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**Kant’s Notion of a *sensus communis* and the Paradox of Taste**

The concept of the (aesthetic) *sensus communis* (SC) – as developed in the *Critique of Judgment* – is central to Kant’s theory of taste. This is already clear from its supposed role of grounding the aesthetic judgment’s claim to necessary universality. However, it is far from obvious how the aesthetic SC is able to fulfill this role and, even more, what the SC is. This mysteriousness has led some authors to either ignore the aesthetic SC or to downplay its role for the aesthetic judgment. In my talk I will shed some light on Kant’s general conception of a *sensus communis* or universal sense as well as on its specification as an aesthetic *sensus communis*. Moreover, I will relate this conception to the overall problem of Kant’s aesthetics, namely the paradox of a judgment which is based on feeling and non-conceptual but, nonetheless, universal.

I will proceed as follows. In the first part of my talk, I will have a close look at § 40 of the *Critique of Judgment*, in which Kant develops a general understanding of a *sensus communis* or universal sense. I will analyze this notion by focusing on its two aspects – namely, being a sense (*sensus* communis) and leading to universal results (sensus *communis*). I will argue that these two aspects, within the framework of Kantian philosophy, form a certain paradox, because, generally speaking, universal results can only be acquired via the application of concepts and not via mere sensibility. It is this paradox which also makes up the core of Kant’s theory of taste, for judgments of taste are aesthetic, i.e., grounded in feeling and not in concepts, but also universal. In the second part of my talk, I will turn to §§ 20-22, where the notion of an aesthetic SC is first introduced. I will investigate in what manner the aesthetic SC incorporates both aspects of a universal sense, i.e., being a sense and leading to universal results. Moreover, I will demonstrate how these two aspects are grounded in the activity of the free play of the faculties or, to be more precise, in the play’s two aspects of being enlivening and containing the relation for a cognition in general. In the last part, I will return to the paradox of universality and non-conceptuality by examining whether the aesthetic SC is able to solve this paradox, which not only afflicts the general notion of a universal sense but also Kant’s overall aesthetic theory.