**Immanuel Kant: The 'Aesthetic Judgement'**

When we come to a decision that something is beautiful, Kant identified four moments in the process by which we come to this aesthetic judgement:

**Disinterestedness.** This means that the object must be understood and appreciated for itself, not for the pleasure it brings us: after understanding that something is beautiful, we will feel pleasure. Beauty creates pleasure, the reverse of what Hume proposed. If judgement was based on our pleasure, Kant argued that we would be confusing our personal feelings about something with its actual qualities and we would not be able to really judge its beauty.

**Universality.** This means that our aesthetic judgements do not apply only to us individually, but that they are statements of fact. When we describe a sunset as beautiful, we act as though the beauty is in the sunset, not in our minds. However, it is in our minds, which are all structured similarly-we share what could be termed common sense about ideas such as morality or beauty (common sense in this context refers to something we all share, rather than common sense ideas like not sticking your tongue onto frozen metal). Kant disagreed with the notion of individual taste as the basis for deciding what is beautiful: beauty is not "in the eye of the beholder", it is in the way the human mind is structured to perceive what is beautiful. Because of our universal ability of common sense, we can all appreciate the beauty of a sunset.

**Necessity.** Closely related to the idea of universality is that of necessity. Since we share the same structure of mind, we should necessarily come to the same conclusions about what is beautiful. After applying my aesthetic judgement and coming to a rational decision about the beauty (or not) of something, you too should be able to use your common sense and come to the same decision since we are all endowed with the same ability to reason. Thus, there can be agreement on what is beautiful, which accounts for why there is widespread agreement about the beauty of sunsets.

**Purpose.** This is the idea that our common sense perceives in something a purpose, but it may not be a definite purpose or even one intended. For instance, the sunset will appeal to the sense of purpose and order in our minds, even though it may not have those qualities itself. Things which have purpose strike us as beautiful.

*Kant's theory explained how universal standards of beauty can be achieved, based on how our minds operate. He also created the foundations of the formalist definition of art, as indicating that there can be objective descriptions of the beauty or artistic merit of something.*