

Kant's Conceptions of the Feeling of Life and the Feeling of the Promotion of Life in Light of Epicurus' Theory of Pleasure and the Stoic Notion of *Oikeiôsis*

[As Concepções Kantianas do Sentimento de Vida e do Sentimento de Promoção da Vida à Luz da Teoria do Prazer de Epicuro e da Noção Estóica de *Oikeiôsis*]

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Abstract

This paper shows the ways in which Kant's notions of the feeling of life and the feeling of the promotion of life may be influenced by Epicurus' theory of pleasure and the Stoic notion of *oikeiôsis*, respectively. Accordingly, getting a clear picture of Epicurus' theory of pleasure and the Stoic notion of *oikeiôsis* will help us (i) understand why Kant introduces these notions in the third *Critique* and (ii) why he identifies aesthetic pleasure with the feeling of the promotion of life. As I will demonstrate, the feeling of life allows us to be conscious of the harmonious interaction of our faculties with each other while the feeling of the promotion of life allows us to be aware of the harmonious relationship between our faculties and nature. Hence, the feeling of the promotion of life indicates the well-being of the subject in its relation to its environment.

Keywords: Aesthetic pleasure; Epicurus; *oikeiôsis*; the feeling of life; the feeling of the promotion of life.

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Introduction

In the beginning of the *Analytic of the Beautiful*, Kant states that

The representation of [beautiful objects] is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, (...) of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state (KU, AA 5: 204, §1).²

In a number of other passages in the third *Critique*, Kant states that the feeling of pleasure signifies a condition promoting life and its activity, and similarly the feeling of displeasure signifies hindrance to life and its activity.

Although at first glance what Kant means by these terms seems straightforward, there is no consensus among Kant scholars on what Kant means by “life” [*Leben*], “the feeling of life” [*das Lebensgefühl*] and “the feeling of promotion of life” [*Gefühl der Beförderung des Lebens*]. According to John Z. Zammito, for instance, life for Kant is a property of an intelligent will. That is, life refers to the capacity to choose to act, which depends on having reason and the ability to act on it. Based on this limited description of life, which excludes non-rational living organisms such as animals or plants, Zammito writes that

The feeling of life, therefore, is the awareness of our empirical freedom, our status as practically purposive in the world of sense. Pleasure, in that context, is either what fosters our consciousness of freedom, or what accompanies and underscores its efficaciousness (Zammito, 1992, p. 295).

In other words, while feeling of life is the feeling of our freedom in nature, feeling of pleasure that promotes life is the feeling that accompanies our free actions.

For Katalin Makkai, on the other hand, “the feeling of pleasure or displeasure,” or the capacity to feel pleasure or displeasure, is simply another name for the “feeling of life.” As she writes, “What this comes to in the case of the judgment of taste is that the mind is brought to life, and one’s pleasure is in this, in finding oneself to be brought to life by something (and not just in some resultant state of being ‘alive’)” (Makkai, 2021, p. 9). In other words, Makkai identifies the feeling of pleasure with the feeling of life, and by life she means the animation of the mental faculties in their free play that grounds our aesthetic pleasure. As she further explains in the second chapter of her book, “My pleasure is pleasure in the object as animating. I take pleasure in finding myself to be animated, brought to life, by the object, its inviting me to reflect upon it and, in particular, upon the way in which it brings me to life” (Makkai, 2021, p. 101). In brief, life in this reading means the free play of our mental faculties and “free play itself is a matter of the mind’s being animated, or brought to life, by the object (or its representation)” (Makkai, 2021, p. 163). According to Makkai, therefore, by life Kant simply means the activity or animation of our faculties, and thereby the feeling of life refers to the feeling of this animation.

While I agree with Makkai’s account of life and the feeling of life, in terms of animation or activity and the feeling of this activity, some fundamental questions regarding these notions remain unanswered. First of all, Makkai does not clearly distinguish the feeling of life from the feeling of the promotion of life. Second, she does not explain the function of the notion of feeling of life in relation to Kant’s main objective in the third *Critique*. That is, she does not explain the relevance or the significance of these notions in connection with the overarching goal of the third *Critique*, namely the goal of closing the gap between the phenomenal and noumenal spheres of nature and freedom. Finally, even though she briefly refers to Plato’s

² Kant will be cited in the conventional way, an abbreviation of the German title of the work followed by volume and page of the Academy edition of Kant’s Writings. I have used the translations in the Cambridge Editions of the Works of Immanuel Kant. The abbreviations of Kant’s works are as follows:

KpV: *Critique of Practical Reason*

KU: *Critique of the Power of Judgment*

V-MP/Herder: *Metaphysics Lectures Herder*

Refl: *Notes and Fragments*.

aesthetic theory, Makkai does not explain the historical and philosophical background for Kant's conceptions of the feeling of life and the feeling of the promotion of life.³

Eduardo Molina in his article "Kant and the Concept of Life" argues that Kant uses the concept of life in the following three distinct senses: first, in a canonical or practical sense, which refers to our ability to act voluntarily; second, in a biological sense, which refers to life of the organisms; third, in an aesthetic sense, where Kant relates life to the feeling of the animation of the faculties when we experience beautiful objects (Molina, 2010, p. 21). By distinguishing different senses of life in different contexts, Molina manages to avoid some of the problems that the previous accounts face.⁴ In the aesthetic sense of the feeling of life, Molina argues, we feel animation in relation to the feeling of the beautiful, which requires both an animal body and the rational capacity for thinking, which is a unique characteristic of humans (Molina, 2010, p. 33). The feeling of life in the aesthetic sense, on this account, mediates the rational and the organic levels of life. What is more, by accounting for the bodily animation as a kind of feeling of health [*Gesundheit*] or of the bodily well-being [*Wohlbefinden*] characteristic of humans, Molina connects Kant's account of the feeling of life in the aesthetic sense with Epicurus' account of pleasure. Although Molina briefly mentions Epicurus' account of pleasure in relation to Kant's account of the feeling of life, he does not explain why Kant introduces the feeling of the promotion of life and why Kant makes several references to Epicurus in his discussion of this notion.

Having pointed out some of the problems and explanatory gaps in some of the available interpretations of Kant's conceptions of the feeling of life and the feeling of promotion of life, in this paper I aim to present an alternative reading which accounts for the significance and the function of these notions by appealing to their apparent historical origins in ancient Greek philosophy. More specifically, I aim to demonstrate the ways in which Kant's conceptions of the feeling of life and the feeling of the promotion of life might be influenced by the Epicurus' theory of pleasure and the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*, respectively.

In the first part of the paper, I present a brief summary of Epicurus' theory of pleasure and argue that Epicurus views the feeling of pleasure as an indication of the proper functioning of the organism. A brief analysis of his theory will both clarify the significance of Kant's references to Epicurus in the third *Critique* and help us understand why the feeling of aesthetic pleasure can be classified as a feeling of promotion of life.

Following the introduction to Epicurus' theory of pleasure, in which pleasure is connected to the harmonious and proper functioning of the different parts of the organism and, thereby, to the inner well-being of living organisms, in the second section of this paper, I will focus on the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*, which is rooted in the term *oikos*, meaning house, household or home. What is important for our purposes is that *oikeiōsis* is a natural disposition that allows one to become aware of the things that belongs to one, which initially include one's mental activities, and then expands to include one's bodily activities as belonging to oneself. As this section will reveal, thanks to their developmental capacity of *oikeiōsis*, humans are able to feel a sense of ownership towards their mental and bodily activities, which develops into a sense of belonging to their immediate and extended family and transforms into a sense of affinity with one's own society, the whole of humanity and finally the universe. Thus, despite the vast diversity of empirical forms and the apparently destructive and chaotic powers in nature, *oikeiōsis* allows humans to feel at home [*oikos*] in nature. Getting clear on the Stoic conception of *oikeiōsis*, which refers to the natural disposition of human beings to feel affinity and a sense of ownership with ever-growing circles of phenomena will help us understand how this notion allows Kant to

³ In her review of Makkai's book, Melissa Meritt (2023) raises similar worries about Makkai's interpretation.

⁴ For Molina, the practical use of the concept of life applies to only human beings as rational and partly spiritual beings (Molina, 2010, p. 32). In that respect, Zammito's concept of life that narrowly applies to rational beings is only one of the three uses of this concept, i.e., the practical use of the concept of life. Similarly, we can say that Makkai's book, in Molina's framework, focuses on the aesthetic use of the concept of life.

bridge the gap between the mental and the physical aspects of humans and nature as well as the gap between the spheres of reason/freedom and nature.

After presenting this philosophical background, in the third and final part of the paper I argue that Kant's account of aesthetic pleasure and its relationship to the "feeling of the promotion of life" can be better understood in light of the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*.⁵ As will be clear, Kant aims to show that the aesthetic pleasure we receive from the experience of nature is based on the conformity of the form of empirical representations to our cognitive needs and interests. This conformity between the empirical forms and our cognitive faculties, which is not due to the *a priori* forms of our faculty of understanding, triggers the harmonious activity of the faculties of imagination and understanding. Sensible awareness of the harmony of our cognitive faculties, in turn, constitutes the feeling of life. Thus, the feeling of life, for Kant, means the sensible awareness of our intelligible self. To put it differently, the feeling of life amounts to the phenomenal (or sensible) consequence of the activity of our noumenal (or intelligible) self or soul.

While feeling of life means the sensible awareness of the activities of our soul, the feeling of the promotion of life means the sensible awareness of our mind's harmonious relationship to our body and nature. According to Kant, the relationship between the mind and the body (or between the mental and corporeal aspects of human nature) can be sensed through the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of our interests or needs in the empirical world.

As I will argue, appreciation of natural beauty not only leads to the harmony of our cognitive faculties, but also indicates the harmony between humans and nature. The aesthetic pleasure we feel when we experience nature, according to Kant, indicates this harmonious relationship, for it depends on the conformity of the form of an empirical representation to our cognitive interest and epistemic needs determined by the theoretical use of reason. Since the harmony between nature and reason promotes rational human activity and, consequently, human life, aesthetic pleasure and the feeling of the sublime signify that the harmony between nature and reason is a feeling of the promotion of life. Hence, the pleasure we experience in the experience of beautiful and sublime objects in nature gives us a sense of belonging and helps humans "feel at home" in nature.

For Kant, then, both the feeling of life and the feeling of the promotion of life play a role in closing the gap between the sensible sphere of nature and the supersensible sphere of reason (or freedom). The feeling of life amounts to the phenomenal consequence of the activity of our noumenal self, and thereby functions as the sensible awareness of our supersensible soul. The feeling of the promotion of life, on the other hand, amounts to the sensible awareness of the conformity of the empirical world to the needs and interests of our faculty of reason. In that respect, it is feeling of the harmony between the sensible sphere of nature and the supersensible sphere of reason as well as the feeling of the reign of reason over nature.

While appealing to Epicurus' theory of pleasure and the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis* illuminates certain aspects of Kant's conceptions of "the feeling of life" and "the feeling of the promotion of life," one might worry that this philosophical background may lead to a more serious problem for Kant. Given that Epicurianism and Stoicism are rival theories with opposite assumptions about what is good, one might worry that, if Kant's views on the feeling of life and the feeling of promotion of life are in fact inspired by these theories, it must be internally inconsistent. However, the rivalry between Epicurianism and Stoicism originates from their incompatible accounts of human nature. Unlike Epicurians and Stoics who respectively define humans as either sensuous animals or rational beings, Kant acknowledges that humans have a multi-faceted nature with different yet compatible aspects and corresponding interests and ends.

⁵ There is a growing interest in discovering the influence of Stoicism on Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy. As far as I am aware, however, no one has suggested that Kant's notions of "feeling of the promotion of life" and his account of "aesthetic pleasure" could be influenced by the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*.

Therefore, the worry about the consistency of Kant's account will be addressed by showing that humans, for Kant, have animalistic, rational and uniquely human aspects with corresponding needs and interests. As animals, we have a natural interest in seeking and experiencing pleasure and judging pleasure to be a pathological good. As rational beings, on the other hand, we also have an interest in acting rationally. As human beings, we have an interest in using our rationality to survive in the world and to act as rational beings in the world. In the third *Critique*, Kant incorporates both the Epicurean and Stoic insights about human nature and argues that the feeling of pleasure as a result of our experience of nature indicates that nature is good to us, and that, thereby, we can judge that the empirical world is hospitable to our rational interests and needs.

1. The Function of Pleasure for Epicurus and Its Influence on Kant's Account of Pleasure

While Kant does not mention the Stoics in his discussions of aesthetic pleasure or the feeling of life, he does refer to Epicurus five times in the third *Critique*. Thus, before I explain the Stoic account of *oikeiōsis* and its relation to Kant's account of the feeling of the promotion of life, a general introduction to Epicurus' account of pleasure is in order. Hence, in this section I will first present the main tenets of Epicurus' theory of pleasure [*hēdonē*] as well as the function of the feeling [*pathos*]. As will be clear, Epicurus' account of pleasure and pain help us understand the way in which the feelings of pleasure and pain function as indicators of our well and ill-being, respectively.⁶ After a brief introduction of Epicurus' account of pleasure, I will examine Kant's references to Epicurus and point out the parts where Kant agrees with Epicurus.

1.1. Epicurus' Account of Pleasure

According to Epicurus, the human soul is a corporeal entity that is constituted of tiny atoms diffused throughout the body. The soul has both rational and irrational parts, to which Epicurus refers as the mind and the spirit respectively (LS, 14A, 65; 14B, 66).⁷ While the spirit, the irrational and sensible part of the soul, receives sensations, mind, the rational part of the soul that is concentrated in the chest area, is responsible for higher intellectual functions such as thought and feeling (LS, 14Hf, 70-1). Epicurus distinguishes sensations from feelings and thinks that, while the former simply involves the material contact between our sense organs and the external world, the latter gives us information about the appropriateness of those sensations to us (LS, 15A, 74).

Within this atomistic and materialistic world-view, sensing the world means that our sense organs are being affected by a stream of atoms originating from external objects and causing a disturbance of the atoms in our sense organs. While sensations put us in touch with the external world and form the basis of our feelings and judgments, they are not themselves judgments or feelings. According to Epicurus, the particles moving from the objects towards us to stimulate our sense organs can cause sensations in either harmonious or disharmonious ways. Depending on the nature of these stimulations, i.e., their appropriateness to us, we would have either positive or negative feelings and judgments about those objects (LS, 15A, 74). The feelings of pleasure and pain [*hēdonē*, *algēdōn*] are feelings through which we recognize the appropriateness and inappropriateness of the sensations to us. For Epicurus, then, the terms

⁶ While summarizing the relevant parts of Epicurus' theory of pleasure and the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*, I rely on A. A. Long and D. Sedley's *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 2 volumes (hereafter LS). I will cite this book by referring to both the relevant section and the page numbers.

⁷ As Epicurus writes, soul resembles the wind in some respects and heat in others.

“pleasure” and “pain” refer to emotions [*pathé*] experienced through the irrational part of the soul atoms distributed throughout our body.

Epicurus situates pleasure as the greatest good and introduces different types of pleasure. As Diogenes Laertius points out, the two types of pleasure are active [*kinetic*] and static [*katastematic*]. Active [*kinetic*] pleasures are felt when one is performing an action in order to restore its state of deprivation to its natural state by satisfying its needs, such as eating when hungry, drinking when thirsty. When one is in one’s natural state of complete freedom from any depravation and physical or mental disturbance, then one feels the static pleasures of contentment and tranquility (LS, 21R, 118).⁸

The greatest pleasure, according to Epicurus, is experienced when all pain is removed from the body and soul, i.e., when we are in a healthy state (LS, 21A, 113.). In the *Letter to Menoeceus*, Epicurus writes that the goal of a blessed life is “the health of the body and soul’s freedom from disturbance” (LS, 21B, 113). In other words, by pleasure, which is the ultimate good for humans, Epicurus means the removal of pain, i.e., a state of complete freedom from physical pain and mental distress. We can remove the pain due to physical needs, such as hunger and thirst by satisfying those needs and we can remove mental distress, i.e., feelings of fear and anxiety, by focusing on the present instead of regretting the past or worrying about the future (LS, 21B, 114; 21D, p. 115). When all physical and mental pain is removed, we can feel static pleasure or the feeling of tranquility. For Epicurus, then the state of contentment and tranquility is a kind of static pleasure and happiness [*eudaimonia*] as the ultimate goal of humanity involves this kind of pleasure.

For Epicurus, then, one is in a good and harmonious state when one attains the state of tranquility by freeing oneself from all physical disturbances [*aponia*] and mental disturbances [*ataraxia*]. As J. C. B. Gosling, and C. C. W. Taylor puts it,

It seems simplest just to suppose that when the organism is functioning harmoniously it is always having some form of perception; that since the operation is harmonious the perception is pleasant and without pain; and that is just what aponia is. Ataraxia is the condition when, because of correct views, our expectations are undisturbed by fear, our desires do not pursue empty objectives and our memories are pleasant: this leaves us to enjoy our pleasures unanxiously. (Gosling, 2011, p. 393)

That is, the state of *aponia* and *ataraxia* is a state in which all the parts of the organism are operating properly. Even though the state of freedom from all physical and mental disturbances, i.e., the state of *aponia* and *ataraxia*, is a state of static pleasure, Epicurus insists that the feelings of joy and well-being are seen in actuality in motion. This, in turn, implies that organisms feel static pleasure or tranquility when their parts are active and moving according to their inner principles, i.e., when they are operating in accordance with their nature.

Epicurus builds his theory of pleasure on the assumption that pleasure is a natural sign through which we can know what is good for us. As Cicero’s Epicurean spokesman Torquatus puts it,

His [Epicurus’] doctrine begins in this way: (2) as soon as every animal is born, it seeks after pleasure and rejoices in it as the greatest good, while it rejects pain as the greatest bad and, as far as possible, avoids it; and it does this when it is not yet corrupted, on the innocent and sound judgment of nature itself. (...) (3) Since man has nothing left if sensations are removed from him, it must be the case that nature itself judges what is in accordance with and contrary to nature. (LS, 21A, p. 112)

In other words, pleasure is good because nature directs us towards it and we naturally pursue it. For Epicurus, then, what is in accordance with nature is good and we can have a primitive

⁸ Epicurus also distinguishes the pleasures of the body and soul and values the former more than the latter. Contrary to the bodily pleasures, which concern only the present, the pleasures of the soul, Epicurus thinks, concern the past, present, and the future (LS, 21R, p. 118).

knowledge about what is good (or bad) for us through our natural desire for pleasure (and avoidance of pain). As he puts it in his *Letter to Menoecus*,

Pleasure is the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the good which is primary and congenital; from it we begin every choice and avoidance, and we come back to it using the feeling as the yardstick for judging every good thing (LS, 21B, 114).

The feeling of pleasure, thereby, serves as a natural guide for both animals and humans: it allows them to identify what is in accordance with their nature and, consequently, what is good. Recognition of good things through the feeling of pleasure initially happens automatically without any interference of thought. As our intellectual capacities develop, however, the feeling of pleasure also serves as a rational criterion for our choices and actions.

So far we saw that, for Epicurus, sensation of objects that satisfy our needs and interests leads to the feeling of pleasure, which is the sensible awareness of the suitability of the objects of sensation to our nature. In other words, when the sensations of objects stimulate our sense organs in an appropriate and harmonious way, they indicate familiarity of the objects to us, which in turn leads to the feeling of pleasure. Similarly, when the objects stimulate our sense organs in a disharmonious way, they cause pain, indicating that the objects in question are foreign and harmful to us. While sensations ground the feelings, the feeling of pleasure and pain ground our value judgments about objects. That is, when the sensations of objects satisfy our needs or interests, we feel pleasure, and this feeling of pleasure leads to the judgment that the object of sensation is good. According to Epicurus, therefore, sensations ground feelings, and feelings ground our judgments. Having briefly explained Epicurus' theory of pleasure, in the following section I will focus on Kant's references to Epicurus in the third *Critique*, which will shed some light on Kant's conception of the feeling of life.

1.2. Kant's Conception of the Feeling of Life

In Kant's *Notes and Fragments*, life is described as "the capacity to initiate a state (of oneself or another from an inner principle)," which means that life is an ability to act on our own based on a principle that belongs to our own nature (*Refl*, AA 17: 313, 1769-70).⁹ The feeling of life, then, is a feeling that allows us to become aware of the self-organizing capacities of our faculties, i.e., their capacity to act according to their unique inner principles. While the inner principle by which animals act is their impulses and inclinations, the inner principle by which humans act may be either inclinations or rational principles. Unlike animals, humans are not necessitated to act based on their instincts and inclinations, which is why humans have the power of choice, allowing them to be free, while animals are *automata* (*Refl*, AA 17: 313). As we shall see, when Kant claims that representations affect the feeling of life, in the context of the third *Critique* he means that empirical representations given to us can affect our mental faculties and trigger the self-governing activity of our cognitive faculties.

In the *General Remark Upon the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgments*, Kant asserts that all representations, as long as they are modifications of the subject or changes in our mental capacities, are *associated* with the feeling of pleasure and pain, however unnoticeable these feelings might be (*KU*, AA 05: 277-78). In other words, Kant concedes that, in the case of representations that constitute cognition of objects, even though they also cause modification in the subject, we may no longer notice the feeling that accompanies this change (*KU*, AA 05: 187). This means that, when the change in our mental state is either too fast or too common,

⁹ Reliance on Kant's *Notes and Fragments* may understandably raise doubts about the relevance of Kant's pre-critical views for his critical position and whether they reflect Kant's mature views on the subject. However, in his 1791 Letter to Christoph Frederick Hellwag, Kant seems to assume the same conception of life as he refers to it as having an absolutely inner cause, which suggests that life for Kant means the ability to cause a change in one's state based on an inner power or principle (*Br*, AA 11: 246).

we may not be conscious of this change, and thereby may not feel anything as a result of the activity of our faculties.

For Kant, then, the consciousness of the activity of our faculties, which is governed by their respective inner principles, constitutes the feeling of life. Depending on the nature of this activity, i.e., whether it is a harmonious or disharmonious activity, we feel pleasure or displeasure. In this respect, the feeling of life is the consequence of the activity of our mental capacities, i.e., our intelligible self. The feeling of pleasure (or displeasure), on the other hand, informs us of the harmonious (or disharmonious) state of this activity.

Given that the inner principle of the faculty of imagination is freedom, while the inner principle of the faculty of understanding is lawfulness, the harmonious activity of these faculties requires a state in which the imagination can be free while the understanding remains lawful. Such harmonious activity of our cognitive faculties would result in the feeling of pleasure. As mentioned before, when the empirical representation given to us by our sensibility leads to the cognition of an object through the subsumption of the representation mediated by the imagination under the *a priori* forms of the understanding, the subject may not notice the feeling that accompanies this interaction either due to the commonality or the briefness of this interaction.

When the empirical representation given to our sensibility exhibits a form that conforms to our cognitive interests and needs, on the other hand, the interaction between the faculty of imagination and the understanding is animated and vivified in a way that allows the faculties of imagination and understanding to act according to their respective inner principles of freedom and lawfulness, the feeling of life would transform into a feeling of harmonious activity of our faculties, i.e., to a feeling of pleasure. When we become sensibly aware of this harmonious activity through the feeling of pleasure, this feeling, in turn, can lead to an aesthetic judgment about the object of that representation. That is, the object of representation would be judged as beautiful. In this respect, following Epicurus Kant also thinks that, when the objects stimulate our sensibility cause sensations or empirical representations that conform to our (cognitive) needs and interests, we feel (disinterested aesthetic) pleasure, which in turn grounds the (aesthetic) judgment that the object of representation is beautiful.

According to Kant, an empirical representation that exhibits formal unity conforming to our cognitive needs and interests allows the imagination to subsume this representation under multiple different concepts or laws the understanding generates. Hence, the imagination can freely dance between multiple available concepts generated by the understanding.¹⁰ In other words, when the empirical representation presented to the faculty of understanding exhibits an empirical unity that is not imposed by the faculty of understanding, the representation would be in formal agreement *not* with any particular concept (or law) of the understanding. Rather the representation would be in agreement with the entire faculty of understanding, i.e., with the subject (*KU*, AA 05: 206). The formal agreement of the empirical representation with the interests and needs of the faculty of understanding means that the empirical representation exhibits purposiveness [*Zweckmässigkeit*] or suitability to our cognitive ends.

As mentioned before, the formal agreement between the empirical representation and the subject triggers the free dance or the free play of the faculty of imagination. The free motion (or dance) of the imagination among the concepts provided by the understanding constitutes a state in which both faculties are active and acting according to their respective inner principles of freedom and lawfulness without hindering each other's activity. That is why the free play of the imagination constitutes the harmony of the faculties of imagination and understanding

¹⁰ For the purposes of this paper, it suffices to note that, on my view, the multi-cognitive interpretation of Kant's account of the free play of the cognitive faculties captures the nature of the interaction between imagination and understanding best. For a detailed discussion of this interpretation please refer to section 3. 3. 3. Multicognitive Interpretation in Mojca Küplen's book, *Beauty, Ugliness and the Free Play of Imagination: An Approach to Kant's Aesthetics*.

(*KU*, AA 20: 224; AA 05: 189-90). Since the free play of the imagination (or the harmony of the faculties of imagination and understanding) results from the conformity of the form of the empirical representation to the general principle of the faculty of understanding, i.e., its lawfulness, this harmony is not governed by any particular concept, nor does it produce one. Instead, the harmonious activity of our cognitive faculties allows us to contemplate on the lawfulness of the empirical representation without settling on a particular law or concept. That is why the judgment we form based on this harmonious interaction of the faculties is a contemplative judgment, and it is indifferent to the existence of any particular object (*KU*, AA 05:209).

The harmonious and active state of the mind, in which our cognitive faculties are acting according to their inner principles and functioning properly without any external disturbance or inhibition, constitutes the ground of our awareness of this activity. Given that life, for Kant, refers to the self-governing activity of organisms, the self-governing activity of our cognitive faculties constitutes our mental life. Since the faculty of feeling belongs to the sensible aspect of human nature, the feeling of life through which we become aware of our (mental) life simply refers to the sensible awareness of our (mental) life.

For Kant, then, consciousness of our cognitive powers is not intellectual, but rather sensible consciousness, which depends on the sensation of our cognitive activities. In § 9, Kant raises the following question:

(...) in what way do we become conscious of a mutual subjective correspondence of the powers of cognition with each other in the judgment of taste – aesthetically, through mere inner sense and sensation, or intellectually, through the consciousness of our intentional activity through which we set them in play? (*KU*, AA 05: 218).

In response to this question, Kant writes that “the subjective unity of the relation [between our cognitive powers] can make itself known only through sensation [*Empfindung*]” (*KU*, AA 05: 219). In other words, by the feeling of life Kant refers to our sensible awareness of the self-organizing activity of our cognitive faculties.

The immediate question is: What is the function of the feeling of life? Why does Kant feel the need to introduce this notion in the third *Critique*? As will be clear, he points out the way in which the intelligible (or cognitive) and sensible aspects of human mind can be united through the feeling of life. In this respect, the feeling of life plays a key role in Kant's overarching aim of unifying the sensible and supersensible domains in his philosophy.

According to Kant, the system of philosophy has theoretical and practical domains (*KU*, AA 20: 185), which correspond to the theoretical and practical cognition of objects. While we can have theoretical cognition of sensible (phenomenal) objects, i.e., appearances, we can only have practical cognition of supersensible (noumenal) objects, i.e., things in themselves (*KU*, AA 05: 174-75). Within this dualist framework, we can infer that human beings have phenomenal (or sensible) and noumenal (or supersensible) aspects as well. The faculty of feeling, which informs us about our mental life through subjective sensations, belongs to the sensible part of the human nature. The inner principles governing our cognitive faculties, on the other hand, belong to the intelligible (or supersensible) part of human nature.¹¹ Given that the faculty of feeling is part of our sensible nature and our cognitive faculties are considered to be a part of our rational or intellectual nature, the feeling of life functions as the sensible awareness of the activities of our intelligible self. In this respect, the feeling of life can be considered the phenomenal consequence of the activity of our noumenal self. This in turn means that the feeling of life is the synthetic unity of the sensible (phenomenal) and rational (noumenal) aspects of human nature via the real *ground-consequence* [*Grund-Folge*] relationship.¹² Through the

11 As Kant writes, “any principle of life must be counted among the *intelligibilia*, thus the soul as well” (*RefI*, AA 17: 585, 143).

12 Unlike logical grounding, in the case of the real grounding relationship, the ground and the consequence are

notion of the feeling of life, therefore, Kant manages to unify the sensible and the supersensible aspects of human nature in a necessary ground-consequence relationship.

So far, we saw that the feeling of life is the feeling of the self-governing and harmonious activities of our cognitive faculties and it functions as the unifying notion of the sensible and supersensible aspects of human nature. Having established that the feeling of life constitutes the sensible awareness of our existence as cognizant beings, we can now move on to the feeling that informs us of our existence in relation to our environment. In the next section, therefore, I will focus on Kant's notion of the feeling of the promotion (or inhibition) of life, which informs us of the relationship between humans and their environment, i.e., nature. As we shall see, our environment can either promote or inhibit the activities of our cognitive faculties and mental capacities. And Kant, following Epicurus, thinks that we can be aware of the nature of our relationship with empirical nature through the feelings of pleasure and displeasure, which indicate the promotion and inhibition of life respectively.

1.3. Epicurus' Influence on Kant in the third *Critique*

As we saw in the previous section, the feeling of life simply amounts to the consciousness of our existence as a being with faculties that can generate representations and act on their own inner principles. Through "the feeling of life," by which Kant simply means "the feeling of our mental life," therefore, we gain sensible consciousness of the operations of our cognitive faculties and our existence as a being with self-governing faculties. As Kant states in the passage from *General Remark Upon the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgments*,

[L]ife without the feeling of the corporeal organ is merely consciousness of one's existence, but not a feeling of well- or ill-being, i.e., the promotion or inhibition of the powers of life; because the mind for itself is entirely life (the principle of life itself), and hindrances or promotions must be sought outside it, though in the human being himself, hence in combination with his body. (KU, AA 05: 277-78)

Here Kant clearly distinguishes the feeling of life from the feeling of the promotion of life and states that the latter requires more than having consciousness of one's mental life, as it requires the consciousness of one's corporal body and its relation to our mental life as well.

Once again, following Epicurus Kant distinguishes sensations from feelings and assumes that sensations are the sensible basis of yet are not identical to the feelings. Unlike sensations, which inform us about the objective features of things, feelings inform us about the suitability of the sensations to our subjective interests and needs. Kant distinguishes sensation [*Empfindung*] from the feeling [*Gefühl*] most clearly in the following passage:

(...) I call the representation of a thing [sensation] For in the latter case [of sensation], the representation is related to the object, but in the first case [of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure] it is related solely to the subject. (...) we understand by the word "sensation" an objective representation of the senses; and in order not always to run the risk of being misinterpreted, we will call that which must always remain merely subjective and absolutely cannot constitute a representation of an object by the otherwise customary name of "feeling." The green color of the meadows belongs to objective sensation, as perception of an object of sense; but its agreeableness belongs to subjective sensation, through which no object is represented, i.e., to feeling, through which the object is considered as an object of satisfaction (which is not a cognition of it). (KU, AA 05: 206)

As it is clear in this passage, sensations are modifications in our sense organs, and they relate to objects. While sensations are objective representations informing us about the features of objects, feelings are subjective representations informing us about the suitability of the objects

not connected to each other through the law of identity. Thus the real grounding relationship is a kind of necessary relationship between two distinct things (VMP/Herder, AA 28: 11). For a detailed discussion of Kant's conception of grounding, see Watkins (2005), Kreines (2016), Stang (2016, 2019).

to our interests and ends.

While Kant sometimes uses the term “sensation” to mean objective representations related to things, at other times he uses it to refer to all the representations of the faculty of sensibility. When he uses the term to refer to the representations of the faculty of sensibility, he distinguishes objective from subjective sensations in order to distinguish the empirical representations that relate to objects from those that relate to the subject. In this context, feelings become subjective sensations as they are representations of our sensible nature that relate to the subject and inform us about the harmonious or disharmonious relationship between the objects of our representation and our subjective needs and interests. To put it differently, feelings, such as the feelings of pain and pleasure, allow the subject to judge whether the object of our representation is appropriate for (or agreeable to) the subject or not (KU, AA 05: 189, 05: 203-6).

In the third *Critique*, Kant distinguishes three kinds of feeling of pleasure: (i) pleasure in the agreeable, i.e., gratification; (ii) pleasure in experience of beautiful objects, i.e., aesthetic pleasure; and (iii) pleasure in the moral good, i.e., respect [*Achtung*] (KU, AA 05: 209). Each kind of pleasure results from the recognition of the appropriateness of the representation of the object to a particular kind of interest we have, and each kind of interest is determined by a different kind of *end* we have by virtue of being (i) sensuous beings or animals, (ii) human beings, and (iii) rational beings, respectively. As sensuous beings, our end is to satisfy our needs and survive in nature. As rational beings, our end is to *act* according to reason at all times and to have a good will. As human beings, our end is to live as rational agents in nature, which requires both the theoretical and practical use of reason. Kant implicitly assumes that each kind of feeling of pleasure concerns the consciousness of the conformity (or appropriateness) of the empirical representation of the object to a particular end we have in virtue of having animal, rational, and uniquely human aspects.

While the feeling of life allows us to have sensible awareness of our own mental faculties' ability to act in accordance with their inner principles, the feelings of pleasure and displeasure allow us to have sensible awareness of the relationship between the subject and its corporeal surrounding. In that respect, the feelings of pleasure and displeasure serve as the feeling of the well- or ill-being of our powers, and inform us whether nature conforms to our needs and interests, which in turn informs us about whether nature promotes or hinders human life. This is because the promotions or inhibitions of our life come from the things outside of our mind even if they are in the human being, namely in combination of the mind with the body (KU, AA 05: 277-78). That is why the feeling of the promotion or inhibition of life is nothing more than the feeling of the harmony or disharmony between our mind and the things outside of the mind, namely our body, our surroundings and nature in general.

Since the feeling of the promotion of life is the feeling of the harmonious or disharmonious relationship between the mind and the corporeal nature, we can become aware of this relationship through our bodily sensations of pain and gratification, respectively. Following Epicurus, Kant contends that pain and gratification ultimately belong to the sensible and corporeal organs and writes that, “as Epicurus maintained, **gratification** and **pain** are always ultimately corporeal, whether they originate from the imagination or even from representations of the understanding” (KU, AA 05: 277-78). Similarly, at the remark after §53, Kant, just like Epicurus, classifies gratification as bodily pleasure. Unlike Epicurus, however, Kant thinks that not all kinds of pleasure is bodily pleasure and points out the difference between pleasure from the mental activity of judging and gratification as follows:

Between that which pleases merely in the judging (*Beurteilung*) and that which gratifies (pleases in the sensation) there is, as we have often shown, an essential difference. The latter is something that one cannot, like the former, require of everyone. **Gratification** (even if its cause may lie in ideas) **always seems to consist in a feeling of the promotion of the total life of the human being**, consequently also

of bodily well-being, i.e., of health; so that Epicurus, who made out all gratification as at bottom bodily sensation, may to that extent perhaps not have been mistaken, and only misunderstood himself when he counted intellectual and even practical satisfaction as gratification. (KU, AA 05: 330-31, emphasis added.)

In other words, Kant thinks that we can feel pleasure as a result of judging, but this feeling is an intellectual pleasure indicating the well-being of our mental life only. Since our cognitive capacities have interests and needs that are shared by all humans, Kant writes that we can require everyone to feel the pleasure from judging that results from the harmonious state of our mental life. Gratification, on the other hand, is the bodily sensation of the well-being or health of our body. According to Kant, our bodies are unique and have particular needs and interests, which is why we cannot require everyone to feel gratification from the same things (KU, AA 05: 292).

As mentioned before, feelings for Kant are subjective sensations informing us about the suitability of the objects to our interests and ends. Like Epicurus, Kant thinks that feeling pain and gratification allows us to sense whether the parts of our body are healthy and functioning properly, i.e., functioning in accordance with the telos of our animality, namely the presentation of the *whole* organism.¹³ In that respect, gratification (and pain) amounts to the sensible awareness of the well-being (and ill-being) of *our total life*.

The feeling of gratification, although significant for informing us about the health of our existence as both mental and corporeal organisms, is not as valuable as the more elevated and noble feelings of respect and taste, which respectively involve the consciousness of ourselves as rational and cognizant beings. As Kant writes,

One can thus, it seems to me, grant to Epicurus that all gratification, even if it is caused by concepts that arouse aesthetic ideas, is **animal**, i.e., bodily sensation, without thereby doing the least damage to the **spiritual** feeling of respect for moral ideas, which is not gratification but self-esteem (of the humanity within us) that elevates us above the need for gratification, without indeed any damage even to the less noble feeling of **taste**. (KU, AA 05: 334-35).

Accordingly, the feeling of gratification allows us to be conscious of the appropriateness of the object of representation to the telos of our animality, namely self-preservation and happiness. That is, the feeling of gratification concerns consciousness of the animalistic and corporeal aspect of human nature and indicates the conformity of the objects of representations to our bodily needs and interests. Objects of gratification, therefore, serve our interests in survival and happiness. Consequently, the feeling of gratification is the subjective sensation that indicates of the promotion of our life as animals.

The feeling of respect, on the other hand, amounts to the consciousness of the appropriateness of a representation of an object to our telos moral agents with practical reason. Since there could be many different things that can serve, and thereby exhibit, suitability for our rational end of morality, Kant writes about different objects of this feeling, such as respect for oneself or self-respect, respect for honest people (KpV, AA 05: 76), respect for the law (KpV, AA 05: 80), respect for one's own being (MM, AA 06: 402). The feeling of respect, therefore, concerns the consciousness of the appropriateness of the representation of an object to the telos of morality, and consequently to the interests and needs of practical reason. In this regard, the feeling of respect is the feeling of the promotion of our life as moral agents.

Finally, the feeling of taste (or the feeling of aesthetic pleasure) concerns the harmonious relationship between the form of empirical representations and our cognitive interests. More specifically, the feeling of aesthetic pleasure amounts to the consciousness of the appropriateness

¹³ For Epicurus, the mind is interlinked with the soul and soul is interlinked with the body. The soul and the mind have corporeal natures made of atoms much smaller than liquid or smoke and they can be more mobile under a delicate cause (LS, 14F, 69).

of the representation of an object to the telos of our theoretical reason, i.e., to have a complete and unified knowledge of the world. Unlike other animals, which rely on their natural impulses and physical strength, humans need to use their rational capacities for self-preservation and the satisfaction of their needs. Through the activity of theoretical reason, we have a uniquely human trait to systematize our cognitions and have systematic knowledge of the laws of nature and use this knowledge to satisfy our needs and desires.¹⁴ As beings who possess theoretical reason, therefore, humans have epistemic interests and needs in experiencing lawful regularities in nature. When an empirical representation of an object exhibits formal unity in a way that triggers the free play of the imagination an understanding, we become aware of the self-governing activity of our cognitive faculties through the feeling of life. When we also become conscious of the appropriateness of the form of the representation to our cognitive needs and epistemic interests, on the other hand, we feel aesthetic pleasure. According to Kant, the conformity of the form of an empirical representation to our epistemic needs does not give us satisfaction of a particular interest, but rather satisfaction of an epistemic interest we have in virtue of being human. Since the satisfaction of our epistemic needs or interests do not require the existence of any object, but simply the existence of a certain kind of representations, Kant notes that aesthetic pleasure is a form of disinterested pleasure (*KU*, AA 05: 210). Since the harmonious relation between the representation of the object and the subject does not depend on any private condition, we can require all human beings to feel aesthetic pleasure when they are given an empirical representation that conforms to their cognitive and epistemic needs. Even though the feeling of aesthetic pleasure indicates the satisfaction of our subjective needs and interests, it has a universal ground (*KU*, AA 05: 211). For Kant, then, the feeling of aesthetic pleasure signifies the conformity of the empirical representation of an object to our subjective epistemic interests, and to that extent it is a feeling of promotion of our life as cognizant beings.

What is common to all these different kinds of feelings, namely bodily gratification, moral feeling of respect, and aesthetic pleasure in beauty, is that they respectively inform us that things outside of us conform to our sensible, moral and epistemic interests. In other word, these three feelings of pleasure concern three aspects of human nature, namely our animal, rational and human aspects, and inform us about the well-being of our life in those three spheres of human activity. Hence, the faculty of feeling through the feelings of pleasure and pain let us know whether our life as animals, as moral agents and as cognizant beings are promoted or hindered by factors outside of us (*KU*, AA 05: 278).

So far, we saw that, just as Epicurus, who takes sensations to be irrational modifications that occur in the subject when one is in contact with some external object, Kant also views sensations as objective representations that relate to objects and form the basis of our subjective sensations, namely feelings. Moreover, Kant, like Epicurus, thinks that, when the sensations conform to the interests and needs of the subject, they cause the feeling of pleasure. In other words, both Epicurus and Kant assume that, when our sensory experiences are appropriate to our ends and conform to our needs and interests determined by those ends, they arouse the feeling of pleasure. Similarly, when our sensory experiences are inappropriate to our natural ends, they arouse the feelings of displeasure or pain. In this respect, both philosophers consider the feeling of pleasure as a natural indication of the well-being or health of the organisms, and describe it as a feeling of the promotion of life.

Even though appealing to Epicurus' account of pleasure illuminates the reason why Kant assumes that the feeling of aesthetic pleasure indicates the well-being of our cognitive faculties and signifies a feeling of promotion of (uniquely human) life, it fails to explain the ways in which aesthetic pleasure informs us about our harmonious relationship with our environment. That is why, in the second part of this paper, I will focus my attention on the Stoic notion of

¹⁴ As Kant writes in the second *Critique*, our survival and the satisfaction of our needs depends on the knowledge of the laws of nature and our ability to use this knowledge for our purposes (*KpV*, AA 05: 113). Thus, reason has theoretical interest in knowing the empirical laws of nature, which in turn allows us to survive as beings with rationality in nature.

oikeiōsis, which will hopefully clarify how a primitive sense of self-awareness through the feeling of life can develop into a more robust and dynamic notion of sensible self-consciousness and an accompanying feeling of the promotion of life, which takes into account one's relationship to one's body, environment, other living creatures and ultimately the whole universe.

2. Kant's Account of Aesthetic Pleasure in Light the Stoic Notion of *Oikeiōsis*

In order to determine the extent to which Kant's account of the feeling of life [*das Lebensgefühl*] might be influenced by the stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*, in this part of the paper I will first present a brief account of that notion, focusing on its meaning and its function in Stoicism. Then I will elaborate how the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis* can help us better understand Kant's account of aesthetic pleasure and the feeling of the promotion of life.

2.1. The Stoic Notion of *Oikeiōsis*

Oikeiōsis is usually translated as “familiarity,” “affinity,” “appropriation,” “suitability” or “belonging to one's own self,” and it is contrasted with alienation [*allogriōsis*]. Hence, *oikeiōsis* signifies a sense of *belonging* and *being at home* in one's own body and surroundings.¹⁵ *Oikeiōsis* is the natural disposition of all living beings, including plants, animals and humans to preserve and augment their life by finding the things that are conducive to living well. Since the feeling of *oikeiōsis* appears to be present not only in animals but also in plants, it functions as the first “animating principle” of animals and plants, allowing them to act in a way that protects and maintains a state appropriate to their natural constitution. While plants (through their vegetative processes) act in a way that preserve their constitution, animals have the additional faculty of impulse that help them search for what is appropriate to their nature and act accordingly (LS, 57A, 346). Unlike animals, rational beings are bestowed with a superior capacity, i.e., reason, to know what is appropriate for their natural constitution and acting in accordance with reason is natural for them (LS, 57A, 346).

Contra Epicurus who takes pleasure to be the object of animals' first impulse, Stoics think that the object of their first impulse is self-preservation and that their natural disposition to feel *oikeiōsis* (or to feel affinity) towards themselves serves this goal by making them reject what is harmful and accept what is appropriate to their nature. This natural disposition of affinity with oneself involves a primitive sense of self-perception or awareness of things as belonging to oneself. In that respect, *oikeiōsis* allows animals to have a primal self-perception and awareness of their bodily constitution, which in turn help animals to coordinate their limbs and act in a way that serves their self-preservation (LS, 57A, 346; 57B, 347). In addition to the preservation of oneself and one's bodily constitution, animals and humans naturally love and feel affinity towards their offsprings, which is the starting point for the natural affinity humans feel towards other humans and the first step on the way of forming a universal community of human race (LS, 57E, 57F, 348). Hence, as human we beings feel affinity and affection not only towards ourselves our children, but also towards other humans. This in turn means that this primitive sense of self-awareness and self-worth transforms itself into sociability and ultimately into the Stoic ideal of cosmopolitanism.

So, our affinity with ourselves and our family members expands to include all of humanity as part of our household and the realization that the world is our house/home. Hierocles writes of the expansion of this feeling of affinity in terms of concentric circles starting with individual's

¹⁵ For a very clear account of the role of *oikeiōsis* in Stoic ethics, see Gisele Striker's “The role of *oikeiōsis* in Stoic Ethics.”

body, then including immediate family members, then extended family members, other relatives, neighbors, fellow tribesman, fellow citizens, neighboring towns, fellow-countrymen and finally to include all humanity (LS, 57G, p. 349). Hence, *oikeiōsis* motivates humans to (i) have a primitive sense of self-worth, (ii) preserve their lives, and (iii) maintain their lives in a way that is appropriate to their (rational) nature.

According to this theory, at every new stage of development after birth, one acquires new things toward which one feels affinity, leading one to act accordingly. For example, the first thing that the infant feels affinity towards and values is itself, and its first motivation for action is for it to preserve its own constitution. In a sense, as humans develop, in each stage of development the number of things they feel affinity toward increases, which brings corresponding new responsibilities or duties. In other words, as one grows up, one starts to have new duties through the process of developing *oikeiōsis*. Thus, through their theory of *oikeiōsis*, Stoic philosophers aim to account for the proper way of acting, and thereby the ethical duties of humans.

In this regard, *oikeiōsis* in humans refers to the process of becoming aware of and affectionate to ourselves, others and ultimately the whole world around us. This would mean that we want inner harmony, i.e., the harmony between our body and nature, but also desire to be in harmony with other humans and the world. While in Epicurus' theory of pleasure, reason is considered a means to attain pleasure, which is the ultimate good, for the Stoics reason is not a means for some other end. Instead, through the feeling of *oikeiōsis* we sense the rationality of nature and gain awareness that nature is not foreign to us, but hospitable to our telos of acting rationally. In what follows, I will argue that Kant's account of aesthetic experience and his notion of the feeling of the promotion of life, which signifies a harmonious relationship between humans and nature, can be better understood in light of the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*.

2.2. The Feeling of the Promotion of Life as a Feeling of Affinity with Nature

Having explained the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*, in this section of the paper I will examine the ways in which Kant is inspired by this notion in his discussion of aesthetic pleasure in the third *Critique*. As we saw before, in order to determine if our mental life or our existence is promoted or inhibited, we need to understand our relationship to our environment and see if we are in a harmonious relationship with our natural surroundings. With his theory of aesthetic pleasure, Kant appears to argue that nature is promoting our life and existence and that aesthetic pleasure is an indication that nature can be a home for us.

One way we can determine if nature is hospitable to our lives is by checking if it is in conformity with our epistemic interests in experiencing lawful and uniform representations. This is because experiencing lawful and uniform empirical representations, which promote the activity of our cognitive faculties, would indicate that nature promotes the activity of our theoretical reason as well. Given that the feeling associated with the consciousness of the suitability of empirical representations to the end of theoretical reason is the feeling of aesthetic pleasure, we can infer that aesthetic pleasure is a feeling of the promotion of life.

According to Kant, pleasure in the beautiful directly brings with it a promotion of life precisely because the empirical representation that has a form of purposiveness (which simply means that it is suitable or appropriate for our epistemic end) promotes the harmonious activity of our cognitive faculties, i.e., our mental life (KU, AA 05: 244). Hence we can infer that the empirical representation causing us to feel aesthetic pleasure also promotes life.

Aesthetic pleasure, Kant argues, results from the experience of purposiveness, i.e., the experience of the agreement of the form of the representations with the general and indeterminate

forms (or concepts) of our understanding. This agreement between the empirical form of the representations presented by the imagination and the general concepts of the understanding constitutes the harmony between the faculties of imagination and understanding (KU, AA 05: 218). As Kant puts it, when an empirical representation, despite its singularity, exhibits universality and lawfulness, then it would be in a formal agreement with the *a priori* forms of our faculty of understanding. This agreement between the singular empirical representation and the faculty of understanding signifies the purposiveness or suitability of empirical representations given to us for our cognitive needs and interests. When the form of the empirical representation exhibits purposiveness and suitability in a way that fits with the needs and interest of our cognitive faculties, we judge it to be beautiful. As Kant writes, “natural beauty (the self-sufficient kind) carries with it a purposiveness in its form, through which the object seems as it were to be predetermined for our power of judgment” (KU, AA 05: 245). Hence, the purposiveness of the object also gives us a sense of affinity and ownership of the relevant representation.

Experiencing empirical representations that have a form of purposiveness and suitability to the *a priori* form of understanding without the use of any determinate concept triggers a free play of the faculties. As Kant writes, “The powers of cognition that are set into play by this representation are hereby in a free play, since no determinate concept restricts them to a particular rule of cognition” (KU, AA 05: 217). So, the harmony of the cognitive faculties that leads to aesthetic experience does not give us any specific information about particular objects, nor does it satisfy any particular need. By experiencing unity and purposiveness within the empirical manifold of objects (KU, AA 05: 359), we become aware of the real possibility of satisfying reason’s theoretical interests to unify and systematize empirically diverse forms in nature.

As Kant points out, even though understanding with its *a priori* laws and concepts, makes the experience of nature possible, those *a priori* laws does not guarantee the empirical lawfulness or the order of nature (KU, AA 05: 184). Under-determination of the empirical lawfulness of nature by the *a priori* form of understanding compels us to approach nature with a subjective principle, which can guide our scientific endeavours to systematize and unify the empirical forms in order to form an interconnected experience of nature. Despite the possibility of having infinitely many empirical laws governing the diverse empirical forms in nature, judging that nature exhibits purposiveness or suitability to our cognitive needs, and thereby can conform to the theoretical needs of reason, is simply a necessary assumption for us to approach nature scientifically. Hence, this subjective principle, according to which nature is judged to be a work of art designed in a way that agrees with the needs and interests of reason, is the principle of the purposiveness of nature. This *a priori* principle of the faculty of judgment allows us to approach nature *as if* it is designed to satisfy the theoretical and practical needs and interests of reason.

In order for this necessary assumption to have some justification that would demonstrate that it is not merely wishful thinking on our part, however, we would need some empirical support. Hence, we need to look at nature and see if it does in fact conform to the theoretical and practical interests of reason. In this context, Kant argues that appreciation of beautiful forms in nature and the experience of aesthetic pleasure serve as empirical evidence that nature is in conformity with reason’s theoretical needs and interests.

According to Kant, “the beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object” (KU, AA 05: 244) and the experience of beautiful forms in nature serves as empirical evidence that nature conforms to reason’s theoretical interest to find unity within the manifold of empirical forms of nature. Based on our experience of aesthetic pleasure, we judge certain objects to be beautiful because they have beautiful forms, i.e., their representations have subjective and formal purposiveness, namely formal suitability to our subjective cognitive interests and needs (KU, AA 05: 221) without any determinate and objective purpose being cognized in them (KU, AA 05: 236).

When the form of the empirical intuition presented to the imagination displays an empirical unity that conforms the *a priori* form of the faculty of understanding, the faculty of imagination is set into free motion between all available determinate laws of the understanding without being subsumed under any one of them. This formal agreement between the empirical representation and the *a priori* principle of the faculty of understanding, i.e., its lawfulness triggers the free play of imagination, which constitutes the ground of aesthetic judgments. As Kant writes,

[T]he judgment of taste must rest on a mere sensation of the reciprocally animating imagination in its **freedom** and the understanding with its **lawfulness**, thus on a feeling that allows the object to be judged in accordance with the purposiveness of the representation (by means of which an object is given) for the promotion of the faculty of cognition in its free play; and taste, as a subjective power of judgment, contains a principle of subsumption, not of intuitions under **concepts**, but of the **faculty** of intuitions or presentations (i.e., of the imagination) under the **faculty** of concepts (i.e., the understanding), insofar as the former **in its freedom** is in harmony with the latter **in its lawfulness**. (KU, AA 05: 287)

In other words, aesthetic judgments are based on the feeling of a harmony (or disharmony) of our cognitive faculties. Since the formal purposiveness of an empirical representation triggers the spontaneous activity of our cognitive faculties, the feeling of this harmonious activity amounts to the sensation of the promotion of the activity of the faculty of cognition and, thereby, the feeling of life. As we saw before, the feeling of life allows us to become conscious of the activity of our cognitive faculties, i.e., the harmony of the faculties of imagination and understanding.

Aesthetic pleasure, on the other hand, is based on the feeling of the harmony between the empirical form of the representations and our faculty of cognition. As Kant puts it,

To grasp a regular, purposive structure with one's faculty of cognition (whether the manner of representation be distinct or confused) is something entirely different from being conscious of this representation with the sensation of satisfaction. Here the representation is related entirely to the subject, indeed to its feeling of life, under the name of the feeling of pleasure or displeasure, which grounds an entirely special faculty for discriminating and judging that contributes nothing to cognition but only holds the given representation in the subject up to the entire faculty of representation, of which the mind becomes conscious in the feeling of its state. (KU, AA 05: 204)

Through aesthetic experience of nature, therefore, we become conscious that, despite the diversity of empirical forms, empirical nature displays some kind of formal unity, and thereby conforms to reason's theoretical end of having a systematic knowledge of nature. Unlike other animals, which rely on their impulses to preserve their lives, humans rely on the theoretical activity of reason to acquire knowledge of the empirical laws of nature and use this knowledge for their purposes. The conformity of nature to the needs of our mental faculties, more specifically to the needs and interest of reason's theoretical activity, suggests that nature is hospitable to human life. That is why following the Stoic philosophers, Kant claims that the feeling of aesthetic pleasure is "a feeling of the promotion of life [*Gefühl der Beförderung des Lebens*]," the feeling of aesthetic displeasure is the feeling of the inhibition of (mental) life (KU, AA 05: 244-245). In other words, the pleasure we feel from the experience of beautiful forms directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life. As Kant puts it,

The beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in limitation (...): so that the beautiful seems to be taken as the presentation of an indeterminate concept of the understanding, but the sublime as that of a similar concept of reason. Thus the satisfaction is connected in the first case with the representation of quality (...). Also (...) pleasure (...), in that the former (the beautiful) directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life [*Gefühl der Beförderung des Lebens*], and hence is compatible with charms and an imagination at play. (KU, AA 05: 244)

If life is the sensible awareness of one's existence, the feeling of the promotion (or

inhibition) of life is the sensible awareness of one's existence in harmony (or disharmony) with one's corporeal body and empirical nature. Consciousness of the harmony between us and empirical nature ultimately grounds the feeling of the promotion of life, which is nothing more than the empirical awareness of nature's conformity with reason's theoretical needs and interest in knowing nature as a system of empirical laws, which would allow us to use this knowledge to preserve our lives both as individuals and as the human species. Since aesthetic pleasure signifies the harmonious relationship between reason's theoretical needs and nature, we can infer that it functions as empirical evidence for the suitability of nature to our subjective purpose, to which Kant refers as the purposiveness of nature [*Zweckmäßigkeit*] (KU, AA 05: 245). Thanks to aesthetic pleasure, we can judge that empirical nature, despite the diversity of its empirical forms, is not chaotic, but rather lawful and thereby hospitable to our epistemic interest in finding unity within diversity. Since receiving representations that exhibit formal unity promotes the end of theoretical reason, aesthetic experience also promotes our life as cognizant beings. That is why Kant writes that aesthetic pleasure in the beautiful directly brings with it a feeling of the promotion of life (KU, AA 05: 244).

As rational agents, the awareness that nature, despite its apparently limitless, chaotic and destructive powers and monstrous scale, can be comprehended by the theoretical use of our reason and its *a priori* ideas, resulting in the feeling of sublime (KU, AA 05: 252-55). As Kant points out, neither sensibility nor imagination can present the infinity of the sensible world or nature in its entirety through their representations. The supersensible faculty of reason or intellect, on the other hand, can think of both the infinity and totality of nature through its *a priori* idea of "the world" (KU, AA 05: 255). This shows that nature conforms to the end of our theoretical reason to systematize our cognitions, grasp and comprehend nature in its entirety, and use this knowledge of the world for our specific needs and interests. In that sense, the feeling of the sublime, which involves the feeling of reason's ability to think the infinity of nature and comprehend it completely ignifies a sense of homecoming for humans, who may hope to make the empirical world their home.¹⁶

As is clear, the feeling of life is the sensible awareness of the activity of our mind or consciousness of the self-organizing activity of our cognitive faculties. While the feeling of life amounts to the feeling of the activity of our sensible and intellectual capacities, Kant also introduces the idea of the feeling of the promotion of life as the feeling that shows the harmony or appropriation between humans and nature. For the feeling of aesthetic pleasure is an indication that we are surrounded by an empirical world that is appropriate for our cognitive needs, namely the theoretical needs of reason. Hence, just as the feeling of *oikeiōsis* allows us to sense the rational order of nature and gain awareness that nature is not foreign to us, the feeling of aesthetic pleasure accompanied by the feeling promotion of life serves as an empirical evidence that nature is a home for us and gives us a sense of belonging to nature, which conforms to our ends.¹⁷

16 Robert Clewis also notes that Kant's account of sublime may be inspired by Stoicism. As Clewis writes "Perhaps drawing from Stoic sources such as Seneca, Kant quickly added that the awareness of our capacity to set and act on goals (specifically moral ones) ultimately redeems us. (...) Kant's claim that the sublime involves recognition of the powers of reason - a claim emphasized in standard interpretations of Kant - can be understood in terms of this third source of the pleasure. It is a kind of homecoming for reason. According to Kant, such recognition of reason counts as an acknowledgment of the rational being's place in the teleological order of reason" (Clewis, 2019, p. 350). Unlike Clewis, on my reading, Kant takes the feeling of aesthetic pleasure and the feeling of the sublime as sensible indications of the harmony between nature and the theoretical reason, as opposed to practical reason.

17 In his article "Self-consciousness and self-care On the Tradition of *Oikeiōsis* in the Modern Age," Reinhard Brandt argues Kant is influenced by the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis* presented in Cicero's *De finibus*. According to Brandt, Kant takes the harmony between nature and humans, by which he mean *oikeiōsis* with nature, as a precondition for the harmony of our cognitive faculties. Brandt further adds that through the feelings of aesthetic pleasure and sublime we get to love and respect nature for conforming to our needs of life and epistemic needs (Brandt, 2001, p. 89). While I agree with Brandt, by arguing that nature conforms to our epistemic needs and interests, Kant's main objective in the first part of the third *Critique* is to show that we may hope to attain the telos of theoretical reason in the world.

Concluding Remarks

As this paper shows, following Epicurus Kant takes pleasure as an indication of a harmonious state and maintenance of a healthy existence in the form of harmony between one's faculties and one's environment. Moreover, just like Epicurus, who takes the pleasurable state as an indication of the harmonious activity of the different parts of human nature, Kant thinks that, when we experience pleasure we want to remain in that state and similarly avoid the disharmonious state of our faculties.

Just as the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis*, which refers to the process of becoming aware of and feeling affinity towards ourselves, others and ultimately towards the whole world around us, through the faculty of feeling and its relationship to the faculties of cognition, our body, and nature, we gain sensible awareness of the activities of our mental faculties and their relationship to nature. Being inspired by the Stoic philosophers and their notion of *oikeiōsis*, Kant argues that through the faculty of feeling, we first gain sensible awareness of the harmonious relationship between our cognitive faculties, which constitutes the feeling of life. This primitive self-consciousness then expands to include the harmonious relationship between our cognitive faculties and our body, to which Kant refers to as the feeling of the promotion of life. The feeling of aesthetic pleasure, Kant argues, further indicates the harmony between humans and empirical world. In that regard, aesthetic pleasure is not only an indicator of healthy mental life and the harmony of the intelligible and sensible faculties of the mind, but also an indicator of the harmony between the subject and its environment. Thus, for Kant, the feelings of aesthetic pleasure and aesthetic displeasure inform us about the degree of harmony between our mental faculties and the empirical world. Thanks to the feeling of aesthetic pleasure, we can judge that nature, despite its apparently chaotic and destructive forces, can be comprehended completely by us. Since it conforms to our cognitive interests and the end of our theoretical reason, we can infer that this empirical world promotes the natural development of our mental faculties, and thereby can become a safe haven for human life.¹⁸

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