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IS THERE A NEGATIVE JUDGMENT OF TASTE? DISGUST AS THE REAL UGLINESS IN KANT'S AESTHETICS

Can we find in Kant's transcendental philosophy an aesthetic judgment on ugliness? What is its relationship with the principle of purposiveness? And what is the role of disgust? These questions animated an intensive debate among Kantian scholars in the last fifteen years. This article aims to contribute to such a debate from the standpoint of a theoretical position that considers the ugly in relation to aesthetic purposiveness and disgust. The just mentioned critical debate started with two articles, both published in the «British Journal of Aesthetics»: in 1998 David Shier claimed that there are no pure negative aesthetic judgments in Kant's aesthetics¹; in 1999 Christian Wenzel answered to Shier by stating that aesthetic disharmony exists and this proves the existence of negative judgment of taste in Kantian aesthetics². The whole debate is therefore based upon two opposite positions about the possibility of a judgment on ugliness in Kant's philosophy. The claim I support derives from Shier's position: I will try to integrate it with the notion of purposiveness and with a comparison with disgust.

The arguments of the two parties are both very interesting and, almost in every case, involve the role of free play between the imagination and the understanding. Authors who state that there aren't negative judgments also claim that the aesthetic judgment is communicable and universally valid while the judgment on the ugly cannot be communicable. What is communicable is the subject's state of mind constituted by the free play between the imagination and the understanding, always in connection with plea-

¹ D. Shier, *Why Kant finds nothing ugly*, «British Journal of Aesthetics» 38 (1998), 4, pp. 412-418.

² C. Wenzel, *Kant finds nothing ugly?*, «British Journal of Aesthetics» 39 (1999), 2, pp. 416-422.

sure. Thus, if the negative aesthetic judgment existed, it would be communicable; however, the free play, which grants the communicability, is never connected with the displeasure that characterizes the ugly. Therefore negative aesthetic judgments don't exist in Kant's transcendental philosophy³.

Authors who claim that negative judgments of taste are possible point instead to the necessity of an aesthetic disharmony and recognize a link between such a disharmony and the knowledge in general, as it happens for the free harmony between the imagination and the understanding. Wenzel, as well as the authors supporting his position⁴, starts from Kant's essay: *Attempt to introduce the concept of negative magnitudes into philosophy*. Following this essay, these authors claim that displeasure is not the mere absence of pleasure, as ugliness is not the mere absence of beauty⁵. Through the principle of purposiveness is thus possible to give a positive ground to ugliness, as well as to apply the structure of the *Analytic of the beauty* to an *Analytic of the ugly*. These authors support their claims also by grounding them on empirical evidence. It is obvious, they say, that Kant had to consider judgments on ugliness, considering the fact that we undoubtedly have experience of it⁶.

³ This is, in sum, the argumentation of: D. Shier, R. Brandt (*Die Schönheit der Kristallen und das Spiel der Erkenntniskräfte. Zum Gegenstand und zur Logik des ästhetischen Urteils bei Kant*, in R. Brandt - W. Stark (eds.), *Autographen, Dokumente und Berichte: Zu Edition, Amtsgeschäften und Werk Immanuel Kants, Kant-Forschungen*, 5, Hamburg, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1994, pp. 19-57), M. Rind (*Can Kant's deduction of judgments of taste be saved?*, «Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie» 84 (2001), pp. 20-45), P. Guyer (*Kant and the purity of ugly*, «Kant e-print» 3 (2004), 3, pp. 1-21).

⁴ I refer to: C. Wenzel, H. Hudson (*The significance of an analytic of the ugly in Kant's deduction of pure judgments of taste*, in R. Meerbote (ed.), *North American Kant Society Studies in Philosophy: Kant's aesthetics*, Ridgeview, Atascadero, 1991, pp. 87-103), H. Allison (*Kant's theory of taste. A reading of the Critique of aesthetic judgments*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 70 ss.), M. Steenhagen (*Explaining the ugly: disharmony and unrestrained cognition in Kant*, «Estetica. Tijdschrift voor Kunst en Philosophie», 2010), S. McConnell (*How Kant might explain ugliness*, «British Journal of Aesthetics» 48 (2008), 2, pp. 205-228).

⁵ I. Kant, *Versuch, den Begriff der negativen Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 2, hrsg. von der königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, Reimer, 1912, p. 194; *Attempt to introduce the concept of negative magnitudes into philosophy*, in *Theoretical philosophy 1755-1770*, trans. by D. Walford, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 231.

⁶ Other interesting essays, not totally reducible to any of these positions are: C. La Rocca, *Das Schöne und der Schatten. Dunkle Vorstellungen und ästhetische Erfahrung zwischen Baumgarten und Kant*, in H.F. Klemme - M. Pauen - M.-L. Raters (hrsg. v.), *Im Schatten des Schönen. Die Ästhetik des Häßlichen in historischen Ansätzen und aktuellen Debatten*, Bielefeld, Aisthesis Verlag, 2006, pp. 19-64; C. La Rocca, *L'intelletto oscuro. Inconscio e auto-coscienza in Kant*, in C. La Rocca (a cura di), *Leggere Kant. Dimensioni della filosofia criti-*

1. Why negative judgments do not exist in Kant's aesthetics

In my opinion, the more convincing argument on the role of ugliness in Kant's aesthetic is that of Paul Guyer⁷, which in turn recalls that of Reinhard Brandt⁸. Guyer agrees with Brandt in claiming that certainly ugly things exist, but this does not mean that pure aesthetic judgment on the ugly exists as well. Guyer argues, in fact, that the experience of the ugly is impure and that Kant is therefore more interested in showing the element of displeasure that characterizes the sublime than that which defines the ugly. Guyer discusses also the reference to negative magnitudes and recognizes that displeasure is not a mere absence of pleasure. He also points out that in the *Reflexionen*, on the basis of the notion of pleasure, Kant defines three categories of aesthetics: the beauty, the ordinary and the ugly⁹. This triad might lead to the conclusion that Kantian aesthetics is grounded on the articulation of pleasure, absence of pleasure and displeasure. Guyer however reminds us that Kant's aesthetics is grounded on the articulation of the faculties and that we can only have two kinds of relationship between the imagination and the understanding: either the free play or the reference of the representation to an intellectual concept. If we have a judgment, Guyer continues, there must be harmony between the imagination and the understanding: we can recognize an object precisely because there is a unity, either logical or aesthetic, between the imagination and the understanding. It follows that there can be judgments on the ugly, but they are not pure aesthetic judgments. Guyer concludes his argument with an interesting reference to disgust and displeasure connected with sub-

ca, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2007, pp. 63-116; D. Lohmar, *Das Geschmacksurteil über das faszinierend Hässliche*, in H. Parret (ed.), *Kants Ästhetik/Kant's Aesthetics/L'esthétique de Kant*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1996, pp. 498-512; D. Morgan, *Kant trouble. The obscurities of the enlightened*, London - New York, Routledge, 2000; H. Parret, *The ugly as the beyond of the sublime*, in C. Madelein - J. Pieters - B. Vandenabeele (eds.), *Histories of the sublime*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009; P. Giordanetti - M. Mazzocut-Mis, *Storia dell'estetica del brutto*, Napoli, Scriptaweb, 2006; P. Giordanetti - G. Gori - M. Mazzocut-Mis, *Il secolo dei lumi e l'oscuro*, Milano, Mimesis, 2008; G. Thomson, *Kant's problems with ugliness*, «Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism» 50 (1992), 2, pp. 107-115.

⁷ P. Guyer, *op. cit.*

⁸ R. Brandt, *Die Schönheit der Kristallen und das Spiel der Erkenntniskräfte* cit.; see also R. Brandt, *Zur Logik des ästhetischen Urteils*, in H. Parrett (ed.), *Kants Ästhetik/Kant's Aesthetics/L'esthétique de Kant* cit., pp. 229-245.

⁹ R 669 (I. Kant, *Reflexion*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 15, hrsg. von der königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin-Leipzig, De Gruyter, 1925, pp. 196-197). See P. Guyer, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

lime¹⁰. I will get back to this reference in the second part of my contribution.

Guyer's argumentation is criticized by Martin Steenhagen¹¹, who recalls the interpretation of Henri Allison¹². Allison argues that we should distinguish between harmony and free play. Steenhagen hence claims that the judgment on the ugly is grounded on the disharmony of the faculties and that it has the same subjective sources of the judgment on the beauty. On this ground he claims the possibility of a pure reflective aesthetic judgment on the ugly and the necessary overcoming of the epistemological argument of Guyer. Guyer, he writes, seems to give for granted that concepts are always at the core of experience, but a pure reflective judgment requires abstraction from such a conceptualism. Therefore Steenhagen suggests that the relationship between the imagination and the understanding should be considered as a necessary cooperation allowing us to conceive a judgment grounded on a disharmony. While it is impossible to define a pure judgment in relation to disharmony, it is however possible to refer to a reflective judgment on the ugly, if we consider it as impure and not universally communicable.

Steenhagen's argument leads us to an important conclusion: there are *impure* aesthetic judgments on the ugly. Nevertheless, his argument does not answer Guyer's article, which tries to answer the question whether or not there are *pure* aesthetic judgments on the ugly. The issue here is not whether or not we make experience of the ugly, which is undeniable, but whether there is room in transcendental philosophy for a judgment on the ugly. I believe that a convincing answer could be found by taking into account the principle of purposiveness.

In the *First introduction to the critique of the power of judgment*, Kant defines purposiveness with relation to the need of the subject to find some empirical rules in nature¹³. For this reason Kant can claim that purposiveness has a subjective character: the aesthetical judgment is grounded on the principle that nature is ordered *as if* it was accordant to the subject's faculties. The prin-

¹⁰ On the ugly and the sublime see: H. Parret, *The ugly as the beyond of the sublime* cit.

¹¹ M. Steenhagen, *op. cit.*

¹² H. Allison, *op. cit.*

¹³ I. Kant, *Erste Einleitung in die Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 20, hrsg. von der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1942, p. 213; *First introduction to the critique of the power of judgment*, in *Critique of the power of judgment*, trans. by P. Guyer, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 17.

ciple of purposiveness therefore ensures the relationship between the imagination and the understanding and grants a free harmony between them. If we considered the ugly as a pure aesthetical judgment, then we would have to refer it to the principle of purposiveness, the fundamental principle of the power of judgment. But how can ugly things be purposive for the subject?

I think there are two solutions, mainly: either the fundamental disharmony of the ugly is connected to an element of contra-purposiveness, or the displeasure created by the ugly is reduced to a form of pleasure. Kant certainly follows the second option when he writes «beautiful art displays its excellence precisely by describing beautifully things that in nature would be ugly or displeasing. The furies, diseases, devastations of war, and the like can, as harmful things, be very beautifully described, indeed even represented in painting»¹⁴. Although Kant recognizes a form of contra-purposiveness in the experience of the sublime and in his description of the organisms¹⁵, he always brings it back to the subjective purposiveness. There is no room in Kantian aesthetics for a real contra-purposiveness and this clearly appears as the power of judgment acts only by following the principle of purposiveness. Since we cannot account for any real contra-purposiveness, we are not allowed to claim any disharmony between faculties based upon the principle of purposiveness. Finally, what can be judged as ugly is brought back to beauty through the action of art. As in the case of the sublime, the initial displeasure is led to a form of pleasure.

The argument of the contra-purposiveness is taken into consideration also by Hud Hudson and by Sean McConnell. In this regards, Hudson, who makes perhaps the first attempt to explain ugliness in Kant's aesthetics, writes that «it is this subjective contra-purposiveness in the presentation of the mere form of an object [...] that is connected with a universal disliking, and that prompts a judgment of taste (of reflection), when it is a judgment of ugliness [...] *ugly* is an object's form of *contra-purposiveness* insofar as it is perceived in the object *without the presentation of a purpose*»¹⁶. McConnell stretches Hudson's argument even further as

¹⁴ I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 5, hrsg. von der königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, Reimer, 1913, p. 312; *Critique of the power of judgment* cit., p. 190. From now quoted as KU.

¹⁵ See KU, pp. 260 and 379; pp. 143 and 250.

¹⁶ H. Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

he concludes: «in the case of a contra-final object, the empirical imagination will never detect a rule and thus the object will not engage the cognitive faculties and so free play (or play for that matter) will never arise. [...] An appeal to contra-purposiveness [...] destroys the very possibility of the judgment of taste»¹⁷.

Both Hudson and McConnell try a different strategy to justify the ugly in Kant's aesthetics yet they do not come to a any drastic conclusion as I do: to my mind, there isn't any pure aesthetical judgment on the ugly. Either the ugly is reduced through art to a specific form of beauty or it is excluded from the realm of the power of judgment.

2. The real ugly: the case of disgust

Properly speaking, the ugly is never excluded from Kant's aesthetics, but it is rather reduced to the beauty. The «only one kind of ugliness – Kant writes— cannot be represented in a way adequate to nature without destroying all aesthetic satisfaction, hence beauty in art, namely, that which arouses *loathing (Ekel)*»¹⁸. It seems therefore that the loathing can be considered as the real ugliness and as the real opposite of beauty.

In the debate on the ugly, also Guyer takes into account the disgusting and writes that disgust is an example of a not pure aesthetic judgment on the ugly. Kant defines disgust as a sensation that arises when «the object is represented as if it were imposing the enjoyment which we are nevertheless forcibly resisting»¹⁹. Thus, Guyer claims that Kantian disgust is a moral answer to the attempt to make beauty what it is not and to overcome the freedom of the imagination²⁰. Similarly, Mojca Kuplen claims that disgust actually interferes with Kantian aesthetics, while the ugly doesn't²¹. We can therefore argue that, although a purely negative aesthetic judgment does not exist, the authentic negative judgment of taste and the real opposite of beauty seems to be the disgusting, and not the ugly. The ugly can in fact be reduced to the

¹⁷ S. McConnell, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217.

¹⁸ KU, p. 312; p. 190. Here Kant seems almost literally quoting: G.E. Lessing, *Laokoon: Oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, in Id., *Werke 1766-1769*, hrsg. v. W. Barner, Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1990, vol. 5/2, pp. 9-206; *Laocoön. An essay on the limits of painting and poetry*, ed. by E.A. McCormick, London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.

¹⁹ KU, p. 312; p. 190.

²⁰ P. Guyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

²¹ M. Kuplen, *Disgust and ugliness. A Kantian perspective*, in *Contemporary aesthetics*, 2011.

beauty so that it can find its own place in Kant's aesthetics. Disgust expresses on the contrary the real threat to beauty.

One of the very few significant studies on Kantian disgust is certainly that of Winfried Menninghaus²². In his famous book on the disgust, Menninghaus claims that Kant's aesthetics follows a different trend from that of the 1750's-1760's debate animated by Herder and Lessing²³. While Johan Adolf Schlegel and Moses Mendelssohn²⁴ paid attention to the disgust only in some marginal points of their texts, Herder and Lessing gave great importance to the disgust in their aesthetic theories. Kant, on the contrary, goes back to writing about the disgust only in his less prominent writings: we find the most important passages on the disgust in the *Anthropology*, in the *Observations* and in some unpublished texts.

In his *Beobachtungen* Kant gives an interesting definition of the disgust. He writes that «nothing is so opposed to the beautiful as the disgusting»²⁵. This statement seems to confirm my claim that the real opposite of beauty is not the ugly, but the disgust. In this regard what Kant writes in his *Remarks in the observations* is also very interesting: «beautiful and sublime are not the same. The latter swells the heart and makes the attention fixed and tense. Therefore, it exhausts. The former lets the soul melt in a soft sensation, and, in that it relaxes the nerves, it puts the feeling into a gentler emotion, which, however, where it goes too far, transforms into weariness, surfeit and disgust»²⁶. Reading this passage,

²² W. Menninghaus, *Disgust. Theory and history of a strong sensation*, transl. by H. Eiland - J. Golb, Suny, Albany 2003, pp. 103-120.

²³ G.E. Lessing, *Laocoön* cit.; J.G. Herder, *Plastik. Einige Wahrnehmungen über Form und Gestalt aus Pygmalions bildendem Träume*, in *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 8, hrsg. v. B. Suphan, Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1892, pp. 1-87.

²⁴ M. Mendelssohn, *82. bis 84. Literaturbrief*, in *Gesammelte Schriften. Jubiläumsausgabe*, vol. 5/1, Stuttgart, Frommann - Holzboog, 1991, pp. 130-137; J.A. Schlegel, *Anmerkungen über Ekel*, in C. Batteux, *Einschränkung der schönen Künste auf einen einzigen Grundsatz, aus dem Französischen übersetzt und mit verschiedenen eignen damit verwandten Abhandlungen begleitet von Johann Adolf Schlegeln*, Leipzig, Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1770, pp. 106-120.

²⁵ I. Kant, *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 2, hrsg. von der königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, Reimer, 1912, p. 233; *Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime and other writings*, trans. by P. Frierson - P. Guyer, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 40. In the following page Kant adjuncts: «to distance oneself as far as possible from this sort of disgustingness takes *purity*, which is indeed becoming for every person, and which in the case of the fair sex is of the first rank among the virtues and can hardly be taken too far by it» (I. Kant, *Observations of the feeling of the beautiful and sublime* cit., p. 234; p. 41).

²⁶ Id., *Bemerkungen zu den Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 20, hrsg. von der Preussischen Akademie der Wissen-

it seems therefore that Kant takes into account three aesthetic categories, that are not the beauty, the sublime and the ugly as in the *Reflexionen*²⁷, but rather the beauty, the sublime and the disgust²⁸. Starting from this tripartition, Menninghaus states that disgust, thus defined, could be considered as an element of the transcendental philosophy, constituting, just as beauty, an important strategic element of Kant's system. Menninghaus is in fact persuaded that Kant places the origin of his aesthetics in the differentiation between the ideal sphere of the aesthetics and the realistic consideration of the disgust. On that basis, Menninghaus can claim that Kant constructs a precise form of politics and morals of the disgust²⁹.

The major merit of Menninghaus' analysis is namely the recognition of the moral nature of Kantian disgust³⁰. In the *Pädagogik*, Kant defines the disgust as the highest form of education³¹ and in the *Anthropology* he writes:

Even the *presentation* of the evil or ugly (for example, the figure of personified death in Milton) can and must be beautiful whenever an object is to be represented aesthetically, and this is true even if the object is a *Thersites*. Otherwise the presentation produces either distaste or disgust, both of which include the endeavor to push away a representation that is offered for enjoyment; whereas *beauty* on the other hand carries with it the concept of an invitation to the most intimate union with the object, that is, to immediate enjoyment.³²

schaften, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1942, p. 19; *Remarks in the Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and the sublime*, in *Observation on the feeling of beautiful and the sublime* cit., p. 79. See also: Id., *Remarks* cit., pp. 52 and 126; pp. 101 and 151.

²⁷ See the footnote n. 5.

²⁸ The same idea is expressed in: Id., *Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und der Moral*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 20, hrsg. von der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1942, p. 280; *Inquiry concerning the distinctness of the principles of natural theology and morality*, in *Theoretical philosophy 1755-1770* cit., p. 252.

²⁹ W. Menninghaus, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

³⁰ His analysis is important also because he straightens the relationship between disgust and ennui. It is possible to find elements that define this relationship in: I. Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 7, hrsg. von der königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, Reimer, 1917, pp. 151 and 276; *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*, in *Anthropology, history and education*, trans. by R.B. Loudon - G. Zöllner, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 265 and 371; Refl. 391 and 604 (Id., *Reflexion* cit., p. 259).

³¹ Id., *Pädagogik*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 9, hrsg. von der königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin-Leipzig, De Gruyter, 1923, pp. 492-493.

³² Id., *Anthropology* cit., pp. 241 and 345.

Also in 1798 Kant maintains the definition of the disgust he had given in the third *Critique*: the disgust is a feeling against an imposing enjoyment. In the *Anthropology* the disgust is however connected also to a «strong vital sensation», that Menninghaus can write that the disgust is part of the moral feeling and it makes morality and freedom in feelings more real. In the *Anthropology*, Kant namely writes: «nausea, an impulse to free oneself of food through the shortest way out of the esophagus (to vomit), has been allotted to the human being as such a strong vital sensation, for this intimate taking in can be dangerous to the animal. However, there is also a *mental pleasure* [...] and thus the natural instinct to be free of it is also called nausea by analogy, although it belongs to inner sense»³³.

The moral nature of the disgust is confirmed by Kant in a passage of the *Metaphysics of morals*, when he formulates the idea of an aesthetics of morals:

To think of several virtues (as one unavoidably does) is nothing other than to think of the various moral objects to which the will is led by the one principle of virtue, and so too with regard to the contrary vices. The expression that personifies both is an aesthetic device which still points to a moral sense. – So an aesthetics of morals, while not indeed part of the metaphysics of morals, is still a subjective presentation of it in which the feelings that accompany the constraining power of the moral law (e.g., disgust, horror, etc., which make moral aversion sensible) make its efficacy felt, in order to get the better of *merely* sensible incitements.³⁴

This passage seems to confirm Menninghaus's interpretation, which states that the disgust can be considered as a «negative sublime»: the disgust has a moral nature, it is connected to the vital sensation and it cooperates in making morality real. Thus, it constitutes a supplement to beauty³⁵.

3. An interpretation of Kantian disgust

After having claimed that the ugly can find a proper space in Kant's aesthetics only if it is reduced to beauty and that the real opposite of beauty, the one really excluded from Kantian aesthet-

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-158 and 269.

³⁴ *Id.*, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. 6, hrsg. von der königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, Reimer, 1914, p. 406; *The metaphysics of morals*, in *Practical philosophy*, transl. by M.J. Gregor - A. Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 534.

³⁵ See W. Menninghaus, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

ics, is the disgust, we can go back to the initial questions. Can we find in Kant's transcendental philosophy an aesthetical judgment on ugliness? What is its relationship with the principle of purposiveness? And what is the role of the disgust?

I think, as I said before, that the solution may be provided by the notion of purposiveness. The principle of purposiveness, which ensures the activity of the power of judgment, does not permit any pure aesthetic judgment on the ugly. The contra-purposiveness is always reduced to the purposiveness, or else no pure reflective judgments would be possible. The contra-purposiveness that is irreducible to beauty (or to the sublime) is in fact totally excluded from Kant's aesthetics through the feeling of the disgust. We can therefore claim that the disgust is the feeling that points at the real ugly and draws the bound that separates what has to be excluded from the transcendental philosophy. This idea is confirmed by the definition of the disgust that Kant gives in one of his *Reflections*: «the disgust is unpleasant for its own and unreserved. Therefore, our mind can't be entertained through the representation of the disgust, as it is through that of the unhappiness. Sins against nature. We don't speak gladly about them, because they create from their own the representation of the disgust»³⁶.

The disgust can thus be defined as a strong vital sensation that preserve the beauty and the purposiveness from the contra-purposiveness. The internal system of Kant's third *Critique* is based upon the reason's need to recognize in nature some rules that allow the transition from the determination of nature to the moral freedom. The purposiveness that we find in nature has then a subjective nature and the objective ugliness of our experiences hasn't got any chance to find a place in Kant's system, that is to say it cannot play any role in the realization of the transition from nature to freedom. On the contrary, disgust can play a significant role in the transcendental philosophy. Although Kant doesn't give it much room in his critical writings, disgust has a moral nature and defines the limits of what can be accepted in Kant's aesthetics. Paradoxically³⁷, the disgusting arises in front of those things that forcibly impose an enjoyment to the subject. It likely refers to

³⁶ R 502 (I. Kant, *Reflexion* cit., p. 218); some reference to disgust can be found also in other anthropological *Reflexionen*: 275, 286, 366, 1067 (Id., *Reflexion* cit., p. 104, 107, 143, 473).

³⁷ But perfectly coherent with the definition of disgust given in the 18th century.

those things that are so ugly that can't be reduced to beauty and rest in the realm of the contra-purposiveness. The notion of purposiveness can thus explain the role of disgust as an aesthetical category that defines the bounds of aesthetics. The relationship between the disgusting and the ugly may help us explain the conceptual boundary between purposiveness and counter-purposiveness, even though we are still missing a clear criterion for distinguishing between irredeemably ugly and ugly *qua* reduced to beauty through art, and, in fact, for separating the ugly from the disgusting in the first place.

Differently from the ugly, the disgusting has a simpler structure, as it doesn't request an articulation of the imagination and of the understanding nor it asks to be considered as the object of a judgment. It is just an immediate and really strong feeling, that moves the subject in the direction of the judgment of taste and nullifies the threat of contra-purposiveness. Disgust, as Menninghaus states, can thus be compared to the moral feeling for its function of delineating the boundary of a judgment, that is, in this case, the pure reflective aesthetic judgment.