

*Kant's Aesthetic Reading of Aristotle's Philia: Disinterestedness and the Mood of the Late Enlightenment*¹

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Abstract

This article roots Kant's concept of disinterestedness, as he uses it in the *Critique of Judgment*, in Aristotle's notion of *philia* by establishing a path from ethics to aesthetics and back. In this way, the third *Critique* turns out to be one of the main sources for a new ideal of humanity: the ideal suitable for late Enlightenment. This article argues that Kant reaches this fruitful use of disinterestedness by giving to Aristotle's concept of *philia* an aesthetic turn.

Keywords: Kant and Aristotle, Disinterestedness, *Philia*, Late Enlightenment, Virtues for Democracy in the late 18th century, Communication for Social Construction.

Friendships are not found in heaven, for heaven is the ultimate in moral perfection, and that is universal; friendship, however, is a special bond between particular persons; in this world only, therefore, it is a recourse for opening one's mind to the other and communing with him.

Immanuel Kant, *On Friendship*²

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² Kant, *Vorlesungen* 4.1, AA 27.1, p. 428. The text *On friendship (Von der Freundschaft)* is in AA 27.1, pp. 422-424. See also *On Enmity (Von der Feindschaft)*, AA. 27.1, pp. 431-432, both in English in:

1. The *Critique of the Power of Judgement*³ and the late enlightenment mood

The *Kritik der Urteils kraft* (*KU*) considered as a whole is essentially a text about critical teleology. Its rationale relates to an abandonment of the mechanistic Cartesian philosophy of the *Analytic of Concepts* and the *Analytic of Principles* in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (*KrV*)⁴ as well as to the development of new perspectives that were settled in the chapters 'Of the Regulative Employment of the Ideas of Pure Reason' and 'Of the Ultimate End of the Natural Dialectic of Human Reason' from the '*Transcendental Dialectics*' of the *KrV*.⁵ Here the transcendental illusion of reason and the insatiability of this faculty are no longer seen as being harmful to philosophy. Rather, they become challenges that, when properly clarified, can be considered appropriate for a new generation of critical questions. These are the seeds that are germinating in Kant's third *Critique*, which is situated in the abandonment of the mechanistic understanding of nature in favor of a more organic and teleological conception of natural objects (*KU*, Part II) and artificial objects (*KU*, Part I). It is an option that favors the thinking of Aristotle and Leibniz rather than that of Descartes, although both Aristotle and Leibniz are passed through the sieve of criticism.

From an epistemological point of view, these new questions mean a radicalization of Kant's philosophy derived from a concern for the exercising of the faculty for judging, highlighted with some insistence by the substitution in the third *Critique* of the term *Vermögen zu urteilen* by *Urteils kraft*. From an ontological point of view, the new questions mean the philosophical rescue of the field of the empirical particular, traditionally pushed to one side and which until that point had maintained reverential respect for the Aristotelian statement that there is no science of the particular. That is why the fourth paragraph of the Introduction to the *KU* states that the exercising of the faculty for judging is the exercising of 'the faculty for thinking of the particular as contained under the universal,'⁶ and the essential concern of the *KU* as a whole is the exercising of reflecting judgment, in which 'only the particular is given,' and 'for which the universal is to be found.'⁷ The term exercising is added here to the term *faculty* because this is the original notion of *Kraft* added to that of *Vermögen*. The search for a universal for a particular becomes

Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (2005). The quoted text is on page 188. These texts clearly show the Aristotelian affiliation of Kant's understanding of the term friendship.

³ Kant, *Kritik der Urteils kraft* (*KU*), AA 5. See English version: *Kant, Critique of the Power of Judgment* (2000).

⁴ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, AA 4. See English version: *Kant, Critique of Pure Reason* (1998).

⁵ Respectively: *KrV* A 642 / B 670 - A 668 / B 696, AA III, pp. 426-442; A 669 / B 697 - A 704 / B 732; AA III, pp. 442-461.

⁶ Kant, I., Introduction to *KU* § IV, 66. AA 5, p. 179.

⁷ *Ibid.*, § IV, 67. AA 5, p. 179.

a new task for a kind of thinking that adopts the form of critical teleology, of Aristotelian–Leibnizian origin, but also strongly regulated by the use of the ‘as if’ (*als ob*) in the arrangement of the final causes.

Kant’s critical project thus embraces a new philosophical *Weltanschauung*, which is simultaneously affected by the vulnerability of the privilege of the field of the particular as well as by the audacity of privileging the exercising of reflecting judgment. In the third *Critique*, *metaphysics* does away with epistemic pretensions to become a science and, instead, turns towards a self-understanding of its responsibility as a part of human knowledge that is as unalienable as it is vulnerable. This self-understanding is developed through the critical attribution of final causes to theoretical and practical questioning. The critical advance of the *KU* is that it signals, now contrary to both Aristotle and Leibniz, that the final causes are no more than a pledge for thought, but one that is inevitably required for the insatiability of reason, and therefore (and at last) final causes are something unavoidable for metaphysics. From this moment metaphysics will conceive itself as a task both uncertain and audacious, adapting itself to the late Enlightenment mood, marked so strongly by the earthquake in Portugal and the French Revolution. That is to say, it will be shaped by the uncertainty of the break of natural laws and by the audacity required by the claims of democracy.

2. The path from Aristotle’s *philia* to Kant’s disinterestedness: from ethics to aesthetics and back

Audacity requires the action of a mind that is prepared to tackle unknown territory, even if the light is so dim that it barely illuminates the most immediate steps. The late Enlightenment period demonstrated an awareness that the lights of reason were discreet, what in the language of the time meant that they were ‘hypothetical’ or ‘problematic.’ The *KU* contributes to this *Zeitgeist* in devoting itself to setting up a kind of intelligibility that vindicates its potential precisely based on this vulnerability and in the most conscious exercising of audacity in the critical attribution of ends, i.e., in its link with a philosophy that no longer belongs to the real world but to the world of what is possible.⁸ The following pages show how the negative concept of disinterestedness in the first part of the *KU* forms one of the keys to this *Zeitgeist*, and that this is possible thanks to the fact that it is rooting in the Aristotelian concept of *philia*.⁹

⁸ *Ibid.*, §§ II-III, 61-62. *AA* 5, pp. 174-175.

⁹ Peroli (2006) and Sherman (1987) compare the similarities and differences between Aristotle’s and Kant’s concepts of *Philia*. Derrida (1994) bridges the gap between both authors in his peculiar seminar on politics of friendship.

Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* defines *philia* as a virtue (1155a).¹⁰ Its specific nature is produced from the confluence of the following attributes: 'it is one of the most indispensable requirements of life'; it 'is not only indispensable as a means, it is also noble in itself'; it 'promote[s] concord'; it requires reciprocated feeling (1155b), that consists in the friends who 'love each other for themselves and not accidentally' (1156b), meaning that 'we ought to wish our friend well for his own sake' (1156a). This demonstrates a disinterested attitude, given that 'friends whose affection is based on utility do not love each other in themselves, but in so far as some benefit accrues to them from each' (1156a).¹¹

Three conditions determine the possibility of reciprocity. The first one, that it should occur 'between the good, and those who resemble each other in virtue' (1156b)¹² – in other words, according to their similarity (1155b)–; the second one: a constant exercising of attention or coexistence (1156b, 1157b); the third one: and mutual confidence (1157a). Reciprocity is, in addition, the consequence of the exercising of choice (1157b), and it occurs more frequently in democracies than in tyrannies, given that in the former 'the citizens being equal have many things in common' (1161b), with the result that 'all friendship [...] involves community'.

One of Kant's greatest audacities was to convert the German language into a philosophical language. Wolff's effort, even taking into account its enormity, was hugely insufficient. The little giant of Königsberg, learned in Greek philosophy, adopted the same procedures as the first philosophers and devoted himself to inspiring his vocabulary and his argumentations in the most advanced disciplines of his own philosophical area: in science and in ethics. From this conviction, I will proceed to argue that the aesthetic concept of *disinterestedness* defended by Kant is clearly anchored in the ethical notion of Aristotle's *philia*, and that it traces a path from ethics to aesthetics and back again.

Following one of his usual procedures when arduously creating a vocabulary in his own language, Kant undertakes a first operation of negative argumentation with the term 'interest,' which is certainly used by Aristotle in both physics and ethics. In relation to this, and against the expression habitually employed by us, the interpreters, Kant does not use the term *disinterestedness*¹³ as a substantive, but rather this negativity is being constructed in composed terms, as if Kant would be testing the adequacy of a right expression. The most successful Kantian terms in this trial

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, English version (1934).

¹¹ See also 1157a.

¹² See also 1157b, 1158b, 1159b.

¹³ For the genealogy of this concept, see Stolnitz (1961). This article is discussed in the following ones: Allentuck (1962); Saisselin (1962); Schiller (1964). See also Stolnitz (1963) and (1978). Other papers discussing the genealogy of the concept are: White (1973); Rind, (2002), and Guyer, (1993). For the further development of the concept of disinterestedness see: Vandenabeele (2001).

are: 'pure and disinterested satisfaction' (*dem reinen uninteressierten Wohlgefallen im Geschmackurteile*, KU § 2), 'disinterested and free satisfaction' (*ein uninteressiertes und freies Wohlgefallen*, KU § 5), 'disinterested judgment' (*ein bloßes Geschmacksurteil ohne alles Interesse*, KU § 42), 'without any interest' (*ohne alles Interesse*, KU §§ 5, 6; *wenn wir gleich am Objekte gar kein Interesse haben*, KU § 25), 'without interest' (*ohne Interesse*, KU §§ 24, 26, 41), 'no interest' (*kein Interesse*, KU §§ 5, 41), 'with the consciousness of an abstraction in it from all interest' (*wovon jemand sich bewußt ist, daß das Wohlgefallen an demselben bei ihm selbst ohne alles Interesse sei*, KU § 6), 'the aesthetic judgment [...] does not produce an interest in the object' (*und ohne ein Interesse am Objekt zu bewirken*, KU § 12), '[a]ny interest spoils of judgment of taste' (*Alles Interesse verdirbt das Geschmacksurteil*, KU § 13), 'do not rest on any interest' (*daß es ohne alles Interesse gefallen müsse*, KU § 29), 'must have no interest' (*und ohne Rücksicht auf irgendein Interesse gefallen hat*, KU § 41).

The main points of confluence between Aristotle's notion of *philia* and the Kantian notion of *disinterestedness* are described below. I understand the sequence proposed as being necessary for a coherent argument on this happy meeting between two concepts set apart by twenty-two centuries of a philosophy that at certain times gave little support to this kind of *sacra conversazione* between similar concepts. The late Enlightenment period, aware of its own fragility, turned this antipathy into a challenge and managed to get them into a conversation.

2.1. *Philia* requires "our friend well for his own sake"¹⁴ from the point of view of disinterestedness

A friend is an empirical particular that can only be the object of discourse from the paradigm of relationship and not from the paradigm of substance: one is a 'friend' simply because one has at least one friend. Friendship, then, is a relationship between two empirical particulars; as Kant argues in the initial citation of this article, 'friendship, however, is a special bond between particular persons.'¹⁵ In the same way, Kantian aesthetics is based on the relationship between particulars: Kant talks about subjects with an aesthetic way of looking and objects viewed aesthetically. The key to this relationship lies, as in the case of the Aristotelian *philia*, in the disinterestedness of the subject, as proposed by the 'definition of the beautiful derived from the first moment':

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1156a.

¹⁵ Flynn (2007), Marcucci (1999), Munzel and Fenves (1998), Paton (1957), Veltman (2004) undertake their discussions on the notion of friendship in Kant from the consideration of the *particularity* characteristic of each person that exercises this bond and its implications in knowledge and the construction of the public sphere.

Taste is the faculty for judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest. The object of such a satisfaction is called beautiful.¹⁶

In this relationship, the priority assigned by Kant to the subject is related to the effort involved in defending the autonomy of this subject within its own vulnerability. For that reason, taste is defined as a faculty. It is, however, a peculiar faculty that did not find its place in philosophy until Hume. If Kant places so much priority on this it is because, to his understanding, taste can only be conceived from *disinterestedness*, and that means a fertile (maybe the most fertile) philosophical possibility of the presupposition that individuals can be free and autonomous:¹⁷ they can liberate themselves from their prejudices and their baggage and are prepared to find common ground. This is precisely the ideal in the late Enlightenment period for being a human being: someone who is not sure of being right but who, if problems arise, will sit down at a table, leaving his prejudices and interests to one side, and discuss the matter with other citizens as a self-confirming, proud but discreet exercising of their freedom.¹⁸ Kant retrieves the old platonic spirit of philosophical dialogue, which can only begin and take place within the productive freedom to 'think aloud' for and with others.¹⁹

This freedom, which could be referred to as *aesthetic freedom*, has to do with the free play of faculties.²⁰ Those who sit down at a table to have a conversation, leaving to one side their prejudices and baggage, are prepared to avail their minds of an openness to that which is possible (not necessarily in opposition to what is real, but that which could be), as in Kant's account of friendship in the initial citation of this article: it is a recourse for *opening one's mind* to another particular human being and communing with him. Kant places aesthetic pleasure in this new ethical-aesthetic imperative of what nowadays we refer to as opening one's mind, which is a consequence of the sense of this new freedom in the exercising of faculties. It is the pleasure of being prepared to find common ground and agreement (whether this actually occurs or not); it is the pleasure of the search for communicability. This is why the *Mittelbarkeit* (mediation) became one of the most recurrent terms in the *KU*: the new individual (free, autonomous and fragile) can only find his

¹⁶ Kant, I., *KU* § 5, 96; *AA* 5, p. 211.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, § 5, 95; *AA* 5, p. 210.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, § 6, 96–7; *AA* 5, pp. 211–212.

¹⁹ The political reading of the *KU* was initiated by Friedrich Schiller in his *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1759–1805). This reading continues in contemporary philosophy in the writings of Herbert Marcuse and Jacques Rancière, and especially in Hannah Arendt's work *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (1982), where she takes the topic of sociable communication as the main ground for this kind of approach.

²⁰ See Kant, *KU* § 9, pp. 102–103; *AA* 5, 216–7. See also § 15, p. 113; *AA* 5, p. 228.

strength in the power of what is common, and therefore *disinterestedness* is a *sine qua non* condition, just as it is for the pleasures of friendship.

2.2. What reciprocity meant to the late Enlightenment notion of art. Beautiful art as a path to sociable communication

Art plays a fundamental role as a place for thought along this new path of freedom and pleasure. The previous section focused on *disinterestedness* as the defining element of this link between a type of empirical particulars in the aesthetic relationship: that of the subjects. This section considers this category in terms of the relationships established between the subjects that look aesthetically and the objects that are viewed in that way. The aesthetic sense is the exercising of the faculty that turns a piece of nature into a landscape, an object into a work of art. Kantian philosophy cannot escape (as indeed none can) the debts of its own history and for that reason it links this sense first to beauty,²¹ which Kant translates as a sense of pleasure; and second to sublime, as a sense of displeasure (*Unlust*), a term that follows, as *disinterestedness* and *displeasure*, the dynamic of negative aesthetics. Both *sublime* and *displeasure* become negative categories of great innovative potential with respect to the category of the ugly.²²

However, the pleasure related to beauty is not just any type of pleasure, but the pleasure of reflection: 'this must not be a pleasure of enjoyment, from mere sensation, but one of reflection.'²³ And reflection is a special mode of intelligibility of the world, which can only be constructed from an empirical particular, in an attempt to bestow upon it a universal that has not been established *a priori* and that needs to be exercised to achieve communicability. The ideas governing this intelligibility are of a new genre for philosophy: they are *aesthetic ideas*, being an aesthetic idea 'a representation of the imagination that occasions much thinking though without it being possible for any determinate thought.'²⁴ Consequently, they *open the mind* to the field of the possible. The exercising of aesthetic sense, therefore, carries the feeling of pleasure in the search for a sense that is not given, but constructed. And, as a matter of fact, the rigorous unity between the first and second parts of the *KU* is revealed above all in the concept of aesthetic idea. The exercising of reflection requires the metaphysical stake on a sphere of ends regulated by the *als ob*, and this is exactly the subject of the second part, which is nothing other than a treatise on critical teleology precisely because of the power granted to that regulation.

²¹ *Ibid.*, §§ 1-22.

²² *Ibid.*, §§ 23-9.

²³ *Ibid.*, § 44, 185; *AA* 5, p. 306.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, § 49, 192. *AA* 5, p. 314.

It is at the heart of that commitment that art has laid down strong roots to take full advantage of the potential contained in paragraphs 43–45 of the *KU*. Kant considers it a privileged place for the exercising of aesthetic sense and, therefore, for the reflecting judgment; the case of the work of art is an occasion²⁵ for exercising the endowment of sense. The aesthetic judgment of art then becomes an area of intelligibility, generating representations as ‘types of cognition,’²⁶ given that art ‘promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication.’²⁷ And, as a matter of fact, that is why judgment of art is ‘indifferent with regard to the existence of an object’ (§ 5: 95, AA 5: 94).²⁸ Kant is making an effort here to distinguish the fine art objects from other objects: while the latter are self comprehending from their ends, the former begin to be so from their capacity to generate a new area of intelligibility, which is reflection. So, Rafael’s *Madonna* is not a work of art because it incites religious fervor, but because its beauty generates the free play of faculties enabling them the exercising of reflection ‘for sociable communication.’ It is worth remembering that according to Book II of Aristotle’s *Physics* ‘the existence of an object’ means producing itself according to the fulfillment of its end, an aspect that Kant specifically excludes in this effort to distinguish fine art from art that is simply *techné*. It is also worth remembering, with regards to the question of ‘sociable communication,’ that at the time Kant was writing the *KU* the first art exhibitions were already being seen as places for the construction of the public sphere.

However and moreover, in this possession of public sense, *disinterestedness* in aesthetic judgment requires reciprocity with regards to the artistic object, as *philia* required reciprocated feeling (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1155b). In other words, if sense is given to the object in an act of affirmation of the subject’s autonomy in the exercising of reflection ‘for sociable communication,’ the work of art will return to the subject a potential sphere for self-intelligibility, precisely as a subject in the public sphere. The proposal of a complicated term such as *purposiveness without purpose*, coined playing with Aristotelian terms,²⁹ as a transcendental principle of aesthetic judgment, is an attempt to capture the first glimmer of that reciprocity. Certainly, something resembling reciprocity exists between the subject that exercises aesthetic sense and the work of art, and that reciprocity occurs in terms of *fitting*: the work fits the subject, offering itself as an occasion for the exercising of reflection ‘for sociable communication’; the subject fits the work, giving it a constituent sense of being ‘for sociable communication’ and the work returns to the subject as sense of self-understanding ‘for sociable communication.’ In short, the aesthetic relationship

²⁵ *Ibid.*, § 49, 193; AA 5, p. 315.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, § 44, 184. AA 5, p. 305.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, § 44, 185. AA 5, p. 306.

²⁸ Paul Guyer has discussed the tensions generated by this question in Guyer (1978).

²⁹ See Kant, Introduction to *KU* §§ IV, V and VI.

between the subjects and the work of art needs to be given a reciprocal, and at the same time, constituent sense of the public sphere, just as occurs in relationships of friendship.

2.3. *Exercising disinterestedness for sociable communication: what Kraft brought to Vermögen*

As seen in the previous section, disinterestedness as an aesthetic attitude favoring social communication only happens in the act of judgment, which must be exercised as much as possible to reach aesthetic expertise. Concerning *philia*, it only exists as being performed. Exercising and performing have to do with the Kantian derivation of the term *urteilen* from the first to the third *Critique*, where the term *Vermögen* (*Vermögen zu urteilen*) is replaced by *Kraft* (*Urteilkraft*), being the title of this work *Kritik der Urteilkraft*. In the quest to convert German into the language of philosophy, the term *Kraft* takes up the Latin *vis*, which was situated on the Aristotelian path from potentiality to actuality. Kant, in the mood of late Enlightenment aesthetics, is no longer concerned about the faculty for judging in itself, but about the exercising of that faculty at times of greatest uncertainty and focusing for this reason in reflecting judgment. With this opting for the term *Kraft*, Kant was taking on Hume's aesthetic legacy and his vindication of experience and exercise of judgment as the only ways to reach aesthetical expertise.

2.4. *Disinterestedness, like philia, promote concord*

It has already been discussed how Kant considers taste a privileged place for preparing common ground, in the sense that the *disinterestedness* which characterizes this faculty let aside purely subjective conditions, which may be harmful for concord. So, disinterestedness promotes concord in the same way as *philia* does (see *Nicomachean Ethics* 1155b). Paragraph 40 of the *KU* adds the explanation that the communal sense gives full philosophical sense to the *disinterestedness* inherent in taste:

By 'sensus communis', however, must be understood the idea of a communal sense, i.e., a faculty for judging that in its reflection takes account (*a priori*) of everyone else's way of representing in thought, in order as it were to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole.³⁰

For the late Enlightenment's new paradigm of communicability, the demand for

³⁰ Kant, *KU* § 40, p. 173; AA 5, p. 293.

recognition of the particular as well as of uncertainty require a fundamental modification of Kant's ethics, which is set out in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. This modification includes in both the first formulation of the categorical imperative ('Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in any other person, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means')³¹ and in the third one ('Every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a legislating member in the universal kingdom of ends'), a much more discreet and pragmatic consignment, which is to take 'account (a priori) of everyone else's way of representing in thought, in order as it were to hold its judgment up to human reason as a whole';³² it is the challenge of being aware, from the hegemony of the imagination, of what the other must be thinking. The exercising of the taste of reflection is similar, therefore, to the exercising of the search for concord (as is in friendship), given that, from a position of *disinterestedness*, (it) 'makes supposedly generally valid (public) judgments.'³³ This search for accordance is one of the reasons of Kant's claim to subjective universality for the judgment of taste,³⁴ which, in its very formulation, vindicates the inherent perplexity in the reflecting judgment³⁵ and can only conceive itself as a disposal towards communicability.³⁶ The reference here is to that which, for the late Enlightenment, is the *strictly* human.

2.5. *What disinterestedness and philia mean to democracy*

In the previous sections I have argued in favor of linking aesthetic *disinterestedness* to the wish for the generation of community. As has been alleged, it deals with the comprehension of taste as the common sense and with aesthetic pleasure as the pleasure of reflection. But *reflection* does not mean that this pleasure should not be deeply vital. In fact, the sense of aesthetic pleasure is, for Kant, *the feeling of life*,³⁷ and there is little more that can be said about it, given that it is profoundly enigmatic. In any case, it 'is found chiefly in those judgments that are called aesthetic, which concern the beautiful and the sublime in nature or in art'³⁸ and, for

³¹ Kant, I., *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten –GMS–*, AA 4, p. 429. English version: *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1993). This text is on pages pp. 381-382.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 237, AA 4, p. 436.

³³ Kant, I., *KU* § 8, p. 99; AA 5, p. 214. Regarding the relationship between common sense and reflection see Kirchmyer Dobe (2010).

³⁴ Kant, I., *KU* § 6, pp. 96-97, AA 5, pp. 211-212; § 7, pp. 97-98, AA 5, pp. 212-213; § 18, p. 121, AA 5, pp. 236-237; § 22, p. 123-124, AA 5, pp. 239-40.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, § pp. 8, 99-100, AA 5, pp. 213-214.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, § 40, pp. 175-176, AA 5, pp. 295-296; § 21, pp. 122-123, AA 5, pp. 238-239.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, § 1, pp. 89-90, AA 5, pp. 203-204.

Kant, the conscious appreciation of this feeling of life is a requirement for a happy life.

The final objective in vindicating this particular type of aesthetic hedonism is none other than that of consolidating the first steps in a democracy called for by 18th century philosophy, just as Aristotle called for it in the 4th century BC with his *philia*.³⁹ It can be said that in both cases *disinterestedness* is a commitment to the fundamental requirements of democracy, which are those of consensus, a topic that was important for Kant from his pre-critique period. In fact, in a letter to Marcus Herz dated June 1771, he considers the standpoint of others as a key to consensus, even with oneself:

You know very well that I am inclined not only to try to refute intelligent criticisms but that I always weave them together with my judgments and give them the right to overthrow all my previously cherished opinions. I hope that in that way I can achieve an unpartisan perspective, by seeing my judgments from the standpoint of others, so that a third opinion may emerge, superior to my previous ones.⁴⁰

I would like to conclude with one of the most lucid texts from the third *Critique*, found in the last paragraph of the first part, which serves as its synthesis. In this text, the essence of what is *human* is situated within the universal feeling of participating in a common act and within the power of generating communication:

The propaedeutic for all beautiful art, so far as it is aimed at the highest degree of its perfection, seems to lie not in precepts, but in the culture of the mental powers through those prior forms of knowledge that are called *humaniora*, presumably because humanity means on the one hand the universal feeling of participation and on the other hand the capacity for being able to communicate one's inmost self universally, which properties taken together constitute the sociability that is appropriate to humankind.⁴¹

The *KU* converts the essential ends of human reason into ends regulated by a new ideal of humanity: the human beings who have to judge by themselves. Their judgments will be constructed from the pride of one's own vulnerability, from the audacity of thought and from confidence in the power of communication for social

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 57, AA 5, p. 169.

³⁹ In addition to Aristotle's texts, Kant was also familiar with Epicure's view on this question. See Epicure, *Gnomologium Vaticanum: E codice Vaticano graeco 52*, MC, 27.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Briefe* 67 [62], 7 Juni 1771. *Briefwechsel*, AA 10, p. 122. English version: Kant, *Correspondence* (1999).

⁴¹ Kant, I., *KU* § 60, p. 229; AA 5, p. 355. See also § 41 and 42, pp. 176-182, AA 5, pp. 296-302. Here Kant develops the topics of the awareness of the subject as a member of the public sphere and civilization and of the need of beauty for this aim in the progress of humankind.

construction. These are the three human virtues required for the new philosophy of the late Enlightenment, all three of them in strong relation to liberty, to reflection and, consequently, to *disinterestedness*, as Aristotelian *philia* was.⁴² The third *Critique*, in a late Enlightenment's mood, led to understand that these three virtues, like friendships, were not to be found in heaven, not in the best of the possible worlds, but in the most human, common and everyday life. And both art and aesthetic sense became the best places to be aware of this late Enlightenment human being that was taking account of his own liberty not in heavenly, but in public spheres.

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⁴² About this virtues, see De Koninck (2003).

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