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# Kant and Nāgārjuna: A hermeneutic inquiry into transcendental aesthetics

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## Abstract

The Madhyamaka tradition of Buddhism, with development of śūnyatā philosophy, was widely considered as founded by Nāgārjuna (ca 150–250 CE) who is best known as one of most important philosophers in the history of Buddhism. Critics do not generally regard Nāgārjuna's philosophy of emptiness, Madhyamaka, as a theory of nonexistence or nihilism. Its acceptance of absolute non-being leads to recognition of a hyperousiological (hyper-Being that mystically surpasses Being) ontotheological superbeing, which is a priori and that it has similarities with transcendental aesthetics where Kant deals with nature of sensibility. Hyperousiology denotes a "Being beyond being" and predominantly used in negative theology. Negative theology is heavily relied on "denegations" that lead to a hyper-theology affirming God as hyperousious, as defined by Pseudo-Dionysius, knowing God by unknowing or "denominating" God. Such mystical theology is a "theology of absence", a higher apophasis that overcomes both affirmation and negation to sustain a hyperessence. Kant's transcendental aesthetics is considered as the investigation of a priori elements which enter into Perception. Kant toiled hard to understand human cognition and human judgment; his focus was on innate human capability of making judgments by a cognitive faculty. Kant claims the matter of all appearance is only given to us a posteriori, but its form must all lie ready for it in the mind a priori and can therefore be considered separately from all sensation. The foundational idea of Madhyamaka school, śūnyatā, the set of ultimately existent things, is an empty set that transcends epistemic foundations in linguistic and conceptual conventions. Accordingly, Madhyamaka school has a two-truth doctrine: ultimate truth (paramārtha-satya) and relative truth (saṃvṛti-satya). Like a priori sensibility, it is argued, ultimate truth (paramārtha-satya) is separate from all sensation as it transcends conceptual conventions. The major research problem investigated in this study is whether the ultimate truth (paramārtha-satya) of Madhyamaka school acts as a priori sensibility and creates a synthesis with relative truth (saṃvṛti-satya) making cognition transcendently ideal and empirically real? This inquiry delves into investigating interconnections between transcendental ideals and empirical reals. Hermeneutics has been employed as the principal research method to interpret both Kant and Nāgārjuna on aesthetic judgment.

**Keywords:** Kant, Nāgārjuna, Transcendental Aesthetics, Madhyamaka Buddhism, Śūnyatā Philosophy

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## Introduction

Madhyamaka tradition of Buddhism was widely considered as founded by Nāgārjuna (ca 150–250 CE), who is best known as one of most important philosophers in the history of Buddhism: his thought is hermeneutical in a sense and original as compared to the early Buddhism. The *magnum opus* of Nāgārjuna is *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, which is also the foundational text of the Madhyamaka School, extending to 450 stanzas; some critics consider he uses *reductio ad absurdum* arguments to demonstrate all phenomena are empty of *svabhāva*, where inherent existence of all dharma is refuted (Bragt & Takeuchi, 1995). Nāgārjuna, based on the *Kaccayanagotta-sutta* of early Buddhism, formulated his discourse of *Śūnyatā*; assimilation of core ideas of the early Buddhism is ineluctably ostensible in the Madhyamaka School's philosophical contribution (McCagney, 1997). In *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* the following stanza can be found.

*kātyāyanāvavāde cāstīti nāstīti cobhayam  
pratiṣiddhaṃ bhagavatā bhāvābhāvavibhāvinā*

The meaning of the sloka is in the Admonition to Kātyāyana, the Blessed One,  
Free from existence and non-existence, refuted both “it is” and “it is not.” (MK 15,7)

As A.K. Warder explains Nāgārjuna's concept of the dependent arising in early Buddhism has been exemplified successfully in *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. A.K. Warder also questions whether Nāgārjuna was a Mahayanist. Critics do not generally regard Nāgārjuna's philosophy of emptiness, *Madhyamaka*, as a theory of nonexistence or nihilism, but I argue in this paper that its acceptance of absolute non-being leads to recognition of a hyperousiological ontotheological superbeing, which is *a priori* and that it has similarities with transcendental aesthetics where Kant deals with nature of sensibility. Kant's transcendental aesthetics is considered as the investigation of the *a priori* elements which enter into Perception (Lord, Harris & Sweet, 2006). Kant toiled hard to understand human cognition and human judgment; his focus was on innate human capability of making judgment by a cognitive faculty (Zuckert, 2007). The temerity Kant places on *a priori* rules makes his investigation divided into two parts: the transcendental aesthetic and the transcendental logic (Brümmer, 1961).

Kant's Critique of Pure Reason is divided into two sections, the “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements” and the “Transcendental Doctrine of Method”, the former of which is further divided into two parts, the “Transcendental Aesthetic” and the “Transcendental Logic.” Although it is comparatively very short, the Transcendental Aesthetic is a crucially important component of Kant's work, its stated aim being to present a “science of all principles of a priori sensibility”. Here, Kant articulates a theory of pure sensible intuition and deploys arguments in support of the transcendental ideality of space and time (Shabel, 2010).

The cognitive faculties, imagination and understanding of human beings have been considered by Kant as three major pillars of the justification of pleasure and beauty, doing their free play, in his corpus of work. For Kant, beauty is not something just sensuous gratification; rather it has a

*prior* content that paves the way for perceptual representation of things. Kantian disinterestedness is a characteristic of universality. In a Kantian analysis, pleasure in beauty is disinterested and it is different from the pleasure that can be found in the agreeable, kind of pleasure leads to something “interested”. Atalay (2007) points out in his moral theory, Kant excludes the notion of *sensus communis* which is an element of our social and moral being, and the moral feeling that is based on such a notion as morality is not based on our feelings, but it is based on our reason—it is based on our practical reason. In his work *Critique of Judgement*, Kant distinguishes the two notions: the sublime and the beautiful (Kant, 2001). True, beauty is something disinteresting; but it boasts characteristics like orderliness and symmetry. Not only is the sublime based on disorder, but purposivelessness of it that is something our mind fails to contain; therefore, limits are inapplicable (Guyer, 2014).

The major research problem in this paper is “can science of the laws of sensitivity be established with the teaching of the Madhyamaka school of Buddhism”? As transcendental aesthetics relates to principles of a priori sensibility, the objective of this paper is to argue that a priori constitution of sensibility resembles the link between *paramarthasatya* and *samvrtisatya*.

*Paramarthasatya*, an a priori judgment free from concepts, is a universal and disinterested area, where no utilitarian or political concerns are valid. Disinterestedness does not depend on conventional situations (*samvrtisatya* or agreeable); agreeable (*samvrtisatya*) is linked with empirical judgments that are totally inclined to subjectivities of us (Finnigan, 2015). In *samvrtisatya* pleasure is created among agreeable objects and contingency permeates in all ordinary affairs. Accordingly, a *priori* necessity in judgment of taste is associated with the *paramarthasatya* and pleasure comes from agreement among people in a community and is associated with the *samvrtisatya*.

Nāgārjuna, with his negative expression of the language that is visible in his masterpiece and his dialectic, engages in total refutation of all assertions and inaugurates a negative transcendentalist turn in Buddhism. Nāgārjuna’s negative affirmation of *paramarthasatya* can be categorized as the pure nature of intuition as Kant put forward in his transcendental aesthetic. *Paramarthasatya* stands for a definitive statement of ultimate truth, and it is the ultimate meaning. This is equivalent to Absolute Truth of other traditions. These two truths have been set up by the Mādhyamaka School for soteriological and pedagogical reasons, while consolidating the early Buddhism’s notion. Logically this argument on two truths always tends to be inevitably aporetic. Nāgārjuna using *prasajya* and *pariyudāsa* in his argument employs the negation of four-fold alternatives called *catuskoṭi* to establish an epistemological and logical analytical frame for his doctrine of non-determinacy of things: It is *śūnyatā* philosophy that allows voidness to form the ultimate reality (Tola & Dragonetti, 1981). *Prasajya* negation is one of two kinds of negation found among the Indian philosophical schools and the distinction between the two kinds (*Pariyudāsa* and *Prasajya*) is based on grammar. In *prasajya* negation the negative particle connects with a verb (as in *brāhmaṇa nāsti*, ‘This is not a brahmin’). For Nāgārjuna, the ultimate reality or *śūnya* is the *Nirvāṇa*, the ultimate stereological emancipation. Mādhyamaka School expounds that essentialism in things is empty and uses *reductio* arguments to prove it. It is neither a *nāstika* school nor an *āstika* school of philosophy. Here, it is my argument that as Nāgārjuna does not refute the existence of the ultimate reality, *Nirvāṇa*, the ultimate point of soteriological release, he is paving the way to accept a hyperousiological and an ontotheological hierarchical order,

where the negative form of argumentation becoming a Being beyond being. It goes without saying that in this super being, no cognitive categories are relevant and at the same time, it is undeniable. As beauty is a pure aesthetic experience, beauty is dependent on hyperousiological being where no differentiation is possible and no ascertainability is witnessed (Caputo, 1997). Across the board, beauty as the utmost aesthetic, it is only possible with *Nirvāṇa* or ultimate truth and this disinterested feeling unattainable and undemonstratable by the *pṛthagjanas*—or worldly minds that are bound up with interest or desire.

## Methodology

This paper is based on qualitative research and employs hermeneutics as the primary methodological approach to interpret the aesthetic judgment in the works of both Kant and Nāgārjuna. Hermeneutics is utilized here as a rigorous and creative strategy for conducting an exploratory and preparatory analysis of the two philosophical frameworks. In this study, key concepts from Nāgārjuna's philosophy—such as *paramārthasatya* (ultimate truth), *samvṛtisatya* (conventional truth), *śūnyatā* (emptiness), and *svabhāva* (intrinsic nature)—are examined within the broader context of the Madhyamaka doctrine. Similarly, Kant's concepts are explored in relation to his own philosophy. With the intention to do a deeper investigation into these two distinct traditions, a dialectical strategy has been employed, analyzing both the individual components and the overarching systems of thought. Through this perpetual hermeneutical process, the doctrines of Nāgārjuna and Kant are interpreted in a way that produces new insights into the nature of aesthetic judgment, inquiring the Eastern and Western philosophical perspectives.

## Results

Nāgārjuna, claims that as a rule of thumb, no proposition can be considered as the reality and hence every proposition should be refuted (*sarva drishti prahanaya yah saddharmam adeshayet*). In pure emptiness, as Nāgārjuna observes, all views or "isms" must be dispensed with and turning emptiness itself into another "ism" is without hap (*śūnyatā sarvadrishṭinam prokta nihsaranam jinaiḥ, yesham tu shunyata drishtistan asadhyān babhashire*) (Handa, 2004). Nāgārjuna's aim is not to refute the rival propositions on their positive claims but his project was to disprove the mechanism or mission of making propositions. He wanted to understand emptiness of everything while interpreting Buddha's teachings concerning emptiness as the lasting therapy for all doctrinal issues.

"It must never be understood in the sense of annihilation or absolute nothingness, for nihilism is as much condemned by Buddhism as naive realism. The Buddha proclaimed emptiness as a remedy for all doctrinal controversies but those who in turn cling to emptiness are beyond treatment." (Suzuki, 1908, p. 173)

Nāgārjuna, throughout his philosophical oeuvre, is trying to attack epistemological doctrines like *pramāṇa*, a central concept of Indian epistemology which can be found in Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, etc. In this paper I argue that in his project to attack *pramāṇas* Nāgārjuna ended up in a paradoxicality as he could not put his finger on what is reality itself, and his philosophy led to

absolute relativism. The possible paradoxicality in Nāgārjuna's doctrine is that if no cognition is valid, what the validity of his *śūnyatā* doctrine is, as it proclaims that everything is empty; though he claimed *śūnyatā sarvadrishṭinam prokta nihsaranam jinaiḥ, yesham tu śhunyata drishṭistan asadhyān babhashire*, a logical fallacy to be generated out of *śūnyatā* philosophy is unavoidable. According to Stcherbatsky, *śūnyatā* is a concept like the Absolute Idea of Hegel. By contrasting the conventional with the ultimate truths, Nāgārjuna distinguishes between worldly being and transcendental being. Nevertheless, Nāgārjuna demonstratively denounces all the views or "isms", it does not seem that he is free from the substantializing tendency.

Madhyamaka School did not consider *śūnyatā* as an entity which was neither real nor non-real, though it refuted all other real entities and their existence. Getting to grips with *śūnyatā* as a non-real entity, it is bound to be a *nāstika* philosophy. But my argument is that the strategy used by Nāgārjuna to get rid of the criticism leveled at him over the fallacy of absolute relativism is taking a leap of faith in *Nirvāṇa*, a hyperousiological and an *a priori* condition. Due to Nāgārjuna's dichotomism of *paramarthaśatya* and *samvrtiśatya*, differentiation between the liberated being and worldly being is established. Never has Nāgārjuna put forward an argument in his whole work refuting the idea of ultimate reality or *Nirvāṇa* (in the sense of early Buddhism); rather he refutes all assertions giving for the ultimate reality (but ultimate reality is possible). In Nāgārjunian soteriology, everything is negated except the ultimate reality: he also negates the possibility of linguistic expressions or assertion of any truth while affirming the ultimate truth is the only truth there which is unsayable. Admittedly, for Nāgārjuna, for no spatial or material depiction can be given to the ultimate truth and the person who is immersed in the soteriological practice will have to transcend and ascend to the intelligible via perceptible with the support of a leap of faith. Hence, conceptual explanation can be made over the *Nirvāṇa*. Moreover, all speech, thought, and even negation must be abandoned at the end to reach the goal.

As Nāgārjuna differentiates truth into two categories (*śatyadvaya*), one he puts as the "ultimately objective truth" (*paramarthaśatya*) and the other as the "conventional truth" (*samvrtiśatya*), the establishment of duality is inevitable though Madhyamaka soteriological claimed all means of valid cognition is eschewed. There is ultimately the objective truth unchallenged as some people are liberated from the *saṃsāra* circle by comprehending the ultimate truth. This ultimate truth is *Nirvāṇa*, a concept Nāgārjuna inherited from early Buddhism. As far as Nāgārjuna is concerned, he assessed that various affirmations given to *Nirvāṇa* are negations, and there is no lasting theory for it; even the negation is negated. This ineffable, invisible and unknowable essence of ultimate truth which is *a priori*, and my argument is that it is like the disinterested realm sans desires, needs, or interest leading to pure aesthetic. Nirvana has been exalted as a state of mind by Nāgārjuna and it is an achievement a human being can make while eliminating defilements. This can be identified as a radical change in the structure of reality, and it goes beyond existence and non-existence, being superbeing. The human mind is insufficient to speculate this realm, and it is totally empty for both Nāgārjuna and Kant.

## Discussion

Nāgārjuna's ultimate truth and *a priori* principle of judgment of taste of Kant bares many resemblances; Kantian principles of aesthetics can be employed to delve into a Madhyamaka principle of aesthetics. The ultimate truth of Madhyamaka School is that it is unable to be

quantified over objects. Therefore, the disinterested pure aesthetic judgments are much like experiencing the *paramarthasatya*. *Paramarthasatya* indicates the *a priori* content of the aesthetic judgments whereas the ordinary spatio-temporal experience is associated with the *samvrtisatya*.

*dvesatyesamupāśrityabuddhānāṃdharmadeśanā  
lokasamvrtisatyaṃcasatyaṃcaparamārthataḥ* (Kalupahana, 1991)

The idea of the above stanza from the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* clearly depicts how Nāgārjuna endorsed the early Buddhism and shows the categorization of the two truths of the teaching of the Buddha: conventional truth (*samvrtisatya*) and ultimate truth (*paramarthasatya*). Though in early Buddhism this categorical division was not obvious and well-articulated, Nāgārjuna brings forward the clear-cut division between the two truths. I argue that this categorization hypostatizes Madhyamaka aesthetics on par with Kantian aesthetics. As no utilitarian concern can be traced with pure disinterested aesthetic judgment in *paramarthasatya*, non-existence of essence and emptiness in the caliber of a super being is enunciated. Neither affirmative nor negative judgment is possible in such a realm; it is totally unknowable and beyond discrete substances.

Meanwhile, intersubjective validity of judgments of taste in the light of the Madhyamaka school of Buddhism is dependent on the conventional truth where empirical knowledge is consolidated. Empirical concepts differ among people with different socio-cultural backgrounds and such aesthetic judgments can be considered as determinative judgments of taste. These situations do rely on contingent experiences. Agreeables among the people over beauty are possible only as people share their experience among fellow human beings and *samvrtisatya* of the Madhyamaka school of Buddhism justifies sensuous beauty. Chandrakirti, a 7<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist scholar of the Madhyamakaschool, explicates that *samvrti* by way of the language.

*Sammuti (samvrti)*, literally means "agreement" and therefore, "convention". *Vohara* (Sk. *vyavahara*) means "usage." A rather lopsided interpretation of these two terms as implying "language" only has caused havoc in the explanation of the teachings of the Buddha as well as of Nāgārjuna. There seems to be no justification for confining the meanings of these two terms to language only (Kalupahana, 1991, p 17).

Kantian aesthetics are equally applicable to Madhyamaka aesthetics where personal preferences caused with the language are transmuted to sensuous preferences. Nāgārjuna identified that sensuous preferences cannot be universalized; hence, the untried theoretical possibility of *paramarthasatya*, is looked upon to quell the philosophical problem that arises with the matter of reality and finally beauty. For Nāgārjuna, I interpret, here, what is really peaceful and really beautiful, disinterested judgment, is *paramarthasatya* that is devoid of experiential pleasure engraved in intersubjectivity. All the liberated beings, including *Tathāgata*, do the disinterested judgment, not equate to the sentient beings.

*tattvānyatvenayonāstimṛgyamāṇaścapañcadhā  
upādānenasakathamprajñāpyetatathāgataḥ* (Kalupahana, 1991)



The meaning of the above stanza is as follows: he who, sought for in the fivefold manner, does not exist in the form of a different identity, how can that *Tathāgata* be made known through grasping? (Kalupahana, 1991) Nāgārjuna's statement affirms that *Tathāgata* will not have a worldly life or bondage to worldly affairs; in my argument, this is the characteristic of disinterestedness of liberated beings. For the liberated beings, beauty is not laid in the causal network; Madhyamaka aesthetics in its true sense does not deal with *a posteriori*. Accordingly, the concept of Madhyamaka aesthetics differentiates contingent experience of pleasure and pure aesthetics. What is pictured here is soteriological motives of Nāgārjuna that tend to generate logically reducible, *Nirvāṇa*, even though his dissimulation on reducibility is persistent. Despite the fact that Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka school proclaimed that all things including *paramarthaśatya*, the ultimate truth, are unreal and empty, my argument is that with support of secrecy of grounding or foundation in soteriological project, Nāgārjuna rescues his *śūnyatā* philosophy from being a paradox as the notion of *Nirvāṇa* of early Buddhism which is *atakkāvacara* (ineffable) and beyond the linguistic categories, which becomes a secret foundation for Nāgārjuna.

As the Buddha himself said, enlightenment is beyond logic (*atakkāvacara*). This dhamma (truth) attained by me is profound, difficult to see, difficult to understand, peaceful, beyond logic, subtle, intelligible to the wise (Watanabe, 1996, p 71).

Naming of *śūnya* by Nāgārjuna, identical above quoted *Nirvāṇa* of early Buddhism, where all positive and negative claims are null, becomes hyperessentiality. This ultimate truth's beyond beingness has not been challenged by the Madhyamaka School, rather it has been reaffirmed or reappropriated. Refutation of intrinsic nature or *svabhāva* does not make the *śūnyatā* philosophy groundless or untenable; rather its ground has been reestablished with the *Nirvāṇa*. My interpretation is that *Nirvāṇa* was a being at the hand of the Buddha and a superbeing at the hand of Nāgārjuna. This superbeing maintains a substantial accord with the pure disinterested delight in the territory of aesthetics and universal validity of beauty. In a Madhyamaka theory of aesthetics, ultimate truth will not predicate any kind of property of an object and its implication is that that beauty belongs to an objective world, where normal human mind (*-prthagjana*) fails to grasp (Dunne & McClintock, 2004).

Nāgārjuna does not downplay the existential status as nothing; existential beings are possible in the world. Madhyamaka School creates an immense vacuum between the two worlds by the separation of ultimate and conventional truths. No clear-cut argument is traceable in the Madhyamaka tradition to see any link between *paramarthaśatya* and *samvrtiśatya* like Kant explains how mundane pleasure originates with *a priori* categories; no association can be found between beings experienced in conventional truth and the ultimate truth. Though the Madhyamaka school accepts that there is a single universal voice, or a superbeing, that works with subjective voice (that operates in the conventional truth) in a mutually exclusive manner, no compatibility can be uncovered in any major work of the tradition, for instance, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. But, engaging in hermeneutical work, I prefer to link the theory with the dependent co-origination of the Buddhist doctrine.

While Nāgārjuna is a powerfully original thinker, he is clearly and self-consciously operating squarely within the framework of Buddhist philosophy. Therefore, Nāgārjuna accepts, and takes it as incumbent upon him, to provide an account of the Four Noble

Truths. Moreover, he takes it as a fundamental philosophical task to provide an understanding of what Buddhist philosophy refers to as *pratītyasamutpāda* dependent co-origination. This term denotes the nexus between phenomena in virtue of which events depend on other events, composites depend upon their parts, and so forth (Garfield, 1994).

The acceptance of dependent co-origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) by Nāgārjuna, emptiness of causation paves the way to aesthetic judgment as it relies on originality of the dependent origination, where emptiness is the foundation. To this question, my argument here is that aesthetic judgments operate in a disinterested manner based on the emptiness and universality of it derived from the void itself. Regular spatio-temporal experience of pleasure which is totally based on the conventional truth that relies on language is different from timelessness of the inner world of *Nirvāṇa* which is the utmost transcendental beauty and peace (Schmidt, 1977). In aesthetics, characteristics of objects intuited in space and time are noteworthy:

By the time you place those impressions in the objective space and time, you are making a transcendental synthesis of the same data because space and time are the pure intuitions that belong to the transcendental subject. (Seung, 2007, p 40)

Kant raises an extremely important question about space and time, and he asks whether they are actual entities or mere relations among things. As every object in this world associates with some form of intuition, our subjectivities shall ascribe things. For example, Newton counted space and time as real and actual entities, and he absolutized and systematized them. Leibniz thought that space and time are relations of things. According to Ishiguro (1972), it has often been maintained that, since Leibniz thought that space and time were nothing but the order and relation of things, his theory of the ideality of space and time implies his denial of the reality of relations. While keeping aloof from both theories, Kant pointed out that space and time must be transcendently ideal and they are also linked with our intuitions, subjective constitution of our own mind, apart from which they cannot be predicated of anything (Kant, 1908).

Kantian transcendental aesthetics transpires that space is purely a priori thing and our representation of space is totally an intuition. According to Kant's "Transcendental Philosophy", in which the critique of reason is undertaken to determine the nature and scope of metaphysics, neither space nor time have a reality in themselves. They are rooted in man's sensibility, so that empirical objects found in them are mere phenomena and not things in themselves. Kant's transcendental argument in favour of the ideality and subjectivity of space constitutes an explanation for the possibility of applying geometry, an a priori discipline, to the knowledge of nature (Parellada, 2003). Thus, space can never be an empirical concept that is possible to be abstracted to sensation or mere sense data. For Kant, being spatial qualities that being able to say that something 'affects' us (Burnham, 2008). Then, this situation is a synthetic *a priori* judgement and understanding it as *a posteriori* will mislead us. It implies that there is something beyond our intuition as there is something in addition to the empirical presentations. Therefore, we must realize that this is a transcendental state of possibility.

When it comes to aesthetic judgments, they will not be based on a 'mere sensation'. Similarly, judgments about beauty cannot be defined; it is not a property of any object, rather it is a



subjective feeling and not an empirically identified thing. So, giving generalizations or standards to beauty is an unattainable thing, and validity of beauty would not be defined based on ideas of a social group. For Kant, beauty goes beyond reasoning and even generally agreeable things among the people in a community. Our judgment on beauty is based on the *Imagination* and the judgment is only possible if the *Imagination* provides data in space and time. The data is basically non-cognitive and are not related to the concepts as they are open to intuitions and leading to *Understating*.

To decide whether something is beautiful, we do not relate the representation by means of understanding to the object for cognition but rather relate it by means of the imagination (perhaps combined with the understanding) to the subject and its feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The judgment of taste is therefore not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective. Any relation of representations, however, even that of sensations, can be objective (in which case it signifies what is real in an empirical representation); but not the relation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated, but in which the subject feels itself as it is affected by the representation (Kant, 2001, p 89).

As concepts are useless in this case of aesthetic judgment, beauty is only possible in itself. Kant argues that for a judgment to be aesthetic, it must be disinterested. It means that no desire or interest is possible in pure aesthetics of Kant and when it comes to the actual existence the distortion occurs and misses the 'pure' appreciation. In the meantime, Nāgārjuna argues that to assert that the things are empty of any intrinsic reality, it needs to explain the way things really are organized as causally conditioned phenomena (*pratītyasamputpanhā*). The emptiness created by the casual conditioning of phenomena eliminates utilitarian purpose beauty and data provided by *Imagination* as above discussed will be subjected to a priori foundation; that is the emptiness itself, preached by the Madhyamaka School. Perfect judgment of beauty has no definite concepts and absolutely nothing; therefore, historical lineage becomes null. In other words, *paramarthasatya* is not historically determined. Definite concepts derived in the *samvrtisatya* are moral judgments and are not considered to be aesthetic judgments of the beautiful. On that account, our aesthetic judgment on things in the world where *samvrtisatya* is valid is totally based on the regularities among the communities and no pure judgment of beauty is possible.

## Conclusion

Aesthetics insights found in the *sūnyatā* philosophy of Nāgārjuna, warrants us to delve into an aesthetic theory in Kantian lenses. In this study, the broadly conceived two truths doctrine of Nāgārjuna, *paramarthasatya* and *samvrtisatya* division, was given pride of place when understanding aesthetics of Madhyamaka tradition. Though *reductio* arguments presented by Nāgārjuna with intricate details attempted to depict all phenomena as empty of essence or inherent existence by repudiating all empirical data, in this paper, I argued that this emptiness is none other than hyperessentiality which generates a superbeing, that is also hyperousiological ontotheological. Though Nāgārjuna in his *magnum opus* argues that no ontological foundation is possible, he even wants to rescue his philosophy from nihilism by being aligned to orthodox

Buddhism. But a-historical ultimate truth of early Buddhism, constitutes a self-referential hyperessentiality paving way a category of the aesthetics that can be universalized and a-historical. Aesthetics associated with ideology, convention, language or history have links with conventional truth. Aesthetic judgment in the convention can be understood as determining an object under an empirical situation that grants pleasure or displeasure. As ultimate truth of Nāgārjuna is a status of complete quietude and highest pleasure, it resembles with Kantian judgment of beauty which is completely detached pleasure. Kant's idea of disinterestedness of beauty is irrational and takes a leap of faith like in *paramarthasatya* and is impossible for the worldly mind. Nāgārjuna's causality concept based on the dependent co-origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) paves the way to cause effects and explicated how new conditions created on casual emptiness. All things considered, my argument in this paper is that *paramarthasatya* is a pure judgment of taste that is devoid of all interests and purely disinterested in ascertaining some intrinsic normative experience. *Samvrtisatya* implicates in a moral context where usefulness governs in the worldly affairs in the convention. Therefore, the value of fine art would be self-contained and Madhyamaka philosophy generates a deep insight into the aesthetic judgment.

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