

# On Liking and Enjoyment: Reassessing Geiger's Account of Aesthetic Pleasure

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*ABSTRACT.* This paper examines the notion of aesthetic pleasure within the framework of an aesthetics of value. The topic is introduced in sect. 1, while sect. 2 presents Moritz Geiger's distinction between two kinds of aesthetic pleasure: liking, which enables us to grasp the aesthetic values of the artwork; and enjoyment, which is understood to be an emotional response. Sect. 3 reassesses the main tenets of Geiger's account in the light of current research. In particular, I provide arguments in favor of Geiger's distinction between liking and enjoyment, but I call into question the claim that liking reveals aesthetic values. In sect. 4, I suggest that liking is a form of feeling motivated by the cognition of aesthetic value and I distinguish it from both the grasping of values and emotional responses. I conclude in sect. 5 by briefly summarizing my main claims.

*KEYWORDS.* Aesthetic pleasure; Aesthetic value; Emotion; Enjoyment; Liking; Value Feeling.

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## 1. Introduction

As is the case with other aesthetic concepts, including beauty, the concept of aesthetic pleasure almost vanished from the aesthetic discourse during the second half of the last century.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, the significance of aesthetic pleasure was challenged by those authors inspired by Brecht and Adorno's materialist aesthetics, who considered that the main function of art is not to please but to move us to social and moral action.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the rise of aesthetic cognitivism after Beardsley and Hospers led to a shifting of attention toward the cognitive powers of art, relegating the notion of pleasure to the background.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the few contemporary accounts of aesthetic pleasure that do exist have tended to explain its function in terms close to emotivist and projectionist views, arguing that aesthetic pleasure confers value on those objects able to elicit it.<sup>4</sup> Against this backdrop, Gorodeisky has drawn attention to a blind spot in contemporary research by considering aesthetic pleasure to be revelatory of aesthetic value. In this paper, my aim is to advance the debate on aesthetic pleasure in the objectivist direction highlighted by Gorodeisky. In particular, I will focus on two main questions: What is the place of aesthetic pleasure within the mind? How is pleasure connected to values?

The answers that I will develop in response to these questions take inspiration from the phenomenological tradition. More precisely, I am interested in presenting and reassessing Moritz Geiger's (1880–1937) account of aesthetic pleasure. Attention will be paid to a distinction between two kinds of aesthetic pleasure: liking, which enables us to

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1 For an analysis of the historical causes of the decline of beauty, which in my view can also be applied to the parallel loss of interest in the notion of aesthetic pleasure, see HUEMER AND VENDRELL FERRAN 2019.

2 BRECHT 1953, 110 and ADORNO 1970, 409.

3 BEARDSLEY 1981 and HOSPERS 1946.

4 See GORODEISKY 2019a, 2 and 2019b.

grasp the aesthetic values of the work; and enjoyment, which is an emotional response toward the grasped values. Geiger's account is interesting in the context of current aesthetics for two reasons. First, by distinguishing between liking and enjoyment, he offers us a good starting point to shed light on the nature of liking as an activity of the mind which is not assimilable to the category of emotion. Second, he offers an explanation of how every kind of pleasure relates to aesthetic value. However, as we will see, Geiger's claims are not exempt from controversy. I will subject his claims to scrutiny, examining them in the light of recent accounts. While I will provide further arguments in favor of Geiger's claim that liking is distinct from emotional responses such as enjoyment, I will also call into question the claim that liking reveals aesthetic values. Through this framework, I will suggest that liking is a form of feeling elicited by the cognition of aesthetic value and I will distinguish it from both the grasping of values and emotional responses.

The aim of this paper is twofold. The first aim is historical: my intention is to offer a reading of Geiger's writing on aesthetic pleasure which makes his work suitable for a dialogue with contemporary philosophy. The early stages of phenomenological aesthetics have been largely neglected and are completely absent in many textbooks on aesthetics.<sup>5</sup> It is high time to reconsider them, to pay tribute to their insightful contributions, and to demonstrate their value for contemporary research.<sup>6</sup> The second aim is more systematic. I will take

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5 Venanzio Raspa has made the same diagnosis in the case of the Aesthetics of the Graz School (to which authors like Meinong and Witasek belong) (RASPA 2010, 8). For a discussion of phenomenologists working on aesthetics, see BIEMEL 1995, 337-50.

6 Geiger's contributions to the study of empathy and emotional expression as well as his valuable accounts of the role of consciousness in the emotional experience have attracted recent attention (see AVERCHI 2015; CRESPO 2015; SALICE 2020; and VENDRELL FERRAN 2019). However, his contribution to the topic of aesthetic pleasure, which is the focus of this paper, has not caught the attention of current aestheticians, despite receiving laudatory remarks such as the following: «Among the older thinkers Kant, and among the more recent ones Moritz Geiger, each dedicated penetrating inquires to it, and the results they obtained belong to the best that has been achieved in the realm of aesthetics» (HARTMANN 2014, 74). In a recent paper, Summa approaches briefly the notion of aesthetic enjoyment in SUMMA (2020).

Geiger as a starting point to advance the debate on aesthetic pleasure, shedding light on its relation to other affective mental phenomena at work during the aesthetic experience and examining its specific connection with aesthetic value.

The paper is structured as follows. Sect. 2 presents and discusses Moritz Geiger's distinction between two kinds of aesthetic pleasure. Sect. 3 reassesses the main tenets of Geiger's account in the light of current research. In sect. 4, I present my view that liking is a form of feeling. I conclude in sect. 5 by briefly summarizing the main claims.

## 2. Geiger on Aesthetic Pleasure

### 2.1 *The Distinction Between Liking (Gefallen) and Enjoyment (Genuss)*

Geiger's aesthetics is, as he used to put it, an "aesthetics of value" (*Wertästhetik*).<sup>7</sup> He coined this expression to contrast his aesthetics from the more dominant "aesthetics of effect" (*Wirkungsästhetik*), which was concerned mainly with the psychological effects of artworks (i.e., with sensations, emotions, and moods), rather than their artistic values.<sup>8</sup> Geiger's main aim in aesthetics was to reconcile the

7 He also refers explicitly to aesthetics as "value science" (GEIGER 1986, 61).

8 In the course of his critique of an aesthetics focused exclusively on the psychological effects of the artwork, Geiger develops an insightful and detailed critique of sentimentalism in the arts, i.e., a critique of the attitude in which we engage with an artwork with the sole aim of experiencing emotions. Geiger elaborates a distinction between two attitudes of aesthetic engagement: "inner concentration" (*Innenkonzentration*), which focuses on the emotions that the artwork elicits in us, and "outer concentration" (*Aussenkonzentration*), which is concerned with the values of the work. Outer concentration is necessary for the appreciation of the artwork. However, not all types of inner concentration are reproachable. He distinguishes between inner concentration *in* the emotion (*Innenkonzentration in Stimmungen*), which consists in attending the experience of the emotion dissolving the boundaries between the experiencing self and the experienced emotion, and inner concentration *toward* the emotion (*Innenkonzentration auf Stimmungen*) through which we attend to *the emotion* experienced but preserve the boundaries between ourselves and the emotion. This second kind of inner concentration might have an aesthetic function. For a discussion of Geiger's critique of sentimentalism, see VENDRELL FERRAN (forthc.).

subjectivity of the aesthetic experience with the objectivity of aesthetic values.<sup>9</sup> In this context, he developed the complex account of aesthetic pleasure in which we can find the distinction between liking (*Gefallen*) and enjoyment (*Genuss*) that forms the focus of this paper.<sup>10</sup>

For Geiger, aesthetic values are given to us with phenomenological objectivity. As he observes, this view does not make the value properties «absolute» because it does not imply that values are permanent properties of the object, but it does indicate that we experience aesthetic properties as being objectively present.<sup>11</sup> According to Geiger, aesthetic values are immediately grasped through our liking.<sup>12</sup> This liking must be distinguished strictly from enjoyment, which is described as pure feeling and excitement and does not contribute to grasping the values of the work. Geiger observes that his distinction between grasping the values of the work in liking and enjoying the work has usually gone unnoticed in the relevant literature, resulting in a conflation between both kinds of aesthetic experience. However, as he remarks, the claims “I like this picture” (*Dieses Bild gefällt mir*) and “This picture pleases me” (*dieses Bild bereitet mir Genuss*) describe experiences of a different nature.<sup>13</sup>

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9 Though Geiger’s aesthetics is phenomenological in nature, it has elements similar to the aesthetics of the Graz School, which was also developed within the Brentanian tradition of value objectivism. A feature that makes his account unique is his frequent employment of methods close to those used in experimental psychology. Geiger was initially trained under the auspices of Wundt before turning to phenomenology and becoming one of the main representatives of the Munich phenomenological circle.

10 Thanks to Klaus Berger’s and Wolfhart Henckmann’s efforts, Geiger’s works on aesthetics were collected in the volume *Die Bedeutung der Kunst* (1976). This volume contains most of the writings on aesthetics he published in his lifetime as well as some manuscripts found in his *Nachlass*. Parts of this book were translated by Berger into English and published in the book *The Significance of Art* (GEIGER 1986). For a general introduction to Geiger’s aesthetics, see BERGER 1976, 8-17; BERGER 1986, ix-xx; and HENCKMANN 1976, 301-11.

11 For Geiger, each individual finds beauty before him in the object in which he takes pleasure, even if different people take pleasure in different things and beauty depends on the beholder.

12 GEIGER 1986, 62. The idea of an immediate grasping of values can already be found in one of Geiger’s first texts *Zum Problem der Stimmungseinführung* (GEIGER 1911).

13 The distinction already appears in one of his early aesthetic writings, entitled *Beiträge*

To explain the difference between both experiences, Geiger presents a series of arguments which I will summarize in the following points:<sup>14</sup>

### 2.1.1 Position-Taking

First, according to Geiger, the sentence “I like this picture” presupposes the adoption of an inner attitude which he describes as a “yes” to the picture: “The picture is there before me and raises in me the question of what attitude to adopt toward it. And the answer may turn out to be positive or negative: I may like or dislike the picture. This is not an intellectual yea-saying or nay-saying; it is a pre-intellectual attitude conforming to feeling”.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, enjoyment (*Genuss*) is an emotional reaction to the work but not a direct “yes” to it. Enjoyment does not presuppose an act of position-taking toward the picture.

### 2.1.2 Polarity

Second, liking has an opposite: disliking. We can speak of pleasure and displeasure. By contrast, enjoyment does not have a polar opposite, as is typical for the emotional reactions as a category. Enjoyment does not have a negative counterpart, just as fear, anger, terror and desperation do not have positive counterparts.

### 2.1.3 Relation between subject and object

A further difference concerns the relation between the subject and its object. Pleasure is an active attitude toward its object. The act of position-taking involved in liking implies a moment of receptivity toward the object where the subject is actively involved. By contrast, in enjoyment, the subject is passive in relation to the targeted object, as is the case for emotional reactions such as terror, fear, etc.

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zur *Phänomenologie des ästhetischen Genusses* (*Contributions to a Phenomenology of Aesthetic Enjoyment*), GEIGER 1974 [1913], 573.

14 These arguments appear mainly in one of his posthumously published manuscripts *Der ästhetischer Wert* (*The Aesthetic Value*), translated into English as *Pleasure and Enjoyment* (GEIGER 1986).

15 GEIGER 1986, 62.

#### 2.1.4 Cognitive function

Fourth, in liking we are open to the value properties of the object: it constitutes a “yes” to the object’s values or a “no” to its disvalues. Pleasure is a pleasure “in” the values of the work. According to Geiger, the value of the artwork is grasped and affirmed in liking, while its disvalues are grasped and rejected in disliking. By contrast, enjoyment is enjoyment of the effects upon one’s self. It is a reaction to an object but there is no grasping of values involved. We can speak of sexual enjoyment, of enjoying a bath or a trip, but we cannot speak of sexual liking or trip liking. Geiger brings this difference to bear on his account, claiming that «pleasure has sight; enjoyment is blind».<sup>16</sup> In short: pleasure may grasp values, but enjoyment lacks this cognitive function.

#### 2.1.5 Contrast cases

Finally, Geiger adds an observation which can be considered as a further argument for the separation of the two aesthetic phenomena: liking and enjoyment can enter into conflict. It is possible to notice the defects of a melody and be displeased by them, yet the melody might move us emotionally so that we come to enjoy it. We hear something like “the voice of aesthetic conscience” as Geiger puts it, but through our emotions we manage to enjoy the melody.

It is worth observing that this distinction between liking and enjoyment is based on a fundamental distinction between grasping values and responding to them emotionally. As I have underscored in the previous exposition, to describe the phenomenon of enjoyment, Geiger compares enjoyment with other emotional reactions toward the artwork, such as fear, anger, terror, desperation, and so on. The category of emotional responses to which enjoyment belongs differs in a crucial respect from the grasping of values, which he describes as liking. Only through liking, and not through enjoyment, that we are able to grasp and affirm its values.

Like other phenomenologists and many of the heirs to the Brentano

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<sup>16</sup> GEIGER 1986, 63.

school, Geiger is defending value objectivism. He applies this objectivism to the realm of the aesthetics. In fact, he adapts for the field of aesthetics the idea of an original feeling which is responsible for acquainting us with the sphere of values and is distinct from merely sensuous feelings and emotions. Among Brentano's followers, the idea of an original emotive intentionality appears mainly in two versions. According to one version, proposed by authors such as the late Meinong, the feeling of values and emoting are one and the same phenomenon.<sup>17</sup> According to the second version, defended by Reinach and Scheler, feeling values and emoting are two different phenomena.<sup>18</sup> In this phenomenological context, Geiger's distinction between liking as a form of grasping values and enjoyment as a form of responding emotionally to the artwork reproduces in the field of aesthetics a broader distinction within early phenomenology between grasping values – also called value-ception (*Wertnehmen* in analogy to perception, *Wahrnehmen*) or value-feeling<sup>19</sup> – and responding emotionally to them.<sup>20</sup>

I will come back to this distinction between the grasping of values and emotional responses in the course of reassessing Geiger's work, below. For now, let us note that the distinction between liking and enjoyment is crucial in supporting Geiger's distinction between an aesthetics concerned with the values of the artwork and an aesthetics concerned primarily with how the work affects us by eliciting emotional responses. In short, the distinction is crucial for distinguishing his aesthetics of value from the aesthetics of effects

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17 The claim is developed mainly in MEINONG 2020.

18 REINACH 2017, 109; SCHELER 1973, 197.

19 As SCHELER (1973, 295) demonstrates, feelings can be of many kinds and might include sensory feelings (e.g., bodily pleasure and pain), vital feelings (e.g., tiredness), psychological feelings (e.g., disgust, fear), and spiritual feelings (e.g., desperation, beatitude). When I write here about the feeling of values, I do not refer to any of these categories of feelings; rather, I employ this term in line with Scheler to describe a sui generis feeling which make us acquainted with evaluative properties or values.

20 For some proponents of the perceptual model of the emotions, the feeling of values is itself an emotion. However, there are strong arguments against this view: MULLIGAN 2010, 481; VENDRELL FERRAN 2008, chapter 6.

which he considered to be dominant during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Note that this distinction between both kinds of phenomena takes place at the conceptual level because, as Geiger makes clear, both forms of engagement with the artwork are intertwined in the aesthetic experience. In fact, we do not only grasp the values of the work through liking it, but we also experience enjoyment while engaging with it. Moreover, genuine aesthetic enjoyment must be based on a liking of the values of the work. Before turning to a reassessment of Geiger's main tenets, an examination of the interaction between grasping values and genuine aesthetic enjoyment is required.

## 2.2 *The Distinction Between Pleasure (Lust) and Happiness (Beglückung)*

The distinction between liking and enjoyment should not be conflated with the distinction between the two kinds of an artwork's effects on us which Geiger refers to as surface and depth effects. Examples of surface effects are "amusement", "pleasure effects" (when we are amused by a farce or a joke), feelings evoked by sentimental songs, delight in the excitement of a melodrama, or the tension felt when reading an adventure story. By contrast, depth effects affect the person in his or her totality.

Geiger examines the difference between both kinds of effects by focusing on pleasure (*Lust*) as representative of surface effects, and happiness (*Glück, Beglückung*) as an example of a depth effect.<sup>21</sup> Note that the term «pleasure» is employed here to refer to an effect of the work on us and not, as in the previous section, in terms of an active liking of the values of the work. Though the distinction between pleasure and happiness refers to the emotional effects of the artwork, it presupposes a distinction between liking and enjoyment. As I will

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21 The distinction is presented in the second chapter of *Zugänge zur Ästhetik (Approaches to Aesthetics)* (GEIGER 1928). This chapter has been translated into English as *Surface and Depth effects of Art* in GEIGER 1986.

show, happiness, but not pleasure (*Lust*), is necessarily grounded on the grasping of the aesthetic values of the work.

That said, let me elaborate the main arguments upon which Geiger establishes a distinction between surface and depth effects, i.e., between pleasure and happiness. The arguments can be summarized in the following terms.

#### 2.2.1 Individual event vs. total state

First, Geiger describes pleasure (in the sense of *Lust*) as «an individual event» or «isolated psychic occurrence»<sup>22</sup> which does not involve the whole person. By contrast, happiness is described as a total state of the self which is invested with pleasure but which cannot be reduced to it.

#### 2.2.2 Surface vs. deep origins

Second, both phenomena have different origins. Pleasure arises when psychic events are favorable for the person. Instead, happiness is a primary state of the person. As he puts it: «The roots of happiness lie deeper than those of pleasure».<sup>23</sup>

#### 2.2.3. Response vs. conscious grasp of values

Third, surface effects such as pleasure might arise from an immediate stimulus or from attending to an object. By contrast, depth effects such as happiness are never a mere reaction to a stimulus but demand that we consciously grasp the artistic values and allow them to affect us.

#### 2.2.4 Vital sphere vs. existential self

Finally, pleasure is a reaction at the level of the vital sphere which is common to animals and human beings. Examples of pleasure are: «the excitement and suspense of a game, pleasure in eating, sensuous voluptuousness, pleasure in the excitement of body and mind».<sup>24</sup> Surface effects are related to non-aesthetic effects of the vital sphere, and can be found outside the arts. By contrast, depth effects reach the

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22 GEIGER 1986, 50.

23 GEIGER 1986, 50.

24 GEIGER 1986, 50.

kernel of the person, mobilize some central aspect of her, affect her existential self, and may elicit “happiness” (*Glück, Beglückung*) which is, for Geiger, central to the aesthetic experience.

The distinction between the two aspects of the artwork’s effect is based on a claim often endorsed by objectivist views on value, according to which values are organized hierarchically. In fact, the distinction between vital and existential values corresponds to a distinction between strata in the constitution of the person. While vital values are common to humans and animals and we react to them with pleasure, the sphere of artistic values can only be grasped by mobilizing central aspects of the person. The origins of this idea of a hierarchy of values and a corresponding stratification of the emotional life can already be found in Scheler, but Geiger applies it to the aesthetic realm.<sup>25</sup> More specifically, as we have seen, Geiger is here focusing on two kinds of values – the spheres of vital and existential values – and the two corresponding strata of the person – the vital self and the existential self.

Geiger’s picture can be summarized as follows. Aesthetic values which are given to us as being phenomenologically objective are grasped in acts of liking/disliking (*Gefallen*). Once disclosed, aesthetic values affect us in both the vital and existential spheres, serving as sources of pleasure (*Lust*) – or enjoyment (*Genuss*), which is a form of pleasure – and happiness (*Beglückung*). The main requirement in order for this to happen is that we adopt an aesthetic attitude of contemplation and distance between ourselves and the artwork. Only in this attitude can we grasp the values of the work and become existentially affected by them.

In my view, the distinction between liking and enjoyment can be interpreted as a distinction between two kinds of pleasure. There is a kind of pleasure which Geiger calls liking, which consists in grasping the values of the work, and another kind – to which enjoyment

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25 SCHELER 1973, 295. However, as mentioned in footnote 19, Scheler identifies four layers in the stratification of the emotional life. Each of these layers is linked to a different level of value.

belongs – which consists in reacting emotionally to the work. Ortega y Gasset, inspired by Geiger, spoke insightfully of blind and seeing pleasures. “Blind pleasures” are caused by something but are unable to grasp values. By contrast, with “seeing pleasures”, we are happy about something while being conscious of its value. For Ortega y Gasset, «aesthetic pleasure must be a seeing pleasure»<sup>26</sup> insofar as it must grasp the values of the work.

### 3. Reassessing Geiger’s Account

I have presented Geiger’s main arguments for a distinction between liking and enjoyment and for the view that liking is revelatory of values. This section reassesses Geiger’s main tenets in the light of more recent accounts (I will focus mainly on objectivist accounts, for which aesthetic pleasure is connected with aesthetic value). More specifically, I will address two issues: Can liking be distinguished from the category of emotion? Is liking a means of revealing the aesthetic values of the work?

#### 3.1 *Is Liking Distinct from the Emotions?*

The first of Geiger’s claims to be evaluated is the distinction between liking and enjoyment as a distinction between an active engagement with the artwork and a passive form of emotional response. In short, the question is: Is liking different from emoting or can liking be considered a kind of emotion?

In a recent proposal, Reicher has argued that liking (and its opposite, disliking) is an aesthetic emotion. In her view, aesthetic experiences are constituted by a perception (or imagining) plus a feeling (*Gefühl*). To refer to this feeling component of the aesthetic experience, she speaks of an «aesthetic emotion» (*ästhetisches Gefühl*).<sup>27</sup> There are two

26 ORTEGA Y GASSET 2019, 27. For the influence of Geiger on Ortega y Gasset’s view on aesthetic appreciation, see ORRINGER 1974, 36 and VENDRELL FERRAN (forthc.).

27 REICHER 2010, 37.

main aesthetic emotions: when the aesthetic emotion is positive, she calls it “liking” (*Gefallen*) and when it is negative, she calls it “disliking” (*Missfallen*). Liking as aesthetic emotion is a constitutive element of the aesthetic experience.

According to Reicher, aesthetic properties depend on non-aesthetic ones, i.e., they are founded on or supervene on non-aesthetic properties.<sup>28</sup> She defends a dispositional view of aesthetic properties, according to which an object has, under ideal conditions, the disposition to cause an “emotion of beauty” (*Schönheitsgefühl*). She employs the idea of “ideal conditions” rather than “normal conditions” (which is the term usually preferred in dispositionalist accounts) because the perception of aesthetic properties occasionally requires ideal conditions, such as attending to the object, being sensitive to it, having the capacity to discern, etc. Reicher’s dispositionalist view is in fact a form of value objectivism. In this account, liking and disliking do not have the function of grasping values but they are a constitutive part of the aesthetic experience in which values are grasped.

I have introduced Reicher’s account here because her proposal to assimilate liking to the aesthetic emotions is diametrically opposed to Geiger’s account, according to which liking cannot be explained in terms of emotional responses. Can we support Geiger’s view? Or should liking be considered an emotion, as per Reicher’s proposal? I think that we have good reasons for adopting Geiger’s view. In what follows, I will introduce arguments which, when combined with Geiger’s arguments above, compel us to accept the existence of a fundamental distinction between liking and emoting. In fact, as I will show, liking does not exhibit the features characteristic of emotional states. My arguments are as follows:

### 3.1.1 Duration vs. occurrence

Emotions (e.g., fear, joy, disgust) have a temporal duration. They occupy stretches of time. By contrast, liking is something that occurs at

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<sup>28</sup> REICHER 2010, 61.

once. Liking is something that happens, and it can happen again and again, but it does not endure over time. To say that I like a picture means that I like this picture each time I see, imagine or think of it. Thus, liking is something that occurs each time the picture is presented to my senses or my mind, but it is not a lasting mental episode.

### 3.1.2 Heterogeneous development vs. homogeneity

Emotions have a course of development: they begin, evolve, and end. Emotions are comprised of heterogeneous moments. By contrast, liking does not have a temporal course of development: it is homogeneous when it occurs. The claim “I like it” is a claim that indicates the occurrence of a mental activity which, when it happens, is homogeneous, but the sentence does not denote a state or a process which evolves over time.

Both of these arguments are derived from the different ways in which the two phenomena occupy time. They are important arguments because they enable us to classify emotions and liking as belonging to two different categories of the mind. Phenomena that have a temporal duration and a course of development in which different moments are involved are mental states and processes, while phenomena which just occur and do not evolve are mental activities.<sup>29</sup> Emotions function like states or processes (which can also exist in dispositional form), while liking is better understood as a mental activity.<sup>30</sup> Mental activities cannot be reduced to mental states or processes. It would therefore be a mistake to interpret liking, a mental activity, in terms of emotion, which belongs to another category of the

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29 In my view, the main arguments for the distinction between mental activities and mental states can be found in early phenomenology. Although Reinach uses a different terminology from the one that I employ here, he makes a similar distinction between mental acts and mental conditions (REINACH 2017, 211). Scheler develops a tripartite model and distinguishes between acts, functions, and states of the mind (SCHELER 1973, 257).

30 Liking is not a disposition which can be activated because liking does not involve a story comprising events. However, liking can be grounded on certain dispositions and skills. For a characterization of mental activities, see WOLLHEIM 1984, 35.

mind. Both arguments speak in favor of Geiger's distinction.

Before turning to the characterization of liking as a kind of mental activity, it is necessary to present some further arguments for distinguishing liking from the category of emotion. These arguments are derived from differences in how emotions and liking relate to values.

### 3.1.3 Formal objects

Emotions have material objects and formal objects. Fear of a dog is directed toward the dog (the material object) and to the property of danger that is instantiated by the dog (the formal object, also called the evaluative property or value). Each emotion has its characteristic formal object or objects. Fear and disgust are associated with the dangerous and the disgusting. Other emotions might be directed toward a wider range of formal objects (admiration can be an emotional response to beauty, elegance, generosity, etc.). But what is the formal object of liking? The answer is that the formal object of liking includes the whole class of positive aesthetic values. The difference between the emotions and liking can be put as follows: the formal objects of the emotions are more determinate than the formal objects of liking, which target a whole class of values.

### 3.1.4 Appropriateness

There is a further difference related to this. Emotions can be either appropriate or inappropriate in regard to their formal objects. Fear is appropriate if the material object toward which it is directed instantiates the formal object (or evaluative property or value) of danger, but inappropriate if the object is disgusting rather than dangerous. However, liking is appropriate insofar as the liked object has a positive aesthetic value. Thus, for liking to be appropriate it is not necessary that what we like instantiates a specific formal object. The value instantiated must simply belong to the class of positive aesthetic values.

The last two arguments suggest that liking behaves differently from

the emotions in terms of its relation to values. These differences neither confirm nor disprove Geiger's second claim (that liking allows us to grasp aesthetic values), but simply reveal that liking and the emotions have different relations to values. I will examine this point in the next section. For now, however, it is important to point out that these arguments show that liking is directed toward the whole realm of the positive aesthetic values, while each emotion has specific formal objects (though the particular way in which liking is directed toward values must be examined in more detail). In this respect, too, these arguments support Geiger's view for a distinction between liking and the emotions.

Additionally, let me note that Geiger's account is better equipped to explain the relation between liking and the emotional responses. Consider the following case. We can like an aesthetically valuable object and while the liking remains the same, we can experience several different emotions toward it. For instance, if something is aesthetically beautiful and we like it, we can also experience a wide range of emotional responses toward it, such as delight, joy, etc. Reicher understands liking as an aesthetic emotion constitutive of the aesthetic experience, but she does not explain how constitutive aesthetic emotions such as liking and disliking relate to those aesthetic emotions that we only occasionally experience. By contrast, Geiger's account proposes a kind of division of labor: in liking we grasp the values of the work, while in emotion we respond to it.

In summary, the four arguments that I have introduced in this section make the case for distinguishing liking from the emotional responses. As I have shown, liking is a mental activity and as such cannot be explained in terms of an emotional response, which is rather a state or a process. In a nutshell, we have good reasons to accept Geiger's first tenet – that liking is not an emotion.

### *3.2 Does Liking Reveal Aesthetic Value?*

Let us turn to Geiger's second tenet – that liking reveals aesthetic

value. Can we find support for this claim too? As we have seen, liking behaves differently from the emotions regarding values, but does this difference imply that liking reveals aesthetic value?

To gain a more precise insight into Geiger's account, let me compare it with Gorodeisky's more recent proposal, which was mentioned in my introduction. According to Gorodeisky's account, aesthetic pleasure or – as she calls it – liking is the response that aesthetically valuable objects merit. In her view, liking is able to reveal the values of the work. As she puts it: «artworks that are valuable qua artworks merit, deserve, and call for a certain pleasure the same pleasure that reveals (or purports to reveal) them to be valuable in the way that they are, and constitutes their aesthetic evaluation».<sup>31</sup>

As with Geiger, Gorodeisky's view aims at reconciling the objectivity of values with the subjective character of the aesthetic experience and, interestingly, she also places her account in line with the Brentanian tradition of value.<sup>32</sup> For her, aesthetic value is metaphysically mind-independent, i.e., it is neither a feeling nor the

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31 GORODEISKY 2019b, 2.

32 GORODEISKY 2019a, footnotes 3 and 4. However, Gorodeisky also considers herself to be embedded in the Kantian tradition. Geiger sometimes also includes Kant as part of a tradition that attributes a cognitive function for aesthetic value to the feelings. However, there are important differences in how Geiger and Gorodeisky relate to Kant. In his posthumously published *Aesthetischer Absolutismus (Aesthetic Absolutism)*, Geiger describes Kant's aesthetic judgment as a judgment about our pleasure, but not as a judgment about a property of the object (GEIGER 1976, 368-69). The judgments "this table is round" and "this painting is beautiful" are, at first glance, similar, but the former is a judgment about a property of the table while the latter signifies that the painting is an object of my pleasure. For Geiger, Kant's aesthetic judgment is a "judgment of reflection", i.e., a judgment about an emotional response and as such it is subjective and individual. However, Kant formulates it as if it were a universal judgment. As a result, Kant's view entails a paradox for Geiger: a judgment based on a subjective emotional reaction is taken to be universal. Contrary to this view, Geiger stresses that an aesthetic judgment cannot be based on an emotional response (such as enjoyment), rather it must be based on the act of disclosing values, which he calls liking. In fact, a recurrent critique of Kant in Geiger's works is that Kant does not acknowledge the existence of an immediate grasping of values (GEIGER 1986, 190). For Geiger, to claim that an aesthetic judgment is based on an emotional response is to leave the door open to aesthetic relativism, which stands in opposition to his project of developing an objectivist aesthetic value.

projection of a feeling onto an object, though it cannot be characterized independently of our capacity to feel it. Unlike dispositionalist accounts, which claim that “under standard conditions” aesthetic values are experienced with pleasure, Gorodiesky thinks that it is possible for us to fail to feel pleasure toward an aesthetically valuable object even under normal conditions.<sup>33</sup> Thus, she conceives of the relation between aesthetic value and liking in terms of a “merited response” and attributes the ability to reveal values to liking.

Gorodeisky characterizes liking in terms of its structure and its function in modifying certain experiences. Liking is described not as a “separate occurrent state”, but as a way of engaging with an object by, for instance, perceiving, imagining, attending or evaluating it.<sup>34</sup> She claims that the kind of pleasure she is describing is not a sensation, but a kind of activity which has a receptive function of being open to the world.<sup>35</sup> She characterizes it as a feeling<sup>36</sup> and argues that we feel pleasure in a work in light of enjoying something about it (its grace, etc.). In short, Gorodeisky argues that we grasp the value of the object by enjoying it. As she puts it: «aesthetic pleasure makes the object’s value available to the feeling subject by modifying experiences such as perceiving, imagining, and attending».<sup>37</sup>

However, there are significant differences with Geiger. In Gorodeisky’s account, although liking is described in terms of a feeling, its difference from the emotions is, on certain occasions, less distinct. This becomes evident through the vocabulary used by

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33 We can also fail to like aesthetically valuable objects under ideal conditions.

34 GORODEISKY 2019a, 9.

35 Drawing on Ryle, GORODEISKY (2019b, 6) observes that one of the reasons why pleasure cannot be classified as a sensation is that it is not subject to spatial and temporal measurements. She rightly indicates the active character of pleasure (in contrast to passive sensations). However, I think that this should be taken as an indicator that pleasure (in the sense of liking) belongs to a different category of the mind – the category of activities – and as such it is different not only from the sensations but also from the emotional states (which, unlike sensations, cannot be spatially located but, like sensations and unlike activities, have a temporal development).

36 GORODEISKY 2019b, 13ff. She characterizes liking as a response in terms of a feeling; sometimes she describes this feeling in terms close to the emotions.

37 GORODEISKY 2019a, 10.

Gorodeisky, who writes of liking in terms of a merited response which has at the same time an ability to reveal values. In contrast, Geiger is careful to differentiate between the disclosure of values and emotional responses. He never describes liking in terms of responding, but in terms of grasping the values of the work. In my view, grasping the work's values is a kind of cognitive experience whereby we gain access to the sphere of values. Once we have a cognition of value, i.e., once we grasp it, this value can *demand* that we respond to it with an emotion, but the cognition of value is not a *response* to the values, but a form of being *receptive* to them.<sup>38</sup> The concepts of demand and response imply that we have already gained access to the value in question. Below I consider the notions of receptiveness and responsiveness separately, since they constitute two different moments of the aesthetic experience.

Second, and related to this last point, Gorodeisky claims that liking is self-maintaining in the sense that it tends toward its own continuation «such that one typically wishes to, and tends to, retain the same pleasurable experience».<sup>39</sup> However, liking cannot be self-maintaining in the sense that we want it to continue over time. What we desire to continue is enjoyment, i.e., the pleasant emotional state or process. Liking just happens and does not have continuity in time. We can desire to like an object again and again, but liking is an occurrence which does not develop over time. In short, I think – as Geiger does – that liking should be interpreted in terms of a mental occurrence or – as I put it – in terms of a mental activity distinct from the emotional responses.

That said, let us subject Geiger's view that liking reveals the work's aesthetic values to further scrutiny. Does liking grasp the aesthetic values of the work? Although I agree with Geiger's claim that liking is an occurrence, i.e., in my terms a mental activity, I think that we

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38 I take the concepts of responsiveness and receptivity from Scheler. When Scheler claims that values demand emotional responses, he clearly distinguishes the cognitive moment of grasping values (value-feeling or value-ception) from the emotional response to the felt value (SCHELER 1973, 255).

39 SCHELER 1973, 255.

should reject his interpretation of liking in terms of a form of grasping values. In short, I think that liking and grasping values are different kinds of mental activities. My view is based on the following two arguments:

### 3.2.1 Grasping without liking

First, we can disclose an aesthetic value without liking or disliking it. That is, we can become immediately acquainted with the aesthetic value of an object without experiencing any like or dislike. I might see that a picture is sublime, but it can happen that I neither like nor dislike it. Thus, it is possible to disclose aesthetic values through a feeling and to do so without the presence of likes or dislikes.

### 3.2.2 Appropriateness and lack thereof

Second, to grasp an aesthetic value is neither appropriate nor inappropriate, while likes and dislikes are subject to conditions of appropriateness. As I mentioned above, liking is appropriate when a positive aesthetic value is given, while disliking is appropriate in the presence of a negative aesthetic disvalue. The grasping of an aesthetic value is something that is outside the parameters of appropriateness.<sup>40</sup> However, in order to like a value, the value must be given to us as belonging to the class of positive aesthetic values.

Both arguments speak for the untenability of Geiger's second claim (that liking grasps the values of the work). The fact is that liking – as indicated by Geiger and more recently by Gorodeisky – is related to aesthetic value, but liking and grasping the values of the work are not the same.

## 4. On Value-Feeling, Liking, and Emoting

In the previous sections, I presented Geiger's account of two kinds of aesthetic pleasure: liking and enjoyment. I argued that we have good

<sup>40</sup> Mulligan develops this claim for the grasping of values more generally: MULLIGAN 2010, 481.

reasons to accept Geiger's first tenet – that liking does not belong to the class of the emotional responses – but I also argued that we should reject his second tenet, according to which liking grasps aesthetic values. Let us return to the two questions with which I opened this paper: What is the place of aesthetic pleasure or liking within the mind? How is aesthetic pleasure or liking connected to values? In this last section, I will provide an answer to these questions which, despite being inspired by Geiger's account, diverges from it with respect to the cognitive function of liking. My suggestion is that liking is a type of feeling motivated by the cognition of aesthetic value. This kind of feeling should be distinguished from the category of value-feelings, which are the most primary form of engagement with the world, and from the category of emotional responses.

The primary function at work in disclosing the evaluative dimension of life is the phenomenon that, in accordance with the phenomenological tradition, I have referred to as feeling of values (sometimes also called value-ception or value-feeling). Value-feeling is a primary mental activity which grasps or discloses values. It is a specific and originary form of *receptivity* toward the world. Value-feeling is also at work when we engage with works of art. Here, too, we grasp and disclose the values embodied in the work. Some of these values are non-aesthetic, for instance, when we feel values of courage or injustice depicted in the narrative. Other values are of an aesthetic nature, such as feeling the sadness of a melody or the beauty or elegance of a dance (these values often supervene on non-aesthetic elements of the work). The activity of the mind at work in all these examples of disclosure of value is a feeling of value, value-ception or value-feeling. In some cases, this activity might require that we have developed particular skills and that we have been trained to feel certain complex values.

This feeling of aesthetic values is only one initial moment of the more complex phenomenon that we call aesthetic experience. The value-feeling is a first moment of *receptivity* toward the values of the work: it is a moment characterized by the cognition of value. A second

moment of *responsivity* toward these grasped values might take place. Responsivity requires that we have already been acquainted with the values of the work. In my view, there are different forms in which we might be responsive toward the values of the work. On the one hand, the values grasped might motivate further mental activities which have the form of specific feelings, such as liking, being moved, being edified, etc. On the other hand, they might motivate mental states or processes, such as the emotional responses of enjoyment, terror, fear, etc.<sup>41</sup>

According to the view that I am proposing here, liking is a mental activity necessarily based and founded on an initial and more originary mental activity: the feeling of values. Liking is one of the possible feelings motivated by the originary feeling of values but liking is not itself an originary value-feeling, despite being a feeling.<sup>42</sup> According to the picture that I am proposing here, the aesthetic experience is a heterogeneous complex constituted by different moments, two of which are the grasping of value and the liking of it.<sup>43</sup> The first of these feelings is original and primitive and it is the feeling of being receptive to the work's values. The second feeling requires the first in order to take place and it is the feeling of responding to the work and its positive aesthetic values. Both kinds of feeling – the primary and receptive feeling of values and the secondary and responsive liking of values – are activities of the mind. Liking is a responsive feeling toward a grasped aesthetic value. In fact, the

41 This tripartite distinction can be found in von HILDEBRAND 2016, 368. He identifies three phenomena: apprehending values, being affected by them (e.g., being moved, stirred, lifted up or edified), and emotional responses (e.g., enthusiasm). However, von Hildebrand aims to show that liking is not an important category for aesthetics and connects it with modest aesthetic values.

42 Von Hildebrand distinguishes between the two moments in terms of a seeing of values and a feeling of values. However, in my view, the seeing of values is already a feeling because apprehending a value moves and affects us. Thus, I prefer to speak of two feelings: one original and more primitive feeling of the value of the work and a second feeling grounded on the first which adopts a more specific form and consists in liking the values grasped.

43 I take inspiration here from Hartmann, for whom aesthetic pleasure is the subjective reverse of the intuition of aesthetic value (HARMAN 2014, 16-17 and 74).

grasping of an aesthetic value can motivate us to like it. None of these moments should be conflated with the emotions, which are responses to artworks, and have both temporal development and specific formal objects.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I offered an analysis of aesthetic pleasure within the framework of an aesthetics of value. In the first part, I presented Geiger's distinction between two kinds of pleasure – liking and enjoyment – and I showed that, for him, only liking fulfills the cognitive function of grasping the values of a work. In the second part, I examined Geiger's main tenets, establishing a comparison between his views and more recent accounts. I provided arguments in favor of Geiger's first tenet – which distinguishes liking from the emotional responses – but I challenged his second tenet, that liking is able to grasp values. Finally, I suggested a distinction between two kinds of feelings: the originary feeling of values, which is receptive to the values of the work, and the secondary feeling of liking, which is a form of response to the aesthetic values grasped. According to the view proposed, liking is a form of feeling motivated by the cognition of aesthetic value.

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