

Schematism and Free Play: The Imagination's Formal Power as a Unifying Feature in Kant's Doctrine of the Faculties

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Abstract

The role of the imagination within Kant's Critical framework remains an issue for any attempt to unify the three *Critiques* through the Doctrine of the Faculties. This work provides a reading of the imagination that serves to unify the imagination through its formal capacity, or ability to recognize harmony and produce the necessary lawfulness that grounds the possibility of judgment. The argument of this work exists in 2 parts. 1) The imagination's formal ability is present, yet concealed, as early as the Schematism in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and reaches its fullest exposition in instances of harmonious free play in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. 2) This formal capacity is key to not only demonstrating the imagination as an original, unified, and independent faculty across Kant's Critical framework, but also serves as grounds for the purposiveness of nature – a key aspect of Kantian aesthetics.

Key words

Imagination, Purposiveness, Reflective Judgment, Schematism, Harmonious Free Play

I. Introduction

The role of the imagination within Kant's Critical framework and its value as a faculty alongside the understanding and reason has remained an open question in not only Kantian scholarship but even within Kant's own works. Despite the contentious status of the

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imagination, there are several features of the imagination that serve as a ground for any investigation into this mysterious aspect of Kant's transcendental project. First, the imagination is most immediately recognized in its role in the synthesis of sense data with the concepts of the understanding. That is, Kant clearly intended the imagination to bear a close relationship with the faculty of the understanding. Second, the imagination retains a certain connection to sensibility, which is seen not only in its ability to prepare sense material for conceptual application but also its role in aesthetic judgment, which is primarily sensible as a felt reaction to beauty and the sublime. Finally, as demonstrated in Kant's treatment of aesthetic and teleological judgments, there is a connection between the imagination and reason. What these features of the imagination suggest is a broader 'Doctrine of the Faculties' at work within Kant's Critical system – a doctrine that requires an analysis of the relationships between understanding, reason, and the imagination.¹

That Kant intends for this relationship to be neither static nor uniform across the *Critiques* is clear. Each Critique offers a different orientation of the faculties. That is, the relationship between understanding, reason, and the imagination will differ in the uses of pure reason, practical reason, and judgment. Further, it is important to note that while each faculty provides a certain legislative role,² this does not mean that the other faculties cease to be useful, or have no role to play under the direction of another faculty; rather, each faculty maintains a particular and irreducible character regardless of its use in pure reason, practical reason, or judgment. To understand Kant's transcendental project is to understand these orientations between the faculties since they and their relation to each other are the sources of our representations. As such, this doctrine provides a way to not only work through each particular Critique, which is a benefit in itself, but it also sheds light on an important unifying thread across all three texts and brings the full value of Kant's project to the foreground.

¹ Here I am using Gilles Deleuze's conception of the 'Doctrine of the Faculties' as a way of unifying Kant's three *Critiques*. Deleuze considers of 2, related, ways that faculties can be understood. 1) There are faculties of mind that relate to relations between representations, object, and subject. Faculties in the 1st sense are the 'faculty of knowledge,' 'faculty of desire,' and 'feeling pleasure and pain.' 2) There are faculties that serve as sources for representations. Respective of the faculties in the 1st sense, these are the understanding, reason, and the imagination. See Deleuze 1984. Unless specifically noted, I will be speaking of faculties in the 2nd sense.

² For the present interest in simplicity, I will set aside the peculiar case of the imagination, which will then serve as focus of this entire work.

With this broad sketch, we can now begin to consider the particular issue of this work, the role of the imagination within Kant's Critical framework. A clear and unified picture of each faculty is key to not only understanding each Critique in an individual sense but developing a unified picture of all three texts as well. Therefore, in this work I intend to demonstrate a connection between the imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* that will serve as a way to dispel the mystery behind this transcendental faculty and provide a more unified picture of the imagination across Kant's Critical philosophy.

In this paper, I will argue that the imagination demonstrates an essential formal capacity, the ability to produce its own forms or lawfulness. Further, this formal capacity is key to provide a unified picture of the imagination that both maintains its status as an independent faculty and maintains its unity as a faculty from the first *Critique* to the third *Critique*. This formal capacity can be seen, albeit in the service of the understanding, in the 'Schematism' section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*; and, this formal capacity can be later more clearly recognized in the imagination's harmonious free play in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Together, I argue, this formal capacity from one text to another provides the key to establishing the imagination as an independent and unified faculty across Kant's Critical philosophy.

II. The First *Critique* Imagination – Transcendental Deduction and Schematism

The imagination emerges in the Transcendental Deduction as a faculty capable of mediating between our sensible capacities and the understanding in the subjective deduction, and as the grounding for the connection between cognition and the unity of apperception in the objective deduction. However, the Deduction focuses on the logical foundations for this process, or on the possibility of a unity between apperception, concepts, and the intuited manifold. What is of particular interest is how this actually occurs in the formation of experience. That is, how it comes to be that a concept can be applied to a representation of an object and taken into the consciousness to form experience. So, while the Deduction establishes the imagination as part of the foundation for this possibility, along with the unity of apperception as grounding the affinity between consciousness and cognition, it is the Schematism that considers the application of the

concepts to actual experience. That is, once Kant has established the necessary lawfulness of nature in terms of the understanding, and grounded its connection in the unified consciousness, the next step was to show how this can be applied to the production of real, objective, experience. Towards this end, we will begin by considering Kant's chapter in the *Critique of Pure Reason* titled, "On the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding." While this chapter is included in the first *Critique* as an element of judgment, I find it to be especially useful in further clarifying the power of the imagination and additionally serving as a springboard into the imagination in the third *Critique*.³

Kant expresses the requirement for the unity of intuitions and concepts as, "the concept must contain that which is represented in the object that is to be subsumed under it," but Kant also notes, "pure concepts of the understanding, however, in comparison with empirical (indeed in general sensible) intuitions, are entirely un-homogeneous, and can never be encountered in any intuition" (Kant 2000, A137/B176). Therefore, there must be a 'third thing', to use Kant's words, that guarantees the homogeneity, or fit, between what is intuited by sensibility and the concepts of the understanding. Otherwise, there is no guarantee that the concept contains what is represented by the object sensibly, therefore rendering the concept empty. This third thing, however, must in some sense be, at once, both amenable to the sensible representation *and* the concept or, as Kant says, "**intellectual** on the one hand and **sensible** on the other" (Kant 2000, A138/B177). Considering Kant's description of the imagination in the Deduction, the faculty of the imagination fits too well into these parameters to simply be a coincidence.⁴

Let us first turn to the role of the imagination in the formation of schema. In the Schematism, we see a definition of both the schema and schematism:

pure concepts *a priori*, in addition to the function of the understanding in the category, must also contain *a priori* formal conditions of sensibility (namely of the inner sense) that contain the general condition under which alone the category can be applied to any object. We will call this formal and pure condition of the sensibility, to which the use of the concept of the understanding is restricted, the

³ I share this reading of the schematism chapter with Sarah Gibbons. In *Kant's Theory of Imagination*, she writes, "The Schematism turns our focus away from the nature and role of the categories as forms of unity in judgment to the problem of *how* it is possible to apply them to material that is sensibly intuited." See Gibbons 1994, p. 53.

⁴ To be brief, the imagination in the Deduction serves as the mediating faculty between the sensible world and our concepts. The imagination prepares the sensible manifold for conceptual application, thereby acting as a mediator between our otherwise empty concepts and the otherwise blind arrangement of sensibility.

schema of this concept of the understanding, and we will call the procedure of the understanding with these schemata the **schematism** of the pure understanding (Kant 2000, A139/B178-A140/B179).

Schemata contain the sensible conditions for the application of the concept to the object of representation. Much like Kant's claims in the Subjective Deduction, sensible intuitions need to be shaped into an amenable form for our conceptual apparatus. Here, we are given schemata as the actual features that bridge the gap between represented objects and our concepts. That is, the Schematism moves from the logical processes of the faculties into the actual application of concepts onto objects of experience. Essentially, it is the same process from the Deduction to the Schematism – the formation of cognition; however, this distinction serves to not only clarify the purpose of the Schematism but sheds light on the function of the imagination as well. It is also worth noting here that Kant indicates a procedure, schematism, in which the understanding operates upon a schema of a represented object. The imagination comes into play when Kant specifically names the schema as “always only a product of the imagination” (Kant 2000, A139/B178-A140/B179) That is, like in the A-Deduction, the imagination's activity is once again made clear not simply as a mediating factor between our sensibility and concepts, but as grounding their necessary unity, since the schema, as a product of the imagination, contain the formal conditions for the application of a concept to an object of sense. However, unlike the Deduction, the imagination in the Schematism focuses on the real unity between sensibility and the concepts, or a concept's ability to be actually applied to an object of sense, rather than the necessary conditions grounding their application.⁵ To reiterate the point for emphasis, the schema provided by the imagination are not then a mediating, incomplete image somewhere between sense and concept. Rather, they are the forms of the imagination that condition the unity of sense and concept, making their homogeneity possible. Or, we can understand the form here as that which serves to guarantee the fit between sensible object and concept. In this way, Kant's formulation of schemata provides an early example of what, I argue, the imagination exhibits fully in the third *Critique* –the ability to provide the formal conditions for experience. Certainly, this capacity is limited

⁵ Gibbons also notes this point, claiming that the Schematism represents a ‘reorientation’ of the Deduction towards the objective reality of concept-application. Another possible way to phrase this comes from Eva Schaper's “Kant's Schematism Revisited,” where the emphasis is moved from the connection of the unity of apperception and knowledge to knowledge and the ‘givenness’ of sensible intuitions. See Gibbons 1994 and Schaper 1964

and subsumed in the cases outlined in the Schematism; however, the Schematism lays the groundwork for the workings of the imagination in Kant's later explanation of reflective judgment in the third *Critique*.

There will be more to say on the connection between the imagination's role in the Schematism and its relation to aesthetic judgments later. For now, the importance of the imagination through its role in the Schematism demonstrates its position as an independent faculty within the framework of the first *Critique*. That is, Kant reiterates at the beginning of the Schematism that there is a gap between the application of concepts to sensible objects, a gap that reflects the problem in the Deduction, as that between the grounding of sensibility and thought.⁶ In the Deduction, the imagination's synthetic capacities served to bridge the gap; in the Schematism, the imagination's ability to form schemata to guarantee the relation between concept and sensible object provided a similar connection. Viewed in this way, the Schematism demonstrates an overlooked power of the imagination, a capacity that is veiled by its relation to the understanding in the formation of cognition. However, I argue that this capacity still represents a formal capacity that can be seen with more clarity later in the Critical project. That is, the imagination in the Schematism reveals a form-shaping capacity to sensible experience that reflects its treatment as an independent and unified transcendental faculty that retains its essential functions across the *Critiques*.⁷

Concluding the section with my analysis of the Schematism, I suggested that the Schematism demonstrates the imagination as a form-shaping faculty through its focus on the application of concepts to objects. While Kant does not represent the full power of the faculty of the imagination in any section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the ground is there for a highly involved faculty that goes beyond reproduction and mere facilitation between sensibility and the understanding. Instead, the imagination is a critical, unifying faculty for the possibility of experience, demonstrated in its grounding of pure

⁶ From the Schematism: "Now pure concepts of the understanding, however, in comparison with empirical (indeed in general sensible) intuitions, are entirely un-homogenous, and can never be encountered in any intuition." See Kant 2000, A137/B176.

⁷ A second benefit that is related to the imagination and its treatment in Kant scholarship is that it indicates an over-emphasis on the B-Edition to the detriment of the A-Edition that dissolves this link between the Deduction and Schematism. The imagination's central role is apparent in both the A-Deduction and both editions of the Schematism. I contend that dissolving this connection risks the adoption of a 'Janus-faced' interpretation of the imagination that strongly divides the imagination between its role in the first and third *Critiques*. We can see this in Rudolph Makkreel's approach to schema and reflective judgment in *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant*. This division ultimately leads to Makkreel's view as a risk of splitting the imagination into two separate faculties, a faculty of schema and another faculty of interpretation. See Makkreel 1990.

apperception with the lawful manifold. Put another way, the imagination as early as the Schematism demonstrates an active, productive capacity in the formation of cognition, rather than simply acting as a reactive facilitator between sense and the understanding. Further, in terms of the real application of concepts to representations, it demonstrates a limited form-shaping capacity, albeit at this early stage in the service of the understanding. This is the extent of the imagination that we can read from the first *Critique*. We will see in the following sections how Kant brings about the full determination of the imagination in the third *Critique*. This complete demonstration will reveal that the imagination serves a formal role in aesthetic judgments.

III: Schematism and the Bridge between Pure Reason and the Power of Judgment

I will now turn to the task of bridging the gap, so to speak, between the imagination as it appears in the Deduction and Schematism, and the imagination in its fullest capacity in the third *Critique*. Since Kant does not directly discuss schematization in the third *Critique*, my claim that this provides a bridge between the two texts requires clarification before moving onto the imagination in reflective judgment. Earlier, I argued the Schematism is related to the Deduction on the grounds that the latter deals with the possibility of applying concepts to intuition, while the former deals with their actual application. In this way, schemata make possible the homogeneity between sensible objects and out concepts, without being reduced to either component. Another way to put this is that schemata make sensibility rule-governed by serving as the necessary condition unifying the heterogenous aspects of our experience, namely sensibility and the concepts of the understanding. As Kant writes in the Introduction to the *Analytic of Principles*:

The peculiar thing about transcendental philosophy is this: that in addition to the rule (or rather the general condition for rules), which is given in the pure concept of the understanding, it can at the same time indicate *a priori* the case to which the rule ought to be applied... it must at the same time offer a general but sufficient characterization of the conditions under which objects in harmony with those concepts can be given, for otherwise they would be without all content, and thus

mere logical forms and not pure concepts of the understanding (Kant 2000, A135/B174-A136/B175).⁸

In the Schematism, which directly follows, Kant offers these conditions for the actual application of concepts to sensible objects, where the sensibly given is sufficient in reference to the concepts, thereby giving them content and significance. What Kant indicates as a requirement then for the actual application of concept to sensible object is a ‘condition’ for harmony between the object and our concept. That is, Kant is making the fairly uncontroversial claim that if there is sensibility on one end and the concepts of the understanding on the other, then there must be some condition which makes possible their synthesis into experience. With that harmony between sensibility and concept, experience is possible.⁹ The faculty responsible for recognizing and making use of instances of this harmony, I argue, is the imagination.

This does not mean, however, that the Schematism is the final word on the imagination’s power within Kant’s framework. It is merely the final word on the imagination’s power within cognition. It does, however, provide an avenue for the imagination beyond the limits of cognition in the first Critique. To clarify, the imagination’s role in the Schematism is to offer instances of harmony for the application of a concept of the understanding. This is general power of judgment as Kant conceives of it in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as, “the faculty of **subsuming** under rules, i.e., of determining whether something stands under a given rule or not” (Kant 2000, A132/B171). The third *Critique* – *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* – has more to say on the subject of judgment. Judgment in the Schematism was guided by a rule towards the goal of applying a concept of the understanding to an object of sensibility. However, now crossing the gap from the imagination in the Schematism to the imagination of reflective judgment, Kant puts us in the position to consider the imagination, not merely as the faculty guided by the goals of the understanding but guided by something entirely different. Yet, as the

⁸ Gibbons also points out the relationship between the concepts and the given just before the Schematism. She writes, “Schematism, the, specifies not (conceptual) rules, but the conditions for the recognition of *instances*; it does so by specifying the conditions under which the (spatio-temporal) *given* is ‘in harmony’ with the categories. See Gibbons 1994, p. 61.

⁹ A point of clarification: Here I am speaking of harmony in a more general sense, which I believe Kant is using in the above passage. This language is a little difficult because Kant later speaks of a specific harmony between the faculties of the imagination and understanding in free play. I do not contend that the specific harmony of free play is required to generate experience, but a more general sense of harmony, which ensures sufficient homogeneity between sensibility and concept to form experience.

same faculty of the Deduction and Schematism, it maintains a connection with the sensible given and the harmony between the given and the concepts.

Before going into my consideration of the imagination in the third *Critique*, it is important to explain why the gap between the imagination in the Deduction and Schematism, and the imagination in reflective judgment needs to be bridged at all. I contend that without a bridge between the imagination as a synthetic faculty of the understanding and the imagination as a free faculty in reflective judgment, there is a risk of splitting the imagination into two distinct faculties, where the operations of the imagination in the Deduction and Schematism illuminate nothing in terms of free play. What is at stake if we do not consider this bridge is twofold: 1) It puts in jeopardy the establishment of a unified picture of the imagination across Kant's Critical framework; and 2) it ignores the key functions of the imagination in the first *Critique* as a synthesizing faculty and as the faculty at work overcoming the gap for the real application of concepts to objects of experience. Both of these are important features of the imagination that ultimately shed light on what Kant hopes to achieve for the faculty in the third *Critique*.

We see this hard division of the imagination in Makkreel's interpretation of the imagination. That is, in order to gain access to a free and independent imagination, Makkreel sees fit to largely sever the connection between the imagination across the first and third *Critiques*. Beyond the textual implications that bring into question the unity of Kant's Critical framework, my concern goes further in suggesting that Makkreel's reading splits the imagination into two separate faculties. That is, the interpretive imagination of the third *Critique* retains no link with the schematizing imagination of the first *Critique*. We can begin to see this towards the beginning of his analysis of the imagination in the third *Critique*. Makkreel writes, "the extent to which the conditions of the first *Critique* can be transferred to the third *Critique* is limited by the different functions assigned to the imagination in its aesthetic setting" (Makkreel 1990, p. 49) Under the conditions of aesthetic judgment, the imagination is not restricted to remaining the handmaiden of the understanding, or simply providing a reading of sensibility amenable to our conceptual application. However, Makkreel takes the next step to claim that the actions of the imagination in the first *Critique* are not really applicable to the imagination in the third *Critique* is questionable to the effect of suggesting that if they exhibit different functions to

the point of not being applicable across different experiences, they may not be the same faculty.

The root of Makkreel's division is the imagination's synthetic activity in the construction of sensible experience. Recall that in the formation of experience, the imagination is subsumed by the goals of the understanding to shape sensible material into an image that can under conceptual ordering. Makkreel takes this to be the synthetic capabilities of the imagination, evinced by the quote, "The fact that Kant concludes that all synthesis is a function of the understanding means only that imagination is subservient to the understanding insofar as it synthesizes" (Makkreel 1990, p. 42). Therefore, any synthetic activity of the imagination is evidence of the imagination being subsumed by the understanding. Therefore, Makkreel must make a clean break between the imagination as a synthetic faculty and the imagination as an interpretive faculty. That is, the interpretive imagination must not demonstrate any of its synthetic capacities in the case of aesthetic experience.¹⁰ This is a problem because in the first *Critique*, the imagination is revealed to us through its synthetic capacities, or its ability to synthesize sense material into an image for the understanding. That is, in the explication of his doctrine of the faculties, Kant introduces the imagination as a faculty for synthesis. To remove this aspect of the imagination for aesthetic judgments risks the continuity of the imagination as a single faculty between its cognitive capacities and its aesthetic employment.¹¹

To conclude this section, I will remark on how my view avoids a sharp division between the first and third *Critiques*, thereby providing a more comprehensive and unified picture of the imagination within Kant's framework. The key feature to this is recognizing that the imagination in the Schematism demonstrates a form-bringing capacity, even while in the service of the understanding. In the connection between sensible objects and their

¹⁰ See Makkreel 1990, p. 48. Makkreel notes that "Kant makes no use of the term 'synthesis' in discussing the imagination's role in aesthetic apprehension and aesthetic comprehension[.]"

¹¹ There are a few points that serve to harden Makkreel's division of the imagination in cognition and in aesthetic judgment. The first is the rather limited view that Makkreel carries in terms of synthesis as strictly a function of the understanding. This limited view is the result of Kant's own opacity on the issue of synthesis, rather than any mistake on Makkreel's part. Comparing the discussion of synthesis in the A- and B-Editions, Kant appears to waver between the imagination and the understanding as the source of synthetic activity. The A-Edition, however, provides the more general aspects of synthesis, while the B-Edition focuses on the synthesis required for empirical, or sensible experience.

Second is his consideration of schemata as "semantical rules," that anticipate "certain basic formal patterns" provided by the categories. See Makkreel 1990, p. 41. The order picked up by the imagination is the result of the understanding. Makkreel goes on to describe this relationship in terms of linguistics. The concepts provide the grammatical rules that the semantic functions of the imagination merely recognize, rather than the imagination itself providing the link between the rules and their application. See also, Butts 1993.

concepts, the imagination, through the schemata, offers the conditions under which the objects can be reconciled with our concepts. These, as I have already argued, are not the rules themselves, which are the result of the understanding, but rather the conditions for the applications of these rules.¹² So, even in the first *Critique*, we can determine a form-bringing capacity of the imagination, even when guided by the specific rules of the understanding. It is a power granted to the imagination in judgment; and, the first *Critique* simply describes it in terms of empirical judgment. This capacity will carry over into reflective judgment, as we will see in the following section. What is worth noting for now, however, is that taking into account the form-bringing capacity of the imagination avoids the need to draw a strong division between the imagination in two of Kant's key texts. This 1) supports my claim that the imagination represents a unified and comprehensive faculty across Kant's framework, and 2) demonstrates the importance of the imagination as a form-bringing faculty in that it not only exhibits this ability in the third *Critique*, which we will soon see, but also earlier in the first *Critique*.

IV. Reflective Judgment, Aesthetic Judgment and the Imagination's Formal Role

The previous section offered the form-shaping capacity of the imagination in the Schematism as the bridge connecting its function for cognition in the first *Critique* to its abilities for reflective judgment in the third *Critique*. My view has the benefit of providing not only an independent capacity for the imagination, but also avoided a possible division of the imagination suggested by Makkreel's interpretation. Therefore, I argue for a faculty of the imagination that demonstrates its own capabilities that are independent of the understanding and a faculty that is unified across Kant's Critical framework. The feature that both reveals the independent aspects and serves as a connection through Kant's framework is the imagination's ability to bring form to judgment, whether that role is bringing relevant sense data for conceptual application in the formation of cognition, or, as we will see, in reflective judgment. Now, we will see how the imagination's form-bringing ability is revealed as a power of the independent imagination and not simply a function in

¹² Compare this to Makkreel's position where, "the schemata of the imagination can be said to anticipate [the formal patterns of the understanding] in terms of particular types of object-attribute relations." In Makkreel's reading, the imagination is merely recognizing, rather than forming the conditions for the homogeneity required in the Schematism. See Makkreel 1990, p. 41.

service of the understanding. This is done through Kant's conception of reflective judgment in the Introduction to the third *Critique*.

In the Schematism, the imagination's activities are directed by a rule of the understanding. That is, the imagination's power to provide form is determined by its role to ground the conditions for the application of a concept to the sensible manifold. This, however, is not the final word on the power of the imagination, as exhibited in reflective judgment. Briefly, reflective judgments are distinguished from cognition in that no rule, or concept, is previously given. Rather, a reflective judgment begins at the particular and searches for a universal. This is different from the mechanism of cognition, which presents a concept to guide the imagination, as we saw with its schematic activity. In instances of reflection, however, there is no concept to determine the activity of the imagination. Instead, reflective judgment reflects on the connection, or fit, between our conceptual apparatus in general with sensible intuitions. Therefore, reflective judgment reveals not a new capacity of the imagination, but one that is merely obscured by the determinate aspects of cognition.¹³ It is the general accord between our conceptual apparatus and sensible nature that is the subject of the imagination's activity in reflection. As such, the imagination maintains its ability to produce the conditions for the connection between sensibility and the understanding but does so guided by its own general lawfulness rather than by a determined concept of the understanding. The role of the imagination remarkably remains the same. Reflective judgment maintains the form-shaping capacity of the imagination that appears in the Schematism; however, under reflective judgment, this ability to produce, or shape, the formal condition for the connection between our concepts and sensible intuitions is not determined by a concept. It is an expression of the imagination's formal role, now independent of the understanding.

With the imagination's freedom in reflective judgment described in general, we can now discuss a specific type of reflective judgment, namely aesthetic judgments. Kant describes these as judgments where "in the mere reflection understanding and imagination mutually agree for the advancement of their business," and "for which, further, no determinate concept of the object at all is required nor is one thereby generated, and the

¹³ This ties in with my earlier connection of the schematism with reflective judgment through the form-shaping capacities of the imagination. Gibbons makes a similar claim in stating, "schematism itself...depends on the suitability of thought to intuition and the capacity to exhibit that fit. Hence, the subjective conditions of judgment are still at issue even in the subsumptive activities of determinant judgment." See Gibbons 1990, p. 83.

judgment itself is not a cognitive judgment” (Kant 2008, 20:221). There are two points here that tie back into my earlier explication of the imagination’s formal capacities. First, aesthetic judgment maintains an agreement, or harmony, between the imagination and understanding, just as there was with cognition. However, and this is the second point, this agreement is not based on the concept. That is, the imagination is not guided in its capacities by a concept of the understanding; rather, the imagination engages in mutual advancement with the understanding.¹⁴ Like in the Schematism, the imagination recognizes harmony between sensible nature and a system of order; however, unlike the Schematism, this harmony is independent of any specific concept of the understanding. The understanding, if you recall, provides the order for the imagination in the Schematism. Kant points to this ground between the imagination and the understanding when points out before the quoted passage above that in an aesthetic judgment, the apprehension of the manifold by the imagination agrees with the concept of the understanding, yet the specific concept is undetermined.¹⁵ This frees the imagination from the guidance of the understanding while retaining its earlier capacity to recognize harmony between sensibility and our conceptual order. In this way, aesthetic judgments represent the first time that the imagination’s dual role capacity is revealed without the laws of the understanding obscuring its true activity.¹⁶ In short, even without the concept acting as a force of proof for the imagination’s activity, the form of its amenability to nature is still recognized and produced, as we see in aesthetic judgments. Further, it is in this reflective activity that we can see the power of the imagination’s ability to shape form, or conditions, that unify the sensible manifold with our concepts.

Before continuing into the formal role of the imagination and its abilities in terms of harmonious free play, it is worth noting a potential objection with this position. The potential objection is that in providing a formal aspect of experience, the imagination demonstrates a particular law, or rule – an ability Kant strictly reserves for reason and the

¹⁴ This is ultimately what Kant refers to as the harmonious free play between the imagination and understanding.

¹⁵ See Kant 2008, 20:220-221.

¹⁶ At A141/B180-1 of the Schematism, Kant claims that the form of the schematism of the understanding and appearances can be unveiled only with difficulty. More notably, he writes “We can say only this much: the **image** is a product of the empirical faculty of the productive imagination, the **schema** of sensible concepts (such as figures in space) is a product [...] of pure *a priori* imagination[.]” The function of the imagination in the schematism remains hidden through its necessary connection with a concept of the understanding. This is markedly different in cases of aesthetic judgment, where there is no determination by the understanding.

understanding. I admit that the imagination in its formal role reveals a *lawfulness*, while not a specific law, as would be the case of the understanding.¹⁷ That is, the imagination is engaged in *reflective* judgment, and thereby demonstrates the lawfulness of this capacity. As we saw, the form provided by the imagination in aesthetic judgment is not determinate in the same manner as the law provided in cognition. In this way, the imagination is not legislative in the same sense as the understanding. Instead, the harmony between the imagination's lawfulness in reflective judgment and the understanding in aesthetic judgment points beyond the experience of nature as a mechanism and to an artistic view of nature.¹⁸

This section has demonstrated that reflective judgment best reveals the formal capacity of the imagination due to the lack of determination by a concept of the understanding. That is, reflection shows a capacity of the imagination that is fundamental, even though it is largely hidden in cases of cognition. This ability of the imagination is its capacity to recognize harmony between the sensible manifold and our conceptual ordering and shape the grounds or conditions for their unity. Reflective judgment, and aesthetic judgment in particular, provided an opportunity to see this as a power of the imagination through its lack of a determinate concept. Further, the imagination's ability to independently shape the form for aesthetic judgment resulted in a kind of lawfulness for our capacity of reflective judgment. It is the nature of this lawfulness that will show the full extent of the imagination's formal capacity made evident in the case of nature's purposiveness and the free harmony of the faculties.

V. Nature's Purposiveness and the Lawfulness of the Imagination

The previous section referenced the mutual agreement between the imagination and understanding in cases of aesthetic judgment in order to solidify the connection between the form-shaping power of the imagination in service of the understanding and the free formal powers demonstrated in aesthetic reflection. Now, I will examine this mutual

¹⁷ Here I distinguish my position from a 'Ginsborgian' perspective, which may claim the imagination's activity is especially purposive for the understanding, though no concept is applied. I argue the 'Ginsborgian' connection is not necessary for aesthetic reflection and that aesthetic forms are not merely purposive toward cognition. Rather, the harmony indicated in aesthetic reflection is the result of forms in nature, as recognized by the imagination, being amenable to our conceptual ordering. See Ginsborg 1997.

¹⁸ Ostaric alternatively describes the outcome of aesthetic judgment as, "grasping that the lawfulness of the imagination is consistent with the discursive demands of the understanding... and, moreover, that the connections of the imagination move well beyond those demands." See Ostaric 2017, p. 1394.

agreement in terms of the imagination and understanding as faculties, and what is revealed as valuable for aesthetic judgments.

Imagination in its formal capacity demonstrated it was capable of producing form, or its own lawfulness, without the determination of a concept. This, of course, does not mean the imagination is unfettered in aesthetic reflection to spontaneously produce forms at its will; rather, the imagination retains its unique position as a faculty rooted both in sensibility and our conceptual ordering – a position that it holds from the first *Critique*. The idea of the imagination demonstrating lawfulness in aesthetic reflection does not exclude the presence of a concept. Rather, the difference between a reflective judgment and a determinate judgment in this regard is the force of proof carried by the concept. That is, in reflective activity like aesthetic judgment, the concept carries no force of proof. For example, we might say a rose is beautiful, but it is not the concept ‘rose’ itself that proves this judgment. We do, however, still utilize the concept ‘rose’ to determine a sensible experience, even though the experience exceeds the concept. What is more interesting, however, is that the imagination’s relation to sensibility also serves as a guide, even in aesthetic judgment, since the products of the imagination remain sensible.¹⁹ It is this connection that will bring into focus the benefit of the imagination’s lawfulness in reflective judgment as revealed through its dual role.

Aesthetic judgment, as a result of judgment’s reflective capacity, requires a principle. However, unlike cognition, where the concept determines the judgment, aesthetic reflection receives its guiding principle from itself, namely the purposiveness of nature.²⁰ Nature’s purposiveness, stated briefly, is the principle that nature itself is ordered in a manner that is amenable to our power of judgment. That is, nature, independent of our conceptual ability to order experience, follows a discoverable and lawful pattern. Kant expresses this as, “**Nature specifies its general laws into empirical ones, in accordance with the form of a logical system, in behalf of the power of judgment**” (Kant 2008, 20:216). This principle, however, is not meant as an objective determination of sensible nature. Instead, it is a principle adopted by our faculty of judgment for its own use to

¹⁹ Ostaric argues this point by claiming that “although the interpretive power of the imagination shows some elements of spontaneity, its products are still presentations of sensibility, to wit, combination of perceptions into images (synthesis of apprehension), and combinations of images (synthesis of fictive faculty).” See Ostaric 2017, p. 1394.

²⁰ See Kant 2008, 20:211- 216, “On the Reflecting Power of Judgment” for Kant’s argument for reflection’s ability to give its law to itself, i.e., its ‘heautonomy.’

facilitate reflection. So, judgment adopts the principle of nature's purposiveness in order to carry out reflective activities, like aesthetic reflection. Let us consider how the principle of purposiveness then fits into my picture of the imagination's formal capacity in aesthetic judgment.

The imagination, across Kant's Critical framework as I have argued, deals with the connection between sensible nature and our experience, be it directed by a concept or by another form of lawfulness. Reflection adopts a principle that presupposes the lawfulness of nature for its own activity. I claim that this principle of nature's purposiveness is the lawfulness of the imagination, or the result of its activities as revealed in aesthetic judgment. The imagination cannot make its own laws; however, the principle of purposiveness is not a law in the same sense as those prescribed by reason or the understanding. In fact, the principle of purposiveness fits the kind of lawfulness that I have been arguing for the imagination in its formal role. First, it determines nothing about the object. The claim is not that nature *is* purposive, but simply that nature can be reflected upon *as if* it were purposive. Second, and more important to my position, it is revealed in the exact manner as the imagination's formal capacity. That is, where we found harmony between intuition and concept, we found the form-bringing capacity of the imagination. This capacity was brought into focus through reflection, where there was no concept to guide the imagination, yet the connection was still possible.

For the principle of purposiveness, again, the point of focus is the connection between sensible intuition and our conceptual apparatus in general, which is then brought into relief by the lack of a determining concept. It is the imagination in its directed formal role that makes the possibility of connecting sense and concept possible in the first place, as seen in the Schematism. Now, with the principle of nature's purposiveness, we see the full expression of this ability in the form of this lawfulness in reflective judgments. Staying true to the imagination as a faculty that retains a tie to sensibility, this lawfulness is not an expression of the imagination itself, but one of nature as if it were an independently ordered system. That is, the inspiration for reflective judgments, like aesthetic judgments, must still be the result of sensible nature; however, once taken by the imagination in its form-shaping capacity, the lawfulness demonstrated is the product of reflective judging, guided by the form given by the free imagination. So, given the capacity of the imagination as both a sense-shaping and form-shaping faculty, we can ground the principle of

purposiveness within our transcendental faculties, since it is the imagination in its sensible and formal roles that make possible the revelation of this principle through the capacity of reflective judgment.

It is important to note that Kant does not specifically mention the imagination in the formulation of the principle of reflection. However, I argue that the principle of purposiveness is the result of the imagination's formal capacity by carrying over the capacities of the imagination from its role in the first *Critique* to reflective judgment in the third *Critique*. In the Deduction the imagination provides the transcendental conditions for the unity of sensibility and concepts of the understanding. The Schematism reveals the imagination as further providing the grounds for the actual application of a concept to sensible intuition. Reflective judgment reveals the underlying assumption at work in the previous capacities of the imagination, namely that there are points of harmony between sensible nature and our ability to order experience based on our conceptual apparatus. The difference, I have argued, is the presence of a concept as a force of proof.²¹ Absent that concept, we still find the principle of purposiveness active in reflective judgment; only now, it is rightfully shown as a result of the imagination's ability to harmonize sensible nature and either a concept of the understanding, or the principle of reflection. To clarify, the principle of purposiveness made possible by the imagination's dual role is the result of viewing the imagination as a faculty that grounds the unity, transcendental or actual, between sensibility and the understanding. My position demonstrates consistency for the imagination across Kant's framework that can only be adopted if we consider the imagination in its formal role where it not only provides the sensible material for aesthetic reflection but also the form for the principle of purposiveness in reflective judgment, or nature's amenability to being governed by rules independent of our understanding.

VI. Harmonious Free Play and the Imagination's Formal Capacity

With the principle of purposiveness acting as the rule for aesthetic judgment, we are now in a position to consider how the imagination's formal capacity brings the form provided

²¹ This position initially appears to agree with a more Ginsborgian view, where reflection is a prior condition for cognition, and where the intuited object is found to be especially amenable to our cognition. My view differs in that the harmony discovered between sensible object and our conceptual apparatus exceeds cognition rather than simply exemplifying it.

by this rule to aesthetic judgments. Further, since aesthetic judgments are special in that, while not determined by a concept of the understanding, they still require the presence of a concept. This unique position requires that the imagination in this dual, sensible and formal, capacity relate to the understanding without being subsumed by it, as it is in cognition. Therefore, the relation between the imagination and understanding in aesthetic judgment is distinct from their activities in the first *Critique*. How Kant describes this new relation as one of harmonious free play and this play between the faculties and the imagination's dual role is the subject of the current section.

I will begin briefly with a description of harmonious free play as it appears in the third *Critique*. Kant distinguishes an aesthetic judgment of reflection from an aesthetic judgment of sense based on the source of the pleasure. While judgments of sense are based on the immediate representation of the object, Kant writes, "in the aesthetic judgment of reflection, however, it is that sensation which the harmonious play of the two faculties of cognition in the power of judgment, imagination and understanding, produces in the subject insofar as in the given representation the faculty of the apperception of the one and the faculty of presentation of the other are mutually expeditious" (Kant 2008, 20:224). The pleasure in an aesthetic judgment is the result, not of the object itself, but the harmony of the imagination and understanding. In addition, rather than the imagination being subsumed under the rules of the understanding, we find in aesthetic reflection a 'mutually expeditious' relationship.

This mutually expeditious relationship is key not only in revealing a free, non-hierarchical, relationship between the imagination and understanding, but also in suggesting another lawfulness made possible by the imagination, since it is capable of a mutual relationship with the essentially law-giving understanding. We find support for this aspect of the imagination later in the third *Critique* when Kant writes, "Thus only a lawfulness without a law and a subjective correspondence of the imagination to the understanding without an objective one – where the representation is related to a determinate concept of an object – are consistent with the free lawfulness of the understanding... and with the peculiarity of a judgment of taste" (Kant 2008, 5:241). Here Kant points out the inherent lawfulness in aesthetic judgments, but specifically points to this lawfulness as existing in the correspondence of the imagination and the understanding. The lawfulness demonstrated in harmonious free play is not a result of the understanding

alone, but a shared aspect of both faculties. That is, the imagination makes possible an applicable lawfulness, which we recognize as the principle of purposiveness, in free play that harmonizes with the lawfulness of the understanding.²² We find additional evidence for this independent lawfulness in the First Introduction. Kant writes:

If, then, the form of a given object in empirical intuition is so constituted that the **apprehension** of its manifold in the imagination agrees with the **presentation** of a concept of the understanding (though which concept be undetermined), then in the mere reflection understanding and imagination mutually agree for the advancement of their business, and the object will be perceived as purposive merely for the power of judgment (Kant 2008, 20:221)[.]

The imagination in harmonious free play apprehends the manifold of the object. This is its usual operation upon sensibility. However, in terms of the presentation of the object, or the application of a concept to an object, harmonious free play yields the object as merely purposive for the power of judgment. Explained otherwise, in aesthetic reflection the object is judged as purposive not to the understanding but to the power of judgment, whose principle is the result of the imagination's form. So, rather than the absence of a rule due to the indeterminacy of a concept, harmonious free play reveals a different sort of lawfulness, namely the principle of purposiveness, which is made possible by the formal capacities of the imagination. In this way, harmonious free play exhibits the ability of the imagination to provide the formal component of an aesthetic judgment through the object of the judgment's presentation as purposive for the power of judgment.

Imagination's dual role as the provider of content and form for aesthetic judgment is a controversial claim, but not one without textual basis in the third *Critique*.²³ The above passages suggest a power of the imagination as a formal faculty in harmonious free play;

²² Gibbons makes a similar, but arguably weaker claim about the lawfulness of the imagination in free harmony. She writes, "The imaginations exhibitions are not lawless or chaotic, but their order is only recognized as lawful in the harmony produced with the understanding in its recognition of these forms as (freely) lawful[.]" The difference between my position and that of Gibbons' is that she requires the understanding to recognize the imagination's forms as lawful. I claim that the imagination brings its own, independent, lawfulness produced from nature in the form of the principle of purposiveness. See Gibbons 1994, p. 93.

²³ There are instances where space for this view have been opened. Gibbons 1994 and Ostaric 2017 are examples of views that are amenable to my position. Gibbons explores the possibility of the imagination as a conceptual faculty within the third *Critique*. Ostaric argues for a lawfulness of the imagination in free play and the primacy of the imagination in aesthetic judgments. Kumar 2018 offers a potentially non-cognitive avenue for the interpretation of free play, but ultimately fails to link such an interpretation with the goals of the third *Critique* in bridging the gap between nature and reason.

however, they lack the explicit mention of the imagination as a formal faculty. While Kant states that the formation of rules and laws are reserved to the understanding and reason, there is some degree of oscillation on this very point. As such, it is worth bringing these passages to notice before concluding my assessment of the imagination's dual role in harmonious free play. In the section of the Introduction titled 'On the Aesthetic Representation of the Purposiveness of Nature,' Kant specifically mentions the imagination's capacity to apprehend forms outside of its subsumption by the understanding. He writes:

If pleasure is connected with the mere apprehension of the form of an object of intuition without a relation of this to a concept for a determinate cognition, then the representation is thereby related not to the object, but solely to the subject, and the pleasure can express nothing but its suitability to the cognitive faculties that are in play in the reflecting power of judgment, insofar as they are in play, and thus merely a subjective formal purposiveness of the object. For that apprehension of forms in the imagination can never take place without the reflecting power of judgment, even if unintentionally, at least comparing them to its faculty for relating intuitions to concepts. Now if in this comparison the imagination (as the faculty for *a priori* intuitions) is unintentionally brought into accord with the understanding, as the faculty of concepts, through a given representation and a feeling of pleasure is thereby aroused, then the object must be regarded as purposive for the reflecting power of judgment (Kant 2008, 5:189-190).

Forms of an object can be apprehended without the determinate concept of the understanding, thereby becoming purposive only to the power of judgment. However, these forms must be apprehended by a faculty, which must in these cases be the imagination. The imagination, unlike the understanding in this context, cannot apprehend forms without the reflective power of judgment. However, given the imagination's dual capacity, this can be easily worked through by reaffirming the principle of purposiveness, the rule for reflective judgment, as the result of the imagination. Therefore, the imagination's limitations here are overcome by its ability to ground, or make possible, the lawfulness of reflective judgment, i.e., the principle of purposiveness. The forms revealed through the principle of purposiveness are then put into use by the imagination's second ability to compare intuitions with concepts. So, the imagination, through its own principle, fashions the forms and brings them into comparison with our concepts. Free play then is

the bringing into accord the results of the form-apprehending imagination with the understanding as the faculty of concepts. Given the above passage from the third *Critique*, I argue that we can form a picture of the imagination that not only furnishes aesthetic judgments with the intuition to be compared with concepts, but the forms as well.

The effects of this position in terms of aesthetic judgment can be understood by going back to the source of the imagination's ability to ground the principle of purposiveness. The imagination recognizes forms in nature that exceed the anticipated fit between our concepts and the sensible intuition. Therefore, the imagination does not schematize as it does for cognition, but rather shapes a form to more adequately represent this supposed natural order to the judging subject. Since this order cannot be fully conceptualized, the imagination operates on the assumed lawfulness of nature in providing this form, thereby adopting its own principle of purposiveness that then acts as the principle for all reflective judgment. If this were the final word on aesthetic judgments, then they might appear as peculiar, perhaps interesting, but ultimately peripheral accidents of human experience. However, harmonious free play becomes the vital piece of Kant's aesthetics in that it brings the supposed lawfulness of nature into relation with the understanding in what should be a very surprising manner. As we have seen in Kant's descriptions, this interaction of the imagination's formal product with the understanding is, in special cases, harmonious or mutually enlivening.

While more can be said on the pleasure of this interaction, since this work is intended to open the way for a sensible and formal picture of the imagination, what is important is the overall meaning of this harmony from the standpoint of the possibility of bridging the gap between nature and reason. Certain natural forms are found by the imagination to be capable of harmony with our own conceptual ordering without submitting to the specific rules of the understanding. What this suggests, albeit indeterminately in cases of aesthetic reflection, is that there may be an order in nature that is more than merely indifferent to human experience.²⁴ Nature suggested through the imagination's discovery of this order is ordered in a way that agrees with the experiences and demands of our faculties, despite the gulf that Kant finds between nature and reason. This not only reveals the value of aesthetic reflection in general but also highlights the role

²⁴ Kant does note that there are cases where the independent order of nature is not only not amenable, but explicitly hostile to our conceptual ordering. These cases are examples of the sublime.

of the imagination in bringing this order to our awareness. Since the understanding's concepts are removed from sensible nature, it cannot grasp this order outside of the imagination's activity. Further, the imagination's formal capacity provides the added ability to not only prepare the sensible manifold for conceptual application, but also its ability to bring its own formal products, inspired by the possibility of nature's own order, to our awareness in harmonious free play. As I have noted, this brings the possibility of bridging the chasm between nature and reason into view. Further, it moves aesthetic reflection from an interesting facet of human experience to a fairly substantial feature of humanity's place within nature. The further application of this link is beyond the scope of this paper; however, what I have sought to demonstrate is the possibility of this connection at the transcendental level of the faculties. By connecting the recognition of nature's order to the imagination in its formal as well as its sensible role, I have argued the transcendental ground for not only the principle of purposiveness in reflective judgment but the possibility of the bridge between nature and reason.

VII. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that the Schematism demonstrates the imagination as a form-shaping faculty through its focus on the application of concepts to objects. While Kant does not represent the full power of the faculty of the imagination in any section of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the ground is there for a highly involved faculty that goes beyond reproduction and even mere facilitation between sensibility and the understanding. In terms of the real application of concepts to representations, it demonstrates a limited form-shaping capacity, albeit in the service of the understanding. This is, however, the extent of the imagination that we can read from the first *Critique*. The imagination's activity in the Schematism provided a basis for understanding its power in reflective judgment and served as a bridge between the first and third *Critiques*. We saw this power come to the forefront in aesthetic judgment as the imagination demonstrated its dual role in providing the form for the judgment in addition to its recognized ability to provide the sensible content for all judgments. Aesthetic reflection revealed a lawfulness in the form of the principle of purposiveness, a principle adopted by reflection that suggests nature as independently ordered and not merely the result of a mechanistic construction of the understanding.

Rather than this staking out a domain for the imagination, like that of the understanding in cognition, this lawfulness served as a point of reflection on the harmony exhibited between the form inspired by nature and those of the understanding. The result of his harmony, presented in incidences of pleasurable free play, was the recognition of not only an order existing in nature but also that order's amenability to humanity's rules and laws. In this way, aesthetic judgments given my position directly refer back to the stated goals of the third *Critique* that aesthetic reflection is to serve as a bridge between the domains of nature and reason, or our sensible existence and moral demands. As such, I consider the formal capacity of the imagination as vital to a comprehensive view of Kantian aesthetics that meets the requirements that Kant sets for this particular type of judgment. In addition, I have shown that not only does it provide a strong interpretation of aesthetic judgments, but it also serves to connect the imagination as a faculty across Kant's framework, thereby avoiding either a deflation of its abilities or a division of the faculty. I have argued then we have the imagination as a unified faculty from the Schematism of the first *Critique* to the harmonious free play of the third *Critique*. This was achieved through its newly identified formal capacity that, in addition to providing the sensible content for our judgments, is also capable of providing a formal lawfulness as well. Further, we have a view of the imagination that is able to return to the original goal of the third *Critique*, which is to reveal, albeit indeterminately, an accordance between nature and reason that points further to the achievement of the human moral project within the sensible realm. While this specific subject offers additional avenues for further consideration, I have revealed the ground for the imagination to serve as the formal faculty guiding this endeavor through its formal and sensible roles in aesthetic judgment. As such, the imagination's formal capacity provides a viable and attractive position for not only considerations of aesthetic judgment, but as a view for the imagination in Kant's overall Critical framework.

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