In the next two video lectures we’re going to look at differing ideas about what it means to experience something as art and the role that art might play in society at large. Beyond this, we’ll consider some conflicting ideologies associated with certain approaches to classical music on one hand and narrative art forms like cinema on the other, and the ways these ideologies shaped the creative decisions of composers and filmmakers in the early days of cinema and the rise of revolutionary political regimes in the early 20th century.

In this lecture we will focus on the aesthetics of classical music in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In the next video lecture we will look at the way that many early filmmakers reacted against this.

Programmatic Music

Absolute Music

We will also consider two main concepts that you will encounter again and again in the readings and lectures this quarter: the idea of Autonomous Art, and the idea of Organicism in art. In particular, we will examine the ways that the values behind the tradition of western classical music are connected to things like ethics, human freedom, and human rights, as well as biology, the natural sciences, and formal logic.

We could start by asking a few questions:

Doesn't art need to be socially relevant?

[SLIDE 2]

I mean, when so much in the world seems to be going wrong, isn't it frivolous to spend our days assiduously bringing a Chopin etude under our fingers or getting lost in the epic grandeur of a Beethoven Symphony or the pious intricacy of a Bach fugue? Shouldn’t *living* composers be compelled to address the problems of the world and ultimately to help fix them? Certainly, many composers today think so. But of course how can a piece of music, a work of art, actually *fix* the problems in the world? Is the idea that music CAN fix the world just a form of arrogance on the part of the composer?

Or maybe the value of music is more immediately practical than that.

[SLIDE 3]

Maybe music’s value is to be found in the way that it allegedly improves spatial reasoning and mathematical acumen, which improves job prospects and efficiency in various tech fields, for example

Maybe the value of music is *social* in the sense that it builds communities:

that playing in ensembles teaches students valuable social skills that they need to be competitive in the workforce, or to manage other people effectively.

[SLIDE 4]

It’s not uncommon to see discussions like this in social media, usually with a link to some study purporting to show the empirical benefits of studying music. But invariably somewhere in the discussion someone will say: yeah – *maybe* its true that music has these benefits – but these are just byproducts of studying music – this is not what **Makes** music *valuable*. Music is valuable **just because it’s valuable** – not because we can use it to learn how to influence the world or control our situation in it. *Music* is valuable **for its own sake**.

This idea that music is valuable for its own sake is at the heart of the notion of Autonomous art. The concept of autonomous art involves a theory that connects the experience of beauty in nature and in art (i.e., aesthetic experience) to rationality, ethics, and ultimately to freedom.

The idea is that music’s value does not first and foremost stem from its ability to, for instance, persuade people into buying a certain commodity or voting for a certain political candidate, or even in music’s ability to improve mathematical reasoning or social skills, but rather, that the experience of music is valuable because it is an exercise in freedom itself.

But, as we’ll see, it's a very special sort of freedom that we’re talking about here: we’re talking about **autonomy**.

[SLIDE 5]

So let’s take apart this word and see what it refers to

Well, the first part is pretty straight-forward -> we have Auto – I think everyone knows what that means : self

But the second part is kind of interesting: what about nomous? : what does nomous refer to?

Well, nomous comes from the Greek nomos : or law.

So an autonomous being (an autonomous nation, an autonomous person, an autonomous artwork) is something that gives the law to itself. But what does THAT mean? What is the law that we’re talking about here?

[SLIDE 6]

This is where the work of Immanuel Kant enters the picture. Kant’s ideas on aesthetics influenced nearly everyone after him in one way or another – sometimes the influence was direct in the case of Beethoven or Wagner, but Kant also laid the groundwork for the way western culture of the 19th century thought about music and art, and in many respects Kant’s ideas still represent the predominant way we think about classical music today, even if his ideas become transmogrified over the course of two centuries – and get pretty far away from what Kant originally had to say in his work the Critique of Judgment.

But interestingly, Kant doesn’t actually spend very much time talking about art, what he’s really interested in is ethics, and in particular the problem how to save ethics in light of the rise of scientific theories of the natural world that reduce everything to causal determinacy. In other words, theories that say there is no right and wrong in the world. The world only amounts to blind physical forces acting on matter 🡪 or as with later thinkers like Darwin and Nietzsche, who came after Kant, that human activity only amounts to blind biological processes and the will for survival, the will for power. And that morality just amounts to a chance adaptation that may or may not aid in the survival of a species.

[SLIDE 7]

This brings us back to autonomy: for Kant Autonomy is crucial to any defense of ethics.

Now one way to see this is think of autonomy in relation to the difference between choice and determinism. Usually when we talk about an action being ethical or unethical it involves the ability to make a choice. In other words can an action be unethical if it is unchosen?

So let’s do a little thought experiment: imagine someone walking down a mountain road the who has a boulder arbitrarily fall on them, crushing them. Now compare that to the same person walking down the road who is then arbitrarily murdered by a stranger. We wouldn’t say that the boulder acted unethically because there was no choice involved -- the boulder is only subject to the laws of determinism, the natural forces that caused it to fall and kill that person, it doesn’t have consciousness, it doesn’t have the ability to make a choice. But another human being, the stranger on the road, is not like a rock, they were able to make a choice about whether to kill or not – maybe they needed money or something, and wanted to kill the other person for that reason, but the point is that they could have rationally thought about how to get some money and decided that might as well kill someone to get it. They could have chosen otherwise.

Now you might say “well what if they were insane? They didn’t rationally choose to kill the other person.” But then that means that they are just like the boulder there’s a sense in which we’re saying on the insanity defense, that they are not fully human, an insane person is just a force of nature. But to be ethical is to have the ability to rationally decide what to do even in the face of all sorts of countervailing motivations to do otherwise. This power to rationally decide is autonomy, and for Kant autonomy is crucial to ethics, because if it’s true that humans are just the product of the physical and biological forces that give rise to their material desires, and if we don’t have the ability to make choices that transcend these desires, then ethics is impossible – all human action is just reducible to natural forces, all human action is subject to the causal determinacy of nature.

So Kant’s solution to this is to ground ethics not in causal determinacy, in the laws of physics or biology, but to find an aspect of human ***consciousness*** that gives the law to itself, human autonomy. And he thinks that human autonomy is bound up with rationality.

Now how is rationality autonomous? Well to understand this, we could take a textbook syllogism something along the lines of

[SLIDE 8]

All humans are mortal

[SLIDE 9]

Socrates is a human

[SLIDE 10]

Therefore?

I’ll bet you can fill in the rest –

[SLIDE 11]

therefore Socrates is mortal.

But how do you KNOW that Socrates is mortal? After all I haven’t told you that – somehow you just seem to know that if all humans are mortal and Socrates is a human then Socrates must be mortal too it MUST be true – there’s something about the structure of rationality that MUST BE THE CASE.

[SLIDE 12]

Rationality is self-consistent and coherent. Rationality is self-determining, it is not determined by laws outside of itself, rather rationality gives law to itself. So when we act in accordance with our rational selves it means we have a special sort of freedom – not the sort of freedom where we might say – I can do anything I want: nothing’s stopping me. Rather, rational autonomy means the freedom we have to transcend our material desires as natural organisms, in effect our power to transcend causal determinism.

And so we have here two competing ideas about freedom: which today are often referred to in terms of Negative Freedom and Positive Freedom.

Positive freedom is more or less what we mean by rational autonomy, the ability to determine for oneself the right course of action, the best thing to do and to act accordingly.

Negative Freedom just refers to an absence of restrictions on our action (so if you’re not in jail you’re perfectly free to walk down the street, nothing’s stopping you, unless there’s a curfew in effect or something like that – or for instance if you are an adult and have the money nothing is stopping you from buying cigarettes and smoking).

Now these two types of freedom, positive and negative freedom are certainly compatible with each other, in fact they’re quite often in agreement, but there are definitely situations where they come into tension with each other:

So we might consider the example of a rich junkie:

Imagine someone who likes nothing more than to get high and is also reasonably wealthy so they can get any drug they want and so they spend their whole life in a more or less inebriated state, totally hopped up on meth or whatever their drug of choice is.

Now the question is would we consider this person to be truly free? After all they can decide for themselves to take the drug and nothing is stopping them from doing it.

I think most of us would say NO they’re not really free, because they’re not engaging in their higher nature, their capacity as rational agents to determine what’s best for themselves, in other words, their ability to override their immediate desire to get high and focus on their higher potential as human beings. That there’s some higher nature that humans can appeal to. And this higher nature, rational autonomy, is for Kant what makes ethics possible. It is the ability to override our own selfish interests, our own material desires for food, sex, drugs, entertainment, whatever – and through the self-consistency and coherence of rational reflection to determine right from wrong and to act accordingly.

[SLIDE 13]

And Kant thinks that even though we may want to satisfy our own immediate desires, even at the expense of everyone else, if we deliberate honestly and rationally we will see that this autonomy is something that everyone shares in, and so we should act not only in our own self-interest but in ways that take the interests of everyone else into account as well.

Because to treat people as a mere means to one of our own self-interested ends is to deny other people’s autonomy, and because rational autonomy is something that everyone shares in, the idea that we could ethically deny someone else’s autonomy is self-contradictory. Which basically just amounts to saying that you shouldn’t use people, or as Kant puts it,

“So act that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.”

And so with Kant we have the birth of the idea of Exploitation as an evil thing. So that whatever evil one person may do to another, the worst thing is to use them as means to one’s own ends and not to theirs. Because to do so is to deny them the one thing that makes them human, the one thing that sets them apart from the natural order 🡪 their autonomy, their higher nature.

So autonomy for Kant is the basis of rationality, it’s what makes ethics possible, it’s the defining characteristic of humanity, and as we’ll see, on this scheme, it’s also deeply connected to aesthetic experience.

[SLIDE 14]

So: what does freedom, autonomy -- i.e., self-determination and self-consistency – what does this have to do with art?

[SLIDE 15]

To see the connection we need to consider the type of experience bound up in the appreciation of art, namely aesthetic experience.

According to this account aesthetic experience is the mode of experiencing the world in which we are most free. And I put emphasis on *experience* here: we’ve been talking about RATIONAL autonomy — the ability to make rational choices, and rationality is involved in our ability to UNDERSTAND the world, but aesthetic experience is a bit different, it’s not a mode of understanding the world exactly, it’s a mode of EXPERIENCING the world, but as we will see, for Kant, it’s bound up with RATIONAL Reflection in a really interesting way.

Now to see how it could be that we are most free in aesthetic experience we need to look at it in terms of two considerations:

(Self-)Interest : what role does self-interest play in the experience of art

Purpose (Zweck): now this word is a bit technical, the word Kant uses in German is Zweck which also means goal or end. But the question here is basically: “what purpose does aesthetic experience have?” “To what end, for what reason does aesthetic experience exist?”

[SLIDE 16]

Ok let’s start with Interest:

According to Kant: to experience something aesthetically is to experience it disinterestedly,

(i.e., without self-interest)

One of the easiest ways to see this is to consider the role of the Nude in art – now there are lots of naked bodies in museums all over the place, in sculpture, in painting. What are they doing there? Is the point of nudes to provide mere titillation or sexual arousal? If your only response to a nude in an artwork is that you’d like to get it on with that body (if you’re expecting a Picasso to function like pornography), Kant would say you haven’t experienced it aesthetically, there’s been some kind of failure. And the failure is that it hasn’t been experienced disinterestedly, it’s only been experienced in terms of the desire for sexual gratification or reproduction, or whatever. Or take a still life of an apple say, if you see a painting of an apple and say, hmm I’d like to eat that you haven’t experienced it aesthetically.

To experience these things aesthetically is to take delight in the play of forms on the canvas, to come to an understanding that there is a strong and thoroughgoing unity and coherence to the work of art that is independent of what it depicts or how you might use it.

But we don’t have to take the example of nudes and artworks to see this. Take a tree for instance, there are a lot of ways of experiencing a tree. We might look at it as a source of wood to build shelter, or to make a fire, or maybe it’s a fruit tree and we look at it as a way to feed ourselves but none of these experiences are aesthetic. OR Perhaps we experience the tree as beautiful for its own sake, on its own terms, regardless of our needs for warmth shelter, sustenance and so on. This is disinterested contemplation and its related to two conceptions of value which we will come back to throughout this course intrinsic value and instrumental value.

If something has intrinsic value this means that it has value for its own sake

(it’s an end in itself).

Instrumental value is basically use value, if a thing has instrumental value it means its valuable for some other end.

So: the instrumental value of a tree is that it can be used for firewood, food, shelter. The intrinsic value of a tree might be that it can be the object of aesthetic contemplation – that its beautiful and valuable for its own sake.

[SLIDE 17]

Now let’s move on to purpose. Kant tells that to experience some aesthetically is to experience it as without purpose, but with a sense of *purposiveness*. Now this is a pretty inscrutable sentence but we’ll do our best to figure out what he means by it.

One way to get at this is to ask what is the purpose of music or art. By and large when I talk to undergrad music majors, they tell me that when they tell people they want to study music a really common response from their parents is something like: what are going to DO with that music degree?

Another way to get at this is to ask “what is music good for, what is its utility, what is its purpose?”

Well on the aesthetic account, the purpose of music, strictly speaking, is nothing, except its own beauty, its own value.

Now, of course, we find uses for music all the time (e.g., persuasion in advertising, film scores / improving mathematical aptitude **->** enhancing job prospects, maybe as a way of enhancing college applications, etc.), but these are all external to the intrinsic value of music. To experience music "on its own terms" is to experience it as having no external use, no external purpose.

Again, we can Think about the tree here, we could experience trees as **problems** to be solved (in the case of landscaping) or **useful** for building shelter (material survival), but to experience a tree as beautiful is to take delight in it “on its own terms”

To enjoy something “on its own terms” amounts to a recognition that while an aesthetic object has no external purpose, its parts **function** in a way that is *purpos-ive or purpose-like*. In the case of a piece of music, for instance, we experience the melody and harmony as pushing the musical narrative forward, as raising tension, as creating excitement, we experience the development of motives in a way that seems ordered and meaningful, but without having any specific meaning at all.

In short, in aesthetic experience objects display a self-consistent and coherent inner logic, they seem to be ordered, unified, to make sense, to fit with our *ability* to understand them, And yet at the same time they seem to have no specific meaning or purpose. This is purposiveness without purpose. And perhaps strangely, according to Kant: when we experience the world this way it gives us pleasure – it makes us love the objects of experience on their own terms, independent of any self-interested desires we might have to exploit or consume them, to bend them to our will.

[SLIDE 18]

Now if you remember, I said at the beginning of this lecture that for Kant ethics and aesthetics are deeply connected.

I think you might already be able to see this 🡪 in both ethics and aesthetics we exercise our power to treat the world and the people in it as autonomous ends in themselves, to ***respect*** their intrinsic value, without regard to our own self-interested desires to use them.

Another way that ethics and aesthetics align for Kant is in the unique way we come to categorize things in the world when we treat them ethically and aesthetically. Now we’re going to need to dip our toes very briefly into formal logic to wrap our heads around this, but I hope once we’ve done so some of the deep connections between ethics and aesthetics will become apparent.

[SLIDE 19]

Usually when we try to understand the world we attempt to bring our individual experiences of individual things under more general concepts. For instance, you see a hairy, happy-looking, four-legged, panting, living thing and think : oh that’s a dog. Dog is the general concept that corresponds to this particular thing you’ve just encountered. BTW this is the way that bold-faced terms in textbooks work: you might have the term like “harmonic modulation” that’s defined in a certain way (the gradual change of key in a piece of tonal music, by way of ambiguous pivot chords, etc.) That’s the general concept of modulation, or maybe we take the general concept “sonata form” which we define as a form consisting of an exposition a development and a recapitulation where the harmony modulates between keys a fifth apart, and so on…and of course each of the terms in these definitions have their own definitions and so on. – now, to understand what’s going on in a particular piece by Mozart --- we make what Kant calls a determinate judgment: we apply these general concepts to the particular events that unfold in the piece. This is how we make sense of things.

But Kant thinks that in aesthetic experience we make a different kind of Judgment, which he calls reflective judgment: we make this kind of judgment when we encounter something that seems to have an inner coherence, a sense of orderliness, that seems to be the sort of thing that *could* fall under a general concept, but we lack a general concept to apply to it. This kind of judgment is something that happens often enough in scientific experimentation, for instance, we might observe something in an experiment that doesn’t fit under any existing scientific theories – in which case new theory has to be developed. But it is also central to aesthetics and ethics. Whenever we experience something not as an example of a general concept but as irreducibly, unique, singular, and yet at the same time unified, self-consistent and coherent. In the case of a piece of music, we might experience a piece just as an example of the concept piano sonata, or we might experience it as Beethoven’s Pathetique Sonata, performed by Alfred Brendel (live, not the 1994 recording) – in other words as distinct and recognizable individual that is not exhaustively described by the concepts we apply to it. When we talk about an artist trying to subvert genre expectations, for instance, this is what they’re trying to bring about – to create something unique that is memorable and yet defies description.

[SLIDE 20]

So if I ask you “what is this?” and you say: an apple – you’ve just made a determinate judgment.

[SLIDE 21]

But if I show you this – it might be a bit harder to tell me what it is – but it’s still the sort of thing that seems unified, recognizable – as though we ***could*** apply a concept to it, but we just don’t have a name for it. It’s not very descriptive to call this thing a rock, because it is unique and particular – it’s the sort of thing we could easily remember and recognize, but that seems to defy categorization. (In fact the title of this sculpture is Apple, by Pablo Picasso). In reflective judgment we treat the objects of experience as being more than the concepts we use to describe them.

[SLIDE 22]

This has significant ethical implications regarding the way we interact with other people. Think about the way we talk about personal identity. We usually talk about it in terms of the groups a person belongs to: so for instance, I am a white, male, middle-aged, middle-class, liberal, west coast, American, college professor. Now if some describes me that to you, you will probably have all sorts of expectations about what I believe, how I will behave, and so on. You could add several more descriptors here, of course, but the point is, you are applying general concepts to define the sort of person I am. You are applying a determinate judgment to me.

But to apply a reflective judgment to another person is to treat them as the unique individuals that they are: in reflective judgment there seems to be a surplus to a person’s selfhood, we see them as a unique and recognizable singular person, whose individuality is not exhausted by those general concepts of identity. And so to treat a person accordingly involves not presuming that they will think or behave in a way defined by those general concepts, the identity groups they might happen to belong to.

Now of course this is a distinction we see in contemporary American society all the time: the inability or lack of desire to treat people as more than the social groups they belong to. Whenever you hear someone say “you just think x because you are from this or that country, this or that economic class, this or that political party, or this or that race” they are failing to apply a reflective judgment to the other person. And this can have dire consequences If the US Congress is any indication – the fact that the political factions vote almost entirely as unified blocs, that the country seems irrevocably divided and partisan, and that many people seem unwilling to engage with people outside their group in a spirit of openness and good faith.

To sum up so far: Humans have the freedom not just to behave in a way that fulfills our immediate material desires, but to use reason to transcend these desires -> if you’re on a diet, you may really want to eat gobs of sugar, but you can use reason to cause to act differently -> in a way that will make you better off 🡪 by eating things you may not like as much but that you know are better for you. If we can use reason to change our behavior and determine the best course of action, we are free to choose to act ethically or unethically. When we use reason to reflect on how to treat others ethically, we will discover that we shouldn’t use them, we should treat them in a way that respects their own autonomy, because to deny their autonomy is to turn them into a mere tool to achieve our ends, not theirs, and this is self-contradictory.

Rationality is one form of autonomy – the freedom to act otherwise than our underlying animal natures dictate. But aesthetic experience is the form of experience in which we’re most free. In aesthetic experience, we get a sense of pleasure from the world not because we can use it to satisfy our desires, but because we can use rational reflection to take delight in the beauty of the world for its own sake. In aesthetic experience we glimpse the underlying coherence and consistency of the things in the world, without trying to use them for some other purpose or even to understand them. And this approach to the world, reflective judgment, allows us to see the singular and unique value of every object, person, or experience we might encounter.

[SLIDE 23]

Now this brings us to one final consideration that is really important for understanding the value system behind western classical music from the middle of the 18th century to at least the middle of the 20th century. And that is the concept of organic unity. You’ve probably heard some version of this phrase several times in other classes - Maybe in reference to motivic organicism in Beethoven, for instance, but what does a Beethoven symphony have to do with biological organisms?

You might remember, at the beginning of this lecture I was talking about the problem of salvaging ethics in the face of views of the world that reduce everything to natural determinacy.

And that Kant thinks that humans, through the autonomy of reason, have an internal causal principle, that allows to rationally and ethically choose how to act, and so circumvent our mere animal desires, to step outside of the chain of natural determinacy.

But he thinks that rational autonomy is not the only type of self-determination that we encounter in the world. Life itself seems to be self-determining, it seems to have an inner autonomy, an internal causal principle. Living organisms seem to display a really strange and special relationship to causal determinacy.

In the normal experience of cause and effect, causes are **external** to their effects – so if you imagine throwing a ball for instance, the ball flies through the air and falls to the ground, the ball is acted upon by external forces, the momentum of my arm, the force of gravity, air pressure, wind resistance and so on. But with organisms you have something really quite distinct and quite remarkable. There seems to be a causality that is **internal** to the organism itself – So what do I mean by this? Well, you can think about it in terms of the difference between planting a rock in the ground and burying it vs. planting an acorn in the ground and watering it. If you plant a rock and water it you end up with a dirty wet rock, but when you do this with an acorn you get an oak tree 🡪 the tree seems to already be encoded in the acorn. Even though there are some external causes – the nutrients from the sun and soil for instance – the information that’s encoded in the acorn is itself an internal cause, it is self-determining.

There seems to be a coherence, a unity between the parts and the whole of an organism – the parts of the organism - ITS ORGANS – function in a way to create and maintain a whole that is more than the sum of its parts: LIFE. A dead organism is just its parts – it’s like that dirty wet rock – the parts are no longer FUNCTIONAL - they can no longer create or maintain life.

But the organs themselves are dependent on the whole of the living organism in order to continue to exist. Think about a plant, A plant needs its organs to live – if you rip up the roots, for instance, the organism will die, but the roots are dependent on the rest of the plant, the leaves, the trunk, functioning together in order to continue to exist as well. So there is this reciprocal dependence between part and whole in an organism, that functions to create something that is more than the sum of its parts: namely, LIFE.

But organisms are also capable of something really remarkable that non-organic matter isn’t capable of: reproduction – they can create offspring like themselves – and so at the level of species there is a relationship between part and whole – the individual members of the species reproduce to maintain the whole species.

Now I think you might already be able to see the relationship of this model to the way composers like Beethoven think about structure in music. Like with an organism there is a thorough-going unity between part and whole. In Beethoven’s 9th symphony, the main motive of the main theme outlines a fifth, and of course the fifth is the fundamental interval of tonality itself, so that every time you get a fifth from the note-to-note action of the music all the way to the architectonic structure of an entire movement and even an entire symphony – there is a sense in which the entire world of the symphony already exists in the microscopic seed of the melodic motive, just in the way the tree already seems to be encoded in the acorn. But also, like an organism, the parts of a symphony form a whole that is more than the sum of its parts: a symphony is not just a random assortment of intervals, rhythms, sounds and so on, rather these things function together to create a vast an epic expression that seems to put us in contact with an other worldly reality – it connects us to the divine.

And its interesting to look at the model of organicism not just in terms of individual organisms or individual symphonies, rather when we look at the world, we see whole ecologies of organisms interacting, whole societies of individual people interacting, so that there seems to a directionality all the way from the blind interactions of particles attracting and repulsing each other to produce chemical reactions which are the basis of organic life, through to intelligent life, life that is conscious of its own existence, namely human life, which creates societies, and societies create cultures of art and ethical behavior.

[SLIDE 24]

Or seen from a different perspective, as in an xkcd cartoon – ethics is just applied sociology, which is just applied psychology, which is just applied biology, which is just applied physics, which may or not just be applied logic.

you know when we do astrophysics, we might see certain regularities in the interaction of heavenly bodies, for instance, or particles, but that underlying those physical regularities are the laws of physics, and those laws exhibit the consistency and regularity of logic, of rationality.

And so, these ideas that originate with Kant are picked up by other thinkers and developed over the 19th century into a theory that holds that the self-determining autonomy of life itself seems to be directed toward culture, music, art, beauty justice, toward a more ethical world. You know If you go back throughout history you can get a very strong sense that human culture seems to be developing, it may not be unidirectional, there are setbacks and so on, but history seems to be moving in a direction, that human civilization is improving, and not just on a technological level, but that society is getting increasingly *moral*, so if you go back 50,000 years we,re living in caves and killing each other, if you go back 5,000 years you have societies with codes of law, and if you fast forward to the 19th century you have these developing ideas of universal human rights, which was not an available concept in the roman empire, for instance.

Now of course, as we *know* with our *own* society, ideas about Universal rights that leave out huge chunks of society for instance women and people of color are highly questionable, but one thing you hear amidst all the protesting going on these days are people saying things like “do you want to be on the wrong side of History”?

And so there is this idea that history is developing or improving, and what was the driving *impetus* of society’s improvement are rational ideas about what is true, ideas about what Justice consists in, and so on.

And this represents another example of the unity of part and whole -- The way Kant puts this, is that its really very strange and awe-inspiring that these clumps of meat in our head – our brains – should be able to uncover the existence of galaxies, the laws of physics and chemistry – the structure of the universe – that we should be able to discover this through human rationality – and that in the same way we seem to intuitively know deep down what is right and what is wrong. How could this be unless there is some underlying similarity between the human mind and the cosmos.

Or as he says:

[SLIDE 25]

“Two things fill the mind with ever-increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more intensely the mind of thought is drawn to them: the **starry heavens above**  and the moral law within.”

[SLIDE 26]

These are words that Beethoven copied down, adding multiple exclamation points, in a notebook in 1820, and we can see the basic outline of these ideas in the way he approached the craft of composition.

[SLIDE 27]

So to return to the questions from the beginning of this lecture: shouldn’t music be relevant, shouldn’t it address todays problems, todays concerns – isn’t the point of art to address the injustices of the world and help to make it a better place? Well, perhaps so, but on the Kantian account, from the perspective of autonomous art, the value of art is not that it literally solves problems or persuades people to hold certain opinions, the value of art is precisely that it has no external value – as John Cage says, the highest purpose of art is to have no purpose at all, or as Oscar Wilde says “We can forgive a man for making a **useful** thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a **useless** thing is that one admires it intensely. All **art** is quite **useless**.”

[SLIDE 28]

From this perspective art is an exercise in freedom, in fairness and impartiality: or to paraphrase Kant 🡪 the aesthetic experience prepares us for ethics because it teaches us “how to love something, even the natural world, without self-interest.”

And so we see this idea that the self-determining autonomy of life itself seems to be directed toward morality.

– so that it seems that existence is directed toward

so that it seems as though there is a sort of directionality to the world. On a subatomic level: particles seem inclined to behave in certain ways, they attract and repulse each other, forming the basis of chemical reactions, which form the basis of organic life – and organic life seems to have developed toward consciousness – and from consciousness to self conscious human life.

And just as free will in humans is an internal causal principle nature, organisms (living beings) have an internal causal principle

This autonomy is mental

This is human autonomy,

 them to act otherwise than nature dictates.

As I’ve said already, we tend to experience the world in terms of cause and effect

Inner causality (teleology) allows living things to be more than the just the sum of their parts

Rather the parts of an organism – its organs function together to cause the unified state we call life. But likewise, the parts cannot (continue to) exist independently of the whole.

***analogous*** to reason's intentional activity.

Autonomy Reason Humanity

Autonomy Teleology Life

Connect reflective judgment to autonomy – autonomy is that aspect of humanity that stands outside natural causality (namely, reason), but even in nature we see a sort of autonomy, not rational autonomy, but teleological autonomy. Life has teleological autonomy (organisms are natural purposes/ends in themselves, because they have a self-coherent causal principle)

Just as free will in humans is an internal causal principle nature, organisms (living beings) have an internal causal principle

divisive

If we apply a determinate judgme

SURPLUS

If I ask you what is this: this: (a book) and ask

In the case of a piece of music, we might experience a piece just as an example of the concept piano sonata, or we might experience it as Beethoven’s

**Determinate Judgment = bringing a particular under a general concept**

**To objectify / name an object = e.g., you are a Black Female Socialist Professor (whatever identity conditions).**

**That is an apple 🡪 applying genus to the particular instance**

**Determined (logically) by the conditions of the general concept (i.e., A x’s are y, z is an x :. z is a y (z is determined by the generality of x)**

**Reflective judgment = encountering an object that has an inner coherence – I can experience it as a particular that *could* fall under a general concept, but I lack a general concept to apply to it = the irreducible singularity of a thing: I see the thing as coherent, as unified, but I can’t objectify/name it : you MAY BE a black female socialist (whatever) BUT at the same time I also see you as a unique individual that is not exhausted by those identity conditions. There is a surplus to your selfhood that can only be described under a particular concept (i.e., a singular proper name, &c.)**

**Or: I experience this artwork not just as an instance of a genre, but as a unique artwork – or even in genre painting – (e.g., still life of an apple) the reflective judgment is not – yep, that’s an apple. Rather it is “I experience this as being self-coherent, I can identify this experience, but I don’t have a name for it, there is not an exhaustive general concept that I can bring this particular apple under.”**

**(btw: what structuralism denies is that there REALLY is this surplus to identity, identity is determined)**

**HH: it seems to me that I can choose how I want to approach the world. In terms of determinate and/or reflective judgments.**

**Aesthetic judgments are reflective**

In both cases

In aesthetic experience we experience the object as an end in itself

Love -> aesthetics / ethics (without self interest) || humans are ends in themselves / artworks are ends in themselves

Do we need to understand in order to love / is love prior to understanding?

Determinate judgment

Reflective judgment

Unity of part whole is a function of continuity - naturalness (see below) - “objective material purposiveness"

**Paradigm of Organicism**

We experience the world in terms of causal determinacy, but organisms ("organized beings") seem to have a special relationship to this — they follow their own organizing principles (DNA, etc.)

CF inorganic objects - plant a rock in the ground, vs. a seed

self-coherence -

functionality - is an organism just a collection of separate parts? No, parts (organs) function together to create the whole - take one out and the organism functionality is impaired/eliminated

Analysis breaks a piece down to its essential functions.

There are no gaps in an organic artwork - there may be extra stuff (irrelevant to analysis), but the essential stuff is the material of analysis.

In some works (Webern, etc.), there is less and less extraneous stuff (or rather it is there but becomes invisible).

There is a unity/similarity between part and whole - e.g., Beethoven’s 9th

**DON'T READ**

\*\*\*Here’s another way to think about it:

1. If ethics requires us to have the autonomous causal power to act otherwise than the dictates of our material desires, and
2. if our material desires are caused by external causal laws (e.g., physics/biology, etc.)

then our autonomy needs to have causal power without itself being caused by these external laws (e.g., physics/biology, etc.).

Therefore, autonomy must be acting under laws that it gives to *itself*.\*\*\*

**CONTINUE READING**