Ido Geiger, *Kant and the Claims of the Empirical World. A Transcendental Reading of the Critique of the Power of Judgment*

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Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (CPJ) is a puzzling work of philosophy. Although set to unify Kant's critical system, it is often described as a disunified patchwork of diverse topics. Geiger's new monograph is a remarkable attempt at providing a philosophically compelling interpretation of this work. It should be immediately noted that Geiger's book is one of the most significant publications on the CPJ in recent decades. It treats the philosophical material with exegetical rigor and masterful scholarship while defending an original, well-argued, and thought-provoking interpretation. In what follows, I briefly review this work and identify some challenges to it.

The main thesis defended in the book is that the assumption of purposiveness of nature is a transcendental condition of experience. I shall call this thesis "PTC." As Kant notoriously puts it in the Introductions to the CPJ, the transcendental conditions laid out in the *Critique of Pure Reason* are insufficient to determine an empirical order of nature. While this is an often-acknowledged point, few interpreters have analysed its far-ranging implications. Geiger proposes that PTC is (1) a unifying thought of CPJ and, as the completion of the critical project, it also (2) allows the transition from the theoretical to the practical realm of Kant's system. The book almost exclusively focuses on (1). Let me briefly remark that while Geiger concedes that the unity provided by his book is "partial" (p. 50), some further elaboration on the relation between (1) and (2) as well as on (2) would have helped readers better understand the scope and strength of the proposed account (some of this work can, however, be found in supporting papers of the author; see notes 2 and 3 of Introduction).

How does Geiger articulate PTC? In short, PTC has two key dimensions: a conceptual and an aesthetic one. The first four chapters of the book cover the conceptual dimension of PTC, whereas the fifth chapter discusses its aesthetic dimension. Both dimensions include necessary conditions of experience. This a strong claim even for "transcendental" readings of CPJ since it puts the latter at the very centre of the critical project—as dealing with the possibility of experience as such rather than with specific experiences of beauty or teleology (as one may read, for example, Zuckert 2007's "transcendental" interpretation). Below I will take a closer look at the main line of argument (although there is much more to learn from other aspects of the book that I cannot discuss here).

In the first chapter, Geiger argues that the deduction of the principle of purposiveness in the Introductions is in fact only introductory. He fittingly points out two major flaws of Kant's notoriously brief deduction of the principle of purposiveness: (i) Kant does not explain why experience must take the form of a system of concepts; and, more importantly, (ii) he does not explain why a transcendental principle must be assumed. Before answering these questions, Geiger focuses on teleological judgments about organisms and argues that they are examples of the ultimate concern of CPJ, namely the purposiveness of nature as a whole. The approach results in an "instrumental" view of the teleology of organisms. While Geiger recognizes that Kant's analysis of teleology has important philosophical value (p. 64), it can at best "reveal rather than ground" PTC (p. 87) since it is based on the contingent fact that we judge some phenomena teleologically. In chapter 2, Geiger argues that although we must resort to intentional language when explaining organisms, the latter only concerns the description of the explananda and does not commit us to an ontological claim—all causal explanations being mechanical for Kant (a claim the author later clarifies; see below). The result of this approach is that the necessity of teleological judgments only attaches to some form of human language (thereby side-lining the role of a possible distinct kind of causality with respect to organisms). In chapter 3, Geiger expands his account of teleology to the Dialectic. He argues that there is no real conflict between the maxims of teleology and mechanism. The conflict only concerns the corresponding determinative claims, which are not principles of reflective judgment. The solution is elegant although it leaves somewhat unexplained why Kant emphasizes the antinomial nature of reflective judgement itself.

It is in the fourth chapter that Geiger provides a solution to (i) and (ii) above. First, that experience must take the form of systematicity is grounded in the discursivity of our understanding. Human understanding is such that it cognizes objects by subsuming particulars under universal concepts. Hence, ideally, empirical cognition takes the form of a complete system of concepts. Second, discursivity explains why conceptual PTC must be assumed. The reason is that only a complete system of concepts grounds claims to an objective order of nature. For Geiger, PTC must therefore underlie any determinative judgments in their claims to objectivity. Finally, discursivity also explains what seems to be a mere assumption in Kant's philosophy, namely that all causal explanations are mechanistic, i.e. they must proceed from simpler parts (the higher concepts in a complete system) to complex wholes. These three claims combined have an important upshot, namely that empirical knowledge is in a strong sense fallible and revisable since it is grounded in PTC as a regulative assumption.

Let me briefly assess these claims. I think that the identification of discursivity as the cognitive ground of the conceptual PTC sheds much light on the argumentative structure of CPJ. However, I wish to challenge the justification of the claim that the assumption of conceptual PTC is Kant's commitment to objectivity. Geiger is aware of the problems of systematic considerations in grounding objectivity (since it is possible to think of laws that do not contribute to the simplicity or strength of a system) and rightly claims that the conceptual system that Kant is talking about is the one tracking genuine causal laws. But it should be noted that this claim falls short of a non-circular justification of objectivity—it simply stipulates that the conceptual system we assume is the objective one. Indeed, for Geiger, Kant posits an isomorphic relation between the parts and wholes of what is conceived and their concepts "as themselves parts and wholes" (p. 128). In other words, when we properly explicate the marks of a concept, we also explain a real whole in terms of its 'parts'. While Kant may well subscribe to this or some version of this view, more analysis should be carried out. It is a question of its own, for example, whether and how causal parts of wholes correspond to conceptual marks (since causality and parthood are different relations). And one may doubt that simpler marks of a concept afford objective explanations of phenomena. After all, simplicity is a desideratum of our cognizing—not a warrant of objectivity.

Geiger's reply to the above challenge may be to qualify the claim to objectivity as a claim to a revisable and fallible kind of objectivity (see section 4.4.5). I think that this move, while legitimate, comes with a high price. For it entails that any determinative judgment is based on a regulative assumption that only guarantees its indeterminate revisability. In other words, conceptual PTC may jeopardize the claim to objectivity of even the most trivial determinative judgments. Note here a disanalogy between judgments about organisms and judgments about nature as a whole. While in the former case it is possible that the assumption of purposiveness is instrumental to finding mechanical laws, in the latter the assumption of PTC cannot be a mere tool to finding objective explanations since, on Geiger's account, PTC *is* our very commitment to objectivity.

The second dimension of PTC, i.e. aesthetic purposiveness of nature, is presented in the last, rich chapter of the book. The main claim defended is that pure judgments of taste offer a first delineation of nature into objects, making possible a provisional parsing of nature. More specifically, Geiger interprets the harmony of the faculties expressed by aesthetic judgments as the "promissory feeling that a sensible manifold can be brought under concepts" (p. 168). This feeling, shared by all humans, corresponds to a non-conceptual grasp of nature that necessarily precedes cognition of nature. Such non-conceptual grasp targets spatial forms and identifies beautiful forms as those that are typical of natural kinds (thereby providing "empirical schemata" that may lead us to the discovery of conceptual systems). As a result, we aesthetically carve up nature into objects that are exemplary of natural kinds.

Some interpreters doubt that aesthetic judgment concerns cognition at all. For instance, Henrich (1992) assumes that the process through which objects are cognized by us cannot be the same process according to which objects are perceived aesthetically. Geiger questions this assumption and provides a strong case for how conceptual and non-conceptual resources jointly make empirical cognition possible. However, one may resist some of the claims defended by the author. A first challenge runs as follows. In the author's view, aesthetic PTC provides empirical schemata that allow us to apply concepts of systematicity to intuition (an element that the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason* could not provide; see section 5.3.3). But I think this is a perplexing claim for, even if we concede that spatial forms are prototypes of natural kinds, they still do not seem to correspond to concepts of systematicity (which, properly speaking, are "ideas of reason"). It is one thing to say that we identify a spatial form as the schema of "dog," and another to say that there is a systematic order of the genus "dog"—the latter claim seems to have no obvious spatial counterpart. Relatedly, I find it somewhat unsatisfactory that the schemata of PTC are spatial forms in their "promise," as it were, of natural kinds, rather than natural kinds themselves. It seems to me that purposiveness is an assumption concerning what kinds of things, beside their contingent features, really are in nature.

A possible response for Geiger might be (similarly to the reply above) to emphasize the revisability of cognition (i.e., to say that aesthetic PTC is only a first step in cognition), but it is unclear how aesthetic judgment positively contributes to cognition. For suppose that aesthetic judgments afford a provisional parsing of objects. This does not seem a first step in cognition but a fallible and often misleading aspect of our epistemic access to the world. In other words, I am not sure what the epistemic value of sorting objects in this way would be. If we get cognition at all, it is precisely because we overcome first-hand parsing of things. Perhaps, however, one can still maintain that aesthetic PTC is a first step in cognition inasmuch as it "initiates" the process of cognizing, without itself contributing to it.

In the conclusion, Geiger recognizes that textual evidence may be insufficient to settle whether his interpretation of aesthetic PTC is exegetically correct. However, he thinks there are good philosophical reasons to hold it. In short, we can extract from Kant the thesis that pre-conceptual observations of similarity ground concept acquisition if they are part of an ongoing, rational investigation. For Geiger, this thesis offers a promising account of concept acquisition since (a) it avoids presupposing outright conceptualism about experience (the necessary aesthetic condition of experience being nonconceptual); and (b) it does not fall prey to the "Myth of the Given", i.e. taking mere facts to be norms, because any factual deliverance of aesthetic judgment is subject to further investigation (p. 212). These last claims do much to clarify the normative dimension of PTC, i.e. that a complete and causally informative system of concepts is not something we will ever possess but rather a regulative demand of science. It is such a demand, not the mere fact that we form concepts, that makes the empirical world accessible for cognition. Although briefly developed in the conclusion, this Kantian account of concept acquisition has potential for various applications and may well deserve further exploration in the author's future work.

Kant and the Claims of the Empirical World is set to become a classic in the literature on Kant and especially on CPJ. This is not to say that it will get everyone to agree—it defends novel and sometimes bold claims that will generate replies. But this is a quality to be expected of any highly original philosophical work (a quality that will itself spur investigation of Kant), especially one dealing with one of the most enigmatic works in the canon of Western philosophy.

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