

Towards an economic analysis of taste: what philosophy of taste is teaching us

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Abstract

A growing number of goods can today be considered as taste goods: wines, gastronomic services, fashion goods, and perfumes, cultural and artistic products. They appeal to tastes and their demands may be highly unstable. Today a lot of empirical things about the behaviours of taste goods consumers are known. We can define classes of consumers according to their willingness to pay. Nevertheless the accumulation of empirical data is not sufficient. Even if David Hume and Adam Smith have been interested in the question of tastes, the standard economic theory ignores these kinds of problems. Is an economic theory of taste possible? How to build it? As the philosophical enquiry is the precondition for the conceptual definition of the notion of taste it seems necessary to consider the main lessons of philosophy of taste for economic theory. The paper starts by considering how economic analysis is dealing with tastes. It studies the emergence of the theory of taste in philosophy and presents the classical theory of taste, elaborated by Kant, and the post-Kantian theories. Finally, it examines the lessons the philosophic debate on taste can bring for building an economic approach of taste.

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1 Introduction: the absence of an economic theory of tastes

In the area of wines and drinks tastes are very diverse. Some people prefer red wines and some others white or rosé when others prefer beer; and, among the lovers of French red wines some people swear only by Bordeaux wines while others swear by the Bourgogne wines. If quality plays a role in the demands and in the working of wine markets –almost everybody thinks that a Petrus or a Romanée-Conti is better than a generic Bordeaux wine - the consideration of quality is not relevant enough to explain some observations. In the same way, some people prefer this movie, this chef, this stylist, this spice to others, when some others are making a different choice. In some cases the quality of these goods is more subjective than objective and does not allow ranking the goods, would the information be perfect. In some cases, some people love goods that others hate. As the assessments of consumers are very diverse, tastes must be taken into consideration. In the area of food, cooking and gastronomy, Fischler (1993) argues that the distinction between eatable and uneatable varies from country to country and from one culinary culture to another one: in 42 cultures dog is usually eaten, in a lot of them rats are very appreciated, ants are cooked in Colombia, bees, wasps and cockroaches in China. In the long time strong changes are appearing. In the nineteenth century the bosses of the fish boats of the Gironde and the Adour rivers used to give up their employees the catch of wild sturgeons as non-noble unsalable fish; the employees would eat the fish, but after having first extirpated the eggs to give them the pigs to eat. Today these eggs constitute the caviar of Aquitaine, which is as expensive as the Iranian caviar. In the same way, and at the same time, vegetables were considered in France as common food but, today, they are a basis for refined dishes; in his famous restaurant L'Arpège (Paris) the great chef Alain Passard presents meat as accompaniment of vegetables. The “parkerization” of wines is another good example of the evolution of the social formation of a dominant taste. The English aristocratic taste that had been leading to the Bordeaux classification of 1855 has been questioned by the reputation of the Parker guide which imposed the modern democratic American Parker's taste, in phase with the new American consumers' one.

A growing number of goods can today be considered as taste goods: food processing goods, gastronomic services, fashion goods, wines, and perfumes, cultural and artistic products. They appeal to tastes and their demands may be highly unstable: taste judgments may be much highly scattered and unstable than preferences on standard goods the rankings of which are closer. Not only do I like or not dodecaphonic music, horsemeat, Galliano's style but I also can change my mind or learn to love them. Moreover price fluctuations have more limited conse-

quences on adjustment processes than for standard goods: a decrease in the price of horsemeat will not persuade me to eat horsemeat if I “hate” it.

More and more, taste goods contribute to economic growth and command the attention of some economists. Today a lot of empirical things about the behaviours of taste goods consumers are known. We can define classes of consumers according to their willingness to pay. Nevertheless the accumulation of empirical data is not sufficient. Economic analysis goes on using its two legs, empirical knowledge and theoretical models. These ones are far from the development of empirical knowledge and the hiatus is worrying. Even if David Hume (1739, 1741, and 1757) and Adam Smith (1759) have been interested in the question of tastes, the standard economic theory ignores these kinds of problems.

On the contrary sociology of taste, history of taste and psychology of taste propose a lot of theories and many empirical studies, for instance on fashion, nutrition, painting and music tastes. Why the difference between a very poor economic analysis of taste and a developed sociology of taste? Is an economic theory of taste possible? Is it necessary? How to build an economic analysis of taste? As the philosophical enquiry is the precondition for the conceptual definition of the notion of taste it seems necessary to consider the main lessons of philosophy of taste for economic theory. It is the aim of this paper. And, to correctly appreciate these lessons and define their stakes we will start (point 2) by considering how economic analysis is dealing with tastes. The third part of the paper considers the emergence of the theory of taste. The fourth one presents the classical theory, elaborated by Kant, and the fifth one the post-Kantian theories. Finally, the sixth part examines the lessons the philosophic debate on taste can bring for building an economic approach of taste.

2 The standard microeconomic theory of demand: tastes and preferences

The standard theory of demand is based on a first principle according to which “de gustibus non est disputandum” (Becker-Stigler, 1977; Becker, 1996). Tastes are out of economic analysis which only considers preferences. Preferences are the practical formulation of tastes which remain before. They are relative and observable (when the relative price of A good grows, *ceteris paribus*, its demand decreases in a specific proportion and so on) when tastes (which express the ‘utility’ of goods) cannot be observed. Then tastes are parametric - so exogenously given -, they are a hidden argument, determining preferences and remaining constant on markets when the adjustment processes rule; for instance in case of excess supply, suppliers can cut their prices to increase demand but they cannot play on tastes,

through for instance advertisement, to obtain the same result.

This methodological principle is based on heuristic considerations. Firstly it is impossible to use economic tools to know, to describe and to explain individual and idiosyncratic tastes, i.e. to establish a stable relation between expressed preferences and a few determinants, either that the relation does not have regularity, or that it implies too many determinants. Then tastes are returned to psychology, social psychology, ethics or aesthetics. Secondly the changes in the used economic variables (prices and wealth) can ordinary explain the changes in the demands.

A second methodological principle is also concerned, the choice of a formalist analysis of economic goods and the reject of a substantivist analysis. According to the formalist way, each good is exchanged through supply and demand functions at an equilibrium relative price. It matters little that the good is a child as on the markets of adoption, is a personal good as on the markets of organs, is a cultural good and is a standard industrial commodity. Modern economic analysis built a general model able, according to Becker, to apply to every good, exchangeable either on an explicit market (the standard markets using monetary prices) or on an implicit one (exchange relations using an exchange rate which can be understood as an implicit price). Heuristic considerations are still dominant: a first argument refers to the universality of the exchange relations based on free rational choices using comparison between relative costs and benefits, that allows applying the model to every good and exchange; a second argument underlines the efficiency of such a model to explain and expect changes in individual choices when relative costs and benefits change. Then, contrary to the substantivist principle of some historians and sociologists (Malinowsky, 1944; Mauss, 1993; Polanyi, 1983; Godelier, 1966, 1977), there is no significant specificity of taste goods or aesthetics goods when considering their demand and supply and the working of their markets.

So, the standard microeconomic model, whatever sophisticated extensions are used, is based on a demand function such as $D_{Ai} = f(R_i, p_A, p_{-A}, u_i)$; the demand of the A good by the i individual depends on his income or wealth (R_i) - a financial constraint -, on the price of A, on the prices of all the other goods (substitute and complementary in the spending), and on the preferences of the individual (u_i). The u variables allow to admit individual diversity (idiosyncrasy) in demands: a j consumer, having the same income ($R_j = R_i$) and facing the same prices, may have a different demand ($D_{Aj} \neq D_{Ai}$) which can be referred to the diversity of tastes inducing a diversity of preferences (individuals have, *ceteris paribus*, different ranking pre-orders on goods: $A > B$ for the first when $B > A$ for the other).

But a lot of observations concerning tastes are today important and remain out of this framework. In many situations changes in the consumption of taste

goods depend more strongly on taste changes than they depend on price changes (for instance for music choices see Dolfsma, 2004). Often changes in individual tastes are connected to changes in other individual tastes or group tastes and strong externalities between utility functions may emerge. Fashion is a well known example but other areas are also concerned. Moreover preferences play a key role in a growing number of issues regarding tastes and taste goods but also the cooperative or non-cooperative behaviours, the envious behaviours, the learning and the adaptation of behaviours and so on; thus, refusing to consider tastes and preferences is no useful any longer.

The “economics of quality” pointed out very special phenomena in the working of cultural and taste goods markets and gave interesting results, but it unhappily maintains the hypothesis of given and fixed tastes. On the contrary, Sen, for instance, as early as 1977 (Sen, 1977), emphasizes the complexity of the structuring of preferences. He defines meta-preferences - sometimes named values - to represent the determination of immediate preferences by others, belonging to a higher level, and constituting a meta-ranking, in order to admit the conscientious action of individuals to modify their former preferences (I do not like ‘classical music’ but I may seek to ‘like’ classical music because I want to become a cultured person).

Elster shows that economic theory has to consider emotions: “Emotional experiences are important sources of human satisfaction, we would expect economists to have thought about them a great deal. . . Economists, as we know, have done nothing of the kind. . . To put it crudely, *economists have totally neglected the most important aspect of their subject matter*” (Elster, 1996: 1386). So, he is interested in the conditions and the effects of the weakness of the will, impulsiveness, habit, self-deception, and criticized the beckerian notion of rationality when it is applied to addiction and time preferences. He studied the links between emotions and formation of preferences, going towards a theory including endogenous preferences. For instance he considered the process of acquired taste like a form of *adaptive preference formation*. An individual can deliberately changes preferences in order to make them more compatible with some situation as the fox of La Fontaine who decides that grapes are too sour for his taste. Moreover choices implying emotions cannot be explained as resulting from cost-benefit analysis (Elster, 2000, proposed to use the theory of dissonances).

Becker, the most rigorous user of standard demand theory, has been the first within the mainstream - but also remains a bit alone - to explain that economic theory needs a theory of changes in tastes. And his trial is a very partial one.

Interested in the explanation of the non-ordinary aspects of consumptions in some fields as cultural or drug consumptions (addiction, learning) he tried to integrate in the microeconomic model the role of the social and of the cultural

capital (Becker, 1996).

The beckerian solution is to distinguish the subutility function (the standard function) and the extended function of utility that allows integrating preferences modifications through two new determinants: personal capital (P) and social capital (S), which belong to the human capital. The consideration of the personal capital allows admitting the effects of previous consumptions on taste formation when the consideration of the social capital allows admitting the effects on social influences on individual tastes.

Nevertheless, the key point of the beckerian solution is to consider changes in tastes without using a theory of taste formation including a consideration of their diversity. But, in the Becker's model, the level of P_t (personal capital at the t moment) and the level of S_t (social capital) does not suffice to define demands as soon as idiosyncrasy effects are: a change in the information concerning the relation tobacco-cancer leads to a change in personal preferences impossible to define as widely idiosyncratic. Moreover, P_t and S_t as stocks result from an accumulation process controlled by individual choices on the basis of a given starting stock. The individual may influence P_t and S_t but his part of freedom on S_t determination is limited because his will to interfere on S_t depends on S_t itself. The child carrying a "bourgeois" social capital passed on by his family or his education is going to choose to invest in social capital (integrating himself in networks of "decent" people, joining an equestrian or a golf club) in conditions different from the conditions of a child carrying a "proletarian" social capital. Of course some degrees of freedom are existing: Becker notices that an individual can move to a different "social network" when he is not satisfied with his own one but all the individuals are not free enough to join the Rotary or the Lions Club. Therefore the analysis can hardly avoid trying to link the study of individual behaviour to the study of his social belonging.

Consequently the assertion according to which the differences in taste are not testable and are only ad hoc hypotheses allowing explaining everything and nothing provides from understanding some demand of taste goods phenomena. Such an assertion is today called into question even in the recent studies of the psychologists who however accept methodological individualism. The empirical results of numerous studies since 1990 are constituting a strong corpus of stylized facts showing that, if individual preferences are rather stable, they are far from being identical and that typologies can be built (for a survey see Caplan, 2003). A more systematic link between emotions and consumption is considered by psychologists. Emotions influence tastes and preferences, and, thus, consumption choices (Caplan, 2006). For instance, some psychological characteristics predict the tendency to choose such foods when stressed and it is possible to define sensory, physiologi-

cal and psychological pathways (Gibson, 2006). It is possible to add to this corpus the theoretical and empirical works of holist sociologists who take into account the social structure of preferences from Veblen (1899) and Halbwachs (1913, 1933) to the sociology of the distinction (confer among others Bourdieu, 1979).

Moreover, entering the processes of formation of tastes is today required by the firms because marketing is also confronted with the complexity of tastes. Firms use sophisticated strategies including advertising, communication and sponsorship, to persuade consumers to buy their products. Stars and celebrities become the new leaders of tastes: George Clooney tells us we have to consume Nespresso to be a modern and refined person, Sharon Stone that we have to use Dior perfumes and so on. Two recent developments tend to surpass the absence of tastes consideration. On one hand, the developments of the McFadden model (1986) have given different models to measure the impact of the variations in the attributes and characteristics of goods on choices and to define coherent consumers groups reacting specifically. We are then getting into the evaluation of preferences structures. Tastes, behaviours, beliefs, perceptions can be studied more precisely. The choice does not only depend on the characteristics of goods, but also on the consumers' latent attitudes and perceptions, we already saw how important their role was in the case of taste goods. Experimental economy is used as a technique to reveal this structure. The Latent Class Models (cf. Magidson and Vermunt, 2005; Vermunt and Magidson 2007; Ashok, Dillon and Yuan, 2002) provide very important tools of analysis.

On the other hand, marketing explores new links between economic analysis and other scientific analyses of the behaviours. Neuroimaging studies investigate how commercial brand information is processed in the brain (Paulus and Frank, 2003; McClure *et al.*, 2004; Deppe *et al.*, 2005; Schaefer *et al.*, 2006). Psychological and sociological studies consider the consequences of emotion created by advertisements in brand preference formation (Gorn, 1982; Whissell and McCall, 1997; Shadel *et al.*, 2002; Anderson *et al.*, 2005). "The Pepsi Paradox" (McClure *et al.*, 2004) is one of the strange observations made by marketing specialists: in the blind taste tests Coca vs. Pepsi, Pepsi was usually the winner, but when the subjects knew what they were drinking, 75% said they preferred Coke². The neuromarketing³ uses magnetic resonance imaging to study the activity in the prefrontal

²With a series of Coke and Pepsi taste tests Michael Koenigs and Daniel Tranel show that patients with damage specifically involving ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VMPC), an area important for emotion, did not demonstrate the normal preference bias when exposed to brand information. Like comparison groups, the VMPC patients preferred Pepsi in the blind taste test, but unlike comparison groups, the VMPC patients maintained their Pepsi preference in the semi-blind test.

³Neuromarketing is the study of how people's brains respond to advertising and other brand-

cortex; it allows understanding what the brain does while making a purchasing decision and to explore the determinants of taste judgments the economic consequences of which are decisive. For instance, images of dominant brands, such as the iPod, stimulated the same part of the brain activated by religious symbols (Lindstrom, 2008).

Finally, regarding the supply conditions of taste goods, only a few analyses are interested in the specificities of producing and marketing taste goods, and, specifically, the role of creativity.

Therefore, in spite of the works of Hume and Smith, and though the story of philosophy is revealing a lot of debates on tastes, there is not yet any economic theory of tastes. Is it a lasting solution? How has a philosophy of taste emerged and what are today its lessons for economic analysis?

3 The emergence of a theory of taste

At the end of the 17th and all long the 18th philosophers seek to consider tastes and debated on a philosophical theory of taste. That led to the first complete theory of taste, the classical theory of Kant which, nowadays, is the core when reasoning on taste. The Kantian theory represents a fundamental change compared to the 'Old' conception of taste, change supposing three main conditions, only put together during the 18th.

3.1 A first condition of emergence: the establishment of aesthetics

In primitive societies "art" has not an aesthetic or artistic function but a magic one. The image of the game, the image of the enemy does not need to be beautiful but it has "to work", performing the magic work that is pursued (Gombrich 2006: 41). It primarily represents signs, the value of which does not depend on aesthetic quality but on its ability to call to mind the signified. As the paintings of the Egyptian tombs helping the souls of the dead to reach the other world, signs may only concern dead people; they may concern Gods' eyes to calm them down or to solicit their assistance. Then, artistic criteria came from outside. In the case of ancient Egypt tomb paintings the necessary elements for the journey of souls had to be described; what is important is to be complete and explicit. Jewish and Christian art of the very first centuries favours the sacred content art has to express and the simplicity of shapes that have to correspond to the praised poverty and humility; beauty exalted by antique statuary has no longer its place

related messages by scientifically monitoring brainwave activity, eye-tracking and skin response (Martin Lindstrom's website).

and virtuosity seems out of place risking drawing the attention on form to the detriment of meaning. It is the same when art criteria are coming from the political sphere because the aim of the Arc of Triumph is to manifest power and domination. A break in this system is necessary for the beautiful and the taste to appear. So, the notion of taste is not universal but implies the recognition of the aesthetic dimension. Within the long time till the end of the 17th century, only a few societies - mainly the Antic Greece and the Roman Empire - recognize in goods, things and manners, some specific characteristics concerning pleasure and emotion and constituting an autonomous dimension of human life.

3.2 A second condition: the end of the subordination of taste to the objective beauty of things

When the aesthetic dimension is taken into account as in the Greek and Roman philosophies taste keeps on being hidden by the fundamental notion of beauty. Taste is generally thought as taste for the beautiful belonging to nature, deriving from it or following it. Individuals or people's role is limited; they don't have to "appreciate" the beautiful; they only have to "recognize" it. Aesthetics have to define its characteristics (form, especially harmony, symmetry, balance, proportions, cf. Shakinko 2008). And the main debate of this episteme is focusing on the criteria of the beautiful: How to define the beautiful when it is considered as universal and objective (are harmony, truth, agreement enough to do so?).

In the Middle Ages, during the Renaissance as in the classical aesthetics, taste goes on being considered as a property of nature, external to people and possibly of a divine origin for Thomas d'Aquin the beautiful is an attribute of God such as godliness or unity, and therefore is transcendental. Art, as nature, applies some timeless rules that classicism synthesizes: to represent the domination of reason on passions according to the Cartesian program (Racine describes passion as a fateful passion destroying the one it possesses). It enhances balance, right proportions, light, harmony, order and moderation; it excludes ugliness, codifies the beautiful, elaborates norms, should it be for nice talking (the language codification by "*la Grammaire de Port-Royal*"), for tragedy or architecture and gardens; these norms will be embodied in models and styles such as Versailles or "*le théâtre français*". Therefore, taste is deriving from the observation of the rules.

It is at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries that the question of taste is explicitly asked but asked as a relation between a thing and a person. This can be found at the same time in the French philosophy, from Montesquieu to the Encyclopaedists, and in the British one, from Shaftesbury

(1671-1713) to Hume (1711-1776)⁴.

Aesthetics broke with the natural and rational Beauty when British empiricism focuses, in reaction to Cartesianism, on the role of impressions and sensations as a source of knowledge. The philosophy of taste will therefore be able to spread shifting the emphasis of metaphysics towards psychology particularly under the influence of British empiricism (the aesthetic emotions of individuals and assessments of things analysis). The foundation of aesthetics by Baumgarten derives explicitly from the idea that reason differs from aesthetic and sensorial relations between individual and world. Then the key determination of taste remains in the *relation* between world and man and not in the mere observation of the world. Taste is claimed as a human state of mind and not as a property of things. The beautiful does not result from the observance of canons but from what we love. Individual have tastes and diverse tastes because they are sensitive to a lot of pleasures or pains.

3.3 A third condition: the end of the subordination of taste to an a priori and natural “good taste”

Within the paradigm of beauty taste is not only related to the beauty of nature or to the Arts but also, according to the development of the Court society, to manners and behaviours. And taste becomes the ability to judge. Aristocrats are the people who know how to judge on good manners and Beauty when the plebeian is incapable of doing it (it is the central point in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* by Molière). Voltaire points the slipping in the use of taste from the reference to one of the five senses towards the capacity to appreciate (to have taste), capacity conceived as a gift⁵. Taste always is coming from nature, which is now the nature of people. Taste is specific to “people of quality” and two worlds are confronting each other: the common world of ordinary goods and people, the world of extraordinary including extra-ordinary goods and people. As beauty is inside things and works it only needs to be recognized. Some people are naturally able to that

⁴Hume wrote: “Beauty is no quality in things themselves. It exists merely in the mind that contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty” (Hume 1742: Of the Standard of Taste).

⁵“The taste, the sense by which we distinguish the flavor of our food, has produced, in all known languages, the metaphor expressed by the word “taste”- a feeling of beauty and defects in all the arts. It is a quick perception, like that of the tongue and the palate, and in the same manner anticipates consideration. Nothing ought to escape the promptitude of its discernment; and this is another instance of the resemblance of taste, the sense, to intellectual taste; for an epicure will quickly feel and detect a mixture of two liquors, as the man of taste and connoisseur will, with a single glance, distinguish the mixture of two styles, or a defect by the side of a beauty” (Voltaire 1751-1752: 229).

- the aristocracy - but the others, the common herd, have no feeling for beauty. In this view taste is assimilated to the “good taste” which is the monopoly of aristocracy.

The breaking will occur when the good taste is disputed and the diversity of tastes observed. Voltaire insisted on the relativity of “sensual”⁶ tastes. Asserting the primacy of emotion and passions on reason, Rousseau criticized the rationalist claim of Lully and Rameau in music. Good taste does not derive from any a priori rule. Connecting beauty and customs, the British Sensualism too debates on the relativity of tastes, as in the works of Goldsmith⁷ and Reynolds. Defining the beautiful as the truth⁸, Shaftesbury enounces the principle of the rules of the judgment of taste and Baumgarten (1735, 1750), explicitly, introduces the concept of aesthetics to design “the science of the mode of sensible knowing and exposition”.

4 Defining tastes: the Kantian answers

The 18th explicitly sets the question of the origin of taste, which is no longer hidden behind beauty and art. Reason and application of the a priori criteria of beauty are not enough for explaining and producing the beautiful. The beautiful is primarily pleasure but implies a judgment and is referring to aesthetics.

4.1 The fundamental contribution of Kant: principle and status of a theory of taste

The dispersion of tastes and the opposition between the Court taste and the bourgeois taste lead to refuse a priori tastes. Kant is the first one to brilliantly deduce that taste supposes a judgment, the judgment of taste. Therefore taste is the capability to define, to identify, to characterise the Beautiful; it is the faculty to judge

⁶“Ask a toad what beauty is, the *to kalon*? He will answer you that it is his toad wife with two great round eyes issuing from her little head, a wide, flat mouth, a yellow belly, a brown back. Interrogate a Guinea negro, for him beauty is a black oily skin, deep-set eyes, a flat nose. Interrogate the devil; he will tell you that beauty is a pair of horns, four claws and a tail. Consult, lastly, the philosophers, they will answer you with gibberish: they have to have something conforming to the arch-type of beauty in essence, to the *to kalon*... beauty is often very relative, just as what is decent in Japan is indecent in Rome, and what is fashionable in Paris, is not fashionable in Peking (Voltaire 1751-1752: 39).

⁷He takes the example of a Chinese gentleman having immigrated in Great Britain. He first is shocked by the English women’s long feet but, once used to the British culture, thinks they are nice. Smith also notes that beauty depends on the cultural context.

⁸“The most natural beauty in the world is honesty and moral truth. For all beauty is truth. True features make the beauty of a face; and true proportions the beauty of architecture” (1963, I: 94).

what is the beautiful. Just as truth or goodness can neither be found in things nor in spirit but in the relations between things and consciences, is the beautiful, as a category of human spirit, in the relation between things and mankind.

On this basis, Kant is the first to propose a rigorous and developed analysis of taste. For him two types of theory share the field of reason, the theory of knowledge and the moral theory, but neither the first one nor the second one can explain tastes. Taste does not derive from the world of trueness; it cannot be explained by criteria of scientific trueness as logic coherence or experimental confirming. It cannot any more be deduced from moral: Beauty is not identifiable to goodness or fairness and art does not necessarily pursue moral targets. Then Kant proposes an autonomous theory of taste, as fundamental for him as his theory of the pure reason (the theory of knowledge) and his theory of the practical reason (the theory of moral).

Its core is the judgment of taste, a third type of judgment beside the scientific judgment and the moral judgment: it is an aesthetic and subjective judgment; an *a posteriori* judgment, coming from experience and concerning sensibility. The Kantian theory establishes the autonomy of the world of the sentiment (the world of senses in relation to the world of intellect) and its autonomy from the world of reason and from the real world: Beauty exists, is out of things and out of reason.

Firstly, the judgment of taste is a reflective judgment and has the general properties of such a judgment. It is based on the human possibilities of knowledge given by sensibility (possibility of feeling sensations from external objects) and understanding (possibility of judging through the elaboration of concepts and the organization of a logical reasoning with categories and rules). As far as each of them has to depend on the other one, they form a system: understanding is of no help beyond experience results which need to be organized by understanding to give a perception and not only the echo of a chaos of feelings.

But, secondly, the judgment of taste is a specific judgment. The beauty of a work of art or its various qualities cannot be inferred from the concept of beauty or from the painting and therefore cannot be proved. It cannot only be valued on the basis of reason as Baumgarten claimed it or on the basis of feelings as Burke wrote it; it has to be valued on the basis of *sentiment*. The judgment of taste is the result of a complex inter-play of our understanding and our imagination (which organizes the feelings), our intelligence and our sensibility in free play. That means that fundamentally the idea of the beautiful depends on the subject's faculties. It is therefore possible to discuss tastes (the discussion is an opinions conflict that cannot be resolved as it is impossible to produce a demonstration) but not to dispute tastes (a dispute, in the philosophical meaning of it, is a conflict of argument in which it is possible to prove the validity of one's point of view).

4.2 The two types of judgment of taste

For Kant the word 'taste' is ambiguous and his first point is to hardly distinguish two types of tastes: the taste of sense referring to the perception of agreeable things and the taste of reflection referring to beauty. So, sensual taste is depreciated⁹. It is limited to pure perception and does not imply any reflection¹⁰. It only produces individual judgments¹¹ when the second one seeks to produce universal judgments¹².

The judgment of sense concerning the agreeable expresses an interest for the object that is to say an interest for its existence for me (it is pleasant for me because I can consume it and enjoy this consumption). The agreeable expresses an "inclination". The aesthetic judgment of reflection is disinterested. The obtained satisfaction is independent from the existence of the object, the object being considered as "in a simple contemplation" and the judgment being there impartial. Doing so, Kant only systematizes an old separation between senses and intellect.

Hume (1741) distinguished the field of reason and the field of emotion, founded on senses. So, taste differs from passion. While the world of passion is rather a world dominating the individual - his inclination or his temperament can rule him and makes him lose his discernment -, the world of taste is rather a chosen world allowing a man sensitive to taste to develop "judgments" ("delicacy of taste is as much to be desired and cultivated as delicacy of passion is to be lamented, and to be remedied, if possible").

For Kant, the judgment of taste is in opposition to madly passion but also makes people get into a richer world than the world of *stricto sensu* interest. Voltaire stressed on the difference of complexity between intellectual taste and sensual taste, therefore contributing to consolidate the superiority of the first one on the second one (a "physical" taste). While sensual taste is arbitrary, intellectual taste is good or bad: "it is said that tastes are not to be disputed; and it is right

⁹"Agreeableness is a significant factor even with irrational animals; beauty has purport and significance only for human beings" (Analytic of the Beautiful, § 5).

¹⁰"We do not scruple to say of a dish that stimulates the palate with spices and other condiments that it is agreeable owning all the while that it is not good: because, while it immediately satisfies the senses, it is mediately displeasing, i.e., in the eye of reason that looks ahead to the consequences" (Analytic... , §4).

¹¹"For in respect of the agreeable, everyone is allowed to have his own opinion, and no one insists upon others agreeing with his judgement of taste, which is what is invariably done in the judgement of taste about beauty." (Analytic... , § 8).

¹²"Insofar as judgments about the agreeable are merely private, whereas judgment about the beautiful are put forward as having general validity (as being public), taste regarding the agreeable can be called taste of sense, and taste regarding the beautiful can be called taste of reflection."

only when talking about sensual taste. It is not the same for arts: as they do have real beauties, there is a good taste distinguishing them and a bad one ignoring them; and the lack of spirit giving a wrong taste ignoring them is often corrected” (Voltaire, 1751-52).

In 1757 Montesquieu published his “Essay on taste” in which he opposed rough sentiments corresponding to natural taste coming straight from senses and giving instantaneous pleasures, called natural pleasures, to the sentiments having been amended by “soul” intervention, sensitive to beauty, to tenderness, to charm and to sublime and giving the acquired taste, source of the pleasures of soul, of more elevated satisfactions distant from “rough” pleasures. On the contrary, the Kantian answer is opposite to the courant *libertin* which contributes to promote sensuality. Restoring the sensual dimension of man’s relations with nature and with his fellow citizens, he justifies the search for sensual pleasures and the refuse of moral norms of authority by the free use of reason. This way he contributes to link reason and pleasure and make of this latest a field of reflection, even of refinement, and no longer the immediate expression of primary senses.

4.3 Aristocratic and democratic paradigm: the audience

Kant writes when the bourgeoisie is more and more conscious of its economic weight; it is establishing itself in every field, particularly in the intellectual and artistic ones, against the old Court and aristocracy model. A public for arts is appearing: the lovers of bourgeoisie are collecting works of arts, visiting exhibitions, attending concerts, going to the theatre¹³ and constitute a new conscious and determined public, contrasting sharply with the superficial and parasitical people at court who were till then dominating the world of art, taste and conventions. The Kantian theory questions the innate taste of the people of quality wondering about taste as universal and within the reach of everyone; it is in a way the first questioning on “democratic” taste. At the same time, Kant wants to go beyond the relativism of the adage on the tastes non disputation when an heterogeneous public is appearing (Uzel 2008). As far as art is concerned the taste imposed by men in high places and the Church (painting dominated by religious or political themes, music written for the courts) is replaced by a diversity of tastes also allowing a diversity in creation.

Is taste only belonging to the world of opinion which is not a common world according to the traditional adage “all tastes are as good as any”? On the contrary is it possible to wonder about the “quality” of the judgment of taste: one

¹³In the case of fashion, a bourgeois taste is clearly appearing and the audience is no more limited to aristocracy, the old “*arbitre des élégances*”.

cannot say that the judgment of a medieval art critic on a religious painting of the 18th century is equivalent to the judgment of a uninitiated. Can the subjective assessment of things by unusual people lead to some taste objectivity allowing to rank works of art or beauties of nature, or at least, to classify differently? These questions had already been considered by Hume who used to talk of delicacy of taste, individuals being more or less sensitive to the beautiful and able to feel or recognize it. For him some perceive it better than others because of their experience or their education. These last are “forming” tastes, that leads to a similarity of tastes among “cultured” people and creates a standard of taste (a standardized taste), the “good” taste (for example Hume wrote that men of taste dislike vice or immorality). And good taste has a progressive role because it makes possible the diffusion of the values of the Age of Enlightenment. In the same way, Voltaire used to define sensual taste as arbitrary but intellectual taste as good or bad.

The Kantian answer comes from the audience as the source of the judgment of taste. In fine the individuals will determine what is in good taste or not and their freedom forbids to consider them as mere adaptators of heteronymous norms of pre-established rules - for example the rules of classical aesthetic. At the same time one can notice the point of agreement of numerous tastes for ranking the different qualities of the works of art (nearly everybody thinks Van Gogh is better painter than the sellers of lousy paintings of the Tertre square in Montmartre); one can also notice the existence of more or less “accurate” or “informed” tastes (nearly everybody thinks that the Louvre curator has a surer taste than the new Chinese or Russian rich). Kant solves the problem with a strict distinction between sensation and feeling.

The judgment on the agreeable is an inner judgment that does not intend to be universal and that cannot be explained but by the only sensation. It reveals an individual interest for the thing and has but the value of the specific person; so in return it is impossible to contest the pleasure felt by the other. In the case of beauty the judgment attributes to others the same satisfaction; I do not only judge for me but for everybody and I speak about beauty as if it were a quality of things (Analytic, §7). The beautiful is “the object of a disinterested satisfaction”, everyone having the possibility to express everyone’s opinion on the beauty of an object independently of his personal situation regarding the taste good (owner, author, seller, buyer...). This disinterestedness is the condition of universality. Judging the beautiful is, for me but for me as a member of a mankind able to formulate the same kind of judgment: to say that this painting is a matter for the beautiful is to say that it is beautiful for me but also for the others.

As every judgment is based on a finality principle, the reflective taste judgment starts from the beautiful as the finality of the aesthetic matter. The excellence

of the form leads to the harmony of cognitive human faculties (sensibility and understanding) encouraging everybody to declare the matter as a beautiful one. Opposite to the previous aesthetics, the aesthetics of the Middle ages which particularly used to define the work of art from the outside (to sing in praise of God, to show the richness of the King...), Kant conceives the finality of the beautiful as from the inside of the aesthetic, as intrinsic; beauty has no other purpose but its own one, the beautiful is the achievement of the matter which draws an internal harmony from it (Allison 2001; Freeland 2001). Therefore in Kant there is a double recovery between aesthetic and beauty, and between beauty and form.

So most of people think roses are beautiful. Hume explains this by the diffusion of the intersubjectivity of educated people creating a norm whereas Kant appeals to judgments. They certainly are subjective judgments, but based on the qualities of reality and at the same time on the universal distribution of the faculties; so, he refuses the idea of an innate taste reserved for the aristocracy and opposes therefore the judgment of taste to the gift. Thanks to this common sense of aesthetic, evident in any human being having sensibility and understanding, the judgment of taste of reflection, universal, can become objective.

5 Beyond Kant: tastes, creation and production

Beside the Kantian construction and opposite to the cult of reason there is also a minority movement, Romanticism, which is going to stress on feeling and on the exceptional role of the artist. The 18th century brought the theme of the genius (Godin: 393) who, by the side of God, has a creative power. It insists on the beautiful as a result of Creation and is going to be developed by Goethe then by Nietzsche considering taste no longer as based on people judgment (therefore the main role belongs to the demand) but on the particular genius of the creator (the supply takes the main role).

5.1 Taste is produced by the creation process

In the 19th century art frees itself from technical domination and from the imitation of nature, transmitted by the Middle Ages via cooperative rules favouring the reproduction of expertises and techniques. A lot of writers put the emphasis on the creative role of man.

Whereas Kant is rather interested in taste in nature (his examples are mainly based on “natural beauties”, see the classic one of the beauty of roses studied in the “Critique de la faculté de juger”), Hegel favours the taste for art because it is a matter of human creation. For him the worst production of a man, the poorest

doodle, will always be superior to the most beautiful landscapes, because the work of art is the special mean with which human spirit is being realized.

Victor Hugo is the first one, in his “*Proses Philosophiques*” (written between 1860 and 1865), to be opposed to classical aesthetics as he wants to go beyond the field of reason by means of intuition. Art plays the leading part. Far from being limited to the formulation of what is good or what is beautiful, it is a “solvent transfigurator”. So it has to be an exception to the rules “to light, to excite and to enrich”; the artist is a unique creator (“it is impossible to ask an eagle to roar and a lion to glide”). Then the genius taking away from “relative taste” to “absolute taste” is appearing. Art (and superior taste) are therefore linked together with the creative character of the genius: “he knows everything and he guesses what he does not know; he invents what he cannot guess and he creates what he cannot invent; what he invents is true and what he creates is viable. And he complicates all this wisdom by means of a kind of divine madness, and genius is there”.

Beside Hugo’s great figure a new giant is appearing, Nietzsche. To the *Apollinian*, that is to say to a well-ordered and rational matter, supposed to be specific to the occidental genius, Nietzsche objects the opposite sensibility, the sensibility of the *Dyonysian*, of the aesthete, characterized by instability, sensuality, inspiration. The creator’s worship follows as the creator himself is the source of progress, and represents the domination of reason by passion. He is remarkable because he is creating his own values and references in a world in which “art is more valuable than truth”. Later on, Freudism put a lot into the study of the role of the unconscious in creation and particularly into the conditions of artistic creation. At the same time it was contributing to connecting artistic creation to art “consumption” in so far as unconscious too has a role in the “acceptance” of the works of art and therefore in the constitution of tastes.

5.2 Producing commodities, producing tastes, producing taste goods

At the beginning of the 20th century a revolution starts in art leading to put an end to the straight collaboration between art and beauty. First because the very concern to represent reality leads when horrors seem to be dominating as during the 1914 war to represent what is ugly, horrible, horrendous. It is first what we can particularly find in the German expressionism like in Otto Dix or George Grosz. Or also the concern to represent everyday life banality, considered as significant of an historical moment; or for example Andy Warhol’s purpose painting piles of tins.

Then as the criterion of aesthetics is questioned, to characterize art, to the benefit of meaning, message, signified, the significant is chosen for the quality of

his expression and not for his aesthetic quality. It is the revolution introduced by Marcel Duchamp and the Dadaism. So Picasso will be in a position to say “I do not paint what I see but what I feel”. And before him, Paul Gauguin as painting as early as 1888, in his canvas “La vision du sermon”, uses as the natural green field that should be imitating reality, a scarlet background completely subjective and imaginary on which stands out the fight of Jacob and the angel and stressing on the violence of the struggle.

The end of the concealment of taste by beauty together with the breaking between taste and beauty (taste is not obviously concerned by beauty and not only by beauty) make possible an important widening of the range of tastes.

During the second half of the 20th century the Frankfurt School interprets the fundamental changes brought about in the cultural field (and that are going afterwards to affect the field of taste goods) as the birth of a mass culture adapted to a mass society. Technological developments allowing the production and the reproduction of cultural works break the previous model based on the singularity and uniqueness of the work of art. Culture then can enter commodities era, be mass-produced to be mass distributed and consumed, according to an industrialist framework which was previously only characteristic of industrial goods (production with equipments, supposing high financial investments allowing economies of scale. . .). That calls into question the traditional relation between the singularity of a work of art and the judgment of the audience. An industrialist market model (see for instance the Factory of Andy Warhol as mass production) is taking place to manage culture.

This process leads to a standardization of taste judgments and, more widely, to a submission of the field of culture - and therefore of taste - to market economic regulation. Economic determinants (the search for profit by the producer) are becoming the most important determinants for tastes instead of aesthetic criteria as in Kant. It submits cultural consumption to the needs of the realization of production within the framework of what Henri Lefebvre used to call “an industrial society of state-controlled consumption”.

Industrialization allowed to develop and to sell less expensive products in order to put at everybody’s disposal consumer goods reserved till then to limited social groups (the ‘revolution’ of the pocket book is significant of this process); it allowed then to mass produce new and differentiated cultural goods (mainly the multimedia goods). Globalization increased the size of the potential outlets as shown by the sales figures of pop music stars albums or of bestsellers. According to Benjamin the loss of singularity of a work of art changes its status (it is possible to extend the observation to most of taste goods) as reintroducing it in social consumption. Art goods lose their “aura” (Benjamin 1936), their religious and

spiritual dimension, become affordable and enter the sphere of mass communication. From that moment, mass culture turns into cultural industry and serves in domination of masses. The development of taste industries can be interpreted as an extension of cultural industries; commodification and industrialization of tastes are the complement of culture commodification.

5.3 The widening of the category of taste goods in post-modernity

Kantian aesthetics is a prisoner of its historical appearing conditions. Its implicit reference is the good taste characteristic of the wonders of nature and of the fine arts. Then, Kantism systematizes an opposition between “refined” taste linked to sensitivity - the heart of its aesthetics - and “vulgar” taste linked to sensuality and banned from analysis.

As Onfray (1995) shows it, the Kantian tradition favours two senses among the existing five. Hearing and sight are noble senses, allowing the distance between the aesthetic object and the art lover whereas touch, smell or taste, odours and flavours, imply proximity of the object even its “consumption”. The classical opposition between soul and body is there again: hearing and sight are close to the soul, therefore to God, whereas touch, smell and taste are immediately referring to the body, so to the animal part of man. Aesthetic feeling is therefore opposed to sexual or eating pleasure, pleasure being shared by animals unlike aesthetic feeling supposed to be reserved for men. Since Antiquity, the taste of senses has been degraded in comparison to intellectual taste, taste for gazing at nature, taste for arts, poetry, and religion. And the good (the flavour of a gastronomic dish) or the pleasant (perfume, caress) are disappearing to the benefit of the beautiful.

But the scope of taste is broader than the scope of beauty. Taste can only be embodied in beauty for two senses out of five, when hearing is concerned (the beauty of a symphony) but above all when sight is concerned (the beauty of a figure in a painting). On the other hand other tastes will be differently defined by people: flavour as good, refined, interesting, surprising (the taste of such dish) but certainly not as beautiful, smell as nice but not as beautiful (the nice smelling of a perfume, the subtlety of fragrances), touch as pleasant but again not as beautiful (the comfort of a pillow, the sweetness of a skin). Under these conditions, it is impossible a fortiori for taste to keep the field of aesthetics for sensations and representations developed by the use of products only resorting to sight and hearing.

6 The main lessons of the four taste paradigms for an economic analysis of tastes

The philosophy of taste allows identifying the main problems every scientific analysis of tastes encounters. It gives us the basis of a conception of taste, while it does not give us the economic tools for its knowledge. In the development of the philosophy of taste four main views of taste can be distinguished.

The first paradigm of taste, the Ancient paradigm (or the paradigm of Beauty), is organized on the idea that taste is inside of things; taste is taste for beauty which belongs to nature. Within the first paradigm of taste, taste was dissimulated by Beauty, conceived as a natural property of things and, mainly, nature. Beauty is the source the taste the individuals have for them.

The second paradigm, the Kantian paradigm (or the paradigm of the judgment of the audience), according to Ferry (1990) derives from the paradigm of modern individualism¹⁴ which introduces the singularity of the persons and, therefore, of their tastes. Taste is explicitly defined as the relation between thing or opus and individuals or audience.

The third one, the Nietzschean paradigm (or the paradigm of the creator) focuses on creation and the special status of the artist as the creator of new tastes when the fourth one, the paradigm of cultural commodities, is interested in the production and consumption of taste goods according to a market, industrial or capitalist logic.

Explicitly or implicitly, the economists use the notions of tastes and preferences. How can they be related to the philosophical conceptions? What are the lessons of these paradigms for the constitution of an economic approach of taste?

6.1 The lessons of the Kantian paradigm: the need of a theory of tastes

According to the Old paradigm taste was the direct effect of beauty, so tastes were given. The Kantian paradigm shows that tastes are not natural and objec-

¹⁴“During the periods of Antiquity in which the aesthetic dimension is more or less explicitly admitted periods corresponding in fact mainly to Greek art, Hellenistic or Roman, the competition among artists benefiting from some freedom and preoccupied solely with their own individuality, the creation of schools or of competitive styles meet with a community, an audience sensible to beauty but also sensible to emotion even to technical virtuosity. It is mainly for their beauty, as products of art, that the statues of the temples during the IVth century b.C., became famous. People comment on paintings and statues as they did on poems and plays, discussing them and exhibiting personal tastes” (Gombrich 2006: 84). Gombrich thinks that during the first century B.C. an audience of collectors is already being formed. Taste is appearing (Gombrich 2006: 91).

tive; they derive from individual personality confronted to objects and to social discussions on beauty. Then there are social and individual processes of formation and evolution of tastes. These processes have, among diverse dimensions, an economic one and, therefore, to explain them, history and sociology are not enough and economic analysis is required.

This requirement refutes two standard methods of the economic analysis of the demand. The first one is to consider the quality of goods as objective and given by nature or technology (except if information is imperfect) but differently appreciated by the individuals. For a lot of taste goods (as in the case of the Aquitaine caviar) it is not acceptable. The problem is not only the diversity of preferences concerning a given quality (some valueate the caviar higher than others) but the actual definition of this quality (are eggs of wild sturgeons a luxury good or food for pigs?), that is to say the constitution of tastes. The second method is to consider tastes and preferences as absolutely subjective but given, not now by nature but by the model maker. Both methods have the same consequences by ruling out the analysis of the formation of tastes. The Kantian paradigm, through the idea that tastes are not natural and objective but implies judgment and social interaction, shows that a theory of taste has to be built. It is all the more important because, firstly, changes in tastes may have more important effects than changes in prices, as, in the area of taste goods, the substitutability of goods can be very small (if the price of horse meat diminishes relatively to the price of beef, there would be very little changes in demands and because, secondly, firms implement just as soon strategies regarding tastes as strategies regarding costs (see for instance the strategies of the luxury groups and the food companies). Obviously the standard micro-economics does not allow interpreting the role of institutions in the process of formation of tastes and the long period evolutions of tastes. But that does not imply that economic analysis cannot and must not make it. The standard micro-economics focuses on the subjective character of tastes and preferences, as Kant does, but the status of subjectivity is not the same in the two approaches. Telling “*De gustibus non est disputandum*” develop a limited part of the Kant approach for Kant immediately added that people are all the time discussing on tastes. When an individual pronounces a judgment of taste he wants to give it a universal impact. And the main problem of Kant is to join both considerations, so to establish the forms of inter-subjectivity. The Kantian individual is a social individual, able to discuss with his fellows.

Moreover, Becker (1996), as Hume and Smith yesterday, is conscious of the social dimension of tastes. He explicitly is interested in the addiction phenomena, the externalities between individual utilities and demands. He admits, as Kant does, that the processes of taste subjectivation are partially social processes and

not only individual processes. Nevertheless, even if he introduces the effects of the human and the social capital on tastes but, *ultimately*, they derive from individual decisions taken by an isolated, asocial, a historical individual. The Beckerian individualistic determinism is similar to the Marxian economic determinism which admits non economic influences but adds that, *ultimately*, the economic base determines the super-structural phenomena. Then the proposition according to which ultimately the effects of the social context on individual choices only depend on the preliminary choices of individuals does not allow to seriously considering social interactions.

The Kantian negation of any natural norm of beauty and taste and its insistence on inter-subjectivity leads economists to consider, not only individual behaviours, but also institutions which contribute to build the legitimacy of tastes, to define standard and prohibited tastes.

Another consequence of the Kant approach for economics regards the process of taste judgment. Is the standard conception of the economic decision making compatible with the process of judgment of taste? If the standard micro-economics does not consider the judgment of taste it nevertheless uses a model of rational decision making (after the exogenous process of definition of tastes), based on a rational process, which has to be confronted to the debates developed in the philosophy of taste. Also Kant promotes rationality in the area of taste. As already seen, he seeks to join together subjectivity, diversity of individuals and universality of taste. To reach this purpose he has to place opposite (as already seen) sensual taste and taste of reflection.

At least two problems are emerging. The first one is that, for Kant, the taste of reflection is disinterested, linked to Beauty and can only be universal according to this disinterest that is opposite to the economic principle of utility maximisation. The second problem concerns the taste of sense which is defined as only linked to the “pleasant”, so idiosyncratic, and only based on emotions, not on reason or research of universality. But the hypothesis of economic rationality is just the opposite, totally underestimating the role of emotions in the decision-making as in the appreciation of utility of goods to favour reason more than sensation, through the postulate of maximising behaviour under constraints in a probabilistic context. At minimum that implies to accept diverse models of judgment of taste according to diverse individuals (idiosyncrasy), diverse situations, diverse social and historical contexts.

6.2 The lessons of the Nietzschean paradigm: creation, emotions and meanings

The Kantian disinterestedness belongs to a rationalism flouting desire and pleasure in the acquaintance of the works of art which is going to raise Nietzsche's criticism. The Kantian reflective judgment of taste supposes that it is possible to judge without desiring and is only applied to situations in which it is possible to leave aside the pleasant (that is to say the desire as a special relationship of investment in the concerned object). The Kantian taste is "an intellectual" taste in comparison with a "physical" or "sensitive" one. It is part of the 19th century opposition between reason and emotion dated from Descartes (who thinks that sensation is the main illusion and that it has to be exceeded by reason) and from Pascal (Damasio 1994, 2002)¹⁵. Kant underestimates the judgment on the agreeable ("and where agreeableness is of the liveliest type a judgement on the character of the object is so entirely out of place that those who are always intent only on enjoyment (for that is the word used to denote intensity of gratification) would fain dispense with all judgement", Analytic §3); this judgment is assimilated to the mere reception of sensation but admits as a criterion "satisfaction" (it is a satisfaction judgment, see notes 3 and 4), satisfaction caused by the beautiful, the mere representation of the object, the harmony of sensation with the other faculties of knowledge, and firstly understanding. Nevertheless the agreeable also is an occasion of choices (in the menu shall I choose sole *meunière* or fillet?), a fortiori if cost is introduced (shall I have the 25 or the 40 Euros menu?).

One can ask the question of the Kantian separation between interest and judgment of taste, above all when the notion of interest is widened beyond the material to the symbolic, the sense of identity, ethics. Taste in clothes, which really is based on a taste judgment (the choice of a garment is not obvious but supposes to appeal to knowledge and reasoning and not only to be under the influence of sensations), is motivated by self-interest for two reasons: it brings me the traditional utility of a good as doing me a material favour (to protect me from cold), it brings me another utility as contributing to create my identity, as creating meaning. Accepting Kantian disinterestedness would prevent from linking the taste characteristics present in taste goods to the utility brought to their consumers. This disinterestedness leads to stress on form (the work as an harmonious and accomplished object) to the detriment of meaning, signification (which makes the semiotic character of the good disappear) and to reduce taste to good taste (the taste for the beautiful) and art to the production of beautiful.

¹⁵Of course Romanticism was in opposition to this but it was limited to literature or art, minor fields compared to the huge one that was to be governed by rational science.

Finally it is possible to use the Nietzschean framework to reject the Kantian disinterestedness as noticing Kant refers, explicitly or implicitly, to the beauty of nature that is to say to something that does not derive from a human creation. Starting from taste goods resulting from a production lead to introduce the aim of the creator and therefore his motivations, extrinsic or intrinsic. On one side, intrinsic motivations, thirst for creating, are appealing to a special kind of interest. Oblation of emotions leads to underestimate at the same time the dimension of representation in comparison with the material dimension of goods. Moreover the cult of reason occults the pleasure phenomena; here again Nietzsche is going to best symbolize the break with rationalist spirit and to show the way to the rediscovery of pleasure and to the philosophical reflection on body and senses. On the other side, extrinsic motivations are appealing for the creator, to the payment got but, in a mass production system of taste goods, are also concerning the producers and distributors motivations cultural industry firms are, and therefore are introducing the search of the profitability on the invest capital.

The evolution of art incites to accept the Nietzschean critic. We cannot follow Kant any longer when contemporary art radically exceeds the idea that art produces beauty, giving therefore an end to a long lasting trend especially in painting. The material contents of the work of art is not important any longer, in the case of the Duchamp's urinal, as the artistic good is physically the same as the industrial good, but what is important is the meaning of the work that is to say the artist's "intention". And the artistic character of the intention is going to be revealed by the place and the context (the urinal stored on the shelves of the sanitary warehouse won't be a work of art whereas the same one exhibited in a museum is a work of art).

As soon as meaning prevailed over beauty and form, the substance of the work of art can widen: it is possible to go from noble materials (marble, colours of the palette, fashionable silks and velvets. . .) to any material (denim in conceptual art, light, dust and last provocation, faeces - Merda d'Artista of Piero Manzoni). For many of its producers and consumers, art is producing meaning, message, semiotic. This evolution is of course questioning the idea that the aim of art is to represent nature as exactly as possible (pretension reduced to nothing by the invention of photography but already denied at the time of the crisis of classical painting based on the search of the most exact representation¹⁶), questions for good the Kantian

¹⁶Classical painting must express, from a subject making sense (The Oath of the Horace, The dishonoured Lucretia, The Annunciation, The Pieta, The Assumption, Napoleon's coronation) an idea, a message, that is to say the essence of a situation (the power of men in high places, the value of loyalty, the goodness of the Lord,..). "Modern" painters are going to enlarge the representation to every phenomenon and transform it as the expression of the personality and

cult of beauty. Freeland (2001: 32) reminds the simplistic character of the Kantian aesthetics as Kant used to hold up as an example the French art of gardens, based on the search for harmony, and to criticize the British art producing creations without unity and coming sometimes close to the grotesque.

At the same time the relevance of the idea of a direct and universal communion of the audience with the beautiful contained in the work is destroyed; to read art, it is necessary to situate it in its history because it is partly self-referent (the *Mona Lisa with moustache* by Duchamp compared to the *Mona Lisa* of Vinci, or the urinal by Duchamp and the ready-made by Andy Warhol).

The post-Nietzschean philosophy of art and culture is interested in emotions, sensibility, passions as also the works of neurobiologists and psychologists. Now, cognitive and semiotic approaches, serving or not producers or distributors of taste goods are today systematically studying the factors of taste judgment. Science itself is rediscovering the role of passions and emotions in the strictly scientific discovery (Witkowski 2003). In the same way the notion of creativity is not only used to explain the scientific or artistic innovation but also the decision leading to relativize the impact of the rational choice model and of rational calculation (Damasio 1994), with the impossibility to separate rational calculation from emotion.

6.3 The lessons of the Frankfurt School paradigm to the economic analysis of tastes: the commodification of tastes and the taste goods

For the fourth paradigm, taste in modern societies is encapsulated into the commodities and belongs to a system running to make capital profitable. The capitalist system is producing commodities, is producing taste, is producing taste goods, and is producing mass product taste goods. Then taste is now a taste encapsulated in goods, produced and consumed on a large scale: taste goods substitute the frequentation of nature and museums. At the same time, a lot of goods are including aesthetic and semiotic values.

Using Lancaster's methodology we can define, among the characteristics of goods, some special characteristics we are going to call taste characteristics. For some goods they are gustative characteristics, in the strict sense of the word, like the ones concerning the flavour of food. They are also visual characteristics of goods widely exceeding the traditional field of artistic goods. They are a source of information but also a source of aesthetic appreciations. The development of design and packaging shows that these visual characteristics tend today to modify most

the singularity of the artist, offering his "vision" of the world, refusing as Romantism the search of exactness. And Delacroix declared: "exactness is not truth".

of mass-consumed goods. Less traditional characteristics can also be concerned. Olfactive marketing shows the importance of smelling in the appreciation of goods, even beyond dietary goods. The other senses are also mobilized. If the direct and voluntary consumption of music (concerts, records, radio or television programs) supplies important markets, it is necessary to take into account the role of the musical backgrounds in the animation of stores and of leisure places. But the noise when closing the doors of our cars is also carefully studied - and differentiated - by the producers to allow the identification of the trademark of car and of the associated imagination.

Recently courts have had to reach a verdict on the property of a noise, the noise of a Harley-Davidson engine. Honda having proposed motorbikes in a Harley style the exhaust of which was reproducing the famous noise characteristic of Harley's engines the question was to know whether Harley could insist on having the monopoly of "its" own noise. When these aesthetic and /or sensorial characteristics more appealing to emotion and desire than to reason and need are dominating among all the characteristics it is becoming a matter of taste goods.

Yesterday, taste goods were limited for two reasons: they were mainly assimilated to artistic goods part of the legitimate culture (noble taste is made for noble arts, refined pleasures of an aesthetic types) and their market was narrow, mainly dependant on aristocratic consumption. Today we can observe a remarkable expansion of the field of taste: taste for pleasures that once used to be vile (from food to sport) is more and more legitimated. Consumption enquiries show that, in all the developed countries, buying goods having common or close characteristics allowing to show them as taste goods, is having more and more importance in the spending of families. Among others, fashion goods, accessories (perfumes, fine leather goods, shoes. . .), gastronomic services, wines, multimedia and cultural industries products are part of the taste goods that can be added to the traditional category of artistic goods. Moreover, more and more goods are including taste characteristics: design today is applied to most of goods.

Nevertheless, the Frankfurt School paradigm refuses idiosyncrasy. Kantian universalism also tended to deny individual autonomy: taste was not idiosyncratic to the difference of the agreeable because it would be the object of a judgment and not the result of a sensation. But if taste brings back too to the agreeable, to pleasure and to desire, its idiosyncratic character is established. And the mechanical conception of a standard taste, created and improved by the capitalist companies is no more pertinent. Today suppliers of taste goods emphasize on the pleasant rather than on the beautiful. As we are in a society of individuals and as the main problem is to sell taste goods likely to be pleasant, therefore likely to interest the individuals to get transformed into merchant consumptions, supply is

highly differentiated and appeals to individual specificities and personal tastes.

7 Conclusion: a program for an economic analysis of taste goods

Taste which was limited to Beauty in its initial conception has seen its area vary: taste for natural beauty, then taste for art imitating nature, taste for good manners, taste for artistic creations, taste extended to non artistic goods linked to the five senses. Within these characteristics some can be, for the individual, seen as close to the Beauty and the Kantian taste of reflection (and, then, the individual considers himself as a social individual and as a universal individual) while the others are seen as close to the agreeable (and linked to the idiosyncratic tastes of the singular individual). Nevertheless they generally come together and, perhaps, are inextricably joint.

The second view of taste symbolized by Kant, introducing the audience as “consumer” of the beautiful stresses on the demand for taste goods. We saw that this view resulted from personal evaluations mixing individual inclinations and social inclinations. The third view of taste introduces the question of the supply in a regime of production of new works. If it is conceived as the result of the creativity of singular individuals, the last view takes into account the production and the mass-consumption of taste goods according to market logic, even an industrial or capitalist one. This leads us then to define a “contemporary economy of taste” as *an economic analysis of goods and services of taste, produced and consumed within the dominant frame of market relations.*

A lot of questions then arise: what are the determinants of the demand? What is the process of decision making regarding taste goods? How are rationality and emotions connected? How does creation modify the production processes? Are tastes stabilizing or destabilizing the working of markets? Over what period are tastes changing? Can suppliers play on tastes? So, a new program is emerging.

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