

# Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics

Volume 15, 2023

Edited by Vítor Moura and Connell Vaughan



Published by



## **Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics**

Founded in 2009 by Fabian Dorsch

Internet: <http://proceedings.eurosa.org>

Email: [proceedings@eurosa.org](mailto:proceedings@eurosa.org)

ISSN: 1664 – 5278

### **Editors**

Connell Vaughan (Technological University Dublin)

Vítor Moura (University of Minho, DOI: 10.54499/UIDB/00305/2020)

### **Editorial Board**

Adam Andrzejewski (University of Warsaw)

Claire Anscomb (De Montfort University)

María José Alcaraz León (University of Murcia)

Pauline von Bonsdorff (University of Jyväskylä)

Tereza Hadravová (Charles University, Prague)

Regina-Nino Mion (Estonian Academy of Arts, Tallinn)

Jochen Schuff (Free University of Berlin)

Elena Tavani (University of Naples)

Iris Vidmar Jovanović (University of Rijeka)

### **Publisher**

The European Society for Aesthetics



Department of Philosophy

University of Fribourg

Avenue de l'Europe 20

1700 Fribourg

Switzerland

Internet: <http://www.eurosa.org>

Email: [secretary@eurosa.org](mailto:secretary@eurosa.org)

# Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics

Volume 15, 2023

Edited by Vítor Moura and Connell Vaughan

## Table of Contents

<b>Sérgio Pinto Amorim</b> <i>The Forms, the Architect, and the Act of Doing Architecture</i> .....	1
<b>Pedro Borges de Araújo</b> <i>Notes on Aesthetics in Architecture</i> .....	15
<b>Emanuele Arielli</b> <i>AI-aesthetics and the artificial author</i> .....	40
<b>Alessandro Bertinotto</b> <i>Habits of Unexpectedness. Expressiveness in Musical Improvisation (and Beyond)</i> .....	55
<b>Thorstein Botz-Bornstein</b> <i>Guilt and Shame: Ethics and Aesthetic</i> .....	84
<b>Gregorio Fiori Carones</b> <i>Simmel and the Aesthetics of Luxury</i> .....	94
<b>Veronika Darida</b> <i>The Aesthetics of Gesture</i> .....	110
<b>Harry Drummond</b> <i>Pitches and Paintings: A Conferralist Theory of Art</i> .....	124
<b>Hannah Fasnacht</b> <i>Different Levels of Narrative Pictorial Content</i> .....	139
<b>Anna Fech</b> <i>What's the "New" in "New Extractivism"? Tracing Postdigital Aesthetics in Vladan Joler's Assemblage</i> .....	167
<b>Stacie Friend</b> <i>Fiction, Belief and Understanding</i> .....	185

<b>Pablo Genazzano</b> <i>General Remarks for a Historical and Systematic Reconstruction of Kant's Analytic of the Sublime</i> .....	205
<b>Jeffrey Goodman</b> <i>Should We Accept Fictional Universals?</i> .....	217
<b>Peter Hajnal</b> <i>Aesthetic Education and Embodiment: Notes Toward a Cavellian Approach</i> .....	234
<b>Sarah Hegenbart</b> <i>Democratic and aesthetic participation as imposition: On the aesthetics of the collective</i> .....	252
<b>Gizela Horváth</b> <i>Displaying Participatory Art</i> .....	271
<b>René Jagnow</b> <i>Multisensory Experience of Paintings</i> .....	285
<b>Lev Kreft</b> <i>Resentiment, Artivism and Magic</i> .....	305
<b>Efi Kyprianidou</b> <i>Moral disgust and imaginative resistance</i> .....	316
<b>Federico Lauria</b> <i>Values in the Air: Musical Contagion, Social Appraisal and Metaphor Experience</i> .....	328
<b>Leonardo Lenner</b> <i>From Concept to Image and Vice Versa: the Philosophical Frontispiece</i> .....	344
<b>Lukáš Makky</b> <i>Revisiting the concept of the end of art</i> .....	363
<b>Martino Manca</b> <i>For the Snark was a Boojum. Towards a Positive Aesthetics of Literary Nonsense</i> .....	384
<b>Sofia Miguens</b> <i>The many ways of doing philosophy of architecture (and what they tell us about contemporary philosophy and the place of aesthetics in it)</i> .....	396
<b>Davide Mogetta</b> <i>Between Art and Philosophy. Patterns of Baxandall's Criticism</i> .....	406

<b>Francisca Pérez-Carreño</b> <i>Fiction as Representation. Or the Verbal Icon Revisited</i> .....	419
<b>Dan Eugen Ratiu</b> <i>Objects at Work: How Do Artefacts Work Aesthetically in Everyday Organizational Life?</i> .....	431
<b>Matthew Rowe</b> <i>The Implications of Mistakes About Art: Ontological and Epistemological</i> .....	458
<b>Merel Semeijn</b> <i>Common Belief and Make-believe</i> .....	471
<b>Thomas Symeonidis</b> <i>On the different meanings of aestheticization</i> .....	486
<b>Malgorzata A. Szyszkowska</b> <i>The Impression of Music: Edmund Gurney's ideas about music in The Power of Sound</i> .....	497
<b>Elettra Villani</b> <i>Aesthetic versus functional: overcoming their dichotomy in T. W. Adorno's Functionalism today</i> .....	511
<b>Andrew Wynn Owen</b> <i>Does a plausible construal of aesthetic value give us reason to emphasize some aesthetic practices over others?</i> .....	522
<b>Giulia Zerbinati</b> <i>The Truth of Art. A Reflection starting from Hegel and Adorno</i> .....	533

# *General Remarks for a Historical and Systematic Reconstruction of Kant's Analytic of the Sublime*

Pablo Genazzano<sup>112</sup>

*University of Potsdam*

ABSTRACT. This paper presents the main aspects for a systematic and historical reconstruction of Kant's Analytic of the Sublime. First, I argue against general assumptions of the literature on the Kantian sublime. Second, I explain Mendelssohn's reception of Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, and his rejection of the philosophical use of the concept of negative magnitudes. Third, I present Kant's concept of "negative pleasure" in the *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* as a response to the problems presented in our explanation of Mendelssohn's reception of Burke. Fourth, I examine how the difficulties encountered by Mendelssohn in Burke's theory of sublime condition Kant's Analytic of the Sublime. This influence is evident in the introduction of the negative pleasure into the *Critique of Judgment*. However, I argue that Kant cannot adequately address the problem that negative pleasure presents in his aesthetics. In conclusion, I claim that Kant, in the third *Critique*, encounters the same difficulty as Mendelssohn in his reception of Burke, namely the impossibility of philosophically grounding negative feelings.

## **1. Introduction**

The problem of the sublime in Kant's philosophy can be reduced to a single question: How is it possible to take pleasure in an imperfect object? This very question is formulated by Kant in the Analytic of the Sublime of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: "How can we designate

---

<sup>112</sup> E-mail: [pabloadriangenazzano@gmail.com](mailto:pabloadriangenazzano@gmail.com)

with an expression of approval that which is apprehended in itself as contra-purposive?"<sup>113</sup>

Interpretations of this question usually make two assumptions that, in my opinion, are insufficient for a proper interpretation of the Kantian sublime. On the one hand, the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* are understood as preamble to the Analytic of the Sublime. On the other hand, it is often said that the title of these *Observations* was inspired by Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.<sup>114</sup> Both assumptions are incompatible with two facts. Against the first assumption, it must be said that the term "displeasure," which plays a central role in the Analytic, appears only once in the *Observations*, so that a systematic relation between this precritical writing and the Analytic loses consistency. Against the second assumption, it must be emphasized that Kant only read the *Enquiry* after the publication of Garve's translation. Thus, a direct influence of Burke on Kant's precritical aesthetics becomes rather fraudulent.

In my view, the *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy* is much more important for understanding the sublime in Kant's early philosophy. There are two historical reasons for considering this essay. On the one hand, the concept of negative pleasure, which plays a central role in the Analytic, was defined for the first time in this essay. On the other hand, this concept is a response to the difficulties of Mendelssohn's aesthetics. This paper aims to outline the key historical and systematic aspects of the concept of negative pleasure. First, I explain the major difficulties presented for Mendelssohn by Burke's theory of the sublime. Second, I explain the concept of negative pleasure in the essay on negative magnitudes, and argue that this feeling can be read as a critique of Mendelssohn's aesthetics. Third, I analyze how Kant reinterprets negative pleasure in the Analytic of the Sublime, arguing that this feeling is not compatible with the foundations of his aesthetics.

## 2. Mendelssohn's Difficulties with Burke's *Enquiry*

For Burke, the most important feature of the sublime is that it arouses an ambivalent feeling, one composed of pleasure and displeasure. It is important to say that, for Burke, the sublime is

---

<sup>113</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 245. The translations of Kant's works are taken from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood.

<sup>114</sup> For instance, see Guyer, Paul (2000), "Editor's Introduction," in *Critique of the power of judgment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), xiii–lii; here, xv.

not a feeling as such, but a property of the objects given in experience. The feeling aroused by sublime objects is called *delight*. As he says, the sublime object is “capable of producing delight; not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror”.<sup>115</sup>

For German intellectuals such as Lessing, the problem of Burke's aesthetics is primarily methodological in nature. According to Lessing, since the empirical method of Burke lacks systematicity, it is necessary to develop the compendium of his empirical observations under the unity of a rational system. However, the task of introducing Burke's aesthetic observations into rationalism is a task reserved for Mendelssohn. After reading the *Enquiry*, Lessing proposes this historical task to his friend: “but even if the author's basic principles are not much use, his book is tremendously useful as a collection of all the observations and perceptions that the philosopher who would undertake the same study must accept as indisputable. He has assembled all the materials for a good system that no one knows better than you how to use.”<sup>116</sup>

The two key moments of Mendelssohn's confrontation with the Burkean sublime are the review of the *Enquiry* and the *Rhapsody*. In both places, one can clearly see the great difficulty that the introduction of Burke into rationalism supposed for Mendelssohn. The main reason why the *Enquiry* seems incompatible with rationalism is the ambivalence of the feeling of delight. In the review, Mendelssohn says: “From this we see that the author does not attribute a positive pleasure to the sublime, but a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant sensation, which can be called delight. But that every delight, every liberation from an unpleasant sensation, could be a source of the sublime, seems to run straight against the system of our philosophers.”<sup>117</sup>

A very similar picture was expressed by Mendelssohn a few years later in the *Rhapsody or Additions to the Letters on Sentiments* (1761). In these additions, Mendelssohn confesses his inability to properly understand Burke: “In no way do I flatter myself with having provided

<sup>115</sup> Burke (2005), *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), p. 136.

<sup>116</sup> Lessing, letter to Mendelssohn from 18 February 1758, in *Werke und Briefe* (Frankfurt a/M: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1998), 11.1: pp. 276–278. See Furniss, Tom (2009), „Our Neighbors Observe and We Explain: Moses Mendelssohn's Critical Encounter with Edmund Burke's Aesthetics“, in *The Eighteenth Century*, 50, 4, pp. 327–54.

<sup>117</sup> Mendelssohn, *Burke, Sublime and Beautiful*, in *Gesammelte Schriften. Jubiläumsausgabe* (JubA) Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1971, 0, p. 235. English translations of Mendelssohn are based on Daniel O. Dahlstrom's translation: Mendelssohn (1997), *Philosophical Writings* Cambridge University Press.



the psychological basis for all the experiences noted by the Englishman. Our sentiments have such depths that poking my eye in their direction is all too fatuous. I wish rather, by my effort here, to have encouraged a philosophical mind to undertake this worthwhile investigation.”<sup>118</sup>

The reason why the mixed feeling of delight is hardly compatible with Mendelssohn's rationalistic aesthetics can be clarified in view of the architectonics of this philosophical discipline. Baumgarten, at the beginning of his *Aesthetica* (1750), says that this discipline is reduced to the reflection on the perfect and the beautiful; the ugly and the imperfect are excluded from it. As Baumgarten says: “Aesthetices finis est perfectio cognitionis sensitivae, qua talis. Haec autem est pulcritudo, et cavenda eiusdem, qua talis, imperfectio. Haec autem est deformitas”.<sup>119</sup> Thus, negative aesthetic objects and feelings remain outside the discipline.

It is important to emphasize that the exclusion of negative feelings from this discipline has, at the same time, an ontological reason of utmost importance. The question of why negative feelings does not deserve philosophical reflection mainly boils down to the fact that negations lack their own reality. For both Baumgarten and Meier, the concepts of reality and negation were opposed to each other. “If a negation is posited, then a reality is removed. Hence, negations and realities are mutually opposite to each other.”<sup>120</sup> Therefore, it was impossible for a negation to have its own reality, that is, a *positive ontological value*. The contrary, that is, if a negation could have reality of its own, it would contradict the principle of sufficient reason (*ex nihilo nihil fit*). This idea is expressed in Meier's *Metaphysics*: “No reality (*Realität*), insofar as it is a reality, can be the ground of a negation or have a negative consequence, since otherwise a negation should be able to have a real ground [...]. If now a reality, insofar as it is a reality, had a negative consequence, it would be to this extent a negation, and therefore it would be a reality at the same time and in the same sense a negation, and this is impossible.”<sup>121</sup>

Mendelssohn developed this fundamental opposition between realities and negations in his aesthetics. In both the *Letters* and the different versions of the *Rhapsody*, he understands the imperfection of the object as a “lack” of reality. Since each negation is a lack of reality, displeasure, as a negation, cannot have its own reality, and it is thus incapable of being opposed

---

<sup>118</sup> Mendelssohn, *Rhapsodie*, JubA, 01, p. 401.

<sup>119</sup> Baumgarten, *Aesthetica*, § 14.

<sup>120</sup> Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 136.

<sup>121</sup> Meier, *Metaphysik*, § 135.

to pleasure. This ontological devaluation of negativity was criticized by Kant in the essay on negative magnitudes. As I show in the next section, Kant's aim in the essay on the philosophical use of negative magnitudes is to define negations as something real and positive. Among the disciplines in which he develops the concept of real negation, empirical psychology stands out.

### 3. Kant's Concept of Negative Pleasure

Against the rationalist conviction that negations are a lack of reality, Kant wrote the *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes in Philosophy*. It is important to remember that this concept was rejected in both mathematics and philosophy. In the first volume of *Elementa Matheseos Universae*, Wolff says: "it is said *positive*, also *affirmative* or *greater than 0* to the amount assigned to something with the + sign; however, when the sign – is assigned to a quantity, it is called *privative*, also *negative* and is *less than 0*, by some it is called *absurd*".<sup>122</sup>

Against the opinion that negative magnitudes are absurd, Kästner tried to popularize their concept in the first volume of his *Foundations of Mathematics*. For him, negative magnitudes are something real: "One can consider the negative magnitude as something that must be subtracted from the affirmative one, and thus denote it with the sign – if the affirmative one has + [...] The negative magnitude can exceed the affirmative one. This negative, which remains, is a real (*wirkliche*) magnitude and is opposed to the one that is considered positive".<sup>123</sup>

Following Kästner's definition, Kant states that negative magnitudes "are not negations [...], but something in itself truly positive."<sup>124</sup> And "positive," as understood by the rationalist school, means reality. According to Wolff, a "positive thing" (*ens positivum*) is something and it has reality.<sup>125</sup> This also applies to Baumgarten: "Tam realitates ipsae, quam entia, quibus insunt, ENTIA REALIA seu positiva dicitur".<sup>126</sup> Therefore, it is possible to affirm that, in the essay on negative magnitudes, negations are something positive and with a reality of their own.

<sup>122</sup> Wolff, *Elementa Matheseos Universae*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1968), 29, p. 299. See Lausch, Hans (1993), „Moses Mendelssohn. ‚Ein Algebraist würde das Gute in seinem Leben mit positiven Größen vergleichen‘. Zur Unwirklichkeit des Negativen im 18. Jahrhundert“, in *Mendelssohn-Studien*, 8, pp. 23-36.

<sup>123</sup> Kästner (1758), *Anfangsgründe der Arithmetik, Geometrie, ebenen und sphärischen Trigonometrie und Perspektiv*, Goettingen, p. 60.

<sup>124</sup> Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 169.

<sup>125</sup> Wolff, *Philosophia prima sive ontologia*, § 274.

<sup>126</sup> Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, § 135.

This positive concept of negativity is developed in the field of empirical psychology, that part of metaphysics that served as the basis for aesthetics. In this section, Kant asks: “Is displeasure simply the lack of pleasure? Or is displeasure a ground of the deprivation of pleasure? And in this case, displeasure, while being indeed something positive in itself and not merely the contradictory opposite of pleasure, is opposed to pleasure in the real sense of the term. The question thus amounts to this: can displeasure be called negative pleasure? Now, right from the beginning, inner feeling tells us that displeasure is more than a mere negation”.<sup>127</sup>

As can be seen in this passage, Kant tries to understand the negation of displeasure as something real and positive that is capable of being opposed to the feeling of pleasure. Further on in the text, he concludes: “Displeasure is accordingly not simply a lack of pleasure. It is a positive ground which, wholly or partly, cancels the pleasure which arises from another ground. For this reason, I call it a *negative pleasure*.”<sup>128</sup> Displeasure becomes as positive as pleasure.

To understand the reality of the feeling of displeasure, that is, of negative pleasure, it is essential to return to Mendelssohn's aesthetic theory. In my opinion, Kant's definition of negative pleasure is a critique of Mendelssohn's aesthetic standpoint. The *Berliner Sokrates*, in the *Letters on Sentiments*, rejects outright the reality of negative magnitudes. He argues: “What is a negative magnitude? An artificial word that mathematicians have adopted to indicate a real magnitude by which another must be reduced. In strict sense, a negative magnitude is something absurd. The reality can come to it as little as to the mathematical point.”<sup>129</sup>

The rejection of this concept has an important consequence. When Mendelssohn asks in the first edition of the *Letters on Sentiments* (1755) how a mixed feeling is possible, he says that the feelings of pleasure and displeasure cannot be in real conflict, that is, opposed to each other:

If a few bitter drops are mixed into the honeysweet bowl of pleasure, they enhance the taste of the pleasure and double its sweetness. Yet this happens only when the two types of sentiments, of which the mixture consists, are not directly opposed to one another. If, to the conception of some present

---

<sup>127</sup> Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 180.

<sup>128</sup> Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 181.

<sup>129</sup> Mendelssohn, *Briefe über die Empfindungen*, JubA 01: p. 96.

fortune, there is added the poignant memory of that misery in which we previously lived, then tears of joy gush forth, tears that are the epitome of all joys. Why? The concept of a past imperfection does not conflict with the concept of the present perfection. Both can exist next to one another, and that bygone imperfection makes us more sensitive to the gratifying feeling.<sup>130</sup>

When Mendelssohn says that both feelings cannot be opposed to each other, he means that the negativity of displeasure cannot have the same ontological value as pleasure: “were there some distressing circumstances that still pain us in the present, they would erase part of the joy and markedly diminish its intensity. For this reason, I said that they must not be directly opposed to one another.”<sup>131</sup> Thus, it becomes evident that the argument that mixed feelings cannot consist of a real opposition is determined by the rejection of the reality of negative magnitudes.

Kant raised the connection between negative magnitudes and the problem of mixed feelings in the *Attempt*. There, Kant says: “The calculation of the total value of the complete pleasure in a mixed state (*vermischten Zustand*) would also be highly absurd if a displeasure were a mere negation and equal to zero.”<sup>132</sup> To make clear in which sense displeasure has a reality, Kant gives an example: “Suppose that the news brought to a Spartan mother that her son has fought heroically for his native country in battle. An agreeable feeling of pleasure takes possession of her soul. She is thereupon told that her son has died a glorious death in battle”.

In view of this aesthetic interpretation of negativity, one can appreciate the novelty of the concept of negative pleasure for aesthetics. Negative pleasure expresses the reality of displeasure and, as can be seen, was defined by Kant against rationalism. However, negative pleasure in the *Critique of Judgment* does not mean mere displeasure; rather, as will be explained in the next section, it describes an opposition between of pleasure and displeasure.

#### 4. Kant's Analytic of the Sublime

As I indicated at the beginning of this paper, the question of the sublime in Kant can be reduced to a single question: “How can we designate with an expression of approval that which is apprehended in itself as contra-purposive?” In other words: How is negative pleasure possible? It is necessary to analyze both parts of this question. Because the sublime is a mixed feeling, it

<sup>130</sup> Mendelssohn, *Briefe über die Empfindungen*, JubA 01: p. 110.

<sup>131</sup> Mendelssohn, *Briefe über die Empfindungen*, JubA 01: p. 110.

<sup>132</sup> Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 181.

is necessary to ask about the conditions of possibility of both displeasure and pleasure. Before explaining both feelings, I would like to point out that the way Kant grounds both feelings are insufficient. (i) On the one hand, as the literature on negative feelings claims, Kant does not offer any transcendental foundation for the feeling of displeasure. (ii) On the other hand, he does not offer an adequate explanation of pleasure either; rather than grounding its purposiveness in *nature*, he grounds it in *freedom*, which is inconsistent with the fact that the proper transcendental principle of pure aesthetic judgments is the purposiveness of *nature*.

(i) In the essay on the concept of negative magnitudes, Kant argues that one of the main characteristics of the reality of negations is that they presuppose a “positive ground.” “A real repugnancy only occurs where there are two things, as positive grounds, and where one of them cancels the consequence of the other.”<sup>133</sup> In the context of the Analytic it is important to emphasize that the “positive ground” of the feeling of displeasure is not a real ground. Because this ground must lie in subjectivity, it must be a *transcendental ground*. In other words, to explain the feeling of displeasure, Kant should have formulated a *negative, transcendental principle*, through which displeasure can be opposed to pleasure in a transcendental sense.

The possibility of displeasure lies mainly in the object that is judged. As opposed to the phenomenon of the beautiful, which seems to show that nature suits to the knowledge conditions of the subject, the sublime shows no purposiveness whatsoever, only chaos and devastation: “in that which we are accustomed to call sublime in nature there is so little that leads to particular objective principles and forms of nature corresponding to these that it is mostly rather in its chaos or in its wildest and most unruly disorder and devastation.”<sup>134</sup> For this reason, Kant states that the sublime object is “contra-purposive” for the power of judgment.

This inadequacy between nature and the subject’s capacity to judge results in displeasure. However, the feeling of displeasure is in itself paradoxical. Although it results from this inadequacy, the judgment does not cease to presuppose a purposiveness of nature. This is emphasized by Henry Allison: “Although the judgment remains both aesthetic and reflective, the faculty here is clearly not functioning heautonomously. Instead of legislating merely to itself, in the experience of the sublime, judgment encounters something that conflicts with its

---

<sup>133</sup> Kant, *Negative Größe*, AA 02: p. 175.

<sup>134</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 246.

own requirements, so that the assessment of reflective judgment as such, that is, as operating in accordance with its own principles, must be negative, issuing in a dislike for the object.”<sup>135</sup>

From this, it follows that the foundation of displeasure lies in the object and not in the subject's inner transcendental structures. As discussed in the literature on negative feelings in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant has not given any transcendental foundation of the principle that could make displeasure possible. Accordingly, displeasure has been interpreted as a mere *psychological effect* of the subject without a transcendental foundation.<sup>136</sup>

(ii) For the judgment of the sublime to be aesthetic, it is necessary that displeasure is accompanied by pleasure. The great difficulty that the feeling of pleasure poses for the interpretation of the Analytic of the Sublime is that Kant does not base the feeling of pleasure on the purposiveness of nature, but on that of freedom. Accordingly, pleasure “indicates not only a purposiveness of objects in relation to the reflecting power of judgment, in accordance with the concept of nature, in the subject, but also, conversely, one of the subject, due to the concept of freedom, with regard to the objects, concerning their form or even their lack of form; and thereby it happens that the aesthetic judgment is related not only to the beautiful, merely as judgment of taste, but also, as one that has arisen from a feeling of spirit, to the sublime”.<sup>137</sup>

The practical dimension of the feeling of the sublime is developed in the dynamic part of the Analytic of the Sublime. In this second part of the Analytic, Kant says that the pleasure of the sublime “has its foundation in human nature, and indeed in that which can be required of everyone and demanded of him along with healthy understanding, namely in the predisposition to the feeling for (practical) ideas, i.e., to that which is moral”. It is evident that the pleasure of the sublime has nothing to do with the principle of the judgment of taste, namely, the purposiveness of nature, for the source of this pleasure lies in freedom. For this reason, some scholars have argued that the pleasure of the sublime is not aesthetic, but moral.

As can be seen in view of both aspects explained (i, ii), Kant does not offer an adequate explanation for the feeling of negative pleasure. On the one hand, there is no transcendental foundation for displeasure. On the other hand, neither does Kant offer an aesthetic, but a moral

---

<sup>135</sup> Allison, Henry (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 306.

<sup>136</sup> Guyer, Paul (2006), „Kant und die Reinheit des Hässlichen“, in *Im Schatten des Schönen: die Ästhetik des Häßlichen in historischen Ansätzen und aktuellen Debatten*, ed. by Heiner Klemme, Michael Pauen and Maire-Luise Raters, Bielefeld, pp. 93–116.

<sup>137</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 192.

explanation of pleasure. These aspects led Kant to reduce the significance of the Analytic to an “appendix”: “For the beautiful in nature we must seek a ground outside ourselves, but for the sublime merely one in ourselves and in the way of thinking that introduces sublimity into the representation of the former – a very necessary introductory remark, which entirely separates the ideas of the sublime from that of a purposiveness of nature, and makes of the theory of the sublime a mere appendix to the aesthetic judging of the purposiveness of nature.”<sup>138</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to outline the main aspects for a historical and systematic reconstruction of the concept of negative pleasure. To conclude this paper, I would like to point out that the impossibility of grounding the feeling of displeasure is not only characteristic of Mendelssohn’s aesthetics. As has been shown in the last section, neither has Kant been able to provide an adequate answer. Neither Mendelssohn nor Kant have been able to provide a transcendental explanation of the feeling of displeasure. While in Mendelssohn’s case this impossibility has been due to his rejection of negative magnitudes, it still remains to be clarified why negative feelings are incompatible with the aesthetic framework of Kant’s *Critique*.

In my view, the underlying reason why the negativity of pleasure cannot take on a transcendental status is mainly due to the fact that the principle of the power of judgment restores the rationalist equivalence between reality and perfection. This equivalence has played a central role in rationalism since Spinoza. For him, the perfection of reality lies in the harmony between objects and concepts. “Ordo et connexio idearum est ac ordo et connexio rerum.”<sup>139</sup> This connection between concepts and objects constitutes the principle of judgment: “the causality of a concept with regard to its object is purposiveness.”<sup>140</sup> The transcendental principle of judgment, the purposiveness of nature, despite being merely regulative and non-determining, seems to be an attempt to restore the rationalistic harmony between objects and concepts.

Because for the reflective judgment the objects of nature must conform to ends, it is therefore unrepresentable that a natural object can be contrary to them and yet be aesthetic, that

---

<sup>138</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 246.

<sup>139</sup> Spinoza, *Ethica*, II, Prop. VII.

<sup>140</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, AA 05: p. 220.

is, capable of producing a pleasure. This is the great difficulty of the Analytic of the Sublime.

## References

- Allison, Henry (2001), *Kant's Theory of Taste*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baumgarten, A. G. (2007), *Aesthetica /Ästhetik*, translated by Dagmar Mirbach, Hamburg: Meiner
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2013), *Metaphysics: A Critical Translation with Kant's Elucidations, Selected Notes, and Related Materials*, translated and edited by Courtney Fugate and John Hymers, New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Burke, (2005), *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Furniss, Tom (2009), "Our Neighbors Observe and We Explain: Moses Mendelssohn's Critical Encounter with Edmund Burke's Aesthetics", in *The Eighteenth Century*, 50, 4, pp. 327–54.
- Guyer, Paul (2000), "Editor's Introduction", in *Critique of the power of judgment*, xiii-lii, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2006), "Kant und die Reinheit des Hässlichen", in *Im Schatten des Schönen: die Ästhetik des Häßlichen in historischen Ansätzen und aktuellen Debatten*", ed. by Heiner Klemme, Michael Pauen and Maire-Luise Raters, Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, pp. 93-116.
- Kant, I. (1900ff), *Gesammelte Schriften. Akademie-Ausgabe*, Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Kästner (1758), *Anfangsgründe der Arithmetik, Geometrie, ebenen und sphärischen Trigonometrie und Perspektiv*, Goettingen.
- Lausch, Hans (1993), "Moses Mendelssohn. ‚Ein Algebraist würde das Gute in seinem Leben mit positiven Größen vergleichen‘. Zur Unwirklichkeit des Negativen im 18. Jahrhundert", in *Mendelssohn-Studien*, 8, pp. 23-36.
- Lessing (1998), *Werke und Briefe*, Frankfurt a/M: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag.
- Meier (2007), *Metaphysik*, Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Georg Olms.
- Mendelssohn (1971), *Gesammelte Schriften. Jubiläumsausgabe*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog.



\_\_\_\_\_ (1997), *Philosophical Writings*, translated by Daniel O. Dahlstrom's, Cambridge: University Press.

Spinoza, B. (1999), *Ethik in geometrischer Ordnung dargestellt*, translated by Wolfgang Bartuschat, Hamburg: Meiner.

Wolff (1968), *Elementa Matheseos Universae*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, Hildesheim: Olms.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1977), *Philosophia prima sive Ontologia*, Hildesheim, New York: Olms.