CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

Introduction
Out in the Territory

At the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and again in his *Logic* lectures, Kant lists his now famous four questions: "1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What may I hope?" (KrV A805/B833). A fourth question – "What is the human being?" – is constituted by the first three (LJ 9:25). The answers to the first two questions of knowing and doing are given explicitly in their own critical examinations, respectively: the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Moreover, both of those texts are decisively oriented by the question they seek to answer. It is not obvious, however, what the orienting question of the third *Critique* is. It is even less obvious that the *Critique of Judgment* may be found to answer to the remaining question of *hope*. One hardly finds the word (*die Hoffnung*) in the text, let alone as a dominant motif. Yet, while "hope" itself is not thematized in the text, the very problem that gives rise to the need for hope is announced in the Introduction as the guiding thread of the inquiry. We find it in Kant's articulation of the "gulf" between freedom and nature that must be bridged (KU 5:175–6). A need for hope is born of our concern for freedom's efficaciousness in the natural order and has as its object a nature that is reconceived in the context of this concern.

Even under the auspice of the announced concern for freedom's efficaciousness in the natural order, the text often remains unclear or underdeveloped with respect to how its arguments may speak to the concern. It is hard, too, to overstate the internal diversity and complexity of the text itself. In some sense, then, it is not hard to see why scholars have not settled on the proper interpretative key for the text as a whole, or, as the case may be, rejected such a possibility entirely. The complexity is apparent even in a brief survey of some of the things the text treats substantively: the power of judgment, reflection, the principle of purposiveness, beauty, art, the sublime, organisms, the system of natural laws, culture, and the existence of God. Organizing how these multiple topics form a coherent

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

whole in the context of Kant's own intersecting and sometimes oblique concerns is, to say the least, a daunting challenge.

My aim in this book is to provide an account of the third *Critique* as a unified text. Crucial to this endeavor is developing what I take the interpretative master key of the text to be. My thesis is that the interpretative master key to the text is the problem of *hope* – hope forms the horizon for Kant's examination of the multiple and seemingly disparate judgments of reflection human beings make. Hope, for Kant, is about the relation of reason and nature – specifically, conceiving of a nature that accords with the demands of freedom. What one hopes for is that nature, which appears indifferent or hostile to human ends, is, in some way, actually hospitable for human life. We hope that nature is underwritten by a deeper law than what we find in our experience as constituted by the laws of the understanding. We further hope that this deeper law also allows nature's law to be fully intelligible to us. Hope, then, is about the fittingness of nature and the world for human beings; hope seeks some evidence that we have a place in the broader context in which we find ourselves, that nature is not alien to us. The answer to the question of hope provided by the third *Critique* is in its description of a new vision of nature – it suggests a cosmic sense of nature, a larger system of nature to which we *belong* and which is meaningful. I further argue that for Kant, we encounter this nature in what he names the *territory* of judgment – a distinctive sphere of human life that allows for the transition he announces as necessary between freedom and nature.

In arguing that the third *Critique* is meant to answer the question of hope, I argue that we understand the internal unity of the text by way of the role the book plays in Kant's philosophical system. That is, the systematic function of judgments of reflection is the key to understanding the text as a whole. I argue this because Kant clearly takes the task of the third *Critique* to find a bridge across the gulf between freedom and nature – the gulf that gives rise to the need for hope in the first place. The significance of this bridging, however, can only be grasped if we first come to understand the character of this gulf and what drives the need for a bridge in the first place. This is no easy task – the problem captured in Kant's brief articulation of it in the Introduction of his text is nothing less than reason's demands in its relation to nature, which stands as the central axis and motivating tension of his entire critical project. Reason ultimately has an interest in unity – even more than this, in rational unity. Reason desires for everything to be rational, that is, to be determined by and identical to itself; this would be the pinnacle of a world fit for us. However,

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

this is not how we find the world we inhabit; we then must turn to the next best thing in a *system* that approximates unity. Reason's interest takes shape in numerous ways. Practically, we are concerned about reason's efficacy in the natural order – we need our freedom to be made real and concrete through our actions. In consequence, we thus also need to think nature's susceptibility to the work of freedom. Theoretically, we seek the absolute intelligibility of nature in a system of laws. While the practical dimension may be said to be existential – that is, it pertains to our existence and whether we are making a difference in the world or belong to it at all – there is a further lathe to the existential import of the problem of hope as well. Bridging the gulf between freedom and nature speaks not only to completing the system of philosophy but also, with this, to the system of human faculties. It is a question about the unity – or, rather, systematic and harmonious relations of – the faculties of the human soul. The third *Critique* speaks then to the vocation of the human being to fulfill the demands of freedom in transforming the natural order as well as the possibility of an integrated, holistic human subject.

Judgments of reflection – the proper subject matter of the *Critique of Judgment* – are what allow for freedom and nature to be related to each other as parts of a larger system, and thus ultimately answer to our deepest philosophical and existential concerns. As I will seek to show, Kant argues that judgments of reflection form a third independent sphere of human life that functions as both *transition between* and *ground of* freedom and nature. The introduction of this sphere – the region of reflection is what Kant names a territory – mediates between and allows freedom and nature to come into relation, thus giving rise to a *system*. Judgments of reflection will be seen to serve both as a kind of hidden ground of as well as a transitional or intermediary sphere between the domains of freedom and nature. For Kant, it is constitutive of his transcendental philosophy that freedom and nature remain interminably independent of each other; the unconditioned and the conditioned will always remain mired in dialectic.[1] Yet reason cannot abide the separation of the two spheres of human life. What I will show is that while judgments of reflection do not ultimately supply any kind of *unity* to freedom and nature, they will address reason's interests in part through their *referential relation* to such a unity. Judgments of

[1] I think it is important to note that this is not an oversight on Kant's part, but rather an explicit commitment. It was clearly available to him to find an inner unity to freedom and nature. His commitment to their independence from each other was based squarely on his transcendental methodology; his recognition of and philosophical grappling with the problems this generated for him did not lead him, however, to acquiesce to reason's own need for this unity.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

reflection complete the critical system in their independence from both freedom and nature; yet they also *suggest* the possibility of freedom's efficacious in the natural order in virtue of their gesture toward *life* – Kant's name for the inner unity of freedom and nature that is foreclosed by the critical system.

It is the *gesture* toward unity that has troubled, excited, and confused many philosophers and scholars after Kant. It appears troubling because, as Kant himself makes clear, life – or, the inner unity of freedom and nature – is not admissible into the critical system. Kant then, it would seem, opens himself up to charges of inconsistency or even senility. It appears exciting because in *life*, reason's needs do seem finally to be met and there is no longer a remainder or anything outstanding under the purview of reason. Here, it is not only that nature, as independent from freedom, is on its own accord serendipitously amenable to freedom; the suggestion of unity goes much further than this. It confuses scholars writing on the third *Critique* because Kant can seem, on the one hand, to maintain the "as if" character of what we come to judge about nature, and then, on the other hand, to assert a further unity of freedom and nature. At times, he can appear to wish to have it both ways. But this is simply the fate of a judgment that is reflective. I have been using the language of reference, suggestion, remind, gesture, point to, and so forth to describe how judgments of reflection function. This group of terms captures what it is like *for us to have* judgments that we make in reflection. Judgments of reflection are not knowledge claims; they offer, however, a kind of legitimate testimony about how things are.

What will emerge in this study, however, is that the as-if character of reflective judgments of nature only has purchase insofar as it is referentially related to a *further unity* of freedom and nature. This referentiality will function at once to leave reason dissatisfied in realizing its own aims, and at the same time to point to a robust *possibility* of reason getting what it most fully demands. Put another way, it gives us reason to *hope*; in hope, we do not get what we want, but maintain that it is possible to do so. Reason remains dissatisfied because it only gets the *suggestion* that nature will accommodate reason's ends. Yet this very suggestion is given with reference to the further possibility of reason's absolute determination of nature. That is, the unity of freedom and nature *appears as possible* in the third *Critique*; it is the pattern of unity that makes an appearance. This motive tension drives the third *Critique* and is, in part, what makes it so compelling and dynamic as a work. However, while many of the Idealists and Romantics who furthered Kant's transcendental project after him find a

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

way to justify an inner unity of freedom and nature, the third *Critique* is distinctive in maintaining not only the seriousness of this demand but also, at the same time, the impossibility of fulfilling it.

One of the principal upshots of my reading of the third *Critique* will be to demonstrate how the text offers Kant's readers a markedly different and surprising account of the place of the human being in a larger, even cosmic whole. While the transcendental turn effected in the first and second *Critiques* places the human being at the center of and as source of any ordered whole – of knowing, and as author of the good – the third *Critique* initiates a new context for self-understanding. In the first two *Critiques*, we understand everything in virtue of our own faculties, and measure the good with respect to the good will of the human being; the third *Critique*, by contrast, introduces a kind of exteriority or externality. Hope, after all, refers us to what is outside of us and exceeds us. As Rachel Zuckert defines hope, it is "an attitude of tentative positive expectation . . . that [something] could happen, might happen, if all things go well . . . in ways we cannot ourselves control."[2] That which we cannot control is, broadly speaking, nature. This book will argue that Kant portrays nature in the third *Critique* as both something genuinely exterior to us and at the same time as a new context in which we must come to understand ourselves. While the new context is not the ancient cosmos of the Greeks and the Judeo-Christian heritage, the third *Critique* does take us back outside of the humanistic center of reason. The natural order as it is rethought in the *Critique of Judgment* is a natural order that is much more hospitable to the ends of human freedom than that of the first *Critique*. Accordingly, insofar as it can be said to inquire into the supersensible substratum of nature (KU 5:176), the *Critique of Judgment* may be understood as developing a new answer to the demand reason makes for metaphysics – one that remains bound by the constraints of the critical system. At the very least, we can see how the text addresses the deepest and most perennial questions of metaphysics as Kant himself articulates them.

In what follows, I will argue that the third *Critique* offers an account of our experience of a more expansive and encompassing system to which both freedom and nature belong. It is in virtue of their places in this larger system, of which both are a part, that freedom finds the possibility of efficacy in the natural order. In establishing a third, independent sphere of judgments of reflection, Kant articulates a system to which the human

[2] Rachel Zuckert, "Is Kantian Hope a Feeling?" in *Kant and the Faculty of Feeling*, Kelly Sorenson and Diane Williamson, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 242–259, 247.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

being belongs and which is suited for its ends. Thus, the third *Critique* is not a text made up of discrete topics; its topic is not aesthetics or philosophy of science. Rather, its topic, in answer to the problem of hope, is the system of nature – *reconceived* – to which the human being and mechanical nature both belong. Aesthetic and teleological judgments are those judgments in which this expansive system of nature to which we belong appears to us. This *cosmic sense* of nature is what buttresses the hope we must have in reason's efficacy in the world.

With this interpretative key, then, I will offer a comprehensive account of the third *Critique* as an answer to the following question: What may I hope? Unlike the first two *Critiques*, however, the third *Critique* is not strictly progressive. Paul Guyer, in one of the first full-length manuscripts in English on the third *Critique* (or, on the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment), writes, "we can compare the structure of the *Critique of Judgment* to that of another machine . . . an electric motor, in which increasing layers of wire are wrapped around a single central core, every new layer of wire making the motor more powerful."[3] This is an apt description of the argumentative structure of the text. That is, it does not exclusively develop one sustained and unfolding argument, but deepens and complicates its main ideas. In part, this fact about the text is what has allowed it to be treated in such a partitioned manner in the secondary literature and evade definitive interpretation. Yet it does consistently address one question. Each matter treated in the text – beauty, the sublime, art, the sensus communis, organisms, God – is comprehended by Kant according to the schema suggested here. Each matter treated answers to the question of hope and refers ultimately to a unity that at once exceeds the possibilities of the critical system and makes the critical system itself possible. This further means that any book on the third *Critique* that treats it in its entirety inevitably runs into this problem: The initial arguments are proved and supported only by way of the whole.

I develop this reading of the text, first, out of Kant's own discussion of the place of the third *Critique* in his philosophical system. Kant's concept of "territory" will thus form the crux of the interpretation I offer throughout this text. An analysis of his treatment of the territory of reflective judgments emphasizes not only their independence but also especially their role as both a transition between and ground of the other two spheres. How the system is completed offers a picture of how to understand the expansive whole Kant is attempting to articulate. My reading,

[3] Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xiii.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

second, is further developed by emphasizing points in Kant's text that have been overlooked as central to its interpretation – the Ideal of Beauty, the sensus communis, genius, organicity, and ethicotheology. These moments of the text, rather than be understood as outliers in the overall movement of the argument that perhaps exceed the critical system, are precisely those moments that suggest the pattern of reflective judgments; these moments all embody a movement of referentiality, where the referent is a more fundamental unity of freedom and nature in the context of a larger system. I will not argue that these moments actually yield said unity, only that their pattern refers to it. To follow an ancient idea related to the arts in particular, these judgments mimic or imitate a unity of freedom and nature; this is to say they reflect it. The Ideal of Beauty provides the template for all judgments of taste. The sensus communis is the ultimate ground of judgments of taste, and, too, of all universality. Genius answers the question of how a human being is able to bring about a product whose production and effect exceed its own capacities. The *life* of living beings refers us ultimately to a system of nature given value in and through the existence of the human being. Ethicotheology develops the inextricable relation of the systems of nature and freedom, leading to faith in God. While much of the history of Kant scholarship has regularly treated these moments as strange aberrations or in the context of concerns alien to the text, we can see, on the contrary, that they gather together and help organize the larger trajectory of the project. Transcendentally speaking, these moments shed light on the conditions for the possibility of things appearing as they do out in the territory. These moments, too, most explicitly answer to the problem of hope as laid out in the Introduction to the book. How this is so can be elucidated by way of how this project fits into the longer history of the reception of the third *Critique*.

The reception of and secondary literature on the *Critique of Judgment* evidence not only the difficulty of the text, as Kant presents it, but also the difficulty of the philosophical task it sets for itself. That the third *Critique* is about the problem of the system of philosophy was clear to Kant's contemporaries and immediate successors. Both Fichte and Schelling published works on the very question of a system of transcendental philosophy oriented by the problem of freedom and nature during Kant's lifetime.[4] Hegel, too, published his own work in 1801 comparing

[4] On the importance of the third *Critique* for the development of Fichte's philosophy, see Daniel Breazeale, "'The Summit of Kantian Speculation': Fichte's reception of the Third *Critique*," *Anuario Filosófico* 52:1 (2019), 113–114.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

Fichte and Schelling's attempts at establishing a system of transcendental philosophy following Kant, three years before Kant died. Even more than this, however, Schiller and Schelling both take their point of departure from what they find Kant to propose in the third *Critique*, namely that beauty and teleology secure the systematic unity of freedom and nature. For Schiller, beauty is an accomplishment of cultivated individuals and society: It unifies the otherwise opposed aspects of human nature; it is "beauty that can lead him back" to the proper, fully human, path.[5] Schelling, at least in some of his earlier works, argues that art is nothing less than the presentation of the absolute, understood as the primordial unity of freedom and nature, ideal and real. "Art," he writes, "is itself an emanation of the absolute."[6] As such it proves the original, ontological unity of freedom and nature. Hegel follows suit to a point, likewise arguing that beauty in art has a metaphysical significance with respect to the unity of freedom and nature.[7] He also recognizes that the third *Critique* addresses the unity of freedom and nature; he criticizes Kant for subjectivizing this unity, rather than committing himself to it as ontological. That the question of system was a – if not the – central issue for those inheriting Kant's transcendental methodology is evident even in Heine's account of *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*: "This want of a definite system in the philosophy of Kant was the reason why it was sometimes refused the name philosophy. As regards Immanuel Kant himself, there was justice in this; but not as regards the Kantists, who constructed from Kant's propositions quite a sufficient number of definite systems."[8]

If Kant's contemporaries and heirs in the speculative idealist tradition took the third *Critique* principally to address the question of a system of transcendental philosophy and, with this, the metaphysical unity of freedom and nature, we can nevertheless identify a competing strain of Kant interpretation. Frederick Beiser, in his *The Genesis of Neo-Kantianism*, argues that there were two traditions battling over Kant's legacy from the

[5] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 33. See especially the Fourteenth Letter, where Schiller describes the "playful impulse" as that which unites "becoming with absolute being" (51).

[6] F. W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 19. He also argues for the systematic significance of teleology and beauty at the end of his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800).

[7] This claim is qualified for two reasons. First, Hegel preserves religion and philosophy as superior to art. Second, Schelling's views on this hierarchy of the presentation of the absolute do not seem to be settled over the course of his scholarship.

[8] Henrich Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 122.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

very beginning. In addition to the rationalistic, speculative idealist tradition, he points to an "empiricist-psychological tradition," represented by Fries, Herbart, and Beneke. When, in the 1840s, the speculative idealist tradition had diminished in influence, it left an "enormous vacuum in the German intellectual scene."[9] This vacuum was filled by the heirs to the empiricist-psychologists and became what we now call the neo-Kantians. In this way, the anti-metaphysical orientation to Kant won out. "The battle to represent Kant's legacy was won – whether rightly or wrongly – by the thinkers of the empiricist-psychological tradition. They won the battle simply because their arguments were later adopted by a slew of thinkers whom we now happen to call . . . neo-Kantians."[10]

The neo-Kantian tradition of Kant interpretation played a formative role in orienting the Anglophone reception of and scholarship on Kant. As John E. Smith observes in his Foreword to a 1956 translation of Richard Kroner's *Kants Weltanschauung* (from 1914):

> Kantian scholarship of the past century has been so vast and varied that it would be a matter of great surprise if different schools of interpretation had not developed. The so-called Marburg school is the one best known to English readers, and even those unfamiliar with the details have heard of the "back to Kant" movement associated with such commentators as Natorp, Cohen, and Cassirer.[11]

While the neo-Kantian movement was broad and diverse, we can nevertheless discern in it some key features. As Beiser points out, there was a general aversion toward and mistrust of metaphysical speculation.[12] The rise of the empirical sciences further contoured philosophical sentiment; philosophy could "find a definite place within the division of sciences, only as epistemology. The neo-Kantians had in mind a very specific conception of epistemology: the examination of the methods, standards and presuppositions of the empirical sciences."[13] This influence thus gave shape to how scholars approached Kant's texts. Smith argues that the neo-Kantians and their heirs "were inclined to regard post-Kantian speculation as misguided and thoroughly un-Kantian, a view which in turn led them to

[9] Frederick C. Beiser, *The Genesis of Neo-Kantianism, 1796–1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 5.
[10] Beiser, *Genesis*, 16.
[11] John E. Smith, "Foreword," to Richard Kroner, *Kant's Weltanschauung: The Ethical and Religious Derivation of Kant's Worldview* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), vii.
[12] See also the Introduction to Rudolf A. Makkreel and Sebastian Luft, eds., *Neo-Kantianism in Contemporary Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
[13] Beiser, *Genesis*, 6.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-316-51112-1 — Kant on Freedom, Nature, and Judgment
Kristi Sweet
Excerpt
More Information

strip Kant of all vestiges of metaphysical thought and thereby reduce him to a thinker concerned only with epistemology."[14] While the speculative idealists were concerned with questions of system, of the unity of freedom and nature, and did not shy away from transcendental metaphysics, the neo-Kantians initiated philosophical questioning that was more narrow in its scope and concerns, at least with respect to their interest in Kant.[15]

The secondary literature on the third *Critique* in the Anglophone context embodies this historical movement. First, the lack of engagement with the third *Critique* in favor of Kant's theoretical works is evident enough. One of the few books written on the third *Critique* in English in the twentieth century laments the neglect. Donald Crawford opens his *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* thus: "Many books could be written about Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. The fact that so few have been written is one of the surprises in the history of philosophy."[16] When, in 1979, Paul Guyer published *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, he noted that Eva Schaper's study was being published that same year, but otherwise only cited a handful of book-length studies on the text, Crawford's being first among them. In addition to the neglect of the third *Critique*, we also find that the weight on the empirical sciences and emphasis on method shows up in our understanding of Kant's moral theory. Even with the proliferation of interest in Kant's practical philosophy following John Rawls' prominence, much of the scholarship on Kant's moral theory was (and still is) concerned with a kind of scientizing of maxim making – finding a rigorous, almost mathematically logical rule by which we may test our maxims for moral worth.

Second, and more importantly for our purposes, engagement with the third *Critique* has likewise been oriented by epistemological concerns. Guyer's work, along with Hannah Ginsborg's, is exemplary in this regard – one of the main lines of his argument is about the structure of reflective judgments. In this, his concern is with the workings of the mind when we

[14] Ibid., vi; vii.

[15] Smith goes much further, asserting that the upshot of the predominance of the Neo-Kantian approach to Kant "lost sight of the main purpose of Kant's thought because we have taken too myopic a view of his philosophy."

[16] Donald Crawford, *Kant's Aesthetic Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), vii. The other early text taking up the third *Critique* that merits mention is J. D. McFarland, *Kant's Concept of Teleology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970). A review of the book notes that it is for "The student who wants to acquaint himself with the 'other' Kant, the Kant not of the 'categories of the understanding' and not of 'practical reason' . . . but that lesser known Kant of the 'ideas of pure reason and of 'teleological judgment.'" L. Funderbunk, "Book Review of *Kant's Concept of Teleology*," *Kant-Studien* 62:1 (1971), 137.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press & Assessment www.cambridge.org