

The Role of Imagination in Kant's Theory of Reflective Judgment

Johannes Haag
University of Potsdam

"You can't depend on your judgment
when your imagination is out of focus"
Mark Twain

The central question I would like to discuss in this paper is the following: What is the reasoning behind Kant's re-interpretation of the concept of teleology in nature as a concept of the reflective, not determining power of judgment? Why, in other words, are the principles governing this cognitive faculty merely regulative, not constitutive? Both ways of exercising the power of judgment – its reflective *and* its constitutive use – are, after all, dependent on the special constitution of our cognitive faculties in general. And this constitution is of a kind that in none of the two cases gives us access to an independent reality as it is in itself. And yet, in the case of teleological judgment, the fact that our judgment is due to the special constitution of our cognitive faculties apparently makes it a merely reflective judgment – while mechanical or causal judgments safely stay in the constitutive-column.

The basic idea of what follows is: Kant's reasoning is best understood if one takes into account the specific functioning of the faculty of *imagination* as it is introduced in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, namely as a faculty of presentation (*Darstellung*). In this way, I would like to argue, we do not only gain a better understanding of the notorious question of the interconnection between the two parts of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, but, more importantly, can we grasp the deeper and more persuasive reason for Kant's claim that teleological explanation is a function of the power of judgment not in its constitutive, but in its regulative form.

Let me give you a quick overview of the general structure and the different stages of my discussion: The subject that will provide the framework in which I would like to answer my central question is a discussion of the alleged *antinomy of the power of judgment* in the *Dialectic*. I will start (1) with a recapitulation of at least some of the basic considerations in Kant's *Critique of Teleological Power of Judgment* relevant for the understanding of this

antinomy. Next I will try (2) to give an initial analysis of what the antinomy consists in and point to the problem that ultimately necessitates the incorporation of the faculty of imagination to outline a convincing solution. This discussion of imagination (3) in turn will centre round a remark in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that highlights this relevance and at the same time shows the importance of a differentiation concerning the concept of purposiveness. It will lead to (4) a very short recapitulation of the general functioning of the imagination in Kant's theoretical philosophy that then is applied to understand the use of this faculty in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* as a special case of this functioning. With that we can turn back (5) to our discussion of the antinomy and its solution.

For only then we will be in a position to understand both *why the antinomy* is a real antinomy (forced upon us as an "unavoidable illusion" by a "natural dialectic" (KU 5:386)) and not one that is merely due to confusion on our side, and *why we are justified*, nevertheless, *to solve it by pointing to different functions of the power of judgment*, i.e. *its reflective as opposed to its determining function*: Not only relies this *solution* heavily on the contrast between our own discursive and an intuitive understanding; but its very *genesis* can, I would like to argue, only be properly understood if one brings the faculty of imagination into the picture.

This reconstruction of both the genesis and the solution to the antinomy of the power of judgment can thus serve to understand Kant's reasons for the denial of constitutive status to teleological judgement and its difference from constitutive judgment. The reasons behind Kant's denial of a *constitutive* function of teleological judgment, I hope to show, are *not* to be found in an overly restrictive perspective on the scope of the categorical functioning of the understanding as laid out in the first *Critique* which did not do proper justice to alleged categories as, for instance, life – problematic as that may be for other reasons. If that were the case, Kant's whole idea of a teleological judgments being merely reflective judgments would, I take it, indeed be unjustified.

But Kant was convinced that he was on save ground here: The reason for this categorization *not* being a longing for the preservation of the overall architectonic of his system or even – as Rolf-Peter Horstmann suggested¹ – a decision on the grounds of saving the principles of a purely mechanistic science of nature.

His reason, as will become clear, is a *conceptual* one: The power of judgment *can* – a conceptual "can" – only be *regulative* in this context, because of the conceptual possibility of

¹ Horstmann 1989, 172

an *intuitive understanding* that would operate on the very same given sensual material that our own *discursive understanding* is operating on in the *synthesis of imagination*. This sharply distinguishes the contrast between a discursive and an intuitive understanding as conceived in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* from the contrast drawn in the *Critique of Pure Reason* between our cognitive faculties and the intellectual intuition: Intellectual intuition as introduced in the *Phaenomena and Noumena*-Chapter of the first *Critique*, by definition does not even operate on the same *matter* given to us in experience. It is part of the burden of my argument that the same does not hold for the intuitive understanding Kant talks about in §77 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*.

Moreover, I am going to argue that the shared basis in reality need not even be restricted to the sensory input, but might include a great part of conceptually structured experience as well. It is the structuring principle underlying the presentation of a very limited kind of phenomena, i.e. organisms that a *finite* intuitive understanding and a discursive understanding differ about – against the background of a *shared* empirical reality.

Admittedly this stronger claim is harder to prove from Kant's published works. Still, I think that it is possible to find some exegetical support for it. And, more importantly, I am convinced that the argument is not only philosophically valid, but required for the solution of our problem: a bigger difference between the two kinds of understanding – discursive and intuitive – would amount to making the operation of the discursive understanding by way of application of the categories merely reflective as well. Only a shared material and conceptual basis for kinds of understanding that only differ in some ways of organizing this material present a convincing philosophical reason why the principles employed in teleological judgement cannot have more than only subjective necessity – and consequently cannot operate on other than merely *regulative* principles.

1 The unity of experience and the transcendental principle of the purposiveness of nature

But with these remarks I was getting far ahead of myself and some of those sketchy considerations might, at this point of the argument, seem utterly unfounded. Let me, therefore, turn to providing those foundations immediately. As my starting point I take the antinomy of the power of judgment that is the objective of the *Dialectic of Teleological Power of*

Judgment. In his presentation of this antinomy Kant, however, refers back to one of the central parts of the *Introduction*, namely to the **transcendental deduction** of the principle of the power of judgment. I quote from § 70 where he repeats the fundamental thought of this deduction:

“Insofar as reason has to do with nature, as the sum of the objects of the outer senses, it can be grounded on laws which are in part prescribed *a priori* to nature by the understanding itself, and which can in part be extended beyond what can be foreseen by empirical determinations encountered in experience. For the application of the first sort of laws, namely the **universal** laws of material nature in general, the power of understanding needs no special principle of reflection: for in that case it is determining, since an objective principle is given to it by the understanding. But as far as the particular laws that can only be made known to us by experience are concerned, there can be such great diversity and dissimilarity among them that the power of judgment itself must serve as a principle even in order merely to investigate the appearances of nature in accordance with a law and spy one out, because it requires one for a guideline if it is to have any hope of an interconnected experiential cognition in accordance with a thoroughgoing lawfulness of nature or of its unity in accordance with empirical laws.” (KU 5:386)

Kant in these remarks takes up the argumentative thread from the very beginning of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in briefly repeating the argument from section V of the *Introduction*.² His point, put briefly, is that, probably unlike he seems to have believed when finishing the first *Critique*³, there is no such thing as a complete determination of natural law by the structuring universal principles provided by the understanding through the schematized categories and the fundamental propositions (*Grundsätze*) inferred from those principles: While the understanding is indeed responsible for the very existence of lawfulness in nature and is giving the most general constraints for any more specific natural laws, those constraints are still liberal enough to allow for a great diversity of different causal processes in the empirical reality – a diversity that could prove too big to allow for any unification of the special laws underlying those processes and, at least in principle, to big to even allow for a unified experience at all.

This lack of unity (though, as Kant seems to have believed, a possible *result* of prolonged scientific enquiry) cannot be rationally accepted *from the very outset* of this inquiry.⁴ Since,

² KU 5:181-4.

³ Cf. e.g. A 126.

⁴ Cf. KU 5:188.

however, neither understanding nor reason *of their own* provide us with the necessary principle, it is the faculty of judgment itself that has to be understood as the source of a governing principle or, as Kant in one place puts it, a “leading thread” (KU 5:185) of our investigation of nature.

Since only when it is subsuming experiences under general concepts according to principles provided by the understanding the power of judgment is heteronomous and its judgment is *determining*, it can in accordance with its own, autonomously given principle only produce mere *reflective* judgment. The power of judgment can accordingly be divided in a heteronomous constitutive power of judgment and an autonomous reflective power of judgment: The first applies laws of the understanding to nature, the last gives laws only to itself. In giving laws to itself the power of judgment, so to speak, takes as its starting point something particular and from there looks for something general, i.e. a concept or law, under which it can subsume the particular. That there indeed is such a general law for a given set of phenomena is, however, objectively contingent from the point of view of the understanding, and yet it is an a priori principle “presupposed *a priori* by the power of judgment in behalf of its power of judgment reflection on nature in accordance with empirical laws, ..., and only the power of judgment attributes it to nature as transcendental purposiveness (in relation to the cognitive faculty of the subject)” (KU 5:185)

The regulative transcendental principle provided by the latter is introduced in the *Introduction* in the following way:

„[T]he principle of the power of judgment in regard to the form of things in nature under empirical laws in general is the **purposiveness of nature** in its multiplicity. I.e., nature is represented through this concept as if an understanding contained the ground of the unity of the manifold of its empirical laws.“ (KU 5:180/1)

The intuitive foundation of this principle has been given shortly before:

„[S]ince universal laws of nature have their ground in our understanding, which prescribes them to nature ..., the particular empirical laws, in regard to that which is left undetermined in them by the former, must be considered in terms of the sort of unity they would have if an understanding (even if not ours) had likewise given them for the sake of our faculty of

cognition, in order to make possible a system of experience in accordance with particular laws of nature.“ (KU 5:180)⁵

Shortly before Kant has defined an *end* or *purpose* as “the concept of an object insofar as it at the same time contains the ground of the reality of this object” (KU 5:180) and *purposiveness* (of the form of an object) accordingly as “the correspondence of a thing with that constitution of things that is possible only in accordance with ends” (ebd.)

The purposiveness of nature as a principle of judgment is, accordingly, the understanding of nature as arranged in accordance with the ends of an (presumably superior) understanding subject. Since this principle is a mere regulative principle of *reflective* judgment it is a heuristic principle that has no implications whatsoever concerning the actual existence of such ends: It does not tell us, as Kant sometimes puts it, anything about empirical reality, but only about the epistemic framework with which I have to approach this reality.

Let me finish this digression on the heuristic principles governing the activity of the faculty of judgment in its attempts to come to grips with the diversity of the experiential input with one last, though maybe controversial remark: In some places it might look as if Kant would subject this whole investigative activity to this overarching regulative principle in a way that would make every law *resulting* from this activity itself a merely *regulative* law.

This, however, would be a serious misunderstanding: As we will shortly see, the principle of purposiveness, according to Kant, has manifestations that differ in substantial ways. It does manifest itself in maxims at least some of which get their ideas from the framework provided by the categories of the understanding. In these cases the laws found by this heuristic method, although certainly not a priori, are laws that will subsequently serve as laws of the power of judgment in its constitutive or determining function: They are rules under which given experiences henceforth may be subsumed. The regulative principle thus guides the epistemic activity of the scientist, but does not somehow automatically depreciate the results gained by applying this principle – at least not in itself. (This claim is, as will become apparent shortly, of some importance for my interpretation.)

⁵ It is here that we first encounter the intuitive understanding – not, however, in a finite form (*secundam analogiam*), but as intuitive understanding *per eminentiam*, i.e. as an infinite understanding that is to be understood as cause of the world (*Weltursache*). (For this distinction cf. p. 23 ff. below.) And it is in this philosophical context that it has to make its systematic contribution to the overall argument – not, as I will argue, in the solution of the antinomy.

2 The Antinomy of Teleological Judgment: Whence the Antinomy?

Let me now turn back to Kant's exposition of the antinomy of teleological judgment:

"Now in the case of this contingent unity of particular laws the power of judgment can set out from two maxims in its reflection, one of which is provided to it by the mere understanding a priori, the other of which, however, is suggested by particular experiences that bring reason into play in order to conduct the judging of corporeal nature and its laws in accordance with a special principle." (KU 5:386)

And shortly afterwards the two maxims are introduced as follows:

"**The first maxim** of the power of judgment is the **thesis**: All generation of material things and their forms must be judged as possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws.

The second maxim is the **antithesis**: Some products of material nature cannot be judged as possible according to merely mechanical laws (judging them requires an entirely different law of causality, namely that of final causes)." (KU 5:387)

Those are the two maxims that manifest the underlying principle of reflection discussed above. Both of them can indeed guide our scientific research in the way sketched above. And one of them, i.e. the first or mechanical maxim, yields laws that then will serve as the basis of constitutive judgment.

As I already pointed out, the principle of final causes does *not* likewise allow for constitutive judgment. In this important respect the two cases are disanalogous. Before I take up the question of why this is so, let me introduce Kant's antinomy – for it will only afterwards be clear just how important it is that we can find a convincing answer to this question.

Here is Kant's construction of the alleged antinomy:⁶

"It may then seem that these two sorts of maxims are not consistent with each other, thus that a dialectic will result that will make the power of judgment go astray in the principle of its reflection." (KU 5:386/7)

Since we already learned to think of those two maxims as *regulative* principles, we will be hardly impressed by this antinomy: Both principles being merely heuristic and not

⁶ Cf. Geiger 2009, 545-548 for a helpful discussion of the concept of an antinomy in the third *Critique* and its relation to the use Kant makes of this concept in the first *Critique*.

determining it is not hard to see how one could get out of this seeming difficulty. And indeed Kant himself at first seems willing to take this easy way out:

"Now if one were to transform these regulative principles for research into constitutive principles of the possibility of the objects themselves⁷ [...], they would contradict one another, and hence one of the two propositions would necessarily be false ... By contrast, the maxims of a reflecting power of judgment that were initially expounded do not in fact contain any contradiction." (KU 5:387)

The first maxim, Kant goes on to explain, does not require that actually every empirical phenomenon allows for mechanical explanation and therefore is no obstacle to the second maxim that, so to speak, serves only to fill the gaps that are not covered by the first.

"For reflection in accordance with the first maxim is not thereby suspended, rather one is required to pursue it as far as one can; it is also not thereby said that those forms would not be possible in accordance with the mechanism of nature." (KU 5:388)

The "case of some forms of nature" (KU 5:387) that forces us to treat the maxim of effective cause as insufficient and introduce a maxim of final cause is no other than the case of *living organism*. Those are the appearances that we cannot, as a matter of principle, integrate in the mechanical world-view. They do have properties that force us to think of them as ends of a special sort, namely *natural ends*.⁸

The first cracks in this smooth picture appear in the subsequent considerations that on the surface are in line with the solution of the antinomy, but at the same time expose an underlying *disanalogy* that will prove of particular importance:

"It is only asserted that **human reason**, in the pursuit of this reflection and in this manner, can never discover the least basis for what is specific in a natural end, although it may well be able to discover other cognitions [Erkenntnisse] of natural laws; in which case it will remain undetermined whether in the inner ground of nature itself, which is unknown to us, physical-mechanical connection and connection to ends may not cohere in the same things, in a single principle: only our reason is not in a position to unify them in such a principle, and thus the power of judgment, as a **reflecting** (on a subjective ground) rather than as a determining (according to an objective principle of the possibility of things in themselves) power of

⁷ As he illustrated shortly before: „**Thesis**: All generation of material things is possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws. **Antithesis**: Some generation of such things is not possible in accordance with merely mechanical laws.“ (KU 5:387).

⁸ I will shortly take up the question why this is the case. Cf. p. 16 f. below.

judgment, is forced to think of another principle than that of the mechanism of nature as the ground of the possibility of certain forms in nature.” (KU 5: 388)

The *problem* with this passage is that the essential „as-if“-character of the resulting teleological judgments about some objects in nature – namely organisms –, is not counter-balanced by a similar „as-if“-character of mechanical explanations.⁹ For only *one* of them – the *teleological explanation* – cannot give rise to constitutive judgment. The same does not hold for mechanical explanation. For, though it may seem as if the ‘physical-mechanical connection’ mentioned in the quote indicates that mechanical and teleological explanation are in this respect in the same boat, Kant repeatedly makes clear, that he thinks of the explanation provided by a superior understanding as a mechanical explanation at least in a broad sense, i.e. an explanation that only relies on efficient causes. That is reflected, for instance, in his description of an intellect that is “another understanding, in relation to which, and indeed prior to any end attributed to it, we can represent that agreement of natural laws with our power of judgment” (KU 5:407) – an intellect we ultimately have to think to conceive the unity of mechanical and teleological causes in one underlying mechanical causal mechanism.

The difference concerning the ‘as-if’-character of the resulting judgments, however, points to a deeper problem – a problem that shows that, after all, the antinomy has *neither* been properly established *nor* yet been properly solved: On the one hand, the antinomy does not yet appear to be an antinomy at all, provided the maxims in question are only heuristic principles and the character of (at least one class of) the resulting judgments is purely reflective to begin with. Thus there simply seems to be no ‘unavoidable illusion’ here.

On the other hand, the solution of the so-called ‘antinomy’ *presupposes* (instead of *arguing for*) the merely regulative character not only of the principles expressed by the two maxims, but also the regulative character of the judgments resulting from at least one of those maxims!

Since I already pointed out that the mechanical maxim, though itself merely regulative, yields determining judgments, it becomes a matter of conceptual necessity for the solution of the antinomy to locate the judgments resulting from the two different heuristic maxims manifesting the principle of the power of judgment on *different levels of description*. It therefore is necessary for a successful solution of the antinomy to give an *argument for the conceptual difference concerning the role of the two maxims*.

⁹ In this respect Kant’s treatment is completely in line with the otherwise importantly different account of these matters in the *Anhang zur transzendentalen Dialektik* of the first *Critique*. Cf. B 712/3.

In other words, only if this difference can be accounted for, the antinomy can count as solved through the „regulative“-move. *How then can this difference be established?* Why can only mechanical explanations be constitutive, while teleological explanations have to principally be confined to the merely regulative realm?

The short answer will be: We have to conceive of the judgments resulting from the teleological maxim as merely regulative, since we are aware that (a) our own understanding is essentially discursive, i.e. has to go from the parts to the whole, and (b) that this is a feature that does not have to be shared by every possible understanding. An alternative understanding that does not operate discursively, but non-discursively or, as Kant puts it, intuitively is at least conceivable.

While our discursive understanding necessarily goes from the intuitively given parts to an intuitively constructed whole, an intuitive understanding “goes from the *synthetically universal* (of the intuition of a whole as such) to the particular, i.e., from the whole to the parts, in which, therefore, and in whose representation of the whole, there is no *contingency* in the combination of the parts, in order to make possible a determinate form of the whole” (KU 5:407).

Since the necessity to explain some appearances teleologically thus is due to a merely contingent fact about the constitution of our cognitive faculties, we understand that our teleological judgment cannot be about things in themselves even in the weak empirical sense here in play where those things ultimately are only appearances. We therefore (a’) cannot but judge teleologically in the face of certain phenomena, i.e. living organisms, because of that *fact about our cognition*; and (b’) we have to understand at the same time that these necessary judgments are merely reflective because this is a *contingent* fact about our cognition.

But even if this would be correct and there were a contingent fact about our cognitive faculties that lies at the bottom of our teleological judgments thereby making them merely reflective: *why*, it will certainly be asked, is this merely contingent fact about our cognitive faculties any *different* from the likewise contingent facts about our cognitive faculties that are responsible for the specific character of the objects of experience that nevertheless are subjected to constitutive judgments? Why is the fact that something is judged to be a natural end different from the fact that something is judged to be a natural mechanism?

3 The Presentation of the Concept of Objective Purposiveness

We cannot, I believe, properly answer these questions unless we take a closer look at the interplay between understanding, imagination, and sensibility. For only then will we be able to properly understand the difference between our teleological and our mechanical judgments.

Since I did not so far bring the faculty of imagination into play, let me begin this elucidation with a quote from the *Introduction* of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* that will help to make clear the relevance of this faculty for the questions under scrutiny:

“[W]e can regard **natural beauty** as the **presentation** [Darstellung] of the concept of formal (merely subjective) purposiveness and **natural ends** as the presentation of the concept of a real (objective) purposiveness, one of which we judge through taste (aesthetically, by means of the feeling of pleasure), the other through understanding and reason (logically, in accordance with concepts).” (KU 5:193)

And Kant goes on to highlight the importance of this distinction for the architectonic of the work as a whole in noticing:

“On this is grounded the division of the critique of the power of judgment into that of the **aesthetic** and **teleological** power of judgment; by the former is meant the faculty for judging formal purposiveness (also called subjective) through the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, by the latter the faculty for judging the real purposiveness (objective) of nature through understanding and reason.” (KU 5:193)

What is meant by Kant’s claim that natural beauty and natural ends are the *presentation* (Darstellung) of subjective and objective purposiveness respectively? Let me begin with the concept of subjective and objective purposiveness.

We already know what purposiveness is according to Kant: *Purposiveness* (of the form of an object) is “the correspondence of a thing with that constitution of things that is possible only in accordance with ends” (KU 5:181), where an end is “the concept of an object insofar as it at the same time contains the ground of the reality of this object” (ibid.).

Purposiveness in this sense can be differentiated in purposiveness that is represented in an object of experience either for a subjective or an objective reason and accordingly between subjective and objective purposiveness.

Subjective purposiveness is presented in an object of experience “as a correspondence of its form in its **apprehension** (*apprehensio*) prior to any concept with the faculties of cognition, in order to unite the intuition with concepts for a cognition in general” (KU 5: 193).

This characterization, situated immediately before the quote about natural beauty and natural ends as presentations of purposiveness, already brings imagination into play: apprehension being the synthesizing activity of imagination of taking up a given manifold and bringing it into consciousness. That imagination is operating here ‘prior to any concept’ should *not* be understood as the imagination operating here *independently* of any concepts. This would otherwise mark a significant departure from Kant’s overall account of our intuitive access to empirical reality. Furthermore, it seems hardly to agree with his treatment of subjective purposiveness in the *Critique of Aesthetic Power of Judgment*, aesthetic judgment being one of the most important areas of application of the concept of subjective purposiveness.¹⁰ In aesthetic judgment it is not the case that we have no concept at all to characterize the object of our judgment. We rather find that the beautiful object inspires us to find ever new (conceptual) interpretations of the given object none of which ever seems to do ultimate justice to the object in question.¹¹ (That seems to be what Kant has in mind when he says that the apprehension of the object’s form corresponds to the faculty of cognition the latter being exactly the faculty that brings intuitions under concepts – in this case, however, not under specific concepts but under concepts in general, because no one specific concept can do fully justice to the beautiful object!) It is this inexhaustibility of possibilities of interpretation that Kant later on describes as a ‘free play of the powers of cognition’ – a play that immediately evokes “the immediate pleasure in the form of the object in mere reflection on [this form]” (KU 5:192) and thus establishes the relationship between the power of judgment and the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.

Objective purposiveness, on the other hand, is represented in an object as “a correspondence of its form with the possibility of the thing itself, in accordance with a concept of it which precedes and contains the ground of this form” (KU 5:192).

This definition ties in with the definitions of end and purposiveness above: While purposiveness *in general* is the correspondence of a thing’s form with that aspect of the object in question that is possible only in accordance with a concept of an object that contains the

¹⁰ The other important area of application is the heuristic function that finds its expression in the transcendental principle of purposiveness.

¹¹ Cf. Förster 2011, 140/1.

ground of the reality of this object, *objective* purposiveness is adding to this the condition that the aspect of the object in question is something *in the thing itself* (which is not to be confused with something in a thing *in* itself). In other words, for objective purposiveness we have to think of *an object itself as an end*.

Kant is obviously correct in emphasizing that this kind of purposiveness has nothing to do anymore with the feeling of pleasure or displeasure: Where objective purposiveness is concerned the subject is not the relation of an object to our faculty of cognition, but the (determinate) cognition of the object itself “under a given concept” (ibid.) – and that subsumption of an object under a given concept is, of course, an activity of the power of judgment in accordance with understanding *and* (as we will see shortly) reason.

Again, we have to be careful and should not interpret Kant’s talk about ‘given concepts’ and ‘cognition’ or, as it is sometimes translated, ‘knowledge’ (*Erkenntnis*) too strong. Kant is emphasizing that the object is only to be *represented* in accordance with a given concept, i.e. a given *idea* in the Early Modern sense of the word. That explicitly is not meant to imply that the object itself as an object of experience is indeed *correctly* subsumed under that concept.

In contexts like this, as we have seen, we have to pay special attention to the question whether the judgment under scrutiny is a judgment of the determining or the reflective power of judgment; whether, in other words, in this case we really subsume under a given concept (by means of the determining power of judgment) or, alternatively, are forced by the confrontation with certain empirical phenomena to form new concepts by means of the reflective power of judgment.

Kant himself articulates this difference immediately after this characterization of objective purposiveness and distinguishes two kinds of correspondence between a given concept in the relevant sense and the form of an object that is preceded by the concept: Those two kinds of representing the object as objectively purposive are (1) the generation of artefacts and (2) what Kant calls ‘technique of nature’ (cf. 5:193), that comes to the fore in organized bodies which we can only comprehend when we ascribe to nature “our concept of an end for judging its product” (KU 5: 193).

In the first case there is in fact a generation of something in accordance with a given concept: the artefact is a product of our intentional act of generation that realizes some previous concept of this object, i.e. an end. In the second case that obviously is of more interest for the

topic of our discussion, unlike subjective purposiveness “what is represented is not merely a **purposiveness** of nature in the form of the thing, but this product of it is represented as a **natural end**.” (KU 5: 193)

It is, of course, not the case that we in this representation of a product of nature after a given concept – namely, our concept of an end – somehow generate the object that this concept is applied to. We rather represent a given object in this case *as if* it was generated in accordance with a given concept (an end).

Although, therefore, in this second case we do not only represent nature in relation to our faculty of cognition (as we do in the case of *subjective* purposiveness), we neither say anything about the properties that the objects in question – living organisms – really have. We are, however, not only *justified* to ascribe those properties for *heuristic* reasons, but in experiencing those phenomena have no other choice, but to judge in this way. The resulting judgment is, as we have seen above, a necessary reaction of our power of judgment, but only in its reflective, not its determining mode.

Given this analysis of the concepts of subjective and objective purposiveness points into the right direction, what then can we make of Kant’s talk about natural beauty and natural ends as the *presentation* of those concepts?

4 Imagination as the Faculty of Presentation

Let me begin by noticing that for Kant the faculty of presentation is *imagination*. What then is *presentation*? Kant in the context of our quotation introduces this concept as follows: „If the concept of an object is given, then the business of the power of judgment in using it for cognition consists in **presentation** (*exhibitio*), i.e., in placing a corresponding intuition beside the concept.“ (KU 5: 192)

What might, at first, seem rather cryptical in this characterization of presentation is the fact that Kant ascribes this activity to the power of judgment. For in many other places Kant is very clear that this is a (central) business of *imagination*. For instance, in a later paragraph of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* he writes: “[T]he faculty of presentation is the imagination.” (KU 5: 232) (Another case in point can be found in the notorious *Deduction* of the *Analytic of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment*. (Cf. KU 5:287.)) What is of importance for

us is, furthermore, Kant's emphasis that the faculty of *apprehension* is "one and the same" (KU 5:279) with the faculty of *presentation*.

What does it mean that the faculty of imagination is at the same time the faculty of presentation *and* the faculty of apprehension? Imagination is first and foremost the faculty of synthesis: Its central epistemological function consists in the synthetic construction of intuitions in accordance with concepts. In a complex 'threefold synthesis' the imagination takes up the sensibly given material into consciousness and restructures it in accordance with the forms of intuitions specific to our (human) sensibility and in accordance with the categories of the understanding that are likewise made suitable for our sensibility or, as Kant puts it, that are schematized. This complex process is called the synthesis of *apprehension*¹²: in its course the subject synthetically apprehends the sensibly given material and constructs complex representations.

Those representations are Kantian *intuitions*, i.e. at the same time sensible and intellectual representations of objects of experience whose basic function it is to bring an object before the mind for its consideration.¹³ It is, however, important to note that Kantian intuitions are not merely categorically structured manifold, but, at least where empirical concepts are involved, as it were sensible models of the concepts in question: they are, as Kant writes in the *Schematism*, products of methods for providing the concepts with pictures.¹⁴ Imagination in this sense really is a faculty that provides concepts with pictures: It is in this sense a faculty of *presentation*.

With this in mind we can turn back to the seeming identification of the faculty of judgment with the faculty of presentation. A closer look at the quoted passage can uncover an alternative reading: Kant starts by writing "the business of the power of judgment in using it for cognition consists in **presentation** (*exhibitio*)" (5:192), but then proceeds, that the presentation in question can consist specifically either in the generation of artefacts or in the representation of a 'technique of nature' in the sense elucidated above: This can be done "through our own imagination, as in art, when we realize an antecedently conceived concept of an object that is an end for us, or through nature, in its technique (as in the case of

¹² At least in the 2nd edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cf. B 162. In the first edition the synthesis of apprehension is only the first part of the threefold synthesis. Cf. A 98-100.

¹³ Cf. Sellars 1978.

¹⁴ A 140. This, of course, is grossly oversimplifying the role of intuition. For a detailed account along these lines cf. Haag 2007 Ch. 7 and 8.

organized bodies), when we ascribe to it our concept of an end for judging its product" (KU 5:192/3).

From the account of imagination in the first *Critique* we know, however, that this can by no means be an exhaustive alternative: The imagination as a faculty of presentation is present in every single act of synthesis of an intuition. Against this background, Kant seems to leave out what is most important about imagination.

An alternative reading is possible, if one takes seriously that the cases in question are cases where it really is the faculty of judgment that is active and, as it were, intentionally puts the faculty of imagination to use, whereas in the usual cases it is the understanding that most of the time unconsciously, but certainly non-intentionally synthesizes a given sensible manifold into an intuition of this manifold. Kant consequently can be understood to point to the activity of the faculty of judgment that intentionally invokes the imagination for the purpose of synthetic presentation: either in the intentional synthesizing of an artefact (the production of a new object of experience) or in a re-synthesizing of a given object of experience in accordance with a new concept it wants to subsume the intuitively given object to in a (teleological) judgement. Imagination, according to this reading, still would be the faculty of presentation and the resulting presentations would still be intuitively give objects – either artefacts or natural ends – , but it would serve only as a tool for the purposes of the faculty of judgment.

Given this reading, what can we make of Kant's claim – immediately following the discussed passage – that *natural beauty* and *natural ends* are the *presentations of the concepts of subjective and objective purposiveness*, respectively?¹⁵ After what we have heard, it should be clear that those presentations somehow are the products of the imagination in its synthesizing function, i.e. presentations the imagination is constructing in accordance with certain concepts.

What concepts is the imagination drawing on in this construction? It is plausible to think of the concepts presented in a presentation as providing the conceptual resources in accordance

¹⁵ "[W]e can regard **natural beauty** as the **presentation** [Darstellung] of the concept of formal (merely subjective) purposiveness and **natural ends** as the presentation of the concept of a real (objective) purposiveness, one of which we judge through taste (aesthetically, by means of the feeling of pleasure), the other through understanding and reason (logically, in accordance with concepts)." (KU 5:193)

with which the presentation is construed. Consequently, the natural candidates in the case at hand obviously are the concepts of subjective and objective purposiveness, respectively.

Since the presentations of objects are, as we have seen, in the paradigmatic case nothing but intuitions, it seems that the imagination in presenting the concepts of subjective or objective purposiveness constructs *intuitions* in accordance with those concepts.

In the *case of objective purposiveness* an intuition representing an object as objectively purposive is indeed a plausible way of presentation: the entities that serve as presentations of this concept, really *are* objects of a certain kind. They are organisms and therefore represented as *natural ends*.

But here a note of caution is in order: It is, of course, not the case, that we somehow voluntarily construe natural ends simply in accordance with certain concepts. It is, as we have seen in our discussion of objective purposiveness, exactly the other way round: we are *first* confronted with certain given phenomena (organisms) that *then* necessitate the formation of the concept of a natural end. Only after having formed this concept, in the face of phenomena that force us to do so, we can then intentionally – but *not* by choice, since we do not have any rational alternative – construe intuitive representations of objects of experience in accordance with *this new* concept of a natural end. Only now can we understand the objects so construed as *presentations* of the concept of objective purposiveness: It is presented in a *natural object* that necessarily is conceived as a *purpose* or an *end*. Intuitions thus construed are representations that present objects as natural ends – and therefore are *presentations of the concept of objective purposiveness*.

We already know why we form the concept of a natural end in the first place, i.e. what it is, that makes the formation of this concept *inevitable*: It is a reaction to an inability on the side of our understanding to come to grips with these phenomena by means of the mechanical means of connection that suffices in describing and subsequently synthesizing all other natural phenomena. We cannot explain what goes on in these cases by means of mechanical explanation. Mechanical explanation is always an explanation that explains a given entity as the sum of its parts. But organisms are not mere sums of their parts:

“In such a product of nature each part is conceived as if it exists only **through** all the others, thus as if existing **for the sake of the others** and **on account of** the whole, i.e., as an instrument (organ), which is, however, not sufficient (for it could also be an instrument of art, and thus represented as possible at all only as an end); rather it must be thought of as an organ that

produces the other parts (consequently each produces the others reciprocally), which cannot be the case in any instrument of art, but only of nature, which provides all the matter for instruments (even those of art): only then and on that account can such a product, as an **organized and self-organizing** being, be called a **natural end**.” (KU 5:373/4)

This *mutual causality of whole and part* we encounter in organisms is, as Kant clarifies, “strictly speaking ... *not analogous with any causality that we know*” (KU 5:375; emphasis J.H.). It is “not thinkable and not explicable even through an exact analogy with human art” (ibd.).

It is for a discursive understanding like ours only graspable by a “remote analogy” (ibd.) with a causality we know, i.e. a final cause in which the *representation of the end* precedes the result of the process of production. In this case the representation of the whole does indeed precede the existence of the parts: We first form the idea and only afterwards work on its realization.

The analogy, however, is not only remote, but, ‘strictly speaking’, *not an analogy at all*, since the object in question is at the same time represented as a *natural* object, i.e. as an object that exhibits this causality *in itself*, and is not caused by a rational being *external* to it. (Otherwise it would be an “analogue of art” (KU 5:374).) We conceptually struggle with this phenomenon, since the *mutual causality of whole and part* does not fit within the constraints of our conceptual system, and we have to contend ourselves with the construction of an *auxiliary* mongrel concept that does fit this framework at least by analogy with the familiar concept of intentional final causation.¹⁶

So, our use of the concept of a natural end is not only necessary, given our cognitive constitution, it is at the same time experienced as ultimately not doing full justice to the phenomena to be explained (and, subsequently, synthesized in accordance with this concept).

We will shortly come back to the specifics of our understanding and its functioning both in imagination and in judgment that ultimately necessitate the formation of this strange concept

¹⁶ This is the point at which Hanah Ginsborgs influential criticism of Peter McLaughlin’s interpretation goes astray. She writes: “For, to put the point very simply, the mechanical inexplicability of organisms in that sense is supposed to be a ground for regarding them teleologically: it is because organisms are, to us, mechanically inexplicable, that we must regard them as ends or purposes. But for Kant there is no less of a need for teleology in understanding a machine such as a watch, than there is in understanding an organism. And this means that—unless, implausibly, the need for teleology in the two cases stems from two quite different sources—it cannot be the non-machine-like character of organisms which makes them mechanically inexplicable. Rather, what makes them mechanically inexplicable has to be something they share with machines and other artifacts.” (Ginsborg 2004, 37) This would only be right, if organisms would exhibit a causality ‘analogous to a causality we know’, i.e. the final causation of intentional action.

of a natural end. For these will prove of pivotal importance in answering the questions we had to leave open in the context of our discussion of the antinomy: namely, why there is an antinomy in the first place and why this antinomy can justifiably be solved by pointing to the reflective character of the teleological judgments.

But let me first at least sketch an answer to the question in what sense *natural beauty* is a *presentation of the concept of subjective purposiveness*. This is the more problematic case: for, as Kant remarks, while our concept of subjective purposiveness *is* a concept that guides our orientation in the manifold that has to be brought under specific natural laws just as much as it lies at the foundation of our aesthetic judgments of taste (as a source of the feeling of pleasure and displeasure), it *is not* a concept of an object:

“Although our concept of a subjective purposiveness of nature in its forms, in accordance with empirical laws, is not a concept of the object at all, but only a principle of the power of judgment for providing concepts in the face of excessive multiplicity in nature (in order to be oriented in it), we nevertheless hereby ascribe to it [i.e. nature] as it were a regard to our faculty of cognition, in accordance with the analogy of an end” (KU 5: 193).

The special laws found under the application of the heuristic principle of purposiveness, however, are indeed not in any way presentations of this purposiveness although their discovery is guided by the concept of subjective purposiveness: Firstly, the experience of *some* special natural laws is not enough for the presentation of a subjective purposiveness that consists in the heuristic supposition that *all* of nature can be brought under laws. And, more importantly, special laws are sentences (or principles) – and therefore no potential products of the synthesis of imagination.

The same, fortunately, does not hold for the other case of subjective purposiveness, i.e. *natural beauty*. Although natural beauty is not really ‘in nature’ – not even for the reflective power of judgment, its being no empirical product of an object¹⁷ – it is in this case intuitively given objects of experience that we judge as a way of *nature somehow adjusting to our cognitive faculties*, i.e. nature being purposive for those faculties. And in this way natural beauty, as *experienced* in the activity of prolonged synthesizing in accordance with ever new concepts on occasion of intuitively given objects indeed is a presentation of this particular concept of purposiveness.

5 The Antinomy of Teleological Judgment revisited

To see the relevance of all this for the establishing of the antinomy *and* its Kantian solution, we have to emphasize the intimate interwovenness of sensible material and concepts in the intuitive products of the imagination: It is the conceptual element even of our intuitive representations that makes possible both the antinomy and its solution.

The main elements of this interpretation are in place by now and we thus are in possession of the means necessary to take up the question we had to leave unanswered in the discussion of the antinomy of the power of judgment: Why is the merely contingent fact about our cognitive faculties that motivate the classification of teleological judgments as *reflective* judgments any different from the likewise contingent facts about our cognitive faculties that are responsible for the specific character of the objects of experience that nevertheless are subjected to *determining* judgments? Why, in other words, is the fact that something is judged to be a natural end different in this important respect from the fact that something is judged to be a natural mechanism?

Let me take as my point of departure the *concept of a natural end as a presentation of objective purposiveness*: As we have seen this concept is inevitably formed by the understanding in reaction to certain phenomena intuitively given by the synthesizing activity of the imagination. This activity is in the ordinary case of natural objects simply guided by categorical concepts together with already abstracted empirical concepts. In the special case of organism we find that the synthesized material cannot be understood by the empirical concepts already in place. Consequently, the understanding has to react by the formation of a *new concept*, i.e. the concept of a *natural end*. *It thus is the synthesis of the imagination that in this special case inevitably leads to the formation of the concept of natural end.*

In doing this, however, we find that the resulting empirical concept aims to integrate two different kinds of dependence that cannot ordinarily be thought united in one and the same object: a dependence of the whole on the parts *and* a dependence of the parts on the whole. This dependence can be conceived by a *discursive* understanding like our own only in analogy to the teleological dependence of the *artefact* to its idea in the artist: organisms have to be conceived as *ends*. Since organisms unlike artefacts are, however, at the same time *natural objects*, i.e. objects that are a product of nature, not of thinking beings, we have to

¹⁷ Cf. Pippin 1997, 145/6.

think of organisms as *natural ends*. The mongrel concept thus inevitably construed on the basis of the material intuitively given by the imagination is therefore a concept that “includes natural necessity and yet at the same time a contingency of the form of the object (in relation to mere laws of nature) in one and the same thing as an end” (KU 5:396).

But this concept of a natural end, even if it does not contain a downright contradiction, is still only a “problematic concept” (KU 5:397) in the Kantian sense, since *it cannot be abstracted from possible experience*.¹⁸ We therefore, due to the constitution of our understanding, have to draw on another faculty for the construction of the concept of a natural end namely the faculty of *reason*: To conceive of something as an *end* essentially draws on the faculty of reason as the faculty that is responsible for the explanation of intentional action, i.e. an explanation that is essentially teleological. The concept of an end, taken from the explanatory discourse of intentional action, therefore is united here with the concept of mechanical explanation in the concept of a natural end.

At this point we are in contact again with the topic of the antinomy of judgment: We can now understand why the antinomy poses a serious problem and why we cannot simply revert to the merely heuristic character of the two maxims.

The reason for this is, of course, the *inevitability* of our synthesizing some of the sensibly given material according to the concept of a natural end. And if this is the case, teleological judgment cannot simply be a matter of (heuristic) choice anymore: We have to introduce teleological explanation not only in our scientific pursuit of a unified empirical reality, but we already necessarily invoke teleological concepts in the synthetical construction of at least some of our intuitions of objects of experience.

The teleological judgments that make explicit what is contained in these intuitions of natural ends are necessary, but – like the intuitive representations they refer and initially gave rise to – problematic, since we cannot understand how in empirical reality natural ends can exist. We cannot, in other words, distance ourselves from the concept of a natural end as a mere heuristic means, since we are forced to synthesize objects in accordance with it – and are thus inevitably led to *present* (*darstellen*) the concept of objective purposiveness in natural objects. The step from heuristic judgment – an exercise of our faculty of judgment – to intuitive

¹⁸ Cf. KU 5:408.28/9. Since the concept cannot simply be abstracted from the objects in question – organisms – it had to be formed, as we have seen, by an *analogical* transformation from the concept of an end.

presentation – an exercise of our faculty of imagination – consequently leads to an antinomy, i.e. an ‘unavoidable illusion’ forced upon us by a ‘natural dialectic’¹⁹.

How is this antinomy to be *solved*? As we have seen, Kant’s argumentative move is to avert this antinomy by pointing to the distinction between reflective judgment and determining judgment: While mechanical judgments are determining, teleological judgments are merely reflective. We are now in a better position to understand why this is not an *ad hoc*-move.

To this end we have to recall Kant’s distinction between a *discursive* and an *intuitive understanding*. Let me quote to Eckart Förster, who has done more than anybody else for our understanding of this difference and the consequences for the solution of the antinomy of judgment, for the relevance of this distinction:

“The possibility of a non-antinomial concept of natural purpose ... rests on a peculiarity of the human understanding ... What makes it appear to be a constitutive principle is the fact that experience constantly supplies us with examples of such beings in which necessity and contingency seem to be simultaneously instantiated: “(the product itself) is given in nature, after all” (5:405; translation modified).” (Förster 2011, 151)

It is, of course, this fact that I tried to explain above by tracing it back to the presentation of objective purposiveness by the imagination in organisms that we have to think of as natural ends. Förster, however, goes on to explain:

“Yet it is only due to the peculiarity of our discursive understanding that the simultaneity of blind necessity and intentionality appears to us as a contradiction. As Kant points out, though, we can only become aware of this peculiarity [as a peculiarity] by contrasting it with “the idea of a possible understanding other than the human one (as in the *Critique of Pure Reason* we had to have in mind another possible intuition if we were to hold our own to be a special kind, namely one that is valid of objects merely as appearances)” (5:405).” (Förster 2011, 151/2)

And Förster shortly afterwards proceeds to outline what he believes to be the solution of the antinomy:

“Kant is not claiming, then, that such a (divine) understanding exists, nor that the possibility of organisms actually presupposes the representation of any end. His claim is only that the constitution of our discursive faculty of cognition forces upon us the concept of natural purpose

¹⁹ Cf. KU 5:386.

and with it the idea of an understanding from which the distinctive features of natural purposes could be lawfully derived.” (Förster 2011, 153)

This divine understanding emerges as important for the overall picture of teleology in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* in more than this respect: Not only can it serve to contrast our understanding with the divine understanding in the way just described; it is furthermore the means by which we can think the principle of the subjective purposiveness of nature (referred to above²⁰) in the unifiability of natural laws as potentially realized.

However, for the solution of the antinomy a *more modest concept* of an alternative, non-discursive understanding turns out to be *sufficient*, as Förster then points out:

Kant then goes on, however, to characterize this understanding as an intuitive faculty which “goes from the *synthetically universal* (of the intuition of a whole as such) to the particular, i.e., from the whole to the parts, in which, therefore, and in whose representation of the whole, there is no *contingency* in the combination of the parts, in order to make possible a determinate form of the whole” (5:407). This characterization reveals that that other understanding which we must be able to conceive in order to resolve the antinomy of the power of judgment, need not in fact be a divine or causative understanding. It suffices for it to be an intuitive understanding which goes from the whole to the parts; whether or not it is causally responsible for the whole need not be decided. For as Kant explicitly emphasizes, it is undeniably possible that “another (higher) understanding than the human one might be able to find the ground of the possibility of such products of nature even in the mechanism of nature, i.e., in a causal connection for which an understanding does not have to be exclusively assumed as a cause” (5:406). Note that Kant refers here to the *products* and not necessarily to the whole of nature.” (Förster *ibid.*)

I fully agree with what Förster says here in characterization of the intuitive understanding that is not a divine understanding. But I would like to close by drawing consequences from this brilliant analysis that seem to differ from the suggestions Förster makes here concerning the *role* of this non-divine intuitive understanding in the solution to the antinomy.

So, let us put this distinction to work in our solution of the antinomy: We wanted to know, why only teleological judgments are merely reflective judgments whereas mechanical judgments are not. The answer, drawing upon many of the elements elucidated above, by now seems to be comparatively simple: The power of judgment *can* – a conceptual “can” – only be

²⁰ Cf. p. 5.

reflective in this context, because of the conceptual possibility of an *intuitive understanding* in its modest, non-divine or, as I would like to call it, *epistemological version*²¹.

This intuitive understanding could, at least *in principle*, operate on the very same given *sensible material* that our own *discursive understanding* is operating on in the synthesis of imagination.²² Furthermore, it would make use of the concepts that form the wider ‘mechanical’ framework outlined by the schematized categories and the resulting principles of the first *Critique*.²³ Unlike our discursive understanding, however, it would be able to conceive of the *mechanical* generation and survival of organisms, i.e. it would *not* have to conceive them as results of “intentional production” (KU 5:408.37) or, equivalently, as *ends*. This being a conceptual possibility, it rules out our teleological judging organisms as natural ends being constitutive. Thus the possibility of this kind of intuitive understanding that ultimately guarantees teleological judgements to be merely reflective.

This intuitive understanding would, consequently, with its own cognitive capacities structure the very same empirical sensory input in a way largely overlapping with our own structuring principles. Furthermore, the *shared* principles guiding our own discursive understanding both in judgment and underlying imagination just as much as the principles of an intuitive understanding would indeed be shared *constitutive* principles. It is about the principle underlying the presentation of a very limited kind of phenomena (organisms) that intuitive and discursive understanding would *differ* – against the background of a shared empirical reality. That is the reason why those principles cannot have more than only subjective necessity – and consequently cannot produce other than *reflective judgments*.

Note that this seems to cover not only the objective judgments concerning natural ends, but equally the search for subsumption of concrete natural events under particular natural laws that then can be related to the most general laws we impose on nature (as discussed in the *Introduction* of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*). This task would be unnecessary for an understanding that could start from an intuition of the whole of nature as a whole and would thus immediately perceive of this “agreement (Zusammenstimmung)” (KU 5:407.2) as

²¹ I take Kant to refer to this sense in what he, in his notes on Metaphysics calls the *intellectus archetypus secundum analogiam*: „intellectus archetypus. ... Man denkt ihn in Ansehung der Welt secundum analogiam, aber nur sofern sein Begriff ein regulativ principium seyn soll; aber *per eminentiam* ohne analogie, wenn von ihm absolute die Rede ist.“ (18:431)

²² “... and that this principle does not pertain to the possibility of such things in themselves (even considered as phenomena) in accordance with this sort of generation, but pertains only to the judging of them that is possible for our understanding” (KU 5:408.10-13; Herv. JH)

²³ For the distinction between a more encompassing concept of mechanism and a narrower concept as efficient causation that necessarily goes from parts to whole as employed in the third *Critique* cf. McLaughlin 1990, 153.

a matter of necessity. Still, it would to this end not have to be a *divine* understanding, since it would be different from the modest intuitive understanding only in degree not in quality, as Kant might put it.

Has the antinomy thus been solved? Only, I would like to suggest, given a presupposition that in turn can be justified only with the help of the concept of an *intellectual intuition*. That the modest intuitive understanding can be conceived of as operating on the very same sensible material, sharply differentiates this kind of intuitive understanding from the *divine intuitive understanding* or, as Kant calls what at the level of things-in-themselves is presumably the very same faculty, *productive intellectual intuition* (KU 5:409.12)²⁴: Divine intuitive understanding necessary works on a *non-sensible* manifold that is *not given* to it, but is made possible by itself *qua* absolute spontaneity (KU 5:406.21/2).²⁵ As divine intuitive understanding it would have unmediated access to a reality, productively brought into existence according to its own ends, that we have knowledge of only through being affected by it.

Are the concepts of intuitive understanding (as *intellectus archetypus per eminentiam*²⁶) and intellectual intuition in any meaningful way distinct? One, possibly instructive, difference might be the *different conceptual focus* on one and the same counterpart of our cognitive faculties: The concept of *intellectual intuition* thus would point to this faculty's productive aspect (that is, as it were, productively responsible for the „supersensible real ground for nature“ (5:409.13/4)); while the concept of *intuitive understanding* would come into play whenever we are to think of the (again: not gradually, but qualitatively) higher intellectual capacities of what ultimately is the very same faculty.

This distinction points to the role of *intellectual intuition*, as introduced in § 77²⁷, in the solution of the antinomy. We have seen that the modest intuitive understanding gives us a reason for deeming our own judgment on natural ends as merely *reflective* and thus not being in conflict with the *constitutive* mechanical judgments. *This, however, leaves open the possibility that they are not really to be taken serious as judgments at all.* True, they are

²⁴ As opposed to an intuition that is intellectual, because it is not sensible. Cf. Förster 2011,160. This kind of intuition has no role to play in the solution of the antinomy.

²⁵ Cf. 18:431: „Der göttliche Verstand heißt der höchste und reine ~~un~~ Verstand, der die Dinge erkennt schlechthin, wie sie an sich selbst sind. Er ist nicht sinnlich bedingt. Es ist keine receptivität, sondern absolute spontaneität. Er ist *intellectus originarius*, nicht *derivativus*. Seine Erkenntnisse sind Anschauungen, nicht Begriffe, aber nicht sinnliche Anschauungen, sondern Ideen, die nicht die Dinge voraussetzen, sondern sie möglich machen. *intellectus archetypus*.“

²⁶ Cf. 18:431.

²⁷ Cf. KU 5:409.12

forced on us by the existence of certain natural phenomena (organisms) and, not having an intuitive understanding, we have to resort to conceive of them as natural ends. But is not this sort of teleological reasoning completely unfounded? May it not be a helpless reaction by an inherently deficient finite being, understandable for its inevitability, but still hopelessly inadequate even for the description of empirical reality?

This cannot be taken for an answer, since it would make incomprehensible the many remarks in the third *Critique* that seem intended to deny just that: Teleological reasoning is not only necessary for studying organized beings²⁸, it is furthermore *warranted* by the possibility of an *intellectual intuition*: It turns out to be *not only necessary* according to the texture of our cognitive faculty, to refer in our judgment on organisms back to the ends²⁹ of an “original understanding as cause of the world” (KU 5:410.11) that generated a substratum (*Substrat*) as the supersensible foundation (qua real ground (*Realgrund*)) for natural ends. It is at the same time *justified* since it is “at least possible to consider the material world as a mere appearance, and to conceive of something as a thing in itself (which is not an appearance) as substratum, and to correlate [unterzulegen] with this a corresponding intellectual intuition (even if it is not ours)” (KU 5:409.8-13).

Given the specific texture of our cognitive faculty, we therefore are justified to reflectively classify organisms as teleological phenomena, whose existence is due to an underlying productive intellectual intuition providing their supersensible real ground.

The intuitive understanding, modestly conceived, does not warrant the thought of such a supernatural ground on its own. This justification is *presupposed* in the reasoning that is intended to solve the antinomy and has to be justified *independently* by showing the possibility of a being capable of intellectual intuition whose ideas could be ends in nature (understood as the *whole* of our experience). This, however, is an easy task only *after* we have shown (as Kant takes himself to have in the first *Critique*) that we are not “justified in regarding material beings as things in themselves” (KU 5:409:1/2).

The intuitive understanding alone can consequently solve the antinomy only if we were justified in pointing to a possible intellectual intuition in the first place. It alone cannot guarantee the possibility of this kind of productive intellectual intuition, at least not taken in

²⁸ Cf. KU 5:410.1-3

²⁹ This marks a decisive contrast with the modest intuitive understanding: This intuitive understanding would not need to invoke ends for the explanation of nature, but would be able to give a quasi-mechanical explanation without reference to any kind of “intentional generation (absichtliche Hervorbringung)” (KU 5:408.37).

its modest form. And even taken in its divine form, the concept of an intuitive understanding would not be the right problematic concept to choose, since not the superior intellectual qualities of an infinite being are at stake, but its productive abilities in accordance with an idea.

It hence has to be an *intentional* intellectual intuition whose existence is presupposed as possible in the justification of our teleological judgments that nevertheless are only reflective and can thus serve solving the alleged antinomy. We therefore can “judge [nature; cf. KU 5:409.14] according to two types of principles, without thereby excluding the mechanical kind of explanation through the teleological, as if they were contradicting each other” (KU 5:409.20-22).

To sum up this point: We as finite rational beings with a discursive understanding have to locate the ground for the existence of organisms, that can be *in nature* for a (modest) intuitive understanding, in a supersensible substratum that we can think because we can conceive of a being that qua its capacity for intellectual intuition could be the cause of the world (*Weltursache*).

Given this reasoning, the solution of the antinomy that, as I tried to show, heavily rests on the availability of an argument for this classification of the resulting judgments as reflective, seems, after all, to be successful.

Since both the inevitable occurrence of the antinomy and its solution depend upon the constitution of our cognitive faculties and therefore cannot be changed by any possible empirical or theoretical findings, we can say with certainty that „with respect to our cognitive faculty, it is ... indubitably certain that the mere mechanism of nature is ... incapable of providing an explanatory ground for the generation of organized beings“ (KU 5:389).

The search for what constitutes the regulative/constitutive-difference concerning the judgments resulting from the application of the two maxims thus at the same time proved to be a way to make intelligible why Kant was so sure that „it would be absurd for humans ... to hope that there may yet arise a Newton who could make comprehensible even the generation of a blade of grass according to natural laws that no intention has ordered“ (KU 5:400).³⁰

³⁰ Tellingly, this claim is repeated in very similar words in KU 5:409.33-37, immediately before the conclusion is repeated in just the way that motivated my interpretation.

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