

Chapter 23

Why Should We Still Be Hopeful? Aestheticization of Power and Resistance

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ABSTRACT

As dispositif, power has to make itself aesthetics in three planes: desire, body, and space. Firstly, desire makes mobilization possible in which power is constituted, whether it is regarded as a deficiency or as a production-machine of socius. Secondly, space provides publicity and timelessness to power. Finally, the omnipresence ability of power is revealed by the body. Actualizing of power come in sight throughout the synchronic relationality of these three planes. So, the aestheticization and actualization of power are the same processes. Therefore, power is in need of organization of images and feelings. This is what aestheticization of power is. So, the study is based on the claim that the aesthetics of power and the aesthetics of resistance are immanent. Within the framework of the theoretical analyses, the chapter discusses whether aestheticizations of power and resistance will provide opportunities for hopefulness.

INTRODUCTION

There are many studies in the literature that define art as political criticism. The fields that the aesthetics of art have always been related to the production of the *difference* as the emergence of the new and specific. However, this is not enough to define art as a political-critical event. The area that the work of art aestheticizes may well be strengthening the hegemonic power relations. Hence, the field of art takes place through a dual process: molecular and molar. These conceptualizations, which Deleuze and Guattari use in many different contexts, are important for the functions of art. Art-machine, which Deleuze and Guattari (1987) conceptualize as molecular flow, is the assemblage of experiments aimed at the virtual-being of meaning. So, the art-machine means more than the artistic activity, which is reduced to a representative activity trapped in the dichotomy of the signifier-signified. The art-machine produces the process that does not represent. So, this comprehension of art involves Kant's transcendental aesthetic to Spinoza's immanence aesthetic-ethical approach. While Kant's transcendental aesthetic approach aims the representation of Beauty and Supreme, Spinoza's field of ethical immanence takes a tough stance

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against representation and rejects the *outside* assumption. This work will move from Spinoza's immanence ethical ground to address the concept of aesthetics and its relationship to the senses and the body.

Secondly, understanding the concept of aesthetics in relation to body and senses makes it necessary to consider aesthetics as an ontological process. This is the same as M. Foucault's recent claim to "*to become life as a work of art*". Therefore, it is an imperative to talk about an aesthetic setup of existence in every situation that are talking about, not power, but power relations. On the one hand, the aestheticization of the body regulated by power relations and the time-space that it acts within the body; on the other hand, it is art-machine as an abstract machine that deterritorialise the aestheticization. Therefore, art practices that are unrepresentative, beyond the definition of homogeneous critical art, work as lines of flight (Zepke, 2005: p.3). This is the multi-functionality that Foucault and Deleuze express with the *toolbox* metaphor. Every lines of flight is made possible by experiments with those in the toolbox. But these experiments are not intended to build the machine as an organism. Because the machine should work first of all, and it works only if each part is broken and communicates with others, rather than the organization between its parts. So what is in the toolbox (runs the power-machine) that enables the aestheticizations of power? At the moment art as an abstract-machine intersect with the dispositif of power, the overdetermination of labour creates ethical creation processes: *subjecti(vati)on*¹.

It should be mentioned that this connection between aesthetics and ethics is very sensitive. This sensitivity is mostly due to the ambiguous definition of both areas. First, aesthetics is accepted as a judicial power that cannot be objectively based on the transcendental particularity that Kant tries to link with the notion of *purposiveness*. Although Kant attempts to theorize aesthetics without reducing the purposiveness to the theological transcendence of his age, this secular theorizing effort of aesthetics and therefore judicial power has been trapped in the rational transcendence of the Enlightenment period. According to Kant, taste is a subjective judicial power and cannot be objectified. However, what is related to Beauty cannot be reduced to taste and pleasure, and cannot be evaluated in subjectively. Beauty is not a concept of the object and cannot be attributed to the object. But the existence of the object is necessary for the Beauty judgment. So, how can the universal beauty judgment be mentioned? If beauty is not a feature of the object, how can beauty judgment demand universality? These questions can only be answered by defining universality. The universality demand of the beauty judgment is possible only with the assumption of compromise between subjects: universal transmissibility (*Mittheilbarkeit*). In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1999), Kant claims that the data of the imagination (*affection*) are transformed into knowledge, subject to the power of comprehension (Yüksel, 2016: pp.42-45). So the power of comprehension establishes domination over imagination. But it is necessary to mention the existence of a *free game* (*Spiel*) between imagination and comprehension power in the formation of the beauty judgment. Although Kant frees imagination from the domination of the power of consensus with the existence of free play, the assumption of universal consensus puts affections into the domination of the mind. The assumption of consensus, which enables universal transmissibility, leads to the publicization of aesthetics. This publicization has two important consequences. Firstly, aesthetics based on consensus cannot reach the universality that it targets due to the existence of the outside, which is not always included in the consensus. Therefore, it will always be doomed to remain partial (to be particular), which will be defined as universality. Secondly, consensus-based aesthetics will acquire a self-professed purposiveness: the mission of universalizing the particular.

In regards to ethics, the problem is about defining the word synonymy of morality, as a whole of social norms, or practically compressing it into narrow areas such as professional ethics. Every situation in which ethics is integrated into morality reveals a debt relationship in the sense that Nietzsche (2011:

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