

- \* Antyemotywizm fenomenologiczny i *Erlebnis* w estetyce von Hildebranda; estetyka obrzydzenia: Kolnai, Derrida i psychoanaliza; wczesna filozofia polityczna Kolnaia;
- \* Marion: anamorfoza fenomenów przesyconych; *slow cinema* okiem Deleuza; filozoficzne dziedzictwo awangardy; *ready-made* i estetyka poza sztuką

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# Spis treści

Bogna J. Gladden-Obidzińska: <b>Editorial</b> .....	5
■ <b>I. Ku (pięknym) rzeczom samym w sobie</b>	
Josef Seifert: <b>Dietrich von Hildebrand's Defense of the Objectivity of Beauty in Music and His Critique of Aesthetic Subjectivism</b> ...	7
Mátyás Szalay: <b>Living the Beauty – Experiencing Beauty: Contributions to a Critique of the Aesthetics of Dietrich von Hildebrand</b> .....	23
Dietrich von Hildebrand: <b>Królestwo wartości estetycznych: Piękno metafizyczne a piękno zmysłowe</b> (przełt. z języka niemieckiego Filip Borek) .....	41
■ <b>II. Od polityki do estetyki wstrętu</b>	
Andrzej Gniazdowski: <b>Krew i kość. Psychopatologia anarchokomunizmu według Aurela Kolnaia</b> .....	61
Peter Mahr: <b>The Double Bind of Disgust: Kolnai, Derrida and Psychoanalysis in Philosophical Aesthetics Before and After 1968</b> .....	87
Aurel Kolnai: <b>Wstręt (wybrane fragmenty)</b> (przełt. z języka niemieckiego Robert Ignatowicz i Daniel Roland Sobota) .....	105
■ <b>III. Fenomenologia i awangarda</b>	
Andrzej Krawiec: <b>Anamorfoza dzieł sztuki w perspektywie fenomenologii Jeana-Luca Mariona</b> .....	121
Alicja Rybkowska: <b>Dziedzictwo awangardy dzisiaj – perspektywa filozoficzna</b> .....	139
Paula Milczarczyk: <b>«Czy cały świat składa się z utajonych dzieł sztuki?» Ready-made jako model doświadczania rzeczywistości pozaartystycznej</b> .....	155
Adam Cichoń: <b>Deleuze, slow cinema i trwanie, czyli dokąd prowadzi nas obraz</b> .....	167
<b>Noty o Autorach</b> .....	182
<b>Informacje dla Autorów</b> .....	184

# Table of Contents

Bogna J. Gladden-Obidzińska: <b>Editorial</b> .....	5
■ <b>I. Back to (Beautiful) Things in Themselves</b>	
Josef Seifert: <b>Dietrich von Hildebrand's Defense of the Objectivity of Beauty in Music and His Critique of Aesthetic Subjectivism</b> . . .	7
Mátyás Szalay: <b>Living the Beauty – Experiencing Beauty: Contributions to a Critique of the Aesthetics of Dietrich von Hildebrand</b> .....	23
Dietrich von Hildebrand: <b>The Realm of Aesthetic Values: Metaphysical and Sensible Beauty</b> (trans. from German into Polish by Filip Borek) . . . .	41
■ <b>II. From Politics to Aesthetics of Disgust</b>	
Andrzej Gniazdowski: <b>Flesh and Blood (and Bone): The Psychopathology of Anarcho-Communism According to Aurel Kolnai</b> .....	61
Peter Mahr: <b>The Double Bind of Disgust: Kolnai, Derrida and Psychoanalysis in Philosophical Aesthetics Before and After 1968</b> .....	87
Aurel Kolnai: <b>Disgust (selected fragments)</b> (trans. from German into Polish by Robert Ignatowicz and Daniel Roland Sobota) .....	105
■ <b>III. Phenomenology and the Avant-Garde</b>	
Andrzej Krawiec: <b>The Anamorphosis of Works of Art from the Perspective of Jean-Luc Marion's Phenomenology</b> .....	121
Alicja Rybkowska: <b>The Legacy of the Avant-Garde Today: A Philosophical Perspective</b> .....	139
Paula Milczarczyk: <b>«Does the Whole World Consist of Latent Works of Art?» The <i>Ready-Made</i> as a Model for Experiencing Non-Artistic Reality</b> .....	155
Adam Cichoń: <b>Deleuze, <i>Slow Cinema</i> and Duration, or Where the Image Leads Us</b> .....	167
<b>Contributors</b> .....	182
<b>Notes for Contributors</b> .....	184

## Editorial

In their introduction to the English translation of Aurel Kolnai's "Der Ekel" ("On Disgust"), Carolyn Korsmeyer and Barry Smith mention that "[t]he first group of philosophers to embrace Husserl's phenomenological method were gathered together at the very beginning of the twentieth century in Munich. To the first generation of this group belong Max Scheler, Alexander Pfänder, Moritz Geiger, and Adolf Reinach, and to the second generation Dietrich von Hildebrand, the recently canonized Edith Stein, Aurel Kolnai, and the Polish phenomenologist and aesthetician Roman Ingarden. (It was especially in Poland, as a result of Ingarden's influence, that the Munich school continued into the second half of the twentieth century [...])."<sup>1</sup> This issue of *Sztuka i Filozofia / Art and Philosophy*, is dedicated to two themes – the value of the beautiful and the (dis)value of the disgusting – conceived and analysed in the realist phenomenological tradition by two of the abovementioned second generation of Husserlian students: von Hildebrand and Kolnai, respectively.

Von Hildebrand's theory of the objectivity of beauty in the aesthetics of music is explained by Josef Seifert, a former student of von Hildebrand and scholar of phenomenology, who explores von Hildebrandian arguments against theories that endorse the subjectivity of aesthetic values, in particular emotivism. Mátyás Szalay dedicates his essay to von Hildebrand's concept of the aesthetic experience as "value-response." In an analysis of the distinction between the primary aesthetic experience and the aesthetic experience conceived as a process of conscious reflection, Szalay develops a polemic against von Hildebrand's post-formalist aesthetics, in particular with respect to the narrative and processual aspects of the experience of "value-response." Aurel Kolnai's aesthetic thought, as intrinsically interwoven into his political philosophy and driven by its intellectual rooting as much in the German phenomenological school as in Hungarian psychoanalytical research, is explored by Andrzej Gniazdowski in his comprehensive article dedicated to Kolnai's early political philosophy as a liberal socialism that is based on the foundations of individualism, personalism and pluralism of values. Peter Mahr's article analyses the potential of Kolnai's theory of disgust for expanding contemporary aesthetics so as to include within its scope more categories than the traditional binary oscillation between the beautiful and the sublime (and their families) allows. To this purpose, Mahr looks into Kolnai's phenomenological theory from the perspective of Derrida's analyses of disgust, by grounding his method in their common roots in psychoanalysis.

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1 C. Korsmeyer and B. Smith, "Visceral Values: Aurel Kolnai on Disgust", in: *On Disgust*, ed. B. Smith and C. Korsmeyer, Chicago: Open Court, 2004, 6.

As neither the aesthetic works of von Hildebrand nor of Kolnai have been available in Polish yet, we are including translations of fragments of *Ästhetik* (1977) and *Der Ekel* (1929), carried out expertly by researchers in German phenomenology, Filip Borek, Daniel R. Sobota and Robert Ignatowicz, as an introduction to further inquiry into the studied thinkers' aesthetic theories in Poland.

Here we would like to express our deep gratitude to John H. Crosby and the Hildebrand Legacy Project and to John Haldane for granting us permission to translate and publish the aforementioned fragments of the works of von Hildebrand and Kolnai. Without their generosity we would not have been able to bring the project to its successful completion.

*Bogna J. Gladden-Obidzińska*

Peter Mahr

### The Double Bind of Disgust: Kolnai, Derrida and Psychoanalysis in Philosophical Aesthetics Before and After 1968

#### Abstract

Today it is obvious that, over the course of the last hundred years, cultural development effected an *approchement* of (de)sublimation and disgust. Relishing the sexual actions of primary genitalia (once objects of disgust) in ways acknowledged as perverse has become a sort of norm, as disgust has become a norm for some groups in society, like those with certain eating disorders. Likewise, the dis-inhibition of the sexual drive by means of disgust has become an artistic means in abject art. However, there is also a widespread consensus that the addiction to disgust remains in the realm of the taboo. Is disgust liberated, or could it be – generally and in the aesthetic area? Two different approaches – derived from the theories of Aurel Kolnai and Jacques Derrida – are analysed to explore what they say about the double bind character of disgust. References to psychoanalysis throw some additional light on the matter.

Keywords: Abject, Aesthetics, Jacques Derrida, Disgust, Aurel Kolnai, Immanuel Kant, Phenomenology, Psychoanalysis, 1968

*Spread the word around  
the rat is leaving town  
the message is a song  
the misery is gone  
...  
Please stay away*

Deep Purple, "Flight of the Rat"<sup>1</sup>

#### 1968

Regarding the song "Flight of the Rat" by Deep Purple, it has been noted that singer Ian Gillan revealed "that this song began as a joke: someone mentioned

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1 Deep Purple, "Flight of the Rat," on: *In Rock*, London: Harvest, 1970. Lyrics: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/deeppurple/flighttotherat.html>. Footnote numbers, translations and other items contained in square brackets throughout this text are insertions by PM. Also insertions between {} are by PM, in quotes where square brackets were already used by the translator.



the classical composition «Flight of the Bumble Bee» and Jon Lord started playing variations around it. «The Rat» is a reference to a drug habit – Deep Purple made occasional anti-drug references in their songs.<sup>2</sup> When Ian Gillan broached the issue of the “flight of the rat” in the “fugitive” and “aeronautic” song of the same name, assisted by guitarist Ritchie Blackmore’s disgusted neighing in bar 78 and organist Jon Lord’s expression of utmost resistance to the “rat” in bars 103 to 110 (and the two solos of drummer Ian Paice, accompanied, in one case, by Ritchie Blackmore), a dim light seemed to emerge on the horizon to overcome the catastrophes of disgust that happened hand in hand with cases of drug addiction like those of Janis Joplin, Brian Jones and Jimi Hendrix. Did this light become stronger when “Love Is The Drug” was proclaimed?<sup>3</sup> One would doubt it, given Robert Palmer’s confession in “Addicted to Love.”<sup>4</sup> And then, what about Yes’s inclusion of the ear worm in the third and final part of their “Starship Trooper?”<sup>5</sup>

Another symbolic example of disgust is the lost heroin needle in the movie *Trainspotting*,<sup>6</sup> in which one of the protagonists looks for a needle that he dropped in the toilet bowl and is miraculously sucked in by the bowl and spat out that very protagonist into a cesspool full of sewage in the floor below. From 2000 to 2002, MTV produced an aesthetically de-socialising filler entertainment series called *Jackass*,<sup>7</sup> whose episodes combined reality television and talk show, with dares and pranks including ‘funny’ confrontations with self-inflicted disgust and violence – well, was it art? Normally we tend to accept the impossibility of aesthetic objectivity and the impossibility of discussion of aesthetic judgements that are deemed arbitrary. But in that case, this impossibility was clearly overwhelmed by the moral and aesthetic distaste and disgust. The latter surpassed the ugliness in Duchamp’s ready-mades, of which the three best known since the 1960s – *Bicycle Wheel*, *Bottle Rack*, and *Fountain* – share the quality of potential disgust which may be caused by possible street dirt, rancid wine and urine/cigarette residues.

Besides its other significance, 1968 stands for a particularly intense confrontation with disgust in the visual arts. As part of the action *Kunst und Revolution* performed by the visual arts Viennese Actionists and the literary arts Wiener Gruppe, Günter Brus would defecate on the desk and stimulate his esophagus to vomit in Lecture Hall 1 of the New Departments Building at the University of Vienna on June 7, 1968. Dieter Roth produced *Mould Picture*,

2 Dougie (anonymous forum user), “Flight of the Rat” fact page, <http://www.songfacts.com/detail.php?id=7568> as accessed June, 19th 2018, referring to Ian Gillan and David Cohen, *Child in Time. The Life Story of the Singer from Deep Purple*, London: Smith Gryphon 1993. The Album of Deep Purple 1970 also contains the song “Speed King.”: References to classical music like the “Flight of the Bumble Bee,” originally part of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s opera titled *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, 1900, were a common practice among rock musicians of the time.

3 Roxy Music, “Love is the Drug,” on: *Siren*, London/New York: Islands/Atco, 1975. Lyrics: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/roxymusic/loveisthedrug.html>.

4 Robert Palmer, “Addicted to Love,” on: *Riptide*, London: Islands, 1985. Lyrics: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/robertpalmer/addictedtolove.html>.

5 Yes, “Starship Trooper,” on: *The Yes Album*, New York: Atlantic Records, 1971.

6 Danny Boyle, *Trainspotting*, London: Channel Four Films, Figment Films, Noel Gay Motion Picture Company, 1996.

7 See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackass\\_\(TV\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackass_(TV_series)).

*Bunny-dropping-bunny*, and *Portrait of the Artist as a Birdseed Bust*, all of which date from 1968, using the processes of putrefaction. He soon extended this action into philosophy, when he tore a copy of "Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Werke in 20 Bänden" into little pieces and made them rather enjoyable by colouring and mixing them with lard and spices and filling them in sausage casings for the sake of pure visual contemplation – Hegel otherwise: how disgusting! And disgust is the topic even in such a sublime and funny photograph as that of the self-depiction by artist Eva Hesse, who in 1968 lay on a sofa in black clothes and was covered all over (except feet, arms and head) with spaghetti-like thin white hoses that alluded to non-disgusting artistic intestines.<sup>8</sup>

## Aurel Kolnai

### a) Objects

According to Aurel Kolnai (1900-1973), the rat is among those animals – for the most part insects – that belong to one of nine "Types of Physically Disgusting Objects," according to his small treatise "Der Ekel" ("Disgust") from 1929, never published in English during his lifetime. The other eight types are the putrefied, excrements, secretions, the viscous, rotten food, the obtrusive body, exuberance, and bodily deformation.<sup>9</sup> Also, in disgust, any attachment to the "object" of food, creatures *et cetera* is rather schematic, saturated, precise. In other words, with disgust there is less content in imagination and fewer circumstances around the subject – i.e., less of a "relation to a state of affairs" (39)<sup>10</sup> or "determinate factual relation" (40), "Sachverhaltsbeziehung" (16/524) – and more of a condensed "object's own intrinsic constitution" (39), "Beschaffenheit an sich" (16/523) ["configuration towards the object"]. The proximity

8 See <http://ff2media.com/secondcityzivi/2016/06/10/eva-hesse-2016/>, the bottom photo.

9 A. Kolnai, "Disgust," in: *On Disgust*, ed. by B. Smith and C. Korsmeyer, Chicago: Open Court Publications 2004, 29-91, 114 ff., 52-62 (on the rat, 57); available today in German as: A. Kolnai, "Der Ekel," in: *Ekel, Haß, Hochmut. Zur Phänomenologie feindlicher Gefühle*, stw. 1845, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2007, 7-65, 29-38; in the German original as: A. Kolnai, "Der Ekel," in: *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* X (1929), 515-569. [http://www.digizeitschriften.de/dms/img/?PID=PPN827944462\\_0010%7CLOG\\_0011\\_536-545](http://www.digizeitschriften.de/dms/img/?PID=PPN827944462_0010%7CLOG_0011_536-545). The parts of the treatise are: "On the Delimitation of Disgust" (I. 30-36), including "Points of View" (I.1 30-33) and "Disgust and Fear as the Principal Types of Defence Reaction" (I.2 33-36); "Fear and Disgust" (II. 36-47), including "The Intentional Content of Fear and Anxiety" (II.1 36-39), "The Intentional Content of Disgust" (II.2 39-44) and "The Relations of Being and So-Being Involved in Fear and Disgust" (II.3 44-47); "The Disgusting" (III. 48-80), including "The Senses and Disgust" (III.1 48-52), "Types of Physically Disgusting Objects" (III.2 52-62), "Types of Morally Disgusting Objects" (III.3 62-72), and "The Relation of Disgust to Life and Death" (III.4 72-80); and "On the Ethics of Disgust" (IV. 80-90), including "The Ethical Function of Disgust" (IV.1 81-86) and "The Problem of Overcoming Disgust" (IV.2 86-90). Kolnai recounts that he applied for publication in the *Jahrbuch* in 1927 and was so encouraged by the acceptance of the text by co-editor Oscar Becker that he decided to study at Husserl's Universität Freiburg during the summer term of 1928. Cf. A. Kolnai, *Political memoirs*, ed. Francesca Murphy, Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999, 135-136. Kolnai also was so frank as to communicate what Husserl said about him: "«you can do description well, but are yet far from being a phenomenologist»" 137.

10 Hereafter, single page numbers are from Kolnai 2004, double page numbers from Kolnai 2007 and Kolnai 1929, and triple page numbers from all three editions. Translations and additions between square brackets are by myself. This elaborate procedure seems necessary because of ambiguities in the existing translation.

of a “concurrent object of the disgust sensation” (40)<sup>11</sup> causes an intentional, real turning away implying that the “tip of the intention” (39)<sup>12</sup> is elongated *into* the object with an always possible break-away of the subject from the object at the same time.

### b) Double Intention

The paradox embodied in the artistic examples of *Trainspotting*, *Jackass* and the 1968 sculptures listed above is a double bind that appears in addiction (and fetishism). This addiction is derived from a particular “disgust-addiction” (87/62/567) to which Kolnai refers when speaking of the “moral disgustingness of drunkenness” (49/26/533). The paradoxical psychological character of disgust manifests itself in fleeing *and* seeking the object or being attracted by the object *and* acting out one’s despicability of it. In this case, the turning away caused by disgust even extends to the subject, while the “intentional structure” (47/24/531) reveals itself to be more homogeneous than is the case in fear, as Kolnai observes (II.3). We are already at the centre of the matter (II.2). Unlike the defensive reaction of fear, disgust is structured double-intentionally. Although it is much more directed to the outside object than to the self, the self as an object to be sustained is *likewise* intended. Following this basic structure, Kolnai describes at great length the double intentionality of disgust in its “modes of aversions” (30) or “Defense Reaction[s]” (30, 33, 63).<sup>13</sup> All in all, these aspects of defences described by Kolnai<sup>14</sup> are motivated by a body-bound disgust directed at and responding to organic objects. Disgust is more like a temporary state than a process; it is intentionally more primitive and more immediately attached to impression, is characterised by a moderate degree of dependency. Finally, in the dynamic state of disgust can be observed (a) the proximity of disgust as experienced in mental representation that functions as a bridge between the arousal and the subject and that feels like a convergence of object and subject in the manner of inversion: “The disgusting object grins and smirks and stinks menacingly at us” (41)<sup>15</sup>, (b) the intention in the feeling of disgust undergoing unification to a great extent, while disgust “reaches out to the subject peripherally” (40)<sup>16</sup>, and (c) the look-and-feel of having no choice as if the object were an intention toward the subject, as if “lurking on the side of the object” (47)<sup>17</sup> and not a “destruction” as signified and embodied by “surplus of life” (72) but by the death intention as expressed in the contestation in the ambivalence of disgust.

11 “Mit-Objekt des Ekelgeföhls,” 16/524 [with-object of the disgust emotion].

12 “Spitze der Intention,” 16/524 [“pinnacle of intention”].

13 “Defense Reaction[s],” 30, 33, 63, is proper for “Abwehrreaktionen,” 8/517, but not for “Abwehrtönungen,” 10/518 [“shadings of defense”] or “Abwehrgeföhls,” 39/545 [“emotion of defense”].

14 Besides, defense is taken, if not explained, by Kolnai as psycho-physiological and not just psychological in character, as are defense mechanisms described in psychoanalysis, for instance by Anna Freud in *The ego and the mechanisms of defense*, New York: International University Press, 1953, first published in 1936.

15 “Das Ekelhafte grinst, starrt, stinkt uns «an»,” 17/525 [“The disgusting grins, smirks, stinks at us”].

16 “die Subjektperson selbst gleichsam an seiner Oberfläche ... intendiert,” 17/524 [“intends the subject somehow on its surface”].

17 “Lauern auf Seite des Objekts,” 23/531, at the same time containing the feel of a provoked “rejection-intention,” (88)/ – “Verwerfungsentention,” 62/567.

### c) *Sosein*

The mode of the “so-being” of disgust (44)<sup>18</sup> is bound to the subject’s existence by proximity and environment, by the lust or greed for, or drive to, something similar to the disgusting thing and by the lust for an alien element in myself.

### d) Reflection

At the higher level of cognitive reflection on disgust we can develop an attitude of mental “concern with one’s own vulnerability” (78)<sup>19</sup>, a perspective not so much oriented to our “own destiny as food for worms” (78)<sup>20</sup> but with

a state of nausea that is related to the object: a rushing through its features, through its so-being, which culminates in a final pushing away directed against it. ... Such a powerful instinctual reaction of ‘pushing away’ would of course be impossible under conditions of complete putting out of action of the moment of concern over one’s own existence (of the sort which occurs at the maximal limit in the attitude of aesthetic evaluation). (78)<sup>21</sup>

And Kolnai adds: “But this intention towards existence is not directed simply to one’s own situation (one’s own survival), as this is subject to the causal efficacy of the object, but rather through its proximity” (78).<sup>22</sup> For Kolnai, this proximity is contingent *and* – by means of the subject’s tension (*nisus*) – substantial: metaphysically ambient. In consequence, we find ourselves in a state “where the existential situation becomes conditioned and formed by a plenitude of features and where, on the other side, the existential situation itself is again represented in featural determinations and permeates the latter” (78-79).<sup>23</sup> This

18 “Soseinsart,” 21/528 [“kind of being-like / being-that”]. On the one hand, with *Sosein*, Kolnai unmistakably opposes modally and existentially the primacy of *Dasein* with *Angst* in Martin Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, a text that appeared two years prior to Kolnai’s treatise in Husserl’s *Jahrbuch*. Cf. Martin Heidegger, “Sein und Zeit. (Erste Hälfte.)”, in: *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* VIII (1927), v-ix, 1-438, [http://www.digizeitschriften.de/dms/toc/?PID=PPN827944462\\_0008](http://www.digizeitschriften.de/dms/toc/?PID=PPN827944462_0008). This opposition is given a higher profile with Kolnai, “The Standard Modes of Aversion: Fear, Hate and Disgust,” in: *On Disgust*, op. cit., 93-108, 115, section 4, written in 1973. On the other hand, disgust could have amounted to still another of Heidegger’s existentials in *Being and Time*. Heidegger’s *Sosein*, incidentally, is translated by Macquarrie and Robinson as being-as-it-is, maybe in order to render the alignment of the *Sosein* to the traditional ground of *Daßsein* (Being-that) against which *Dasein* is silhouetted. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 24, 26, 34, 67. However, it is more likely that with *Sosein* (and *Wesensregion*, see below) Kolnai alluded to the terminology of Max Scheler, the antipode of Heidegger before Scheler’s death in 1928.

19 “Verweilen bei der eigenen Brüchigkeit,” 53/559 [“dwelling on one’s own fragility”].

20 “eigenen Bestimmung als «Fraß der Würmer»,” 53/559 [“own destiny as a «grub of worms»”].

21 “Übelsein, ein Durchhuschen seiner Beschaffenheit, seines Soseins, in einen entfernenden Stoß gegen denselben mündend. ... «entfernender Stoß»; eine so heftige, gleichsam triebmäßige Abwehrreaktion wäre ja bei voller Ausschaltung des Daseinsmoments (deren maximalen [sic!] Grenzfall in der ästhetischen Bewertung zutage tritt) gar nicht möglich,” 53/559 [“nauseation, a scampering of one’s configuration, one’s being-like/being-that, within a distancing push discharged against it (the object)... «distancing push»; such an intense, somehow drive-like defense reaction would not be possible at all with full elimination of the moment of existence (whose maximum limiting case appears in aesthetic evaluation)”].

22 “Nur richtet sich diese Daseinsintention nicht auf die eigene Lage schlechthin (den eigenen Bestand), mit ihrer Bedingtheit durch die Wirksamkeit des Gegenstandes; sondern auf diese Nähe des Gegenstandes,” 53/559 [“For this intention of existence is related not to the very situation plainly (the very continuance!) with its conditionality by the object’s efficacy, but to the *proximity* to the object”].

23 “daß eine Daseinslage durch eine Fülle von Soseinselementen bestimmt und gestaltet wird – und daß andererseits die Daseinslage selbst wieder in einem Sosein vertreten ist, dieses Sosein durchwaltet,” 54/559 [the “situation of existence (*Daseinslage*) is determined and formed by an abundance of elements

attitude of a mental “dwelling on one’s own fragility” contains and conceals an ultimate ability for conceiving, a “substantial proximity which touches the *general* properties of our being and at the same time represents in a concentrated manner the specific features of the object giving rise to disgust” (79).<sup>24</sup> That means that for us existentially, “[i]n the subject’s experience it is the specific situation in which ... [the subject is] intended” (79). (Or: “Im Erlebnis wird ... die spezielle Lage ... intendiert” (54/559).) Hence, “[h]ere this special situation, the proximity of the object with its quite characteristic intention towards life and towards death constitutes a unity between the object itself and its announcing of life and death” (79).<sup>25</sup> Above all we need to pay attention, as Kolnai demands, to the possibility that the perverse and aggressive proximity of the object may threaten to swell like a landslide, “[h]ence the defense reaction of repulsion against it along with the intention towards its features which is central to it” (79).<sup>26</sup> At a higher level of reflection, we are able to recognise that this basic structure is so fundamental to disgust that with an “understanding of the peculiar phenomenon ... an object that of its nature would not be disgusting can under certain circumstances appear to be so through proximity” (79).<sup>27</sup> Here, Kolnai names tedium and, for example – another potential double bind! – the special form of sexual encounter enjoyed *and* detested at once. Here one could take into account – which Kolnai doesn’t – the preliminary stage of disgust in three-year-old children crying because of chewing gum that is stuck to them and which they are unable to remove, for whom the feelings of fear and disgust are not yet separated.

### e) The Senses

Of course, Kolnai does not forget to consider disgust as based on the senses: “so-being” is found in a “range of interconnections among intentions of various kinds” (50),<sup>28</sup> which is particularly the case in the sense of smell. Smell, for Kolnai, is an intimate sense modality, along with the “urge” to vomit (50).<sup>29</sup> This is surprising, for in Kolnai’s theory of disgust, smell is not conceived in unity with

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of the being-like/being-that (*Sosein*) – and, on the other hand, the situation of existence itself stands in again with a being-like/being-that (*Sosein*) and penetrates this being-like/being-that”].

24 “daß ... diese substantielle, auf unseren *allgemeinen* Seiseigenschaften mit beruhende Nähe im *speziellen* Sosein des ekeleinflößenden Gegenstandes verdichtungsweise vertreten ist,” 54/559 [“this substantial proximity that rests on our *general* properties of existence is represented in a *special* being-like/being-that of the object infusing disgust in a condensed way”].

25 “Nun aber bildet diese spezielle Lage, die Nähe jenes Gegenstandes mit der eigentümlichen Lebens- und Todesintention, mit der Beschaffenheit des Gegenstandes selbst, mit seiner Lebens- und Todesdemonstration, eine Einheit,” 54/560 [“But now this special situation – the proximity of that object together with the peculiar intention of life and death – forms a unity with the configuration of the object itself., together with its demonstration of life and death”].

26 “Daher die wegstoßende Abwehrreaktion gegen ihn nebst seiner zentralen Soseinsintendierung,” 54/560 [“Hence the result is a defense reaction pushing the object away from its central intending in being-like/being-that”].

27 “(dass im) Verständnis jenes Sonderphänomens ... die Nähe eines Gegenstandes, der an sich der Beschaffenheit nach nicht per se ekelhaft wäre, ihn selber, sein Sosein ‘ekelhaft’ erscheinen lassen kann,” 55/560 [“understanding of that extra phenomenon ... the proximity of an object that is not disgusting per se can make its being-like/being-that appear as «disgusting»”].

28 “Beziehungskreis,” 26/533 [“sphere of relations”].

29 “Erbrechensintention,” 26/533 [“intention of vomiting”].

taste. Moreover, Kolnai separates smell from taste by excluding it from theory though not from description. Besides, compared to the sense of touch, smell is deemed by Kolnai to be more unambiguous and, as compared to sight, more involved in the "region where we can grasp the essence of the object" (51).<sup>30</sup>

#### f) The Aesthetic

Where is the "aesthetic"<sup>31</sup> in or of disgust for Kolnai? The "aesthetic" does seem to move within the circle of attention only because of his reservations against arts (like literature) displaying disgust – be that disappointing for our aesthetic concerns or not. One explanation for this definitive choice by Kolnai could be the low standing of aesthetics in interwar-period academic philosophy or his own lack of interest at the time.<sup>32</sup> As a matter of fact, in "Disgust" Kolnai does not deal with aesthetic aspects. True, he ponders and rejects disgust in music, even in the case of cacophony (49/26/532ff.), which for him is a case of rather moral than aesthetic disgust; he does not consider the ear worm.<sup>33</sup> What he considers as aesthetic is the "demonstrative «life dance»" (58/34/540), however, without the warmth of life, as in the example of our disgust with insects. Besides, in his treatise, Kolnai entertains several references to literature. He discusses the "Relationship of disgust to Life and Death" (II.3, 44-47/48-55/553-561), with a short hint in passing at the ambivalence of disgust in the Decadent movement (77/52/558). Further, he describes "Types of moral disgust" (III.3, 52-62/39-47/545-553), with an example of the demonstration of permanent inactivity expressing the disgust with tedium in Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomow* (64/40/546), and mentions the superfluous wealth of ideas in Thomas Mann's *Zauberberg* (67/43/549). Finally, he criticises the worship of the soul in elements of Russian literature which are, however, unspecified. With these examples, Kolnai targets disgust more as an ethical<sup>34</sup> than an aesthetic force,

30 "Wesensregion des Gegenstandes," 28/534 ["region of the essence of the object"].

31 Cf. Bernard Bosanquet, *A History of Aesthetic*, London/New York: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. / Humanities Press Inc., 1966, Reprint 2nd ed. 1904. Throughout his book, the author plays with recounting the senses of the aesthetic as a qualitative entity while "only" presenting a history of aesthetics.

32 Maybe Kolnai's extensive occupation with disgust led him to call for more rigour. Be that as it may, it is important that Winfried Menninghaus criticised Kolnai for his conservative, authoritarian tendencies that favoured a "healthy" heterosexuality (61/37/543), the unconditional obedience of a "soldier" (67/43/549), and political "dictatorship" in opposition to corruption (75/50/556). Cf. W. Menninghaus, *Disgust. The theory and history of a strong sensation*, trans. by H. Eiland and J. Golb, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003, esp.: "Introduction: Between Vomiting and Laughing. Base Lines of a Philosophy of Disgust," section "Aurel Kolnai, Der Ekel (1929)," last page. It is disappointing that Carolyn Korsmeyer, who up to 2004 had widely published on aesthetics and disgust, does not touch any possible implications or the reasons of neglect of aesthetics in Kolnai's text, cf. C. Korsmeyer and B. Smith, "Visceral Values: Aurel Kolnai on Disgust," in: A. Kolnai, *On Disgust*, op. cit., 1-25. For Kolnai, in "The Standard Modes of Aversion..." op. cit., disgust is an "aesthetic emotion," 100, but he does not give any evidence for this classification. To be fair, one must note that Moritz Geiger's 1913 "Beiträge zur Phänomenologie des ästhetischen Genusses" (to which Kolnai does not refer) remained the only and relatively small contribution to the 11 volumes of the hugely influential periodical *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* from 1913 to 1930, which at the time was not favourable to philosophical aesthetics.

33 I propose that the phenomenon of the ear worm be considered as a form of acoustic disgust.

34 According to Lee Congdon in: *Exile and Social Thought: Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria, 1919-1933*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, 236, Kolnai's primary philosophical interest after his first book – A. Kolnai, *Psychoanalyse und Soziologie. Zur Psychologie von Masse und*

with the exception of passages like those stating that “disgust is more aesthetically determined than is fear” (34/11/519) or referring to “the role of the rejecting judgment of taste in the arousal of disgust” (45/22/529). In general, Kolnai does not seek to unearth the potential of a philosophical aesthetics or a philosophy of the arts. This shows in the sub-chapter titled “The problem of «overcoming» of disgust” (IV.2, 86-90/61-64/566-569), where Kolnai provides an interpretation of Franz Werfel’s “beautiful poem” (86/61/566) titled “Jesus und der Äser-Weg” (80ff./56/561, 89ff./63ff./568ff.). There is no reference to the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant or Friedrich Nietzsche,<sup>35</sup> who both wrote about disgust, nor to aesthetic aspects in phenomenology.

## Psychoanalysis

Moreover, there is no connection to the (aesthetic) observations of psychoanalysis. Kolnai refers to psychoanalysis once explicitly (42ff./19/527) and more often terminologically and thematically. But he could have connected his thought to psychoanalysis as Kolnai had already acknowledged psychoanalysis in his 1925 discussion of the critique of psychoanalysis by Max Scheler in *The Nature of Sympathy*,<sup>36</sup> whom Kolnai considered the head of the phenomenological school at that time. For Kolnai, Scheler’s phenomenology targets a prepsychology

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*Gesellschaft*, Leipzig/Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1920 – was ethics, particularly after he had read: Max Scheler, “Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik,” in: *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* I (1913), 405-565, M. Scheler, “Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik,” in: *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* II (1916), 21-478, and M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy*, trans. by P. Heath, New Brunswick / London: Transaction Publishers, 2008, 1st German ed. 1913 and 2nd German ed. 1923. In Kolnai’s *Psychoanalyse und Soziologie...*, there had been no trace of an occupation with aesthetics, besides listing Otto Rank’s *Der Künstler*, although the *libido* could have been a cause for it, as it was liberated by the destruction of bourgeois society by anarchism and communism as Kolnai has it, in that book, with Georg Lukács’s Leninism, according to Congdon, op. cit., 234ff. This interest would also show in Kolnai’s Vienna Ph.D. dissertation *Der ethische Wert und die Wirklichkeit*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1927, an enquiry into value ethics in which Scheler is the author most often referred to and in which the only line dedicated to aesthetics states that the relation of “ethics to aesthetics [is] like that of holding value to being pleasing,” 21 [trans. PM]. Francis Dunlop in *The life and thought of Aurel Kolnai*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002, 114, is certainly right in saying that Kolnai’s endeavour in the area of negative emotions like disgust was conceived “to supplement and complement Scheler’s work,” who himself intended to publish a complement. When Kolnai began to publish in aesthetics, only in 1964, for the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, his inclination to ethics shows already in his articles’ titles.

35 After Nietzsche had already exclaimed a great loathing for man in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883) and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), he pleaded in *Ecce Homo* for art as a solution to the problem by forming man in stone, a material as tasteless and odourless as possible (1908, written in 1888/89), like the ready-mades: “Zarathustra became master even of his loathing of man; man is to him a thing unshaped, raw material, an ugly stone that needs the sculptor’s chisel,” in: F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo (Nietzsche’s Autobiography)*, trans. by A. M. Ludovici, *The Complete Works*, Volume 17, ed. by O. Levy, New York: Macmillan, 1924, 113.

36 Cf. M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy...*, op. cit. A. Kolnai, “Max Schelers Kritik und Würdigung der Freudschen Libidolehre,” in: *Imago. Zeitschrift für Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften* 11, Leipzig/Wien/Zürich: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1925, 135-146, 136, <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/imago1925/0151/image>. As Congdon reports in: L. Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought*, op. cit., 234-235, Kolnai’s first book, when he was twenty, was already conveyed to Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag by fellow Hungarian and psychoanalyst Sándor Ferenczi in 1920. This was the same publisher for which Ferenczi was co-editor of *Imago*.

and not Sigmund Freud's metapsychology of the essence of the laws of appearances. Scheler's critique of psychoanalysis is centered in the claim that love is independent from sexuality, to which developmentally belong perversions, sublimation and (by means of disgust, shame and incest shyness) repression. Scheler, however, according to Kolnai, unfortunately misunderstands Freud's concept of repression, the removal of affect-driven representation from consciousness. Again, Kolnai did not communicate his theoretical attitude toward Freud here or three years later in "Disgust". He could have had, as Freud did, a distinctive place for disgust. According to Freud, the sexual drive has one goal: sexual satisfaction. Obstacles or excessive excitement shift the drive away from the sexual object in the preparatory stage of sexual action to the appearance either of the whole body or of one of its erogenous zones like the eyes and the skin. The consequence of the shift is the victory of the powerful achievements of culture. Disgust enters the picture because – being one of the forms of repression like shame and morality, originally distinct from sublimation – it can draw attention as an intermediary sexual goal or, as happens more often, function as an inhibition of the sexual drive.<sup>37</sup> Whereas Kolnai's text "Disgust" does not take account of Freud's psychoanalysis (nor of phenomenology itself), Derrida's "Economimesis" does.

### Jacques Derrida

For Derrida, the work of art – *ergon* – can only be conceived on the basis of the marginal, material artistic conditions of pedestal, frame, applause, title, etc. – the *parergon* – just as language (speech) can only be conceived on the basis of writing. This principle is the core of Jacques Derrida's aesthetics and general philosophy. Like almost everything in Derrida's thought, this principle is developed by means of reading and commenting on a philosophical text – in the case of aesthetics, primarily Kant's *Third Critique*. One can see how Derrida's reading of Kant in "Economimesis" (1975) contains a whole aesthetics and philosophy of art, which culminate in a discussion of the role of disgust. For Derrida, his post-Husserlian (post-phenomenological, post-structuralist) transcendental idealism requires him to occupy himself with the transcendental idealism of Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement* as well as – informed by the post-anthropology of Michel Foucault<sup>38</sup> – Kant's *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*. It is remarkable that in close proximity to "Economimesis" (1975), Derrida published *Glas* (1990 (1974)), "Le facteur de la vérité" (1980

37 S. Freud, "Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie (1905)," in: *Studienausgabe V. Sexualleben*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1972, 37-145, in particular 55, 79, 111, 85, 66-68. For full bibliographic references for this and other works of Freud in German and in English and French translation, see P. Mahr, "Bibliographie. Inhaltsverzeichnisse von vier Werkausgaben Sigmund Freuds", <http://homepage.univie.ac.at/peter.mahr/2012.3.html>.

38 M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1966; M. Foucault, *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, trans. by R. Nigro and K. Briggs, ed. by R. Nigro, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008 (thèse complémentaire, Université de Paris, Faculté des lettres et des sciences humaines, 1961, published in 1964).



(1975)), "Foreword: *Fors: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok*" (1986 (1976)) and particularly "Parergon" (1987 (1974)) – all of which depart from Kant and refer to or are strongly informed by Freud<sup>39</sup> and by references to double bind theory.<sup>40</sup>

In "Parergon", examples of *parerga* are as diverse as the dead language of ancient Greek as an *hors-d'oeuvre* for education, with Kant, or the *bord* of the border and the board form *parerga* (P 54, E 20<sup>41</sup>). Kant's dynamic sublime is a singular case. It is commented on by Derrida in the following way: "paragraph 27 [of Kant's *Third Critique*<sup>42</sup>] speaks of an emotion which ... can be compared to a shock, to a tremor or a shaking due to the rapid alternation or even to the simultaneity of an attraction and a repulsion. Attraction/repulsion of the same object. Double bind. There is an excess here, a surplus, a superabundance ... which opens an abyss" (P 129). However, bringing together the disgusting and the sublime is not Derrida's strategy. Concerning the bodily precondition for taste and (poetic) speech, the emptiness of the mouth – the paradigmatic orifice – is to be filled with language<sup>43</sup> and is usually complemented by the

39 J. Derrida, "Économimésis," in: Silviane Agacinski, Jacques Derrida, Sarah Kofman, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, Bernard Pautrat, *Mimésis. Des articulations*, Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1975, 57-93; *Glas*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990 (1974); "Le facteur de la vérité", in: *La carte postale de Socrate à Freud et au-delà*, Paris: Flammarion, 1980, 439-524 (1975), [https://archive.org/stream/DerridaJacquesLaCartePostale1980/Derrida\\_Jacques\\_La\\_carte\\_postale\\_1980\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/DerridaJacquesLaCartePostale1980/Derrida_Jacques_La_carte_postale_1980_djvu.txt); "Foreword: *Fors: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok*," in: Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Wolf Man's Magic Word: a Cryptonymy*, trans. by Nicholas Rand, as vol. 37 of *Theory and History of Literature*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, xi-xlviii, (1976); J. Derrida, "Parergon," in: *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, 15-147.

40 A double bind theory that also accounts for addiction. For Derrida, addiction (to disgust) means that you lose your name (or head) because you have become ad-dicted to something else – in the case here, to disgust. But this loss may become one's aim, consciously and responsibly, not just in art. Cf. J. Derrida, "The Rhetoric of Drugs" [interview by J.-M. Hervieu], in: *Points. Interviews 1974-1994*, trans. by Elisabeth Weber, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995, 228-254, (1989).

41 P 54 stands for "Parergon," page 54; E 20 stands for "Economimésis," in: J. Derrida, "Economimésis," trans. by R. Klein, in: *Diacritics* 11 (1981), No. 2/June, 2-25, page 20.

42 I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. by P. Guyer and E. Matthews, ed. by P. Guyer, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 140-143. [http://www.univie.ac.at/immanuel\\_kant\\_kritik\\_der\\_urteilskraft/](http://www.univie.ac.at/immanuel_kant_kritik_der_urteilskraft/).

43 Concerning the Freudian part, it is worth noting that, as a philosopher, Derrida had already published his seminal text "Freud et la scène de l'écriture," in: *L'écriture et la différence*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967, 288-340; he had also been a friend of Hungarian-French psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok since the 1950s and had been married to a psychoanalyst since 1957. In the mid-1970s the psychoanalytical context of "Parergon" is made clear by "Fors", Derrida's preface for a book by two psychoanalysts about Freud's 'wolf man,' in which Derrida emphasises psychoanalyst Ferenczi's concept of introjection from 1919, cf. Sándor Ferenczi, "Foreword," in *Fors: The English Words...*, op. cit., xxxviii: "On the borderline between the outside and the inside, itself a system of edges, the buccal orifice plays this paradigmatic role in introjection only to the extent that it is *first* a silent spot in the body, never totally ceases to be silent, and only «speaks» through supplementarity." Incidentally, this position is considered by Derrida to be the point of departure for Hungarian-French psychoanalyst and phenomenologist Nicholas Abraham's "«transphenomenology»" of 1961, to which Derrida subscribes (in his "Fors", op. cit., xxx). Abraham's and Torok's book is an interpretation of Sigmund Freud's case study "Aus der Geschichte einer infantilen Neurose («Der Wolfsmann»)" 1918 (1914), in: *Studienausgabe VIII. Zwei Kinderneurosen*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1969. Also, it needs to be remembered that already in the 1950s Abraham was endeavouring to phenomenologically deepen psychoanalysis. Cf. *Recherches pour un approfondissement phénoménologique de la psychanalyse, Séminaires de psychologie phénoménologique* 1, Paris: Séminaires de psychologie phénoménologique, 1959.

compensatory element of the “[c]olossal *Fort: Da*”<sup>44</sup>. What comes-in-front{de vant}-of-it-to-erect-itself. Having to erect itself in the excessive movement of its own disappearance, of its unrepresentable presentation. The obscenity of its abyss” (P 145). To this colossal “*Away: Here*,” Derrida compares “the ... Freudian problematic of the Medusa (erection/castration/apotropaic)” (P 121), which could be linked with the persistent analysis of sexual erection and the “*bande double*” in Derrida’s *Glas* with “*bander*” standing for penile erection (Derrida 1990, 23, 66, 133, 201, 226ff., 247). And again, Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is explicitly mentioned when addressing Kant’s sublime:

What is excluded from this discourse (and what is excluded from the inside forms that internal lack which always calls for the parergonal frame), is thus not the sans [the without] of the without-end but the counter of the counter-end. The question of counter-finality (Zweckwidrigkeit [in: *Third Critique*, § 23, third paragraph: contrapurposive, C 129])<sup>45</sup> making use of violence and producing what Kant calls not a beyond of pleasure or a pleasure of the beyond, but, in a formula which could figure in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a «negative pleasure» (negative Lust [in: *Immanuel Kant, Third Critique*, § 23, second paragraph, C 129]), is the question of the sublime. (P 102)

And with reference to “*Economimesis*,” Derrida emphasises a rejection (or at least restriction) of mimesis already in Kant (P 47-48), connects Kant’s reservations to his own hierarchical division of the fine arts (C 198, 200, § 51; P 116) and pronounces that “*Against imitation but by analogy ... economimesis ... which always forms itself anew ... nonetheless leaves an embouchure [mouthpiece, river mouth] each time*” (P 118-119).

### a) Kant’s Disgust

After this brief inquiry, let us turn now to how disgust is addressed by Derrida in aesthetic as well as anthropological theory. In contrast to Kant’s (and already Edmund Burke’s) complementarity of the beautiful and the sublime (deemed by Derrida to be not radical enough), Derrida claims in “*Economimesis*” that the disgusting is not the opposite of the beautiful but the very basis that undermines any judgement, not only the aesthetic judgement of the beautiful. The disgusting amounts to be the absolute other, which means that the disgusting may come with vomit, which is more disgusting than anything else. Derrida is cunning and goes to the extreme: “*Why vomit then, as a parergon of the third Critique considered as a general synthesis of transcendental idealism?*” (E 21).<sup>46</sup>

44 «Fort: Da,» Eng.: «*Away: Here*», a children’s game, is examined by Freud, “*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*,” Eng.: “*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,” in: S. Freud, *Studienausgabe III. Psychologie des Unbewußten*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1975 (1920), 213-272.

45 C 129 stands for (*Third Critique*, page 129, in I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, op. cit.

46 It is worth noting that Julia Kristeva’s grafting of the abject on the disgusting in: J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by L. S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press 1982 (1980), was widely read in the 1980s and 90s humanities and art world and certainly contributed to undertaking the publishing of the translations of Kolnai’s text that had lain in a desk drawer for a long time, according to the “*Preface*,” in: A. Kolnai, *On Disgust*, op. cit., vii ff. Kristeva drew criticism from Rosalind Krauss because of a purported neglect of the origin of the concept of abjection in Georges Bataille. Cf. R. Krauss, “*Le destin de l’informe*,” in: Y.-A. Bois and R. E. Krauss (eds.), *L’informe: mode d’emploi*, Paris: Éd. du Centre Pompidou, 1996, 222-243, 224-227 (presented as: “*L’informe: mode d’emploi*,” 22 mai – 26 août 1996; exposition présentée par le Centre National d’Art et de Culture

That question may be taken as the point of departure of Derrida's long chain of musings. Going through it can disclose Derrida's theory-in-actu-interpretandi.

### b) The Ugly and the Sublime in Kant

Most importantly, Derrida quotes one of two passages in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* with the word "disgust": "[O]nly one kind of ugliness cannot be represented in a way adequate to nature without destroying all aesthetic satisfaction, hence beauty in art, namely, that which arouses loathing [Ekel]" (C 190, § 48).<sup>47</sup> Derrida offers this comment:

The absolute excluded does not allow itself even to be granted the status of an object of negative pleasure or of ugliness redeemed by representation. It is unrepresentable [to a degree beyond the sublime]. And at the same time it is unnameable in its singularity. If one could name it or represent it, it would begin to enter into the auto-effective circle of mastery or reappropriation. An economy would be possible. [But] The disgusting X ... is ... in-sensible and un-intelligible, irrepresentable and unnameable, the absolute other of the system. (E 22)<sup>48</sup>

In the same context and again with relation to Kant's § 48, Derrida says:

the Fine-Arts can give beauty to ugly or displeasing things and therein lies their superiority. ... The ugly, the evil, the false, the monstrous, the negative in general can be assimilated by art ... to the system. [But] A single 'thing' is unassimilable. It will therefore form the transcendental of the transcendental, the non-transcendentalisable, the non-idealisable, and that is the *disgusting*.

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Georges Pompidou dans l'espace de la Galerie Sud). Kristeva refers to Kant's ethics in general (29), but not to Derrida's "Economimesis," or *Glas*, where, with reference to a text of Jean Genet, a policeman draws a tube of mentholated vaseline from the pocket of a narrator – the occasion for Derrida to get close to nominalising the abject: "The object is abject («the very sign of abjection»)," Cf. J. Derrida, *Glas*, op. cit., 144. Menninghaus says that nothing more than a mere relation between Derrida's argument and Kristeva's "abjection" can be established. Cf. Menninghaus, *Disgust...*, op. cit. footnote 16 at the beginning of Section IX, "Abject Mother (Kristeva), Abject Art, and the Convergence of Disgust, Truth, and the Real," 365ff. It would be a thrilling exercise to unearth Kristeva's roots in Derrida and demonstrate how her transformation of disgust into the power of abjection popularised Derrida in the art world and the humanities discreetly.

47 In German: "nur eine Art Häßlichkeit kann nicht der Natur gemäß vorgestellt werden, ohne alles ästhetische Wohlgefallen, mithin die Kunstschönheit, zugrunde zu richten: nämlich diejenige, welche *Ekel* erweckt." The other locus not used by Derrida is: "in all beautiful art what is essential consists ... not in the matter of sensation (the charm or the emotion), where it aimed merely at enjoyment, which leaves behind it nothing in the idea, and makes the spirit dull, the object by and by loathsome, and the mind ... dissatisfied with itself and moody." C 203, § 52.

48 One needs to keep in mind that Derrida, with Georges Bataille, aims at giving a perspective on an economy that transcends the confines of everyday political economy, as well as that of Hegel and Marx, who still aim at sublation and reappropriation of that which is given other than by way of ecstasis. Cf. J. Derrida, "De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale. Un hegelianisme sans réserve," in: *L'écriture et la différence*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967, 369-407. Besides, for Derrida, as Menninghaus says, in art any example of disgust quickly converts itself into a non-example of disgust. Cf. last page of Section I, "The Disgust Taboo, and the Omnipresence of Disgust in Aesthetic Theory," 25ff. Menninghaus's most important reference to Derrida, with a mention of Bourdieu, is the expression of doubt in Derrida's reading of Kant's § 48: the lack of examples in Kant, says Menninghaus, is not a limitation, because Kant could take for granted that Lessing's examples were known at the time. Yes, disgust is irrepresentable, because it deconstructs the logocentric system, hierarchisation and economy. But there are many examples in the *Anthropology*, taken by Kant to be adequate. Moreover, Kant thinks that disgust is useful in the economy and there is the limit of aesthetic transcendence: any example is a remedy in Kant, says Menninghaus. Cf. Menninghaus, op. cit., first page of Section III, "«Strong Vital Sensation» and Organon of Philosophy: The Judgment of Disgust in Kant," 103 ff.

It presents itself ... as a 'species' ... of the hideous or hateful, but one quickly observes that it is not a species that would peacefully belong to its genus. (E 22)<sup>49</sup>

Here Derrida indeed follows Kant, who in the aforementioned § 48 of the *Third Critique* held representation impossible in the case of:

...that which arouses loathing. For since in this strange sensation, resting on sheer imagination, the object is represented as if it were imposing the enjoyment which we are nevertheless forcibly resisting, the artistic representation of the object is no longer distinguished in our sensation itself from the nature of the object itself, and it then becomes impossible for the former to be taken as beautiful. (C 190)

The proof for Derrida is this:

Vomit is related to enjoyment {jouissance}, if not pleasure. It even represents the very thing that forces us to enjoy – in spite of ourselves {notre corps défendant} [*our body defending itself*]. But this representation annuls itself, and that is why vomit remains unrepresentable. {A representation of the irrepresentable, a presentation of the unrepresentable, is also the structure of the colossal, as it is described, or circumvented, in § 26. Cf. «Le colossal» [50] ...} ... it abolishes representative distance ... forces us to consume, but without allowing any chance for idealisation. ... It can be neither beautiful, nor ugly, nor sublime, give rise neither to positive nor negative, neither to interested nor disinterested pleasure. (E 22)

We see that what seemed to be reserved to the sublime in Kant, turns out to be more relevant for the disgusting. It is the disgusting that has to do with negative pleasure. Kant still, in § 23 of the *Third Critique*, "Transition from the faculty for judging the beautiful to that for judging the sublime" (C 128-130), called "negative pleasure" (C 129), a distinctive feature of the sublime. For Derrida, "the sublime is not the absolute other of the beautiful. It still provokes a certain pleasure. Its [interior] negativity does indeed provoke a disagreement between the faculties and disorder in the unity of the subject" (E 21). The "sublime ... can dawn in art" (E 21). So, the interior negativity is not condemned to silence. It is all the more active.<sup>51</sup> "Economic calculation allows the sublime to be swallowed [and sublated]" (E 22).

### c) Kant's Arts and Senses

We have seen so far that the whole affair has to do with the mouth. We further see that in the sentient *and* representational functions of the face can be found all the major expressive functions of the fine arts. This is derived by Kant in § 51 of the *Third Critique*. Art is "the *expression* of aesthetic ideas ... that people use in speaking in order to communicate to each other ... This consists in the *word*, the *gesture*, and the *tone* (articulation, gesticulation, and modulation)" (C 197ff.), the first of which are the "arts of *speech*, ... *rhetoric and poetry*" (C 198), the second the "*pictorial arts*" containing the "*plastic arts* ... sculpture

49 This is the place to reinforce Derrida's objection to the subordination of the disgusting under the ugly, as had become, misleadingly, influential through Karl Rosenkranz, *Ästhetik des Häßlichen*, RB 1341, Leipzig: Reclam, 1990, first edition 1853, [http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/rosenkranz\\_aes-thetik\\_1853](http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/rosenkranz_aes-thetik_1853)), 252-260: Section 3. Defiguration, B. The Adverse, III, The Hideous, b) The Disgusting.

50 This "Cf." refers to part IV, "The Colossal" in Derrida's "Parergon," op. cit., 119-147.

51 "General remark on the exposition of aesthetic reflective judgments," C 149-159.

and architecture" (C 199) and the "art[s] of the painter" with "painting proper ... [and] the art of pleasure gardens" (C 200), and the third the "art[s] of the beautiful play of sensations of hearing and sight, ... music and the art of colors [like the ornament or fireworks]" (C 201). According to this hierarchy, the arts of the word occupy the highest rank. They are uttered by the mouth and privilege listening as one of the five senses. Listening is classified as one of the objective senses (like seeing), with perception of the object mediated by air. This is the point where Derrida's "Economimesis" switches to Kant's *Anthropology* and its classification. Acoustic vibrations are intentionally caused, while in smell and taste „the sensible gets mixed in, with saliva for example, and penetrates the organ without preserving its objective subsistence" (E 19). But the art of the mouth, speech, is primary – not that of singing, because "poetry with music in song" (C 203) is already a combined art. For Derrida, the mouth is not only part of the face, as are the eyes, the nose, the ears or – gesticulation! – the skin. Moreover, the mouth, for Derrida, organises all organs. It cares for input, i.e., eats, drinks, and for output; it emits and expresses aesthetic ideas. The "emitting production" (E 16), as a matter of fact, includes vomiting [and spitting], besides speaking. Taking this feature only, the poem could not be the highest art, as the mouth may also be "the os of the system" (E 16). Generally, all values go through the mouth, through the orifice (harbour).<sup>52</sup> For this reason, the pure or "exemplary" in (beautiful) art works is combined with any possibly impure "orality" of art products. So the interior sensibility and taste is always endangered by impurity. Derrida binds the pure "exemplary" and the impure "orality" together in "exemplorality".<sup>53</sup> Hence, the tension between literal and aesthetic taste. Hence a "certain allergy in the mouth, between pure taste and actual tasting {*dégustation*}" (E 16).<sup>54</sup> Derrida's dialectical follow-up is this: "We ... have before us the question of where to inscribe disgust. Would not disgust, by turning itself back against actual tasting, also be the origin of pure taste, in the wake of a sort of catastrophe?" (E 16). Maybe, if:

the other of the system of taste [goût] should be distaste. And if taste metaphorizes exemplorality, then disgust should have the same form, but inverted; nothing has been learned. Certainly. Unless we learn to question this tautological necessity in another way; and to wonder whether the tautological structure is not itself the very form of what the exclusion [of disgust] serves to construct. If it can be confirmed that everything can be said ... by this logocentric system except vomit, it is only because the oral relation taste/disgust constitutes, other than as a metaphor, this whole discourse on discourse ... (I)t must be ascertained that the word disgust [Eckel] does not designate the repugnant or the negative in general. It refers precisely to what makes one desire to vomit. (E 23)

<sup>52</sup> Derrida, "Economimesis", op. cit., 13ff.: *embouchure*, quoted in French.

<sup>53</sup> Of course, with "orality," Derrida alludes to Freud's concept of oral organisation, the first of three "Phases of Development of the Sexual Organization," cf. Freud 1975, op. cit., II (6); this part was added by Freud in 1915.

<sup>54</sup> In whatever respect Pierre Bourdieu's criticism of Derrida may be valid (Cf. P. Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge, 2010, 496ff.), it is certainly not when Bourdieu refers to the (Derrida's?) possible origin of taste in disgust within the field of a "consumptive orality" and does not include the principally artistic exemplorality as developed in "Economimesis."

But disgust, analogically derived, keeps the literal, bodily disgust of Kant's *Anthropology* "in place of the replacement that has no proper place, no proper trajectory, no circular and economical return. In place of prosthesis. All that can no longer take place between the «objective» senses (hearing, sight, touch) but only between the subjective «senses»; and that no longer depends on mechanics but on chemistry" (E 23).<sup>55</sup> Furthermore:

There is then something more disgusting than the disgusting, than what disgusts taste. ... Disgust is not the symmetrical inverse of taste, the negative key to the system, except in so far as some interest sustains its excellence, like that of the mouth itself – the chemistry of the word –, and prohibits the substitution of any non-oral analogue. The system therefore is interested in determining the other as *its* other, that is, as literally disgusting. What is absolutely foreclosed is not vomit, but the possibility of a vicariousness [<sup>56</sup>] of vomit, of its replacement by anything else – by some ... obscene other which forces enjoyment and whose irrepressible violence would undo the hierarchizing authority of logocentric analogy – its power of *identification*. (E 25)

This vicariousness of vomit would have to represent itself while at the same time starting and releasing a double bind from the "impossibility that economimesis is constrained in its processes" (E 25).<sup>57</sup> Vomiting in the extreme sense means an absolute necessity of ejecting again, abjecting what has been tasted as the aesthetic object.

## Double bind

Gregory Bateson and others have described the double bind as the experience of a person who receives a primary negative injunction accompanied by a secondary injunction contradictory to the first one and a tertiary command not to escape that situation.<sup>58</sup> As these authors concede that some Zen *koan* practices may provoke a similar, however positive, experience (254), I attempt to apply the notion "double bind" in a manner not unlike Derrida, and possibly in accordance with Kolnai, to aesthetic experience and shift our attention from the actional paradox to perceptual affordance.

<sup>55</sup> At this point, E 23ff., Derrida quotes in full Immanuel Kant, "Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht", in: *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 7, Berlin: Reimer, 1917, 117-332, <https://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de/Kant/aa07/117.html>, 157ff., §§ 20 and 21.

<sup>56</sup> See I. Kant, "Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht," op. cit., 158, § 22.

<sup>57</sup> "This impossibility cannot be said to be some thing, something sensible or intelligible, that could fall under one or the other senses or under some concept. One cannot name it within the logocentric system – within the name – which in turn can only vomit it and vomit itself in it. One cannot even say: what is it? That would be to begin to eat it, or – what is no longer absolutely different – to vomit it. The question *what is?* already parleys [arraisonne] like a *parergon*, it constructs a framework which captures the energy of what is completely inassimilable and absolutely repressed. Any philosophical question already determines, concerning this other, a paregoric {with-exciting} *parergon*. ... The word vomit arrests the vicariousness of disgust; it puts the thing in the mouth {tries it, tastes it}; it substitutes, but only for example, oral for anal {and in consequence ejects it}. It is determined by the system of the beautiful, 'the symbol of morality,' as its other; it is then for philosophy, still, an elixir, even in the very quintessence of its bad taste," E 25.

<sup>58</sup> Gregory Bateson, Don D. Jackson, Jay Haley, and John Weakland, "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia," in: *Behavioral Science* 1 (4), 1956, 251-264, 253-254.

With Kolnai, even though it involves some lesser extent of imperative intensity, you cannot escape the situation because of fascination or some institutional habit – which is to say, the (aesthetic) object imposes the following combination of imperatives: “Seek it (the beautiful) and flee it (the ugly, sublime, disgusting)!” and “Accept the attraction and act out your despisal!” This is the conception of Aurel Kolnai, whose concept of disgust takes account of the phenomenon of “disgust addiction”. Thus, we can say that, based on Kolnai’s theory, *the double bind of disgust – the emotional kind of defensive reaction based on the senses of smell and taste – is formed into a disgust-addiction that can only exist on the basis of the double intentional structure*. This is described by Kolnai with regard to contingent proximity and the distancing of the *organic object* from the self. The structure of a *double intention* unifies schematically (1) an as-if-object-intention elongated into (2) the object outside, which is accompanied by a rejection-intention and metaphorical death intention. At stake in disgust is *Sosein*, being-like/-so or being-as-it-is, rather than being-there or existence. On the level of *reflection*, disgust reveals a person’s dwelling on one’s own fragile unity of an object and its sense of life and death.

For Derrida, in specifying the *parergon* – the *hors-d’oeuvre* and bord of the art work, the abyss of the river’s mouth or mouthpiece of the art work – the double bind of disgust is signalled with the “Away: Here” of the colossal erection-with-castration. With Kant, the dynamic sublime of the tremor in the double bind of attraction-with-repulsion avoids any beyond-the-pleasure by means of employing a negative pleasure. Therefore, regarding the ugly and the sublime as opposites of the beautiful (both of which would still be beautiful in mimesis and taste), only vomit (the most disgusting) can be identified as the absolute other of the beautiful. It is this *parergon*, contra Kant, that forms the non-transcendentalisable transcendental (of the transcendental), which reveals itself to be the condition of the possibility of art. Regarding the arts and senses, poetry – as the prime and supreme art (the fine art of the mouth and the ear, alongside the arts of the eye and the gesticulating skin) – discloses a double bind *exemplorality*, namely, that of impure (de-metaphorised) disgust as the very origin of pure taste, the desire to vomit and the vicariousness of vomit. In this exemplorality, the word *disgust* cannot designate the negative. With the turn from the objective to the subjective senses, disgust determines the other as the other of taste.

### Topics in Aesthetics

In philosophical aesthetics or philosophy of art are at stake the theory of the aesthetic and the theory of the (fine) arts. Notwithstanding a theory of the aesthetic based on the disgusting that is inextricably linked to the art (of speech) and the sense of mouth (dis/taste), as in Derrida’s theory, we have a history of the “aesthetic” in the plural – *aesthetics* – that is not written yet. This highlights the need to clarify when the aesthetic of the ugly, the sublime, the colossal, and of course the disgusting, arises in the discourse on the (*a*)*topos* of the beautiful.

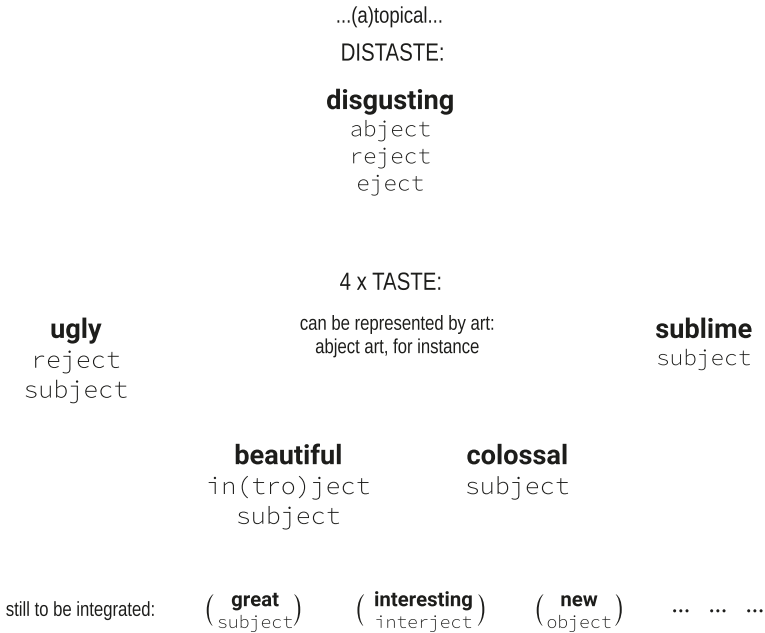


Diagram 1. The position of the disgusting in aesthetics, after Kolnai and Derrida (©PM 2018)

There are more *topoi*, like the great, the interesting, the new, the characteristic, the shocking, the uncanny, the Apollonian, the sentimental and so on.

From Kolnai's theory of the being-so of disgust – as opposed to being-here, where substantiality indicates a state of modality – aestheticians should be enabled to incorporate in their work the aesthetic which *is* modal in terms of qualities, features and properties. The task of carrying that out goes beyond this paper. An attempt is made here, however, to move the *topos* of the disgusting into the context of aesthetics (see Diagram 1 above), where the notion of the abject is the motivation for establishing a correspondence between aesthetic qualities and the variety of “-jects”.<sup>59</sup> Derrida's manoeuvre of deconstructing the standard aesthetics (Kant's and Hume's) could be the point of departure for another study. For this reason Diagram 1 is given here in order to highlight the fact that a more systematic account is still needed for gaining a more lucid picture of where disgust figures in philosophical aesthetics.

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59 Cf. footnote 46.



## Noty o Autorach

**Filip Borek** – student Instytutu Filozofii Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego. Jego główne zainteresowania obejmują filozofię Heideggera oraz fenomenologię getyńsko-monachijską, w szczególności zagadnienia wczucia i uczuć oraz kwestia źródłowości. Opublikował artykuły i wygłosił referaty na konferencjach ogólnopolskich i międzynarodowych poświęcone filozofii Stein, Geigera, Heideggera i Kanta. Ostatnio zajmował się zagadnieniem źródłowości w filozofii Jana Patočki.

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