Introduction

I Reflective Judgment and the Problem of Reason’s Unity

In Kant scholarship, the Critique of Judgment is traditionally approached as a disunified work that contains two essentially unrelated parts: the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and the Critique of Teleological Judgment. According to this view, analyzing the book’s two parts as two separate projects is helpful for understanding better Kant’s major contributions to aesthetics and to the philosophy of biology, respectively. The literature that promotes the approach that stresses the unity of the work remains sparse. Among those who raise the question of the unitary structure of the work are some who see it as an artificially imposed theory which ultimately stunts its potential. However, others consider the “systematic approach” promising primarily for answering the question of the possibility of empirical cognition.

According to this view, the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and the Critique of Teleological Judgment do not stand in a contingent relation to each other because aesthetic and teleological judgments share a common principle: namely, the principle of taste is in fact the logical principle of nature’s

1 Translating the original German title, Kritik der Urteilskraft, as Critique of the Power of Judgment, would be more accurate. For the sake of simplicity, however, throughout the book I will be translating the full title of Kant’s third Critique as Critique of Judgment.

2 For the view that analyzing Critique of Aesthetic Judgment independently of Critique of Teleological Judgment is a productive approach to the Critique of Judgment see Schaper 1992, 367–68. Paul Guyer argues that the only principle of taste which Kant ever actually states or defends has no essential connection to the principle of systematicity which is the guiding principle of teleological judgment. This is why he remains convinced that the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and the Critique of Teleological Judgment are not essentially related. See Guyer 1979, 64–65.

3 Jens Kulenkampff argues that classifying both aesthetic judgments and teleological judgments under the category of reflective judgments detracts from Kant’s theory of taste. See Kulenkampff 1978, 32 ff. John Zammito is a proponent of a genetic approach and gives an account of the work’s emergence through different times and phases of Kant’s interest and development which is also supposed to explain the different tensions and inconsistencies in the work. See Zammito 1992. The views of Kulenkampff and Zammito are also discussed in Nuzzo 2005, 62–63.
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purposiveness. For the proponents of this position, this assimilation is justified by Kant’s account of reflective judgment, the primary function of which is empirical conceptualization. This interpretation of reflective judgment has motivated a number of recent publications on the relation between aesthetics and empirical cognition of nature in Kant’s Critical philosophy.

Unlike these recent “systematic approaches,” that of the present monograph takes as its anchor point Kant’s claim that the Critique of Judgment “bring[s] [his] entire critical enterprise to an end” (ZEKU, 5: 170). Kant’s Critical system does not culminate in empirical cognition of the natural world but, rather, in reason’s “highest” or “final end” (KrV, A840/B868), or what Kant calls “the entire vocation of human beings” (KrV, A840/B868), namely, morality. This entails the realization of our moral ends in the world. According to Kant, we are beings of both freedom and nature. Thus, even though we are self-determining, that is, capable of determining our will in accordance with the moral law, we are also creatures of nature and sensibility. As creatures of both freedom and sensibility, we know what ought to be done but it is not always the case that we formulate proper moral intentions. Moreover, our moral ends are to be realized in this world, which is governed by mechanical laws and principles unlike our own rational principles. Hence, the natural world is not necessarily cooperative with our rational ends. Although, there is an “incalculable gulf” (unübersehbare Kluft) (ZEKU, 5: 176) between the domains of nature and freedom, “the latter should have an influence on the former, namely the concept of freedom should make the end that is imposed by its laws real in the sensible world” (ZEKU, 5: 176).

Some discussions have already been advanced on the issue of the relation between the third Critique and morality, which interpret the problem of the “gulf” that needs to be bridged as “not that between the noumenal and phenomenal causality but between feeling and freedom – that is, between the arbitrary realm of sensation and the law-governed autonomy of reason.” According to this view, given the changes in Kant’s moral

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4 This is the view held by Hannah Ginsborg. See Ginsborg 1990a.
6 Kant’s claim that the Critique of Judgment completes his Critical system is not unknown in the secondary literature. The claim, for example, is acknowledged by Rachel Zuckert. And yet, she contends that Kant’s Critical philosophy culminates in empirical cognition. (See, for example, Zuckert 2007, 1.) Given that Kant writes that “all interest (of reason – LO) is ultimately practical and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone” (KpV, 5: 121), Zuckert’s interpretation is, as she herself acknowledges, a strong revision, a controversial reconstruction (Zuckert 2007, 17), of Kant’s Critical project and the aims of the third Critique.
7 Guyer 1993, 33.
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psychology and epistemology, the central focus of his later writings (starting with the third Critique but extending itself to his Religion and the Metaphysics of Morals) becomes the striving for the harmony between the human being as the natural being and the human being as the rational being, between inclinations and the moral demands of rationality. On this interpretation of the “gulf,” the connection between nature and freedom, between theoretical and practical reason respectively, is grounded primarily on human psychology. According to this psychological argument for the unity of the disparate realms of theory and practice, the first moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful, where Kant discusses the quality of the feeling in a pure judgment of taste, matters the most. Unlike the pleasure for both the agreeable and the good, aesthetic pleasure is “disinterested and free” (KU, §5, 5: 210) because it is not “imposed upon us” (KU, §5, 5: 210) by any factors external to aesthetic contemplation itself. Proponents of the psychological argument draw an analogy between the “disinterested and free” (KU, §5, 5: 210) pleasure in the beautiful and the state of an individual with a virtuous disposition. The state of the latter is analogous to the former because it is a state not necessitated by any factors external to the will itself. I call this approach “psychological” because it relies on the introspection of one’s inner states, whether those that pertain to the quality of the pleasure in the beautiful or those that pertain to a virtuous individual and her relation to her inclinations.

While one can find textual support in Kant’s third Critique for such an interpretation, I contend that it is not central to it. The approach to the “gulf” between theoretical and practical reason summarized above focuses on what Kant calls in the third Critique the “ultimate end of nature” (der letzte Zweck der Natur) (KU, §83, 5: 429). By the latter Kant understands the development of culture, more specifically, the “culture of discipline” (Zucht) (KU, §83, 5: 432), meaning the development of arts and sciences that leads to a cultivation of human sensibility that is amenable to the demands of morality. But nature does not have an ultimate end and, thus, it does not constitute a teleological system until human beings give it one

8 The leading defender of this interpretation is Paul Guyer. For the connection between the teleology of nature and morality, see chs. 11, 12 in Guyer 2005a. For the connection between aesthetics and morality, see chs. 1, 6, and 7 in Guyer 1996 and chs. 7, 8, and 9 in Guyer 2005b. For the more specific arguments about the analogy between the disinterested pleasure of aesthetic judgment and the state of a character with the virtuous disposition, see Guyer 1996, 33–35 and Guyer 1997, 317–21. Similar versions of this argument can be found earlier in Crawford 1974, 142–59 and Coleman 1974. Both Crawford and Coleman focus exclusively on Kant’s aesthetic judgment. More recently, in Germany, the argument has been advanced by Birgit Reckl in Reckl 2006, 2001.

by setting the “final end” (Endzweck) (KU, §83, § 431), the unconditioned end of reason, which is the highest good.

I shall argue that Kant’s conception of the highest good and moral Glaube is key to understanding Kant’s solution to the problem of the causal efficacy of reason in the third Critique, the problem of the infinite separation between moral agency and the world in which its actions take place. Reason in its practical domain, just as in its theoretical domain, requires the absolute totality of conditions for a given conditioned. Thus, we do not merely strive toward a realization of different, unrelated conceptions of the good. Instead, we strive for a realization of the highest good as the final or unconditioned end of reason, a world where happiness would be distributed in proportion with one’s worthiness of being happy. Because of the disparate realms of freedom and nature, the connection between happiness and morality is contingent: there is no guarantee that even if one acts morally one will be justly rewarded for one’s moral deeds and there is no guarantee even that one will be able to persist in one’s moral disposition due to one’s constant temptations to choose nonmoral maxims. But because reason commands us to strive toward the realization of the highest good in the world and it is a basic supposition of rational willing to will those ends for which we have reason to believe that their realization is possible, we are justified in assuming both the existence of the supreme being that would assist us in our realization of the highest good and the immortal soul that would make possible the endless progress toward this end.

Thus, although from the theoretical perspective it is impossible for reason to cognize that which is necessary for it to think and even posit, namely the unconditioned, this becomes possible from the “practical perspective” (KpV, § 105), the truth of the moral law and the necessary ends of practical reason. This is only possible because theoretical reason can recognize the ends of practical reason as its own. That is to say that although the legislation of human reason has two objects with two separate systems, namely, nature and freedom, these two parts are ultimately united in one single system grounded in one final end, morality. This is what I call the problem of reason’s unity.

Kant’s notion of “Glaube” is technical, denoting a form of rational assent with specific criteria of what constitutes its proper justification. Thus, I leave the term in the original German because neither “faith,” nor “belief” would be an entirely adequate translation into English.

The problem of the unity of reason is rarely discussed among Kant scholars. Susan Nieman’s book (see Nieman 1994) is an exception. In her book, Nieman emphasizes the regulative role of reason,
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Moreover, the unity of reason, which makes possible the determination of the unconditioned from a “practical perspective” (KpV, 5: 105), reveals reason’s genuinely cognitive, constitutive, and not merely regulative function regarding the unconditioned, as is commonly argued in the literature. Therefore, this book shall approach the question of whether we are free not as a mere belief that regulatively guides our actions, “as if” we were free, nor shall this book approach the representations of moral Glaube as necessary illusions aimed at directing our will in a desired way, or as responses to our psychological need to feel that our actions have bearing on moral outcomes. Instead, this book will point to Kant’s argument for the “objective reality” (KpV, 5: 3) of the Idea of absolute freedom, that is, that freedom “is real” (KpV, 5: 4) and is “a fact” (KpV, 5: 6), as well as the objective reality of the Ideas of God and the soul, albeit, “from a practical point of view” (FM, 20: 305). This book shall emphasize that although reason’s determination is the one of a real and given object, this determination, given the limitation of our discursive understanding, is not theoretical and, hence, cannot result in theoretical cognition of this object. Instead, it constitutes “a pure cognition practically” (KpV, 5: 134). The claims of reason’s “practical cognition” have universality and necessity like the claims of its theoretical cognition.
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The problematic of the highest good and the postulates (briefly described above) serve only as a background to the central issue of the third *Critique*. The aim of this book is to show how the third *Critique* advances Kant’s argument for the postulates and moral *Glaube* that he develops in the first and the second *Critique*. While in the first and the second *Critique* the possibility of our progress toward the highest good and the objective reality of the Ideas of the postulates are what we intellectually “conceive” (*KU*, §88, 5: 455) on moral grounds, in the third *Critique*, they are what we must be able to *perceive* by means of reflective judgment (both in its aesthetic and teleological applications). For Kant, “perception” is a sensation of which we are conscious and in *The Postulates of Empirical Thinking in General*, he relates perception to the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of things.13 When I claim that for Kant it is not sufficient that we intellectually conceive but that we must be able to perceive our progress toward the final end of reason, I am clearly using Kant’s conception of perception in a modified sense. My intention is not to claim that either the final end of reason or the objects of the Ideas of the postulates are entities given as appearances for us to perceive. The point of contrast between “intellectually conceiving” vs. “perceiving” is to emphasize that Kant’s aim in the third *Critique* is to argue that these Ideas of reason receive a reality even though this reality is merely the one “sufficient for the reflecting power of judgment” (*KU*, General Remark on the Teleology, 5: 479). In other words, although on moral grounds we can intellectually cognize that we are free and are justified in conceiving of the world as cooperative with our moral ends, in the third *Critique*, by means of reflective judgment, we represent nature as if rational and as if furthering the highest good. Because by the time of the third *Critique* Kant emphasizes even more strongly human finitude – that is, the fact that we are not merely intellectual beings but also sentient and receptive beings to whom things are given – for the Kant of the third *Critique* it is not sufficient that the object of the Idea of the highest good (together with its necessary conditions) is something that is normatively necessary for us to conceive intellectually. In the third *Critique*, the object of the Idea of the highest good as the final end of nature is something that must be given to us in sensibility.

I shall argue in this book that reflective judgment (both aesthetic and teleological) creates a schema-analogue14 of the Ideas of the postulates and

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14 See *KrV*, A669/B693 where Kant refers to the Idea of reason as “an analogue of a schema” for the thoroughgoing systematic unity of all concepts of the understanding. Regarding nature as if created by the highest intelligence functions a schema-analogue for the principle of nature’s systematicity.
the highest good, an “image” that indirectly or analogically exhibits these Ideas as if obtaining in nature. In the first *Critique*, Kant defines a “schema” as a rule of synthesis of the transcendental imagination in accordance with a concept of the understanding so that in this synthesis the imagination renders the rule of this concept sensible in a form of time determination.\(^5\) In the third *Critique*, Kant refers to “schemata” as “direct […] presentations of the concept” in sensible intuition (\(KU\), §595, §: 352). Because reason’s Ideas of the highest good and the postulates cannot have their objects given in empirical reality, I shall contend that objects of beauty, the feeling of pleasure in the free harmony of the faculties, our representations of organisms as “natural ends” and of nature as a system of ends, and even Kant’s teleological conception of human history, all serve as their indirect exhibitions, that is, their schema-analogues.\(^6\) These schema-analogues are the products of reason’s *poiesis*, its creation or production, which is a hallmark of its finitude.

To call representations and the feeling made possible by reflective judgment (in its teleological and aesthetic reflection, respectively) an image or a schema of the Ideas of reason does not amount to the claim that they are illusions, or mere “fictions”\(^7\) of reason. Reflective judgments (whether aesthetic or teleological) are our responses to concrete features in empirical reality and they entail, as universally valid judgments, a certain form of cognition:

among the concepts pertaining to cognition [\(Erkenntniß\)]\(^8\) of nature […] we still find one having the special feature, that by means of it we can grasp, not what is in the object, but rather what we can make intelligible to ourselves by the mere fact of imputing it to the object; which is therefore actually no constituent of cognition of the object, but still a means or ground of cognition given by reason, and this of theoretical, but yet not to that extent

\(^5\) For example, a transcendental schema, or a “pure image” (\(KrV\, A442/B82\)) of the category of reality is “a being in time” (\(KrV\, A143/B182\)), of the category of substance is “the persistence of the real in time” (\(KrV\, A144/B184\)), of the category of causality is “the succession of the manifold in time” (\(KrV\, A144/B184\)), etc.

\(^6\) It is well known that Kant refers to beauty as a “symbol of morality” (\(KU\), §595, §: 352). He defines “symbol” as an “indirect presentation [Darstellung] of a concept” (\(KU\), §595, §: 352). The term “symbol” can be used in reference to a specific object of a sensible intuition, whether an object of beauty or an organism as a “natural end.” Because reflective judgment’s representation of the whole of nature as a system of ends and the feeling of pleasure in pure aesthetic judgments do not refer to a concrete individual object of a sensible intuition I will refer to them simply as schema-analogues and not as symbols.

\(^7\) Allison 2004, 430.

\(^8\) I have altered the Cambridge translation which translates “\(Erkenntniß\)” as “knowledge.” The latter for Kant is “Wissen.”
dogmatic cognition. And this is the concept of a *purposiveness* of nature, which can also be an object of experience, and is thus, not a transcendent, but an immanent concept” (*FM*, 20: 293).

For Kant, the a priori principle of nature’s purposiveness is a means of theoretical cognition of nature even though this cognition could never amount to cognition of the objects of nature (i.e., it is not “dogmatic” or pertaining to “dogmata,” a body of synthetic a priori propositions derived from concepts). Although Kant (in his efforts to distinguish his aesthetic theory from those of the rationalists) refers to aesthetic judgments as aconceptual, they presuppose, like other judgments, a subsumption of a particular under a universal. Thus, insofar as aesthetic judgments are universally valid and entail some agreement with the object (i.e., “this x is beautiful” is either true or false of the object), by means of them we determine the object in some sense and hence aesthetic judgments are in service of a narrow notion of cognition.20 The same could be said of teleological judgments. There are some objects in the empirical world that we, given the kind of beings we are, make intelligible to ourselves by representing them as a cause and effect of themselves, that is, as “natural ends.” This also leaves open the possibility that another type of intellect could cognize those objects differently, namely, purely mechanically. But teleological judgments are universally valid and objective because they determine the object in some way, that is, by representing organisms as “natural ends” we are able to investigate properties and functions of organic formations. Finally, reflective judgment’s representation of nature as a systematic whole does not determine nature as it is in itself. And yet, the representation of nature as a systematic whole is in some sense objective insofar as it is a condition of finding a unity among different particular empirical laws, a condition for a discovery of empirical laws, and a condition for a generation of empirical concepts, all of which is necessary for a scientific progress.

My aim in this book, however, is to show that reflective judgments do not merely satisfy reason’s minimal ends, that is, they do not merely make

19 My view therefore entails that the principle of taste and the objective principle of nature’s purposiveness are specific applications of a more general principle of nature’s purposiveness. (This has already been suggested in Düsing 1968, 81–85 and in Allison 2001, 63–64. But while the former treats only the Critique of Teleological Judgment, the latter focuses only on the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment.) I shall show that teleological judgment reinforces reason’s unity primarily at the level of our cognition of nature and life (natural organisms as “natural ends”). Although aesthetic judgment presupposes a cognitive component, it reinforces reason’s unity primarily at the level of our sensibility, or the “feeling of life” (*Lebensgefühl*) (*KU*, §1, 51 204).

20 See Ameriks 2003, 285–306, 324–43. For a denial that for Kant the subjective ground of taste amounts to standard objective judgments, see Ginsborg 1990a and Ginsborg 2015, ch. 1.
possible the determination of some forms and objects in nature, but they also serve reason’s final ends. On a meta-aesthetic and a meta-teleological level, they generate schema-analogues of the Idea of the highest good together with the conditions of its realization and thereby they facilitate “practical cognition” (KU, General Remark on the Teleology, § 475). Put differently, our assent in moral Glaube is rationally necessitated by the truth of the moral law and it presupposes a genuine commitment to truth. With reflective judgment, the objects practical reason demands that we conceive as real are represented as if obtaining in nature. Because representations of reflective judgments are normatively necessary in the epistemic sense and also serve as a schema for the Ideas whose objects are normatively necessary in the practical sense, I refer to the role Kant assigns to reflective judgment in his moral teleology as “moral image realism” (MIR).

Last but not least, Kant’s conception of reason’s unity is the one in which the theoretical and practical representations of nature “must cohere” (müssen zusammenhängen) (KU, § 78, § 412). Kant never brings into question the infinite separation between nature and freedom but instead shows the possibility of the structural interdependence of theoretical and practical arguments for the unconditioned so that the theoretical exploration of reason cannot proceed without having as its horizon reason’s own practical interest, that is, its basic orientation toward the good. Thus, even though my approach to the third Critique may be helpful for explaining why this work strongly influenced Kant’s immediate successors, Kant’s project of reason’s unity in the third Critique should be distinguished sharply from the ambitious project of reason’s unity sought by them, that is, the unity based on theoretical knowledge of some third unifying principle. It is, therefore, useful to reiterate that for Kant reflective judgment’s principle of nature’s purposiveness remains always subjectively necessary given our limited cognitive capacities and it is this principle that grounds a merely contingent agreement of nature with the ends of reason. This contingent agreement of nature and freedom contributes to the view of the world in

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21 I borrow the term “moral image” from Henrich 1992.

22 In his late Munich lectures on the history of modern philosophy, Schelling refers to the third Critique as “Kant’s deepest work, which, if he could have begun with it, as he finished with it, would have probably given his whole philosophy another direction” (Schelling 1994, 173). In his Encyclopaedia Logic, Hegel praises the third Critique for being genuinely speculative and for expressing the Absolute: “The outstanding merit of the Critique of Judgment is that Kant has expressed in it the notion and even the thought of the Idea, the notion of an intuitive understanding, of inner purposiveness, etc., is the universal concurrently thought of as concrete in itself. It is only in these notions that Kant’s philosophy shows itself to be speculative” (Hegel 1991, §§ 55, 102). For the influence of Kant’s third Critique on German Idealism see Zöller 2006 and Gardner 2016.
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which the noumenal realm, the realm of freedom, is seen as harmoniously coexisting and cohering with the phenomenal realm, the realm of nature which can further only strengthen moral Gläube and our hope in progress toward the highest good.  

II Overview

Each chapter that follows can be read separately from the rest of the volume because each aims to contribute to the current debate on that chapter’s particular issue. However, the chapters at the same time clearly advance the narrative organized around three main parts of the book.

I The Highest Good and the Postulates

Because I take the problem of the highest good to be central to the systematic concerns of the third Critique, this book must address what Kant has accomplished with respect to this issue prior to his third Critique in order to make clear how the third Critique advances the problematic of the highest good and reason’s unity.

Kant famously refers to freedom as “the keystone of the whole structure of a system of pure reason” (KpV, §: 3–4) to which “all other concepts (those of God and immortality) […] attach themselves […] and by means of it get stability and objective reality” (KpV, §: 4). The book thus opens with my discussion in Chapter 1 of Kant’s postulate of the objective reality of freedom via his controversial notion of the moral law as a “fact of reason.”

53 One may question why this book does not discuss the role of the sublime in connecting the sensible and the supersensible or the realm of nature and the realm of freedom. The focus of my discussion, and what I take to be central to the third Critique, is the problem of the highest good and our progress toward this unconditioned end of reason in the world. Thus, of central concern for this project is reflective judgment’s principle of nature’s purposiveness by means of which the highest good is not merely conceived as possible, but also perceived in nature. For Kant’s discussion of the sublime, making palpable our own purposiveness, and not that of nature, is central. That for this reason, the experience of the sublime, although important and interesting in many ways, remains “parergonal” (Allison 2001, 103) to the main systematic concerns of the work, Kant summarizes in the following paragraph: “[T]he concept of the sublime in nature is far from being as important and rich in consequences as that of its beauty, and […] in general it indicates nothing purposive in nature itself, but only in the possible use of its intuitions to make palpable in ourselves a purposiveness that is entirely independent of nature. For the beautiful in nature we must seek a ground outside ourselves, but for the sublime merely one in ourselves and in the way of thinking that introduces sublimity into the representation of the former – a very necessary introductory remark, which entirely separates the ideas of the sublime from that of a purposiveness of nature, and makes of the theory of the sublime a mere appendix to the aesthetic judging of the purposiveness of nature, since by this means no particular form is represented in the latter, but only a purposive use that the imagination makes of its representation is developed” (KU, §: 23, §: 246).