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The Synthetic Unity of Reason and Nature in the Third Critique

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I advance a new interpretation of the argumentative structure of the third *Critique*, which in turn clarifies the connection between its two apparently unrelated parts. I propose to read the third *Critique* as a response to Kant's question of hope, which concerns the satisfaction of reason's practical and theoretical interests. On this proposal, while the first part on aesthetics describes what *we*—as possessors of theoretical reason—may hope for, the second part, on teleology, describes what *we*—as possessors of practical reason—may hope for. The main question of the third *Critique* is, 'What may *we* hope if we act as we should, i.e. act rationally?' Kant's implicit answer is, 'to attain the ideals of reason, which leads to happiness as a consequence of it.' This novel reconstruction of the argumentative structure of the third *Critique* contributes to the literature by (i) explaining how the two parts of the third *Critique* on aesthetics and teleology are connected, (ii) clarifying how the ideals of reason are connected to hope and happiness, and (iii) showing how the spheres of nature and freedom can be synthetically unified through the faculty of judgment.

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Introduction

One of the main questions regarding Kant's third *Critique* concerns how its two parts, the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment and the Critique of Teleological Judgment, are connected to each other.¹ Kant does not explain the relationship between aesthetics and teleology explicitly, which has led to scepticism regarding the unity of this text. Due to the mysterious relationship between the parts on aesthetics and teleology, some scholars simply deny the existence of a unifying principle.² Others prefer to deal with each part separately, and thereby, focus on either aesthetics or teleology exclusively.³ Scholars who seek a unifying theme or principle, on the other hand, disagree on the concept or principle that unifies the two parts.⁴ According to some

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