

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment* stands not only as a seminal work of aesthetic theory, but also as a conclusion to his larger critical project. Scholars agree that a key goal of this book is to resolve the apparent disconnect between the worlds of nature and morality—simply put, are our moral aims achievable in the natural world? The *Critique of Judgment* is divided in two parts: The “Critique of Aesthetic Judgment” and the “Critique of Teleological Judgment.” This summer, using the facilities available to me in Evanston and Chicago, I will examine the both parts of the book in an attempt to derive a unified understanding of Kant's solution, as it relates both to the experience of beauty and our understanding of the teleology of nature. Reaching this understanding would be of key importance to the field of Kant scholarship, of significance not only to philosophy, but also to the humanities as a whole, as well as biology, and psychology.

Few philosophers have had as much an influence on human civilization as Immanuel Kant. Writing in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), his writings have made significant contributions on nearly every philosophical topic. In his most important work, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he created the modern epistemological distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, refuted the causal skepticism of Hume and the idealism of Descartes, and argued that we are unable to know the existence of God, Freedom and the Immortality of the Soul. In his second *Critique*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant deduced his moral system from the premise that we as humans possess free will; his ability to create such a complete system stands as proof of free will's existence. Problems, however, remain; while the first *Critique* allows the existence of free will, it does not find it to be necessary in nature. The second *Critique* argues for the obligatory nature of his moral system, but does not argue as strongly for its achievability. This creates a problem: in spite of their obligatory nature, how are we to know that our moral ends are actually practically achievable in the world? Kant is concerned with this question in the third and final book of his critical project, *The Critique of Judgment*, and addresses it through an explanation of ability to make aesthetic and teleological judgments.

Due to its foundational role in modern aesthetics, the bulk of Kantian scholarship is devoted to the first half of the third *Critique*, with little attention being paid to the relationship between beauty and morality. Furthermore, the two foremost contemporary Kant scholars, Paul Guyer and Henry Allison (as well as his student, Anne-Margaret Baxley), are divided as to the nature of the difficulty that Kant is attempting to resolve. Allison and Baxley pose the problem as such: regardless of the arguments put forth in the second critique, it would be foolish for one to feel bound by the moral law if our moral aims were unachievable due to the strength of the nature of human desires. Guyer's view instead argues that the belief in the achievability of our moral ends provides the psychological aid that allows us to actually achieve them. While my current view is more in line with Allison and Baxley, I suspect that Kant is actually trying to solve both of these problems. None of them have attempted to provide a complete and unified account of the achievability of our moral ends as it relates to both parts of the third *Critique*. While some accounts do exist on the relationships between beauty and morality, the second half of the book, relating to teleology, has frequently been ignored.

My research would seek to provide a complete account of Kant's arguments for the achievability of our moral ends in nature as discussed both parts of the *Critique of Judgment*. This research question involves not only a comprehension of the relative parts

of the third *Critique*, but also an understanding of freedom, nature, and morality as they are discussed in both the first and second *Critiques*. By understanding the problem Kant is facing, I will be able to understand a complete account of his proposed solution. Is the beauty (as well as the teleological structure) of nature a “secret communication” hinting at the possibility of our ability to accomplish our moral ends? Must human art have a moral content in order to be beautiful? What role do judgments of taste and teleology play in Kant’s view of God, which can only be accepted as a matter of faith, yet is important in his ethical system as a powerful assumption inspiring actual moral achievement? It is this final question, ignored by many, which I believe will lead me to a solution of these and other questions. My current instincts lead me to think that judgments of taste and teleology lay the groundwork for the acceptance of God as a matter of faith, which while not theoretically necessary, is of such immense practical use for achieving moral purposes that it stands as Kant’s solution.

During the months of July and August I will conduct a rigorous philosophical analysis of the relevant parts of the three *Critiques*, drawing upon some of Kant’s other works as necessary. Furthermore, I will utilize the current field of Kant scholarship for commentary and analysis. The resources available to me in the Northwestern and University of Chicago libraries will be of much use for this project. Furthermore, local access to my advisor, Rachel Zuckert and other members of the Northwestern Philosophy department will allow me to discuss and develop my analysis, key for philosophical research.

My philosophical background is wide ranging, but also one of sufficient focus on Kant. Two of my classes have dealt with Kant directly: “Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason” and “German Aesthetics to and from Kant” concerned the first half of the first and third *Critiques* respectively. My final paper for “German Aesthetics to and from Kant” examined section 42 of the third *Critique*, which addressed our moral sense’s interest in the beauty of nature. A portion of the work done in these two classes will directly relate to my project; more importantly, these two classes have provided me with an understanding of Kant’s methods of argument and vocabulary—no easy matter. Other aspects of my philosophical background include topics as diverse as Medieval Islamic Philosophy to my current course in contemporary Ontology. Furthermore, I have also had the opportunity to draw from not only Northwestern’s Philosophy Department, but also from the Philosophy Department of Bogazici University in Istanbul, Turkey, where I have been studying since September (I will return to Evanston in late June). This variety of experiences will aid me in conducting this project, which, while limited in scale, is quite wide in scope, drawing on aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics and epistemology.

I intend this work to allow me to greatly further my academic goals, especially as the results of this research will directly contribute to my honors thesis on this topic. The thesis, when completed, will be submitted to various undergraduate journals of philosophy, and will hopefully be published. I am currently undecided regarding my plans after graduation. However, I do know that completing this project will be very useful for almost any path I choose, whether it be a fellowship, law school, or especially a graduate degree in philosophy.