

## Life in Kant

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**ENG Abstract:** This study articulates the Kantian understanding of the concept of life through a transversal investigation of his work, from the pre-Critical writings to the mature period, positioning the debate around the distinction between animated and inanimate matter and examining references to the immaterial principle that vivifies matter. For Kant, life does not constitute a direct scientific object, configuring itself as a primarily metaphysical theme, accessible only through indirect approaches, analogies, and regulative principles. The philosopher consistently maintains the position that matter needs an immaterial principle for its vivification, establishing fundamental distinctions between organized and inorganic beings, where not every organized being is living: only animals, endowed with *vis locomotiva*, can be considered properly living, while plants remain as non-living organisms. Life is defined as the capacity for action of a being according to its representations, differentiating itself by the type of will, free will in the human case and *arbitrium brutum* in irrational creatures. In this sense, life, in its concrete dynamics, manifests itself through the constant play between pleasure and displeasure, constituting the only mode by which the subject can indirectly experience its own vitality.

**Keywords:** life, organism, soul, representations, pleasure.

**Summary:** Introduction. 1. Organized beings – organisms. 2. An immaterial principle. 3. Acting according to representations. Conclusion. References.

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### Introduction

The present study articulates the prefiguration of central concepts of this debate in writings from the pre-Critical period with their use in the rest of Kant's work. Although it does not pretend to ground the thesis of continuity of Kantian thought between the pre-Critical and Critical periods, it considers possible and preferable an articulation between both periods relative to the central themes of this investigation, recognizing the distinctions between prefigurations and mature conceptions when significant.

This article positions the debate about life and the members of empirical nature that presumably possess the capacity to feel themselves alive, considering the epistemic limits inherent to the object. Applying to the word *life* what Kant affirmed about *race*, that “the word absolutely does not figure in a system of description of nature, presumably, therefore, also the thing itself is not in nature” (ÜGTP, AA 08: 163.13-15)<sup>1</sup>, there is established from the beginning Kant's caveat from 1766, maintained until his late writings, that “it is perhaps impossible to establish someday, with certainty, to which members of nature life extends and which are the degrees of it that immediately touch upon the total absence of life” (TG, AA 02: 330.21-24).

Kant does not treat “the specific mode of functioning of living beings as ‘life’ (*‘Leben’*)” (Zöller 2012, p. 102 s). There is no way to make a direct application of this term to living beings, only in an indirect form. In Kant, “the expression ‘life’ serves him [...] to characterize psychic and noetic processes, which, at best, could be extrapolated indirectly to biological processes and beings” (Zöller 2012, p. 102). This has in view that the approach implies considering in the living being an “internal causality according to ends, whose original sphere is another and whose original meaning is known, in a direct manner, only from this other sphere” (Dörflinger 2012, p. 226). This other sphere is the spiritual life of man. Thus, when approaching Kant's use of ‘life’ in living beings, the context refers, strictly speaking, to an *analogon* of life.

The Kantian consideration also of the *soul* operates exclusively in the realm of idea, not reality. Although Kant conceives the thinking nature of the subject as distinct from the mechanical processes of the material body, suggesting an immaterial principle in relation to the material body, as will be addressed, both the nature

<sup>1</sup> In this article, we have chosen to present all citations in English, even when the original text is in another language. Thus, excerpts from Kant and commentators whose references point to other languages are offered here in our own translation.

of this principle and its relation to the body exceed the limits of empirical knowledge. Similarly, other notions such as that of *formative force* mentioned in the present study must also be understood as hypotheses.

The discussion emerges from a context that takes place only in thought, marked by the *as if*, by analogy and by indirect approaches, always configuring an approximation to think nature in perspectives that, without this indirect form and with only relative principles, would be an occasion to wait for the Newtons who would occupy themselves with blades of grass and have success in their explanations in this realm as well<sup>2</sup>. With these limitations, or, still, with the limitations inherent to human constitution, “man is destined to never completely understand what life is, to remain always needy before it” (Madrid 2012, p. 180).

For Beckenkamp (2012, p. 227) due to the absence of more adequate conditions with the limited cognitive apparatus of access to this object, indirect approaches to this obscure term are already customary, to be taken “following in figurative sense; [...] in the sense of existence, activity, duration. ‘Living’ is used figuratively in relation to sensory impressions; for example, when one speaks of a living color”. The problem only presents itself when taking what is merely an indirect approach and confusing it with a direct approach.

Even the appropriation of life as a scientific discipline by *biology* reveals itself problematic, considering that life cannot be identified in a time and space. One perceives in sensible intuition living beings, but not life, configuring it as a primarily metaphysical, not scientific object. Or, still, about the so-called *life sciences*, “insofar as they have to do with life, they are not sciences, and insofar as they are sciences, they have nothing to do with life. In the Kantian perspective, the life sciences would therefore be an absurdity” (Zöller 2012, p. 107).

Generally speaking, “the question ‘what is life?’ is a linguistic trap. To answer it according to grammatical rules, we must provide a noun, a thing. But life on Earth resembles more a verb” (Margulis 2002, p. 28), or, still, an *experience of life* (Battaglia 2009, p. 255). Kant himself comes to approach, even if occasionally, life in terms of *self-activity* (Refl, AA 15: 248.10), referring to a causing independent of the medium in which the caused activity takes effect, although related to something beyond the mere subject and with the medium itself, leading back to the question of freedom *versus* nature.

Distancing itself from Lebrun’s (2002, p. 337) pretension, which directly questions “what is, for him [Kant] the exact meaning of the word *living*”, the present article approaches the main Kantian positions on the debate, or rather, a possible understanding from what Kant presents in relation to the notions that construct the worldview from which this discussion emerges. In this sense, this study introduces the reader to the complex and dispersed Kantian discussion around life.

The question of life implies recognizing its transversal presence in Kantian work, at least in the productive period between 1755 and 1803. According to Santos (2012, p. 17-81), this thematic concern (‘organism’, organic bodies, life and its principle) accompanies the thinker throughout all his work, with first vestiges in essays by the young philosopher, as in *NTH* from 1755, being thematized topically only in the essay *TG*, from 1766. Despite unchanged basic positions, such as the consideration that matter, as such, does not possess life, lacking an immaterial principle that animates it, that vivifies it, Kantian terminology suffered alterations over the years or contexts, aiming, among other possible explanations, a terminological adaptation more adequate to a Natural History, a *Naturgeschichte* (Santos 2012,, p. 60-63).

The terminological adaptation manifests itself in the relation of mutual influence, or, still, of a productive misunderstanding between Kant and the naturalist Blumenbach, resulting in the incorporation of terms such as formative impulse (*Bildungstrieb - nisus formativus*) or formative force (*bildende Kraft*), as immaterial principle related to products of organic nature, distinguishing itself from machines that would possess only motive force<sup>3</sup>. This epoch was characterized by a fluctuating signification of terminological options, since not even the terms of the debate were established. While conceptions such as man-machine, animal-machines, being-machine prevailed, considered inappropriate for Kant, an adequate terminology was sought that would explain life not only mechanically or materially, but through the relation of the material body with an immaterial principle. This principle, initially designated as soul, found resistances due to the long questionable tradition of the term and philosophical extrapolations (Lebrun 2002, p. 339), leading physiologists to prefer vital force (*Lebenskraft*) to what was previously designated as soul (VNAEF, AA 08: 413). In this terminological search, Blumenbach’s formative impulse presented itself as a considerable option. The possibilities and limits of the compatibility between vital force, formative force, *vis locomotiva*, soul, mood, among others, remains an open question, recognizing that Kant was still adapting to this terminological alteration, even coming to consider the discussion in terms of *world soul* in his last unpublished writings (*OP*).

The following exposition starts from a possible distinction between matter and body, salutary for approaching the organism, pointing out distinctions between organic and inorganic beings and directing the discussion in the sense of suggesting the possibility of speaking in terms of *living being* (analogously speaking, or still, of derived life) only to a part of the group of organic beings, namely, to animals. At issue are the animal, plant and mineral groups, among which the first will be associated with the consideration of life as derived life and not a debate in terms of living organic bodies *versus* brute and lifeless bodies. However, it is opportune to emphasize once more the limitations of the approach to “life” in Kant: “although organisms seem mainly *objects*, in reality, what interests us are the *processes* that take place inside them and which we are not in condition to explain” (Madrid 2012, p. 172 n.).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. KU, AA 05: 400, Lebrun 2002, p. 618. See also the indications of possibilities and risks of approaches to ‘life’, especially on pages 173 to 175, in Madrid 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Beckenkamp 2013, p. 40-70; Pires 2006, p. 462. Santos 2012, p. 56; Soromenho-Marques 2010, p. 245-258, ÜGTP, AA 08: 180 n.

## 1. Organized beings - organisms

Regarding the term *organism* (*Organismus*), at least three initial observations are opportune. The first is that such term is used very rarely by Kant and, applied to *living beings* or, rather, to *organized beings* (*organisierte Wesen*), only late by the philosopher (Zöller 2012, p. 102; Santos 2012, p. 70 s). The second is that the original realm of the meaning of *organism* is not material. It is rather a term more adequate to speak of a *system*, or still, of *reason*, and applied in an indirect form, by analogy, to other spheres. According to Rohden (2009, p. 20), “the organism is an *analogon of reason*, in which this is not understood biologically, but rather Biology is thought by analogy with rationality”. The third observation is that “*living* is not and never will be, for Kant, co-extensive to *organized*. Every living body is organic, but not every organic body is living” (Lebrun 2002, p. 337).

Here is an occasion to point out a possible understanding of matter and also of body, to make clearer the notion of organism. The concept of matter, in the physical sense, implies abstraction from any form, internal and external (OP, AA 22: 546). The concept of body, however, implies considering a form (internal/external) in what was simply matter (OP, AA 21: 188). In this sense, it is important to remember that, according to Kant, “all matter as such is *devoid of life*” (MAN, AA 04: 544: 16).

The term body is understood, thus, to refer to an organized matter. The notion of body, concerning its internal form, implies considering a matter with a structure and organization (*Struktur und Organisation*). With this, it is said that matter possesses an internal form and an external form. The focus in the sequence is the internal form (*innere Form*).

To mention a structure and an organization in matter, that is, a body, is still little to refer to the beings of nature to which the notion of life can be attributed, even life in terms of *as if*, of derived life. Here in the exposition is added the debate around a relation of this (organized) matter with a *fundamental-force*, a *Grundkraft*, or, rather with *fundamental forces*, since Kant does not consider it possible that they let themselves be derived from a single fundamental force (ÜGTP, AA 08: 180; EEKU, AA 20: 206; KU, AA 05: 177), despite it being a common task both to the physics of bodies and to the physics of souls the search for the reduction of the diversity of forces to the smallest possible number of them (V-Met-L2/Pölit, AA 28: 564), which is altogether a task even encouraged by the philosopher, despite the little hope in being satisfied with the results of the research.

Kant considers that all forces are subdivided into fundamental forces and derived forces (V-Met-L2/Pölit, AA 28: 564) of which the true cause is largely unknown to us. These forces (fundamental or derived) can be mechanical or organic. They are mechanical forces if they are only exterior to the body, without which it remains immobile (attraction, repulsion). This body obeys, thus, an order that is foreign to it. They are organic forces if the fundamental forces are internal. This body obeys, thus, an internal order, despite being also subjected to conditions that are foreign to it, to mechanical forces.

Despite the implication of *cause* when speaking of *force* or, still, as Kant mentions, “causality leads to the concept of action, this to the concept of force and, through this, to that of substance” (KrV, AA 03: 176.19-20), which could lead to considering the possibility of freedom or not in the activity involved, note that, speaking of organisms in general, this question is not being discussed. One is treating merely of the “physical possibility or necessity of an effect” (KU, AA 05: 172.08-09).

As already mentioned, this approach of a formative force has a direct relation with the naturalist Blumenbach. Kant receives in an agreeable form this approach from Blumenbach, having in view that the latter, even seeking to remove “from organized matter all physical explanation of these formations [...] leaves to the mechanism of nature an indeterminable and, nevertheless, at the same time undeniable participation” (KU, AA 05: 424.23-30). Only by mechanical explanations<sup>4</sup> one cannot account for organized beings, and Blumenbach having recognized this was an event that Kant sanctioned without reserves (Cf. Santos 2012, p. 50. Cf. also Beckenkamp 2013, p. 68).

According to Pires (2006, p. 462), in Blumenbach “the *formative force* must be taken as a vital force that cannot be recognized in inorganic physical products”. Generation, reproduction and regeneration are understood as “modifications of this primitive force” (Pires 2006, p. 462). Still according to Pires (2006, p. 463), “the *formative force* designates, in sum, that autonomous capacity for self-regeneration of the living being which is nothing more than the self-reproduction of its original formative force”.

In Kant, Dörflinger refers to the *formative force* in terms of a *potency* in the organism, attending to a term whose application makes the debate even more complex, due to the history of the concept of *potency* before and after Kant. Dörflinger emphasizes, thus, the perspective that in the organism “the ideal projection to be proposed for its formation anticipates its product” (Dörflinger 2012, p. 220). This anticipation is internal and is ideal, not material. It is according to this anticipation that the development of the organism follows, “in the ideality of the plan that the growth of the organism follows, is contained [...] the specific material quality that it will assume in the course of its realization through growth, for example, the quality of an elephant” (Dörflinger 2012, p. 220). Even with external contributions for the increment of the organism, such as, for example, external nature serving it as food, the assimilation of this exteriority obeys internal principles (KU, AA 05: 371) which, as idea, anticipate an effect, such as the growth of an organism, that is consistent with its species and “could not be accumulated at will [...] nor by means of another external cause” (Dörflinger 2012, p. 219). Thus the perspective of thinking the organism as developing from within and not by aggregation of parts is

<sup>4</sup> “By mechanistic explanation of life, we understand any attempt to reconstruct the possibility of an organism exclusively from *natural mechanical forces*” (Lebrun 2002, p. 329).

maintained; as an idea, a system, not an aggregate should be. This same dynamics mentioned with regard to growth would also apply to other spheres that, according to Kant, equally are not explained only mechanically such as self-conservation (as individual and as species).

In paragraph 64 of the *KU*, the three characteristics (growth, reproduction and self-conservation) “that Blumenbach had attributed to ‘life’, [...] he [Kant] attributes to the organism as *natural end*” (Lebrun 2002, p. 340). In the mentioned activities (growth, reproduction, self-conservation) they are understood as related to an organism understood as natural end, that is, a being organized and organizing itself, a being whose parts are ordered in relation to the whole (*KU*, AA 05: 374). An organically organized body would possess a proper fundamental force, a force “such that communicates it to matters that do not possess it (organizing them)” (*KU*, AA 05: 374.23-24). Thus, even if something possesses a motive force, one still cannot speak in terms of an organism, because “an organized being is not simply a machine, [...] this only possesses *motive* force, but ‘that’ possesses in itself besides that *formative* force” (*KU*, AA 05: 374.21-26).

The very possibility of an organized being from this Kantian notion, which “involves in itself that it be a matter in which everything is related among itself reciprocally as end and means, and this, even, can only be thought as a system of final causes” (ÜGTP, AA 08: 179.09-12) cannot be explained in a merely mechanical mode, which implies real causes. We should not think of this question in terms of real causes, but in terms of ideal causes. It is in terms of ideal causes that teleology is thought, which would be the only mode, according to Kant, of explanation of an organized being from these considerations, despite the fact that, even the organized being understood as *natural end* is also subjected, to some measure (although not completely explained by it), to real causes (which goes from causes to effects). With relation to ideal causes, one thinks “a causal connection according to a concept of reason (of ends)” (*KU*, AA 05: 372.25). Kant mentions that this *idea* of a *natural end* “possesses something different from all other ideas” (*KU*, AA 05: 405.15-16) and this having in view this connotation of causality related to an empirical correspondent for it, the organism. Strictly speaking, an empirical object is not given for the idea, nor for the idea of *natural end*. However, an empirical object is given for the consequence of the idea, an organism as *natural end* (Dörflinger 2012, p. 225), and this for Kant is *really remarkable*. Here one should think of a perspective “different from that which the rest of nature obeys” (Dörflinger 2012, p. 217), and even from other ideas.

The ideas, as Rohden (2007, p. 114) synthesizes, “are representations of totality, they preside over a system, a science, a work of art [...]. They also, and principally, preside over the idea of organism, as an articulated whole by means of the idea of life”. Being through our reason that the human being can place *ends* for itself, when one speaks in terms of *ends of nature*, one thinks as if another reason, even if it is not the human one, had placed such *ends* “in such a way that these ends must be placed as foundation of the possibility of the effect” (ÜGTP, AA 08: 181.06-07), as if following a *system of ends of nature*<sup>5</sup>.

Basically, the term nature can be understood in two senses in Kant: a formal and a material one. In its formal perspective, it signifies the *first internal principle* (the *essence*) “of everything that belongs to the possibility of a thing” (*MAN*, AA 04: 467), or, still, “the concatenation of the determinations of a thing, according to an internal principle of causality” (*KrV*, AA 03: 289 n.). In this first perspective one speaks, for example, that the soul as substance is “considered, according to its nature, totally different from matter” (AA 12: 32 n.). The material sense of nature, however, signifies the complex of all things that can be objects of our senses (*MAN*, AA 04: 467). The *KrV* defines this material sense of nature as “the complete totality of phenomena insofar as they are entirely concatenated by means of an internal principle of causality” (*KrV*, AA 03: 289 n.), or still, as “unity in the existence of phenomena” (*KrV*, AA 03: 289.06). Since there is both the external sense and the internal sense, this second sense of *nature* subdivides into two theories: that of bodies and that of souls, or still, of nature outside us (the extended) and that of nature in us (the thinking) (*MAN*, AA 04: 467). The notion of nature in the material sense implies, therefore, considering a *sum of objects of the senses*. Such sum must be *thought* as constituted in a *system* and not merely as a collection by aggregation of objects (*EEKU*, AA 20: 209). However, “it is necessary to erase the pretension [...] of being able to reduce the field of the living to a grammar of means-ends” (Madrid 2012, p. 173), fruit of an anthropomorphism that ignores the Kantian epistemic limits, as if nature submitted itself to our little comprehensive capacity, forgetting the function of such concepts that must be understood as valid only for us to orient ourselves amid nature, since “only the structure that reflection attributes with teleological intention to organisms manages that Judgment not be neutralized in confrontation with *life*” (Madrid 2012, p. 173), but this does not imply saying that this structure of reflection is sufficient to apprehend securely *life*, to know it or, still, that it authorizes us to approach life as being a predicate of the material body, if satisfied the criteria of the grammar of means-ends. It is rather a “particular and strange presupposition of our reason” (AA 11: 441.13-14), writes Kant in a letter to Beck “that nature, in the diversity of its products, consented as if voluntarily, and as end for our power of apprehension, an accommodation to the limits of our Judgment” (AA 11: 441.14-15). We are authorized to use such strange presupposition only because we have need of it. Or, still, “we introduce, it is said, final causes into things and do not extract them, so to speak, from their perception” (*EEKU*, AA 20: 220 n.). In this perspective, even “a fundamental force by which an organization would be produced must [...] be thought as a cause that acts according to *ends*” (ÜGTP, AA 08: 181.05-06).

In §65 of the *KU*, Kant recognizes that “very little is said of nature and its faculty in organized products” (*KU*, AA 05: 374.27-28). This immaterial sphere that is responsible for all the wide segment of that which

<sup>5</sup> “The proper principle of Judgment is thus: *nature specifies its universal laws into empirical ones, in conformity with the form of a logical system, for the sake of Judgment*. And here originates the concept of a *purposiveness* of nature” (*EEKU*, AA 20: 216.01-04).

cannot be explained uniquely by mechanical means is incomprehensible to us. But, “perhaps we acquire a more correct perspective of this impenetrable property if we designate it as an *analogon* of life” (KU, AA 05: 374.33-34). One cannot explain what we commonly understand by life in living beings neither with mechanical explanations, nor with analogies with human art, or still, with any other resource that we know. Kant’s solution is to resort, thus, to an analogy, or, still, he speaks, inclusively, in terms of *mere remote analogy* with something that, in turn, also presents us with limits of comprehension.

An important point here is that “to the expression ‘living being’ habitually used in an unreflective and almost natural form, must be given, therefore, a strongly modified sense” (Dörflinger 2012, p. 227), because Kant takes the perspective of spiritual life and extends it by analogy to organized beings, although not to all organized beings, to speak in terms of the possibility of life in animals, as hypothesis, as if these were living like a spirit. Besides that, they would be living as if with them (as matter) a being of spiritual nature were in relation. Even in this case, “it is purely spiritual life that is the original and properly said life” (Refl, AA 17: 474). For him, “animal life is only a derived and limited life. Therefore, birth is not a beginning of life in general, but only of animal life” (Refl, AA 17: 474).

Zammuto (1992, p. 295) suggests that “Life, for Kant, is the property of an intelligent will, the capacity to choose, to act. It is freedom of will in its actuality: *Willkür*, in Kant’s precise sense”. In this approach irrational animals are not positioned in the discussion with relation to life. Molina suggests that, in Kant, the debate around the term life occurs from the use of this term in three senses: a practical, a biological and an aesthetic sense. The first case “refers eminently to human life and its capacity to act voluntarily” (Molina 2015, p. 495), linking life with the capacity to desire, both in its superior form, when determined by reason, and in its inferior form, when determined by inclinations (Molina 2015, p. 497). The second case refers “to the manner with which Kant describes life in its primordial level, namely, as organisms” (Molina 2015, p. 496). The third case that Molina identifies in Kant is “referred especially to the feeling of vivification that [...] we experience before beauty, but also [...] related to the spiritual feeling that we experience before the sublime” (Molina 2015, p. 496). Caygill also divides into three groups Kant’s uses of the term life, although not in the same groups suggested by Molina. For Caygill, the first group refers to the value of life, the second group permeates what he calls a “complex relationship between the body, the outside world and the *Gemüt*” (Caygill 2000, p. 278), and the third refers to “life in terms of the ‘organized products’ of nature” (Caygill 2000, p. 279).

Faced with the absence of systematic treatment of this topic in Kant, as well as faced with the polysemy of the term among commentators, as illustrated, the present article seeks to think a common background of meaning among the different approaches of Kant to the term “life”. In this sense, the present article proposes the comprehensive hypothesis that, in Kant, representations provoke a positioning of activity or passivity of the soul of the living animal (rational and irrational), according to the concordance of the representation with the purpose of nature. The soul determines its forces in the sense of: 1. maintaining the present state, which in the body of the animal is felt as a pleasure, or 2. of rejecting this state, this activity of the soul that in the body is felt as a displeasure, to exit the present state, in a constant play between pleasure and displeasure that occupies the “life” of the animal. It is in this sense that life can be understood as a faculty or capacity for action. This would be the action according to representations. The rest of the article has the intention of explaining what was suggested in this present paragraph.

## 2. An immaterial principle

One of the first essays in which Kant mentions more explicitly the discussion about life, or, as Santos (2012, p. 44) says, in which the philosopher “enunciates a topic that will not cease to concern him: that of knowing what life is” is the *TG*, in which appears one of the positions referring to the debate around the possibility of life that Kant will maintain as a constant throughout his work: “what contains in the world a principle of life seems to be of immaterial nature. For all life rests upon the internal capacity to determine oneself according to will [*Willkür*]” (TG, AA 02: 327 n.). From this at least two points are emphasized: the first is that an explanation of life only by mechanical processes seems to be discarded for Kant already in this text from 1766. The second is that in all life one can presuppose will. Kant still reiterates with relation to this: “those natures that must be themselves active and contain the foundation of life effectively from their internal force, in sum, those whose proper will is capable of determining and altering itself” (TG, AA 02: 327 n.). Here, as can be noted, it is understood that this basic immaterial principle, to speak in terms of life, already possesses proper force.

Some decades later, in the *KU*, the philosopher still maintains the necessity of an immaterial principle in relation to the material body to speak in terms of life: “we have to endow all matter, as simple matter, with a property (hylozoism) that contradicts its essence, or we animate it with a principle that finds itself in community with it and of different species (a soul [*eine Seele*])” (KU, AA 05: 374.35-37). About this passage, it is understood that the first part of the cited sentence is not Kant’s option, who comes to refer to hylozoism as being “the death of all philosophy of nature” (MAN, AA 04: 544.25-26). Or, still, he mentions that “hylozoism vivifies everything, materialism, to the contrary, well considered, kills everything” (TG, AA 02: 330.24-26). Thus, in the sequence of the excerpt from the *KU*, the text agrees with the option of the second part of the cited, namely, that of presupposing a soul that vivifies or still that animates matter, as a principle of different nature but in community with it, although such union between soul and body is mysterious.

Still in a note in the essay from 1766, Kant explicates the understanding that “those immaterial beings that contain the foundation of animal life are distinct from those that include reason in their proper activity and are called spirits” (TG, AA 02: 327 n.). It is emphasized that both in man and in creatures a soul is understood. The difference is that in the rational being, therefore, for possessing reason, the immaterial principle is also called

spirit (despite the fact that the Kantian text can be read as if it had more than one sense for the term spirit). In creatures there is no reason. There is an analogue of reason, instinct, which is also present in the human being. In the creature, there is no relation to spirit.

Initially, among the beings of nature, only organized beings could be considered as if they were living: “the organic is [...] a certain formal type of structuring of forces [...] that brings a factual restriction to the polymorphism of matter” (Lebrun 2002, p. 332). In this same sense can also be understood the phrase of Chrysippus that Kant mentions in *VNAEF*: “nature attributed to the pig a soul [*Seele*], instead of salt, so that it would not corrupt” (*VNAEF*, AA 08: 413.05-06), to which Kant adds that “it is as if the philosopher had cast here a prophetic glance into the physiological systems of our time; only that now one preferred to use, instead of the word soul [*Seele*], the term vital force [*Lebenskraft*]” (*VNAEF*, AA 08: 413.09-11). This soul that animates matter is employed here as *vital force*, if not by Kant himself, at least by the physiologists of his time. The soul is needed, understood also in terms of *vis locomotiva* so that matter can be considered as vivified (*belebt*) / animated (*beseelt*) (OP, AA 21: 65.29-31).

The expression vital force seems to be employed at levels, at least in the distinction between rational and irrational animals. In the *Anth* one reads: “the complete mental weakness [*Gemüthsschwäche*], where one is not even capable of the animal use of vital force [*Lebenskraft*] [...] cannot be called illness of the soul [*Seelenkrankheit*]” (*Anth*, AA 07: 211.30-31). According to Kant, in this case the most adequate would be to call it “lack of soul [*Seelenlosigkeit*]” (*Anth*, AA 07: 212.04). Here is highlighted the mention of an animal use of vital force, as if presupposing other uses, perhaps the human, still animal, but capable of self-consciousness, which for Kant implies a use of reason. Besides clear relation between soul and vital force.

The animal use of vital force implies an “*analogon rationis*”, refers to instinct (*Instinkt*). In the *VNAEF*, Kant already mentioned a “lowest degree of the nature of the human being before all culture” (*VNAEF*, AA 08: 413.07-08), or, still, nature as “represented in the human being still before its humanity, therefore, in its universality, just as it is active in the animal, to only develop forces that afterwards the human being can use according to laws of freedom” (*VNAEF*, AA 08: 413.22-25). It is interesting to emphasize the reference to a universality in this excerpt, since the other extreme also refers to a universality, that is, in the free use of reason.

Despite being limited, the animal use of vital force still preserves capacities. For example, in the *KU*, Kant mentions that “animals [irrational] also act according to representations (they are not machines, as Descartes wants it) and that despite their specific difference, they are according to genus (as living beings) identical to man” (*KU*, AA 05: 464 n.). Irrational animals do not possess, however, the capacity for the representation of freedom (*Anth*, AA 07: 268), they cannot make their representations universal: “animals also possess *apperceptions*, but not *apperceptions*; consequently they cannot make their representations universal” (*Refl*, AA 15: 166.18-19). Irrational animals possess, inclusively, the capacity to reflect, that is, they not only act according to representations, but also possess the capacity to “compare and hold-together given representations”<sup>6</sup>, although without the capacity to conceptualize the representations, because they do not possess understanding, although they may possess an analogue of it: “animals: *analogon* of understanding, of the capacity to judge and of reason” (*Refl*, AA 15: 167.23-24).

In this sense, it is considered as hypothesis that irrational animals could act by representation, this task being one that can be understood as an activity that presupposes a capacity to, inclusively, create representation, since representations are internal. It would need to be presupposed in the irrational animal an immaterial principle that had the capacity to produce representations (perhaps by the analogue of reason and by the analogue of understanding, instinctively) and react from these representations, related inclusively with pleasure and pain.

From what has already been briefly approached, the possibility of thinking creatures as if they possessed a soul is suggested. Along with this, as hypothesis, the considerations that it possesses instinct, an analogue of reason, possesses the capacity to reflect, and, still, by the consideration of the *TG*, possesses the capacity of will.

Kant considers, as hypothesis, that the capacity to feel is original to the soul, together with the capacity to know (*Refl*, AA 15: 57.04-11) which, according to Beckenkamp (2012, p. 216) perhaps has relation to the debate of the epoch that considered that free will and intellect would be attributes of spirit, being still a “heritage” of Wolff in Kant, who only after that essay of the 60s begins to distance himself from this connotation of spirit and will focus on a connotation of the term more related to the aesthetic debate, related to the notion of genius, although perhaps one can say that Kant never came to “a clear and distinct concept of spirit in this aesthetic sense” (Beckenkamp 2012, p. 232).

Instinct as an analogue of reason for creatures, would the soul be an analogue of spirit? Or would it be the animal use of vital forces, since even rational beings possess soul? The soul is approached as a substance in conditions to receive (passive) representations and provoke (active) an action before the reception of these representations. In §7 of the *Anth*, Kant, using the term “*Gemüt*”, instead of the term “*Seele*”, mentions that, concerning the capacity to know, the soul connects and separates representations (*Anth*, AA 07: 140). The capacity to feel of the soul is mentioned in *Refl*. 158a as a capacity in the exercise of which it “occupies itself with itself and is affected well or badly” (*Refl*, AA 15: 57.08-09). In this perspective, “its activity turns to uniquely changing its state in the disagreeable and to enjoying it in the agreeable” (*Refl*, AA 15: 57.09-11).

In creatures, this capacity to feel linked to an immaterial principle, here namely soul, can be illustrated by a passage in footnote in the *RGV*, in which Kant comments that Malebranche “preferred not to attribute to

<sup>6</sup> “Reflecting ([...] occurs even in animals, although only instinctively, that is, not in reference to a concept to be obtained through it, but to an inclination to be eventually determined by it)” (*EEKU*, AA 20: 211.19-21).

irrational animals souls and, with this, also feelings, to admitting that horses would have to endure so many torments «without, however, having eaten from the forbidden hay» (RGV, AA 06: 73 n.).

In the *KrV*, Kant mentions “the thinking substance as principle of life [*Principium des Lebens*] in matter, i.e., as soul [*Seele (anima)*] and as foundation of animality” (*KrV*, AA 04: 218, as well as *KrV*, AA 03: 265). In the *OP* (written probably between 1799 and 1803), Kant mentions a distinction between lifeless machines and living animals, attributing to the second group the presupposition of a soul (*Seele*) (*OP*, AA 22: 373.11-17). In another passage, Kant comes to mention that inclusively internal motives are insufficient to speak in terms of life to a matter, lacking also a principle of movement, or a *vis locomotiva* (*OP*, AA 22: 373.11-17), namely soul (*Seele*) in what is living.

For Lebrun (2002, p. 338), Kant’s understanding of living being “indicates no rupture with the classical definition, that of Descartes and of Leibniz”, despite being a more restrictive conception: “Leibniz went too far in populating the universe with souls. Kant refuses this. But the important thing is that living being and animated being continue to be synonyms” (Lebrun 2002, p. 339). Thus, the restriction in Kant has in view not the consideration of linking the soul with matter as requirement for the consideration that it is a living being but rather the very consideration of to what matter in nature a soul can be attributed and, with this, life, as, for example, the case of the absence of soul (and, with this, of life) in plants that, in this perspective, would be lifeless machines, non-living organisms or still non-living beings.

Not considering plants as included among living bodies may sound strange nowadays. However, according to Martins, in the eighteenth century the concept of “life” in general was limited to the animal kingdom (Martins 2012, p. 188). Even deprived of life, Kant considers that this non-living being can grow, reproduce, self-serve and die, which can lead to questionings referring to the understanding of the possibility of death of something that is not living, as in passages in which it is mentioned that repeated defoliation would kill the tree (*KU*, AA 05: 372).

In sum, it can be said that brute matter is, for Kant, without life. It can also be said that plants, for Kant, do not possess life, despite being organisms and possessing a formative force, but not *vis locomotiva*. Animals as a whole (rational and irrational) possess life, possess formative force and possess soul. Human beings, besides formative force, besides soul, also possess reason, which implies saying that they possess spirit: “through reason is attributed to the soul of the human being a spirit (*mens, nous*), so that it does not conduct a life simply according to the mechanisms of nature and its technical-practical laws, but also according to the spontaneity of freedom” (*VNAEF*, AA 08: 417.14-17). That is, beyond irrational animals, in the human being there is the possibility of an independence from a dynamics enslaved to the senses, to the pleasure inherent to the agreeable, integrating also the aesthetic realm and moral acting.

It is known that from the 70s Kant began to prefer the term mood to the term soul, but, according to Vaihinger (1922, p. 9), such option has in view avoiding the term *Seele* due to the metaphysical charge that such term carries from the philosophical tradition<sup>7</sup>. Rohden (2009, p. 9) also calls attention to this question: “Kant, faced with the metaphysical connotation of the term *Seele/anima* (soul), began to prefer in his critical conception, instead of it, the term *Gemüt/animus* (mood)”. In these cases, he would use as correspondent, the term *Gemüt* (mood/mind).

Not only in the pre-Critical period, also in the Critical period we have the consideration, as hypothesis, of the soul as an immaterial substance. In the *MS* the hypothesis of the soul is approached as a “substance that inhabits in it [in man], distinct from the body and that possesses the faculty of thinking independent of this, that is, as spiritual substance [*geistige Substanz*]” (*MS*, AA 06: 419.08-10). Kant, however, emphasizes that “such a demonstration was never made” (*TG*, AA 02: 324.16-17).

### 3. Acting according to representations

Still in the *MS*, one reads one of the most known definitions of life in Kant: “the faculty of a being to act according to its representations is called life” (*MS*, AA 06: 211.08-09), passage about which Lebrun (2002, p. 338) mentions: “this will always be the Kantian definition of life”. In this sense, the previous debate becomes salutary that has already placed some nuances of the possibility of attribution also to creatures of the consideration of the capacity to act according to representations<sup>8</sup>. In this sense, we find in the same text a clarification regarding this: “the will [*Willkür*] that can be determined by pure reason, is called free will. That which is only determinable by inclination (sensible impulse, *stimulus*) would be animal will (*arbitrium brutum*)” (*MS*, AA 06:213.29-32).

This distinction between free will and animal will allows that the hypothesis of linking will with the soul, or, still, the hypothesis of an immaterial principle that animates the creature, is still considered, in agreement with the mentioned definition of life, without this immaterial principle being of spiritual nature (that is, endowed with reason). The presupposition of will does not make it necessary a use of reason to speak in terms of life.

Returning to the definition of life, it is important to remember that the *KU* tells us that all representations can “be linked subjectively to delight or pain, however imperceptible both may be (because they in sum affect the feeling of life [...])” (*KU*, AA 05: 477.25-30). When approaching life as “the faculty of a being to act

<sup>7</sup> “Kant therefore prefers the expression ‘mood’ [*Gemüth*] because of its neutrality and non-commitment; he wants to avoid the expression ‘soul’ [*Seele*] because it easily awakens metaphysical concepts and claims” (Vaihinger 1922, p. 9).

<sup>8</sup> However, it is worth noting that, “despite all living beings being capable of acting according to representations, only man, as a rational being, acts according to the representation of laws” (Giannotti 2011, p. 162).

according to its representations" (MS, AA 06:211.07-09), it can be suggested that such action is a capacity of the soul to determine its forces to change the state in which it finds itself (in the case of displeasure) or to enjoy it (in the case of pleasure). Such determination of forces has as principle the will, or, still, the faculty of appetite. It is understood here that referring to will as principle can be understood in a similar form to the consideration that straight lines are principles of the triangle, but not its cause (V-Met-L2/Pölit, AA 28: 571), since the cause must always rest in a substance.

Representations provoke a positioning of activity or passivity of the soul, according to the mode with which the soul is affected by representations. The *KU* tells us: "the mood is by itself entirely life (the vital principle itself), and obstacles or promotions have to be sought outside it and yet in man himself [...] in the connection with his body" (KU, AA 05: 278.03-06). The capacity for action by means of representations that permeates the conceptualization of life would be the capacity of the soul to determine its forces in the sense of maintaining a state, which in the body is felt as pleasure and rejecting this state, this activity of the soul that in the body is felt as displeasure. It is in this sense that life can be understood as a faculty or capacity for action. This would be the action according to representations.

After the definition of life mentioned in the *MS*, the philosopher adds that to the desire (*Begehren*) of the object is united the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, but that there can be pleasure and displeasure not united to the desire of an object, which would be the case of aesthetic judgments of taste. The feeling of pleasure and displeasure also would not necessarily be precedent to desire, this being able to occur in the case of the agreeable, but not in the case of the good in itself, in which the feeling is an unintended consequence (Cf. MS, AA 06:211 ss, as well as §2 of the *KU*).

The animal (rational and irrational) feels pleasure or displeasure with a representation. In its most basic level, not free, the desire of the animal is to maintain a present state if this is felt as agreeable to it. Its aversion to the present state, in which it finds itself, is if this present state is felt as a displeasure and it remains at the mercy of this play. Life can be understood, thus, as an action (determination of forces) or still, one can speak in terms of activity that can be related to desire and to aversion of the present state. Representations "affect the feeling of life and none, as modification of the subject, can be indifferent to them" (KU, AA 05: 477.25-30). The soul reacts to them to maintain them or disperse them. In this perspective, representations would be related to pleasure and displeasure.

According to Kant, "if we seek the cause of any change whatever of matter in life, we must immediately seek it in another substance different from matter, although connected with it" (MAN, AA 04: 544: 17-19). Thus, it is already said that this capacity must be sought beyond the corporality of the animal. That which would be responsible for the movement of maintaining or rejecting a state is not the body itself, despite this action being concretized in the body. In this sense, the "foundations of determination and actions do not belong to the representations of external senses and consequently, also not to the determinations of matter as matter" (MAN, AA 04: 544: 14-16). They are foundations of determination and actions of this immaterial substance, but, which are related, however, to matter, or still, to the body of the animal, all pleasure and pain are felt in the body of the animal (KU, AA 05: 334 s). In this perspective, this other substance different from matter is what would have the capacity to determine itself to change by means of desire, as internal principle, that is, one could only presuppose life in matter if also presupposed an immaterial substance related to it, since "all matter as such is devoid of life" (MAN, AA, 04: 544: 16).

In the *MAN*, from 1786, there is an approach to life that commentators such as Santos (2012, p. 45) highlight as being "one of the most explicit definitions that the philosopher gave of life, in the set of his writings":

Life is called the power [faculty - *Vermögen*] of a substance to determine itself to act from a principle, <the power/faculty> of a finite substance to determine itself for change, and of a material substance to determine itself to movement or to rest as change of its state. Now, we know no other principle of a substance to change its state, except desiring and, in general, no other activity except thinking with what depends on it, the feeling of pleasure or displeasure and desire or willing (MAN, AA 04: 544.07-14).

It is emphasized that Kant distinguishes life from the faculty of appetite and comes to cite, at least a few times, together with the definition of life, also a definition of appetite and, inclusively, a definition of pleasure, in a sentence before or in a sentence after. Life is related to the faculty of appetite, but is not confused with it. Determining forces and being cause of the effectiveness of objects present themselves as distinct.

In the *MS* one reads: "the faculty of appetite is the faculty of, by means of its representations, being cause of the objects of these representations. The faculty of a being to act according to its representations is called life" (MS, AA 06: 211. 08-09). Regarding acting according to representations, the action is the determination of forces. The representation can be felt as pleasure or as displeasure. Appetite would be related to pleasure. Aversion would be related to displeasure. The action, as determination of forces on the part of the soul can be simply a determination of forces in the sense of maintaining the present state or of determining forces in contrary perspective to the present state, but this perhaps does not necessarily imply causing the appetized object, which one would not necessarily even know what it is. In case of displeasure (always corporal), it would be the soul determining its forces for the living being to exit the present state, even if it does not know to what state it will go, or what will follow from this determination of forces.

Pleasure and displeasure would be modes of feeling from the determination of forces on the part of the soul, in the perspective of accepting or refusing the present representation, this is the form with which the subject feels a representation, subjectively speaking. These determinations of forces as positionings of the soul before a representation can only be "present" when there are representations. In the body, the effect makes itself noticed as pleasure and displeasure, but the object in direct contact with the body does not have

only for this reason conditions to be felt as pleasurable or as displeasurable. The soul reacts to a representation, so that the subject feels as pleasurable or displeasurable that present state and there seeks (the body) to react or maintain the present state.

One of the basic capacities of the soul would be to feel. It is the soul, and not the body, the cause from a criterion for the consideration of a specific object as pleasurable and not displeasurable. There must be a rule, a criterion so that the immaterial principle (the soul) impels an effect that will be perceived in the body as a pleasure or as a displeasure “before” a representation<sup>9</sup>. The effect, or still, the movement occurs in the material body. Thus the subject feels pleasure (or displeasure) with a representation. All pleasure, thus, is linked to representations.

In §60 of the *Anth*, Kant mentions that “the life [of the animal] is, as the physicians had also already noticed, a continuous play of antagonism” (*Anth*, AA 07: 231.23-24), this antagonism between delight and pain, or, still, pleasure and displeasure. This passage presents the conception of play (*Spiele*). Kant understands play as an “occupation that is agreeable by itself” (*KU*, AA 05: 304.06) and not for its finality. Kant comes to mention that among players (in treating of games of chance), one thinks that one is playing against the other, “however, in reality, it is nature that plays with both” (*Anth*, AA 07: 275.18), because the entertaining in itself, the simple changing alternation of sensations promotes the feeling of life, beyond the final result of the game (*KU*, AA 05: 331). With relation to the play with aesthetic ideas, there would be an entertaining of the faculties of the soul, which are put into play by representations (*KU*, AA 05: 217). In this play, there would be a harmony among the faculties, that is, when one of the faculties does not determine the others, whether by an idea or a concept. Thus, they remain in a free and indetermined play, this play being an indispensable condition for aesthetic judgments of taste. During such play, there would be a promotion of the feeling of life.

Kant denies the possibility of our feeling life, since it would be an action of an immaterial substance, despite being necessarily related to matter, but suggests that it is possible for us to feel ourselves living: “we do not feel life itself, but [we feel] its promotion or obstacle” (*Refl*, AA 15: 244.03-04). Life would occupy itself with the alternation between pleasure and displeasure, and between displeasure and pleasure, this is what can be felt of life. The promotion of life possible to be felt consists in the very alternation, and not only in the concretization of the action of changing from a possible state of displeasure to a state of pleasure. According to Kant, “the relation of representations to the active forces of the subject, to maintain or produce the same representation, is the feeling of pleasure” (*Refl*, AA 15: 241.14-16). Life, occupied between the alternation of displeasure to pleasure and of pleasure to displeasure does not imply the capacity of the subject to realize the object of pleasure, merely the capacity (original of the soul) (*Refl*, AA 15: 57. 04-19) to feel and, from this, to reject or maintain a representation, according to this feeling. According to Kant, “the relation to the active force to realize the object of pleasure <is> the faculty of appetite” (*Refl*, AA 15: 241.16-17). In this sense, one of the most known definitions of life of Kant deserves to be commented, which, in these terms, is incomplete, does not include irrational animals. In the *KpV* one reads that life is the “faculty of a being to act according to laws of the faculty of appetite” (*KpV*, AA 05: 9 n.).

The definition of life of the *KpV* can be understood as partial by the reference to *laws* of the faculty of appetite. Thus understood, the definition of life is related to the good in itself, to freedom, for making reference to *laws* of the faculty of appetite, being that, according to *Refl*. 5237, “the *law* contains the imperative of what should happen (of the end)”<sup>10</sup>. Thus, according to this definition of life, it is not also a matter of mere desire, nor of mere disinterested contemplation of the existence of the object, but rather of the employment of force to *produce* the object of representation. This definition of life of the *KpV* is incomplete, but was inserted in a specific context, namely, responding in footnote to criticisms made to the *GMS*. This limitation of this definition in reference to others is made even more notable, as already mentioned, by the definition of pleasure that appears right after the definition of *life* and of *faculty of appetite* on this page of the *KpV*, where pleasure is understood as being “the representation of the concordance of the object or of the action with the subjective conditions of life, that is, with the faculty of causality of a representation with regard to the effectiveness of its object (or of the determination of the forces of the subject to the action of producing it)” (*KpV*, AA 05: 9 n.). In this case pleasure is related to the representation of the concordance of an appetized object with its effectuation and, as Rohden (2011, p. 178) mentions, “the subject finds its satisfaction in the realization of the appetized, that is, finds its pleasure or its happiness in the world that it creates by means of its appetitive self-determination. This will be called ‘interest’ -- a satisfaction in existence mediated by reason”. It is reiterated that this is not the only species of pleasure possible in Kant, this definition being also partial. This observation is emphasized having in view the acceptance of other species of pleasure, which do not fit in this given definition, such as that related to aesthetic judgments. In the *MS* Kant mentions that “there

<sup>9</sup> To discuss this point satisfactorily would require opening the discussion beyond the limits of this present article. However, we point to the interpretative hypothesis to be investigated that it would be the concordance of representation with nature’s hidden plan of which Kant speaks in the *laG* that serves as the criterion for the representation to be *felt* by the soul as worthy of being maintained. Nature, in the constitution of the animal, inserted natural dispositions in it, as well as, in the case of human beings, also reason, which can give a notion of the general lines of this hidden plan of nature, or even, according to Kant, a *clear indication* of this plan. Since nature is what *organized* and *structured* the animal, *endowed* it with reason according to its hidden plan, the soul is also placed in the animal by nature, and is part of nature, and since the soul has the criterion of maintaining or dispersing a representation according to concordance with a plan, the soul seems to be in a more intimate connection, or rather, a clearer consciousness of nature’s hidden plan than the animal, even the rational one, can achieve.

<sup>10</sup> “The *rule* concerns only the manner in which what one wants should happen; the *law* contains the imperative of what should happen (of the end); the maxim is the subjective law, that is, what one has universally proposed to oneself to do” (*Refl*, AA 18: 127.27-128.01-03).

can be a pleasure that is not united to any desire of the object, but rather to the mere representation that one has of an object (no matter whether the object of it exists or not)" (MS, AA 06: 211.12-15).

The conditions from which pleasure occurs, which differentiate themselves having in view basically the interest and disinterest in the existence of the object of representation, make it possible to speak of four modes of pleasure in Kant. The *KU* tells us that "in reference to the feeling of pleasure, an object must be counted as belonging to the *agreeable*, or to the *beautiful*, or to the *sublime*, or to the *good* (absolutely)" (KU, AA 05: 266.20-22). In the case of belonging to the *agreeable*, the specific mode of complaisance is delight (*Vergnügen*), in the case of the beautiful it is liking (*Gefallen*), in that of the sublime it is emotion (*Rührung*), and in that of the good, according to the *KU*, it is approval (*Billigung*). Kant mentions still an intimate linking between pleasure and life in Refl. number 4857 (1776 - 1778), and not to one or another mode of pleasure: "uniquely pleasure and displeasure constitute the absolute, because they are life itself" (Refl, AA 18: 11.18-19).

Kant distinguished a faculty of appetite independent of pleasure, as well as distinguished a pleasure unlinked from the faculty of appetite - "necessary condition for [...] being able to speak of morality or of taste" (Lebrun 2002, p. 427). Nevertheless, "life", "pleasure" and "faculty of appetite" are in intimate relation, which can be noted, besides in the content of the very definition of these terms, also by the fact that both in the *KpV* and in the *MS*, when Kant detained himself in giving a definition of them, he gave them of the three together, one right after the other.

A possible interpretation of this question is that *life* is related to a basic capacity of the soul to determine its forces, but does not imply causing the object of representations, in producing the object or the action, or even does not imply movement, to use a term widely attached to this debate. The soul *feels* a representation as representation, whether they be merely sensible representations, or whether they be totally intellectual representations (KU, AA 05: 277). "Before" it, the soul determines its forces to maintain the present representation or to disperse it. In the corporality of the animal, such effect of the soul is felt as *pleasure* and as *displeasure*. Pleasure and displeasure is, thus, leaving a little the Kantian terminology, only a *symptom*, an *expression* of life. Pleasure and displeasure is that which can be felt of life and is only possible to be felt by the living subject itself.

Still, what delights would not be "what promotes the feeling of life. Pain also promotes it, but in it it is a matter of a feeling of the obstacle of life" (Refl, AA 15: 251.04-06). In this perspective, pain (or, still, displeasure) has an important function in the action of which life occupies itself. In the *Anth*, Kant mentions that "pain is the stimulus of activity and in this we feel primarily our life; without it there would be absence of life" (Anth, AA 07: 231.36-37). The state of pain would serve as a stimulus (goad, spur, *Stachel*) to the activity of seeking to exit this state, "nature put pain in the human being as a stimulus to activity" (Anth, AA 07: 235.02-03).

Thus, one could not feel life, only its promotion or obstacle (Refl, AA 15: 244.03-04) which occurs in a constant play, whose activity (of the soul) occupies life. In this sense, "to feel oneself living, to delight oneself, is not, therefore, but to feel oneself continuously impelled to exit the present state (which, therefore, must be a pain that returns with equal continuity)" (Anth, AA 07: 233.07-09). To feel pain, or still, to feel displeasure would impel the animal (rational and irrational) to seek to exit the state in which it finds itself, beyond knowing beforehand in what state it would enter. To feel delight, or still, pleasure, would stimulate the animal to conserve its current state, which, however, it cannot make last, because the feeling of displeasure constantly returns (Anth, AA 07: 231).

## Conclusion

The present article on the concept of life in Kant articulates a reflection that, although dispersed throughout decades of philosophical production, maintains notable conceptual consistency and argumentative rigor. The central problem that guided this study, understanding how Kant elaborates and develops the concept of life in his work, finds resolution in the demonstration that the philosopher develops a fundamentally dualist and restrictive conception of life, anchored in presuppositions that, although hypothetical, orient our understanding of organic nature.

The study points out that life, for Kant, configures itself primarily as a metaphysical, not scientific theme. Life cannot be identified in a determined time and space. Therefore, the approach to life operates exclusively in the realm of idea, of the *as if*, of analogy and of indirect approaches, always configuring an approximation to think nature in perspectives that, otherwise, would remain inaccessible. Organized beings must be thought as natural ends through ideal causes, in a teleological perspective that allows understanding phenomena such as growth, reproduction and self-conservation that cannot be explained only mechanically.

The analysis demonstrated that three fundamental theses structure Kantian thought about life. First, the irreducible distinction between matter and immaterial principle, which leads to the rejection of both hylozoism and mechanistic materialism. Kant sustains, from the writings of 1766 to the late texts, that life emerges exclusively from the relation between an organized material body and an immaterial principle (soul). Matter lacks an immaterial principle that vivifies it. This position remains unchanged throughout his work, evidencing the continuity of Kantian thought on this fundamental question.

Second, the distinctive criterion of life resides in the capacity to act according to representations, a definition that presupposes not only material organization, but also the presence of a principle capable of receiving, processing and responding to representations through the determination of its forces. This formulation allows including both rational and irrational beings in the realm of the living, differentiating them by the type of will, free will in the human case and animal will in irrational creatures, but rigorously excluding plants, which, although organized and endowed with formative force, lack the *vis locomotiva* necessary to life properly said.

Third, the concrete manifestation of life occurs through the dynamics between pleasure and displeasure, where the soul determines its forces to maintain representations (concordant) or reject representations (discordant with the purpose of nature). This continuous play of antagonism constitutes the only indirect access that the living subject possesses to its own vital process, since we do not feel life itself, but only its promotion or obstacle through the alternation between pleasure and displeasure.

The investigation demonstrated that Kant establishes fundamental distinctions between different levels of organization in nature. Organized beings divide between non-living organisms (plants), which possess formative force but lack soul, and living beings (animals), which besides formative force possess soul. Among animals, irrational ones are distinguished, which act according to representations through an analogue of reason (instinct), and rational ones, in which the soul also relates to spirit, permitting a life according to the spontaneity of freedom.

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