Between Beauty and Duty: Ethics and Judgment in Camus and Kant

Identifer
etd-07032015-163206

Alex Donovan Cole, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

Degree
Master of Arts (MA)

Department
Political Science

Document Type
Thesis

Abstract
The ideas of Albert Camus and Immanuel Kant are not often thought of as sharing pronounced similarities. However, both thinkers are deeply concerned with role of aesthetics in moral, and subsequently, political life. According to each, taste is a faculty whereby one is able to develop the “moral insight” needed for the flourishing of a robust, thoughtful, ethical individual. Yet, both Camus and Kant utilize highly divergent methodologies in going about this. Camus prefers the artistic form and poetic language offered by the novel and Kant prefers the logical rigor of critical philosophical arguments. This thesis hopes to reveal that this methodological chasm allows one thinker to express what the other cannot. Camus is able to artistically and beautifully express the absurdity of moral life in such a way that is ripe with personal resonance and meaning; while Kant is able to philosophically ground Camus’ concerns in a logically thorough manner. Utilizing the novels of Camus and the works of Kant, this thesis posits that Camus and Kant are complimentary thinkers, each in need of one another in order to express a more nuanced conception of politics in which judgment and aesthetic taste play a key role. Such a project also hopes to demonstrate the importance of aesthetics and artistic expression in the maintenance of a just political order.

Date
2015

Document Availability at the Time of Submission
Release the entire work immediately for access worldwide.

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/3651

Committee Chair
Eubanks, Cecil
judgement issues a claim to subjective universal validity, i.e. a demand that everybody should share the mental state and feeling of the subject when cognising this object. Kantian ethics refers to a deontological ethical theory ascribed to the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. The theory, developed as a result of Enlightenment rationalism, is based on the view that the only intrinsically good thing is a good will; an action can only be good if its maxim – the principle behind it – is duty to the moral law. Central to Kant's construction of the moral law is the categorical imperative, which acts on all people, regardless of their interests or desires. Kant formulated the