

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FOCUS ON DISGUST

In these last years the debate on philosophical aesthetics mainly focused on the category of beauty. Both in the United States and in Europe many books have been dedicated to the primary object of aesthetics, i.e. the definition of beauty. Starting from its modern determination, beauty has also been defined through its opposite, for which we should not look at what is 'ugly', but at disgusting. After the success of the studies on disgust in the 1990s – I refer here to the studies by Winfried Menninghaus, Carolyn Korsmeyer, Ian Miller and the rediscovery of Aurel Kolnai's theory – an analysis of disgust can now be very interesting again, as far as a comparison with the debate on the nature of beauty is concerned. As Menninghaus states in his famous book, disgust is in fact decisive in delineating the bounds of aesthetics, and of course of its object, that is, the judgment on beauty.

The essays here presented gather the research of some of the biggest experts on disgust as well as that of some young scholars. The *ensemble* of the texts creates an interesting route from the Enlightenment to contemporary aesthetics. The collection starts with the article of Maddalena Mazzocut-Mis, who reconstructs the definition of disgust given by the 18<sup>th</sup> century French, German and British aesthetics. This essay is followed by a study by Serena Feloj on disgust in Kantian aesthetics in relation to the ugly: until now, such a topic has not been much investigated inside the field of Kantian studies, and it certainly provides an interesting insight on the transcendental judgment of taste. Carolyn Korsmeyer's work, instead, starts from the 18<sup>th</sup> century studies on disgust, and from the phenomenological theory of Aurel Kolnai, in order to expose her own interesting position on the relation between disgust and emotions. On the other hand, Marco Tedeschi's essay takes into account the role of the disgusting in contemporary art: starting from the theories of Arthur Danto and Jean Clare, he pays great attention to Aurel Kolnai's theory as well. This essay is very rich in references and provides an interesting overview of the 20<sup>th</sup> century theories on disgust. Tedeschi's essay ends with a reference to the psychoanalytic analysis of disgust, that is the object of Winfried Menninghaus' essay. Menninghaus

discusses the details of the Freudian interpretation of the evolution of the upright walk as a decisive step for human beings' evolution. He reconstructs Freud's idea that abject pleasures are inescapable, and that art has a highly specific capacity of pleasurable addressing what is otherwise rejected as disgusting.

Thus, the essays here presented testify the importance of an analysis of disgust for the aesthetic debate, and show, through the several very different perspectives taken into account, that also today the notion of disgust can open very interesting perspectives of study.

SERENA FELOJ