

SPIRIT WITHOUT LINES: KANT'S ATTEMPT TO RECONCILE THE GENIUS AND SOCIETY

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Abstract: In the *Anthropology*, Kant wonders whether the genius or the individual possessing perfected judgment has contributed more to the advance of culture. In the KU, Kant answers this question definitively on the side of those with perfected judgment. Nevertheless, occurring as it does in §50 of the KU, immediately after Kant's celebration of the genius in §49, this only raises more questions. Kant rejects the genius in favour of the individual of taste as an advancer of culture, yet under what conditions could the genius contribute? And, what threat does the genius really pose to this advance, other than that of penning simple nonsense? My essay attempts to answer these questions, using key texts and overlooked *Reflexionen*, all of which nest Kant's concern for the genius in the associated risks of fanaticism. I conclude that, given certain conditions, the genius can contribute in a unique manner to the advance of culture.

Bringt doch der Wanderer auch vom Hange des Bergrands
nicht eine Hand voll Erde ins Tal, die Allen unsägliche, sondern
ein erworbenes Wort, reines, den gelben und blaun
Enzian.

—R.M. Rilke, “Die neunte Elegie”

Introduction

In §58 of the lectures on *Anthropology* Kant poses the following question: “Does the world benefit more, on the whole, from great geniuses who often take new paths and open new prospects? Or have mechanical minds [i.e., those with perfected judgment but no inspiration] . . . contributed more to the growth of the arts and sciences . . . ?” (VII:226). Not surprisingly, this question is not completely answered within the scope of the *Anthropology*; it is perhaps only in the *Critique of Judgment* (KU) where the same parties are reassembled and evaluated in relation to their respective artistic and scientific contributions. In §50 of that work, Kant identifies the trappings of judgment and taste, as opposed to those of genius, as both the deciding factor in the appraisal of a work of fine art, and as more suitable “for an ever advancing culture” (V:319). Thus, “if there is a conflict between these two properties . . . and something has to be sacrificed, then it should rather be on the side of genius” (V:319–320). Kant’s interest in culture as the space of human progress leads

him to prefer those agents who advance it towards its end and, therefore, the lasting and modest contributions of taste over the sound and fury of genius

The KU's answer to the question raised in the *Anthropology*, however, leaves open a pregnant possibility. While crediting "mechanical minds" with the lion's share of humanity's artistic and scientific progress, is it nonetheless possible that the genius might uniquely contribute to our cultural improvement, outside of his strict apprenticeship to taste? This latter question has not been entirely lost on commentators. Most recently, Henry Allison briefly discusses this question in the context of Kant's sudden demotion of the initially necessary role of genius in the generation of the work of art in KU §49 to a merely "co-equal status with taste . . . and then to a mere subordinate" immediately after in §50.¹ Allison explains this sudden shift in Kant's appraisal as hinging upon Kant's un-sigaled transition from a "thick" to a "thin" conception of genius, where the "thick" genius represents a progressive combination of imagination and judgment that constitutes Kant's positive model, whereas the "thin" is "polemical" inasmuch as such a genius will lack the tempering of judgment required to make a lasting and universal contribution to human culture.² Thus, §49 celebrates the possibility of genial harmony whereas §50 warns the reader of the excesses of imagination. I take Allison's brief analysis as correct in the essentials, but lacking answers to further, important questions. First and foremost, it passes over in silence the question of whether the untempered genius merely fails to contribute to cultural advance or whether his works pose a more sinister threat, even actively undoing progress and dangerously undermining, even corrupting the judgment of others.³ Below it will be shown that Kant's fears concerning the risks of genius seem disproportionate to the their apparent motivation by the worry that the untutored genius will "produce nothing but nonsense" (KU §50, V:319).

Secondly, the foregoing analysis does not detail the conditions under which the positive, progressive genius (and his works) can in fact contribute to the advance of culture. Of course this is quite excusable since in KU §50 Kant himself only sets as a standard that "the imagination in its freedom be commensurate with the lawfulness of the understanding" (V:319). And yet, the question is surely a natural one. Kant will later state in the second part of the KU, "[p]roducing in a rational being an aptitude for purposes generally . . . is culture. Hence only culture can be the ultimate purpose that we have cause to attribute to nature" (§83, V:431). Culture is nature's purpose and the genius is nature's chosen (V:318), through whom nature gives the rule to art, and yet Kant only problematically accepts the genius as an advancer of culture. Here, Allison's distinction is certainly handy, but without further refinement of the otherwise general conditions according to which the (works of the) progressive genius can be identified, Kant's criterion risks becoming inapplicable due to its vagueness. This undermines, most importantly, the seriousness with which Kant approaches the question of culture, but also promises a loss to scholarship by recusing Kant from the later, especially romantic-period, discussions of just this topic. As will be investigated below with particular reference to unpublished *Reflexionen* (which, although they pre-date the KU, nonetheless serve to fill out the deceptively sketchy analyses in the latter), Kant had taken pains to further determine this rather broad criterion, providing the genius with the unique opportunity to contribute to humanity's progress, but carefully outlining as well the serious risks.

I

The tension between the genius and society finds its roots in the process of genial creation which, for Kant, is a paradoxical process of making the inherently ineffable universally communicable. The ineffable component, aesthetic ideas, are only mysteriously defined as a “representation (*Vorstellung*) of the imagination which prompts much thought, but to which no determinate thought whatsoever . . . can be adequate, so that no language can express it completely” (KU §49, V:314). This definition is clarified through comparison of aesthetic with rational ideas. Like rational ideas, aesthetic ideas are *ideas* insofar as they do not admit of complete exhibition within the bounds of experience but instead, in their artistic exhibition, propel the rational faculties of the viewers “beyond the bounds of experience” (*ibid.*). As Kant writes with regard to rational ideas in the KrV, ideas “are concerned with something to which all experience is subordinate, but which is never itself an object of experience—something to which reason leads in its inferences from experience” (A 311/B367, cf. also A318/B375). However, aesthetic ideas are *aesthetic* in that, rather than representing “a concept to which no intuition (presentation of the imagination) can be adequate,” they instead constitute an “inner intuition,” provided by the imagination, “to which no concept can be completely adequate” (§49, V:314).⁴

Of course, considered in analogy to intuition, the question concerning the origin of aesthetic ideas is certainly appropriate. Thus, Kant emphasizes their nature as *products*, that is, products containing both perceptual material and the activity of the artist’s own (productive) imagination. Kant explains this at V:314: “For the imagination (as a productive cognitive faculty) is very mighty when it creates, as it were another nature out of the material that actual nature gives it.”⁵ The artist’s imagination, in reworking what is given in nature, *constructs*⁶ an inner intuition by, as Kant continues, “process[ing] that material [provided by nature] into something quite different, namely, into something that surpasses nature.” This is not a subjective association, nor a process governed by the laws of the understanding; rather, in this process we “follow principles which reside higher up, namely, in reason (and which are just as natural to us as those which the understanding follows . . .) . . . [and] in this process we feel our freedom from the law of association” (*ibid.*). These inner intuitions are, in turn, put to use as sensible counterparts of rational ideas, such as eternity, creation, or the cosmopolitan spirit, thereby lending depth to the exhibition and, given their artificial status, “a completeness for which no example can be found in nature” (V:314).

For our immediate purposes, two points should be noted here, first aesthetic ideas have an unusual power to set the mind in motion: “the presentation . . . makes reason think more . . . than what can be apprehended and made distinct in the presentation” (V:315), which power to invoke play or agitation Kant is not content to leave in the hands of the genius. Also, in spite of the ready application of the above model of production to the plastic arts, and in spite of the ineffability of aesthetic ideas themselves, Kant labels poetry, a distinctly linguistic medium relying upon the communication of its ideas for its success, as that art which can manifest “the power of aesthetic ideas . . . to full extent” (§49, V:314, cf. also §53, V:326). As such, Kant’s celebration of poetry, the task of which appears to be saying the unsayable, constitutes another puzzle.

This capacity to construct aesthetic ideas must nonetheless be distinguished from the ability to exhibit them. The genius, in order to create artistically, requires the ability both to manufacture through imagination the concept-exceeding ideas and to “synthesize” this inner intuition with an appropriate “form.” Kant begins his account of the inter-relation between the functions involved in the process of artistic creation at KU §49: “genius consists in the happy relation . . . allowing us, first, to discover ideas for a given concept, and, second, to hit upon a way of *expressing* these ideas that enables us to communicate to others. . . . The second talent is properly the one we call spirit.” (V:317).⁷ Here spirit, in orienting the expression to the condition of communicability and guiding the genius’ expression of the apprehended idea by ensuring it conforms to the principles of taste, clearly requires judgment in apprehending and uniting the genial manifold such that it bears expression in communicable form. For this reason, language similar to that found in Kant’s deduction in the first edition of the KrV can be discerned in an important *Reflexion*, #817, which fleshes out this synthetic procedure of making the incommunicable communicable:

Judgment determines the idea of what a thing ought to be. The figure, in which such a thing appears, must not contrast [conflict] with the idea. Thus, judgment bounds and limits the play of sensibility, but it gives true unity to it and reinforces in this way the impression. The mind . . . is put into motion and action by spirit, goes through the multiplicity, reaches an idea, comes back again, and proportions that multiplicity in its choice and relationship, both in connection with the idea and with itself.⁸

As Kant writes in the KU, spirit is the ability to “apprehend the imagination’s rapidly passing play and unite it in a concept that can be communicated” (§49, V:317). Through spirit, that which is apprehended as an inner intuition is synthesized with that which is recognized through the proportion of judgment as an appropriate form for its expression.

II

The trouble for the genius arises in relation to attaining universal (and sometimes even simply broad) communicability. As noted above, in §50 Kant indicates that a genius’ lack of judgment results in the creation of “nonsense” when it is not the case that “judgment . . . adapts the imagination to the understanding” (V:319). But Kant makes clear that nonsense is not the only risk, nor even the most dangerous, and therefore could hardly be the sole concern motivating his preference of taste over genius. Rather, it is the fanatical consequences proceeding from the lack of judgment of the genius which causes Kant to worry. For one, the fanatic-genius seemingly ignores the imagination’s dependency upon the natural, empirical material required for the creation of aesthetic ideas. According to Kant’s dramatic characterization in *Reflexion*, #771, such a one “raves [*schwärm*]” inasmuch as he “has to set his feelings, his mental agitations, images, the half-dreamed, half-thought notions which play about in his swirling mind, before the matter at hand, for these appear to him a unique power in himself.”⁹ What’s worse, and what truly characterizes the fanatic, is that he is not stimulated by the free play and un-coerced harmony of imagination and understanding. Instead, he single-mindedly pursues fantastic mental agitation through the

whirr of barely communicable images. He is ignored as an impenetrable mystic by his contemporaries, and, as a result, becomes a despiser of reason and language rather than lay the blame for his esoteric expressions on himself and his own lack of judgment:

The less he can make himself understood, the more he criticizes the limitations of language and of reason and is an enemy of all distinctness because he is entertained not by concepts, or even by images, but by mental agitation. They may one and all have genius, be full of sensibility and spirit, even some taste, but they are without the dryness and laboriousness and cold-bloodedness of judgment.¹⁰

Taken as such, however, the fanatic is at worst only a concern to himself. Yet, just as the genius risks becoming a fanatic insofar as his lack of cultivation of judgment implies a propensity to being stimulated by “mental agitation” rather than harmonious, universally communicable play, in a similar way, the same danger confronts the viewers of his work. The mental agitation involved in raving or fanaticism is due to the fact that the product of genius is imperfect—an exhibition of the genius’ spirit which lacks the tempering of taste. A fanatical work lacks “the cold-bloodedness of judgment” and, for that reason, possesses a disproportionately large and unrefined imaginative component which communicates a “momentum of . . . unbounded imagination” (KU §29 Gen. Comm., V:274).¹¹ This in turn engenders the destructive propensity to stimulation by agitation rather than the cultivated pursuit of tasteful play. The imperfect outward expression of the aesthetic idea exploits its inherent motive power and impels the viewer’s imagination “to SEE something beyond all bounds of sensibility” (KU V:275).¹² Indeed, part of the perverse allure of this affect of fanaticism is its unnatural approximation to the sublime feeling; perverse insofar as Kant limits the source of sublimity only to natural objects and events.¹³ Genius, therefore, requires the moderating influence of taste if it is to avoid the dangerous fanatical consequence of inculcating a preference for contagious agitation over communicable play : “Spirit without art is raw.”¹⁴

The risk of simple nonsense is, for the above reasons, a limit case. While some works of untutored genius may in fact be so incomunicable as not to resonate with a single individual, most will fall into a middle category, and thus pose a danger to the audience and to tasteful society in general. In another important *Reflexion*, Kant designates this category “communal” (“*gemeinschaftlich*”), over and against “communicable.” The audiences of the communally appealing geniuses are limited by the peculiarities of the chosen modes of expression, as Kant writes: “The initiates of genius, who must necessarily make appeals to genius, [but] also can only estimate their genius by the appraisal of people, are those who have a communal, but not a communicable, inspiration, [and thus share] only a *sympathetic intelligibility*.¹⁵ Communal appeal and mystical enthusiasm create a volatile type of artistic representation, the result of which is not only the author’s isolation from society at large but also the “corruption of minds.”¹⁶ This danger is the deepest source of Kant’s mistrust of the genius expressed in §50—Kant worries that the paucity of the genius’ expression may incite its limited audience to fanatical, perhaps even revolutionary, attempts to realize a fuller exhibition of the aesthetic idea, stunting the progress of culture and actively impeding the techniques of society. Only the tutored genius, then, will bring forth fully-formed exhibitions of aesthetic ideas that remain faithful both to their inef-

fable source *and* to the precision of judgment, where this latter precision is the basis of a resulting mental state's universal communicability and, therefore, its social utility.

This abstract discussion of fanaticism cannot fail to bring to mind the example of Kant's most enthusiastic student, and later bitter rival, J. G. Herder. For Kant, Herder became the early model of this "initiate" or fanatical genius, lacking training in expression yet singularly subject to genial inspiration. Kant's letters to and concerning Herder clearly reveal the above evaluative distinctions operating in the teacher's disapproval of the young genius' development. For instance, in a letter to Herder in 1768, Kant acknowledges Herder's originality, but warns him against the fanatical thrill of mysticism:

Observing the precocious development of your talents I anticipate with pleasure the time when your fertile mind, no longer so buffeted by the warm winds of youthful feeling, will achieve that gentle but sensitive tranquility which is the contemplative life . . . just the opposite of the life that mystics dream about.¹⁷

Herder risks falling prey to a mysticism in which his ideas are expressed only to a select few. Indeed, Kant's exchange of correspondence with Hamann concerning Herder's book, the *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts*, express the fear that Herder's thought has become thoroughly esoteric. Near the end of a letter dated April 6, 1774, Kant requests that Hamann evaluate his interpretation of the work, fearing that he may have misunderstood it. But Kant attaches a rider which specifies that Hamann do so "where possible in the language of men. Since I [Kant] am a poor common man, not at all attuned to the divine language of intuitive reason."¹⁸ Kant would later continue to polemicize against Herder's idiolectical mode of expression, including the published review (1784) of Herder's *Ideen*, where he writes: "It is as if [Herder's] genius did not simply assemble ideas out of the wide range of arts and sciences in order to add them to other intelligible ideas, but as if he transformed them according to a certain law of assimilation . . . peculiar to him."¹⁹ Kant here reacts to the merely "communal" language of expression adopted by Herder, which, even though genial as it approximates to the ineffability of ideas, nonetheless does not admit of broader dissemination but is "peculiar" to Herder himself. "The fantastical manner of writing is . . . a language of alchemists or initiates . . .,"²⁰ and therefore, more of a matter of self-expression than a contribution to the advancement of culture and artistic consciousness. Kant nevertheless took action to forestall Herder's descent into fanaticism, and his advice to Herder as his student was departing Königsberg appropriately prescribes increased socialization to counteract the isolating consequences of long hours of study: "Kant spoke with the nineteen-year-old and advised him that he should not pore so much over books, but rather follow his own example. He was very sociable and it was only in the world that one could cultivate himself [*sich bilden*]."²¹ Only a vigorous interest in society, Kant implies, can counteract the peculiar effects upon expression brought about by studious isolation.

III

Herder famously wrote: "I wish to produce for the other thoughts, have images appear in him, create ideas in him. . . . I want to awaken *geniuses*."²² Kant would similarly maintain that the work of genius may be followed only "by another genius" (KU §49, V:318). Yet,

without considering Kant's claim in light of his decided emphasis upon the condition of universal communicability, we risk conflating Kant's position with Herder's. Indeed, Kant will maintain that the genius' audience comprises other geniuses as well, and this section of the audience is sometimes labeled in the critical literature as an "audience of originality."²³ Kant's discussion of genial influence should not be ignored, particularly, for our purposes, as an illustration of the power of the aesthetic idea and its expression to move the minds (of select members) of the audience.²⁴ Kant, nevertheless, rejects the possibility entertained by Herder of a series of exclusive genial influence without need for the tempering of taste. The possibility of such a genial community would divide society into two distinct groups: the esoteric geniuses who trade imprecise expressions of aesthetic ideas in order to sustain their mental agitation and near-sublime fanaticism, and the rest of the public who are left with the inscrutable works of communal genius and their own simple lines without spirit. It is just this possibility of such a divergent society, I contend, which leads Kant to suddenly cut short his own enthusiastic flight concerning artistic succession in §49 and to temper his discussion of genius with the moderation of judgment in §50. Kant's enlightened cosmopolitanism, that is, the advancement of culture towards its end while leaving no one behind, precludes his entertaining of the possibility of a community consisting exclusively of genius.

While §50 contains Kant's modest remonstration of genius, it is again in his *Reflexionen* that a cosmopolitan intent comes through. It is necessary for taste, "like the power of judgment in general" (V:319), to clip the wings of genius in order to avoid fanaticism, and it is necessary that the genius himself find an expressive median between the aesthetic idea and the appropriate form. In an oft-quoted phrase, Kant maintains that only the addition of the communicable element of taste lends civility, durability, and accessibility to the aesthetic idea: "[taste] introduces clarity and order into a wealth of thought, and hence makes the ideas durable, fit for approval that is both lasting and universal, and fit for being followed by others and fit for an ever advancing culture" (V:319). Works of genius, Kant hints, must at least peacefully co-exist with taste in order to contribute to the cosmopolitan spirit. Such works of genius will meet a certain standard about which Kant does not go into detail in the KU, but which he does in fact discuss in a particularly important though overlooked *Reflexion*, #917. First, Kant writes, the work of genius cannot be a merely local phenomenon—fanatic works are like meteors disintegrating in a flash of light, visible only to a small group of observers. Works of genius, on the other hand, are like comets which, though only appearing briefly, are inferred to have a wider universal course that will bring them on future return trips. Kant suggests this metaphor in the first part of #917:

Certain luminous phenomena shine only in an area (and last a short time) or country but are not at all noticed on a foreign horizon. They belong to the lower atmosphere . . . and are meteors. Then there are others which can be seen throughout the world, and although they generally disappear quickly, their regularity yields the assumption[s] that they will appear again sometime after their time has elapsed, and that they are perpetual bodies in the universe.²⁵

The work of combined genius and taste will attract a global audience, “throughout the world,” attesting to its fitness for universal approval through its unlimited appeal, rather than pandering to local peculiarity and preference. The question, then, becomes: how do we distinguish between a meteor, that is, an absolutely singular work, and a comet, whose only apparent singularity is the product of a deeper regularity?

The answer comes at the end of the same *Reflexion* where Kant’s cosmopolitan point of view attains a radical expression: “If writings lose almost everything in translation, then it was an accidental play of fantasy dependant on local modes of expression but not itself beautiful. Time sifts all writings, though for many of them one can immediately establish their origin.”²⁶ All expressions of genius, with an obvious emphasis on poetry, must be capable of translation without (significant) loss to the expression of the work. This condition, we might call it “universal translatability,” provides a criterion for the cultural worth of the work of genius—the work attains value only if it is universally communicable, in *any*, or better, *every* language. Otherwise, the putative artwork holds only as a more or less imperfect expression of an idea, consequently having a merely local appeal and entirely useless from the perspective of the goal of “communicating with one another as perfectly as possible” (KU §51, V:320). Poetry, which as we know Kant claimed held “[a]mong all the arts . . . the highest rank” (KU §53, V:326), is for this reason a particularly important art form since verbal communication is essential to poetic expression. Turning from the *Reflexion* to the KU, Kant’s own German translation of Frederick II’s poem in §49 (V:315–316) takes on new importance: it is intended as a concrete illustration of the King’s “cosmopolitan attitude” by showing how the idea expressed within his piece transcends local interest or expression in only one individual language.²⁷

This reading of *Reflexion* #917 allows for a qualification of Kant’s enthusiastic vision of a genial community in KU §49. The metaphor of the comet suggests that present works of genius co-exist in continuity with works of genius of the past and future, and it is for this reason that Kant had critiqued Herder for “not adding” to the stock of genial, yet communicable, expressions of aesthetic ideas. The same comet returns, after having run its long course, and re-illuminates the horizon. Similarly, the genius wins “a new rule” for art (V:318) and the progressive, cosmopolitan genius will indeed stand in a relation of continuity to geniuses of the past, though crucially his work will transcend that particular audience and radiate with universal appeal. Clearly, this characterization of genial succession as part of a progressive narrative also challenges attempts to discern a modernist analogue in Kant’s discussion of the relation between geniuses. Modernism might be expressed, as Timothy Gould writes, as the requirement that “each art must first define itself *against* the achievements of its own past.”²⁸ While Gould sees “analogues” of the modernist perspective in Kant (and Wordsworth²⁹), it is clear from the present analysis that the role of the tutored genius with regard to society is not that of radically disrupting any continuity with the past, but instead one of adding to an ongoing development by acquiring for art a new expression of an aesthetic idea. Thus, in a *Reflexion* already partially presented above, #896, Kant makes the claim that a genius “does not actually contradict the spirit [of one’s predecessors] and yet [he] refutes it.”³⁰ While this claim is admittedly somewhat puzzling, we might nonetheless take Kant to imply that the stock of ideas itself is not discredited (a rather “modernist” reading), but only the notion that this

stock exhausts human originality is disproved by supplying yet another original expression. In this way, Kant critiques Herder for not “adding” to the collection of intelligible ideas already “won,” and we might on these grounds also dispute Gould’s claim on behalf of Kant that the work of art “has led us to forego our old resources,”³¹ if, that is, we interpret this claim as implying a substantive discontinuity between geniuses.

Thus, the genius has value *only* if he builds upon the artistic achievements of the past, where such an achievement requires that the genius transforms his incommunicable ideas into universally communicable expressions. The genius’ role in promoting such communication is, for Kant, among the highest of cultural tasks, and he is certainly painting in broad strokes when he writes, “in the end when civilization has reached its peak, it makes this communication almost the principal activity of refined inclination” (KU §41, V:297). Of course, inasmuch as the genial expression threatens to interrupt the “ever advancing” of culture, insofar as the genius either does not adequately incorporate the requirements of refined judgment into the work itself or does not perceive the role his expression has in advancing culture on the backs of his predecessors, Kant insists that his work must be regarded as belonging to merely communal interest, aesthetically imperfect, and even dangerous. The fanatic, the initiate, and even the mystic understand neither the import of humanity’s past in advancing from the natural to the cultural, nor the purpose unfolding in humanity’s future. Yet, only by such means can the genius contribute to the cultural progress of humanity, though he may be unaware of, or even unwilling to take up, his important vocation. Kant himself, a self-styled mechanical mind, seems to demur: “To handle profoundly complicated questions of philosophy in the manner of a genius: I decline the honor altogether. I try only to conduct my inquiry in an academic manner.”³²

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Notes

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1. Henry Allison, *Kant’s Theory of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 300.

2. Allison, *Kant's Theory*, p. 301.
3. For instance, cf. *Reflex.* #831, approx. 1778 (XV:371): “Wenn der Geist so zu sagen die reflexion überholt, so können fehler der Urtheilskraft vorfallen, die aber alle gegen das Leben, was sie bey sich führen, nicht gemerkt werden.”
4. For a brief, but useful, discussion of the initially perplexing relationship between imagination and intuition in Kant's theory of aesthetic ideas, see Jean-Luc Marion's “The Saturated Phenomenon,” in *Phenomenology and the “Theological Turn,”* ed. and trans. D. Janicaud (New York: Fordham, 2000), p. 196n. Marion rejects the notion that the faculty of intuition is completely distinct from the imagination, thereby normalizing Kant's statements in KU §49. In particular, Marion emphasizes, rightly, Kant's statement in the B Deduction that “Imagination is the faculty of representing in intuition an object that is *not itself present*” (B 151).
5. Translation slightly modified.
6. On this language of “creation” and “construction” see also the *Anthropology* where Kant likens the act of genial creation to the working of metal for instance, an effort which yields in either case “a spark-scattering flash (sprühenden Funken) which a happy seizure of the spirit entices from the productive imagination” (VII:318n). These creative efforts of the genius are limited here as well to the material provided by nature, as Kant observes, “no matter how great an artist . . . imagination may be, it . . . must get the *material* for its images from the *senses*” (VII:168).
7. See also V:314: “this principle [spirit] is nothing but the ability of exhibiting [Darstellung] *aesthetic ideas*” (translation modified).
8. *Reflex.* #817, 1778 (XV:364) “Die Urtheilskraft bestimmt die Idee, was eigentlich eine Sache seyn soll. Die Gestalt, wie sie erscheint, muss der Idee nicht wiederstreiten. Die Urtheilskraft bindet also und schränkt das Spiel der Sinnlichkeit ein, aber sie gibt ihm wahre Einheit und verstärkt dadurch den Eindruck. Das Gemüth wird durch rührungen interessiert, durch Geist in Bewegung und action versetzt, läuft das Mannigfaltige durch, geht bis zur Idee, von da wieder zurück und proportioniert es in seiner Wahl und Verhältnissen nach derselben und unter einander” (translation by Giorgio Tonelli, “Kant's Early Theory of Genius (1770–1779),” *History of Philosophy*, vol. 4 [1966] [Part I, pp. 109–131, Part II pp. 209–224]; quoted passage occurs on p. 124–125). For linguistic, not to mention thematic, similarity to Kant's deductive enterprise, compare, for instance, KrV A 99 and A105.
9. *Reflex.* #771, 1774–1775 (XV:337): “Es ist nothwendig, dass er seine Gefühle, Gemüthsbewegungen, Bilder, halbgeträumte, halbgedachte Begriffe, welche in seinem bewegten Gemüthe spielen, vor die Sachen selbst nimmt, die einer besonderen Kraft in ihm so erscheinen” (translation by John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992], p. 38).
10. *Reflex.* #771, 1774–1775 (XV:337): “Je weniger er sich verständlich machen kan, desto mehr schmält er auf die Unzulänglichkeit der Sprache und der Vernunft und ist ein Feind aller Deutlichkeit, weil er nicht durch Begriffe, auch nicht durch Bilder, sondern durch Gemüthsbewegung unterhalten wird. Auch gefühlvolle autoren realisiren ihre Launen. Alle insgesamt können *genie* haben, voll Empfindung und Geist, auch einigen Geschmak, aber ohne die Trockenheit und mühsamkeit und Kaltblütigkeit der Urtheilskraft.” (translation by Zammito, *Genesis*, p. 38).
11. Though Kant does not indicate this in the KU, in the collected *Reflexionen zur Anthropologie*, (especially #365–370) he distinguishes between *Einbildung* and *Phantasie*. In the *Anthropology* itself, Kant labels fantasy a “role” of imagination (VII:175), imagination is nevertheless distinguished as willingly subjected to reason's direction, where fantasy is our “genius or daemon, which despises the rule of our will [“Willkür”]” (*Reflex.* #370 XV:144).

12. Cf. KU, General Comment on the Exposition, V:274–275, where Kant discusses the “sublime” Jewish commandment prohibiting images of the divine as being the source of profound religious sentiment. Kant denies that this prohibition results in “cold and lifeless approval” and instead observes that the lack of an appropriate image to correspond to this idea—its purely “negative” exhibition—presents none of the danger of the positive, yet necessarily imperfect positive exhibition of the same.

13. For the necessary connection between the sublime and nature, and a discussion of the agitated mental state, see KU §23, 24, and the General Comment after §29.

14. *Reflex.* #952, 1778 (XV:421): “Geist ohne Kunst ist roh.”

15. *Reflex.* #896, 1778 (XV:391–392): “Die adepten des genies, die nothwendig auf genie anspruch machen müssen und auch nur auf den Beyfall von Leuten von genie rechnen können, sind die, welche eine nicht communicable, sondern durch gemeinschaftliche Eingebung nur sympathetische Verständlichkeit haben” (translation Martin Gammon, “‘Exemplary Originality’: Kant on Genius and Imitation,” in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 35 [1997], p. 587).

16. *Reflex.* #912, 1778 (XV:399): “Herder verdirbt die Köpfe dadurch . . .”

17. Letter to Herder, May 9, 1768 (X:73–74).

18. Letter to Hamann, April 6, 1774 (X:155): “aber womöglich in der Sprache der Menschen. Denn ich armer Erdensohn bin zu der Göttersprache der anschauenden Vernunft gar nicht organisiert.”

19. “Review of Herder’s *Ideas*,” 27 (VIII:45). Compare, and see below regarding, Herder’s failure to “add to” intelligible ideas with Kant’s claim in §49 that the genius “wins a new rule for art” (V:318).

20. *Reflex.* #921a, 1778 (XV:408): “Die phantastische Schreibart ist . . . eine alchemistische oder adeptensprache. . . .”

21. Karl August Böttiger, *Literarische Zustände und Zeignossen*, vol. 1, ed K. W. Böttiger (Leipzig, 1834). (Quoted and translated in Zammito, *Kant, Herder*, p. 102.)

22. Quoted in Zammito, *Kant, Herder*, p. 155.

23. Taken from Ted Hughes’s essay, “The Audience of Originality,” in *Essays in Kant’s Aesthetics*, ed. T. Cohen and P. Guyer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 179–193. Gould’s account is discussed further below.

24. For instance, see KU §49 (V:319): “The other genius, who follows the example, is aroused by it to a feeling of his own originality, which allows him to exercise his freedom from the constraint of rules.”

25. *Reflex.* #917, 1778 (XV:401): “Gewisse glänzende Erscheinungen leuchten nur in irgendeiner Provinz oder Lande, werden aber auf fremden Horizont gar nicht bemerkt. Diese gehören in die niedere Atmosphäre und sind meteore. Andre werden endlich in aller Welt wargenommen, und, ob sie zwar bisweilen bald verschwinden, so giebt doch ihre Regelmässigkeit eine Vermuthung, dass sie, nachdem sie ihre Zeit hindurch gedauert haben, dereinst wiederum ercheinen werden, und sind ewige weltkörper.” Cf. also *Anthropology* VII:318n for a thematically similar formulation (“Genius, then, flashes as a momentary phenomenon, appearing at intervals and then disappearing again”), and also Schopenhauer’s almost word-for-word reproduction of Kant’s statement in *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. II, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1958), p. 390.

26. *Reflex.* #917, 1778 (XV:401) “Wenn schriften in der Übersetzung beynahe alles verlieren, so war es eine den Nationalausdrüken anhängende zufällige Anspielung der Phantasie, aber keine

selbständige Schonheit. Die Zeit sichtet alle Schriften. Aber man kan vielen ihre Nativität auch schon jetzt stellen.”

27. Cf. also Kant’s praise of Milton, whom he rates highly yet would only have read in translation, in many *Reflexionen* (#778, 914), the early Blomberg Logik (XXIV:56), and probably in the KU (V:314).

28. Gould, “Audience,” p. 192 (my emphasis).

29. Gould maintains that Wordsworth and Kant shared important opinions regarding the genius and genial succession, including a belief that “only a genius can follow the work of a genius” (Gould, 188). Indeed, I would claim that the early Wordsworth perceived a similar social role for the genius insofar as he adopts “the real language of men” for his poetical expressions. This is not a vulgar condescension but an attempt to express “our elementary feelings” which “coexist in a state of greater simplicity” in common language. This simplicity allows these feelings to “be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly *communicated*” (“Preface to the Lyrical Ballads,” in *Wordsworth’s Literary Criticism*, ed. N.C. Smith (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1980), pp. 13–14, my emphasis). In thus describing the task of the poet, Wordsworth, in this respect at least, is allied with Kant against the claim that only the genius is the proper audience of the genius.

30. *Reflex.* #896, 1778 (XV:392): “weil man dem Geiste freylich nicht wiedersprechen noch ihn wiederlegen kan” (translation Gammon, “Exemplary Originality,” p. 587).

31. Gould, “Audience,” p. 186.

32. *Reflex.* #990, 1785–1789 (XV:435): “Geniemässig tief verwickelte philosophische Fragen zu behandeln: auf diese Ehre thue ich ganzlich verzicht. Ich unternehme es nur, sie schulmässig zu bearbeiten” (translation Zammuto, *Genesis*, p. 187).