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## INTRODUCTION

The essays collected here result from a research project on disgust that seeks to bring together different perspectives to define an increasingly relevant emotion in the contemporary debate. A common problem emerges in various research perspectives: to legitimise disgust by freeing it from the allegation of being a conservative and anti-liberal emotion. This type of charge has been made on several occasions by Martha Nussbaum. She has stated the need to overcome disgust as a discriminatory emotion, unreliable and contrary to liberal and inclusive democracy values.

The present *Focus* on disgust, hosted by *Lebenswelt. Aesthetics and Philosophy of Experience*, shows how, on the contrary, disgust can be a valid object of investigation and even a valuable tool for social living. As in the moral domain or the political, aesthetic or even psychological ones, it does not seem desirable to reduce disgust to an attitude that should be avoided. Instead, it appears that this emotion can be a worthwhile element in cultivating our humanity. In the following lines, we will briefly introduce such essays to provide a brief figure of the richness and width in implications for our life of this only apparently simple emotion.

Giorgia Vasari, in her essay *Le dégoût de l'absurde : Phénoménologie de l'existence dans La nausée de Jean-Paul Sartre*, aims to analyse the disgust of which Sartre's concept of "nausea" is an expression, by identifying its ontological significance and its role within his thought.

The question raised by Elisabetta Sirgiovanni, *Is moral disgust good or bad?*, proceeds from the consideration that most disgust scholars have fed arguments for its moral unreliability and concluded with moral condemnation of this emotion. More cautiously, but perhaps, more sharply, Sirgiovanni claims that moral disgust can be rational or irrational, pro-social or anti-social, liberal or conservative, depending on the eliciting contexts.

*The smell of prejudice. Disgust, sense of smell and social attitudes*, by Marco Tullio Liuzza, reviews some evidence that shows how body odour disgust sensitivity (BODS) plays a central role in

the so-called behavioural immune system (BIS). He also reports empirical evidence on how the BODS relates to social attitudes such as authoritarianism, xenophobia, and condemnation of “impure” moral violations.

Debra Bergoffen’s *From a politics of disgust to a politics of the body* claims that the politics of disgust weaponises the bodily recoil of revulsion to legitimate oppression and discrimination and argues that disgust can be severed from this politics to serve a politics of the body where the repugnance of disgust is reserved for those who repudiate the humanity of our intersubjective vulnerability.

At variance with other theories of disgust, Serena Feloj’s *Is it possible to overcome disgust? An ambivalent emotion* argues that it is impossible to theoretically articulate the overcoming of disgust but that it is possible to educate about this emotion through artistic experience. On this ground, an ethic of disgust will be outlined.

In *Il ripugnante: oltraggio e contraddizione*, Marco Tedeschini proposes distinguishing between the disgust itself and its ethical and political use to justify oppression and discrimination. This use must be replaced by the practice of explaining the reasons for oppressing and discriminating, reasons which should be brought about without recurring to the emotion of disgust itself.

Disgust provides a compelling way to epitomise and illustrate the invisible rules that rule our societies and our lives. It deserves to be treated with maximum seriousness from an empirical standpoint and a genuine philosophical one. We tried to do both through this *Focus*, gathering research from the most different fields. A plural perspective on disgust, such that we present here, does not mean anyone can choose the perspective they prefer. On the contrary, this is the sole means to try and understand the very idea that underlies the many empirical forms of disgust we daily meet. We sincerely thank the colleagues who decided to contribute to this *Focus* by exposing their perspectives on disgust.