

## ***Introduction***

For our “comrades”  
of the Permanent Seminar of Philosophy and Beer,  
for simply being there and simply being who they are,  
both aesthetically and affectively.

The more you know, the less you feel.

U2

I don’t want to think, I want to feel.

PEARL JAM

Feelings, emotions, phenomena of empathy and sympathy, appetites, desires, moods, and generally the whole sphere of affectivity make up one of the most fundamental dimensions of human life which, also with the advent of the so-called “Affective Turn” in various fields of the human and social sciences, has been the object of recent rediscovery and reevaluation. Sometimes this renewed appreciation of the affective and emotional dimension of experience in contemporary thought has also been put in contrast with a certain primacy of the purely representational and cognitive dimension that has been quite characteristic of modern thinking and culture. As has been noted about the notion of atmosphere (Griffero 2018), “the humanities [...], bypassing positivist conventions and endorsing more [...] affective paradigms rather than [...] cognitive ones,” in the last decades have been focused “more on the vague and expressive *qualia* of reality (the how) than on its defined and quantified materiality (the what)”: *mutatis mutandis*, a consideration of this kind can probably be applied also to the reevaluation and rehabilitation of the sphere of affectivity in general.

With regard to what we have just defined as the overall significance of feelings, moods, emotions, and the entire sphere of affectivity, let us consider this: on the one hand, it is certainly possible to think and talk of something like a “common world” in terms of sensations or perceptions shared by all

human beings. On the other hand, if we focus on each individual's emotions and feelings, and on how the latter often condition our perception and consciousness of the real, the notion itself of a "common world"—which is precisely one and the same for everyone with no essential differentiations between what is perceived by each individual and how it is perceived, experienced or felt—becomes somewhat ambiguous. As has been noted, "[a]ffective and emotional states are not simply qualities of subjective experience; rather, they are given *in* [...] phenomena" (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008, 182). That is, these components of human life act at such a fundamental level that they objectively condition our access to the real and permeate our whole experience of the world, well beyond the limits of a merely subjectively determined "as-if" dimension or level.

If what has been said above is true with regard to our experience of the world in general, it is probably even more accurate and more evident in the specific case of our experience with art and the aesthetic. In fact, the above-mentioned fundamental elements or components of the human experience of the world as such, i.e., of the human experience understood at the most general level, also seem to play an essential role (although in different and sometimes problematic ways) in art and aesthetic experience. Of course, this has been widely (although variously and hence not always systematically and coherently) recognized since the beginning of Western philosophy and culture and in non-Western forms of thinking and worldviews. Focusing our attention again on the present age, we may notice that this has led in our time, among other things, to significant developments in several fields and subfields of contemporary aesthetics variously interested in the role played by the dimension of affectivity in human experience; including—for example, and without any presumption or claim for completeness—recent aesthetic conceptions connected to theories of embodiment and the extended mind (Noë 2015; Matteucci 2019), phenomenological aesthetics of atmospheres and emotional spaces (Griffero 2016), and also somaesthetics with a significant reevaluation of the bodily dimension in its entirety (Shusterman 1999, 2019). As noted by Richard Shusterman about his original disciplinary proposal (namely somaesthetics), its roots in the original project of aesthetics as not only a theory of fine art and natural beauty but also (if not mainly) as a theory of sensory perception and its status of a discipline of both theory and practice: "the senses surely belong to the body and are deeply influenced by its condition. Our sensory perception thus depends on how the body feels and functions; what it desires, does, and suffers. [...] Concerned not simply with the body's external form or *representation* but also with its

lived *experience*, somaesthetics works at improving awareness of our bodily states and feelings, thus providing greater insight into both our passing moods and lasting attitudes" (Shusterman 1999, 301-302).

So, returning to "Aesthetics and Affectivity" as the topic of the present issue of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, we can say that reflections on the fundamental role played by passions, emotions, feelings, and moods in the human experience lead us to recognize, for example, that every experienced object, apart from its purely factual properties, presents some "splits" into which the subject fits, so to speak—specifically, to recognize that our description of reality, even as it appears in perceptual experience, is always full of "anthropological predicates" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 320 *et passim*). This recognition becomes fully apparent if we consider such experiences as fantasizing and dreaming (or in a more radical and even dramatic way, specific psychological pathologies in which the subject's "private world," primarily influenced by their emotions and feelings, sometimes almost wholly eclipses evidence of what we conventionally consider "real"), and also applies to a great extent to art and aesthetic experiences of different kinds.

From Plato and Aristotle to modern and contemporary times, philosophers have always assumed a close connection between art and what we may call the realm of affectivity, sometimes also developing forms of skepticism and suspiciousness towards them as supposedly irrational components of human life. However, throughout philosophy's history, there have always been other voices that have conceived of passions, feelings, and emotions differently. Such proposals lead to identification with emotional and even instinctual aspects, such as that of the feeling of horror, no less than with the obscure origin of the brightness of ancient Greek culture and art (Nietzsche 1999), or acknowledgment of the undeniably powerful and indeed constitutive role of "attunement" and moods in the *Da-sein*, i.e., in human existence (Heidegger 1996, §29, 126-131), or to the proposal for the rediscovery and rehabilitation of the specific "intelligence of emotions" (Nussbaum 2003).

Of course, philosophical reflections on affectivity with a specific focus on its role in the aesthetic dimension can also lead to questioning the validity and appropriateness of the customary use of categories such as "rational" and "irrational" that people sometimes tend to use in easy, unproblematic and somehow dualistic ways, both in everyday language and in scientific discourses. Indeed, it still appears as a widely shared and quite common belief that our feelings and emotions are unambiguously non-rational or merely irrational (and thus, as it were, potentially distracting, risky, or even dangerous). However, it is also true that many philosophers, psychologists,

scientists, and especially artists (including poets, novelists, musicians, painters, performers, *et cetera*) have shown that it is very difficult—or perhaps even impossible—to lucidly draw a line to sharply differentiate the purely rational from the non-rational (and, say, merely emotional) components of our self-knowledge and also knowledge of the world. Human experience is made of mediations, constant interrelations between different aspects and moments, and strictly but simultaneously fluid interwoven components; so, the affective dimension, understood in all its breadth, richness, and variety, appears to be fundamental also in the general economy of our convictions and construction of our beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

Based on all this and still more and in intending to adopt a broad and open philosophical approach—the only one which can do justice to the multifiform and complex character of a question such as that of emotions, desires, moods, and feelings—in planning and then realizing this issue of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, we invited authors to submit articles concerning the role of affectivity in human experience with a particular focus on aesthetics broadly understood, i.e., including both the philosophy of art and the philosophical understanding of sensory perception and experiences of the aesthetic. For this reason, in our Call for Papers for the present issue of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics* we welcomed and indeed solicited the submission of proposals addressing (but not limited to) aspects such as: the phenomenological analysis of emotions and their intentionality; the relationship between emotion and perception in normal, pathological or dream-like/fantastic experience; the phenomenon of affectivity as part of the grounds of philosophical thinking and aesthetic experience; the revealing power of affective dispositions and emotional states understood as primary expression of the embedded character of the human experience in the world; the investigation of the various roles played by moods in the history of aesthetics, with particular attention to the contemporary age and current debates in aesthetics; the question concerning the corporeality of emotional states, including somaesthetic investigations; the relation between moods, aesthetic enjoyment and moral sentiments; the interaction between intellectual and emotional components within the aesthetic experience, including (but not limited to) artistic creation and fruition.

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<sup>1</sup> Stefano Marino would like to thank Caterina Conti for her invaluable suggestions about the importance to focus one's attention on emotions and on "how it feels" in lived and first-hand experience, rather than only on cognition and interpretations, and for her invitation to fully rediscover the unique richness of the affective dimension of life and especially the specific "coherence of feelings."

As guest editors of “Aesthetics and Affectivity,” vol. 60/1 (2021) of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*, we are now happy to present to our readers a volume that, as the Table of Contents clearly shows, includes seven contributions offered by several scholars of aesthetics. As readers will immediately see by simply reading the titles of the essays collected here, and then understand better by carefully reading the full papers, these contributions are all strictly focused on the question concerning the affective dimension(s) of human experience as explained before. Nevertheless, at the same time, they are all different from each other as far as the cultural backgrounds, the theoretical interests, the chosen methodologies, the particular topics studied, and the specific aims of the various authors are concerned. In short, we might describe the articulation of “Aesthetics and Affectivity” as a development or progression that starts from art (literature, visual arts), progresses to aesthetic experience(s) (also connecting the latter to ethical questions and political implications), and finally arrives at the education of senses as a way to profitably intersect the dimension of affectivity and the disciplinary field of aesthetics. In concluding our short introduction to the present volume, we would like therefore to sincerely thank: all our authors (Jandra Boettger, Carsten Friberg, Amy Keating, Patrick Martin, Marcello Sessa, Manuel Vella Rago, Lorraine K.C. Yeung) for the exciting and original contributions that they proposed and offered for this issue of *The Polish Journal of Aesthetics*; the whole staff of the journal (Dominika Czakon, Marcin Lubecki, Natalia Anna Michna, Adrian Mróz) for the professionally excellent and personally “super-nice” collaboration that we have established during the long months of the year 2020 in which we worked all together, in our respective roles, at this volume; finally, the whole team of our anonymous reviewers who scrupulously and timely worked at the double-blind peer review process of evaluation of all the papers that we had received, some of which were accepted for publication and some of which were rejected.

*Laura La Bella, Stefano Marino, Vittoria Sisca*

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