

On Justice Beauty and Health - Pluralist Approaches

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beauty, far from contributing to social injustice... actually assists us in the work of addressing injustice (Scarry 1998, 42)

This article discusses historical and symbolic perceptions and representations of justice. In a Western context justice has for millennia been depicted as female and for a long period also as divine. In this article these symbols are interconnected with changing, complex and pluralist understandings of beauty, health and justice. Both justice and beauty are related, as are beauty and health. Beauty has a historical value, and is used for political, commercial, health, artistic and many other purposes. Ideals of beauty and attempts to live up to them can be damaging - historically especially for women. Beauty has been considered unjust, but it may also contribute to fairness, justice and wellbeing. Globalisations and technology have led to pluralisation and uncertainty about what is just, beautiful, and healthy, but they have in no way made these values obsolete.

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Introduction

Justice, beauty and health are (contested) values, ideals and concepts both historically and in a globalized world. Justice is perhaps a more western oriented concept, than we normally think of, while beauty seems to be

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valued globally but according to different ideals - including increasingly diverse aesthetic ideals also in a Western context (Petersen 2011; Eco 2004a, 428). The same diversity can be said to characterize ideals of health, which also differ according to cultural traditions and eras, even if the World Health Organisation after World War II introduced a much cited definition, which underlines the importance of 'well-being'.³

The article takes a Danish, Nordic and European starting point for experiences and perspectives. It includes a historical and an increasingly global context, when discussing the complex interrelation between justice, beauty and health. Theoretically and methodologically we approach the subject through reflections on the concepts and values addressed in the title, as well as their interrelations. These are Justice, which is etymologically and historically related to fairness, which is again related to beauty. Beauty may - or may not - be linked to health, and the positive and negative relations between the three concepts are discussed through concrete global examples. Historical and contemporary examples of normative desire for 'unhealthy' expressions of beauty, in the form of celebration of anorectic and perfectionist ideals, demonstrate the limits of modern law - and politics - in securing both justice, fairness and health. Due to its general, conceptual and more philosophical nature, the article does not address examples or consequences in terms of specific national or international policies or regulations. We consider it a contribution to an understanding of the complexity of a theory of justice and normativity in the intricate relations to the complex understandings and expressions of also beauty and health.

The global corona crisis, which happened after the article was written, has clearly demonstrated that justice (or injustice) and health are interrelated - which we already knew, but which has now been underlined (Vallgårda 2019; Snowden 2019).

Before the Black Death hit Florence from 1348-1351, the city government of the neighbouring city Siena, commissioned the artist Ambrogio Lorenzetti to paint three famous fresco panels between 1338 and 1339 for the City Hall depicting *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government*. These frescos demonstrate the consequences of good government of a city, which

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³ "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", Preamble to the Constitution of WHO (1946).

is portrayed as clean, orderly, healthy and beautiful - as contrasted to the badly governed city depicted as devastated, dilapidated and unhealthy.⁴ The corona crisis has also demonstrated the relations between good and bad government and its consequences for life and death.

"Justitia is a Woman"

In her book, "Justitia ist eine Frau. Geschichte und Symbolik der Gerechtigkeit" which was also a catalogue for a travelling exhibition, German lawyer Barbara Degen discusses why the allegory of justice is portrayed as a woman (Degen 2008). Her answer is that women, especially mothers incorporate the central elements of justice: the unity of everyday rules, law and justice; wisdom, love and just action; the ability to punish without exclusion and destruction; a just distribution and passing on of knowledge and power (ibid, 11). In another text I have along the same lines discussed the English term 'Justice', which refers back to the Roman goddess Justitia, who was a transformation of primarily the Greek goddess Dike. Ancient Greece had a number of goddesses dealing with law and justice. Demeter (Ceres in Roman culture) dealt with the creation of laws. Eunomia, as her name indicates dealt with good laws. Her sister Dike, was the goddess of *justice*, and her other sister, *Eirene*, was the goddess of *peace*. Their mother was *Themis*, goddess of *customary laws*, and *her* sister was Nemesis, the goddess of revenge. Further, the Erinye were goddesses, who would punish transgression of laws (Petersen 2011, 14). The image of a woman with a balance goes back to the Egyptian goddess of justice, Maat, who would weigh the hearts of humans, symbols of conscience, after their death against one of her feathers, which were an emblem of Right and Truth. If humans had behaved rightfully and truthfully while alive, the heart, which was closely related to the soul, would be light, and they would have an easy journey through the afterlife. Maat is also praised for her beauty (Petersen 2011).5

Barbara Degen claims that both Demeter and Themis were related to fertility, and that fertility and justice were closely linked. Where justice ruled, humans fared well (Degen 2008, 18-19). The symbolic relation

⁴ See Wikipedia - The Allegory of Good and Bad Government (accessed June 23,2020)

⁵ See Degen 2008, Chapter 2 - on the Egyptian goddess Maat. See also *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* 2001, 65 and 70-71.

between the female body, nourishment and value is remarkable (ibid, 31), and the well-fed and well-proportioned body has often been considered beautiful in Western history. In a chapter on Themis and her daughters Degen writes that "Justice is the wish and hope for a happy fate, a good and just new beginning" (ibid, 47).⁶ Democratic conditions were dependent upon the respect of Themis and her three daughters (Dike, Eunomia & Eirene) in all spheres of community and nature (ibid, 49). Law and justice would heal society as sources of life-giving water would heal individuals from disease (ibid, 66).

Christian perceptions of justice were influenced by Sumerian, Egyptian, Greek-Roman and Jewish knowledge of wisdom and virtue. Mary - the Jew and Christian mother - paved the way for a new understanding of justice. The attributes related to her were the strength of a lion, the wisdom of the snake, the power of governing and love, beauty and prophetic and rhetorical qualities. She incorporated the new values, and personified wisdom, love and beauty (ibid, 74).

It is noteworthy that all virtues were embodied as female figures, and since justice was a cardinal (classical) virtue, it was especially important. Degen writes that in the 16th century, Justice is often portrayed as a naked woman, who is sometimes seductive, sometimes strong, but she always governs the universe with her beauty. "The beauty of a just woman is symbolically an image of hope regarding her societal creativity and her overview and view of the world" (ibid, 117).⁷

These developments were never without challenges. The witch hunts which lasted for hundreds of years starting in the 16th century, disempowered women. With the fall of empires and transition to democracies after the French Revolution, women were for a long period excluded from political rights and representation as well as from access to education and the possibility of becoming civil servants for the states including judges.

The tensions between popular and symbolic images and representations of women in Europe and the Nordic countries (which became Christianized

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⁶ "Gerechtigkeit ist der Wunsch und die Hoffnung auf ein glückliches Schicksal, einen guten und gerechten Neuanfang" - my translation above).

⁷ "Die Schönheit einer gerechten Frau ist symbolisch ein Hoffnungsbild auf ihre gesellschaftliche Schöpfungskraft und auf ihren Überblick und ihre Weltsicht." (My translation - HP).

around the year 1000) were always present, but the female representations of justice persisted.

On Justice, Fairness and Beauty

It is interesting to note the link in a Western understanding of justice over several millennia between one or more female divine beings representing justice, and the attribute of being fair - which is still today mostly associated with femaleness, when used to describe beauty and loveliness.

In the Tanner Lectures on Human Values delivered at Yale University in March 1998, the American professor Elaine Scarry gave a couple of lectures published under the title On Beauty and Being Just (Scarry 1998).8 Her main argument of the lectures underlines the importance of beauty in the humanities, and in the part called "On Beauty and Being Fair", her argument is that "beauty, far from contributing to social injustice... actually assists us in the work of addressing injustice" (Scarry 1998, 42). This is in contrast to often used arguments, which claim that beauty is unjust as it is not divided equally and not equally achievable. "The beauty of persons is honored throughout the world, but so too, is the beauty of gods, the beauty of gardens, the beauty of poems" (ibid, 43). Scarry writes that noticing beauty increases the possibility that something will be carefully handled. She claims that beauty has a 'pacific quality', which in part comes from its reciprocal, life-granting pact (ibid, 47). Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch contemplate that the fact that we look at beautiful persons and things without wishing to be ourselves beautiful "is one of the key ways... in which beauty prepares us for justice" (ibid, 53), Scarry considers that the world through its beauty continually "recommits us to a rigorous standard of perpetual care" (ibid, 55). Beauty makes us care for the world.

Beauty seems to place requirements on us for attending to the aliveness or (in the case of objects) quasi-aliveness of our world, and for entering into its protection. Beauty is, then, a compact, or contract between the beautiful being (a person or thing) and the perceiver. As the beautiful being confers on the perceiver the gift of

⁸ In this context, her lecture "On Beauty and Being Fair" has been especially helpful and interesting.

life, so the perceiver confers on the beautiful being the gift of life (ibid, 61).

Scarry combines beauty and justice by using the words fair and fairness with their multiple meanings. "A single word, 'fairness' is used both in referring to loveliness of countenance and in referring to the ethical requirement for 'being fair', 'playing fair' and 'fair distribution'" (ibid, 62). Scarry later claims that beautiful things give rise to the notion of distribution "to a lifesaving reciprocity, to fairness not just in the sense of liveliness of aspect, but in the sense of 'a symmetry of everyone's relations to each other'" (ibid, 65). Beautiful things "hold steadily visible the manifest good of equality and balance" (ibid, 66).

Imagine...a world that has blue sky, musical sounds, cakes, roses, and the body's soft, smooth surface; and now imagine further that this world also has a set of just social arrangements and laws that ... by their very consistency stand guard over and secure themselves...The equality residing in the song-filled sky light and the equality residing in the legal arrangements need not be spoken about as anything other than analogous, especially since the laws (both written and applied with a consistency across all persons) are now themselves beautiful (ibid, 68).

But beauty is in the world before justice, and it will stay longer, Scarry argues, because it does not depend on human beings to bring it about, "though human beings have created much of the beauty of the world, they are only collaborators in a much vaster project" (ibid, 74).

Zadie Smith's novel On Beauty takes its title directly from Elaine Scarry's lectures and book. It is also inspired by Howards' End by E.M.Forster. Smith's novel describes an interracial marriage between a British white male university professor with continued extra-marital affairs, and his African-American voluptuous and sensual wife. He asks his students "to imagine prettiness as the mask that power wears. To recast Aesthetics as a rarefied language of exclusion" (Smith 2005, 155). A painting described in the book is by a great Vodoo goddess, Erzulie. "She's called the Black Virgin - also, the Violent Venus... She represents love, beauty, purity, the ideal female and the moon... and she's the mystère of jealousy, vengeance and discord, and, on the other hand, of love, perpetual help, goodwill, health,

beauty and fortune" (ibid, 175). It is clear from the gender and race relations, which are prominent in Zadie Smith's book, how much (perceptions of) beauty also relates to justice and power.

The term 'fair' is often used without translation in all Nordic languages in the understanding of 'righteous' and even-handed. It is interesting to note the etymology of 'fair' in a Nordic context, 'Fair' comes from

Old English 'fæger' "pleasing to the sight (of persons and body features, also of objects, places, etc.); beautiful, handsome, attractive," of weather, "bright, clear, pleasant; not rainy," also in late Old English "morally good," from Proto-Germanic *fagraz (source also of Old Saxon fagar, Old Norse fagr, Swedish fager, Old High German fagar "beautiful," Gothic fagrs "fit"), perhaps from PIE *pek-(1) "to make pretty" (source also of Lithuanian puošiu "I decorate"). 9

The term 'fager' is still used in Swedish, Danish and Norwegian, although rarely, as it has an old-fashioned ring about it. It still primarily means beautiful. The relation between good, honest and adequate is linked also in the Danish etymology of 'fager' (Nielsen 1985).

Swedish, Danish and Norwegian use 'indigenous' words for what is in English translated into 'justice'. These words are 'rättvisa' in Swedish or 'retfærdighed/rettferdighet', which is used in Danish and Norwegian. They are not personified and deified as in the Roman languages. They both relate to combinations with 'ret/rätt'. This is a word, which can be used both as a noun and an adjective, with a very rich etymology, going back to an Indo European root relating to governing (right), steering (right), leading. 'Ret' is translated into English as *right*, *straight*, *court*, *court house*, *law court*, *title* - but also as *dish*, which can sometimes emphasize the ambiguity of the term, as when one speaks about 'today's dishes/laws' (Petersen 2006, 233). The adjective 'retfærdig' is translated as fair, just, and righteous, while the noun 'retfærdighed' is translated as 'Justice'.'10

The term 'welfare' in the Nordic countries called 'velfærd' comes from German 'Wohl-fahrt' - directly translated as 'travel well' or 'fare well'. Governing righteously and fairly and faring well can thus be said to have a rather long heritage in Nordic culture in general and in legal and political culture in particular. It reverberates Barbara Degen's reflections on why

⁹ https://www.etymonline.com/word/fair (accessed 1 March 2019).

¹⁰ See Gyldendals røde ordbøger. 1992. Dansk-engelsk

Justice is allegorically and symbolically portrayed as a woman in European and Mediterranean history.

On Beauty and Health

During a period of my life, in the late 1990s when I lived and worked in Greenland, I used to walk to work along first a path and then a gravel road. When entering the gravel road, I faced the Nuuk fjord, and many mornings, I admired the almost overwhelming beauty of this sight - especially when the sun was out, the air was clear, and the sky was blue. Then I continued to the University of Greenland, which at that time was placed at the same fjord, in an old Moravian missionary building - also with beautiful views and of beautiful proportions. The former chapel had become a classroom. It faced the fjord to the south, as did my tiny office, and a graveyard to the north. Greenlandic graveyards often faced scenic and beautiful views. Beauty was highly valued by the Inuit population for centuries, as demonstrated in dress, tools for hunting and in relation to afterlife. This experience of especially natural beauty has had a lasting impact and has made me reflect on the role of beauty for many years.

More than twenty years later, when I began working on and talking about this article, I realised that the site where I had my repeated morning experiences of beauty was actually also related to health. The gravel road - an evacuation road - was directly in front of the local hospital, which was originally established as a tuberculosis sanatorium in 1953-54. It was initially named The Sanatorium of Queen Ingrid (then queen of Denmark) - and was always called Sana, even if its name had later changed to The Hospital of Queen Ingrid. Many of the tuberculosis sanatoria in the 19th and 20th centuries were placed in beautiful surroundings. Thomas Mann's novel The Magic Mountain (originally from 1924) is inspired by his wife's stay at a forest sanatorium in Davos in the Swiss mountains. Interestingly the narrator and also the protagonist of the book expresses on several occasions to the main

¹¹ On perhaps a similar note, Janesh Vaidya writes in his ayurvedic cookbook *Maden er min medicin* [Food is my medicine - recently translated from Swedish to Danish] 7-9, about especially three reasons,why he loves Sweden. These are the clean air and abundance of oxygen, the abundance of clean water, and the fact that Sweden is one of the most peaceful places on earth, because it has not been involved in wars for centuries. The Swedes have managed to create a society with political, economic and social stability without resorting to violence. Vaidya is an ayurvedic practitioner who lives and works in Sweden.

female character in the book that "Disease gives you freedom" (Mann 2017, 817).

Beauty has been highly valued in all societies at all times - although what has been considered beautiful has varied. The Danish philosopher, Dorthe Jørgensen, has dealt with beauty and aesthetic ideas on many occasions (Jørgensen 2001). She has written about beauty and aesthetic experience as related to a tradition of transcendence. Aesthetics is according to her by nature a metaphysics of experience. Classical metaphysics emerged from ideas of the good and the beautiful. She is looking for aesthetic experience as an experience of coherence and meaning, which we are otherwise distant from - an experience of something, which is valuable in itself. According to her, we cannot have a utilitarian approach to everything. As discussed above, beauty and justice have historically been related in Western (legal) culture, as has justice and divinity. Further, Justice, beauty and health have all been considered divine values for millennia.

This emphasis on the divine is still reflected in the modern era. In 1969 the first spaceship Apollo went on its mission to the moon. It was named after one of the most important and beautiful Greek male gods, who was a complex God of amongst others music, poetry, medicine and healing, oracles and archery. The view of the 'blue planet' by the astronauts as both beautiful and fragile has had an impact on human imagination of the world ever since. It has to a certain extent formed our present imaginary of the planet, we inhabit and care for, and which we often consider beautiful. But this is not always the case. Recently American astronaut, Scott Kelly, in his book Endurance: A Year in Space, A Lifetime of Discovery from 2017 writes that seen from space certain parts of the world, especially in Asia, are so covered by air pollution that they seem sick and in need of treatment, or at least time to recover (Kelly 2018).

Indigenous people in Australia have long been aware of what they have called *Sickness Country*. Oxford Dictionary defines the concept as an area of spiritual significance where mythological beings may cause illness, especially to those disturbing or profaning the area. Traditionally these places are considered sacred. Artists and scientists have described this: "Not far from Kakadu are deposits of uranium. Aboriginals have known to avoid this area for centuries—it is known as 'sickness country'. Rock art has

¹² https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sickness_country (accessed 1 March 2019).

depicted a person with swollen joints—the first signs of radiation poisoning."¹³

In China the rapid industrial and economic development over the last decades has led to the emergence of what has been called 'cancer villages'. There are about 450 villages in China, where the prevalence of cancer has been over proportionate in some cases leading whole families to die.

The Chinese Wikipedia defines 'cancer village' as a post-reform phenomenon in mainland China, where the number of cancer patients in some villages is extraordinarily high, and water contamination from industries is often the likely cause. In most cases, there is a single cancer village in a county, while the number of cancer villages in one township can reach 21. Outside China, the term "cancer cluster' has been used to refer to a local area where cancer is more prevalent as a result of cancer-causing pollutants. While the public typically thinks of cancer clusters in terms of cancer caused by industrial pollution, scientists tend to see them as a geographic area, time period, or group of people with a greater than expected number of cases of cancer. China's cancer villages are cancer clusters in farming villages... In Xiaojizhuang Village in Hebei, one out of 10 people had died of cancer, while fertile fields became barren (Liu, 2010).

Increasing environmental problems - sickness of land and people - have probably led the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping, to include a section in his report to the 19th Party Congress in October 2017, called IX. Speeding up Reform of the System for Developing an Ecological Civilization, and Building a Beautiful China. The first part of this section runs as follows:

Man and nature form a community of life; we, as human beings, must respect nature, follow its ways, and protect it. Only by observing the laws of nature can mankind avoid costly blunders in its exploitation. Any harm we inflict on nature will eventually return to haunt us. This is a reality we have to face. The modernization that we pursue is one characterized by harmonious coexistence between man and nature. In addition to creating more material and cultural wealth to meet people's ever-increasing needs for a better life, we need also to

¹³ See https://www.artistwd.com/joyzine/australia/abr_culture/sickness_country.php and https://learnearnandreturn.wordpress.com/2013/12/11/kakadu-and-sickness-country/ (accessed 1 March 2019).

provide more quality ecological goods to meet people's ever-growing demands for a beautiful environment. We should, acting on the principles of prioritizing resource conservation and environmental protection and letting nature restore itself, develop spatial layouts, industrial structures, and ways of work and life that help conserve resources and protect the environment. With this, we can restore the serenity, harmony, and beauty of nature.¹⁴

The emphasis on beauty is both ancient and new. It probably underlines both a general value of beauty in the world - even if the expressions may vary. It also reflects a political demand and need of both the Chinese population (not least but not only its middle class) and the political leadership to improve living conditions in relation to both health and beauty.

Constitutional changes (re)introducing unlimited absolutist leadership is returning in many places of the world including in China, but even absolutist leaders have to bow to demands for values, they may not control, even if they will also try to take advantage of them. Beauty has to be cared for.

On Beauty, Health and In/equality

The beauty industry is a considerable industry in the world, it is very lucrative, and very much on the outlook for new products. In 2016, the global cosmetic market grew an estimated four percent in comparison to the previous year. Skincare, hair care, make-up, perfumes, toiletries and deodorants, and oral cosmetics are the main product categories of the cosmetic market.¹⁵

The pressure to look better to improve market opportunities has been growing. Standards and ideals of beauty may differ and may be contextual - but the demand to be beautiful seems to be ever growing in the visual and global culture we live in, where Asia is a particularly important and growing

¹⁴ See Xi Jinping, Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October18, 2017

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report at 19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf (accessed October 22 2020)

¹⁵ https://www.statista.com/topics/3137/cosmetics-industry/ (accessed 1 March 2019).

market. According to German and South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han in a market order and society, a smooth and slick expression of both beauty and health is expected (Han 2015). At a conference on Law in May 2016 in Beijing, law Professor Zhu Suli from Peking University in his keynote speech commented on the importance of looks and beauty in Asia saying, "young and handsome people get better jobs." Youth and beauty is a well-known reason for (positive) discrimination in China. He also noted that cosmetic surgery is amongst the biggest industries of South Korea.¹⁶

In their book The Spirit Level, the authors, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, both of whom are British doctors, write that inequality leads to social erosion - also of welfare and well-being. They underline the paradox that we may live under conditions of both great wealth, great fear and personal and societal insecurity. An inequality scale may also be an indicator for psychological well-being or lack of such. "We have got close to the end of what economic growth can do for us" they claim (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009, 5). An evidence of this is that the general life expectancy of the US has for a long period been similar to that of Cuba, which has a much lower GNP. The consequences of large-scale inequality are declining mental health and drug abuse, obesity, lower educational performance, more teenage births, increasing violence, growing imprisonment and punishment and lack of social mobility. In sum dysfunctional and unbalanced societies. Depression and anxiety are closely connected; people who suffer from one often suffer from the other (ibid, 35). Women's obesity rates turn out to be more closely related to inequality than men's are (ibid, 17)..."We may... have become highly self-conscious, obsessed with how we appear to others, worried that we may come across as unattractive, boring, stupid or whatever, and constantly trying to manage the impressions we make... This vulnerability is part of the modern psychological condition and feeds directly into consumerism" (ibid, 42-3). The quality of social relations deteriorates in less equal societies (ibid, 51) and "in several respects more unequal societies seem more masculine, at least in term of stereotypes... just as levels of trust and social relations are affected by inequality, so too is the status of women" (ibid, 58).

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¹⁶ 13th Asian Law Institute Conference, *Asian Perspectives on Legal Globalisation*, held at Peking University in May 2016, author's notes.

Appearance and beauty are perhaps especially of concern in the anxious and individualized middle classes - and perhaps especially in a world where gender is at the same time more and more fluid, and where the appearance of female gender (whatever that may mean) is under pressure. "Depression is a common mental disorder... (It) is the leading case of disability worldwide, and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease. More women are affected by depression than men." 'Depression epidemics' and 'beauty traps', seem to hit especially women, and 85% of all cosmetic surgery is performed on women (Nacea 2016).

The pressure to live up to *ideals* of beauty and perfection at the risk of health is addressed in a publication from 2017 produced by the Danish Ethical Council and focusing specifically on teenagers in the final classes of the primary school level. The title of the publication is "Kropumulig! Om sundhed, skønhed og selvværd." An English translation might be "Unruly! On health, beauty and self-esteem. "18 The four chapters deal with reflections on the concept and understanding of the body, body and ethics, body and society and body and identity. The concern of the Ethical Council is that in a society with a focus on the individual and individual performance, the body can play the main role in the hunt for success - especially when it is viewed as plastic and malleable. It seems that the main concern of the Council is to make young people more satisfied and happy with their body, and that an exaggerated and extreme focus on both (certain ideals of) beauty and health may obstruct health. It may also lead to low self-esteem, because it is not possible to live up to all expectations about being young and beautiful. Norms and values about what one should try to achieve will influence ideals about the body. These norms and ideals are especially shaped by (social) media, which seem to present uniform looks, while individuals are much more diverse (Det etiske råd 2017, 14). Fitness, cosmetic surgery, and medical optimisation are used to counter shame related to a body, which is not 'formed in the right way' (ibid, 12). The 'right way' was long considered a presentation of a 'natural look', but this is no longer the norm. It is obvious that the publication is critical of a neo-liberal

¹⁷ See http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs369/en/ (accessed 1 March 2019).

¹⁸ The title is difficult to translate. Literally translated 'kropumulig' could be 'bodily impossible/ unruly'. My suggestion for a translation here is "Unruly! On health, beauty and self-esteem." See the text here http://www.etiskraad.dk/etiske-temaer/optimering-af-mennesket/undervisning-til-grundskolen/kropumulig-side (accessed 1 March 2019).

understanding of the self-made body - and the 'perfect' body. However, it appears as if the ideal in contemporary (teenage) culture is actually exactly an ideal of the 'perfect body' rather than a 'beautiful body'. ¹⁹ This reflects Umberto Eco's observation in his book on Beauty (2004) that there is no longer one aesthetic ideal of beauty, "[An] explorer from the future will no longer be able to identify the aesthetic ideal diffused by the mass media of the twentieth century and beyond. He will have to surrender before the orgy of tolerance, the total syncretism and the absolute and unstoppable polytheism of Beauty" (Eco 2004 b, 428).

The report mentions health or relations to health 48 times, which seems to indicate a much stronger focus on health than on beauty - perhaps even an obsession or insecurity? The last page of the material highlights the following quote: "There should be room for all of us and for our differences" (Det etiske råd 2017, 42). ²⁰ Is this combination of space and diversity today's version of justice or fairness?

On Perceptions of Beauty and Other's desire²¹

'It hurts so much,' the little mermaid said. 'Yes, one has to go through a great deal of trouble to look nice!' the old woman said (Andersen 2014).

The quotation above is from the fairytale The Little Mermaid by H. C. Andersen, and it underlines a less flattering aspect of beauty, sometimes it hurts. The dialogue takes place between the young little mermaid and her grandmother, who teaches her to dress properly, which entails the pain of having eight large oysters attach to the tail. The scene also foreshadows the later fate of the little mermaid who must suffer a lot more to become a (human) woman. Though beauty can be a source of health and justice, it can also be unhealthy, painful and unjust. As illustrated in The Little Mermaid beauty for women is sometimes connected with suffering. Beauty ideals are changing and are becoming increasingly pluralistic and polycentric, but

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¹⁹ The report uses the term 'a beautiful body' only once, it refers to *perceptions of beauty* 8 times, and to the 'perfect body' 15 times.

²⁰ "Vi skal alle sammen være her, og der skal være plads til hinandens forskelligheder."

²¹ The following section is written by Rasmus Glud Madsen, BA in Philosophy (University of Aarhus) and LL.M. (University of Copenhagen).

even as ideals of beauty are changing, they still seem generally to have much higher costs for women than for men, and thereby they may become a source of structural injustices. Here I will present and analyse two examples of how ideals of beauty can effect health.

It is not natural, it is desire

One of the main injustices in the gendered beauty ideals is the question of weight. (Western) women seem to be exposed to increasingly unhealthy beauty ideals especially in relation to body weight. The discrepancy between realities and beauty ideals is creating body dissatisfaction. Media is one of the main sources creating beauty ideals. To counter media's effect on body dissatisfaction, some countries including France, the United Kingdom, Australia, (Tiggemann et al 2017, 107) and Denmark²² have introduced mandatory disclaimer labels. These disclaimer labels mark that an commercial image has been altered (ibid, 107-108). A test of the effect of disclaimer labels on body dissatisfaction did not find it significant (ibid 111).

The rationale behind disclaimer labels is based on an assumption that information about the digital alteration of an image of a body will remove or minimise its desirability. The logic behind this is an assumption that is that you want what someone else has. Thus, a woman will only desire a body, which someone else actually has. Knowledge that there is no one who in reality has a body like the altered image, would consequently remove its desirability. Empirical research however, indicates that this is not how desire functions (ibid). Knowledge that an image is unrealistic, does not make the body ideal undesirable.

To understand why this is so, it is helpful to reflect upon Lacan's definition of desire: "Man's desire is the desire of the Other" (Lacan 2004, 235). When Lacan writes the Other with a capital O, he refers to the individual's fantasy of who and what other people are and think.²³ Human desire is not to have what the Other has, but *to be desired* by the Other. Desire is therefore a desire for what an individual thinks would make her desirable for other people. It is not a question of whether the ideal that the Other desires is realistic or not. It is a question of what *the Other* desires.

²² https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/regionale/hovedstadsomraadet/nu-er-det-vedtaget-retoucherede-reklamekroppe-skal-maerkes-i (accessed 1 March 2019).

²³ The concept is more complex than elaborated here. See Evans 1996, 135.

With this logic of desire, it makes perfect sense, that it is not important whether a commercial is unrealistic. Desire is not limited by realism; it is determined by the Other.

Historically body ideals have not necessarily been either healthy or realistic. In the 1830s in Victorian Great Britain, the ideal for women was to look as if they were suffering from tuberculosis (Zapata 2016) - something which was later to be treated by stays in beautiful natural surroundings. In China foot binding has been practiced for many years, practically handicapping women with unnaturally small feet. In contemporary Western culture (unhealthy) skinniness has for a long time been considered an ideal.

'Pro ana': ideals and the truth of the internet

'Pro ana' is short for pro anorexia, which is an internet phenomenon, where anorectics support each other to be good anorectics, not to overcome anorexia. The webpages contains e.g. 'thinspiration': images, which are supposed to inspire to skinniness by viewing the 'beauty' of extremely thin persons. The forums of the webpages are full of discussions of how to lose weight and how to handle the consequences of extreme diets.²⁴

It is a fundamental presumption of the 'pro ana' community that an 'eating disorder' is *not* a disorder, but *a lifestyle choice* (Udovitch 2002). The community has a 'religious-like' relation to anorexia (Brenneisen 2015). They have commandments and a creed that commands statements like "If you aren't thin, you aren't attractive", "Being thin is more important than being healthy" and "Being thin and not eating are signs of true will power and success". ²⁵ This is a clear rejection of a "normal" approach to anorexia as illness, and instead a 'worshipping' of a different and potentially lethal beauty ideal.

An immediate reaction to the 'pro ana' community might be that the logic of 'pro ana' is in scary opposition to a 'normal' and 'healthy' mind. It is however, maybe something else that seems scary about the 'pro ana' community. Maybe the 'pro ana' community seems so scary because its logic actually resonates in the average person. Freud once compared a

²⁴ See e.g. http://www.myproana.com/ (accessed 1 March 2019).

²⁵ https://anastart.weebly.com/ana-creed-and-thin-commandments.html (accessed 1 March 2019).

'pathological' mind and a 'normal' mind to a crystal. The 'pathological' mind is like a shattered crystal, which reveals its structures. The 'normal' mind is like the whole and unbroken crystal. The structures of the shattered crystal existed before it broke, but they were invisible (Freud 1933, 84-85). Similarly the underlying logic of the 'pro ana' community may show the invisible structures of Western societies' general approach to body fat and food. The anorectic mindset is not a deviation from a 'normal' or average mind; it is rather an exaggeration of society's general approach to food and body weight. It is not extreme to believe, that a connection exists between weight and attractiveness that attractiveness may be more important than health, and that skinniness can be a sign of being in control, as the 'pro anas' claim. ²⁶ In this sense the extreme action by the 'pro anas' is just to state the ideals so bluntly.

In his lecture on angst and drive Freud describes the death drive as a combination of both the will to 'return' to a state of death and as the aggression of the superego (ibid, 144-152). The term death drive is therefore quite literal for the 'pro anas' as one of the 'pro ana' commandments is "You can never be to thin". ²⁷ Death is the only possible outcome of obedience to this commandment. The will never to stop losing weight is a will towards death.

Another part of the death drive is, that it is an intervention of the superego. This is obvious in the weight loss tips of the 'pro ana' community, which underline and create the guilt of the anorectic: "Eat in front of the mirror. Hell, eat in front of the mirror naked and see how much you want to eat then." Guilt and control is central. By watching oneself eating in the mirror, one sees oneself as the superego towards whom one feels guilt. Through 'mirror eating', an anorectic reproduces the 'original' guilt produced by the parents blaming the child. Reflecting herself in the mirror the anorectic can be both the parent and the superego, who are looking at her(self) and blaming her(self). The death drive is not a symptom of a pathology. According to Freud it is a general human condition. The death drive of the 'pro anas' may seem pathological, but it is also an exaggeration

²⁶ https://anastart.weebly.com/ana-creed-and-thin-commandments.html (accessed 1 March 2019).

²⁷ https://anastart.weebly.com/ana-creed-and-thin-commandments.html - original spelling (accessed 1 March 2019).

²⁸ https://anastart.weebly.com/diets-and-tips.html (accessed 1 March 2019).

of the normal condition, not a completely alien way of relating to food and bodies.

The 'pro ana' community is a symptom of a more polycentric world of pluralised and contested ideals, expressed and emphasised by the internet. In this world, there are many and more disputed 'normals' where the boundaries of 'the normal' is challenged and stretched. The 'pro anas' have created an ethic and a beauty ideal that differs from the mainstream. Before the internet and the 'pro ana' movement such behaviour would just have been considered pathologic, but now that they are a community, it is possible to see them as one of many beauty ideals.

These two examples of the contemporary effect of beauty ideals on women and the injustice that follows from them, illustrate how beauty is interconnected with health and justice. In situations of 'pathological normality' ideals of beauty and health may have unjust consequences. Beauty has always been a complex and multifaceted concept, but the modern polycentric quality of beauty makes the concept even more complex. It does not only produce beauty ideals, which may be unhealthy as shown here, but also other new beauty ideals which may be both healthy and just (Howard 2018).

On plural understandings of health

"Between health and disease. On the past, progress and real doctors. A narrative cultural analysis", is a post-humously published doctoral dissertation by folklore researcher Birgitte Rørbye. By means of a narrative cultural study of writings on the history of medicine and other historical sources, Birgitte Rørbye uncovers the narrative of the 'true physicians'. This narrative has resulted in the exclusion of other occupational groups and schemes of things from the official and approved public health system because of being 'alternative'.

Her approach indicates the contested and highly complex nature of the concepts discussed in this article. Neither health, beauty, nor justice are clear or unambiguous concepts. With 'alternative' forms of 'medicine' increasingly becoming part of Western understandings and practices - and vice versa for other forms of knowledge about health in this world, it is no longer so easy to distinguish between health and disease (Rørbye 2002). This is also clear from the sections above. The term for health in Danish is

'rask', which can also be translated and understood as fresh, quick, resolute, resourceful, energetic. This is close to the WHO definition of health, which is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organization 1946). What does well-being require? It is perhaps no coincidence that some of the beautifully situated tuberculosis sanatoria have been turned into spas, retreats, and hotels - institutions and centres related to exactly that 'well-being' and 'well-ness'. Could this also be a market approach to issues of health - buy yourself well-being, by cosmetic surgery, well-ness treatment or other of the many 'alternative' offers in the market, which cater for your combined and diffuse needs for both beauty and well-being - or one much more than some of the others?

Concluding reflections

This text presents multifaceted, changing and contested ideals, symbols and perceptions of justice, beauty and to a lesser degree health. Throughout the text we have illustrated, how the connections between justice, beauty and health are both strong and diverse. Justice and beauty are etymologically, mythologically and conceptually connected as they are both expressions of symmetry and balance. Beauty and health are connected in different and contradictory ways. The beauty of nature is connected to health and wellbeing, while the beauty of (wo)man on the other hand can be a source for injustice and unhealthy practises.

Justice varies over time and place. It has been strongly related to equality in modernity, while historical and contemporary (gendered) presentations link it to fertility and fairness - also understood as beautiful. Desire of beauty may come at a price of both health and economy, not least but not only in a market society. The Nordic countries have combined a welfare and a market culture to different degrees. This has to some degree allowed beauty and fairness to be linked as Scarry claims, without beauty ideals (yet) becoming overly oppressive or unfair. Life satisfaction is still among the highest in Europe in all age groups - including the aging, where women dominate in the Nordic countries. ²⁹ This is a heritage of a still functioning

²⁹ See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Quality of life in Europe - facts and views - overall life satisfaction&oldid=400088); see also

even if gradually exhausted welfare state. A beautiful world is not necessarily a just world, but a fair world can be beautiful and worthy to protect. As Eco mentions, we are experiencing a polytheism of beauty - but perhaps also of fairness, ethics and justice, as in Greek mythology (Eco 2004 a). Both justice, beauty and health need protection and care.

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