/every member should surely be purpose as well as means⁶⁹’, provided that this cosmopolitical awareness were based on this specific free pleasure, and on the enlarged mentality. The point of Politics (as re-conceived by the third *Critique*) is empathy for the freedom of any other world citizen. In the light of the third *Critique*, this empathy for the freedom of other men may succeed because it is accessible as a free pleasure rather than a duty. In Kant’s third *Critique*, “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics” is grounded upon the universal validity (and, consequently, communicability) of the free pleasure.

5. Conclusion

First, I have argued that the reduction of Aesthetics to the sole domain of Art proves all the more prejudicial when the question of “Aesthetics as Politics” is at stake. I have given evidence of the damages of this reductive standpoint in Rancière’s choice of addressing “Aesthetics as Politics” on the ground of the “Aesthetic Regime of Art” which, as highlighted by Ruban Yepes, resulted in the reduction to the localized space of Art, bound to a micropolitical level, as opposed to the worldwide sphere of influence of the Police. By pointing out Rancière’s own avowal of the pessimistic outcome of Politics, which can only hope to make an interstitial tear in the worldwide web of the Police, this paper contributed to prove that the aim of emancipation, as it was embedded in Rancière’s conception of “Aesthetics as Politics”, cannot be fulfilled as long as you forbid an all-encompassing approach at a worldwide level instead of a localized one.

The first upshot of my argument is that, from the moment that your aim (pursuing “Aesthetics as Politics”) deals with emancipation and

⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 16.

freedom, the enlarged dimension of “Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics” proves to be a necessary requirement. If such is not the case, this emancipation aim is bound to fail and you don’t give way to a “cosmopoliticization of aesthetics⁷⁰” able to offer an alternative to the damages of globalization, provided that this “cosmopoliticization of aesthetics” does not become an uncontrollable phenomenon⁷¹ and does not result in an “aestheticization of politics”.

It is the place to pay homage to Rancière’s choice of addressing the topic of the linkage between Aesthetics and Politics, not so much as relations implying a fatal instrumentalization by one of them at the expense of the other (as it was the pitfall of the debates about “aestheticization of politics”) but as an intrinsic collaboration, bordering on quasi mutual identification⁷², which is precisely what is at stake in Rancière’s phrase “Aesthetics as Politics”. My main argument is to emphasize the discrepancy between the heuristic insights offered by the phrase coined by Rancière, namely “Aesthetics as Politics”, and the actual developments, in Rancière’s work, which fail to fulfill the promises of this fruitful concept. But the analysis of the causes of Rancière’s failure proved to be fruitful too. First of all, I have argued that one might make the claim that the role of the “universal without concept” in “Aesthetics as Politics” is crucial, without indulging in Rancière’s misreading of the Kantian Beautiful based on the conflictuous model of the Sublime. If Rancière escaped the postmodern tropism for the Sublime (despite its unequalitarian nature) at the expense of the Beautiful, he did not escape the pitfall of the “sublimization” of the Beautiful. But, at a second glance, what appears more fundamental in

⁷⁰ Jacinto Lageira, *L’Art comme Histoire*, Editions Mimèsis, 2016, 274 : ‘what /.../ Ulrich Beck calls the First Modernity, which would now be absorbed by the Second Modernity, the one of /.../ globalization to which he opposes /.../ firmly the cosmopolitization’. [my translation]

⁷¹ Ulrich Beck, *Qu’est-ce que le cosmopolitisme ?*, Aubier, 2006, 43 : ‘the cosmopolitism, in the Kantian meaning, is something active /.../. The cosmopolitization, on the contrary, compels us to see something uncontrollable and passive’. [my translation]

⁷² See Rafał Czekaj, “Aesthetics and the political turn in Art”, *Art Inquiry*, 2015, vol. XVII, 85: ‘It is in the latter book, in the essay *Aesthetics as Politics*, that Rancière advances the thesis of a strong bond between aesthetics and politics. It is so strong that one can even speak of an inextricable connection between aesthetics and politics.’

Rancière's causes of failure regarding his heuristic promise lies in other philosophical assumptions. I have highlighted the influence of Plato on that score. But, what really matters as far as methodological insights are at stake, is the fact that this analysis of the causes of "Rancière's failure" (in order to fulfill the promises offered by his "Aesthetics as Politics") has led me, thanks to a demonstration by default, to disclose the necessary requirements of "Aesthetics as Politics", its conditions of possibility as far as an implicit freedom – based conception of Politics is embedded in this concept, as was the case for Rancière.

On that score, the main upshot of my argument is to show that the crucial elements deciphered as necessary (but which default in Rancière's essays) were eventually deciphered as present in Kant's third *Critic*. First of all, in the third *Critic*, Aesthetics is definitely not reduced to the sole domain of Art, as is manifest both in Kant's tropism for the free beauties of Nature and in the requirement of very subtle arguments⁷³ in order to subsume some artworks under this category of free beauties. Second, "Aesthetic as Politics" is definitely not reduced to a micropolitical level in Kant's approach, since his third *Critique* gives to it a cosmopolitical extension. And, last but not least, I have argued that, contrary to Rancière's essays in which the requirement of emancipation seems to burden the task of "Aesthetics as Politics" to such a point that it cannot fulfill its aims, Kant's choice of addressing the topic of the aesthetic judgment on the ground of freedom sustains its ability to have a universal validity and to ground the cosmopolitical scope of the *sensus communis*. Hence the upshot of my argument which gave evidence of Kant's consistency, precisely in the fact that it is his freedom-based conception of Aesthetics that led him to pave the way both to "Aesthetics as Politics" and to "Aesthetics as Cosmopolitics".

What remains a puzzle for subsequent aesthetic researches is the crucial role of the free pleasure. On the one hand, its universal validity which grounds the *sensus communis* is what matters. But on the other hand, the gist of Kant's discovery of "free pleasure" lies in the linkage between freedom and the sensible realm, which might lead us to reconsider, from

⁷³ Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 45.

another standpoint than Rancière's, the political incidence of their relations.

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