

Disgust as Rebellion: Reading the Metaphors of Disgust in the Songs from Obzen by Meshuggah

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The established normative order of the state or any regime demands that each subject feels satiated and satisfied with their existence pertaining to various domains established by that very order. This satisfaction would necessarily drive an individual subject to the point of complacency so that any kind of questioning, dissent or rebellion can be prevented. For that rebellion raises questions, disrupts and tends to reverse the established order. Art has forever been used to raise questions, cause dissent, inspire rebellion throughout human history. From the most revered names in literary history of the world like Ovid to Hugo, from the liked Dante to Bunin, all these men of letters had attracted the wrath of their respective rulers for their resistance in belief and in art that they had to flee from their native soil (Krispyn 3). Protest art, music, film, literature have also been questioned in terms of their effective participation and the necessary outcome in terms of the real act of resistance or revolt but to this point it can be noted even if the liberal humanist or the radical left artistic production couldn't prevent the Third Reich from establishing their totalitarian rule but they definitely disturbed and bothered the centre of that power which is why the necessary measures of suppression were taken, for example writers and poets in Soviet Russia during the Stalinist period were marked as counter revolutionaries or Trotskyist (the followers of Leon Trotsky) and appropriate and harsh punitive measures were taken.

Post War Twentieth Century and early Twenty first Century music has often raised its voice against various contemporary issues and have successfully tried to cause the disturbance within the established order of the capitalist world. The songs by the musical group Rage Against the Machine have frequently raised their voice against the United States and its various war efforts, foreign policies and internal laws. Rage Against the Machine stands out as a fearless musical force that harnessed the power of protest through their songs. With incendiary lyrics and blistering guitar riffs, they didn't just perform music; they ignited political fires, challenging societal norms with every note. Tracks like "Killing in the Name" weren't just songs; they were rallying cries against systemic injustice, encouraging listeners to question authority and demand change. The band, fronted by Zack de la Rocha and driven by Tom Morello's guitar wizardry, became synonymous with political activism. Their music transcended mere entertainment; it was a sonic protest, amplifying the voices of the marginalized and spotlighting the darkest corners of political corruption.

Meshuggah a Swedish musical group wrote their most highly rated album *Obzen* where they have tried to capture the contemporary world as a dystopian reality. The human condition and world is presented as driven by evil intent as humanity selects as the 'zen' where new state of equilibrium and balance for humanity is the obscene and the obscure, in blood and in violence ("Inside 'obZen': How Meshuggah Pushed Themselves to the Limit to Make a Masterpiece"). Released in the first decade of the twenty first century this album takes for it foregrounding the capitalist order, the war in Iraq, Afghanistan and the overall crisis that humanity is driven into due to its interaction with violence. Haake the songwriter of Meshuggah intends to not only portray this crisis but chooses a unique way to present and revolt against. He uses the various metaphors and images throughout all the songs in the album that arouses an intense feeling of 'disgust'

for the readers and listeners, for example in the song *ObZen*,

A state of perfection Immersed in filth Equilibrium
obtained

Pure in devotion to all things unwell

This sweet zen of our ill condition sustained A new belief
system

Salvation found in vomit and blood

(“Meshuggah - ObZen”)

The words ‘filth’, ‘vomit and blood’, these images instantly gives rise to a feeling of disgust and repulsion upon the readers and the audience. The feeling of ‘disgust’ is very much dominant feeling that the songs of the album arouse. The etymological analysis of the word ‘disgust’ presents before us two Latin words ‘dis’ that means to revolt and ‘gust’ relating to the sense of taste (Disgust - Wiktionary, the Free Dictionary). In Meshuggah’s song “Pravus,” the metaphors of disgust serve as a potent form of resistance, akin to a musical rebellion against the mundane and the conventional. The guttural, discordant riffs and relentless polyrhythms evoke a visceral sensation of revulsion, as if the very essence of the music is repulsed by the status quo. This sonic revolt becomes a cathartic release for listeners, a channel through which they can express their own disgust for the banality of the everyday. Much like an artist wielding their craft as a weapon, Meshuggah wields their discordant soundscape as a means of subversion, challenging conformity and demanding an awakening from the slumber of the ordinary. In “Pravus,” the metaphors of disgust transform into a powerful medium for resistance, inviting us to question, rebel, and embrace the chaos of life’s raw, unfiltered reality. In “Pravus,” Meshuggah’s metaphors of disgust go beyond mere musical rebellion; they become a reflection of the turmoil within the human psyche. The lyrics, delivered with ferocious intensity, manifest a profound rejection of societal norms and a call for self-examination. The cacophonous instrumentation and

frenetic tempo mirror the dissonance and chaos of a world where conformity often prevails. Yet, amidst this disarray, there lies a paradoxical beauty—a beauty born from the audacity to challenge the ordinary. Meshuggah’s artistry reminds us that resistance need not always be gentle or harmonious; sometimes, it emerges from the abrasive and discordant corners of existence, where our deepest discontent sparks the fires of change. “Pravus” stands as a testament to the transformative power of music, showing us that even the harshest dissonance can be a harbinger of enlightenment and a catalyst for revolutionary thought. The lines that follow substantiate the earlier assertions,

Drooling floods of lead Armed with distorted belief
Sharp munition spat from our mind Malignancy- rounds,
automatic fire
Black, acidic- bile

(“Meshuggah - Pravus”)

Metaphors of repulsion and disgust serve as powerful conduits for exploring profound philosophical ideas. They function as symbolic gateways into the complexities of human experience, reflecting our instinctual aversion to what threatens our sensibilities or moral compass. In these metaphors, we find echoes of existentialism, as they underline our confrontation with the absurdity of existence, forcing us to confront the chaos and irrationality of life. Furthermore, they resonate with themes of moral relativism, revealing how disgust can be a subjective construct shaped by cultural, societal, and individual perspectives. Metaphors of repulsion invite us to contemplate the boundaries of our comfort zones, challenging us to confront discomfort and question the origins of our revulsions. Ultimately, they remind us that beneath the visceral reactions lie profound questions about identity, morality, and the human condition, making them a rich source of philosophical inquiry and introspection.

In Meshuggah’s composition “Dancing to a Discordant

System,” the metaphors of disgust manifest as a dynamic form of resistance, akin to a musical insurgency against the established norms. The jagged, dissonant guitar riffs and relentless polyrhythms within the song create a disquieting atmosphere, evoking an innate sense of revulsion as if the music itself is recoiling from the conventional. This auditory rebellion becomes an emancipating outlet for listeners, a means through which they can channel their own disgust for the monotony of the everyday. Similar to an artist wielding their craft as a weapon, Meshuggah employs their tumultuous soundscape to challenge conformity and demand an awakening from the lethargy of the ordinary. In “Dancing to a Discordant System,” the metaphors of disgust metamorphose into a potent medium for resistance, urging us to question, revolt, and embrace the frenetic disarray of life’s unfiltered reality.

Within the visceral maelstrom of “Dancing to a Discordant System,” Meshuggah’s metaphors of disgust also embody a deeper philosophical dimension. They serve as sonic mirrors reflecting the inherent chaos and contradictions of human existence. This cacophony becomes a symbol of the existential struggle against the absurdity of life, inviting listeners to grapple with the incongruities that surround them. Moreover, the very act of dancing to this discordant system becomes a metaphorical rebellion in itself, as it symbolizes our resilience and determination to find meaning and rhythm amidst the disarray. In “Dancing to a Discordant System,” Meshuggah’s musical language becomes a manifesto, encouraging us to embrace the discomfort, confront our own revulsions, and discover transcendence through the discord.

In Meshuggah’s relentless sonic assault “Bleed,” the metaphors of disgust take on a formidable role as a distinctive form of resistance. The song’s thunderous, mechanical rhythms and chaotic guitar work evoke an overwhelming sensation of revulsion, as if the music itself recoils from the mundane and the ordinary. This auditory rebellion serves as

a potent conduit for listeners, a channel through which they can express their own visceral repulsion toward the stifling constraints of society. Comparable to an act of defiance, Meshuggah's sonic onslaught challenges the status quo, demanding an awakening from the inertia of conformity. In "Bleed," the metaphors of disgust metamorphose into an uncompromising medium of resistance, compelling us to question, revolt, and embrace the unapologetic intensity of life's raw, unfiltered reality. Within the relentless barrage of "Bleed," Meshuggah's metaphors of disgust delve deeper into the human psyche, transcending mere sonic rebellion. They become mirrors reflecting our internal discord and existential turmoil. The song's relentless pace serves as a reminder of the constant struggle we face in reconciling our desires and limitations, echoing existentialist themes of the absurdity of existence. In "Bleed," disgust is not just an emotional reaction; it's a symbol of the inner turmoil we all grapple with, pushing us to confront the dissonance between our aspirations and our reality. As listeners navigate the disorienting labyrinth of this track, they are compelled to explore the boundaries of their comfort zones, challenging their own revulsions and societal norms. Ultimately, "Bleed" encapsulates the transformative potential of music, reminding us that resistance often emerges from the dissonant edges of existence, where we find the most profound and challenging truths.

In Meshuggah's "ObZen," disgust emerges as a potent tool for rebellion against a corrupt and dystopic order. The album's cacophonous compositions mirror the dissonance of a world plagued by moral decay and societal chaos. Meshuggah's intricate rhythms and abrasive soundscapes become a musical manifestation of the inner turmoil, pushing listeners to confront the revulsion they feel towards the prevailing injustices. In tracks like "Bleed" and "Dancers to a Discordant System," the metaphors of disgust serve as sonic sledgehammers, shattering the veneer of complacency and challenging the status quo. "ObZen" becomes a visceral journey, inviting

us to question the oppressive norms of our dystopian reality and, in doing so, to spark a rebellion of consciousness against the corrupt order that surrounds us. It's a testament to the transformative power of music as a rallying cry for change in the face of societal decay. In the dissonant notes of "ObZen," Meshuggah's music becomes a sonic battlefield where listeners can harness their own disgust as a weapon of resistance. The album serves as a visceral reminder that in the face of a corrupt and dystopic order, revulsion can be a powerful catalyst for change. As the relentless rhythms and aggressive lyrics surge forth, they beckon us to channel our discontent and rebel against the oppressive forces that threaten our humanity, ultimately inspiring us to forge a path toward a more just and enlightened world. "ObZen" stands as an auditory testament to the enduring spirit of defiance against the darkest aspects of our reality.