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Response to My Critics

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In this article, I give a short précis of my recently published book, The *Critique of Judgment* and the Unity of Kant's Critical System*, and I also respond to the arguments of my critics, Andrija Šoć, Monika Jovanović, Ted Kinnaman, and Luigi Filieri. In response to Šoć, I take the opportunity to clarify the difference between the realism I argue is in the representations of reflective judgment ("moral image realism") and the realism in our assent to moral Glaube ("rational necessitation realism"). In response to Jovanović, I endorse her claim that my approach to Kant's aesthetics relates to contemporary notions of aesthetic cognitivism and further elaborate on how Kant's text can support this view. In response to Kinnaman, I remind the reader that my book sufficiently acknowledges that a contingent fit between nature and our cognitive faculties must be at the core of the reflective judgment's principle of purposiveness. I also emphasize that my notion of reflective judgment's "schema analogues," although subjective because they respond to the need of reason, are also at the same time objective and in some respect about the world. In response to Filieri, I contend that, for Kant, our representations of the progress of human history presuppose both autonomous human agency and something that surpasses it yet cooperates with its final aims. Thus, the progress of human history is both about "the aim of freedom" and "the aim of nature."*

Keywords: Reflective judgment; moral image realism; rational necessitation realism; aesthetic cognitivism; contingency; principle of purposiveness; schema-analogue; progress of human history; autonomy.

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1. Précis

My 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 realizing our moral ends in the world. According to Kant, we are beings of both freedom and nature. Thus, even though we are self-determining, i.e., 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* influence 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).

I argue in the book 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. We do not merely strive towards 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. There is also no guarantee that one will be able to persist in one's moral disposition due to one's constant temptations to choose non-moral maxims. But because reason commands us to strive towards 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 towards 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*, 5: 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.

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 approaches the question of whether we are free not as a mere belief that regulatively guides our actions, 'as if' we were free, nor does it 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, my book points 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). My book emphasizes that although reason's determination cannot result in theoretical cognition of this object, 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.

The main goal of my 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 second *Critiques*. While in those *Critiques,* 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*, these are what we must be able to *perceive* through 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 connects perception to the actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) of things. When I say that, for Kant, it is not enough to conceive intellectually but that we must be able to perceive our progress toward the final end of reason, I am clearly using Kant's idea of perception in a modified way. My aim 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 key contrast between 'intellectually conceiving' and 'perceiving' is to highlight that Kant's goal in the third *Critique* is to argue that these Ideas of reason have 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 know that we are free and are justified in conceiving the world as cooperating with our moral ends, in the third *Critique*, through reflective judgment, we represent nature as if it were rational and as if it fur-

thered the highest good. Because by the time of the third *Critique* Kant stresses even more strongly human finitude—that is, the fact that we are not just intellectual beings but also sentient and receptive beings to whom things are given—for Kant in the third *Critique,* it is not enough that the object of the Idea of the highest good (along with its necessary conditions) 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 must also be given to us in sensibility.

I argue in my book that reflective judgment (both aesthetic and teleological) creates a schema-analogue of the Ideas of the postulates and the highest good, an "image" that indirectly or analogically exhibits these Ideas as if they exist in nature. In the first *Critique*, Kant defines a 'schema' as the transcendental imagination's synthesis in accordance with a concept of the understanding, so that in this synthesis, the imagination makes the rule of this concept sensible in the form of time determination. In the third *Critique*, Kant refers to "schemata" as "direct [...] presentations of the concept" in sensible intuition (*KU*, §59, 5: 352). Because reason's Ideas of the highest good and the postulates cannot have their objects given in empirical reality, I contend that objects of beauty, the feeling of pleasure from 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 view of human history, all serve as their *indirect* exhibitions—that is, their schema-analogues. These schema-analogues are the products of reason's *poiesis,* its creation or production, which is a hallmark of its finiteness.

Reflective judgment's image or a schema of the Ideas of reason does not amount to the claim that they are illusions, or mere "fictions" of reason. Reflective judgements (whether aesthetic or teleological) are our responses to concrete features in empirical reality, and they entail, as universally valid judgments, a particular form of cognition. 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. 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, i.e., 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 can 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 the discovery of empirical laws, and a condition for the generation of empirical concepts, all of which are necessary for scientific progress.

The goal of my book, however, is to show that reflective judgments do not merely satisfy reason's minimal ends, that is, they do not simply make 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, 5: 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 they obtained 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).

2. Responses to my critics

2.1 Response to Andrija Šoć

I am very grateful to Professor Šoć for engaging my work and for his very charitable comments (Šoć 2025). Professor Šoć understands my "moral image realism thesis" as my "key insight […] that there is more than merely a heuristic interest into establishing what Kant calls 'A kingdom of ends', a 'Civic culture', or, to put it in different words, an enlightened alliance of republican states in an arrangement that guarantees perpetual peace and is based on a consensus of moral agency" (Šoć 2025: 147).

Here I would like to take the opportunity to emphasize how the question of what I call "moral image realism" (MIR) differs from the issue of the realism of moral *Glaube*, which I call "rational necessitation realism" (RNR) and which is the topic of ch. 2 of my book.

While for Kant the necessity of assent in "pragmatic" and "doctrinal *Glaube*" is of an instrumental sort, that is, necessity relative to the end that must be achieved, the assent of moral *Glaube* is absolutely necessary, "[f]or it is absolutely necessary that something must hap-

pen, namely, that I fulfill the moral law in all points. The end here is inescapably fixed, and according to all my insight there is possible only a single condition under which this end is consistent with all ends together and thereby has practical validity, namely, that there be a God and a future world" (*KrV*, A828/B856). Thus, the practical end in moral *Glaube*, that is, the fulfillment of the moral ought, is absolutely necessary and is not dependent on empirical circumstances, as is the case in 'doctrinal' and 'pragmatic' *Glaube*. However, this "absolute necessity" of moral *Glaube* does not entail that the degree of "moral certainty" (*moralische Gewißheit*) (*KrV*, A829/B857), or certainty from a "practical point of view" (*in praktischer Absicht*) (*KrV*, A828/B856), is the same as the "logical certainty" (*KrV*, A829/B857) presupposed in knowledge. In the Canon, the kind of certainty that is achieved on "subjective grounds (of moral disposition)" (*KrV*, A829/B857) is lesser in degree in comparison to the certainty of knowledge (*Wissen*) achieved on "objective grounds," that is, grounds based on evidence given either in empirical or pure intuition. In Kant's later writings, including the third *Critique*, moral *Glaube* is no longer epistemically inferior to knowledge. Instead, it enjoys an objectivity that is genuinely cognitive. Therefore, Kant grants it a knowledge-like status and the status of a cognition that is not theoretical but "practical." The notion of *Glaube* presupposes representations that are true, but cognized in an indirect or "inferred" way. And because the representations of *Glaube* are not "less true" than the matters of fact, regarding the relation *Glaube* establishes to its objects, Kant uses the same term he uses with respect to the relation "matters of fact" establish with their objects, namely, "cognition." On RNR, thus, the transcendental philosopher, given the necessity of his assent to the postulates, can intellectually "conceive" that the progress towards the highest good is really possible.

With the introduction of reflective judgment, the transcendental philosopher does not merely intellectually "conceive" that there is God from the perspective of the truth of the moral law but also, given the work of reflective judgment and the limitations of our cognitive faculties, she is able to see it "displayed" in nature and is thus able to "perceive" it in nature. That which practical reason demands that we intellectually conceive as possible (the progress towards the realization of the final end of creation, the highest good) *receives its object* from reflective judgment in response to the needs of theoretical reason. In this respect, the objective reality of the Idea of the highest good accomplished by reflective judgment is not the same as the objective reality of the Idea of the highest good reached by rational necessitation from the need of practical reason (RNR). We can call the objective reality of the Idea of the highest good accomplished by reflective judgment "moral image realism" (MIR). On the surface it may seem contradictory to call "realism" a view according to which the world is an "image." However, "image" refers neither to some arbitrary creation of reason nor to a mere illusion of an instrumental sort, that is, the one that

reason generates given its practical needs. Instead, it refers to reason's principle of purposiveness, a rule reflective judgment heautonomously prescribes to itself and not to nature. In other words, it prescribes how it *ought to* proceed in its reflection on certain natural formations relative to the needs of our limited human cognitive capacities. The condition that is necessary for our theoretical representation of nature, reflective judgment's principle of purposiveness, is *the same* condition that is necessary for our representation of nature from a practical point of view. In other words, by representing nature as an organized system with the human being as its final end, reflective judgment creates an image of the world that serves as a schema-analogue of the Idea of the highest good, that is, it represents the world not only as a scene of theoretical exploration but also as a scene of action—the representation of the world as amenable to the realization of our moral ends.

More specifically, with respect to Kant's idea of historical progress, discussed by Professor Šoć, nature's purposiveness cannot be ascribed to nature in itself. It is something that we "add in thought" or a merely regulative Idea with respect to which we regard nature in analogy with human art, which is directed towards ends or purposes. Given its regulative status, from the theoretical point of view, this Idea does not have objective reality; that is, it does not determine the way nature is in itself. However, from the practical perspective, it is "dogmatic and well founded as to its reality". In other words, our "representation" (*ZeF*, 8: 362) of nature, by means of reflective judgment, as purposive and our representation of human history as indicating human moral progress, although they do not determine the way nature is in itself, have objective reality when considered from a 'practical point of view,' and they are not something we merely assume hypothetically at will, given some contingent pragmatic ends. With reflective judgment, the objects that 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 (i.e., we must represent human history teleologically in order to render it intelligible) and also serve as a schema, or its analogue, for the Ideas whose objects are normatively necessary in the practical sense (i.e., reflective judgment's representation of human historical progress serves as an analogue of the schema of the Idea of God's providence) the representation of human historical progress in Kant's philosophy of history can be referred to as, what I call, "moral image realism" (MIR)

2.2 Response to Monika Jovanović

I am very grateful to Professor Jovanović for her comments on my book and for engaging with my work (Jovanović 2025).

I find her comments regarding the implications of my work for contemporary aesthetics especially illuminating. I am also inclined to endorse her view that my interpretation of Kant's aesthetics could be

interpreted as a form of "aesthetic cognitivism." In fact, Kant refers to the presentations of the work of fine art as "kinds of cognition" (*Erkenntnisarten*) (*KU*, §44, 5: 305). Kant is here clearly paying tribute to Baumgarten and his view that aesthetic experience is a form of cognition. But although Kant may be alluding to Baumgarten, the cognitive aspect of aesthetic experience for Kant is consistent with his own theory of knowledge and his own Critical system.

Initially, Kant's claim that our experiences of works of art are "kinds of cognition" may seem puzzling when compared to his persistent contrary claims that aesthetic judgments, as non-determinative judgments, do not use the concepts of the understanding for the purpose of determining the intuition, and, hence, cannot yield cognition of the object. But the tension between Kant's insistence on the autonomy of aesthetic judgment (its non-determinative and, hence, non-cognitive aspect) and his claim that aesthetic experience nevertheless has a cognitive dimension is resolved when Kant's qualification of the latter as "*kinds* of cognition" is taken seriously (*KU*, §44, 5: 305, my emphasis—LO). The literature in Kant's aesthetics most commonly emphasizes a negative significance of the structural parallel between the Ideas of reason and aesthetic Ideas, that is, the fact that neither of them can yield knowledge in the proper Kantian sense. However, if we emphasize the positive significance of this structural parallel—that is, the fact that aesthetic Ideas serve as a sensuous counterpart of the Ideas of reason, or more precisely, the Idea of the highest good—then we can understand Kant's claim that presentations of works of fine art and beauty in general are "kinds of cognition." For cognition, it is not sufficient to have concepts, rather, those concepts require a corresponding intuition. The Ideas of reason cannot have a corresponding intuition in empirical reality. However, the experience of beauty and aesthetic Ideas evoked by the beauty of nature and art indirectly or analogically exhibit the Idea of the highest good. Thus, although beauty can never provide a direct intuition for the Idea of the highest good, it affords a "kind of cognition" insofar as it serves as an indirect or symbolic presentation of this Idea.

My claim that for Kant, aesthetic judgment indirectly exhibits the Idea of the highest good is relevant for understanding the role of the aesthetic *object* for providing an indirect exhibition of the supersensible. Because of the rule of causal reciprocity in our reflection on the given beautiful object, we are licensed to use this rule of causal reciprocity to represent or think the unknown causality of the Idea of the highest good that cannot have its corresponding object in the empirical reality. The beautiful object stands as a symbol of reciprocal causal relation in the community of virtuous individuals that further each other's ends. However, one must focus not only on the aesthetic object but also on the experiencing *subject*, that is, on the feeling of pure aesthetic pleasure and its logical ground, the free harmony of the faculties, in their role of

relating the sensible to the supersensible (*EEKU*, 20: 244). This is the feeling Kant sometimes refers to as the "feeling of life [*Lebensgefühl*]" (*KU*, §1, 5: 204). The imagination and understanding reciprocally animate each other (*KU*, §35, 5: 287) in their 'free play' and their reciprocal causal relation gives us license to place aesthetic feeling beside the Idea whose object cannot be given to us in inner intuition, whose object we cannot 'feel'—i.e., the Idea of the soul, the substance with the power of self-determination. In other words, their reciprocal causal relation gives us license for an indirect or analogical exhibition of a transcendent Idea. When the focus is on the experiencing subject (and not the aesthetic object in the world) the Idea that is indirectly schematized is the Idea of the "supersensible substrate" (*KU*, §59, 5: 353) of freedom.

I must, however, disagree with Professor Jovanović's description of the activity of the imagination, which facilitates Jovanović's indirect schematization of the Ideas of reason, including the Idea of the highest good, as being "very difficult, if not impossible, to describe this activity in a law-like or rule-based manner" (Jovanović 2025). If the activity of the imagination were to be arbitrary, it would be hard to assign to it any cognitive function. On the contrary, Kant argues that the schematizing activity of the imagination follows the rule of analogy, that is, it must be analogical or symbolic exhibition of the Idea of reason. In ch. 4 of my book, "Beauty as a Symbol of Morality: the 'Moral Image' of the 'Supersensible Without'," I discussed at length this formal aspect of symbolic presentation in Kant's aesthetic judgment, in other words, his notion of analogy as the rule or the principle of that indirect schematization, and therefore will not discuss it in this response.

Finally, I do agree with Professor Jovanović that the aesthetic experience of the sublime provides a connection to the "supersensible," namely, facing the obstacles in nature reminds one of one's own autonomy in the face of one's internal "obstacles" (i.e., inclinations). But the fact that the sublime provides the connection to the issue of freedom does not entail that it is relevant for the systematic concerns of the third *Critique*. The latter is focused on the causal efficacy of reason in nature and on the role of reflective judgment in representing reason as if it were present in nature. It presupposes nature's amenability to reason's ends and not its role in presenting obstacles to them.

2.3 Response to Ted Kinnaman

I greatly appreciate Professor Kinnaman's comments on my book (Kinnaman 2025). He understands that the main concern of the third *Critique* is to create space in transcendental philosophy for sensitivity to empirical discovery—specifically, the givenness of purposiveness in nature. His question is whether my book can accommodate that sensitivity. He worries that my focus on the role of imagination in reflective judgment and its activity of creating "schema-analogues" of the

Ideas of the supersensible "may not be sufficiently responsive to the in principle unpredictable appearance of purposiveness." I will proceed to show that Professor Kinnaman's concerns are unfounded.

I agree with Professor Kinnaman that contingency is crucial to reflective judgment, both in its aesthetic and teleological applications. This explains why we find pure aesthetic pleasure and joy in discovering empirical laws.

I have stressed this point enough in my book. In Chapter 5, "The Free Harmony of the Faculties and the Primacy of Imagination in Kant's Aesthetic Judgment," I criticize some commentators who underestimate the importance of the free harmony of the faculties in aesthetic judgment, which arises from a contingent fit between the manifold of imagination and understanding. Henry Allison, for example, argues that some form of logical reflection is also central to aesthetic reflection, and he views the "mutual agreement" (*Zusammenstimmung*) (*EEKU*, 20: 221) of imagination and understanding in aesthetic judgment as the fact that the imagination schematizes not a specific concept of understanding but the "form of a concept in general" (Allison 2001, 171). By this, he means a "pattern of order (form), which suggests an indeterminate number of possible schematizations (or conceptualizations), none of which is fully adequate, thereby prompting further reflection and engagement with the object" (Allison 2001, 51). Although Kant's text in many ways supports such 'multicognitive' interpretations of the free harmony, claiming that imagination "schematizes the form of a concept in general" diminishes the element of contingency in the agreement between understanding and imagination, which is, at the core of the principle of purposiveness. This is because the rule shown in the manifold must be understood as the rule of the understanding, meaning that, if not the rule of its single determinate concept, then as a rule of the concept of the object in its "general form". Additionally, on this view, schematization in aesthetic judgment is the function of our discursive capacities, just as in empirical concept formation. The main difference between the two processes of schematization is that the latter results in empirical concept formation, while the former results in an "as yet undetermined concept" without a specific content.

My alternative is to argue that the schematization in aesthetic judgment should not be directly equated with the schematization of the understanding. Instead, the connections of the manifold of the imagination aspire to present that which lies beyond the understanding, even though they contingently meet its demands.

In Ch. 7 "Kant's Account of Nature's Systematicity and the Unity of Theoretical and Practical Reason," I emphasize the self-referential nature of reflective judgment's normativity and the element of contingency in the agreement of the order of nature with our cognitive needs and capacities. This element of contingency could not come to the foreground in the Appendix to the Dialectic of the first *Critique* because reason's principle of systematicity was prescriptive of nature itself, al-

though "indirectly" (*KrV*, A665/B693), that is, it was not constitutive of experience as the a priori principles of the understanding. In the third *Critique*, nature surprises us in its regularity because this regularity of nature is not merely an outcome of the understanding applying its a priori rules to nature. Nature could have turned out to be so chaotic that understanding would not be capable of cognition. The fact that nature is structured to our advantage results in our "admiration" (*Bewunderung*) (*KU*, §62, 5: 365) of nature as also the thought that there is "something lying beyond those sensible representations, in which, although unknown to us, the ultimate ground of that accord [*Einstimmung*] could be found" (*KU*, §62, 5: 365). This is what Kant in the Appendix to the Dialectic of the first *Critique* called an "analogue of […] a schema" (*KrV*, A665/B693)—a representation, which is a product of the imagination, (in the first *Critique* under reason's rule of the principle of systematicity and in the third *Critique* under the reflective judgment's principle of logical purposiveness), and according to which all the objects of experience are approached as if originating in the highest intelligence. Thus, from the perspective of our *human* way of knowing or thinking, i.e., from the perspective of our "*human* point of view" (KU, §75, 5: 400; §76, 5: 403; my emphasis, L.O.), we must go beyond the certainties of determinative judgments and represent nature *as if* intentionally ordered.

Finally, in Ch. 7 "Organisms as Natural Ends and Reflective Judgment's Image of Externalized Freedom," I argue that to understand better how our representations of organisms as ends or purposes are "subjective," or relative to the needs of our discursive human understanding, we need to clarify how these organizations for Kant are "contingent" or "excessive" (überschwenglich) (*KU*, §74, 5: 396) for the determining power of judgment. If organisms are going to be a part of our rational and systematic cognition of nature, then reason demands that the relation of their parts not remain contingent but instead that it be represented as lawful. If we take Kant's example of a bird's anatomy (§61), then we find that the hollow structure of its bones, the placement of its wings, and of its tail are all directed to the purpose of flight. Without the concept of a purpose, e.g., flight, we could not find the necessary unity in the organization of a bird's anatomy. In addition to the properties of particular parts, we can also formulate the problem in relation to the unity of particular laws that govern the function of those individual parts. The unity of all the particular laws in, for example, the human eye is provided with its overall function or purpose, namely, to produce vision. Because organic formations remain *under*determined relative to our human discursive understanding which is limited to the laws of efficient causation, and because "[r]eason requires unity, hence lawfulness" (*KU*, §76, 5: 404) or necessity since organic formations must accord with the rest of nature and the unity of our experience, an appeal to a final causation is required. But given that organic formations are products of nature rather than of art, we cannot use the concept of an

end constitutively but only analogically in reflective judgment; i.e., we approach their organization *as if* it were a product of reason.

In sum, I have sufficiently emphasized in the book that all three types of reflective judgment's technical procedures – i.e., "logical" (*EEKU*, 20: 214), which represents nature as a system of unified laws; "real" (*EE*, 20: 232), which represents organisms as natural ends; and "formal" (*EE*, 20: 232), which elicits a feeling of pleasure in the judging subject – the principle of nature's purposiveness manifests itself in each case as the "lawfulness of the contingent as such" (*EE*, 20: 217). This emphasis on contingency is consistent with my claim that the imagination's activity also provides a connection to the moral aims of reason.

Where then might a misunderstanding between me and Professor Kinnaman be? It seems that Professor Kinnaman forgets that the principle of nature's purposiveness is a principle that reflective judgment prescribes heautonomously, that is, to itself, as a measure of correctness of its own procedure. It is not something that is "given" in nature. This does not entail that representations of reflective judgments are mere projections of reasons, illusions, aimed at satisfying reasons' own needs. On the contrary, reflective judgments' representations afford, if not an explanation, at least an "elucidation" (*Erörterung*) (*KU*, §78, 5: 412), which makes the functioning of an organism intelligible; they help us discover new empirical laws and make scientific progress possible. They evaluate an object with a demand for a universal agreement so that, in this evaluation, something new is learned about the object, namely, that it is beautiful. Thus, the fact that the representations of reflective judgments meet the demands of reason and are, in some respect, subjective is compatible with them being, in some respect, also objective or about the world. This is why I refer to these representations as "moral image realism."

2.4 Response to Luigi Filieri

I am very grateful to Professor Filieri for his careful reading of my book and especially for his thoughtful comments on its last chapter (Filieri 2025).

Professor Filieri objects that my interpretation of Kant's teleological progression of history does not sufficiently emphasize that the progress in human history is the result of our autonomy and, hence, is the "aim of freedom" and not the "aim of nature." My intention was never to deny that our representation of the progress of human history presupposes our autonomy. Below I proceed to clarify what may be the point of a possible misunderstanding.

First, I wish to clarify the context of my claim that Kant's account of human history pertains to the history of human culture and the progress of a the human being as a phenomenal being. Kant characterizes

his own philosophy as a "system, as it were, of the *epigenesis* of pure reason" (*KrV*, B 167). That Kant indeed had in mind something resembling an epigenetic account of reason is further reinforced by Kant's use of the language of 18th-century biology, by his reference to the progress of human social history as "develop[ing] completely the germs [*Keime*] of nature" (*IaG*, 8: 22), and by his characterizing reason as "grow[ing] steadily with advancing culture" (*ZeF*, 8: 380). It was difficult to reconcile Kant's notion of autonomy, which presupposes the noumenal ream, with the claims of historically developing rationality. But some commentators (e.g., Pauline Kleingeld) argued that it is neither reason nor morality that undergoes a historical process but our rational capacities for judging and acting morally. In contrast to the earlier stages of human social history, the man of the Enlightenment "understands the good perfectly" (*IaG*, 8: 28). The progress in understanding the rational foundation of our moral distinctions, argues Kleingeld, will contribute towards having more individuals with a virtuous disposition.

Kant, however, is explicit that moral progress in human social history does not entail that there will be more individuals with a virtuous disposition. In answering the question "What profit will progress toward the better yield humanity?" he writes the following: "Not an ever-growing quantity of *morality* with regard to intention, but an increase in the products of *legality* in dutiful actions whatever their motives" (*SF*, 7: 91). The progress for Kant consists in improvements made with respect to "external" and not "internal" lawgiving, that is, the union of individuals and states grounded on the principle of right, which will ensure that increasingly more good deeds will be done which may not necessarily be grounded in the good will.

Establishing civil society grounded on the rule of right helps control each human being's "malevolence," or acting with respect to others based on their inclinations whereby civil society receives a "moral veneer" (*ZeF*, 8: 376n). It is a "moral veneer" because the curbing of their inclinations is not due to them determining their will "internally," in accordance with the moral law but "externally" by civil laws grounded on the principle of right. However, grounding civic relations on the universal principle of right contributes to the development of the moral predisposition insofar as our sensibility will be increasingly more amenable to rational demands.

The progress will be complete once "the perfect art," or culture at the peak of its development, becomes indistinguishable from nature. This will be "the ultimate end" (*der letzte Zweck*) or the "ultimate goal" (*das letzte Ziel*) of the moral vocation of human kind as a natural species. In other words, this will be the point when the human natural predispositions, passions and sentiments, cultivated through arts and sciences, become universally shared sentiments, no longer in conflict with the feeling of respect for the moral law, and fully amenable to the unconditional demands of morality.

This progress towards eradication of the conflict between the human natural and moral predispositions still does not entail, that there will be more individuals with a virtuous *Gesinnung*. Even though the natural predispositions may progressively be less in conflict with the moral predisposition, they will always remain essentially distinct. Moreover, determining the will in accordance with the moral law is a question of freedom and one's intelligible character, into which we can have no insight. This is why Kant contends that, although the "final end" (*Endzweck*) of the human vocation is the realization of the highest good in the world, an ethical community, or a "people of God under ethical laws" (*RGV*, 6: 98), we cannot have a historical representation of the gradual establishment of the dominion of the good principle on earth. The determination of one's will in accordance with the moral law and moral *Glaube* that is grounded in it is "internal lawgiving" (*MM*, 6: 220). Only "external" or juridical lawgiving (*MM*, 6: 220), based on the principle of right, is manifested in the public institutions, the changes in which we represent as the outcome of the unique combination of "nature's aim" and human rational spontaneity. Thus, it is not as Professor Filieri contends, that, in my view, human freedom is not relevant for human history but that freedom belongs to the noumenal realm and, given our limited intellectual capacities, its progress cannot be historically represented by us. Hence, a universal history of the human race can only focus on the realm of culture: the gradual change in public institutions so that they shall be grounded on the principle of right, and the gradual removal of the conflict between the moral and natural human predispositions.

Therefore, Kant's allusion to epigenesis within the context of human history is neither related to 1) a natural progressive development of morality (i.e., increasingly greater number of individuals with moral *Gesinnung*), nor 2) a natural progressive development of freedom and reason as such. Instead, it refers to the development of our institutions which are increasingly based on the principle of right and the overcoming of the conflict between the human natural with the human moral predispositions. All this development takes place in space and time and in accordance with the laws of nature. However, just as in epigenetic explanations of development in biology, there is an aspect to this development that is atemporal and ahistorical (and therefore "preformed" in some sense), namely, human absolute freedom and morality, which belongs to the noumenal realm and is not the object of the historical progressive development but is nevertheless presupposed by it.

Finally, Professor Filieri claims that it is possible to have a truly Kantian and not Hegelian view of human history while at the same time maintaining that reason is situated historically and that "history of freedom is the work of humankind."

It was never my intention to argue that our representations of human history do not presuppose human freedom and autonomy. Instead, I argued that human autonomy is insufficient for representing human

progress. Contrary to some proto-Hegelian interpretations, Kant does not offer a picture of the self-sufficiency of moral agency, that is, of a moral agent who is aware that her own progress is the sole merit of her own reason and of the cumulative learning process from generation to generation. Learning, according to Kant, comes "from above" (*Anth*, 7: 328) and not from below. In other words, "nature within the human being strives to lead him from culture to morality, and not (as reason prescribes) beginning with morality and its law, to lead him to a culture designed to be appropriate to morality" (*Anth*, 7: 328). Kant denies the possibility of establishing a world history based on human intentions that belong to the intelligible, not the phenomenal, realm. For Kant, human progress towards its moral vocation requires on our part the affirmation of *both* autonomous human rational agency and something that surpasses it and will cooperate in the realization of our moral ends. The latter is the object of our *belief* (*Glaube*), which is strengthened by reflective judgment.

Kant's writings by abbreviations used for German titles with corresponding translations

Anth *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*. 1798. ["Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View." In *Immanuel Kant Anthropology, History, and Education*, trans. Allen W. Wood, eds. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden, 227–420. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2013.]

EEKU *Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Nachlass. [First Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, ed. Paul Guyer, 3–51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.]

FM *Welches sind die wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnitzens und Wolf's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?* 1793/1804 ["What real progress has metaphysics made in Germany since the time of Leibniz and Wolff?" In *Immanuel Kant Theoretical Philosophy After 1781*, trans. Peter Heath, eds. Henry Allison and Peter Heath, 349–384. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.]

IaG *Idee zur einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*. 1784. ["Idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan aim." In *Immanuel Kant Anthropology, History, and Education*, trans. Allen W. Wood, eds. Günter Zöller and Robert B. Louden, 108–120. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.]

KpV *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*. 1788. ["Critique of practical reason." In *Immanuel Kant Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor, 138–271. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.]

KrV *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. 1st edn. [A] 1781; 2nd edn. [B] 1787. [*Critique of Pure Reason*, eds. and trans. Allen W. Wood and Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.]

KU *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. 1st edn., 1790; 2nd edn. 1793; 3rd edn. 1799. [*Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.]

MS *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*. 1st edn. 1797; 2nd edn. 1798. ["The metaphysics of morals." In *Immanuel Kant Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor, 363-603. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.]

RGV *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*. 1st edn. 1793; 2nd edn. 1794. ["Religion within the boundaries of mere reason." In *Immanuel Kant Religion and Rational Theology*, eds. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, 39–215. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.]

SF *Der Streit der Fakultäten*. 1798. ["The conflict of the faculties." In *Immanuel Kant Religion and Rational Theology*, eds. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, 239–309. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.]

ZeF *Zum ewigen Frieden*. 1795. ["Toward perpetual peace." In *Immanuel Kant Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor, 317–351. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.]

ZEKU *Zweite Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft*. [Second Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews, ed. Paul Guyer, 59–83. Cambridge: Cambridge

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