

Public Order and the Struggle for Recognition.
Political Aesthetics of Social Exclusion.

Popular summary

The aim of the project is to work out a conception of political aesthetics on the basis of the paradigm of the theory of recognition. The purpose of the projected political aesthetics is to explain the role of the aesthetical factors in formation of normative judgements which form a ground for exclusionary attitudes.

Aesthetics is commonly thought to refer to things superficial, ornamental, and thus inessential for human individuals and societies. Such a view of aesthetics owes much to the fact that it is usually understood a philosophy of arts. Aesthetics occupies a more prominent role in contemporary political philosophy which addresses the issues of the use of the arts in politics, the political influence upon the arts, as well as the role of the aesthetical aspects in political behaviour. The existing conceptions of political aesthetics stress the role of the aesthetical aspect in social and political life, yet they too confine their interest to the role of the arts in politics and the influence of politics upon the arts. Due the elusiveness of both aesthetics and politics, their relationship is often misunderstood, or understood in mutually conflicting ways.

The project assumes that the concept of aesthetics does not refer only to the perception of beauty and the works of art, but to the sensory perception as such in the sense of αἴσθησις adopted in the ancient Greek philosophy. Following the results of the evolutionary aesthetics, the project also assumes that aesthetical (perceptual) factors cannot be reduced to ornamentality but that they play a constitutive role in formation of normative judgements. The project aims to demonstrate that both the paradigm of the theory of recognition, as well as the existing conceptions of the political aesthetics, do not take seriously enough the functions of the aesthetical factors in the above specified sense. More specifically, they tend to overlook the role of aesthetic factors in not only in formation of normative frameworks that enable the acts of recognition, but also in emergence of the so-called pathologies of recognition, i.e. denials of recognition (exclusionary attitudes).

In particular, the project will consider how perception is subject to processes of social of construction, and, vice versa, how perception influences the emergence of regulative principles of social conduct. The purpose of the project is thus to consider the legitimacy of the claim that perception plays an essential role in society through performing the discriminatory and regulatory, thus controlling and repressive functions in everyday activities as well as in social and political behaviour, and that perceptual abilities play a fundamental role in the emergence of systems of normative beliefs codified in norms which constitute the underpinning of moral, social, political and legal orders.

The above claims will be demonstrated through exploration of the main claims of the theory of recognition, i.e. an approach which has become a well-established paradigm in social and political philosophy. The project will be executed through three closely interconnected research tasks. The first one will be devoted to development of a novel theoretical foundation of political aesthetics, alternative to the existing ones. In the second task, the existing conceptions of recognition will be analysed and some of their deficiencies diagnosed and rectified. The third task will address the issue of the formation of exclusionary attitudes as a result of the current forms of the struggle of recognition.