

*Kant's Aesthetic Epistemology: Form and World.* By Fiona Hughes. Pp. viii, 324, Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

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Perhaps the deepest and most important philosophical question is the question of the relation between mind and world. This question permeates Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Fiona Hughes' *Kant's Aesthetic Epistemology* deals head on with this particular issue as it arises in the first *Critique*.

One of Hughes' most important claims is that we need to look to Kant's third *Critique*, the *Critique of Judgement* (a work on aesthetics) in order to properly complete and understand the position of the first *Critique* (insofar as that can be considered a work of epistemology). This claim is defended particularly in Chapters 5, 7 and 8, where Hughes builds a convincing and admirably meticulous case.

It is hard to recommend this book to those with a general interest in the relation between mind and world. One reason is that the book is very much one for Kant scholars. That a lot of background knowledge on Kant is required for getting the most of this book is evident in the first two chapters where Hughes delves, with a critical eye, into the secondary literature on Kant's *Transcendental Analytic*, which contains some of the most perplexing passages of philosophy ever written.

Hughes' book although philosophically rich in its interpretation doesn't attempt to vindicate or justify the interesting position it ascribes to Kant. This is perhaps another reason why it would not be of interest to those outside of Kant scholarship, however Hughes' book should, without doubt, be read by Kant scholars. It deserves interest not only because of its intrinsic quality and interpretation, but also because of its critical discussion of much secondary literature on Kant's first and third *Critiques*.

In the opening chapters Hughes criticises a tendency to read Kant such that the position that emerges puts too much of the mind into the world (i.e. is too "subjectivist"). The reading involves the view that the form in which the world appears to us is imposed on it by the mind in a problematic way – in a way such that we lose a grip on the idea that there might be anything other than mind, i.e. extra-mental reality of some sort. Interestingly Hughes finds the tendency towards subjectivism, in some form or other, in disparate readings of Kant (e.g. those by Strawson, Guyer, Allison and Longuenesse to name just a few).

To get a more sympathetic position from Kant's first *Critique* Hughes is surely right to avoid the subjectivist tendency, but it is not clear to me that she is right to identify it in some of the scholars she discusses, for instance in Longuenesse. Kant takes it that there are forms of sensibility, that is, forms in which we intuit things (famously, space and time). Longuenesse has an interesting reading of Kant which identifies what Kant calls "the understanding" as in some sense being the ultimate source of the form of sensibility. Whether or not Longuenesse is right in this reading it is puzzling that Hughes thinks this 'would be very close to saying that the data of sensibility has its source in the mind itself' (p. 75). This simply doesn't follow, and moreover Longuenesse is quite explicit about Kant's distinction between form and matter (see her *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, especially Chapters 2 and 8).

However Hughes is right to emphasise the importance of considering the extra-mental in Kant's philosophy, especially if that means, as it does for Hughes, taking into account the way in which Kant might not be a problematic subjectivist. Hughes develops her own interpretation in Chapters 3 and 4. The interpretation is complex, as are the passages from which it is drawn (i.e. the "Transcendental Aesthetic" and the "Transcendental Analytic", in particular the two-editions of the *Transcendental Deduction of the Categories*).

A key feature of Hughes' interpretation is that there are extra-mental but still *empirical* objects which affect us (these Hughes calls "aesthetic" or "sensory" givens). This is an anti-subjectivist picture since it admits objects that don't have, as far as their existence is concerned, a mental source.

Hughes' way getting the extra-mental in the picture is intriguing, since she doesn't identify the extra-mental with Kant's notorious "things in themselves". This is helpful insofar as for Kant things in themselves are that of which we can know nothing and hence to assign them the role of affecting us so as to secure some extra-mental ground for experience would be internally unstable. However, Hughes' ultimate position doesn't say very much at all about these mysterious entities (or aspects)

that Kant clearly *does* posit, and posit as in *some sense* grounding the world as it appears. Hughes needs to say more.

Further features of Hughes' interpretation are also worthy of discussion. For example, the way in which for Kant the imagination makes possible synthesis, and how this is the case in both editions of the *Transcendental Deduction of the Categories*. Furthermore, Hughes takes the *Critique of Judgement* to be crucial in clarifying the role of the imagination in Kant's philosophy. This view Hughes presents as part of Kant's complex theory of mind where mental activity conditions the possibility of experience through the dynamic interaction of a plurality of orientations, none of which are privileged (experience also requires, of course, the sensory given). Alas the crucial notion of a mental "orientation" is unclear to the point where it is hard to know what this theory of mind amounts to.

There is another respect in which Hughes argues that the third *Critique* complements Kant's epistemological story, namely that aesthetic judgement is revelatory of the conditions of the possibility of cognition (i.e. cognitive judgement), without itself being a species of cognitive judgement. So even Kant's account of *aesthetic* judgement (in a work on aesthetics) makes a contribution to his own epistemological project. The way in which Hughes maps out and argues for the connections between Kant's epistemology and aesthetics is a significant contribution which, I hope, will generate much discussion.