

RESEARCH STATEMENT – NATHAN BAUER

Much of my current work in philosophy builds upon the foundation of my dissertation: *Kant's Transcendental Deductions of the Categories*. This ongoing project lies at the intersection of my two main research areas: Kant's theoretical philosophy and Kantian approaches to contemporary issues in epistemology. In my dissertation, and in several recent articles, I have developed an account of the relationship between our sensible and intellectual capacities for knowledge—a relationship in which the intellectual concepts of understanding are essentially involved in our sensible perceptions of the world. This account is meant to serve both as a plausible reading of Kant and as a defensible theory of perception and intentionality.

I am currently working on a new article that employs this basic account to explain Kant's decision to rewrite the Deduction for the second edition of the *Critique*. This work, titled "**Representing the Categories: Kant's Rewriting of the Transcendental Deduction**," will focus on Kant's remarkable decision to rewrite this core argument of the first *Critique*. Comparison of the differences and similarities between the two versions is very illuminating. I offer a novel explanation of Kant's decision to recast the argument. I claim that he was unhappy with the original Deduction because it relies, in part, on a merely negative argumentative strategy. That is, Kant arrives at his own position by an indirect *reductio* argument, eliminating the available alternatives. He later confessed to misgivings about this approach (as did one of his earliest critics), and the changes in the new version of the Deduction are best understood as allowing for a more positive defense and explanation of his own position.

In the former paper, I am focused on achieving a proper understanding of Kant's critical system, by applying my general account of the connection between our sensible and intellectual faculties to specific parts of his theory. I believe, however, that this account also bears upon contemporary philosophical issues. For example, I am currently working on a paper titled "**Confronting Skepticism with Kant**," in which I examine Kant's understanding of how one should respond to Humean skepticism—both as way of clarifying the argumentative strategy of the Deduction and as a plausible strategy for addressing certain contemporary forms of skepticism.

The above work forms the core of my current research program, but I also have a number of active and planned projects that reflect my broader research interests. One such project extends my research to another area of interest: ancient philosophy. Having repeatedly taught and studied the *Republic*, I have always found it puzzling that, near the end of the dialogue, Plato seems to take back his account of a tripartite soul, so central to his theory of justice, because it is at odds with the simplicity required of immortal things. This is a longstanding puzzle, and I am not satisfied with the proposed solutions in the secondary literature. In a paper to be titled "**Departed Souls: Contradiction in Plato's Account of the Just Soul**," I develop and defend a new solution to the problem, one that appeals to Plato's views on harmony.

In another project, I apply features of my reading of the Deduction to better understand Kant's moral philosophy. This paper has the working title, "**Respecting the Law: Two Sides of Duty in Kant's Groundwork**." In it I compare Kant's distinction between objective and subjective sides of the Deduction with his distinction, in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, between objective and subjective aspects of duty. There are some revealing parallels between these two distinctions, and just as the former, properly understood, illuminates the structure of the Deduction, the latter distinction between the two aspects of duty brings clarity to the complicated ar-

gumentative structure of the *Groundwork*. It also highlights the importance of Kant's notion of respect as the subjective, motivating ground of our ethical lives. This topic reflects a broader concern of mine to map out structural affinities between Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy that have often gone unnoticed.

I am also very interested in Kant's views on animals, both as beings capable of something analogous to experience and as beings deserving of our moral concern. The former topic is often raised as a problem—both for Kant and for Kant-influenced philosophers such as McDowell. If, following Kant, we take our perceptions to be inherently concept-laden, then it might seem that we are committed to the absurd view that animals, who lack the relevant concepts, are therefore incapable even of perception. In fact, Kant was aware of this objection. By considering his scattered remarks on animal cognition as well as contemporary criticisms of broadly Kantian views of perception, I will show that there is solid textual support for the Kantian position I am defending. This position, I claim, leaves room for a meaningful notion of animal perception, while still recognizing how the human power of reason radically transforms our perceptual capacities. I suggest that the Kantian distinction between human and animal cognition is obscured by our presumption of a Hume-inspired empiricist model of knowledge. I plan to pursue this topic in a paper tentatively titled “**So Humean an Animal: Kant on the Conditions of Non-Rational Sensibility.**”

Animals are also a problem for Kantian ethics, given its firm grounding in rationality. Kant notoriously claimed that we have no direct duties toward animals, and that treating animals cruelly is wrong only because it makes us more likely to be cruel to other people. I am currently co-writing a paper on this topic with David Svolba, an ethicist at Fitchburg State University. We hope to show that there are the resources, within Kantian ethics, for a more satisfying and direct account of our duties toward nonhuman animals, focusing on a connection between our common capacities for suffering and agency and Kant's rationally-grounded concern for universality. This work is tentatively titled “**Rehabilitating Kant on the Moral Value of Animals.**”

Looking further ahead, a more ambitious and long-term project I wish to pursue concerns the resurgence of naturalism in philosophy of perception and mind. It seems to me that there are some very interesting parallels between recent naturalistic readings of Kant and nineteenth-century psychologistic readings of him. In both cases these readings of Kant reflect broader trends in philosophy at that time, and in both cases these readings get Kant wrong. Kant, I will argue, is opposed to forms of philosophical naturalism that leave no room for genuine, rational normativity. This is a broad topic, one that will lead to several articles, if not a book. This project, like those discussed above, involves the intersection of Kant scholarship and contemporary topics in epistemology. As should be evident by now, this is a central theme of my work in philosophy.