V.1 Some Preliminaries

In this chapter we explore the bearing of Kant’s aesthetic theory on aesthetic education. It is true that Kant does not, directly deal with the question of what constitutes a desirable and effective aesthetic education. In fact, the expression ‘aesthetic education’ does not figure in his works. Yet, the implications of his aesthetic theory for aesthetic education are highly significant since the latter constitutes a field for the application of the former. In fact, Kant was very particular about the application of his theoretical ideas. Even while he was engaged in the project of critical philosophy he looked forward “for men of impartiality, insight and the real gift of popular explanation to devote themselves to giving it true elegance” (quoted in Körner 1955, 175). By way of showing the practical significance of his philosophical theory after completing Critique of Judgement he writes at the end of his ‘Preface’ that with the completion of the third Critique, he is bringing his “entire critical undertaking to a close … [and would] hasten to the doctrinal part” (1952, Preface to the first edition, 7/170 AE). The doctrinal part pertains to “the cultivation of those regions of which, as he believed, the critical philosophy had rightfully taken possession” (quoted in Körner 1955, 175). One of those regions, according to this thesis, is aesthetic education. This chapter seeks to show how Kant’s aesthetic theory provides aesthetic education a breadth and depth which it needs and deserves. Kant’s aesthetic
theory provides a philosophy of aesthetic education by identifying its cognitive, cultural, spiritual and moral dimensions. And in this sense, for Kant, aesthetic education is something more than mere acquisition of skills for appreciation of beauty in nature or in art. Particularly significant in this connection is his convincingly successful attempt to relate aesthetic experience/thought with moral experience/thought. Equally importantly, he deepens that relation by not confining to beauty in art but extending the scope of ‘aesthetic’ to beauty in nature and sublimity.

We may begin our discussion of Kant’s philosophy of aesthetic education by noting the differences between the orientation of Kant and Friedrich Schiller. Schiller was the first in the modern times to provide a philosophy of aesthetic education. He did so in his celebrated work The Aesthetic Education of Man in (1795) which was a series of letters by him. Kant and Schiller have many points of affinity though, as we shall see, fundamental differences. Expressivists like Herder and Romantic philosophers who adopted anti-rationalist position in their critique of modernity unlike Kant who while critically responding to the philosophy of Enlightenment never compromised his valorization of Reason. Against the main stream of modern philosophy which is called philosophy of Enlightenment Kant put forth a theory of human nature the core of which was the concept of rational autonomy whereas Kant’s opponents came out with a theory of man central to which was the idea of man’s expressive unity with nature. Schiller stands in between Kant on the one hand and expressivists and romantics on the other. Unlike the latter “he did not rush into a monist ontology, and seek a unified foundation in being. Schiller remains with a rough approximation to the Kantian account of subjectivity: we form as subjects the stuff which we receive through the senses” (Taylor 1975, 37). But central to the Schiller’s conception of man was his idea of play by which
Schiller understands free creativity and self-expression of man in a harmonious interaction with nature. To quote Taylor again “We can recognize here the ideal of the expression [Expressivist] theory, an expressive harmony in which natural desires and the highest human forms are effortlessly united in a single élan” (*Ibid*, 38). However, “Schiller is not generally classed as [an Expressivist or] a Romantic, although he shared their hunger for unity; and this is partly because he would not take the ontological step, either as philosopher or writer, to a divinized nature” (*Ibid*, 42).

The above discussion was necessary to put in context the affinities and differences between the Kantian and the Schillerian approaches to aesthetic education. Like Kant, Schiller maintains that aesthetic education serves the purpose of realization of morality and hence promotes the establishment of a free society. As Tauber says “This view is in line with an assertion found in Kant’s writings, implying a possible pedagogical link between aesthetics and ethics” (2006, 23). However, Tauber’s assertion is premised on the interpretation of Kant as one who is not a complete autonomist. (Of course, as we have seen, there are statements of Kant which strengthen the ultra-autonomist interpretation of Kant- an interpretation which this thesis has rejected in chapter IV). It may be noted that on the basis of this point of affinity that Schiller expresses his indebtedness to Kant but the affinity ends here and differences outweigh affinity. First of all, Schiller construed along with the Romantic philosophers, the aim of education to be self-formation and self-cultivation. That is, the purpose of aesthetic education was the development of rich personality unique to each individual. Such an objective of aesthetic education was taken to be morally edifying by Schiller. Thus the orientation of aesthetic education for Schiller must be individualistic as it is the individual realizing his aesthetic potential *as an individual* who is the end of such an education. By contrast, for Kant
“aesthetic education was supposed to help strip from a person that which is merely individual, thus facilitating one’s transition to the universal standpoint needed for morality” (Kabeshkin 2011, 1). In other words, “Schiller and the Romantics aimed to achieve the development of rich and harmonious individuality by means of aesthetic education while Kant endeavored to strip from a person that which is merely individual, thus facilitating one’s transition to the universal standpoint” (Ibid, 6). Another major difference is that according to Schiller “The aesthetic experience is conceived ... as an end in itself, for even morality and the principle of the free society are formulated in aesthetic terms” (Tauber 2006, 23). Such a primacy of the aesthetic is not consistent with Kant’s position however much, as we shall see, he vouches for a bond between the aesthetic and the ethical.

The above discussion regarding the fundamental differences between Schiller and Kant give us an entry point into Kant’s philosophy of aesthetic education. In what follows we discuss the way in which Kant adds significant dimensions to the philosophical underpinnings of aesthetic education. Those dimensions concern cognitive, cultural, spiritual and moral facets which aesthetic education must make room for in order to be intellectually and practically wholesome and rewarding. We discusses this faces under the two following sections.

**V.2 Extra-Moral Dimension of Aesthetic Education**

This section deals with extra-moral dimension of aesthetic education which comprises cognitive, cultural and spiritual aspects of aesthetic education which as Kant
visualizes it. Recognition of the cognitive component by Kant sets as naught the view attributed to Kant that aesthetic experience and pure aesthetic judgements are non-cognitive. Crowther brings out this point very effectively. When he says, “the aesthetic can be felt as a release and a renewal … one might say that the primordial significance of the pure aesthetic judgement is disclosed intuitively through its felt contrast with the routines of everyday life” (Crowther 1996, 119,120). Our experience of transcending day-to-day life which aesthetic experience embodies is primordial in the sense that “the motive for non-determined infant cognitive behaviour is aesthetic. It is a curiosity-for-its-own-sake which can be characterized as disinterested in so far as the infant has not yet fully articulated the categorial basis of either the world or its own self” (Ibid, 119). Those who read only socio-political meaning in our judgements of taste do not recognize their cognitive content and the fail to explain how our aesthetic judgements are efficacious in promoting those socio-political purposes to which our aesthetic judgements are reduced by way of an exclusively sociological explanation. The centrality of the cognitive in the aesthetic can be reinforced by our acknowledging that the appreciation of a work of art demands the recognition of human intentionality. Such a recognition concerns what Kant calls ‘aesthetic value’ the possession of which distinguishes fine art from what he calls ‘agreeable art’. The cognitive content of an aesthetic object gets further reinforced by the communicative competence it promotes. As Haskins says, according to Kant “when our cognitive and sensuous faculties are engaged by fine art, the mental activity which results promotes a state of affairs beyond itself, a state of affairs referred to … as ‘social communication’” (1989, 45). The cognitive component of a work of art and its capacity to enrich communication are inseparable. Both are organically linked to what Kant calls ‘common sense’ which is a capacity to weigh one’s judgements with the “collective
reason of mankind”. Common sense is not common understanding. Its existence is the presupposition of our aesthetic experience and judgements.

We now come to the cultural component of the extra-moral dimension of aesthetic education. The exercise of taste which promotes communication of ideas strengthens the culture of a community, provides a glue in the form of a common culture weakening the hold of social barriers. As Haskins says, “Rather than separating upper and lower economic classes, the experience of art binds their members together by engaging their sense of belonging to a common humanity. In so doing, works of art at once constitute and promote common culture in the deepest sense of the term. And insofar as a genuine work of fine art can and will speak to all within a society, the standard of taste, sociologically speaking, is a democratic one” (Ibid, 46-47). By claiming that our aesthetic judgements have a universal validity in the sense we take it as axiomatic that others are capable of appreciating an aesthetic object we treat them with regard and in doing so attach value to them intrinsically. Such an attitude is the aesthetic counterpart of the moral idea of treating other human beings as ends in themselves.

We end this section by noting the spiritual component of the extra-moral dimension of aesthetic education we are discussing. We have already noted how Crowther reminds us of the way aesthetic experience lifts us from drab day to day life, and thus provides spiritual edification. As Allison points out, weans “us from an excessive attachment to sensuous interests and egocentric involvements in the world” (2001, 219). However, this does not lead us an other-worldly realm. Rather, as Crowther says aesthetic experience “embodies and discloses fundamental truths about the human mode of inhering in the world” (1996, 110). It makes us feel at home in the world in spite of its demands of
sensuousness. Yet, aesthetic experience provides us with a sense of transcendence akin to religious feeling. This is very well brought out by Allan Lazaroff. Though he makes this point in connection with our experience of the sublime, it holds equally good about our experience of the beautiful.

The feeling of sublimity is basically an aesthetic feeling since, as we have seen. Such a feeling is one of pleasure. No doubt such a feeling of pleasure is inseparable from the feeling of awe verging on fear. Keeping this contradictory emotion associated with sublimity we have called it ‘semi-pure aesthetic feeling’ and the corresponding judgement a ‘semi-pure aesthetic judgement’ as distinct from experience of the beautiful which is a pure aesthetic experience and corresponding judgement is a pure aesthetic judgement. But the semi-pure aesthetic character of sublimity is still aesthetic. Thus, aesthetic element is the first element, according to Lazaroff, of Kant’s idea of the sublime. The second element is the feeling of the numinous which is a religious feeling. As Lazaroff says “sublimity contains a unique element which is not aesthetic at all but religious … Though the judgement of the sublime has basic characteristics which are aesthetic, these converge with an equally basic feeling which is numinous” (1992, 367). Lazaroff has taken the term ‘Numinous’ from Rudolf Otto who invokes this term in his classic *The Idea of the Holly* to designate what he takes to be a non-rational feeling characteristic of religious experience. According to Lazaroff, Otto’s ‘numinous’ is similar to the Kantian sublime in three respects: (a) both involve contradictory feelings of joy and dread which, however, are harmonized; (b) both draw us magnetically with the feeling of the ecstasy unlike a mere feeling of pleasure; and (c) a mysteriousness defying reason.
The above facts concerning the experience of the numinous and the sublime establish, according to Lazaroff, that the Kantian sublime is something more than aesthetic, as it incorporates the religious. The sublime in so far as it is akin to numinous and hence religious points outside or beyond, transcending the ordinary. Lazaroff makes an important point when he says “Kant did not recognize this numinous feeling as uniquely religious because his philosophy represents an extreme rationalization of the religious feeling” (Ibid, 368). Lazaroff, therefore, concludes that “Kant rationalized this numinous feeling by making its object the realm of morality” (Ibid, 372). In other words, Kant provides a rationalist interpretation to that aspect of the sublime which is akin to the religious and connects such an account to his idea of the moral which for him is inseparable from the rational nature of man. This points of Lazaroff facilitates our discussion of the relation between the aesthetic and the moral in the next section.

V.3 Moral Dimension of Aesthetic Education

The moral dimension constitutes the crux of Kan’s philosophy of aesthetic education. This has contemporary relevance because in the present education system what is called ‘value education’ has nothing to do with aesthetic values since it is confined to ethical values. On the other hand, aesthetic education which usually confines itself to art appreciation has nothing to do with ethical value of art. The rupture between the ethical and the aesthetic makes our education, aesthetic or moral, inadequate and lopsided. It is here Kant has an important lesson by relating the aesthetic and the ethical. We discuss this theme in what follows. Since Kant considers the beautiful and the
sublime as two distinct aesthetic categories we discuss their relation to the moral separately.

V. 3. A: Beauty and Morality

Before we discuss the relation between beauty and morality in the Kantian aesthetic framework we must note that Kant attempted to avoid two extreme views regarding the relation between them. According to one extreme view morality, that is, moral rightness and beauty are inseparable from each other in the sense taste is the highest morality and nothing is more aesthetically satisfying that moral life. According to the other extreme view attributed, among others to Rousseau, morality and beauty are antithetical to each other in the sense those who are aesthetically inclined are liable to be morally corrupt. Kant, like the former, sees an affinity between beauty and morality but unlike the followers of the first view he does not see such an affinity as an inner one (cf, Allison 2001, 227). Similarly, he agrees with the second extreme view by accepting that the aesthetic and the ethical are non-equivalent. But he differs from it by rejecting the idea that the relation is antithetical. Though he was an admirer of Rousseau he undertook a project of connecting beauty and morality. Most importantly, he maintains that it is only natural beauty and not artistic beauty that is related to morality. Kant makes his position very clear when he says “I do maintain that to take an immediate interest in the beauty of nature … is always a mark of a good soul… [such an interest] is indicative of a temper of mind favorable to the moral feeling” (1952, §42, 157/298,299 AE). As we shall see, Kant could not confine the relation between the moral to natural beauty. However, what induced Kant to recognize the relation between natural beauty and the morally good is his
idea that both seek to undo the tendency in us which Kant calls ‘radical evil’. In the case of ethical life the radical evil expresses itself in our strong inclination to prefer desire over duty. The radical evil expresses in the aesthetic domain in our tendency to destroy natural beauty. As Allison says, in Kant’s view “the capacity to sympathize with the plight of others, is best characterized as a moral facilitator. Moreover … it is precisely because of humanity’s inherent propensity to evil that such a facilitator is required” (2001, 234).

Any discussion of Kant’s view regarding the organic link between beauty and morality must start with the consideration of his claim that beauty is the symbol of morality. Before doing so we may note the a posteriori concepts are exemplified whereas the (non-mathematical) a priori concepts called ‘categories’ by him in the first Critique can not be exemplified but can only be schematized. The ideas of reason can neither be exemplified nor schematized. As Körner says “They can, however, be indirectly represented by means of analogies, that is to say, they can be symbolized” (1955, 192). Kant has something akin to this in mind when he says that beauty is the symbol of morality. What does he mean?

First of all, Kant does not mean that the objects of aesthetic experience provide us the moral norms of conduct. The relation of beauty and morality is quite loose. This is the reason why he looks upon the relation as one of symbol and symbolized. This is in spite of the fact that both the morally right and the beautiful involve freedom, universality, immediacy and disinterestedness, though these might offer grounds for a symbolic relation between them. Kant gives some hint regarding the nature of the symbolic relation when he says, “the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good, and only in this light (a
point of view natural to every one, and one which every one exacts from others as a duty) does it give us pleasure with an attendant claim to the agreement of every one else, whereupon the mind becomes conscious of a certain ennoblement and elevation above mere sensibility to pleasure from impressions of sense” (1952, §59, 223-224/353 AE).

What does Kant means by ‘symbol’ and ‘symbolization’? The symbol, according to Kant, is primarily an analogy that indicates agreement “merely in the form of reflection, and not in the content” (Ibid, §59, 222/351 AE). In this connection Kant gives example of monarchy symbolized as a living body and a despotic state symbolized as hand mill. However, it is difficult to see any analogy here. As Tauber points out, the symbolic relation involves analogous objects “A crucial problem may arise here: If the symbol, being determined by analogy, indicates a certain similarity between one object and another ... then the issue of similarity or analogy between them is unclear, as it were, for they are seemingly “entirely other” to one another” (2006, 25). Hence, we have to accept that Kant has to extend the scope of ‘analogy’ to include completely heterogeneous entities. This brings his concept of analogy in terms of which he explicates the symbolic relation very close to a metaphorical relation and many Kantian scholars have accepted this. Thus, “the essential difference between them lies, first and foremost, in the different ontological levels on which each one is actualized” (Ibid, 26). Greater the difference in ontological levels, higher the suggestive quality of a metaphor. This is the reason why ‘nature’ and ‘selection’ in the theory of evolution by natural selection, and ‘nature’ and ‘machine’ in the Cartesian theory which was so crucial for modern science proved to be metaphors of a fertile kind. The ontological distance between nature and moral life is what facilitates natural beauty in becoming a symbol of morality. In Rueger’s words “Only if nature is such a different realm can we see a ‘hint’ or ‘sign’ in it concerning our
moral interest; and only if nature is sufficiently different, can we make aesthetic judgements that are more than merely subjective” (2007, 155). What Kant means when he affirms a symbolic/analogical relation between the beautiful and the moral is not that certain locutions are used in both the domains or certain locutions are used between the two domains interchangeably. Rather, it is that, “taste, experienced by an individual subject and applied (as a postulate) to all human beings, is analogically similar to the practical rule that is elevated to the level of a moral general law through the reason and will of an individual subject and is also applied to all humanity” (Tauber 2006, 29).

Thus, the relation between the aesthetic and the moral termed as symbolic by Kant is neither too intimate as to subsume one under the other, nor is it too distant to be connected with each other. The aesthetic and the ethical are akin to each other in the sense “Taste makes, as it were, the transition from the charm of sense to habitual moral interest possible without too violent a leap” (1952, §59, 225/354 AE). On the other hand it is also true that “the true propaedeutic for laying the foundations of taste is the development of moral ideas and the culture of the moral feeling” (Ibid, §60, 227/356 AE). In what follow we elaborate on these points.

From what is said above regarding the relation between beauty and morality it is clear that the symbolic relation is too lose to construe the relation to be one of formal analogy though it is analogical in a broad sense. Hence, it is inappropriate to consider that relation to be one of isomorphism, as does Allison (cf, 2001, 255), since isomorphism concerns a structural relation. After considering the symbolic relation between beauty and morality, Allison himself raises an important question: “how can the mere reflection on a sensible intuition, which ex hypothesi is not governed by a determinate concept, be
viewed as *formally* analogous to the explicitly rule-governed reflection on the corresponding intellectual object?” (Ibid, 256, emphasis added). As has been said, Allison’s question is misplaced, unless the words ‘formal’ and ‘formally’ are used in an extremely loose sense. But his answer to this question is extremely significant in illuminating the nature of symbolic relation between beauty and morality as Kant conceives it. Central to Allison’s answer is the notion of an aesthetic idea which Kant defines, as we have already seen, “representation of the imagination which induces much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e. *concept*, being adequate to it” (1952, §49, 175-176/314 AE). Aesthetic ideas in this sense are different from ideas of reason or what Kant calls ‘rational ideas’. Yet, like rational ideas, they are transcendental in the sense “that no concept can be wholly adequate to them as internal intuitions” (Ibid, §49, 176/314 AE). In simple terms, both rational and aesthetic ideas are not determinable by concepts of understanding. And in this sense they concerns the supersensible. It is obvious that among rational ideas Kant includes the moral law. It is here that Allison captures the essence of Kant’s thought about beauty-morality relation when he says, “aesthetic ideas may serve as indirect exhibitions of their rational counterparts precisely because they necessarily involve a striving toward transcendence, either in the sense of endeavoring to depict something inherently supersensible or of attempting to approximate imaginatively the completeness or totality that is thought in the idea but not attainable in experience” (2001, 257). In fact, aesthetic ideas serve rational ideas by being substitutes for their ‘logical exhibition’. Allison identifies this as the sense of Kant’s calling aesthetic ideas as symbols of ideas of reason.

Now let us take Kant’s central contention that “Beauty (whether it be of nature or of art) may in general be termed the *expression* of aesthetic ideas” (1952, §51, 183/320
AE). This means artistic beauty like natural beauty, expresses an idea and hence as much related to morality as natural beauty is. No doubt, unlike in the case of natural beauty “with beauty of art this idea must be excited through the medium of a concept of the Object” (Ibid, §51, 183-184/320 AE). But it must be noted that the concept of an object serves us as the medium of the expression of the aesthetic idea and does not at all determined the expression of the aesthetic idea. Of course, Kant does not consider all objects of artistic beauty to be symbolizing morality. For example those poems or painting which depict envy or ill will such as those objects of art which celebrated racial hatred in Nazi Germany. This qualification does not apply to objects of beauty in nature. The privileged position which natural beauty occupies in the Kantian scheme in this connection does not undermine the relation of artistic beauty to morality.

The relation of beauty with morality in the Kantian scheme as discussed above in no way entails that beauty or taste can be elevated to the status of an ingredient of morality. Nor is it a sufficient or necessary condition of a moral life. Experience of beauty is a preparation of morality. It initiates us into the experience of the supersensible as a first step towards a morally rich life. It is in this preparatory role that the significance of aesthetic education lies.

From the discussion till now it is obvious that the preparatory role of aesthetic education for a genuine moral life is promoted by the fact that judgements of the beautiful and the experience of the beautiful objects mark a shift from interest oriented and ego-centric life to the modes of engagement that call for freedom from interest and as well as trans-personal standpoint. The latter are the exemplified, though in different ways, by both aesthetic and moral aspects of our life. Genuine aesthetic education helps us in
discriminating between the mere charming and the beautiful and hence in discriminating between what pleases us and what constitutes our duty. Tauber brings out this point when he says “Aesthetic education, whose essence is an experience in view of an image of reality, following relatively unmediated instructions of “what and how” (rather than a mere intellectual comprehension following disciplinary instructions of “universal rules”), is supposed to develop a mental state within the “pupil”’” (2006, 30). Kant’s recognition of the way cultivation of taste for beauty enhances our moral sensitivity constitutes a “direct textual support for the argument that an implicit idea of aesthetic education exists in Kant’s third Critique” (Kabeshkin 2011, 4).

V. 3. B: Sublimity and Morality

The theme of this section is significant because it deals with the bearing of Kant’s idea of sublimity on aesthetic education. Aesthetic education has not accorded a significant place to sublimity. In fact, it does not even consider it to be an autonomous aesthetic category and hence sublimity has no place in present aesthetic pedagogy. Student, younger or adult, is not enabled to distinguish between the aesthetic categories of the beautiful and the sublime. For example, even elders fail to associate Niagara Falls with primarily the sublime and only secondarily with the beautiful. Kant’s idea of sublimity is important for aesthetic education not only because he vouches for the autonomy of the sublime vis-à-vis the beautiful, but also because through that idea he reinforces the moral dimension of aesthetic education. In fact, according to Kant, sublimity stands in a more direct and intimate relation to morality than does the beautiful. Kant himself makes this point when he says that to present the morally good aesthetically
“we must represent it not so much as beautiful but rather as sublime, so that it will arouse more a feeling of respect (which disdains charm) than one of love and familiar affection” (quoted in Allison 2001, 341). In fact, John Zammito claims that “The sublime was added late and added precisely to establish a much more substantive relation between the aesthetic experience and the ethical one” (quoted in Kabeshkin 2011, 7, end note 24).

Kant’s contention that the difference in the degree of intimacy between the beautiful and the moral, on the one hand, and the sublime and the moral, on the other, is based on the way he identifies the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime -“the beautiful prepares us for loving something and the sublime for esteeming”. Since morality involves both love (for those towards whom we act) and respect (for the moral law) both beauty and sublimity constitute the preparatory ground for moral life. Yet, we may act morally towards someone whom we do not know but we can not act morally without respecting the moral law. Therefore, the feeling of respect is more fundamental for moral feeling. Hence, greater intimacy between the sublime and the moral than the beautiful and the moral. Equally importantly, unlike the beautiful the sublime, as we have seen in chapter III, by the very act of overwhelming us makes us aware of our supersensuous nature and therefore the sublimity of our nature as rational beings and hence, of our noumenal status. Further, unlike the feeling of the beautiful, the feeling of the sublime resembles moral feeling in the sense that both the moral feeling and the feeling of the sublime involve contradictory feelings. As we have seen, the sublime pleases or attracts us, on the one hand, and intimidates us by creating a sense of awe. Similarly, the moral feeling produces in us a pain of guilt for inclining towards desires, even while obeying the moral law: after all, unlike holy beings, we face the moral law as an imperative, and this is in the reason we face conflict between desire and duty. Yet is creates a feeling of edification as a result
of our affirmation as rational beings by obeying it freely. Lazaroff brings out this point aptly when he says “The moral feeling, therefore, like the feeling of the sublime, is also a dual contradictory one, a negative feeling in regard to our sensible nature and a positive one in regard to our supersensible role” (1992, 364).

Yet, the feeling of the sublime, like the feeling of the beautiful is completely aesthetic. It is analogous to moral feeling and not either same as or constitutive of the moral feeling. That is why the respect that sublimity involves is entirely different from the respect associated with the moral law. The two kinds of respect are different “casually and phenomenologically” (Allison 2001, 341).

Though both the beautiful and the sublime provide the preparatory ground for moral life, how do the two modes of preparation differ? The difference in the preparatory function between the two is related by Allison to the two kinds of duties which Kant distinguishes. Beauty, that is natural beauty, is related to imperfect duties whereas the sublime is related to the perfect duties. Kant calls those duties imperfect which “require merely a sincere commitment to [morally required] ends, rather than the performance … of particular actions” (Allison 2001, 342). The failure to perform those actions may be due to serious obstacles created by nature or our inability to overcome our self-interest or social factors which render our actions futile. The perfect duties are those which involve refraining from certain actions like lying or breaking a promise or committing suicide. Hence, perfect duties are positive whereas imperfect duties are negative and hence the latter one easy to perform. Allison concludes that “the sublime is morally significant because it provides us with an aesthetic awareness of precisely what morality requires of us with respect to all duties, and of what is sufficient for the perfect duties that constitute
the veritable foundation of the moral life for Kant. Otherwise expressed, the sublime puts us in touch (albeit merely aesthetically) with our ‘higher self” (2001, 343).

Allison’s effort to establish the preparatory role of the sublime in relation to moral life by invoking the concept of perfect duty may not convince everyone. This is because the relation between the concepts of perfect duty and the sublime is too tenuous to bear the weight of Allison’s contention. However, Allison’s move is not necessary to establish the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime as moral facilitators. That task can be accomplished in other ways which we have already noted.

The thrust of this chapter was to highlight those aspects of Kantian aesthetics which have bearing on a wholesome idea of aesthetic education, formal or informal. The fundamental point is that genuine aesthetic education has a significance that goes beyond a training in art appreciation. Aesthetic education, in so far as it is informed by Kantian ideas, enables us to comprehend what it is to be in the world as human beings aesthetically and how such as aesthetic involvement is inextricably related to cognitive and moral dimensions of human engagement with the world. Unless aesthetic education recognizes the possibility of acquiring cognitive, cultural, spiritual and moral dimensions it loses its human significance. Working out the idea of such an aesthetic education with its broad canvas that includes artistic beauty, natural beauty and sublimity with which nature dazzles us and its deep significance, moral and extra-moral, is what is bequeathed to us by Kant. No doubt, it is difficult to work out in all the pedagogic details on Kantian lines. But that does not matter. After all, Kant has given us in the form of his theory a set of regulative ideals between whom and our pedagogic practices these can not be a perfect much. After all, a theory can not have its mirror image in its application. The guiding
principles that broadly shape the formation of and nurture our aesthetic taste remain as the legacy of the parthbreaking work of Kant.

It is in the fitness of things to end this thesis with the words of Kant himself:

The propaedeutic to all fine art [we may add natural beauty and sublimity] … appear to lie … in the culture of the mental powers produced by a sound preparatory education in what are called the humaniora – so called, presumably, because humanity signifies, on the one hand, the universal feeling of sympathy, and, on the other, the faculty of being able to communicate universally one’s inmost self-properties constituting in conjunction the befitting social spirit of mankind, in contradistinction to the narrow life of the lower animals. (1952, §60, 226/355 AE).