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Towards an Affective Understanding of Pure Judgments of Taste

Keywords
affect, Kant, Arendt, natural humanity, moral humanity, political/aesthetic humanity, pure judgement of taste, pleasure, desire

Abstract
In this article, we argue that "affect" should be an important notion in political philosophy. We do this, firstly, by tracing the notion of affect through the philosophical system of Immanuel Kant. We find that affect plays a threefold role for Kant, which can be mapped onto Hannah Arendt's distinction between natural humanity, moral humanity, and political/aesthetic humanity (our rephrasing). Affect clearly plays a role on the level of natural humanity, and it is arguably to be pinpointed from within moral humanity. With regard to political/aesthetic humanity, we argue that in order to understand how pure judgments of taste can vouch for the 'bridging' of the gap between natural and moral humanity, an understanding of the role of aesthetic *affection* is essential. Secondly, we broaden the Kantian scope of affect by discussing how Žižek, in Lacan's wake, has tried (but failed) to systematically examine the political relevance of pure judgments of taste. To understand how humans are able to come together politically, we need a better understanding of affect as that which allows *pure form* to effectuate a subjectively but universally shareable proclivity for (dis)pleasure and desire.

K afektivnemu razumevanju čistih sodb okusa

Ključne besede
afekt, Kant, Arendt, naravna človečnost, moralna človečnost, politična/estetska človečnost, čista sodba okusa, ugodje, želja

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Povzetek

V tem članku zagovarjamo tezo, da bi moral biti afekt pomemben pojem v politični filozofiji. Da bi to pokazali, sledimo pojmu afekta v filozofskem sistemu Immanuela Kanta in ugotavljamo, da ima afekt pri Kantu tri vloge, pri čemer si za njihovo razlikovanje pomagamo z razlikovanjem Hannah Arendt med naravno človečnostjo, moralno človečnostjo in politično/estetsko človečnostjo (naša reformulacija). Afekt ima očitno vlogo na ravni naravne človečnosti, verjetno pa ga je mogoče opredeliti znotraj moralne človečnosti. Glede politične/estetske človečnosti pa trdimo, da je za razumevanje, kako lahko čiste sodbe okusa jamčijo za »premostitev« vrzeli med naravno in moralno človečnostjo, bistveno razumevanje vloge estetske *afekcije*. Drugič, kantovski domet afekta razširimo z razpravo o tem, kako je Žižek, sledeč Lacanu, poskušal (a mu ni uspelo) sistematično preučiti političen pomen čistih sodb okusa. Da bi razumeli, kako se lahko človeška bitja politično združujejo, potrebujemo boljše razumevanje afekta kot tisto, kar omogoča, da *čista forma* udejanja subjektivno, a univerzalno deljeno nagnjenje k (ne)užitku in želji.

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Introduction

How is it possible for people to come together politically? This might come across as a naïve question. People do, after all, already do so. Philosophically speaking, however, this topic is not only poorly understood, it is also quite often neglected. In an attempt to revive this question, we will draw upon Kant. In doing so, we will deal with the blind spots left behind by Hannah Arendt and Slavoj Žižek when interpreting Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (hereinafter referred to as the "third Critique").[1] The paper argues that the general conditions of possibility of coming together politically can be articulated by means of the notion of affect and its role in pure judgments of taste. In line with scholars such as Lyotard, Žižek has famously argued that the political value of

[1] When referring to Kant, we refer to the *Akademieausgabe* (*Gesammelte Schriften*) by indicating title abbreviation, volume and page numbers (e.g., KU, 5:178), but we quote from English translations. For the title abbreviations and translations used, see the list at the end of the article.

the third Critique lies in its discussion of the (dynamically) sublime.[2] Inspired by Lacan, he relaunches ideology critique by trying out not so much an epistemological account[3] as an account focusing on *jouissance*. However, Žižek does not give a systematic analysis of what constitutes ideology as such. More precisely, Žižek fails to see that a critique of ideology is also (and perhaps more interestingly so) to be found in the third Critique's "Analytic of the Beautiful."[4] Although he acknowledges that the sublime must always be read as *following* the beautiful, namely in the sense that the sublime is the point of collapse of what the beautiful stands for,[5] Žižek still fails to grasp what the beautiful would, then, "stand for."[6] This leads one to wonder why Žižek devotes so little attention to the beautiful. In our view, the main reason for this is the minor role of affect in his philosophy. We will thus attempt to contribute to ideology critique by properly exploring the notion of affect and its role in the constitution of the human being as a political being. In view of this, however, we will indeed return to the philosophy of someone who is often portrayed as being totally apathetic, asexual, and affectless: the sage of Königsberg, Immanuel Kant. Although Kant himself is often evidently dismissive of affect, we argue that this notion is crucial to his philosophy.

In what follows, we will first delve into Kant's account of affect, which will serve as a prelude necessary to be able to reconsider, in line with Arendt, the political relevance of pure judgments of taste. Our discussion of the relevance of pure judgments of taste builds on but also attempts to move beyond Hannah Arendt's famous take on it in her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. By means of our

2 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008), 228; Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 46–7.

3 That is to say, Žižek moves away from the diagnosis that one falls prey to ideology due to a lack of knowledge. He convincingly argues that such an approach makes no sense in relation to the 'cynical ideology' of our time. (Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology*, 26–30) This form of ideology invokes a certain distance from a universal knowing and, so the argument goes in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, preserves the illusion constitutive of ideology.

4 KU, 5:203–44, §1–22.

5 Žižek, *Sublime Object of Ideology*, 228.

6 Žižek mentions the beautiful, but merely refers to it as symbol of the good, and refrains from exploring how the beautiful and the good are distinguished by Kant: "Beauty is the symbol of the Good, i.e., of the moral Law as the pacifying agency which reins in our egotism and renders possible harmonious social coexistence." Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, 47.

focus on affect, we also hope to shed new light on a crucial issue in contemporary critique of ideology: the place of pleasure in the human condition. In our forward-looking conclusion, we highlight the potential avenues of research that could emanate from our approach.

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In this section, we will explain why considering affect[7] from a Kantian point of view is an interesting starting position to examine the conditions of possibility of "coming together politically."[8] In our view, the Kantian conception of the human being as *both* an animal belonging to the realm of nature *and* as a moral subject belonging to the realm of freedom, seems to draw in a notion of affect. Not only do we encounter affects in human beings considered as *animals*, but they also seem to be at the heart of the position that bridges the gap between nature and freedom: the *aesthetic* subject. In the Kantian universe, affects seem to be the point where the "pure" aspects of our humanity anchor themselves in its "pathological" aspects. Moreover, if we may take seriously the examples Kant gives, this anchoring seems to take place in a manner that is not only morally and aesthetically, but also *politically*, relevant. We will, in the spirit of Hannah Arendt, discuss affect in reference to her tripartite distinction of humans as (i) natural beings (natural humanity), (ii) moral beings (moral humanity), and (iii) actual inhabitants of the earth (political/aesthetic humanity).[9] More in particular, we will argue that affect, as a specific type of feeling, (i) occupies a (straightforward and unsurprising) place in a conception of man as a natural being, (ii) is a feature of our animality that is excluded from but still must be pinpointed from within the realm of morality, and (iii) seems to play a central but often unnoticed role in man's capacity to bridge the gap between (i) and (ii).

7 Examples of affects are: longing (KU, 5:178), hope, fear, joy, anger, scorn, laughter (KU, 5:332), timidity, fortitude (Anth, 7:256–8), as well as enthusiasm (SF, 7:85–86). Although sometimes Kant takes longing to be a passion rather than as an affect (V–Anth/Fried, 25:589).

8 In our view, this is so even if 1) Kant is often dismissive of affects, and 2) a consistent account thereof is absent from the Kantian corpus.

9 Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 26–27.

First, we will give a brief overview of what Kant has to say about affects, and how he distinguishes them from passions in light of his faculty psychology, i.e., on the level of man as a natural being. Then we will highlight, to some extent contrary to his general assessment of them, the possible role of affect in morality. Subsequently, we discuss how this seemingly inconsistent picture can nevertheless be quilted via the aesthetic-political role of affect.

Pathological Affect in Natural Humanity

Affects, according to Kant, are "movements" of the mind (*Gemüt*)[10] grounded in "a feeling of pleasure or displeasure" that do "not allow a subject [in his present state] to rise to reflection." That is, affects impede a subject from considering "the representation of reason whether one should give himself up to [. . .] or refuse" something.[11] This is because an affect involves "surprise by means of sensation, in which the mind's self-control (*animus sui compos*) is suspended."[12] In this capacity, affects are to be distinguished from passions:

> Affect is a feeling through which we lose our composure [*aus der Faßung kommen*], but passion is a desire which takes away our composure [*aus der Faßung bringt*]. The desire is not a perception of what is actual, but merely of what is possible and future. Feeling however aims at the present. Actual affects therefore appertain to feeling and passions to the desires.[13]

Both passions and affects hinder the subject's reason,[14] but the former are concerned with *inclinations*, while the latter concern *feelings*.[15] Passions are said to

10 EEKU, 20:238.

11 Anth, 7:251, § 73.

12 Anth, 7:252, § 74.

13 V–Anth/Fried, 25:589.

14 Anth, 7:251.

15 More specifically, whereas an affect is an incapacity "to estimate and compare the object with the sum total of all our sensation [and/or feeling]," a passion occurs when one is "unable to estimate the object with the sum total of all inclination" (V–Anth/Fried, 25:590). Kant did not always sharply distinguish between passions and affects. In fact, in early lectures they seem to be treated synonymously (this is in line with Hutcheson's account, Kant's reference point in these matters). For instance, in Anth–V/Collins he is reported as having stated: "A desire that is so big that it makes it impossible to compare the object of our desire with the sum of all inclinations, is called affect" (25:210; quoted from Frierson,

involve the faculty of desire, and are therefore grafted upon a representation of the future, while affects, due to the involvement of feeling, are grafted on to the present.[16] Affects hamper one's ability to keep one's composure, and to "keep one's composure means when the state of the mind is subject to our power of choice."[17] For Kant, affects are thoughtless paroxysms,[18] but they are nonetheless still *able to cause desires* (just like cognition causes feelings).[19] Now, in this context, affect is to be seen as an aspect of human nature insofar as it highlights the latter's *animality*: "In the state of animality, where after all the first human beings were, the affects served to double all of their powers and thus provided for their preservation." Preserving these affects in a civilized context would defeat this purpose:

> If the human being has emerged from animality, he does not need the affects anymore and must suppress them. Nature thus implanted the affects in us only provisionally and it gave them to us as a spur to activity, as it were, in order to develop our humanity. In opposition to affect is equanimity, the state of inner repose of the soul, not apathy but affectlessness. [. . .] Furthermore, in opposition to affect is the capacity to control oneself with composure during a surging affect.[20]

"Affects and Passions"). Here, desires and affects are not yet uncoupled. For a comparison between Hutcheson and Kant, and for a historical account of the genesis of Kant's more clear-cut distinction between passions and effects, see Patrick Frierson, "Affects and Passions," in *Kant's Lectures on Anthropology: A Critical Guide*, ed. Alix Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 94–113.

16 However, this is not to say that the *prospect* of an affect could not in any way be future-oriented (V–Anth/Mron, 25:1343). In an affect, the future can be implicated, but it is implicated *from within the present*. That is why affects and passions are essentially different from each other as concerns their quality, even if they "are equally vehement in degree" (7:251; cf. VA–Anth/Mensch 25:1115).

17 V–Anth/Fried, 25:589; and, as Frierson ("Affects and Passions," 111) points out: while affects bypass this ability to keep one's composure (thus *annulling* rationality), passions act on it (thus *influencing* rationality).

18 Anth, 7:253.

19 V–Anth/Mensch, 25:1125; according to Kant's "psychology," there are three basic "faculties" of the mind: cognition, feeling, and desire. Feeling is indeed right in the middle.

20 V–Anth/Mron, 25:1342–43; cf. V–Anth/Mensch, 25:1125.

Affects According to Moral Humanity?

At first glance, the preceding picture is generally quite in line with Kant's moral philosophy. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant tells us that "moderation in affects and passions" (just like self-control and calm reflection) is not only "good for all sorts of purposes but even seem[s] to constitute a part of the *inner* worth of a person [. . .]."[21] As is well known, the main focus of this work is on how "the idea of freedom makes me a member of an intelligible world," whereby, "if I were only this, all my actions *would* always be in conformity with the autonomy of the will." However, "since at the same time I intuit myself as a member of the world of sense, they [my actions] *ought* to be in conformity with it [the autonomy of the will]." This "*categorical* ought represents a synthetic proposition *a priori*, since to *my will affected by sensible desires* there is added the idea of the same will but belonging to the world of the understanding."[22] Now, this addition of the idea of a purely practical will to *the will affected by sensible desires* presupposes, conversely, that the categorical imperative itself can *also* affect our will. This is what Kant calls "moral feeling," namely the "*subjective* effect that the law exercises on the will, to which reason alone delivers the objective grounds."[23] Moreover, Kant grants that

> for a sensibly affected rational being to will that for which reason alone prescribes the "ought," it is admittedly required that his reason have the capacity to *induce a feeling of pleasure* or of delight in the fulfillment of duty, and thus there is required a causality of reason to determine sensibility in conformity with its principles.[24]

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21 GMS, 4:394.

22 GMS, 4:454; some italics added.

23 GMS, 4:460.

24 GMS, 4:460; respect, for instance, as the *consciousness* of the "immediate determination of the will by means of the law," is "the *effect* of the law on the subject," namely a "feeling that is not "*received* by means of influence" but rather "a feeling *self–wrought* by means of a rational concept" (GMS, 4:401n). This is still sharply distinguishable from "the *agreeable*, as that which influences the will only by means of feeling from merely subjective causes, which hold only for the senses of this or that one, not as a principle of reason, which holds for everyone." This passage from GMS distinguishes between the agreeable and a principle of reason on the basis of subjective causes, and general validity (holding for everyone). The third Critique adds pure judgment of taste, which confuses things, since it is a judgment on subjective grounds, but independent of the existence of an object. We will come back to this in the next section. Crucial here is that for the categorical imperative to be an *imperative*, it needs to anchor itself in a will that is "exposed also to subjective

This means that *feeling* is both internal to Kant's moral philosophy as well as significantly external it: it is external to the idea of an autonomous will, but central to the idea of the moral law as a categorical imperative. In fact, Kant even says that the universal formula of the categorical imperative (e.g., "*act in accordance with a maxim that can at the same time make itself a universal law*"), can only be specified as a threefold formulation (that is, the three formulae of universality, humanity, and autonomy) by relating it to the subjective, pathological, or sensible aspects of our human condition. Thus, these "three ways of representing the principle of morality"

> are at bottom only so many formulae of the very same law, and any one of them of itself unites the other two in it. There is nevertheless a difference among them, which is indeed subjectively rather than objectively practical, intended namely to bring an idea of reason closer to intuition (by a certain analogy) and thereby to feeling.[25]

The idea intimated here is this: if it were not for our human nature, which is structurally torn between affectation by sensibility, on the one hand, and affectation by reason, on the other, we would not even *have* the three formulations of the categorical imperative, arguably the centerpieces of Kant's moral philosophy.[26]

In spite of this striking role of affect for morality, Kant's practical philosophy can still be seen (and in a sense, rightly so) as completely affectless, inhuman even. His own contempt for and criticism of affect (see section Pathological Affect in Natural Humanity) cannot be neglected and does of course add to this picture. However, we hold that there is a split within Kant's practical philosophy to which Kant was quite sensitive himself. We have on the one hand a "pure" moral sphere, and on the other hand a "pathological" moral sphere where the

conditions (certain incentives) that are not always in conformity with reason (as is actually the case with human beings)" (GMS, 4:412–13).

25 GMS, 4:436.

26 Admittedly, in this aspect of his philosophy Kant does not come to the point of developing a more fine-grained theory of the role of feeling, let alone of *affect*. This is, after all, not his concern here. Moreover, if affect is indeed what *hampers* our ability to maintain our composure, to control ourselves, because it overwhelms us (quantitatively) with a sensation, then perhaps affect, as a type of feeling, cannot be counted among the moral feelings described in the Groundwork.

former is to exercise its jurisdiction. *How* exactly this exercise of power is possible is a question recognized by Kant himself already in the *Groundwork*.[27] In our view, Kant most significantly addressed this question in the third Critique, where (and elsewhere – cf. *infra*) affect is portrayed as being morally significant, at times namely as not unworthy of praise in political contexts.

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As argued in the previous sections, the notion of affect runs through Kant's philosophy in a peculiar way. Even though affect is ascribed to the human being's natural state, this ascription is perhaps also to be made from the standpoint of man as a moral agent. How could the objective moral law effectuate a subjectively felt categorical imperative? This "effectuation" can be made sense of by means of the notion of affect.[28] It seems that a human being cannot only be affected by sensations, as described above,[29] but also by *laws*. What else could instantiate so-called "moral feeling" (the subjective effect of the law)[30] other than the pathological capacity for *affect as such*? To develop this hypothesis, we propose to take a look at Kant's notions of enthusiasm and humor, which form a part of his politico-aesthetic discussions in the third Critique. Before we can do this, however, we must, in line with Arendt, take a look at the political significance of pure judgments of taste. After all, Kant himself had put his hope on pure judgments of taste precisely in order to quilt the divided realms of natural humanity and moral humanity, of nature and freedom.[31]

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27 We consider the following citation to be a good example of how Kant anticipates the problem of his unearthly practical philosophy: "Es ist aber gänzlich unmöglich, einzusehen, d. i. a priori begreiflich zu machen, wie ein bloßer Gedanke, der selbst nichts Sinnliches in sich enthält, eine Empfindung der Lust oder Unlust hervorbringe; denn das ist eine besondere Art von Causalität, von der wie von aller Causalität wir gar nichts a priori bestimmen können, sondern darum allein die Erfahrung befragen müssen." GMS, 4:460.

28 This is in line with Zupančič's argument that "form itself must be appropriated as a material surplus, in order for it to be capable of determining the will. Kant's point, I repeat, is not that all traces of materiality have to be purged from the determining ground of the moral will but, rather, that the form of the moral law has itself to become 'material,' in order for it to function as a motive force of action." This concerns what she calls "ethical transubstantiation," namely "the question of the possibility of converting a mere form into a materially efficacious drive." Alenka Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real* (London: Verso, 2011), 15.

29 Anth, 7:252, §74.

30 GMS, 4:460.

31 KU, 5:176.

Affected by Neither Concept nor Object

First of all, we need to establish that pure judgment of taste can be considered as involving affect.[32] In the first section of the "Analytic of the Beautiful," Kant makes it clear that pure judgment of taste concerns the feeling of pleasure and displeasure.[33] Interestingly, pleasure and displeasure are, thus, common to both affect and pure judgments of taste (see section Pathological Affect in Natural Humanity). Yet, affect does not allow a subject to rise to reflection at the moment of affection, while Kant specifies that a judgment of taste deals with "the reflection of the subject on his own state (of pleasure or displeasure)."[34] This reflection does not allow for an objectively and universally valid judgment. As a consequence, the predicate "beautiful" in the judgment "this rose is beautiful" does not allow for subsumption and comparison, i.e., it does not give us a rule with which to determine objectively whether or not a particular thing is beautiful, so that we could compare it with other particulars within the class of beautiful objects.[35] In pure judgment of taste, reflection is key, but then the question arises: reflection on what? In the "Analytic of the Beautiful,"[36] Kant defines the ground of aesthetic judgment as follows: "The relation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, by means of which nothing at all in the object is designated, but in which the subject feels itself as it is affected by the representation."[37] The feeling of pleasure in pure judgment of taste is not attributed to the existing object. Instead, the pleasure is effectuated by the free play of our faculties, i.e., as the subject "is *affected* by the representation." Pure judgment of taste thus entails reflection *on* the felt effect of our faculties vis-à-vis the sensible form of an object, i.e., it entails reflection on the affect caused *by the faculties*.[38] Peculiar to

32 For another insightful account on the role of affect in beauty, see Maria Borges, "Emotion and the Beautiful in Art," *Con–Textos Kantianos: International Journal of Philosophy* 15 (2022): 263–71.

33 KU, 5:204.

34 KU, 5:285–86.

35 KU, 5:215–16.

36 KU, 5:203–44, § 1–22.

37 KU, 5:204.

38 For more on this "effect logic," see: Gertrudis Van de Vijver, "Embarrassments of Knowledge: A Philosophical Comment On Lacan's Formulae of Sexuation," *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven* 41, no. 2 (2023): 171–86; Levi Haeck and Gertrudis Van de Vijver, "Canguilhem's Divided Subject: A Kantian Perspective on the Intertwinement of Logic and Life," in *Canguilhem and Continental Philosophy of Biology*, ed. Giuseppe Bianco, Charles Wolfe,

judgment of taste is that we can and must presuppose this capacity for affect(a-tion) in all humans, which makes up its universality and disinterestedness.[39]

That is to say, the grounds of the *subjective universality* of pure judgment of taste lie in the *disinterestedness* of the judgment. Kant characterizes "interest" as pleasure combined with the representation of the existence of the object.[40] Such pleasure always relates to the faculty of desire "either as its determining ground or else as necessarily interconnected with [it as] its determining ground."[41] The ground of a judgment of beauty, however, has nothing to do with pleasure in the existence of the object of representation. In pure judgment of taste, we lay "a claim to validity for everyone without the universality that pertains to objects, i.e., it must be combined with a claim to subjective universality."[42] Crucially, in claiming (aesthetic) universality, one appeals neither to the object of practical reason, nor to the object of bodily sensations, but to a subjective disposition supposed to be shared by all.

In this way, Kant is at once able to distinguish the beautiful from both the good and the agreeable (*Angenehme*).

1) The agreeable, on the one hand, is that "which pleases the senses in sensation."[43] In this judgment the grounds are subjective, but rely on the felt effect of an object on the senses, i.e., on the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. Therefore, one takes an interest in the object's existence, precisely because what one judges to be agreeable is the effect of the object on our subjec-

and Gertrudis Van de Vijver (Cham: Springer, 2023) 123–46; Levi Haeck, "Immanuel Kants transcendentale logica: Singulier, algemeen, heterogeen." *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 83, no. 2 (2021): 217–48.

39 For universality, see KU 5:212; for disinterestedness KU, 5:204–6. For a discussion of both, see Bart Vandenabeele, "The Subjective Universality of Aesthetic Judgements Revisited," *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 48, no. 4 (October 2008): 410–25, https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayn042.

40 KU, 5:204.

41 KU, 5:204.

42 KU, 5:212.

43 KU, 5:206.

tive disposition. This is what distinguishes it from the pleasurableness of the beautiful, which, as we know, does not rely on the existence of an object and involves no felt effect of an object as such.

2) The good, on the other hand, is "that what pleases through the mere concept."[44] Thus, here too we encounter a distinguishing feature of the beautiful, which does not, as we know, rely on a concept. Moreover, if "one judges objects merely in accordance with concepts, then all representation of beauty gets lost."[45]

Thus, with pure judgment of taste, we get a judgment that (i) does not rely on a concept, (ii) nor on the existence of the object. Interestingly, the judgment of beauty has something in common with both, without possibly being reduced to either one of them. It shares with the agreeable that the ground of the judgment is subjective, i.e., the feeling of pleasure, while it shares with the good the universality of our discursive capacities. This very configuration, we claim, is what allows pure judgment of taste to quilt the practical and the theoretical realms, freedom and nature. However, as will be shown below, in order to establish the binding of these two realms, we need to understand how it is possible that our faculties are the cause of the reality of our representations.[46]

A Quilting Point

Consider Kant's definition of the faculty of desire, which goes as follows: "The faculty of desire is a being's faculty to be by means of its representations the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations."[47] Kant was heavily criticized for this definition. He tries to give an answer to the main objections in a fascinating footnote appended to the third Critique's introduction.[48] The main objection is quite obvious: one can wish whatever one wants, but the wish will

44 KU, 5:207.

45 KU, 5:215.

46 For a discussion of this "project of unification," see: Sebastian Gardner, "Kant's Third Critique: The Project of Unification," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 78 (July 2016): 161–85, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246116000254.

47 "Das Begehrungsvermögen ist das Vermögen desselben, durch seine Vorstellungen Ursache von der Wirklichkeit der Gegenstände dieser Vorstellungen zu sein." KpV, 5:9n; we added the German here because this is quite a controversial definition, and was already in Kant's time.

48 KU, 5:177–78n.

not become reality simply by virtue of wishing it. This, however, is not exactly what Kant is after. Generally speaking, in this definition Kant is concerned with the way in which a representation alone can be the cause of something, say, of another representation—and of the object that belongs to it. This means that even idle wishes are an effect of "our faculties for the production of an object." It is worth quoting Kant a bit more at length here:

> Although in the case of such fantastic desires we are aware of the inadequacy of our representations [. . .] to be *causes* of their objects, nevertheless their [i.e., the representations'] relation as causes, hence the representation of their *causality*, is contained in every *wish*, and it is especially visible if this is an affect, namely *longing*. For the latter prove by the fact that they expand the heart and make it flaccid and thus exhaust our powers that the powers are repeatedly strained by means of representations, but the mind, in view of the impossibility, is inexorably allowed to sink back into exhaustion. Even the prayers for the avoidance of great and so far as one can see unavoidable evil and many superstitious means for the attainment of naturally impossible ends prove the causal relation of representations to their objects, which cannot be held back from striving to achieve their effect even by the consciousness of their inadequacy for it.[49]

Even though we know very well that what we wish for is impossible to obtain, the representation of the causality of the representation remains unaltered. Now, pure judgment of taste has to be understood in line with this representation of causality, for it is caused by nothing but the felt effect of one's own faculties.[50] Conversely, however, it seems that pure judgments of taste, because they are both without an object and without a concept, lay bare the very condition of possibility for (moral) representations to have an effect on a human subject.

To further illustrate the latter point, we will briefly elaborate on two notions closely related to our interpretation of pure judgment of taste: enthusiasm and humor.

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49 KU, AA05: 178n. For more on the relevance of this footnote for Kant's theory of objectivity, see: Gertrudis Van de Vijver and Eli Noé, "The Constraint is the Possibility: A Dynamical Perspective on Kant's Theory of Objectivity," *Idealistic Studies* 41, no. 1–2 (2011): 95–112.

50 We consider this the right moment to stress that our article is in line with Rado Riha's focus on the self-affectation in Kant's philosophical system. Rado Riha, *Kant in Lacan'scher Absicht: Die Kopernikanische Wende und das Reale* (Vienna: Turia + Kant, 2018).

1) Kant explains enthusiasm [*Enthusiasm*] as the "idea of the good with affect," whereby this "state of mind seems to be sublime, so much so that it is commonly maintained that without it nothing great can be accomplished." Nonetheless, every affect is, as such, blind. Affect is still, and always will be, "that movement of the mind that makes it incapable of engaging in free consideration of principles, in order to determine itself in accordance with them. Thus, it cannot in any way merit a satisfaction of reason." And yet enthusiasm, as the idea of the good with affect, "is aesthetically sublime, because it is a stretching of the powers through ideas, which give the mind a momentum that acts far more powerfully and persistently than the impetus given by sensory representations."[51]

2) The humorous affects, e.g., the humorous conversations during a lively party of about three to eight guests,[52] are "an affect resulting from the sudden transformation of a heightened expectation into *nothing*."[53] In the case of jokes, which must be "counted as agreeable rather than as beautiful art,"[54]

> the play begins with thoughts which, as a whole, insofar as they are to be expressed sensibly, also occupy the body; and since the understanding, in this presentation in which it does not find what was expected, suddenly relaxes, one feels the effect of this *relaxation in the body* through the oscillation of the organs, which promotes the restoration of their balance and has a beneficial influence on health.[55]

Both enthusiasm and humor testify to the effect that a mere thought, of whatever kind it may be, can have. Both enthusiasm and humor show a similar structure as pure judgment of taste with regard to the latter's articulation of how it is possible for a mere thought to anchor itself in the body, to have subjective effect. This configuration cannot suffice to demand universal assent, as is the case for *pure* judgments of taste, but it does offer a crucial perspective on what the human's "split constitution" amounts to, or how it can function. As

51 KU, 5:272.

52 Of all the settings in which Kant dared to venture himself, this is arguably the most political one.

53 KU, 5:332; italics added.

54 KU, 5:332.

55 KU, 5:332; italics added.

the nodal point between thought and the body *per se*, we can appreciate affect as the baseline condition of possibility for *becoming* something other than a plaything of nature.

Why, then, do we focus on pure judgment of taste, rather than *solely* on affect as such? We argue that pure judgment of taste must still be put center stage, because it shows the connection of affect to discursivity in a *universal way*. This does not hold for enthusiasm (which involves sublimity and thus is not coupled to *sensus communis* as strongly as beauty is)[56] and humor (which is merely agreeable, and thus not subject to the claim of universal assent), where the connection is general at best. In addition, pure judgment of taste allows us, because of its "emptiness" (with regard to both the object as well as to the concept), to make explicit what underlies moral feeling (i.e., the subjective effect of the moral law). *That* is why beauty is able to bridge nature and freedom.

This quilting aspect of beauty is exactly what Žižek, by focusing on the sublime, does not grasp. By rushing to the sublime, one forgets how a momentary feeling of harmony, i.e., of sense, gets constituted to begin with. In order to appreciate the political value of the beautiful, one must be attentive to the role of affect(ation) in it. This is something that, e.g., Paul Guyer and Allen Wood did not fail to see, as they rightly remark "that our disinterested affection for beauty prepares us for the non-self-regarding respect and love for mankind that is required of us by morality."[57]

Conclusion

We hope that we have marked the crucial role of affect for pure judgment of taste as such, as well having paved the way for further investigations into its political relevance. The manner in which pure judgment of taste functions as a quilting point between nature and freedom has been made more palpable. The beautiful involves an affect, namely a felt effect of x. The x in this case is nothing but form, that is, the forms exhibited by our capacity to judge vis-à-vis a certain sensible

[56] See, for example, Kant's discussion of fearfulness regarding the dynamical sublime in KU, 5:260–64.

[57] Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, "Editor's Introduction," in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), xxvii.

Vorstellung. Since pure judgment of taste involves no interest in the existence of the object, the delight in this reflective judgment stems from the free play of the faculties, on account of which aesthetic judgment is subjectively, yet universally valid. The judgment of beauty is about the ability to be affected by nothing but our faculties and the free play between them. Importantly, contrary to affection for sublimity, which can only be cultivated by some,[58] the affection proper to the judgment of beauty implies a capacity or ability that is, in principle, shared by all judging beings. In other words, while the sublime proliferates a politics of exclusion, there is no principled exclusion as to who is able to formulate pure judgments of taste. We think that, on the basis of this programmatic analysis, further avenues of research are possible.

Our interpretation of the role of affect in aesthetic judgments and its political signification can help to elucidate the importance of something like moral *feeling*, and clarify why the moral law appears to us human beings as an imperative. Notwithstanding the significant distinction between morality and aesthetics, we would like to propose that the felt effect of the law as an imperative (moral feeling), presupposes, quite like the judgments of taste, a universally shareable capacity for being affected by form as such (in this case, the law).[59]

We know that pure judgment of taste bridges the gap between practical and theoretical reason, and that affect plays a role in this bridging. However, what was left untouched in our interpretation is the principle for this bridging: purposiveness without a purpose.[60] This would however merit further investigation, as it too can highlight the importance of form as such. The purposiveness of aesthetic judgment is not (ful)filled by a specific purpose, or: the form remains without content. We can connect this to the fact that beauty as a predicate does not signify anything *in* the object deemed to be beautiful.[61] That is, a judgment of taste does not predicate something of the object, but entails reflection on the felt effect (i.e., affect) of the free play of the faculties. Thus, we propose to understand beauty along the lines of a Freudian and Lacanian framework, where-

58 Cf. KU, 5:260–64.

59 See Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real*, 15, 17.

60 EEKU, 20:242–43; KU, 5:180.

61 KU, 5:207, 215–16, 285–86.

by beauty functions as a mere *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* or empty signifier.[62] If the beautiful is understood as we have been arguing, it should be understood as a functioning of mere form (resulting in a specific type of affect); its element of purposeless purposiveness might be understood as resting on a structure of "signification," which comes close to the definition of a signifier in Lacanian theory: that which signifies something for another signifier. Understood in this way, the beautiful expresses a formal structure which is itself without meaning, but which allows for the production of meaning.[63] In this structure, forms of pleasure and desire can be anchored.

Let us now address the question with which this essay was launched, namely: how is it possible to come together politically? By discerning the importance of affectation in our understanding of pure judgment of taste, we are in a better position to compare it, qua structural features, with affects such as enthusiasm and humor.[64] Technically speaking, we could say that knowing what affects are is relevant to knowing what pure judgments of taste are, because the latter involve a kind of affectation as well. However, there is an important difference between affects such as humor and enthusiasm and the affectation proper to pure taste—a difference which will turn out to be key in addressing the issue of coming together politically. This difference is in our view wrongly suppressed by Arendt, even if she rightly connects affect (namely, enthusiasm) to pure taste. By bringing affects such as enthusiasm closer to pure judgment of taste, Arendt forgets how affects actually add an element to pure taste that it would otherwise lack.

Pure taste involves a structure that allows a subject to be affected by the activity of its faculties, which, as Arendt explains quite well, involves intersubjectivity.

62 For a thorough article on the role of affectation and signification, see Gertrudis Van de Vijver, Ariane Bazan, and Sandrine Detandt, "The Mark, the Thing, and the Object: On What Commands Repetition in Freud and Lacan," *Frontiers in Psychology* 8, art. no. 2244 (2017): https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.02244. For an interpretation of pure judgment of taste and signification, see Moran Godess–Riccitelli, "The Cipher of Nature in Kant's Third Critique: How to Represent Natural Beauty as Meaningful?," *Con–textos Kantianos: International Journal of Philosophy* 12 (2020): 338–57.

63 This is another part of the third Critique that is overlooked by Žižek, namely that the form or the Idea that fills one with delight corresponds to purposiveness, but then it is a "purposiveness—*full stop*."

64 And, perhaps, love, if this is indeed an affect.

She rightly suggests that the three maxims of the *sensus communis*[65] imply the presence of others.[66] This, however, is not a complete account. As such, *sensus communis* implies nothing but the idea (and the potentiality) of there being other judging beings whenever one *singularly* judges.[67] Otherness runs through the beautiful, humor, and enthusiasm, but it does so in a different way. Affects such as humor and enthusiasm involve our being affected by an actual other human being. Judging the beautiful, however, does not require another human being to be judging along with us whenever we are judging. It "merely" implies that if there is another judger, this other being too shall (i.e., must) know (dis)pleasure with regard to this or that object we deem beautiful or not. Pure judgment of taste does not depend on the assent of the other. It is the other way around: one appeals to the other's assent on the basis of one's judgment. What is shown by affects such as enthusiasm and humor is the exact inverse of this: affects (can) attest to the fact that, as judging beings, we can also be interpellated by other judging beings calling on us to respond. That is to say, what works in a joke as well as in the enthusiasm for a revolution relies on what the other is trying to *tell me*.[68] If one speaks, then one demands from the other to hear the universal in what is being said. This indeed goes for the revolutionaries, who would not do what they do (storm the Bastille) if it were not for the presence of a spectator, as Arendt rightly remarks.[69] The same goes for the funny guy, who would not tell a joke if nobody were around to hear it. This is the role of affect as pathology: in order to hear the universal, one must be able not only to speak, but to listen too. This is why Kant (and Arendt cites this passage), in a sense retroactively, says that "only in society does it become *interesting* to have taste."[70] And also: the

65 "1. To think for oneself; 2. To think in the position of everyone else; 3. Always to think in accordance with oneself." KU, 5:294.

66 Arendt, *Kant's Political Philosophy*, 67.

67 For example, with regard to the three maxims of *sensus communis*, we can see that from the moment one is capable of saying "I think," i.e., to think in accordance with oneself, the figure of the other is implied.

68 It is in *The Contest of the Faculties* that Kant is most adamant about the value of affect vis-à-vis one of the supreme political events of the century, the French revolution. SF, 7:85.

69 Arendt, *Kant's Political Philosophy*, 61–62, 65–67. Gertrudis Van de Vijver pointed out to us that this is at bottom the idea intimated in "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" (WA, AA08), be it with regard to freedom of speech. The point made in this text is that to be able to come together politically, we need to be engaged in free public discourse (i.e., we must speak to each other).

70 KU, 5:205; italics added.

"beautiful interests empirically only in society." The "drive to society is," after all, "admitted to be natural to human beings."[71] However, this is a testimony to the addition of the pathological (affect) to the pure (beauty). We find this most exquisite collapsing of the pathological in the pure, of which Kant is in fact the masterly analyst, here as well:

> For himself alone a human being abandoned on a desert island would not adorn either his hut or himself, nor seek out or still less plant flowers in order to decorate himself; rather, only in society does it occur to him to be not merely a human being but also, in his own way, a refined human being.[72]

Through the human pathology, thus, one can escape the singular position in which one would demand that the other assent to one's own judgment, if the other were around.[73] In this sense, studying affects (such as both humor and enthusiasm) can expand our understanding of pure judgment of taste if we acknowledge that the former realize the latter's fulfillment. Where Arendt locates the actual presence of the other *in* pure judgment of taste, we hold the latter to be a pure moment in need of supplementation by a pathological moment (even though our conception of pure judgment of taste surely *anticipates* this supplementation). Whereas for pure judgment of taste the *actual* presence of the other is not a necessary condition, the exact opposite goes for both humor and enthusiasm. We can now answer our general question as follows. How can we come together politically? By coming together—full stop.

Abbreviations of Kant's Works:

Anth: Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht (AA 7), 1798
EEKU: Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft (AA 20), 1794
GMS: Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten (AA 4), 1785
IaG: Idee zu einer allgemeine Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht (AA 8), 1784
KpV: Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (AA 5), 1788
KU: Kritik der Urteilskraft (AA 5), 1790

71 KU, 5:296. Albeit a *divided* drive to society, called unsociable sociability (*ungesellige Geselligkeit*). Kant calls this antagonism, inherent in man's sociability, the means by which nature operates to bring about development in human history. IaG, 8:20.

72 KU, 5:297.

73 Cf. KU, 5:278 on egoism and pluralism.

SF: Der Streit der Fakultäten (AA 7), 1798

V-Anth/Fried: Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1775/1776 Friedländer (AA 25)

V-Anth/Mensch: Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1781/1782 Menschenkunde, Petersburg (AA 25)

V-Anth/Mron: Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1784/1785 Mrongovius (AA 25)

V-Anth/Pillau: Vorlesungen Wintersemester 1777/1778 Pillau (AA 25)

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