

Pleasure of body, order of mind. Kantian remarks about the contemporary theory of emotions

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to focus on a Kantian “emotional consciousness”, connected to the aesthetic and affective subjectivity exposed in the *Critique of Judgment* and related to some issues concerning contemporary theories of emotions. This essay will try to valorise Kantian anthropological emotions [*Affekten*], that “prepare” the treatment of the pleasure of beauty as a *free game* through a homeostatic balance of bodily sensations. The first part will analyse the concept of Kantian *animus*, seeing how the Kantian perspective on regulative and evaluative emotions offers suggestions on the *appraisal theory*. The second part will try to connect Kantian sensible pleasure with some theories of emotion embodied in contemporary *enactivism*. The last part of the paper, starting from the concept of pleasure as a specific mental activity, will deepen the Kantian conception of “emotional causality” as an essential point of interest for the debate in the contemporary philosophy of emotions, between cognitivism and affectivism.

KEYWORDS

Immanuel Kant, emotions, evaluation, causality, self-regulation

1. “*Affect works like water that breaks through a dam*”: An introduction to a Kantian conception of emotions

It is only recently and starting from contemporary developments of the mind-body problem, that some transcendental readings related to emotions have emerged; both as reflections on the theoretical and empirical gains offered by cognitive sciences and neurosciences and as a return to the philosophical tradition of the past or as a meta-theoretical discourse on affectivity. If this ambit of research has been investigated mostly by phenomenological scholars, the Kantian critical interpretation has begun to take its first steps within themes related to emotion, especially starting from studies on moral motivation – a topic that in recent years has acquired decisive im-

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portance in deontological ethics and the ethics of virtue, following the translations in English of the *Anthropological Lectures* above all. Specifically, these last interpretative perspectives have rehabilitated the themes of moral feeling or respect (*Achtung*) according to the idea that in Kant there is a mediated control of emotions given by the cultivation of some natural and habitual moral presuppositions (Guyer 1997; Sherman 2014). Conversely, interpretive positions have questioned the value of emotions within Kant's critical effort, either by relegating them to the level of obscure representations or, again, by reducing their status, principally about the role of pure reason in its theoretical and practical use. These lectures have emphasized a single intellectual pleasure connected to a *need* (*Bedürfnis*) or an aesthetic feeling deepened only starting from a transcendental investigation (Failla & Sánchez Madrid, eds. 2021). On the other hand, the interpretative work of the scholars who think about identity between emotion and feeling leads to readings of them as autonomous mental states, disconnected from the body and different from the emotional models linked to judgments and beliefs (Cohen 2020). To preserve itself from the most recent neo-Jamesian formulations, such as somatic or reductionist conception, Kantian emotion, in these interpretations, is defined exclusively as a feeling of aesthetic pleasure, which would have the function of ascertaining the activity of the faculties of the mind.

Compared to the phenomenological tradition, it is evident that the Kantian position on emotions, in its connection to environment, mind, and body, is still an ambit of research that is little explored. Another reason for this 'forgetfulness' in the literature of emotions is that Kant does not offer a systematic taxonomy of emotions in his works (Sorenson 2002) and does not seem to have a theory independent from a cognitive or moral consideration in mind. From a lexical point of view, some terms such as *Begierde*, *Neigung*, and *Leidenschaft*, are often associated with emotion in the broad sense, although they are quite deceptive as they are linked to the sphere of inclinations and desires. Still, others as *Affekt*, *Gefühl*, or *Rührung*, are delimited within an aesthetic and anthropological treatment. Furthermore, Kant often refers to an active emotional movement, the *Motion des Gemüths*, understood as an inner motion, e.g. *innere Motion*, *Gemüthsbewegung*, or, again, to the word *Erregung*, aimed at explaining the nervous process of excitation or a physiological change that is exemplified by mechanical cause. In these last cases, the Kantian interest in the dynamism of the psycho-corporeal sphere, which also refers to the theme of the strength (*Kraft*) of substances of a scholastic ap-

proach and to those reactive processes that explain biological life, is evident. Again, an interpretation of *Gemüth*, taken in a more general sense, means to interpret Kantian affectivity immediately connected to the body and corporeity.

According to the most common interpretations of the terms mentioned, emotion for Kant does not belong to the field of simple perception, e.g. the *Wahrnehmung*, which is an empirical sensation, nor properly to the feeling, e.g. *Gefühl*, but it seems to connect to affection, e.g. *Affekt*, which emerges through the body and is only partly related to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, *Lust/Unlust*. Indeed, while some emotional states seem to have some ethical and anthropological value, intuited and achievable, others seem even incompatible with practical (such as passions) and theoretical (as in the case of mental illnesses and their emotional relapses) reason. More specifically, while feeling concerns the system of reason, as it is defined as a specific faculty that supports desire and knowledge, emotion touches the empirical dimension of human subjectivity, included in its bodily structure, located and connected to inclinations that are temporally rapid and qualitatively discontinuous, that “quickly grows to a degree of feeling that makes reflection impossible (it is thoughtless)” (*Anthr.*, p. 252; transl., p. 150), without involving the sphere of sensation, which is not the object of critical-transcendental attention, and without including the practical or aesthetic reflection. Affections are precipitous and rapid states, opposite to passions which instead tend to take root in the soul, and Kant lists among them joy, sadness or affliction, fear, anger, and classifying them as exciting states or as depressive states. Health, for example, is promoted mechanically by nature through several affects: “*laughing* and *crying*, in particular, belong here, – says Kant – anger is also a fairly reliable aid to digestion” (*ivi*, p. 261; transl., p. 161), because they relax and harmonise the life force (*Lebenskraft*), and it regulates the natural and biological state of the animal species. It is therefore clear how many “anthropological” emotions have an essentially dynamic and bodily component, unlike the pleasure of beauty which has only a secondary physical consequence.

Now, in contrast with the traditional marginalisation of Kantian *Affekten* in literature, I will point out some remarks provided by anthropological writings, excluding *Gefühl*'s broader theme from my discussion, while trying to understand if this perspective can be said to be useful for the contemporary theory of emotions. What I would like to suggest in this paper will be a description of a possible *regulatory and evaluative character* of the Kantian perspective on

elementary and natural emotions, not understanding this position simply as a proposal aimed at enhancing the affective sphere as an expressively immediate result of inclinations and instincts, but as the basis for an integral reflection on the body, environment, and mind. To advance this interpretative hypothesis, I will try to read Kantian emotions starting from an investigation of the concept of *animus* (*Gemüth*) (2) and sensible pleasure (*Angenehm*) (3), seeing how they, i.e. emotions, depend on an original affective dimension that is strongly naturalised and they activate a process of natural self-regulation, in which the homeostatic conservation of biological life (*Leben*) and the tension towards the achievement of a balance of emotional sensations prefigure that harmonisation of the transcendental faculties, explained in the subject as a promotion of life (e.g. the feeling of pleasure for the beauty that is connected to it). In this way, my discussion will aim to show the presence of emotional causality, connected to but different from the sentimental subjectivity exposed in the *Critique of Judgment*, which is interesting for the current research on emotions (4).

2. *The Kantian animus and the regulation of emotion between body and environment*

The principle of *Gemüthsbewegung*, or *Gemüth* (*animus*), is crucial in my hypothesis of Kantian regulative emotion for three reasons: it is a natural and pre-cognitive ambit that connects human beings and animals; it is an affective dimension that can distinguish a pleasant sensation from an unpleasant one in an elementary way, maintaining the first state and omitting the latter; it is a biological (Zammuto 2018) and anthropological structure (Teruel 2013) that reconnects the system of faculties through a vitalistic and epigenetic interpretation (Meld Shell 2014) of the mind and in close relation with the body. This principle is for Kant a *site* of the human mind where concepts, ideas, and conative representations are connected, in the empirical and transcendental sense (Beck 1969). This intermediate dimension is always available to activate in a reactive sense, that is, react to a stimulus through an immediate response and, at the same time, be able to reflect on this emotional state of excitement and conscious activation. However, it is not just this. This reflexive structure, passive and active at the same time, is also connected to a temporal structure of perceptions of the inner sense,²

² Since our representation can be directed as much to the objects of the inner sense (oneself and one's states, and by which one is aware of oneself), as to those of the ex-

which Kant believes is shared, as far as the concept of animality is concerned, even with non-rational animals,³ because all living beings, according to the empirical law of association, connect the representations of the inner sense, which also has an emotional influence on feeling and the faculty of desire (*Briefwechsel*, Bd. 10, p. 52) Last but not least, *Gemüth* is also capable, in the field of physical and mental illnesses, of canceling negative sensations and reinforcing positive and healthy ones,⁴ through rules useful to control and inhibit the morbid sensations that make existence difficult, of causing premature aging, and of shortening life.

Taken in its aspect of sentimental self-reflection and disposition towards sensations learned over time and felt as a representational state conceived as pleasant and unpleasant, this structure of *Gemüth* does not seem to go too far from the contemporary emotional and neuro-biological tradition, whereby an emotion is conceived as the relation between an external stimulus and an internal emotional response mediated by a neural structure. In the same sense, Kant's approach to the theme of the *animus* opens to a consideration of emotions, not simply understood as expressions immediately connected to a conative-desire consideration but to some positions of *appraisal theory* for which emotion is rather a *tendency* to action (Arnold 1960; Prinz 2004; Goldie 2000; Solomon 1993) according to which each emotional state seems to emerge as an element of a regulative relationship in which "intellect and heart [*Geist und Gemüth*]" (*VA – Friedländer*, p. 474; transl. p. 50) mutually collaborate in the modulation of representations that pass obscurely through the body and the environment in which subjectivity is inserted. The connection between *Gemüth* and *Geist* consists in the fact that the former is that animal's ability to experience feelings, impressions, and representations, while the latter

ternal sense (other things outside of us and by which other things are known things), Kant says: "I'm conscious of two kinds of objects: 1. of my subject and my state 2. of things outside me. My representation is direct either to objects or to myself. In the first case, I am conscious of other cognitions, in the second case of my subject. E.g., a human being who is reckoning is conscious of numbers, but not at all of his subject during the time that he is reckoning. This is the logical consciousness (*conscientia logica*), which is distinguished from psychological consciousness (*conscientia psychologica*), where one is conscious only of one's subject. Objective consciousness, or cognition with consciousness of objects, is a necessary condition for cognition of any object. But subjective consciousness is a forcible state. It is an observing turned upon itself; it is not discursive, but rather intuitive. The healthiest state is the consciousness of the outer object. Yet the state of perception or the consciousness of oneself is also necessary, and indeed necessary as a revision" (*ML*, p. 227; transl., p. 46).

³ Allais 2009 values the possibility of a synthesis of intuitions variously interpreted, beyond the conceptual reunification. For a conceptualist position that can be close to the idea that there are intuitions without clear and distinct concepts, cf. Grüne 2009.

⁴ For this, see also Hufeland 1797 and the answer by Kant (1798).

is that intelligence (*Intelligenz*) by which one can transcend that merely passive ability to be determined internally by external forces. The relationship between the two aspects of this first affective and biological knowledge is explained by Kant as a connection between the spontaneity and passivity of the soul, between a vivifying and unitary principle and the unity of the receptive and partially passive forces that characterise the subject in its complexity, especially about its animal element. In other words, and following the results of current experimental approaches, in the Kantian concept of *animus* it is possible to trace irreducibility between *emotion* and *sensation of emotion*, making a distinction between a first reactive level of consciousness and a dynamic active one, beyond the background of that intertwining between subjectivity that emotionally feels the totality of its content and the “I think” that synthetically connects the representations.

In this general scheme, proposals by Lazarus (1982), Frijda (1986), and Damasio (2001), also seem to recall the Kantian perspectives on *Gemüth* originally since they explain the affective process as a *temporal* relationship between a present bodily state and the expectation of future well-being and underline the conception according to which emotion, in addition to defining a sentimental dimension that connects human being and animal, determines a general forecasting capacity connected to selective behaviours useful for self-preservation. In this sense, the sensible pleasure (or animal pleasure) that characterises human beings and beasts alike, is, for Kant, the basis of reciprocal *animality* (*MS*, p. 400; transl., p. 201), a concept not to be understood in a merely negative sense but, above all, a biological one, and concerns the conservation of the species. Animality, which belongs to man and characterises him in his bodily essence, is connected to three impulses: natural conservation, the impulse to preserve the species, and the stimulus which keeps the faculties in their harmonious exercise. The conservation of animality, that is of the human biological element, also passes through a strengthening of sensible pleasure and natural emotions. However, in human being and animals, the preservation of one's nature follows different methods and procedures and it is possible to trace, originally, the existence of a conscience through which the original adaptive emotions are organized into a strategy, an action plan, to organize behavior capable of successfully responding to these needs. In this direction, it is possible to see how in Kant's anthropology, as well as in some models of *primordial consciousness* (Denton 2006), a first form of consciousness emerges, shared with animals, which manifests original emotions (hunger, thirst, desire

sexual, appetite) which are essential for the survival of living organisms. But that is not all. The Kantian perspective seems to go in the direction of some biological conceptions (Edelman & Tononi 2000; Panksepp 1998), which theorize the evolutionary origin of an emotional consciousness in that capacity for the elaboration of an internal 'scene' in which visual and pre-cognitive representations appear (in case of animals, dark representations [*dunkele Vorstellungen*]).

Concerning this perspective, there are many references also offered in Kantian *Anthropology from a Pragmatic point of view* and *Anthropological Lectures*, relating to the foresight capacity of the imagination which defines both animal behaviour in its relationship to the environment, and the human capacity to prefigure possible scenarios or to create tools and techniques or artifacts useful for a technological relationship with the environment:

"The characterization of the human being as a rational animal is already present in the form and organization of his hand, his fingers, and fingertips; partly through their structure, and partly through their sensitive feeling. By this means nature has made the human being not suited for one way of manipulating things but undetermined for every way, consequently suited for the use of reason; and thereby has indicated the technical predisposition, or the predisposition of skill, of his species as a rational animal". (*Anthr.*, p. 323; transl., p. 418)

The relationship between emotion and practical rules and the *regulation* of emotions given by imagination is also expressed in the note to the first section of the *First Introduction to the Critique of Judgement*, where, after having explained the difference between technical-practical rules and maxims of practical reason, Kant says:

"The same holds for the practical precepts concerning the voluntary production in us of a certain state of mind (e.g., the state of stirring or restraining our *imagination*, pacifying or abating our inclinations). There is no practical *psychology* as a special part of the philosophy of human nature. The principles of [how we can produce a certain mental] state using art must be borrowed from those of [how our] attributes can [arise] from what our nature is like, and although they consist of practical propositions, they still do not form a practical part of empirical psychology but belong merely to its scholia, because they have no special principles". (*EE*, p. 199; transl., p. 389)

Kant establishes that those practical propositions that designate the possibility of the object as deriving from the causality of the will, as regards their principle, do not differ from the theoretical propositions which concern the nature of things and certain states of mind. The difference between such a practical proposition and a theoretical proposition concern is not so much their common

reference to the nature of things, as the fact that the former must borrow their principles from nature to “exhibit [*darzustellen*] the representation of an object in reality effective”. The practical precepts that concern the possibility of realizing an object through an arbitrary action are applications of theoretical knowledge and, according to Kant, concern also *human psychology* and the arbitrary production of a *state of mind* (*Gemüthzustandes*), stirring or restraining the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), pacifying or abating the inclinations (*Neigungen*). This discourse, which calls into question imagination, practical judgment, and technical-practical maxims, therefore defines the *tendency*, expressed also by the contemporary neuro-biological connection between cognition and expression (Adolphs & Damasio 2001), of the species to maintain a regular relationship between faculties and the surrounding environment, training the animal to define its adaptive behaviours and human being to gain experience expressively. Just as Kant considers the reproductive imagination necessary to produce a mental state, however, also evaluating the actual external resources, the recent proposals on emotions understand this emotional *propensity* to act as impulses that push the subject to act in a certain way even if they do not always translate into manifest actions, limiting themselves to “mental actions”.

The Kantian conception of anthropological emotion hence described sounds to exclude an ethical characterisation of affectivity since it proposes an integrated approach in which body, evaluation, and action are connected to the natural end of the “mutual dependence between the preservation of one part and that of the others” (*KU*, p. 371; transl., p. 250), and, secondly, it seems to conceive the emergence of an emotional-sensorial causality. This particular ability of the subject, which can regulate his emotions and achieve a balance, is soon explained by Kant:

“Suppose that we are offered precepts for furthering our happiness, and that, e.g., all they talk about is what we must do about our person to [make ourselves] receptive to happiness. All we present in such precepts are the conditions within [us] under which this happiness is possible, such as modesty, moderation of our inclinations to keep them from becoming passion[s], etc.: we present these conditions as belonging to the nature of the subject, and we also present the way we can produce this equilibrium [*Erzeugungsort dieses Gleichgewichts*], namely we present it as a causality that we can exercise and some present everything as [a] direct consequence of the theory of the object [happiness, in this case] as related to the theory of our nature ourselves as a cause”. (*EE*, p. 197; transl., p. 387)

It is evident how much this causality acts independently of moral interest, aimed exclusively at the cultivation of virtues, and which

instead manifests a propensity of human nature toward an *emotional causality* made possible by a subjective capacity for self-regulation of the biological balance of human beings. In this sense, and following the perspective according to which primary consciousness is the ability to build a mental scene integrated into the present which is based on imagination and the integration of perceptive categorization, I would say that the theory of Kantian emotional consciousness differs from the subjective aspects of instinctive behavior and, therefore, is configured in an anti-Jamesian sense.

3. *Sensible pleasure and homeostatic equilibrium: a possible Kantian emotional awareness and its embodied features*

The exercise of this causality is a particular emotional consciousness, also connected to the concept of sensible pleasure (*An-genehme*) that characterises both humans and animals and is concerned with the sensation of health and disease, which promotes or inhibits the vital forces: this activity is not a moral causality but a subjective indicator of our psycho-corporeal condition, for which emotions become functional dispositions for the survival and the well-being of the organism that characterises every form of life.⁵ In his anthropological writings, about affections and passions, Kant believes that the condition of health or disease of our physical organization influences the ability to control the faculties of the mind: reflecting on those uncontrolled forces of bodily affections can also help to understand when sensible pleasure, which is very different from the aesthetic judgment which is expressed as a harmonious and free play, requires a harmony (Engstrom 2007) that must be achieved (*Anthr.*, p. 261; transl., p. 363).

This state of well-being of which one is already aware in the lower faculty of desire, therefore, does not exclude a relevant bodily element, since “Epicurus may certainly be granted that all gratification, even if it is prompted by concepts that arouse aesthetic ideas, is *animal* (i.e., bodily [*körperliche*]) sensation” (*KU*, p. 335; transl., p. 205), and involves vibration of the elastic parts of the bowels. In this sense, the relationship with the body and the fact that the judgment on what is pleasant is not based exclusively on the activity of the faculties, but always presupposes significant physical changes

⁵ The contemporary neurobehavioral and biological considerations are based on evolutionary positions and the most up-to-date biodynamic concepts. In this sense, desire is interpreted as a homeostatic and adaptive balance of higher vertebrates, that functions as an adaptation mechanism and offers a series of extremely advantageous elements for the survival of the species.

since the vital forces are here connected to the activity of the soul and its balance, explain a particular kind of emotional and bodily sensibleness. Since some sensible perceptions produce representative contents similar to those expressed by evaluation judgments, even without using concepts of the understanding, and this is a representation expressed in a *bodily way*, can be considered the existence of an emotional awareness that is characterised by two indivisible and interdependent moments, one representative and the other causal or, said following contemporary *enactivism*, one emotional and the other evaluative (Varela *et al.* 1991). In this sense, emotions express evaluative properties through the perception of bodily changes and, therefore, the pleasant emotion is linked to the body not only in an evolutionary (Menninghaus 2009) but above all enactive sense. This evaluation can also be considered a general motivation, without expressing itself in a real drive and predisposition to action.

This is better explained in paragraph 54 of the *Critique of Judgment* when Kant defines gratification, that seems “(even if its cause happens to lie in ideas) always to consist in a feeling that a person’s life is being furthered generally, and [this feeling] thus includes furtherance of his bodily well-being, i.e., his health” and describes various forms of this concept based not on the free play of understanding and imagination but on “any changing free play of sensation because it furthers our feeling of health” (*KU*, p. 331; transl., p. 201). This play requires an equilibrium, based on the mathematically controlled musical play of sound impressions, which is grounded on emotional variation and controlled movement that vivifies the mind and the body:

“In music, this play proceeds from bodily sensation to aesthetic ideas (of the objects of affects), and from these back again [to the body], but with the force exerted on the body concentrated. In jest (which, just as much as music, deserves to be considered more agreeable than fine art) the play starts from thoughts, all of which as far as they seek sensible expression, engage the body also. In the exhibition involved in jest, the understanding, failing to find what it expected, suddenly relaxes, so that we feel the effect of this slackening in the body by the vibration of our organs, which helps restore their equilibrium and has a beneficial influence on our health.” (*KU*, p. 332; transl., p. 203)

In a music play, the rapid emotional alternation causes an overall activity of the body and an expressive capacity directed toward the object that arouses the emotion, because the sensations pass from the body to the representations and from these back to the body again. The subjective experience of music, as observed by Colombetti and Thompson (2008), also appears in Kant as an affective incorporation of the object, in which the world is perceived

affectively through the experience of the body itself, as well as the fact the musician experiences his instrument through which an affective state emerges during his performance. In this case, the musical instrument is not an intentional object or an emotion, nor should it be understood in the sensorimotor scheme of the subject: in a musical performance, we have an integral part of the affective experience and its embodied (or bodily) evaluation.

Starting from these considerations, it seems that the Kantian perspective anticipates some assumptions of the *enactivist model* relating to those processes of regulation, sensorimotor organisation, and intersubjective interaction that characterise embodied organisms, that Kant identifies in organised creatures (*organisierter Geschöpfe*), constituted by a continuous mental and bodily activity. This position does not conceive knowledge as meaning realises independently of the environment but as the result of contextual and sensory-motor synergies between nature and agency. Using the Kantian approach to emotions, we see how emotional responses, understood as bodily evaluations, emerge from the obscure representations that go from the senses to the brain (or to the *Gemüth*), almost as if there were a harmony capable of connecting different natural causes. Secondly, the traditional Damasio's critique of William James, relating to the connection between emotions and evaluation, can become a contemporary reinterpretation of the Kantian theory of emotions, since they represent the relationship between cognitive and behavioural stimulus and reaction, distinct from the simple perception of bodily changes, so for Kant, emotional consciousness manages to extend beyond the boundaries of the body consciousness, for example, considering laughter as an emotion positive in the physical sense, but above all relevant from an intersubjective and social point of view, because "Good-natured (open-hearted) laughter is sociable (insofar as it belongs to the emotion of cheerfulness); malicious (sneering) laughter is hostile" (*Anthr.*, p. 264; transl., p. 366). Last but not least, the emotional deliberation that indicates the positive or negative quality of the possible outcomes of our choices, nowadays identified in the hypothesis of the function of the somatic marker (Damasio *et al.* 1996), finds its explanation in the ability of some elementary emotions to express the correlation between a mental and bodily state. The conscious processes, underlying the mechanism of maintaining homeostatic balance, are fundamentally linked to the consciousness of the body and the physiological and empirical "judgments" that Kantian aesthetics must "exclude" from its theory of taste, but which have their importance in a further theoretical sphere.

4. Concluding remarks: the aesthetic pleasure and the “emotional causality”

So far, I have tried to demonstrate the existence of an emotional consciousness that is realised through a feeling of promotion of bodily health and life that characterises a human being who is rational but even more embodied. At a first level, biological and epigenetic, bodily pleasure is gratification and promotes a condition of physical well-being that is conceived only in a private sense, by the sentient subject: it is the basis of the harmonisation of the faculties as an activity of the mind and its balance. My discussion attempted to highlight not so much aesthetic pleasure which for Kant, as I will say shortly, is an *eccentric* emotional reaction, but those anthropological and natural emotions that have some relationship with the pleasure of beauty (D’Angelo 2020). Aesthetic pleasure, unlike joy, fear, or suffering, is a typical human (and not animal) feeling that differs from the gratification (*das Angenehme*) and the good (*das Gute*), and it is defined by Kant in three places in his critical work. In the note to the *Preface* to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, pleasure is defined as:

“The presentation of the agreement [*Übereinstimmung*] of the object or the action with the subjective conditions of life [*subjektiven Bedingungen des Lebens*] i.e. with the power [consisting] of the causality of a presentation regarding the actuality of its object (or [regarding] the determination of the subject’s forces to action to produce the object).” (*KpV*, p. 9 n; transl. p. 14)

A further definition can be found in the *First Introduction* of the *Critique of Judgment*:

“Pleasure is a mental state [*Zustand*], in which a presentation is in harmony with itself [and] which is the basis either for merely preserving this state itself (for the state in which mental powers further one another in a presentation preserves itself) or for producing the object of this presentation.” (*EE*, p. 230; transl., pp. 419-20)

Finally, in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant writes:

“The consciousness of a presentation’s causality [*Das Bewußtsein der Causalität*] directed at the subject’s state to *keep* him in that state, may here designate generally what we call generally pleasure.” (*KU*, p. 220; transl., p. 65)

Kant offers a unitary definition of aesthetic pleasure, connected to the concept of promotion (*Beförderung*) of the activity of the faculties, e.g. the life (*Leben*), which is expressed through the realisation of objects of desire or the preservation of a state of proportional equilibrium of the mind. Beyond the mere explanation

of the principle of natural causality, which is connected also to the psychology of human nature, Kant believes that all mental processes are described by a principle of general spontaneity, which explains the overall activity of the mind's capacities according to a process involving the body, nerves, and the vital feeling, e.g. the *Vitalsinn*. But, on closer inspection, another conception of causality returns in the definitions of pleasure for beautiful objects. I'll explain it better shortly.

Now, if the common interpretation of Kantian theory of aesthetic pleasure has opened a significant quarrel between various critical positions, from its reading as an opaque state devoid of particular qualitative differences concerning its causes (intuitions, sensations, or concepts), passing through a model of temporal persistence of a tendentially relational state, up to the idea of pleasure as a self-referential and predicative reflection (Aquila 1982), however, the aesthetic pleasure can explain a certain subjective causality, not related to a representation and its potential cognitive or desiderative effects but referring solely to an activity that determines an exercise of persistence and maintenance of a mental state (Zuckert 2002; Ginsborg 2003). This means that the attribution of aesthetic intentionality, that is, of directionality or tendency of the aesthetic representation towards an existing object, in the more nuanced expressions of *being aware of something* or *being directed towards something* seems more useful to understand it, since the pleasure is, in this case, purely disinterested (*uninteressirt*). In this sense, the awareness of the causality of a representation is not only a state of mind through which one becomes aware of a causal power of a higher order but it is, more simply, the tendency of a representation to maintain itself in its state. This conservation, which is a form of self-regulation, consists of two elements, namely, of a first cognitive moment referring to the representation, understood in general, and of a second causal moment which takes the form of a natural disposition to maintain the proportion of the faculties in a mental state:

“This pleasure is also not practical in any way, neither like the one arising from the pathological basis, agreeableness, nor like the one arising from the intellectual basis, the conceived good. Yet it does have a causality in it, namely, to *keep* us in the state of [having] the presentation itself, and [to keep] the cognitive powers engaged [in their occupation] without any further aim.” (*KU*, p. 222; transl., p. 68)

Aesthetic judgment, therefore, does not predicate the beauty of an object through a specific concept, but pleasure is connected to a pure form of a finality without purpose. This is understood as “the subjective finality of the representation of an object, without

any purpose (neither objective nor subjective), and therefore the simple form of the finality with which an object is given to us” (KU, p. 221; transl., p. 109). In the feeling of pleasure which constitutes an aesthetic judgment, therefore, the identity of this form is not realised by the concept of understanding, but by that *tendency* of the imagination and the understanding which, in their free play, mutually support each other in an dynamical activity that is characterised as a “subjective unity of the relationship [*subjektive Einheit des Verhältnisses*]” between the faculties. Therefore, this kind of orientation towards an aesthetic form, characterised without any reference to an existing object or a specific intellectual concept, corresponds to a specific relationship towards objects of pleasure and not towards known objects or knowable, opening for the subject a sentimental cognition of himself. In this sense, the particular intentionality of aesthetic pleasure can be understood as a “second-level” causality concerning the natural and biological causality with which emotions regulate the relationship between body, mind, and nature.

To conclude, the emotional causality of anthropological Kantian emotions seems to prepare the *possibility* of elaborating an action by selecting the real environmental resources, evaluating contents, discriminating possible actions, and making a practical judgment, without being immediately an unreflected response to an external stimulus. Kant, thereby, writes in *Anthropology*:

“Desiring without exercising power to produce [*ohne Krafterwendung*] the object is *wish* [*Wünsche*]. A wish can be directed toward objects that the subject himself feels incapable [*unvermögend*] of producing, and then it is an *empty* (idle) wish. The empty wish to be able to annihilate the time between the desire and the acquisition of the desired object is *longing*. The undetermined desire, in respect of the object (*appetitio vaga*), which only impels the subject to leave his present state without knowing what state he then wants to enter, can be called the *peevis* wish (one that nothing satisfies).” (*Anthr.*, p. 251; transl., p. 149)

The strictly attitudinal and tensional character of anthropological emotion is then clear also in its regulative sense, as that ability to realise or not realise an object of inclination, given the real resources in nature and the ability of free will to produce mental representations, contents, and things. Unlike the causality of aesthetic pleasure, linked to a reflective and disinterested judgment, and whose representative contents are only useful for strengthening the internal order of the faculties, the causal exercise of regulative emotions activates an attitudinal process of natural balancing through which contents are evaluated also in a dispositional or non-dispositional way (Deonna & Teroni 2012). This specific emotional causality, in

particular, is a subjective and biological predisposition necessary for the promotion of the faculties, a way of generating an equilibrium (*Erzeugungsart dieses Gleichgewichts*) since: “the movement and occupation of the mind rest on its peculiar characteristic, since here we are dealing with the life [*Leben*] and proportion of the faculty. By contrast, the order is about what knowledge is to everyone” (*Refl.* §779, p. 341). Furthermore, primary emotions, described both in animals and in human beings, are connected to dispositions rooted in consciousness and in the body and which are expressed in attitudes with the value of operational and precognitive resources and dispositions (Desideri 2014). These prerequisites, or preconditions (mimetic capacity, exercise of preferences, environmental exploration) are the basis of any aesthetic mechanism and predispose the integration of higher cognitive functions (in particular the capacity for reflective processing, planning, and design) with the development of techno-poietic productive skills. It is therefore important to consider a dynamic activity of the brain that integrates the cortical and subcortical neural circuits in a single space of mutual harmonization: the life and order of the mind is thus harmonized both in an emotional sense and in the cognitive processing of information.

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