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Lara Ostaric, *The* Critique of Judgment *and the Unity of Kant's Critical System*. Cambridge and New York: CUP, 2024, 280 pp. ISBN 9781009336857

In recent years, many readers and commentators have attempted to reconstruct Kant's critical system in architectonic or systematic ways. To this end, many have incorporated pre-Critical works while others have argued that any published or unpublished work written after 1781 belongs to the critical system. Lara Ostaric, however, asserts that the third *Critique* represents the end––in all senses of that word—of the critical project, for "it does not culminate in empirical cognition of the natural world but, rather, in reason's 'highest' or 'final end' (KrV, A840/B8868) . . . namely, morality" (2). She offers a bold and ambitious claim and one that I think she achieves. The whole problem that she sets off to resolve, for Kant, is the alleged "gulf" between nature and freedom. She contests the view established by previous commentators that the gulf between the autonomy of rational (moral) principles and our sensible inclinations is closed by the free and disinterested aesthetic pleasure that judgments of taste find in beauty. She refers to these interpretations as psychological and while these claims are substantiated by the third *Critique*, Ostaric argues instead that there is an issue more central to the problem at hand: the unity of reason's principles established by the argument regarding the objective reality of freedom, as well as the objective reality of the Ideas of God and the soul (4–5).

We can take it that she is most interested in highlighting the third *Critique* as being primarily concerned with continuing the claim given in the first and second *Critiques* regarding the postulates and moral belief with the goal in the third *Critique* to be that of demonstrating how reflective judgment achieves a representation of nature *as if* it were rational and, hence, suitable for our rational ends (6). This argument hangs on Kant's notion of the imagination's schematism that serves to create analogues of reason's ideas insofar as the imagination operates on sensible representations of beauty, thus offering reason an indirect presentation for it to think the highest good. I am quite sympathetic to the latter argument, as I think it more convincingly demonstrates the cooperation of the faculties, and especially makes it clear that the intellectual powers of the mind require the imagination to determine

or think an object. As he says in the *Anthropology*, "the mental powers . . . must move harmoniously with the help of the imagination, because otherwise they would not animate but would disturb one another" (Anth, 7: 225).

Ostaric claims that, according to Kant, "reflective judgments do not merely satisfy reason's minimal ends . . . but they also serve reason's final ends" (8–9). Interwoven throughout the book is the concept of the highest good, which I believe plays the role of threading together the stated aims of each chapter, beginning with the effort to establish Kant's theory concerning the objective reality of freedom in Chapter 1. However, this argument of hers does pose a daunting challenge because the very demonstration of freedom, she claims, requires recourse to the idea of reason's purely practical "cognition" (*Erkenntnis*), a term Kant in the first *Critique* reserves for representations of objects given in sensible intuition and brought under rules of the understanding via the imagination's schemata. She claims that, by practical cognition, Kant intends to clarify practical reason's legislation of the morally good in relation to oneself as a moral agent (23). Perhaps *judgment* or simply *thought* would fulfill that argument better than the specific use of cognition, but Ostaric does cite quite a bit of literature to justify her usage of that term, thus it is not as if it is a careless placement of cognition in view of practical reason. She points to the second *Critique* as making evident Kant's claims that practical cognition refers to the consciousness of a moral principle, its objects (good and evil) and ends, and the feeling *and* respect for the moral law (28–29).

Ostaric claims in Chapters 2 and 3 that the exposition of the highest good in the second and third *Critiques*, respectively, obliges us to consider its objective reality strictly from the perspective of a "subjective practical reality" of reason, which is found in the ideas of God and the soul (11 and 47). She poses both realist and anti-realist approaches to this argument, coming down ultimately on the side of the former, for moral belief, on her view, aims at a real and not theoretical object (59–68, 72). This requires some bit of charity on our part, for we must assume that reflective judgment does all the work of actually applying or at least presenting nature in such a way that moral belief is fulfilled by practical reason's desire to posit nature as exhibiting laws analogical to reason's laws. This is to say that the aims of the highest good must be achieved by reflective judgment, thus bridging the theoretical and practical sides of reason. Ostaric refers to this act not as a "representation of the world as it is in itself," but as the "product of the reflective judgment and the power of imagination relative to the needs of reason" (73). This makes real sense to me, as Kant consistently argues that the imagination assists in delivering the ends that the powers pursue. One can also think of reflective

judgment bearing witness to the highest good represented in the imagination's free play with beauty. As Schiller would argue in his *Kallias Briefe*, what we love about the beautiful in nature is that it shows off an appearance of freedom that we desperately desire for ourselves.

To make good on her claim about the connection between the moral ends of reason and reflective judgment, Ostaric argues in Chapters 4 and 5 that aesthetic objects conform to reason's idea of the highest good by exhibiting the "supersensible from without," while the aesthetic experiences of subjects (that is, all of us) exhibit the "supersensible from within" made possible by the free harmony of the powers, imagination in its freedom to schematize and the understanding in its lawfulness (even sometimes without a law). Chapter 4 particularly draws attention to the Kantian argument concerning beauty, wherein she points to §59 of the third *Critique* where Kant famously claims that "beauty is a symbol of morality." However, Ostaric somewhat controversially adds that the beauty of art, no less than nature, operates as a symbol for moral teleology (102, 113–18). There are textual reasons to be suspicious of the latter argument, as Kant specifies in the third *Critique* as follows: "This superiority of natural beauty over that of art, namely, that—even if art were to excel nature in form—it is the only beauty that arouses a direct interest, agrees with the refined and solid [*gründlich*] way of thinking of all people who have cultivated their moral feeling" (§42, AA 5: 299). In other words, nature must seemingly be considered superior not just because it represents a higher aesthetic quality, but because nature evokes the Idea of God, thereby setting into motion the realization of the final end of nature, humanity itself. Kant describes the lover of beautiful nature, in contrast to the mere "connoisseur and lover of art," as possessing a "beautiful soul."

Ostaric defends her claim that "*all* beauty, whether natural or artistic, symbolizes morality" by arguing that the work of genius threatens a strict distinction between nature and art (113–14). She challenges contemporary commentators who give privilege to either natural or artistic beauty, maintaining that the works of the genius artist, who is nature's gift, exhibit an idea of the supersensible basis of nature. One can think of poetry as especially illuminating the free harmony of the faculties, setting into motion what Ostaric views as the realization of the supersensible within and without.

However, one problem that nags at me is the question concerning the relativity of art or at least what might be considered the kind of art conducive for promoting our moral ends. This question will no doubt appear too conservative for some readers, but I cannot help but to think that what some might call art is nothing but hideous, drivel, or simply an immature work of

a talentless hack. Arthur Danto once claimed and made a career out of the idea that anything visual can be called art, but that does not signify the kind of conditions needed for moral teleology. No doubt art as it was created in the late eighteenth century would be able to forestall this issue, thus we have to assume that this claim refers to the work of genius in fine art alone.

I had expected Ostaric's attention to ugliness in Chapter 6 to serve as a defense of her claim that art no less than nature exhibits the idea of the supersensible. However, that discussion indicates not so much a failure of the universal harmony of the powers of imagination and understanding but simply the outcome of an object failing to meet the demands of taste.

The previous chapter (5), I think, promotes the aims of the book more significantly by pointing to the imagination as the faculty that prepares the supersensible power of freedom. She begins by rejecting a somewhat popular trend in the scholarship that pairs schematization and logical acts of reflection, as if the aesthetic act of reflection merely acts in service of the logical demands of the understanding (127). I think her claim here is quite correct and I appreciate the push that she makes in Chapter 5, wherein she claims that to view the free play of imagination as still acting at the behest of a "concept in general," even without a noticeable concept guiding the play, undermines Kant's notion of aesthetic judgment (130–31). On this basis, she contends that aesthetic reflection "should be sharply divorced" from logical reflection (132). I also appreciate her efforts to indicate how Kant in the A-Deduction had already made the case that the imagination operates freely in its synthetic apprehension of intuitions, even though it must conform to the demands of inner sense and apperception. However, I would support her argument further by noting how Kant in the B-Deduction describes the "synthetic influence" that the imagination plays on inner sense through its production of "time-relations" (cf. B153–55).

As Ostaric points out, Kant's argument for the free harmony of the faculties in the third *Critique* does represent a shift in his argument given in the first *Critique*. A close reading, though, notices that those rules provided by the understanding are merely abstract and logical without the schemata that apply the categories to the conditions of space and time. In the third *Critique*, we find Kant arguing that the purposiveness of judgment can be secured by the imagination alone or at least with the imagination taking the lead in its play with nature's forms insofar as imagination enables judgment to find pleasure in the beauty of nature. This is all to say that Ostaric provides a much welcome argument by claiming that, even in instances of determinative judgment, the understanding cannot do the work of synthesis nor of subsumption without the freedom of imagination. However, she also claims

that the two dominant strands of interpretation ("pre-cognitivist" and "proto-Hegelian") place too much emphasis on the independence of imagination, as she claims that the freedom of imagination should be thought of as cultivating judgment. But she also claims that the so-called "multi-cognitivist" prioritizes understanding and thereby ignores the imagination at the expense of the argument as a whole.

The remaining chapters of the book turn to Kant's accounts of history and culture and their rootedness in the power of reason. Thus, in Chapter 7, Ostaric claims that previous commentators misconstrue Kant's account of reason's search for the unity of nature by separating theoretical and practical interests as if they belong to two separate faculties. She claims that understanding Kant's transcendental idealism requires a metaphysical, not merely epistemological, approach that views reason's aims as being slightly modified from the rationalist tradition (189–90). This, she claims, anticipates Kant's argument regarding nature's systematic unity in the third *Critique* in which he claims that such unity is represented through the reflective power of judgment, namely, by way of its principle of purposiveness.

Chapters 8 and 9 develop this argument by turning to Kant's notion of organisms indicating natural ends in themselves, thus demonstrating the viability of theoretical and practical interests coalescing in a regulative ideal concerning nature; specifically, the real possibility of freedom for us in this world. According to Ostaric, Kant views the idea of a natural end through which reflective judgment generates the possibility of freedom in nature in a way that balances mechanical and teleological perspectives as harmonizing the theoretical and practical functions of reason. I think that she is correct in her assessment of the idea of the intuitive understanding resolving that antinomy of mechanism and teleology. In Chapter 9, she focuses on Kant's argument regarding human history as tending toward progress in a way that reveals nature's suitability for our moral aims. What strikes me as interesting about her argument is that "Kant's philosophy of history should be narrowed to a political history and the history of culture" of all human beings as such (236). Criticisms of Kant being Eurocentric thus fail to take note of the many passages in which he argues that all human beings have a right to inherit the bounty of nature and shall not be limited to trade with others because of national borders (cf. *Metaphysics of Morals*, The World Community, §62). Ostaric claims that the need for a philosophical account of history, for Kant, satisfies reason's desire to posit a (regulative) teleological aim of humanity as a whole in such a way that is also in relation to the aims of nature (239–42). This does not mean that the abundance of morally just agents will increase, but only that, according to Ostaric's interpretation, history will demonstrate

that humans will improve the sensibilities to accommodate rational (moral) demands (254). That being said, no actual proof in history of the highest good in the world will be possible.

This book contributes a valuable piece of scholarship that incorporates elements of Kant's critical philosophy as a whole. I think Ostaric offers enthusiasts of classical German philosophy much to consider and comment upon in the coming years. Through detailed and sustained analyses of Kant's texts, sharp and incisive critical reflections on existing expert commentators, she provides the community with a solid basis from which we may continue to discuss the seemingly endless possibilities that Kant's *Critique of Judgment* poses, including the relationship between aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics, ultimately creating pathways toward the kind of social-political philosophy built upon Kantian ethics.

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Daniel Whistler, *François Hemsterhuis and the Writing of Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2022, pp. 294, ISBN 978-1-3995-0982-4

La monografia in lingua inglese di Daniel Whistler, dal titolo *François Hemsterhuis and the Writing of Philosophy*, uscita per la casa editrice Edinburgh University Press, è avvincente per il modo con cui l'Autore sollecita il lettore allo studio del filosofo olandese di fine Settecento François Hemsterhuis (1721-1790). Whistler dimostra di conoscere bene sia gli scritti di Hemsterhuis sia il vasto carteggio che egli ha intrattenuto con la corrispondente privilegiata Amalia von Gallitzin. Altresì, Whistler documenta una conoscenza approfondita della ricezione del suo pensiero in Germania e del dibattito su Hemsterhuis sia tra i filosofi a lui coevi, come per esempio Jacobi, sia all'interno della letteratura critica internazionale odierna. Whistler colma una lacuna nella bibliografia su Hemsterhuis in lingua inglese proponendo un testo con un approccio interpretativo singolare e libero da desuete interpretazioni. Indubbiamente, il vasto materiale inedito, pubblicato dopo la morte di Hemsterhuis, ha permesso agli interpreti soprattutto degli ultimi venticinque anni di avere un quadro più vasto sulla sua filosofia e di presentare, così, letture con una prospettiva più ampia e articolata.

Whistler ha avuto il merito di saper decifrare i due diversi periodi della speculazione filosofica di Hemsterhuis. Ha potuto, pertanto, individuare alcune chiavi di lettura per comprendere i temi espressi nelle differenti opere