

Rado Riha*

The Second Copernican Turn of Kant's Philosophy¹

What I set out to do in this essay is something modest: to put forth a broader claim concerning the possibility of bringing together the theme of our conference – *reason plus enjoyment* – and Kant's philosophy by positing three main claims as the point of departure:

1. Kant's critical philosophy is considered a paradigm case of the domination of "pure reason," reason purified of all non-rational contamination. Without challenging the legitimacy of this reading of Kant, I will opt for another reading. My first thesis hence consists in postulating the following: if we take Kant's philosophy as constituting a system of three *Critiques*, that which characterises Kant's revolution in the way of thinking, the famous "Copernican turn" in philosophy, to borrow Kant's proper term, is the recognition that a philosophical thought as such, i.e. born of "pure reason," to use Kant's expression, is in its very origins affected by some "thing," which a thought can not appropriate, despite the fact that this "thing" belongs to it.
2. While the revolution in the way of thinking starts with Kant's first *Critique*, the problem of a thought being affected by its thing requires a continuation of the revolution, which is brought to completion only in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* with what I propose to call the second Copernican turn.
3. It is only from the perspective of the second Copernican turn that Kant's philosophy becomes one of the philosophical interlocutors in dealing with the question of the relationship between reason and *jouissance*.

The first two theses are entirely inscribed within the framework of Kant's philosophy as they are warranted by two central topics of Kant's philosophy. The

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* Institute of Philosophy, Research Centre of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts

first is *ontological* and the second *logical*. While these two topics are related, both conceptually and in terms of their thematic features, Kant only succeeds in truly connecting them in the *Critique of Judgment*. In my reading, this connection results in an additional, what I call the second “Copernican turn” of Kant’s philosophy, and it is only in this second “Copernican turn” that Kant’s revolution in the way of thinking is brought to completion precisely to the extent that it solves the problem of how thought is affected by its “thing”.

The first topic is centred around Kant’s controversial “transcendental difference” between appearance and the thing itself, between *phaenomenon* and *noumenon*. According to Kant, the only objective reality to which a human being as a finite rational being has access is the phenomenal reality, the reality of appearances, which is constituted by the combined activities of the two faculties of cognition – understanding and sensibility. Having posited this, Kant nevertheless obstinately insists that our phenomenal world does not constitute the world precisely to the extent that it is in itself. Hence, while the constituted phenomenal world is in fact the only world, indeed, it is all we have, it is nevertheless not all or whole as it is always supplemented by something that does not belong to it and, hence, does not exist in it: the “thing in itself,” i.e. something that is not constituted and which I propose to call, borrowing a Lacanian term, the instance of the real.

Seen from this perspective, Kant’s “transcendental difference” signals that the phenomenal world can only exist and function as objective as long as an awareness that the given world is *not already the thing itself*, indeed, *that the thing itself is absent from it*, is somehow at work in it. By positing that our world is marked by an absence of the “thing itself,” we also posit that there is, in our world, in a specific manner, also something present that is absent, that in the world there also exists something that actually does not exist. Thus, if the phenomenal world is essentially marked by the absence of the “thing itself,” if the phenomenal world is the real world only on the condition that it does not consider itself as the “thing itself,” then for this world and its “objectivity” it is equally essential that the world itself, in one way or another, reflects in itself the absence of the “thing itself,” making it visible somehow.

But what is the ontological status of this present absence, this extraction of the “thing itself,” i.e. of the real from reality? What is that which is not part of real-

ity, i.e. an empirical object among empirical objects, nor an object that reason successfully thinks in its ideas while striving in vain to attain it in objective reality? Related to this question is another question: what logical procedures would make it possible to conceive of the ontological status of the “thing itself” that functions in objective reality as its element while being at the same time extracted from it?

This question introduces the second central topic of Kant's philosophy, namely the logical one, insofar as it articulated that which for Kant's philosophy is its “thing of thought”. The core of this topic presents the logical operations of the self-critique of reason in the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*. According to Kant, reason seeks in various realms of thought and action as well as the absolute totality of All, their ultimate condition, the point of the Unconditioned. The Unconditioned, towards which reason is driven, to quote Kant, by “its unquenchable desire,” “*die nicht zu dämpfende Begierde*,”² is that which affects reason from within and which, ultimately, “makes reason think,” for this “thing of thought” is the absolute condition of reason. Indeed, it is what makes reason reason.

Pure reason, thus goes Kant's definition, “is in fact concerned with nothing but itself.”³ The task assigned to the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique* is to prove that reason, in its being concerned with itself, is not necessarily caught in a delusional universe inhabited by mere creations of thought. On the contrary, if reason is *really* concerned with nothing but itself, it nevertheless succeeds in touching upon something that is irreducibly external, heterogeneous to reason. Hence, the way reason operates is appropriately presented only at the point at which reason has gone through the process of self-critique.

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By simplifying slightly, it could be said that reason starts by directly projecting its “thing of thought,” which is embodied in its ideas, from itself out into the world. Its own ideas, which are nothing but “thought-entities,” *Gedankendinge*, that is to say, products of reason's own thinking operations, the totalisation

² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, [Cpr], B 824/A 796; transl. and ed. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Cambridge 1992.

³ Cpr, B 708/A 680.

of appearances of the sensible and supersensible worlds, are considered by reason as if they were objects of the given world of experience. It could also be argued that reason takes, as the unstated guide to its actions, the norm of objectivity, which leads to the constitution of the reality of appearances by understanding and sensibility. In short, reason sees Something there where there is Nothing – nothing but the projections of reason’s thinking operations. In the final analysis, reason is forced to acknowledge again and again that where it saw Something there was actually Nothing. Again and again it is revealed that its functioning, compared to the functioning of understanding that is constitutive of objective reality, produces mere (thought-driven) delusions.

It is only after the self-critique of reason, as developed in the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*, that the possibility arises that things might radically change. Namely, the self-critique of reason reveals a structural flaw in the functioning of reason, yet one that cannot be avoided: where there is nothing but the form of their operation of unification, the ideas of reason create an appearance of some objectivity. Hence, this recognition of its own structural flaw does not by any means change the way in which reason operates. Reason continues to spontaneously turn something merely subjective, its “thing of thought” materialised as ideas, into some objectality. It continues to effect the appearance of Something there where, strictly speaking, there is Nothing, more precisely, where there is nothing but subjective forms of reason’s activity. What changes, however, is the status of this appearance, for this appearance persists but, because it is now recognised as an appearance, it *no longer deceives*.⁴ In the process of the self-critique, reason considers its ideas for what they are, that is to say, as logical operations, which are devoid of all objective existence, because they have no sensibly given referent, and are to that extent something that does not exist for objective reality. Due to this recognition, the appearance of objectivity, which the ideas of reason cannot but continue to produce, is divested of its power to deceive.

⁴ Speaking in terms of Kant: “The transcendental dialectic will therefore content itself with uncovering the illusion in transcendental judgments, while at the same time protecting us from being deceived by it; but it can never bring it about that transcendental illusion (like logical illusion) should even disappear and cease to be an illusion. For what we have to do with here is a *natural* and unavoidable *illusion*....” *Crp*, B 354/A 297.

But if the self-critique of reason results merely in a negative determination of what ideas are not, and, as we have seen, they are nothing that objectively exist, it is no more than an additional proof of the objectivity of cognition. For that reason, it is essential to not limit the achievement of the self-critique of reason in the first *Critique* to reason's ability to consider its ideas as a mere, albeit necessary, logical appearance. If, however, the self-critique of reason is something more than "censorship made in the name of theoretical understanding,"⁵ then a negative determination of ideas, the recognition of an idea as an appearance that does not deceive, must also contain some positive, affirmative dimension that defines the functioning of the ideas of reason on the level that is determinant for reason as an autonomous faculty of cognition. That is to say, precisely on that level on which reason is concerned solely with itself. The true achievement of the self-critique of reason is not a definition of what the ideas of reason *are not*, rather it has to be sought in the outline of what, in its ontological status, the post-critical ideas of reason – which *exist* as something that is inexistent for the objective world – *are*. I posit that the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique* provides just such a basic outline.

If we were to detect in Kant's argumentation the affirmative dimension of the self-critical definition of ideas as an appearance that does not deceive, we would need to begin by asserting that in its operation of self-critique reason does not renounce the "thing of thought" and its materialisations as ideas, just as it does not renounce its original aim, namely, to realise its ideas in the world. It only renounces the belief that its "thing of thought" *directly* participates in objective reality and that its ideas are, as such, an object of the empirical world – just like any other object. Succinctly, reason renounces the *norm of objectivity* as the guide to its actions. Thus, reason is no longer concerned with the Other of objectivity, but instead limits itself to itself and is therefore truly concerned only with itself. Henceforth, it considers its ideas as its own creation and likewise considers an object to which an idea refers solely as an "object-in-the-idea". Using an expression which is not Kantian, one could say that reason henceforth treats its ideas as fictions of truth.

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Throughout these fictions of truth, reason is certainly present in empirically constituted reality. For the positive, affirmative aspect of reason's self-critical

⁵ Gérard Lebrun, *Kant et la fin de la métaphysique*, Armand Colin, Paris 1970, p. 111.

reflection of ideas as sheer, yet undecieving appearance signals the entry of reason into the world of objectivity. In its self-limitation, that is, once it is concerned only with itself, once it finally truly operates as pure reason, it paradoxically transcends the realm of a mere speculation of thought and enters, with its ideas, the realm of objective reality. "Reason's concern with itself" could then best be seen as a thinking act that, on the one hand, withdraws the ideas of reason from the order of objectivity while, on the other hand, affirms them in the empirical world as its integral, constitutive part. It could then be maintained that, after the accomplished self-critique, reason is *indirectly* present in objective reality through its ideas, i.e. its fictions of truth. As we know, Kant calls this indirect presence of reason in the world of objectivity the *immanent* or *empirical* use of reason.

Or, put differently, by being concerned only with itself, reason is, paradoxically, brought to the point that it steps outside itself into the realm of objective reality, there precisely where, prior to the accomplishment of its self-critique, it could not find itself. How can we explain this passage of reason from the pure inside, where it is concerned only with itself, into the external, objective world? I would argue that, for Kant, a negative definition of ideas as the appearance to which no objective existence can be ascribed, as such, already constitutes a positive articulation of the status of post-critical ideas. The fact that the ideas of reason have no objectivity does not imply that they are without objectality. And the fact that these ideas do not exist for objective reality does not imply that they are without existence. Rather, the positive achievement of the self-critique of reason can be seen in the fact that it transforms ideas from that for which objective reality *does not exist* into that which in objective reality *exists* as its *inexistent*. In the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*, the self-critique of reason is undertaken as a thinking act that succeeds in affirming, in objective reality as its constitutive part, something that is for this reality properly its *inexistent*.

In the context of the first *Critique*, the empirical usage of reason, which allows reason to unify the acts of understanding, consists in reason accepting that it play a secondary role in the constitution of empirical reality effected by understanding and sensibility. In defining the relationship between the Transcendental Analytic and Transcendental Dialectic in the first *Critique*, we could borrow Monique David-Ménard's felicitous formulation, according to which "Under-

standing succeeds there where Reason fails.”⁶ However, one should not misunderstand something that is otherwise crucial in this formulation: at first sight, it seems to be suggesting that reason depends on the success of understanding. In effect, the point is rather the opposite: the success of understanding depends on the power of reason in accomplishing its self-critique. This is because the role of reason is far from exhausted with its co-operation in the constitution of objective reality by understanding, or, as it could also be phrased, through the empirical use of reason in the service of understanding. As a matter of fact, we find hints of that which will be fully developed only in the third *Critique* already in the first *Critique*, namely, that the self-critique of reason is oriented towards that empirical use of reason that is in accordance with *reason itself*.

Indeed, a positive determination of the ideas of reason, insofar as they function in objective reality as its inexistent element, is conceptually set down in the first *Critique*. But this outline can be detected in the first *Critique* only from the perspective of the conceptual innovations introduced in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. For it is exactly these innovations that allow us to grasp that the role played by reason in the constituted objective reality is far from a simple instrumentalisation of reason in the service of understanding.

Following my first working hypothesis, which effects the shift from the first to the third *Critique*, we can turn now to the four theses advanced at the beginning of this paper:

Firstly, at the core of Kant's “Copernican turn” in philosophy lies the problem of the affection of thought with its “thing”.

Secondly, this view of Kant's revolution in the way of thinking is grounded on the connection of two central issues of his philosophy: the *ontological* issue of the “transcendental difference” between an appearance and a thing in itself, and the *logical* issue of the critique of transcendental appearance. The ontological issue requires, in turn, an answer to the following question: What is the ontological status of that which while being part of the phenomenal world is nonetheless absent from it, and which therefore has the status of a present ab-

⁶ Monique David-Ménard, *La folie dans la raison pure. Kant lecteur de Swedenborg*, Vrin, Paris 1990, p. 17.

sence? This logical issue requires in turn an answer to the question: What logical operations allow reason, in the very immanence of its concern with itself, to succeed in touching upon something that is external, heterogeneous to it?

Thirdly, we have posited that Kant truly succeeds in connecting both issues only in the third *Critique*. Indeed, in the third *Critique*, the ontological problem of an “appearance,” which simultaneously is and is not an element of the phenomenal world, becomes constitutive of the logical operation of the self-critique of reason, in which reason learns to deal with that “thing” which affects reason from within while remaining at the same time irreducible to it.

Fourthly, by joining both issues into one, i.e. into the *onto-logical issue*, not only is the second “Copernican turn” accomplished, but also the revolution in the way of thinking is completed, for the completed revolution of thought solves the problem of the affection of thought with its “thing,” that problem, namely, which involves, as has already been noted, the relationship between reason and enjoyment.

The answer of the third *Critique* offers to both crucial questions of Kant’s philosophy, the ontological and logical, can perhaps best be outlined with the help of G. Lebrun’s formulation: Kant’s philosophy “teaches us to think differently.”⁷ For me, this different way of thinking consists in a thinking that is capable of grasping, *begreifen*, that which resists comprehension by means of a notion without annulling this resisting moment in the process. Yet this can only be achieved if this way of thinking is grounded on the universal, which is itself supplemented by a moment of an irreducible singularity.

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In what follows, I will focus on three conceptual innovations of the third *Critique* that are crucial for this way of thinking:

1. extension of the notion of the transcendental aesthetic defined in the first *Critique*;
2. comprehension of the particular in its irreducible particularity or singularity; and

⁷ Gérard Lebrun, op. cit., p. 13.

3. the concept of aesthetic reflecting judgment (judgment of the beautiful and the sublime).

In the first *Critique*, Kant defines the transcendental aesthetic as a science of all principles of *a priori* sensibility⁸. In fact, in this critique *a priori* sensibility is considered only as a function and element of *cognition*. It is considered only as a sensibility of the objective *sense*, *Sinn*. What the third *Critique* adds to the notion of *a priori* sensibility is the representation of the object, the latter being designated in the following terms: firstly, that which is *only subjective*, i.e. sensible; secondly, that which does not belong to the order of the empirical but, rather, to the order of *a priori*; and thirdly, that which has no *cognitive, objective* function, i.e. a function that is constitutive for the object.

Any relation of our representations can be objective, that is, a constitutive part of the cognition of the object as an appearance, even if the representation is in itself only subjective, such as the representation of space, which merely expresses the subjective aspect of our representations. The only thing that in our representations cannot but be subjective and cannot become an element of cognition at all is the feeling of pleasure or displeasure: "...by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated, but in which the subject feels itself that it is affected by the representation."⁹ Under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed, to its feeling of life.¹⁰

2. The notion of the sensibility of feeling is, in the third *Critique*, closely connected with the *Critique's* second central problem. What is at stake here is the question of knowing how to make available to cognition that which by definition resists a cognitive determination: the particular in its irreducible particularity, namely its *singularity*. Kant provides a twofold response to this question – and I will allow myself a simplification here. In response to the view that cognition of the singular is not possible because singularity is, for the cognition of understanding, something that is wholly contingent, lawless, unordered,

⁸ Cf., *Crp*, B 35/A 21.

⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, [*CpJ*], § 1, p. 89. Paul Guyer (ed.); transl. by Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, Cambridge 2000.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Kant posits an oppositional thesis, which is elaborated by using the notions of the Beautiful and the Sublime. According to Kant's first response, singularity is recognised as such, that is, it is conceived of as something that is entirely contingent, lawless, unordered, and yet, precisely as such, considered to be constitutive for cognition. It is precisely at this point that we need to point out that in the third *Critique*, although based on this thesis, Kant elaborates a novel notion of the universal that is constituted as universal by including the instance of singularity that supplements the universal in its universality from the outside. This instance of singularity is what Kant calls *a case*, more precisely, a case of the Idea.

3. The main conceptual innovation of the third *Critique*, its central issue and a primary conceptual tool, is the concept of reflecting power as an independent and autonomous faculty of cognition, that is, the concept of the *reflecting power of judgement*. For it is in this concept that both of the aforementioned problems of the third *Critique* – the extension of the notion of the transcendental aesthetic and the determination of irreducible singularity – are directly connected. The connection of both tasks can be considered, at least this is my view, as a junction between the ontological and logical issue of Kant's philosophy. Kant considers it as “a direct relationship” between the *faculty of cognition* and the *sensibility of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure*, this direct relational junction of the faculty of cognition and sensibility is conceived of as that “which is precisely puzzling in the principle of the power of judgement,”¹¹ and which gives the reflecting power of judgement the stamp of its uniqueness.

As is well known, Kant distinguishes between two kinds of power of judgment. The power of judgment, in general, is the faculty for thinking the particular as being subsumed under the universal: the law, the principle, the rule, etc. The power of judgment is *determining* if the universal is already given. Put simply, coming across an unknown phenomenon in nature, culture, society, we can determine what we are dealing with here by finding a universal concept adequate to this particular of the world, by which we can determine it, and thus understand it. This is a kind of power of judgment ready-made for the globalised world in which we live. For this world, there only exists the particular, which can be subsumed under the category of the universal, in which there are oth-

¹¹ *Cpj*, Preface, p. 57.

er, similar particulars. And conversely, for this world, that which is singular, strictly speaking, does not exist.

Kant's other kind of power of judgment is more interesting: the *reflecting* power of judgment. It is at work when, as Kant puts it, only the particular is given, that is to say, something about which we are not quite certain, due to the absence of a universal concept, law, rule, etc., that would help us identify and understand the given particular. If the universal is not given – and this is Kant's main point – this is not because we are unable to find it. There is no universal at our disposal because there simply is no universal for what we see before us. The task of the reflecting power of judgment is precisely to *invent*, in the very process of judging, a universal concept for something that, because it is singular, does not fit in any cognitive category. The reflecting power of judgement must invent a universal rule for that which defies any universal rule, indeed, for that which exists as the absence of any rule, for that which is contingent *per se*, non-cognitive, briefly stated, for the particular in its irreducible particularity, that is, its singularity.

The reflecting power of judgment can thus be conceived as a thought protocol that can only become operative if it is grounded on the decision or declaration that there exists in objective reality, such as it is constructed from the universal and the particular, also that which does not exist in it, namely the singular as an example of the inexistent. Thus, to be operative, the reflecting power of judgement inevitably requires a declaration and affirmation of the existence of the inexistent.

At this point it is necessary to highlight two elements that characterise the power of judgment in its specificity. The first element concerns the specific cognition that is connected with the reflecting judgment; the second one concerns the specific object of cognition, which is characteristic of the reflecting judgment.

I will begin with the first element, namely, the orientation of the sensibility of feeling to cognition. The extension of the notion of the aesthetic is based on the fact that Kant no longer connects the sensible character of representation with the representation itself, but rather connects it with the “act of the

power of judgment,”¹² more precisely, with the act of the power of judgement, which is considered only in its *subjective dimension*. The feeling of pleasure or displeasure is produced in the act of the reflecting judgment that turns from the object to the representation of the object and to its subjective conditions of possibility. This feeling allows us to realise – in an aesthetic, i.e. sensible way – that in the representation of an object given in experience, that is, in its mere apprehension prior to any concept, there is a unity between imagination and understanding at work, the unity that is the elementary condition for any kind of effect of cognition.

Despite the fact that the aesthetic judgment is not primarily about the objective cognition of the object, the reflecting judgment does not give up on every orientation towards cognition. On the contrary, Kant attributes to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure the function of a kind of undetermined cognition, cognition without (objective) cognition, which he designates in the third *Critique* as “cognition in general”.¹³

The crucial point here is that the withdrawal of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure from cognition of understanding is not to be considered in terms of an affirmation of the “logic of heart” against the “logic of understanding”. The reflecting judgment is conditioned by the *general communicability* of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure produced by the judgment. And, according to Kant, only cognition can be communicated generally. The feeling of pleasure or displeasure is “cognition in general,” because with this cognition we assume that everyone else will necessarily consider in the same way what we see and feel as beautiful or sublime.¹⁴

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Let me now move to the second key element of the reflecting judgment. It should be noted that, for Kant’s philosophy, where there is cognition, although only “cognition in general,” there is necessarily also the *object* of this cognition. The feeling of pleasure or displeasure is inseparable from that which is its *case*. When we are presented with something for which there is no notion available, something, that, strictly speaking, we do not know what it is – despite the

¹² *Cpj*, First Introduction, p. 25.

¹³ *Cpj*, § 9, p. 103.

¹⁴ *Cpj*, § 8 and 9, pp. 99-105.

fact that what we see is a constituted object of appearance, an object of natural, cultural, historical reality: a building, canvas, sculpture, historical event, etc. – while it rouses in us a feeling of pleasure or displeasure, this feeling is expressed in the judgment proclaiming that what we see in front of us is something *exemplary*. That it is – to put it in the language of the third *Critique* – the *case, der Fall*, of the Beautiful or Sublime, today we would simply say a case of good painting, good architecture, true politics.

The aesthetic reflecting judgment is constructed as the statement of existence in the sense that it maintains that in the given object or event there exists also something other than this object itself, namely, the *case* of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. That is, something, which in this particular object is *irreducibly singular*, yet accompanied by an expectation that it is generally communicable, which is to say that it is something universally valid.

But where exactly is the *materiality*, the *objectness* of the case of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure to be found? Here we have to take seriously Kant's statement that the reflecting power of judgment is indifferent to the existence of the phenomenal object. Taking this statement seriously namely implies that the object in itself is insignificant for the act of reflecting judgment. The power of judgment judges the representation in "mere reflection". In the act of the reflecting power of judgment every determination, both material and formal, of that which is given in intuition, is suspended. Judging the representation is the act that the power of judgement exercises for itself. What matters instead is what I make of this representation, not how I depend on the existence of the object.¹⁵ Ultimately, the only cause of the reflecting judgment is the act of judgment itself: "but the judgment of taste is not determinable by means of concepts, it is grounded only on the subjective formal condition of a judgment in general. The subjective condition of all judgments is the faculty for judging itself, or the power of judgment."¹⁶

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In sum, and this is precisely the main issue in Kant's second Copernican turn, the reflecting judgment that turns from the object to the subjective conditions of the object's *representation* is the act that *derealisises* or nullifies the object

¹⁵ *Cpj*, § 2, p. 91.

¹⁶ *Cpj*, § 35, p. 167.

in its material, spatio-temporal determination. For while the act of judgement may well be indifferent to the object itself, if it is to be successful, it cannot be indifferent to the indifference itself since this indifference is exactly what characterises the reflecting and not the determining power of judgement.

Stated in different terms, the indifference towards the object, the nullification of its material-formal determination, is the fundamental attitude of the reflecting judgment. Which amounts to saying that in the act of mere reflection, while something objective is after all produced, what is produced is – to be exact – the nullification, *the absence of the object as the substance of the object* of the reflecting judgment. In the reflecting judgment, the *Nothing* of the objective object immediately turns into *Something*. Not, of course, an object like all other objects of objective reality. Rather, Nothing becomes Something in the form of the specific object of the reflecting judgment – it becomes something in the form of the *case*.

The reflecting judgment does not create its object, its case “from nothing,” it is therefore not a *creatio ex nihilo*. Rather, the reflecting judgment, in its operation of the derealisation of an objective object’s spatio-temporal *determination*, situates in the place of that derealised object, this same *derealised object as the body* of the case of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. That is to say, as the body of some irreducible singularity, but one which involves the demand for the subjectively universal validity.

Thus, the case of the sensibility of feeling has a specific ontological status: it is the *existence* of the (objectively) *inexistent*. It is something irreducibly singular, which has effects in the given world of objectivity but, at the same time, does not belong to this world, just like it does not belong to the supersensible world. It exists only in the potential universality of its consequences, and not only in the given world, but also, in Kant’s words, “of all times and peoples.”¹⁷

The case of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is not an objective object of the constitution of objects by understanding, nor is it a sublime supersensible object of reason before its self-critique. Its objectness, materiality, is rather the result of this double negation. It is the *derealisation* of the objects of experiential

¹⁷ *Cpj*, § 17, p. 116.

reality and the *desublimation* of the objects of pre-critical reason. Yet, precisely as such a materiality of a special kind, it exists within the constituted objective reality. In its ontological status the objectness of the case is the *material trace* of that present absence of the thing itself, which confers on the objective world of appearances its consistency and solidity. Hence, the case of feeling is as such at the same time the adequate empirical appearance of the ideas of reason, which in objective reality have no adequate empirical appearance.

In conclusion, I will advance a claim which while going beyond Kant's self-understanding strictly speaking nonetheless opens up the horizon of the second Copernican turn of his philosophy. The crucial issue here is that the existence of the case of the reflecting power of judgment is the *decided existence*, more precisely, the existence that is decided by thought. The reflecting judgment is based on the decision that the only true or real thing in every thing is the thing decided by thought, in short, the *thing of thought*. This decision is connected with another decision, namely that we truly think only when we try to bring that thing which affects our thought and which only really affirms thinking as a generic human faculty, that is, as more than a mere survival tool, to the point where it appears in empirical reality. The decision of the reflecting judgment concerning the existence of the case of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is more than a mere realisation that in the world of appearances there exists also something that is inexistent. It is a decision about the point that only the existence of the inexistent, conceived of as the existence of some universally valid singularity, gives the empirical world the stamp of the *world for all*.

The view that the subject, as Kant points out, feels himself or herself in the feeling of pleasure or displeasure entails a re-orientation in the thinking of the one who thinks; a re-orientation from the object and objectivity as the *norm* and *aim* of cognition, to the singularity of the case, which is decided by thought, as the *cause* and *driving force* or *incentive* of thinking and action. What assures thought its orientation is not the idea of reason in itself, an idea in the heaven of ideas, nor the cognitive machinery of understanding, which knows no orientation of its own. It is instead the thing of thought, the existence of the case of the singular, which can only be decided through thinking, in the act of the reflecting power of judgment, and which is affirmed in the world as something universal. Cognition in general, which presents itself in the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, does not have the status of non-objective cognition

because it withdraws itself from the constituted objective reality, but because it is a *re-constitution of this reality*. There where the power of judgment is at work the world is no longer only a realm of objectivity; rather, it becomes the scene of its re-constitution. Kant's formulation that the feeling of pleasure or displeasure is the *feeling of life* can in this regard be understood in the following way: the reflecting power of judgment is life that is endowed with an orientation. An orientation towards that which is its *Triebfeder*, its incentive or drive, towards the cause of thinking and action, more exactly, towards the thing of thought.