Abstract Submission

Abstract Title: Aesthetic Normativity, the Political Body and Violent Perception

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Several thinkers throughout the philosophical tradition, amongst them are Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Foucault; take up the relationship between metaphysics, the body, and politics. Their concerns explicate that dealing with the essential connection between the political and metaphysical must necessarily be considered in terms of their embodiment. The metaphysical nature of our earth and the embodied reality of our politics should play a role in transforming our capacity to think of political solutions.

The relationship between aesthetics and the political body is a crucial part of these concerns. An analysis of relationships between aesthetic normativity and oppression created by *violent perception* is crucial. I bring about this new term called "violent perception" to emphasize that not only our physical actions should be defined to be violent but also one can be violent due to unrighteous judgment and thinking. The new phenomena in our societies such as mobbing, gang stalking and other psychological torture techniques can give a great deal of harm to people without giving the people a direct physical hurt. Therefore, I choose to define and emphasize a specific kind of perception which is unrighteous, discriminative and depowering to be violent perception. The acts of violent perception may not always result in a physical form or embodiment of violence, but the identification of the other at the first sense results from and it belongs to the political body, identity and embodiment.

In this paper, concepts of law and power will be analyzed in relation to passing aesthetic judgments, especially those regarding the beauty of things in daily life. Aesthetics of the perfect body reflect the ideals of beauty as seen in mass media, advertising and the corporate states which fails to relate aesthetic values with moral values. Discrimination and genocide throughout history represents the logical conclusion of *violent perception,* an example being the demands for perfection of Nazi regime in their persecution of disabled and the elderly. Discrimination of modern artists (as the Nazis considered modern art to be imperfect) was also echoed in their pronouncements on "*entartete Kunst* [degenerate art]."

The aesthetics of imperfection open up new understandings supporting an approach that stands against *violent perception*. In *everyday aesthetics*, beauty doesn't only belong to the perfect but to everyday imperfections. Aesthetic relativism is encouraged over aesthetic normativity. Demands made by the aesthetics of perfection and associated ideologies create a form of violence and intolerance. Violent perception includes a level of ignorance which lacks

morality. Søren Kierkegaard in *Either/Or* differentiates between aesthetic- and ethical stages of existence. The aesthetic stage is the initial underdeveloped stage. Don Juan, Ahasuerus and Faust are some characters which represent different aesthetes in his work. Johannes the Seducer is the reflective aesthete who manipulates the people in his life to conform to his alternative imaginative reality. The aesthetic stage lacks commitment and responsibility. It fails to acknowledge one's social debt and communal existence (McDonald, 2016, p.11). The aesthete escapes from a given reality through recreating it in imagination for obtaining personal pleasure from life (Kierkegaard, 1923, p.48). Identification and discrimination of people through perception of bodily characteristics which express their ethnical ground, gender and age is common. "Violent perception" occurs with identification of "other" only at an aesthetic level. When the aesthete is not capable of forming a truthful moral judgment, yet s/he picks up some readymade rhetoric:"Muslims are possible terrorists", "Black people are possible criminals", "Mexican people in the USA or Syrian refugees are possible rapists."

Edward Said makes a crucial differentiation between truth and rhetoric in "Speaking Truth to Power", discussing how specific ideologies form their conforming language to hide the moral responsibilities, while an intellectual should be aware and always be critical of readymade judgments (Said, 1994, pp.85-87). Similarly, Emmanuel Levinas argues that the rhetoric approaches to the Other not to face the Other but to solicit his own idea. Specific nature of rhetoric as propaganda, flattery and diplomacy consists in corrupting freedom of other (Levinas, 1979, p.70). Levinas argues the condition of peace can occur only in accepting the uniqueness of the other as a form of "love" and "recognition in the individual of the uniqueness of the person" (Levinas, 1998, pp.194-195). The moment of justice is, in a sense, stepping from aesthetic stage of existence to the ethical stage of existence, by taking the moral responsibility dealing with the others. The theory of "violent perception" combines the aesthetic identification of other and discrimination, offering the solution of changing the perspective taking a moral level of judgment against unknown others by developing empathy.

This condition of peace may sound to be utopic. The possibility of the unity with the others in embodiment in the world and the capacity of empathy are ontologically described by the phenomenology of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty brings a unitary and unique approach to our capacity to perceive the worlds of others since people are bound to each other as being one "flesh" ontologically. Therefore, the perception of the other is a connected to perceiving one's own self, which opens discussions on the foundation of empathy at an ontological level while we continue to maintain a position with regards to the perceptions of the other. Heidegger offers an ontological analysis of emotional experiences of human beings with his concept of *Mitsein* [Being-with] and *Mitwelt* [with-world]. These concepts offer a reflection upon the existential ontological foundations of empathy. He writes about empathy that it is able to "provide the ontological bridge from one's own subject, which is given proximally as alone, to the other subject, which is proximally quite closed off" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 162). Heidegger (1996) maintains that empathy is "possible only if Dasein, as *Being-in-the-world*, already is with others. 'Empathy' does not first constitute Being-with; only on the basis of Being-with does 'empathy' become possible" (p. 162).

Although Martin Heidegger supported the Nazi regime, he doesn't directly fall into the category of violent perception with regard of aesthetics of perfection. His interpretations of Vincent van Gogh's "Shoes [1886]" express the imperfect world of a peasant woman and her shoes in their everyday use. In his definitions about the peasant woman and her world, we do not realize a form of perfectionism, while he takes the normal peasant life and the role of instrumentality as his main points of analysis. The levels of violent perception cannot be directly observed in his texts. However, taking no direct position in extreme situations of injustice is a position which belongs to the indifferent and irresponsive aesthetic stage, which cannot lead to the level of responsibility in an ethical stage of existence.

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