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From Aesthetics to Politics: Rancière, Kant and Deleuze

Katharine Wolfe

Abstract

What does politics have to do with aesthetics? Surely, both politics and aesthetics are concerned with imagining, envisioning, and even creating, yet aren't the kinds of things these fields of inquiry imagine, envision and create greatly disparate? Jacques Rancière argues that what is at stake in politics, just as it is in aesthetics, is the distribution of the sensible, and that politics happens not only through the disruption of a certain aesthetic organization of sense experience but through the eruption of a distinct aesthetics. Here I elaborate the Kantian foundation for Rancière's conception of the kind of aesthetics that politics must disrupt, drawn primarily from the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Yet I also look to Kant's *Critique of Judgment* to pave the way for the kind of aesthetics Rancière understands as synonymous with the political event. With this gesture, my intention is, first, to provide further support for Rancière's call for a distinct aesthetics by elaborating upon how such a distinct aesthetics may be both possible and realizable. Yet my intention is also polemical. Rancière is highly critical of the political potential to be found in the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, namely due to the onus placed on the project of 'becoming-imperceptible,' a notion which, Rancière claims, leads politics to a dead end. Is not the Deleuzian turn towards imperceptibility a move altogether away from any aesthetics? Here, I argue that it is vital to identify Deleuze's notion of the imperceptible, like Rancière's politics, as situated in an engagement with Kantian aesthetics. It is only through attention to Deleuze's reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* that it becomes evident that the 'imperceptible' for Deleuze is also the '*perciendum*': that which *must* be perceived but cannot be perceived according to the delimitation of sense experience in the *sensus communis*. Through attention to Deleuze's own Kantian interlude, then, a political voice can be discerned in his philosophy in spite of Rancière's reservations. If we care about Rancière's 'Politics of Aesthetics,' we should care about this.

Key Words

aesthetics, politics, sense, Rancière, Kant, Deleuze

1. Introduction

Jacques Rancière's *Dis-agreement*, as Rancière writes in his subsequent work, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, explores "the distribution of the sensible at stake in any politics".^[1] How is this phrase 'the distribution of the sensible' to be understood and why does the distribution of the sensible bear such a relation to politics? *Dis-agreement* tells us that politics first becomes a possibility with the institution of a community, where a community itself begins with something in common. This commonality is no shared stock of goods or shared claim to a territory. Rather, it is a shared partition of the sensible: community pivots around common modalities of sense. In other words, the commonality upon which a community is

founded is *sense*, and politics first becomes a possibility with the institution of *common sense*. Hand in hand with the disclosure of shared modalities of sensing, moreover, comes the delimitation of each modality. The partition of the sensible thus renders some sounds intelligible (*logos*) and others unintelligible (*pathos*), some capacities visible and other invisible, and more. Moreover, social positions are portioned out according to these delimitations, and the partitioning of the sensible upon which the community is founded ultimately determines which people are recognizable as part of a shared world and which are sanctioned in partaking of it. Yet the moment politics becomes possible is distinct from the moment politics erupts -- politics is a much rarer thing than common sense or the institution of a community. For Rancière, politics is that rare event that occurs when the confluence between sanctioned dispositions to partake of the shared world and positions within the partition of the sensible is ruptured. Politics not only interrupts common sense but also erupts into the shared sensible world.

As the title suggests, *The Politics of Aesthetics* argues that the distribution of the sensible is an aesthetic enterprise, and what is at stake in any politics is aesthetics. Drawing this correlation between aesthetics and the distribution of the sensible and, ultimately, between aesthetics and politics requires a precise understanding of the term. Aesthetics is not any set of artistic practices nor is it the general theory that concerns these practices. Indeed, aesthetics for Rancière is not even a theory of sense experience at large. Rather, if the correlation between politics and aesthetics is to be exposed, Rancière insists aesthetics must be understood in the terms of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Aesthetics is "the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience."^[2] Moreover, Rancière claims the relation aesthetics bears to politics is analogous to the relation Kant's *a priori* forms bear to sense experience. Just as these *a priori* forms determine the organization of human experience and provide its conditions, aesthetics comes in various structural systems that serve both to condition the shared world of our daily experience and to partition that world and delimit the positions one might occupy within it. Politics is not reducible to this partitioning of the sensible on the condition of aesthetic systems, yet it is conditioned by aesthetics, just as sense experience is conditioned by the *a priori*, according to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, insofar as it requires the partitions of the sensible as its space of disruption.

In *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière moves quickly on to undertake a Foucaultian historiography of distinct artistic practices and systems, illuminating the subject positions they make possible as well as the political systems with which they are synonymous. Here, however, I pause to reflect on the significance of Rancière's Kantian interlude. Returning to the insights of *Dis-agreement*, with Rancière's subsequent insights into the correlation between aesthetics and politics at hand, I hope to illuminate why and in what manner politics requires the disruption of aesthetics, understood, in the terms of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, as the structural system organizing human sense experience. In addition, I follow up Rancière's further claim that politics likewise requires the inauguration of a distinct aesthetics that will not replace the partitions of the

sensible that give us a shared sensible world but will erupt from within them. This distinct aesthetics, I assert, also has its elucidation in Kant's critical philosophy. However, I shall press that it is Kant's last critical project, the *Critique of Judgment* and not the earlier *Critique of Pure Reason*, that offers such an aesthetics.

Rancière misses this moment in Kant, as he derives his conception of Kantian aesthetics primarily from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, a text concerned first and foremost with the conditions of possibility for the world as we know it, where it is the later *Critique of Judgment* that explores sense beyond the limits of our understanding. The later might be called real sense, in contrast to the merely conceptually possible sense of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. A turn to the *Critique of Judgment* and its alternative elucidation of sense aids Rancière's 'Politics of Aesthetics' by providing this concept with a philosophical backbone and support for which his Foucaultian historiography at times is wanting. The *Critique of Judgment* distinguishes between two kinds of aesthetic experiences, experiences of the beautiful and of the sublime. While both offer insights into sense beyond the limits of the understanding and its correlated concepts, I want to argue that Kant's encounter with the sublime is much richer in its attunement to the interruption of the partitions of the sensible, or, in Kant's terms, the *a priori* structures of human experience, by a distinct aesthetics. Indeed, I shall use Kant's articulations of the aesthetic experience of the sublime as a foil for further elucidation of Rancière's notion of the partitioning of the sensible.^[3]

In addition to aspiring to better substantiate philosophically the correlation Rancière makes between politics and aesthetics, this turn to Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is also polemical. Rancière, in his article "Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula," writes that the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze erects an impasse for politics.^[4] Deleuze places 'imperceptibility' at the heart of a project to give birth to a new kind of community, a new kind of relationality between beings in the world. If politics occurs in a forced eruption into the sensible of that which aesthetic systems, conceived on the model of the *a priori*, render insensible through a partaking in and of common sense, how could imperceptibility be political? Is not the Deleuzian turn towards imperceptibility a move altogether away from any partaking in a shared, sensory world? Here, I want to argue that it is vital to identify Deleuze's notion of the imperceptible, like Rancière's politics, as situated in an engagement with Kantian aesthetics. The 'imperceptible' is only so from a particular perspective, that of the Kantian object-form, the condition of perception in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the *sensus communis* in which it is key. This form is disrupted however, as Deleuze tells us, by the force of the real itself. The imperceptible is a part of this force and party to this disruption, functioning aesthetically as the '*perciendum*', that which *must* be perceived but cannot be perceived according to the delimitation of sense experience in the *sensus communis*. Indeed, it may be what Deleuze does with Kant's *Critique of Judgment* more than Kant's work itself that provides the philosophical backbone for Rancière's 'Politics of Aesthetics' and, through attention to Deleuze's own Kantian interlude, a political voice can be discerned in his philosophy in

spite of Rancière's reservations. This is the key polemical assertion of this essay. However, one aspiration of this essay is to inspire further inquiries into the resonances between the work of Deleuze and Rancière despite Rancière's own reservations. Thus I add in passing that insofar as Deleuze remains first and foremost a philosopher, it may be only through Rancière's own Kantian interlude, revealing the political implications of aesthetics systems modeled like the Kantian *a priori* to which Deleuze, drawing on Kant's later *Critique of Judgment*, offers an alternative, that the possibility for a passage to politics from Deleuze is opened. Rather than illuminating the impasse Deleuze sends politics hurtling into, Rancière may instead point Deleuze's philosophy towards a political passage.

2. The Perceptible and the Beautiful

In *Dis-agreement*, Rancière employs Aristotle's political philosophy to illuminate the pivotal role partitions of the sensible play in the institution of community. Although Rancière's primary engagement with the notion of an aesthetics of politics comes in his *The Politics of Aesthetics*, engagement with this notion in *Dis-agreement* sets the stage. Here, I employ Kant's articulation of the aesthetic experience of the beautiful in the *Critique of Judgment* in order to corroborate Rancière's later claim that any partitioning of the sensible is always conditioned by a certain aesthetic system. Aristotle's political community, I want to argue, is instituted according to the rules and principles of the aesthetic experience of the beautiful, itself conceived by Kant at least in the early stages of the *Critique of Judgment's* development according to the *a priori* rules and principles of human understanding.

For Aristotle, the institution of a political community requires first the existence of a being whose nature is political: the human being. It is *logos* - the capacity to reason and to express claims about justice and injustice through speech - that marks the human as such an animal by nature. *Logos* is for Aristotle set apart from *pathos* - the capacity to express pain and pleasure. It is here, at the foundation of the Aristotelian political community, that Rancière finds lodged a partition of the sensible, a distinction "between two modes of access to sense experience:" *logos*, rendering sensible a world of justice and injustice, and *pathos*, restricting the sensible to the domain of pain and pleasure.^[5] Capacities in not only sensing but expressing what is sensed are the hinge upon which the institution of a political community pivots, simultaneous with a delimitation of who will and will not partake of that community.

Furthermore, it is insofar as *logos* is a modality of sense revealing a world of justice and injustice that *logos* is requisite for entry into a political community, and thus, Rancière pushes, it is precisely the appearance of such relations that marks this community as political. What, then, are relations of justice and injustice and how do they configure the sensible? Aristotle, like Plato, opposes any notion of justice that would reduce it to a question of profits and losses weighed against one another, such that what is just is only so from the perspective of a single profiting party, and what is unjust is in

turn only so from the perspective of a correlative party harmed. This logic might be called mercantile, whereas the logic of justice, in contrast, pivots around relations of domination and dominance, ordered in accordance with each person's nature. One is positioned within the community so as to give to it that which is properly theirs to give and, in portion, take from it that which is properly theirs to take. In relations of justice there is no 'harm' correlated with profit the inferior party, for example the son, benefits from being ruled over by his father, the older and wiser of the pair. Thus, coextensive with the modality of sense experience characteristic of *logos* is the sensible emergence of a world composed of proper parts (those with a capacity for *logos*, rather than simply *pathos*) as well as, between these parts, proper relations (those which accord with the nature of the parts correlated). When a proper part takes a proper place - a place proportional to what that part brings to the community, a relation of justice holds; when either improper parts or improper relations appear on a shared horizon, injustice.

Rancière, however, will question to what extent improper parts and improper relations can register sensibly at all. Those who can be taken account of in the political community are always already those who can be counted, those who make up some recognizable part. It is not clear that those, to whom is attributed the capacity for *pathos* alone, for example, can be 'heard.' This is not to say that their voices simply do not register audibly but that they register only in an unrecognizable modality. Their words register much like a buzzing or humming in the air of which no intelligible sense can be made. The same will be true of any claim that does not fall in its proper place. For example, Rancière writes that historically the partition of the sensible was such that the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* and the characteristics of a working day were perceived to have nothing to do with one another, and it was worker's strikes that forced the community to perceive the relationship between the two differently.^[6]

It is thus that the task of politics becomes one of producing and forcing into everyday experience a distinct organization of the sensible, conditioned by a distinct aesthetics. This task demands reconfiguring the limits of each of our senses, and their relations to one another. Offering another historical example to support his claims, Rancière writes that the plebeians of Aventine realized this necessity. In order that their speech, registering as mere background noise in the current sensory order, would be heard, they spoke in an overall sensory context mimicking that of their patricians. Just like their patricians, "they pronounce imprecations and apotheoses; they delegate one of their number to go and consult *their* oracles, and they give themselves representatives by rebaptizing them."^[7]

With Rancière's rendering of Aristotle's conception of justice as a partitioning of the sensible, I argue, resonates a Kantian refrain. Kant's critical philosophy marks out two distinct domains: the transcendental realm of *a priori* forms and the empirical realm of sensible matter (the phenomena). Despite a strict delineation of the two, Kant critical philosophy works to articulate the process by which the *a priori* structures of

human subjectivity are mapped onto the sensible, phenomenal domain. Indeed, it is in this project that Kant's philosophical project finds much of its normative thrust. The shared sensory world is configured ethically for Kant only when it takes a shape expressive of the higher nature of the human being granted to that being by the transcendental form of human subjectivity.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as Daniel W. Smith explains, the form given to the phenomenal through reflection of the transcendental is what Kant calls the "object = x."^[8] This is an empty form that only receives qualitative specifications when related to a multiplicity of phenomenal qualia held together through mental operations. White, thin, and sheet-like bark, dark-black knots, and a thin trunk, for example, are synthesized together mentally to form the object known as a birch tree. Moreover, Kant claims it is such a synthesis that allows the various qualitative impressions had of the birch tree, the sun, one's own hand, and more to be shared between the various faculties. It is because of this synthesis that the same qualia present themselves when, for example, I imagine a birch tree as when I conceptualize one. Pushing Kant's claim further, it might be posited that this synthesis is also what allows each of our various senses to present the same object to us such that when I put my hand to the white sheet-like bark of the tree, the feel of the bark indicates it is a birch tree I am touching, just as the visual appearance of its knots and leaves likewise indicates.

However, the object-form is not itself a transcendental form but rather an analogue of such a form. What of the transcendental human subject has the capacity to produce an analogue of itself that conditions a shared sensory world? The *cogito*. The *cogito* for Kant is a unity prior conditionally to all empirical experience. It is the "I think" which gives to the human being a subjecthood by which it can then reach out to the world and make it one's own. Nonetheless, the *cogito* is neither individual nor personal. Rather, it is the universal form of reason in general. Thus, as an analogue of the *cogito*, the object-form renders a shared, sensory world not only for one's own senses and faculties but also for one person and another.

It is in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and not the *Critique of Pure Reason* that the question of the communication between the empirical and the transcendental comes to the fore. By way of analogy, Kant here further explores the relation between two mental faculties or *a priori* formative powers of subjectivity distinguished in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: the faculty of cognition, with understanding as its primary modality, and the faculty of feeling pleasure and pain, with imagination as its operative expression. Imagination is the mode by which the subject reaches out to the sensible. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant insists that the sensible can only be received in a form conditioned by the structure of the human understanding. Nonetheless, in the *Critique of Judgment* he is struck by the sensible's capacity to manifest structural organization beyond that which the understanding can conceptualize in terms of the object form. All structural organization manifested in the sensible which is beyond the possibility of understanding is organization manifest in a *particular*, empirical phenomenon. The understanding finds structure only in subsuming the

particular under a general concept, never in the particular itself. Yet the sensible can manifest a regularity without recognizable specificities; a regularity that can't be referred back to any concepts the understanding already has. Conceptual matches are made only on the basis of specific regularities which a concept can be recognized to repeat itself in. The concept of a straight line, for example, is matched with any empirical instantiation of the shortest path between two points. Thus, the regularity cannot be referred back to concepts and thus to the activity of understanding as its *a priori* ground.

The aesthetic experience of the beautiful is one example of the manifestation of such regularity in the particular. It is, Kant tells us, a single rose that one finds beautiful, not roses in general, due to a certain harmony or proportionality that appears to us in it.^[9] Kant here puts an onus on *appearance*. It is not clear that the regularity is there in the sensible itself but only that it is there in the sensible *for us*. Beyond the limits of the understanding, then, any apparent reference of empirical phenomena to an *a priori* ground both preceding and making it possible is not clearly a necessary fact but only a subjective need. We cannot presuppose "that every thinking and cognizing being is subject to the same need as a necessary condition, and hence that this condition attaches to the object rather than merely to our selves as subjects."^[10] Nonetheless, we can suppose every *human* being shares this need, and the aesthetic comprehension of the beautiful is thus posed to play a key role in the ethical configuration of the shared world of human experience.

There are two parallels with Aristotle to be drawn from this. First, it is from this transcendental form, unique to human beings as creatures of consciousness and reason, that a shared sensory world is produced, with each of the senses as well as each of the faculties taking a proper place in this production. This sounds much like Aristotle's account of the coming to be of the community as rendered by Rancière, a coming to be of a common sensory world. The similarities suggest that Kant's account of the ethical configuration of human experience, begun in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and carried over into the *Critique of Judgment's* account of the aesthetic expression of beauty, can likewise be characterized in Rancière's terms as the very 'distribution of the sensible' at stake for politics. Kant's positioning and partitioning of the senses and the faculties will ultimately translate ethically into the positioning and partitioning of various beings (some of them barely registering on this continuum of humanity at all) and result, as Rancière reminds us, in such events as the Scythian's "customarily put[ting] out the eyes of those they reduced to slavery, the better to restrict them to their tasks as slaves, which was to milk the livestock."^[11]

Second, just as Aristotle pushes away from a mercantile logic that renders justice a question of point of view, the universality of the cogito as a transcendental form pushes away from an overly empirical perspective to render within the sensible its higher, ethical expression. However, it might be thought that to move away from the empirical with Kant is to move away from the very logic of natural parts and their proper relations that Aristotle posits as an alternative. Yet

although Rancière does indeed emphasize the empirical nature of Aristotle's rendition of politics, he places, in addition, an onus on *proportionality*. What one takes -a place in the community - is always proportional to that which one brings to it, that is, certain capacities to make, say, see and do that supposedly belong to us by nature. Proportionality is the element in Aristotle's rendition of the political community that gives it harmony, making it not simply an expression of natural life, as are other associations such as the family and the village, but rather an almost divine expression of good life. In other words, proportionality is key in establishing perfection, in the form of man's proper end, within the empirical itself.

The *Critique of Pure Reason* had a strong influence on Kant's later account of aesthetic comprehension, and this influence figures strongly in the ethical implications Kant's aesthetics share with Aristotle's teleological conception of political community. Yet the *Critique of Judgment* poses a question not asked in the *Critique of Pure Reason*: On what basis is it determined what of the multitudinous empirical world, full of sensory shocks and vague and diffuse matter, will count as a part of an object-form? That is, what of the sensible, empirical world around us will register as perceptible? The *Critique of Pure Reason* does insist that what counts is simply that which can be synthesized, yet just what can be synthesized and how? Kant's answer, says Smith, is that synthesis occurs by way of a certain notion of measure.^[12] The faculty of understanding operates through concepts and thus has the capacity to develop conceptual units of measurement such as a meter or a foot. The faculty of imagination, however, does not have concepts at its disposal. Thus, there must be a sensible measure by which to synthesize parts. One might, for example, "evaluate a tree in relation to the human body" or "evaluate the moon rising in terms of a coin held at close range."^[13]

As Smith notes, there is here a moment of phenomenology in Kant that opens aesthetic comprehension to a kind of dialogue between the empirical and the transcendental, rather than simply a communion in one direction alone. One's choice of a unit of measurement reflects the object to be measured, just as this unit of measure influences the account of the object taken. The notion of a sensible unit of measure, then, offers a distinct notion of proportionality the relation between the shared, sensory world and one's natural qualities is not entirely prefigured by one end of the equation. Rather, a bi-directional exchange occurs. It is this phenomenological moment of attunement to sensible measure and bi-directional exchange that leads Kant to an aesthetic encounter with the sublime, and, I claim, installs in the *Critique of Judgment* insights into an aesthetics which would erupt in the form of what Rancière calls politics, in contrast to the aesthetics which such an alternative must disrupt.

3. The Percipiendum and the Sublime

Rancière speaks of a people who have no proper place in Aristotle's political community. As such, there is no part regarded as theirs by nature to give to or take from a shared world. Politics is the rare event that occurs when these people

nonetheless forcibly partake (part-take) in that community. Rancière designates them by the name they were given in Ancient Rome - the proletariat, the class of people regarded as contributing only offspring to the community.^[14] The proletariat is thus a group of people rendered without *logos*. Here, Rancière follows a line of logic that derives from Aristotle's account of the slave. This account begins with an acknowledgement that slaves, just like their masters, exercise moral virtue and understanding; indeed, they do so just insofar as they obey their masters. Thus, if slavery is to be upheld as a natural order, there must be something other than moral virtue and understanding that gives to a master his natural claim to rule. It is on the basis of this acknowledgement, then, that Aristotle asks, "How could it be proper for the one to rule and the other to be ruled unconditionally?"^[15] That is, how could slavery be proper to the political community? It is proper, according to Aristotle, insofar as a slave is different in kind from his master. The master has a soul with a deliberative capacity, and this gives him the natural right of rule. The slave has no such capacity, and although he can understand the reason of his master (allowing him to obey his master's orders), has no capacity to reason himself. Thus, following Aristotle, it is only insofar as the slave obeys his master that he partakes of *logos*, and in turn takes a proper place in the political community a place of subservience.

For Rancière, the proletariat are slaves who have ceased to be subservient. The proletariat, just like the slaves of Athens, are rendered without any reason of their own, and "doomed to the anonymity of work and reproduction."^[16] However, the proletariat make a claim to freedom. In this, they step wholly outside of the political community's partitioning of the sensible insofar as they denounce subservience. Yet at the same time they lay claim to that which belongs only to those with a part in the political community. The proletariat's claim to freedom, then, is a political event. It should be noted that Aristotle, too, contemplated the relation of such people to the political community. Rancière's proletariat is Aristotle's 'ordinary men,' those people whom are neither wealthy oligarchs nor noble aristocracy. Against Plato, Aristotle argues that the place of these people in the political community is ensured precisely insofar as these people do have freedom, and thus where the oligarchs contribute wealth to the community and the nobles virtue, ordinary men contribute freedom. Rancière's interest, then, is in showing that Aristotle's ordinary men just are the slaves whose capacity for equality he previously denied. Rancière presses two questions: What precisely is it that freedom brings to the community? And what makes freedom proper to the people? Beginning with the latter question, Rancière insists that there is nothing 'proper' about freedom at all; it is a historical contingency. Freedom is nothing other than the disobedience of the slaves and/or the abolition of slavery. Moreover, freedom is not the only property that is historically contingent. In slavery's illumination as a historical rather than natural condition, so, too, is illuminated the contingency of the aristocracy. The aristocracy is no more virtuous by nature and thus destined to rule over others than the oligarchs are naturally wealthy. The system of natural propriety upon which Aristotle orders the political community is thus thoroughly disrupted by the proletarian claim to

freedom.

Yet despite its impropriety, Rancière insists that freedom still contributes to the institution of a political community and a shared sensible world. A claim to freedom is not the same as either a claim to wealth or nobility. The later assert particular qualities as proper to s/he who lays the claim, and thus identify something contributed to the community which in turn validates a proportional partaking in accordance with the principles of Aristotelian justice. A claim to freedom, alternatively, is a partaking *immediately*, without any justification by way of a proportional, contributing quality. For the proletariat to partake of freedom is for the proletariat to claim it is, by nature, *just like* both the nobles and the oligarchs, despite historical conditions that leave them with nothing to give. Aristotle attempts to correct the teeter-totter-like imbalance of a mercantile logic in which one party profits only at another's expense by means of a logic of justice in which one takes a part in society always in proportion to one's own natural properties. The proletariat's claim to freedom upsets this balance by insisting on the artifice of that upon which it is grounded - a strict correlation between one's social position and one's natural capacities.

I apply this conclusion to refute that of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. The structure of the sensible, empirical world has a way of reverberating from its own conditions, that is, from those structures of human subjectivity Kant speaks of as *a priori*. Although Kant's *a priori* structures are intended to mark out universal structures of all human experience, and to show that these structures are simply those which are necessary in order to understand and draw together the elements of sensory experience, Rancière's account of the historical construction of the sensible hints that Kant's *a priori* structures are already too historically embedded to be universal. On the other hand, however, Rancière's attention to the eruption of voices, of sights, of people, and more, unsanctioned by any historical partitioning of the sensible - in other words, Rancière's insistence that politics can and does happen - may not be unlike Kant's encounter with a distinct aesthetics via the sublime in *Critique of Judgment*. Both Rancière's account of politics and Kant's attention to the sublime in the *Critique of Judgment* illuminate a power of sensible expression over and above any *sensus communis*, yet they do so without disavowing altogether a shared sensory world. Both illuminate a capacity for sense and its eruption that holds regardless of historically contingent and qualitatively determinable properties, such as a recognizable capacity for *logos* as lodged within the very push towards a shared, sensory world. In Rancière words, "It is through the existence of this part of those who have no part, of this nothing that is all, that the community exists as a political community . . . that is, as divided by a fundamental dispute. . . to do with the counting of the community's parts."[\[17\]](#)

Perception's requisite of a sensible unit of measure, encountered in the aesthetic comprehension of the beautiful, sets up a path to the sublime. This two-way relation between the mental faculty of imagination and the sensible world opens sense experience to constant variation as new units of measure emerge. Thus the constancy of a shared sensory

world is called into question. In a sensible world of constant variation, what could be constantly the same not only everywhere and for everyone but even for our own senses and faculties? Here, the sublime comes crashing in. The sublime is a mode of aesthetic comprehension occurring precisely when one experiences the harmonious relation between one's various faculties and senses being overturned. Indeed, an experience of the variation of a sensible measure is only a minor form of such loss. It can happen not only that sensible units of measure vary in accordance with the phenomena but, moreover, that for a particular phenomenon there is no commensurable measure. Further still, insofar as it is a sensible unit of measure that is necessary for the synthesis of empirical parts in accordance with an object-form, an experience of the sublime is one in which there is no synthesis. The parts cannot be counted, and a form cannot be produced.

Without an object-form, there can be no *sensus communis*; no shared sensory ground that renders the object encountered the same for all of the senses and all mental faculties. Here emerges a serious problem for the Kantian system. While the *cogito* remains its own kind of *sensus communis*, a form of reason universalizable across all human life, it loses the analogue by which it would reach expression in the ethical organization of sensory experience, putting each sense and faculty in its proper place. In the sensible measure, then, Smith writes that Kant discovers the foundation of the *sensus communis* at the same time that he also discovers the fragility of this foundation.^[18] This discovery is well articulated using Rancière's terminology: At the very foundation of common sense, there is a part played by that which cannot be counted, and it is in an aesthetic encounter with this part that politics occurs. Given that for Rancière this part is played by living, breathing people, is it crucial to highlight a correlation between formation and recognition embedded in Kant's philosophy all along. For the transcendental form of the *cogito* to express itself in the empirical world and give to this world its higher expression through form requires that this world can be rendered perceptible in accordance with that analogue of the *cogito*, the object-form. That is, the formation of the sensible world is always conditioned by recognition. Just as, on Rancière's account, in order to take part in the common world, one's words must be recognized by others as intelligible sounds rather than mere noise, so too for an object to take form, it is necessary that one can imagine and conceive as well as see and smell the same birth tree.

Drawing on this correlation in Kant, it becomes evident that in order for the proletariat - the part of those who have no part - to not simply disrupt the sensible world but to partake of it. There must be a capacity for sense *without* recognition. Something in the Kantian sublime speaks to this. At the moment when the faculty of imagination is confronted with its fragility in the face of the world, the faculties are forced to stretch beyond themselves. It is this higher power that Kant speaks of as the *Ideas*, and where previously the faculties operated in the name of the *cogito*, the "I think," they hereby come to operate in the name of the *cogitandum*: that which *ought* be thought.

If one is to follow Rancière's politics in a philosophical key and

pose the question not only of what politics is but of what being is so that politics may come about, would one find that it is only the movement in being from the *cogito* to the *cogitandum* that allows for politics? First, it should be borne in mind that it is the faculty of imagination, in its requirement for a sensible rather than a conceptual measure that encounters the sublime. This allows Kant to conceive of the *cogitandum* as a higher power of transcendental reason that comes into full force in a moment when the faculties more closely tethered to the sensible are revealed as too frail to communicate with the transcendental. The sublime shows a faculty of the mind surpassing every standard of sense insofar as it reveals that "all the might of the imagination[is] still inadequate to reason's ideas."^[19] In other words, a measure equal to the world can always be conceived, although not always imagined. Kant's philosophy remains in the end convinced that there will always be an *a priori* form which makes the sensible possible. Conceived along these Kantian lines, then, the *cogitandum* does not open being to the possibility of politics but rather operates to elide the political event.

Yet to invoke Smith's insights once more, to posit something that can be thought but not imagined is to encounter a moment of discord between the faculties.^[20] This moment of discord would be a moment of experience outside the dominion of common sense. Moreover - and this is key - its discovery by way of a sensible measure entails that this moment is sensible nonetheless. Uncovered here is a kind of sensibility distinct from that which partitions the world so as to render one sensible only within one's proper place, a sensibility without recognition. To follow this insight further, I turn to Deleuze. In Deleuze's rendition of this moment, the *cogitandum* appears when the faculty of understanding, pushing imagination to always find a measure, pushes imagination to its very limit and, at this limit, the imagination pushes back, leading the understanding itself to acquire a distinct power. Here, discord is understood as itself a kind of communication and, moreover, is revealed to be lodged within an orientation towards common sense.^[21] Finally, whereas previously common sense was the goal and the end of communion between the senses and faculties, the end here is the generation of a higher form of each of these. For Kant's movement from the *cogito* to the *cogitandum*, Deleuze offers a like movement from the sensible to the *sentiendum*, from the perceptible to the *perciendum*, and more.

Here, I stress the last of these. The movement from the perceptible to the *perciendum* is a movement from that which is only perceptible on the condition of the object-form, and its correlated *sensus communis*, to that which, as Deleuze insists, must be perceived, i.e. to that which "cannot but be perceived."^[22] Note that Deleuze translates Kant's ought to a must. In this, he gives to the *perciendum* an imperative force resonant with Rancière's politics. The *perciendum* is that which forcibly erupts; it cannot but be perceived, whatever the community's will. This imperative power comes from a force of life unrecognizable according to the partitions of the sensible, and what is generated is a sense of that which is insensible and imperceptible in the community. Contrary to Rancière's denunciation of Deleuze's philosophy on the whole and his theory of 'imperceptibility' in particular, I argue that is

just what Deleuze has captured and illustrated under this heading and that forces us to perceive precisely that which is unrecognizable - the part of those who have no part.^[23] The import of this argument is not just to establish that Rancière's criticisms miss the political potential in Deleuze's work, but also give Rancière's 'Politics of Aesthetics' a philosophical backbone that holds up against those critics who ask how the imperceptible and the insensible can be or become perceptible and sensible.

4. From the Imperceptible to Politics

If Deleuze's inversion of Kant offers to Rancière's politics, first, its affirmation as a potential within being as such and, second, an amplification of its claim to a crucial correlation between aesthetics and politics, what is to be done with Rancière's critique of Deleuze? Where Rancière's aesthetics of politics leads him ultimately to Deleuze, Deleuze, according to Rancière, leads politics ultimately to an impasse. There are several facets to Rancière's critique. However, Deleuze's notion of the imperceptible and its situation at the foundation of what Deleuze describes as a new kind of relationality, I argue, is the key. Rancière, I submit, has missed the force of this notion. The imperceptible is only so from the perspective of the *sensus communis*, and this perspective, despite Kant's efforts, may in the end be simply too empirical for politics or ethics. In other words, it is from an all too empirical perspective that the eruptive force of the imperceptible, a living force and perhaps the force of a certain *people*, is missed in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and even in certain stages of his *Critique of Judgment*. Deleuze offers the notion of the 'imperceptible' or the *perceptiendum* as a means to illuminate Kant's empiricism, its costs, as well as an alternative. Moreover, this Deleuzian move illuminates a distinct aesthetics that may well be much like what Rancière conceives of as politics.

It is in "Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula" that Rancière concludes Deleuze's philosophy erects an impasse for politics. There are two interlocking tenets to this conclusion. The first of these derives from the value Deleuze assigns to the powers of being and the possibilities they entail for living, expressed and exemplified through the literary figure of Melville's 'Bartleby.' The second derives from a certain metaphysics in which these possibilities are inscribed, expressed in the image offered by Deleuze of the world as "a wall of loose, uncemented stones, where every element has a value in itself but also in relation to others."^[24] Both tenets converge in drawing heavily on the Deleuzian notion of the imperceptible.

For Deleuze, as described in his "Bartleby; Or, the Formula," the story of Bartleby is the story of the direct effects had upon the life of the protagonist when he develops a peculiar habit. Bartleby is a clerk in an attorney's office. The habit he develops is that of responding, when asked by the attorney to perform a particular task, "I would prefer not to." What are these effects and what in the nature of this utterance produces them? Deleuze begins with the second question, remarking on the indeterminacy of Bartleby's expression: that it ends with "not to" leaves open the object of the renunciation. Without an

object specified, Deleuze stresses that it is not only that which Bartleby does not prefer that remains indeterminate but, insofar as the specificity of the one requires that of the other, that which he prefers as well. With both Bartleby's preferences and non-preferences indeterminate, the two themselves becomes almost indistinguishable from one another. This effect is multiplied by the indeterminacy of the statement not only with regard to its object but also with regard to affirmation and negation. To prefer not to is to neither refuse a particular task nor to accept it. In the end, then, the effect of the formula is to produce a state of suspension, a state in which it is indeterminate what will and will not be done. Bartleby only expresses preference, thus never affirming concretely what he will or will not do and, on top of this, never affirms concretely what it is that he does and does not prefer, rendering what might be expected of him still further indeterminate.

In a regime of the sensible partitioned such that one is to make, say, see, and do in accordance with predetermined properties and correlative proper places, such indeterminacy may have noteworthy effects. Indeed, it is of import that Bartleby repeats this phrase in his workplace and in response to the tasks demanded of him by his employer. As Deleuze notes, to refuse his required task would transport Bartleby from one social position to another, from employee to derelict. Yet by first leaving indeterminate his preferences and, second, insisting on nonetheless only preferring, he escapes social positioning.

However, on Rancière's account of politics such an effect may be no effect at all. An effect marks a change in the state of the world, and Bartleby, through this formula, mightn't change a thing. Rather, he may only cast his lot in with that of those cast, in the partitioning off of the sensible, into an almost unbearable state, one in which these people cease to register within the community. At its best, however, such an effect interrupts the operations of these partitions, much as, to find an analogy in the work of Kant, an aesthetic encounter with the sublime interrupts the organization of the faculties and senses. Here, Rancière's offers this summary: "The formula erodes the attorney's reasonable organization of work and life. It shatters not just the hierarchies of a world but also what supports them: the connections between causes and effects we expect from that world, between the behaviors and motives we attribute to them and the means we have to modify them."[\[25\]](#)

Yet to interrupt the functioning of the regime of common sense is not yet to render sensible a missing part, the part of those who cannot be recognized in such partitions. If there is any hope for politics in Bartleby's formula, this formula must not only have the potential to disrupt the sensible order but must also have the potential to found a distinct kind of sense. Rancière finds Deleuze hopeful regarding the prospects of just such a founding. Indeed, as Rancière will emphasize, Deleuze posits Bartleby's formula as precisely the seed from which Melville's story develops. In so doing, he instantiates a commitment to the view that from this formula, a formula disrupting the partitions of the sensible and rendering Bartleby unlocatable within them, a new expression of the sensible - a

new literature -- can indeed emerge.

Such a view requires philosophical interrogation, as Deleuze is well aware. Looking to explain how a sensible expression, and, indeed, an aesthetic object such as a story can be generated from a formula that, if only in its first effect, disrupts the sensible, Deleuze turns to the radical empiricism of William James. It is in this engagement with James that Deleuze offers the image of the world by which Rancière is so intrigued, the world as "a wall of loose, uncemented stones." [26] However, where Deleuze finds in this image of radical empiricism the support for a new kind of literature and a new form of relationality, Rancière finds a metaphysics that is the impasse into which Deleuze sends any hope of politics hurtling.

Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics* highlights the long-standing accounts of aesthetic production, such as Aristotle's, that have taken the properties of various subjects, predetermined by nature, to be the causal and formative force from which any narrative, that is, any ordering of the sensible, can unfold. This incites a political question: By what power might a narrative unfold in the absence of a subject with determinate capacities? In the history of literary theory, this question has been answered in several ways, yet all are, for Rancière, versions of one and the same contention: There is a causal power within matter itself and thus no heteronymous power, such as that of predetermined subjects' forms, is necessary to generate works of art. Introduced here is a kind of individuation distinct from that offered by either by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* or by Aristotle. Whereas for both of these philosophers, a faculty of the soul and an *a priori* power of the subject, respectively, give to matter its sensible form, here, individuations are immanent within matter itself. Rancière draws on Flaubert's *Saint Anthony* to exemplify these new individuations. An individuation can now be "a drop of water, a shell, a strand of hair." Moreover, these individuations are immediately felt. Their impact is to render us "stopped short, eyes fixed. . . heart open." [27]

Yet this conception of matter, for Rancière, leading to the inauguration of a distinct metaphysics as well as a distinct aesthetic regime, does not facilitate any politics. Indeed, Rancière's employment of Flaubert bears Deleuze in mind. Deleuze, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, speaks of like individuations as 'imperceptible.' These individuations are of matter in its own genetic self-expression, and hold the key to a kind of relationality William James' speaks of as a radical empiricism. Sticking closely to the frame of aesthetic theory, Rancière will address this as an answer to a persisting problem. While such individuations, as Flaubert characterizes them, may be felt and are thus in some form sensible, it remains unclear what such individuations could contribute to the production of a work of art. Rancière asks what "can string a necklace from those 'pearls' that *Saint Anthony* supplied loose?" such that a new kind of literature, inseparable from a new kind of community, might come about. [28] Here, many versions of aesthetics will, in the end, remain Aristotelian. A harmony vested in natural properties of the soul will be subtly reinstated in order to hold the pieces together or, in other words, to create a political community.

Deleuze's efforts by way of the notion of radical empiricism, then, are rare and, moreover, bear political community in mind, as Rancière is quick to acknowledge. In the potential to string the pearls together without recourse to Aristotelian proportionality lies "the promise of a people to come," as Rancière writes.^[29] Bartleby's formula sets the stage for this by upsetting a metaphysics partitioning the sensible through an external and static law of natural properties and proper relations and, moreover, positing in its place the immanent power of the sensible to express itself. Bartleby's formula just is a series of imperceptible individuations. In this, Rancière sees all bodies rendered equal, the site of the same genetic power. This is a rendering in which the proletariat, understood via the *sensus communis*, or the distribution of the sensible, as the part that has no part, are granted something in common with others.

However, this equality in and of itself is not sufficient for the entry into the community of a people that is missing in its current form. Here, Rancière insists that it is crucial to not simply substitute one metaphysics for another - a metaphysics that finds in matter its own genetic force for a metaphysics of static and predetermined forms that render sensible passive matter - but to bring these two worlds together. Indeed, in focusing on the character of Bartleby in his engagement with Melville's story, Rancière again notes that such a concern seems evident in Deleuze. Bartleby is the site at which the genetic power of matter in itself can enter into combat with a world that is structured in elision of such power. Bartleby, writes Rancière, is the figure who "make[s] the power of 'the other world' effective as the power that destroys this world."^[30]

According to Deleuze, it is from these ashes that arises the new kind of relationality indicative of James' radical empiricism. Whereas a traditional empiricism understands the empirical as the domain of discrete parts, at the heart of James' philosophy is the contention that relations are not derivations of a mental operation upon the raw data of sense experience, as Kant asserts by way of his account of syntheses. Rather, relations are themselves immediately sensed. Indeed, they are only sensed. Brian Massumi captures this insight in James: "relationality. . . registers materially in the activity of the body before it registers consciously" and thus "we do not run because we are afraid, but we are afraid because we run."^[31] Immediately sensed relations, then, are of a world wherein, to follow the terms Rancière takes from Flaubert, the pearls not only individuate themselves but string themselves together.

Indeed, the pearls only individuate themselves in this very relationality. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is helpful here. He offers as exemplary the phenomenon of two contrasting colors appearing side by side, each intensifying each other and generating their value in this, such that, as Claudel writes, "a certain blue of the sea is so blue that only blood would be more red."^[32] Deleuze himself offers just the image Rancière employs to crystallize his reservations about the political potential in Deleuze's philosophy; the image of a wall composed of 'loose, uncemented stones.' Such an image emphasizes the import of interrelations to the being of the

phenomena, yet these interrelations do not form a whole fusing parts into a proper and immutable place. Rather, they form a whole world of individuations existing only in relation with others.

Yet Rancière is not satisfied. He asks, "Why does the image of the whole in motion. . . have to be the image of a wall?"^[33] Is not a wall rather the kind of thing that would "bar the road. . . of the people to come"? For Rancière, the fact that Deleuze's account of literature ends with this wall gives cause to ask once more after the very mode of existence his sojourn in Melville's text began with the mode of existence exemplified in the character of Bartleby and his formula. Where before, Rancière, following Deleuze, emphasized Bartleby's indiscernibility, here he puts the onus on what can aptly be called Bartleby's imperceptibility. Bartleby is not only a character who, through his formula, escapes location within the partitions of the sensible which would assign to him a proper place and, accordingly, proper tasks. In addition, he is a character who literally goes *unperceived*.

On his very first day at work for the attorney, Bartleby is given as his workspace an enclave within the office of the attorney himself. On one side of this enclave are the doors leading out of the office, on another a window that looks out only onto the wall of another building, and, finally, on the other is a high-rising screen. In such a situation, then, Bartleby both does not see the attorney and goes unseen by him. Moreover, when Bartleby utters his formula, it is generally followed, as Deleuze writes, by a retreat "behind his partition."^[34] It is in this situation that Bartleby, for Rancière, is rendered imperceptible and unperceiving in the shared world. In the end, Rancière cannot find in this imperceptibility that which would be sensible without being re-cognized according to *a priori* forms; Rancière cannot find any suggestion of a new sensible world Deleuze would give to a missing people. Rancière concludes, "The strength of every strong thought is. . . its ability to arrange its aporia itself, the point where it can no longer pass. And that is indeed what Deleuze does. . . clears the way of Deleuzianism and sends it into the wall."^[35]

Thus, to respond to Rancière's critique, it is crucial to investigate the notion of imperceptibility in Deleuze. The individuations which characterize his distinct metaphysics are indeed given this name. However, to be imperceptible is, for Deleuze, a very different thing from not being available perceptually. Just as, for James, relationality is *only* immediately felt rather than always already conceptualized, so too for Deleuze are these imperceptible individuations *only* sensed and perceived. Moreover, they are always and only sensible in relation to others. Each pushes against another, and it is through this discordant communication with one another that each forces itself sensibly upon us. It should be noted that such discord is only possible, as the brief moment of phenomenology in Kant suggests, on the condition that the communication conditional to sense experience is bi-directional, and thus there is no faculty that acts without itself being acted upon. In other words, the sensing subject and not just the sensible must be organized like Deleuze's wall. Deleuze's imperceptible, then, is a force that registers within the common world its outside, that which can *only* be

perceived, by way of bi-directional communication. Hence, the imperceptible for Deleuze just is the *perciendum*, that of the perceptible that presents itself when our perception and the *sensus communis*, both among our faculties and senses and at the heart of political community, are pushed to their limit. Deleuze's notion of the imperceptible, then, crystallizes and further illuminates a moment in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* that turns the aesthetics of the *Critique of Pure Reason* on its head. This moment, I propose, may well open it to politics as Rancière understands it.

What's more, Deleuze seeks in the *perciendum* a model for a kind of communication and an example of a certain sensible force that goes unperceived from an all too empirical perspective, whether a perspective that, à la Aristotle, develops a metaphysics that naturalizes historically contingent parts and properties or, à la Kant, develops a theory of transcendental subjectivity according to a logic that is itself founded on a particular historical organization of the sensible. Drawing on the work of Duns Scotus, Deleuze gives to the imperceptible individuations that compose his wall the name of 'haeccities.' *Haec* is the Greek term for 'this,' and to speak of haeccities is to speak of the "thisness" of being. The onus on a kind of indeterminacy in the term is key, for haeccities are non-qualitative properties. Qualities are too empirical in the traditional sense, too distinct and concrete in and of themselves, to capture the discordant force that marks the always-relational individuation of a haeccity.

Duns Scotus comes to the notion of 'haeccities' in asking how it is that we not only distinguish one kind of thing from another, such as a human from an animal, but also distinguish instantiations of the same kind of thing, one's child, for example, as an instantiation of a more general human being. The fact that things can share natures and yet remain distinct requires that a real property other than a thing's nature be in force in its being. It is in asking first after what *cannot* be instantiated, that is, divided into several things each of which remains the thing itself, that Scotus's notion of haeccities begins to develop, for it is here that the real property in being preventing the perfect collapse of two human beings into one general form might be witnessed.^[36] There is something in the property of temperature or of pressure, for example, just as there is in an individual human being, which is absolutely incompatible with division into several parts each of which is an instance of the thing itself. While we may be able to divide these properties into parts, this cannot be done without changing the nature of the thing. For example, if we take away half the heat of a pot of water at 100 degrees centigrade, we will no longer have a pot of boiling water. There is a real property that exists in *this* state of the water that is not divisible such that each of the parts it separates into remains an instance of itself.

That there is a real property in being indivisible without a change in kind suggests that something very like James' notion of relationality is at play in the real properties of being Scotus names 'haeccities.' Moreover, these properties, although not empirical in a traditional sense, are not strictly transcendental, they figure in the sensible, corporeal domain. Here it is Spinoza whom Deleuze turns to in order to further

stress the point. A body, for Spinoza, is not first and foremost a distinct extension of matter but rather a set of orientations in movement and rest. For example, take a soap bubble. As Manuel De Landa tells us, the constituent molecules of this bubble "are constrained energetically to 'seek' the point at which surface tension is minimized."^[37] In Spinoza's terms, this is a pattern of movement and rest that grows from within the collective molecules and through their energy, and it is this pattern that generates the soap bubble's extensive, empirical form.

In addition, a number of empirical shapes and forms might be generated from one intensive pattern. Again, Manuel De Landa is helpful: "if instead of molecules of soap we have the atomic components of an ordinary salt crystal, the form that emerges from minimizing energy. . . is a cube."^[38] Thus one can be sure that it is not the extensive parts, even if approached on a scale smaller than that of the soap bubble or salt cube itself - the scale of soap or salt *molecules* -- that are the force of behind its self-organization. Rather, organizational force derives from the relation that holds between the parts before they are even broken down into distinct parts. Spinoza again corroborates Deleuze's conclusion. For Spinoza, relations of movement and rest are only one of two halves to any body. The other he will call the body's affectivity. Affectivity is what gives to these relations their force to communicate with other such relations in the world, for affectivity is indissoluble from an expenditure outward, bringing the body into contact with these others, in an effort to endure, to preserve the particular relations of movement and rest that give to it its own being.

What, then, is a force of self-organization that develops only through exchange and communication with the non-self? Here, it is helpful to think of Duns Scotus' insight, that there is in the world a real property indivisible without a change in nature, but in reverse. The force of affectivity is a force allowing intensities differing in nature to nonetheless be condensed into a whole which itself differs in nature from each of these intensities. Thus, the body's effort to endure always takes the form of a forcible communion between incommensurables, producing new intensities and reconfiguring the old. What Spinoza calls 'affectivity,' always tethered to relations of movement and rest, is then precisely the capacity which Deleuze finds holding forth the promise of a people to come, the promise of a new kind of community and, indissolubly, a new kind of sense.

Deleuze's concern in developing the notion of the 'imperceptible,' then, is with illuminating this world of communication without common sense, a world in which the sensible is constituted through the holding together of that which differs in kind. Haecities, the loose stones in Deleuze's wall, are indeed imperceptible, yet only from a traditional empirical perspective that reduces the perceptible to discrete and extended matter, matter, that is, without intensity or affectivity. This empirical account of the perceptible has the object-form, and thus, in turn, the transcendental cogito, as its condition. It is this form that renders the sensible the same despite divisions between the senses, the faculties, perspectives, and more, and thus institutes what Rancière will speak of as community. A wall of "loose, uncemented stones,"

in contrast, is a whole world outside this domain insofar as to divide these stones from their relations is to alter their nature. This world is the world of the *perciendum*, that which must be perceived. Just as yellow and blue vanish from sight upon reaching a critical point of proximity with one another, changing in nature to produce green, relations of critical proximity produce every discrete element available to perception. 'Imperceptible' individuations constitute the perceived, and the perceived here forces itself upon our body just like a color so bright one cannot turn one's eyes from it. Moreover, there is a further implication to Deleuze's Kantian inversion. Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* posits the "I think" as the control centre responsible for the organization of sense experience in which each faculty and sensory apparatus has a proper function, and develops a conception of the *a priori* and of aesthetics accordingly. It is precisely the functioning of such a control center productive of a proper and harmonious organization of senses, faculties, and parts that radical empiricism, indissoluble from the *perciendum*, renders difficult.

Rancière's attention to an aesthetics of politics may surprise us. Yet aesthetics has long been a field of inquiry that looks to sense experience to ask after value. Aesthetics asks how value is expressed sensibly and how we know when value is present.^[39] Rancière is clearly responding to Foucault's analysis of the modern invention of the disciplines, distinguishing aesthetic value from ethics, social and political values from the evaluation of sense experience, and more, when he posits aesthetics both at what is at stake in politics and at what erupts anew when politics happens. The intentions of this paper, centered around Rancière's call for a *Politics of Aesthetics*, have been twofold. First, it has aimed to demonstrate how Kant's critical philosophy, particularly as developed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, corroborates Rancière's analysis of the distribution of the sensible. Simultaneously, however, it argues that Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, approached through a Deleuzian lens, opens to a distinctly political aesthetics as defined by Rancière. Second, it argues that an eye to the role Kant's *Critique of Judgment* plays in Deleuze's formulation of the notion of the 'imperceptible,' key to Deleuze's own call for politics in *A Thousand Plateaus*, can not only reconcile Deleuze's philosophy with Rancière's politics but can, in fact, render Rancière's call for a 'Politics of Aesthetics' both more convincing, urgent, and important.

Endnotes

[1] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p.9.

[2] *Ibid.*, p.13.

[3] Although the aesthetic experience of the beautiful, as Kant's text suggests, needs to be reinvestigated following an illumination of the aesthetic experience of the sublime, this is a task that I will not undertake here.

[4] Jacques Rancière, "Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula," in *The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing*, trans.

Charlotte Mandell (Stanford, California: Stanford U.P, 2004), pp. 146-164, p.164.

[5] Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis and London: U. of Minnesota P., 1999), p.2.

[6] *Ibid.*, p.40.

[7] *Ibid.*, p.24.

[8] Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze on Bacon: Three Conceptual Trajectories in The Logic of Sensation," in Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 2002) pp.vii - xxvii, esp. pp.xv-xvi.

[9] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), p.59.

[10] *Ibid.*, p.282.

[11] *Dis-agreement*, p.12.

[12] "Deleuze on Bacon," pp.xviii - xix.

[13] *Ibid.*, p.xviii.

[14] See Davide Panagia, "Dissenting Words: A Conversation with Jacques Rancière," in *diacritics*, 30,2 (2002), pp. 113-126, esp. 113-117.

[15] Aristotle, *Politics I*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard U. P., 1944), 1259b10-20.

[16] *Dis-agreement*, p. 7.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[18] "Deleuze on Bacon," pp. xx - xxii.

[19] *Critique of Judgment*, p. 256.

[20] Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality," in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), pp. 29-56, p. 33.

[21] Deleuze writes: "[The sublime] brings the various faculties into play in such a way that they struggle against one another, the one pushing the other towards its maximum or limit, the other reacting by pushing the first towards an inspiration which it would not have had alone. . . The faculties find their accord. . . in a fundamental discord" (Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 1984), p. xii-xiii).

[22] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: U. of Minnesota P., 1987), p. 281.

[23] The same could well be said of all other higher expressions produced by way of an encounter with the sublime - the *cogitandum*, the *sentiendum*, and more - on the

understanding that these expressions are gendered by the force of the real itself. I stress the *percipiendum* here in order to set the stage for a response to Rancière's own reading of Deleuze.

[24] Gilles Deleuze, "Bartleby; Or, the Formula," in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 1997), pp. 68 - 90, p.86.

[25] "Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula," p.146-147.

[26] "Bartleby; Or, The Formula," p.86.

[27] "Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula," p.149.

[28] *Ibid.*, p.151.

[29] *Ibid.*, p.157.

[30] *Ibid.*, p.158.

[31] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham and London: Duke U. P., 2002), p.231.

[32] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern U.P., 1968), p.132. (Merleau-Ponty is here referring to an expression of Claudel's).

[33] "Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula," p.161-162.

[34] "Bartleby; Or, the Formula," p.73.

[35] "Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula," p.164.

[36] Cross, Richard. "Medieval Theories of Haecceity." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Edward N. Zalta. Fall 2003, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2003/entries/medieval-haecceity>.

[37] Manuel De Landa, "Deleuze, Diagrams, and the Open-Ended Becoming of the World," in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz (Ithaca and London: Cornell U. P., 1999), pp. 29-41, p.33.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp.33-34.

[39] Davide Panagia makes a similar claim in *The Poetics of Politics* (Durham and London: Duke U.P., 2006), *cf.* pp.4-5.

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