

The sensibility of Gemüt in aesthetic judgment. On the feeling of life between Geist and the Body

Kant is typically recognized, both by his defenders and critics, as the founder of the autonomous, rational subject of Western modernity. This emphasis on subjectivity in Kant as solely based in reason – in opposition to sensibility – has been especially strong within the field of aesthetics ever since Nietzsche in the *Genealogy of Morals* dismissed Kantian aesthetic judgment as disengaged disinterest. However, recent research has challenged this assumption of Kant as an advocate of pure rationality by showing how Kantian reason itself is shaped in relation to human sensibility (Nuzzo, 2009, Meld Shell, 1995). Notably, sensibility in Kant is not only synonymous with an empirical and material sphere; articulated as a wide-ranging domain that also includes transcendental functions – such as forms of intuition and the faculty of imagination – sensibility transcends any dualistic division of thought and body. To recall Nuzzo's notion of the Kantian "ideal embodiment" of reason, the dividing line between "pure" and "empirical" does thus not separate a metaphysical subject from a physical body.

So how does our understanding of the feeling of life (*das Lebensgefühl*) (AA 5: 204) in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* add importance to a retrieved notion of aesthetic judgment in Kant; a notion stressing the sensibility and situated corporality of this mode of experience?

Crucial to my analysis of the feeling of life and its role in the constitution of the judging subject of aesthetics, is the simultaneously fundamental and marginal concept of *Gemüt* (\approx *mind*), ambiguously defined in the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* as the "faculty of feeling/perceiving [*empfinden*] and thinking" (AA 7:161). As a result of translation together with philosophical interest, emphasis has usually been put on the cognitive meaning of the term (*mind* as the opposite of *body*), or it has been concentrated to meanings within the field of ethics, thereby overlooking the sensibility that *Gemüt* also entails. In this paper, I suggest an interpretational shift concerning *Gemüt* that puts weight on its sense of feeling and perceiving.

This shift in our understanding of the *Lebensgefühl*, and furthermore of aesthetic experience in the third *Critique*, is primarily based upon the conceptual framework conveyed from Foucault's analysis of *Gemüt* in his introduction to Kant's *Anthropology*, which is outlined as an account of the empirical-transcendental doubling of the subject (Foucault, 2008); and secondly, on Lyotard's demonstration of the tautegorical character of aesthetic experience – marked by repetition and modification, identity and difference – and the sensation of the thought that feels itself thinking (Lyotard, 1994).

I further exemplify my argument with Kant's own critique of Burke's "physiological" theory of aesthetic pleasure (§29), the scope of which he considers inadequately narrow to properly encompass the wide-ranging form of animation of the *Gemüt* that marks aesthetic experience: A feeling of life which implies a dimension of corporeality that neither coincides completely with the empirical body, nor with spirit (*Geist*), but openly states the tension between them.