



## The Role of Imagination in Constituting Objectivity According to Kant

Ali salmani\* | Saeed Haj Rashidian\*\*

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### Abstract



Kant believes providing objectivity is one of the most essential functions of imagination. The role of imagination in establishing objectivity includes both the epistemic determinant judgment related to understanding, and the aesthetic reflective judgment. Kant constantly places imagination in connection with matters such as understanding, self-consciousness and/or pure intuition, or common sense, and reflective judgment. Imagination has always maintained a core role in relation to other faculties of cognition. This role could be simply regarded as the possibility of constituting objectivity. This paper seeks, in the first step, to critique pure reason by addressing how imagination in relation with understanding serves as a source of objectivity and then provides answers as to how imagination in its unity with common sense and the operation of reflection presented in the critique of the faculty of judgment, provides an objective reference to them, without which, the common validity for aesthetic-taste judgment will be lost. Hence, in Kant's view, imagination has a requisite role in providing objectivity.

### Keywords

imagination, understanding, self-consciousness, formation, reflective action, common validity, common sense.

\* Associate professor of Bu Ali Sina University (corresponding author) | salmani@basu.ac.ir

\*\* PhD graduated of Bu Ali Sina University. iran | hacisaheed@yahoo.com



## **Introduction**

Imagination in Kantian philosophy has an important role. In this essay we try to determine the role of imagination. Kant claims the imagination plays an essential role in the constitution of objectivity. We can find the constitutive role of imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgment*. Kant believes providing objectivity is one of the most essential functions of imagination. The role of imagination in establishing objectivity includes both the epistemic determinant judgment, and the aesthetic reflective judgment. Kant constantly places imagination in connection with matters such as understanding, self-consciousness and/or pure intuition, or common sense, and reflective judgment. Imagination has always maintained a central role in relation to other faculties of cognition. This role can be simply considered as the possibility of constituting objectivity.

### **The role of Imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason***

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* imagination serves understanding and has some essential functions without which objectivity is impossible. The first of these functions is that the imagination produces a transcendental formation which forms a connection between sensation and understanding in order to provide the possibility of applying categories of understanding. However, apart from this function, it is also considered as the origin of every kind of unity. For example, it creates unity in simple perceptions and creates the possibility of the formation of unity in sensory multiplicity; hence it can provide the condition for unity in manifold. Moreover, in relation to pure sensory intuitions, the imagination provides the possibility of their embodiment in time and space as a whole. Similarly, the imagination is the source of the unity of self-consciousness which is necessary for all our cognition. If we look at this collection of functions of imagination we will notice its essential role in the constitution of objectivity.

### **The role of imagination in the critique of power of judgment**

In the critique of power of judgment, Kant doesn't take imagination to be in service of understanding; rather he regards it in its freedom. Here, imagination makes a connection with understanding as a whole. Although, this relation between them is not a conceptual one, rather, it is a type of harmony which Kant calls "the free game of imagination and understanding". The free game has an epistemological function and is evaluated in two parts: the analysis of something beautiful and transcendental deduction. In other words, Kant wants to demonstrate the communicability of cognition in human beings through this coordinated game; because if this kind of communicability is not possible, the objectivity of knowledge is impossible as a whole. Kant, however, evaluates imagination in relation with pure reflective judgment and the common sense (*sensus communis*) as well. In this case, imagination first

supplies the material for reflective judgment and then discovers “non-subjective others”, in its relation with the common sense. In fact, the reason for the universal validity of taste judgments is the possibility for comparing actual subjective judgment with the possible judgments of these objective others.

## Conclusion

The role of imagination in the Critique of Pure Reason is so essential that without taking it into consideration, we cannot achieve any objectivity for the empirical rules gained through understanding and intuition and even experience itself loses its possibility as a judgment. Therefore, one can understand how imagination provides objectivity for judgments related to understanding.

Kant’s main concern in the Critique of Judgment, in which he addresses understanding and imagination in relation to each other, is an epistemological concern which cannot be explained through taste-aesthetic judgment. From this view, taste-aesthetic judgments come under cognitive judgments and Kant tries to provide a cognitive foundation based on the universal communicability of our cognitive faculties for the conformity of judgment with the object. On the other hand, in the transcendental deduction for the aesthetic judgments, Kant has another approach to imagination. In this approach, imagination combines with the act of reflection and *sensus communis*. By combining with the act of reflection, the imagination provides an represented form of perception which is necessary data for applying reflective judgment. From another aspect, by the eliminating specific condition of the subject and by creating the possibility for the comparison of subjective judgment with the possible judgments of others, the imagination provides the condition for the communicability of taste-aesthetic judgments based on the *sensus communis* which is in fact, providing the possibility of necessity for it. However, through the *sensus communis*, the imagination gains access to a non-objective and objective matter that is others. If others were not considered as objective persons that have possible judgments, valid universal communicability, and as a result, the necessity of taste-aesthetic judgments would not be achieved. By what has been discussed so far, it is clear that the function of imagination is essential for the constitution of objectivity in both critiques.

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