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# ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

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## Anthropological Aesthetics of Greek Antiquity as a Narrative of Philosophical Discourse

**Purpose.** The article aims to define the philosophical narratives about the "beautiful human" of Greek antiquity in the coordinates of the triad of "natural", "social" and "cultural" body. **Theoretical basis.** When achieving this purpose, the author based on the conceptual provisions of the philosophical anthropology of H. Plessner, in particular, concerning the attitude of a limited body to its limit as an empirical comprehension of a human him/herself and the world. Developing the position of the body as a socio-cultural phenomenon and proceeding from the definition of corporeality as a "transformed human body under the influence of social and cultural factors, which has socio-cultural meanings and performs certain socio-cultural functions" (I. Bykhovskaya) (transl. by O. G.), the triad of "natural", "social" and "cultural" body was used as a methodological basis to analyse the research object. **Originality** lies in the explication of the peculiarities of aesthetic and anthropological discourse in Ancient Greek philosophy, not only through the prism of the dichotomy of "soul" and "body", but also through the prism of the triad "natural", "social" and "cultural" body, allowing rethinking of the narratives concerning the "beautiful human" of the formation period of the European anthropological aesthetics in Antiquity. **Conclusions.** The anthropological aesthetics of Greek Antiquity is masculine aesthetics, the aesthetics of the male "cultural body". If a man is an epistemological subject, he is able, despite the ugliness and abomination of his natural body, to reach the level of the cultural body, the level of "personal existence of corporeality". As for the female corporeality, since the Ancient Greek philosophy does not provide the status of an epistemological subject for a woman, she remains at the level of "social body".

**Keywords:** anthropological aesthetics of antiquity; natural body; social body; cultural body; epistemological subject

### Introduction

Antique aesthetics has been and remains one of the constant objects of scientific interest. Despite, at first glance, its good exploration degree, expanding access to the ancient sources through translation, as well as the publication of original texts opens up new possibilities for their comprehension, better understanding of past achievements, clarification, revision or strengthening the existing views on the initial stage of European culture. In addition, new realities of cultural practices create the need to re-describe the established ideas about the ascending paradigm of European civilization, using a new "dictionary of culture" (R. Rorty).

One of the objects of re-descriptions from the standpoint of the actualities of existential connotations of today is the human body. Feminist philosophy and gender analysis have greatly contributed to this. The explosion of interest they produced in the philosophical rethinking of the corporeality, especially the female, continues to fuel this theme even today, after almost half a century.

Recently, however, the issue of corporeality and its discourse multimodalities has acquired new and somewhat unusual approaches and interpretations. Thus, Lisa Downing in her book *Selfish Women* stands against the traditional view of the female body as a projection of male demands, which in Western culture has established a clearly negative connotation with the "selfishness" of women. While men claimed the polyvalence of the social manifestations of their "self", the established set of social assessments for centuries had a toxic effect on women's identity. The biological corporeality of woman, having extrapolated to her social purpose, cultivated the stereotype of women's sacrifice, resulting in the absurdity of self-denial.

For women, who are supposed, in this binary logic that casts them as the mere complement of men, to be life-giving, to be nurturing, to be *for the other*, and therefore literally *self-less*, it is a far more serious transgression to be selfish while a woman – indeed it is a category violation of identity. (Downing, 2019, p. 1)

In the context of modern forms of alienation, corporeality is considered in the book *From Self to Selfie* (2019). In particular, Frank Furedi, one of the authors of the book (chapter *The Emergence of the Self in History*) analyses the formation of the concept of *Self*. While clarifying the role of corporeality in the formation of this concept, he refers to the opinion of Bruno Snell, according to which "In fact, if one examines the way Homer writes about people, about his heroes, he tends to talk about their physicality and their bodily dimensions, rather than anything to do with their interiority" (Furedi, 2019, p. 21) and emphasizes the need to determine what was the proportion of body awareness in the formation of individuality or what is expressed by part of the *self*, in particular, in *self-creation* (Furedi, 2019, p. 25).

The body in the context of violence was one of the objects of attention of the authors of *Liberal Pacification and the Phenomenology of Violence*, who emphasized that "Acts of violence do not only inflict physical (and/or psychological) harm, they also restructure the social and political world" (Baron et al., 2019, p. 202).

The concept of body/corporeality has gained new significance in connection with the development of new technologies and the spread of social networks with their virtual mass communication. Lesley Procter in her article *I Am/We Are: Exploring the Online Self-Avatar Relationship* calls this virtual reality *Second Life* and points out that in this "life" there is a fundamentally different understanding of the concept of body, embodiment and re-embodiment: "Each avatar-persona comprises a skin (flesh colour, tone and highlights), a shape (the body), and an outfit (everything worn on the body, plus any attachments on the body such as hair, body hair and any objects such as swords or purses that might be held)" (Procter, 2021, p. 50).

Lesley Procter notes that the avatar or virtual body is a dematerialization of the physical body and the reconstruction of the person with the self-presentation of a new manifestation of his/her identity: "In a digital context, ... identification with objects blends into ways in which we become "re-embodied" in our avatar-persona by seeing the avatar-persona as *ours*, taking ownership of it just as we do with objects and experiences that belong to us in our offline world" (Procter, 2021, p. 58).

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Thus, new discourses of corporeality, examples of which have been considered, lead to a new retrospective analysis of the origins of the European philosophy of corporeality. Such an *ab ovo* is the philosophy of Greek antiquity, in which the attitude to the human body included its aesthetic dimension.

Despite the fact that the institutionalization of aesthetics dates back to the 18th century, and the founder is considered to be Alexander Baumgarten, its existence begins simultaneously with the formation of European philosophy itself as its intertwined component. As a discourse on the beautiful, it appears primarily as the aesthetics of man himself – anthropological aesthetics.

Being paradigmatically formulated first in the natural philosophy of Heraclitus (the most beautiful of monkeys is ugly in comparison with the human race), and later – developed in the doctrine of Socratic-Platonic idealism, the issue of anthropological aesthetics was formed as a narrative of philosophical-anthropological discourse. We can say in other words: the whole philosophical aesthetics of antiquity is anthropological. After all, even where there was a verbal aesthetics, the aesthetics of speech, aesthetic ideas acted as anthropologically relevant, because rhetorical techniques and figures of speech were ultimately measured by the features of auditory (and the visible body language of the speaker – by visual) perception and had to resonate with mental characteristics of those present.

### Purpose

*The purpose* of the article is to define the philosophical narratives about the "beautiful human" of Greek antiquity in the coordinates of the triad of "natural", "social" and "cultural" body. This will further clarify some aspects of the issue of corporeality, articulated by the latest anthropologically relevant discourses.

*Methodology.* When achieving this purpose, the author relied on the conceptual provisions of the philosophical anthropology of H. Plessner, in particular, the attitude of the limited body to its limit as an empirical comprehension of a human him/herself and the world (Plessner, 2019).

Based on the definition of corporeality as "transformed human body under the influence of social and cultural factors, which has socio-cultural meanings and senses and performs certain socio-cultural functions" (transl. by O. G.) (Bykhovskaya, 1998), a triad of concepts "natural", "social" and "cultural" body was used as a methodology for analysing the research subject. According to I. Bykhovskaya, the natural body means the biological body of the individual; the social body is the result of the interaction of the natural human organism with the social environment, due to which it is derived from purposeful influences on it, conscious adaptation to the purposes of social functioning as a tool for using in various activities. Cultural body is the product of culturally appropriate formation and the use of the bodily principle of a human, which is the completion of the transition process from "impersonal" natural and bodily preconditions to the actual human personal existence of corporeality.

Such an approach will make it possible to rethink the philosophical narratives about the "beautiful human" of the formation period of European anthropological aesthetics in ancient Greek philosophy.

### Statement of basic materials

During the dialogue between Socrates and Hippias, where the nature of the beautiful is discussed, the acknowledgement of the syncretism of the aesthetic and the separation of the actual

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anthropological content takes place. Thus, the interlocutors first give examples of material ("materialized") embodiments of beautiful in inanimate (lyre, pot) and animate nature (horse, girl).

Only a girl of all the above falls within the actual anthropological aesthetics, but she is not further discussed in the dialogue.

Aesthetic characteristics of anthropic (man-made) objects, lyre and pot, are considered through the category of beautiful. The criterion of a "beautiful" inanimate body created by human is its appropriateness: "we call it beautiful what is appropriate, because it is appropriate, in relation to what it is appropriate for and when it is appropriate..." (transl. by O. G.) (Plato, 1999, p. 97).

However, the appropriateness is also the initial criterion of the aesthetics of the animate body, for which the characteristic "to be beautiful" means to be appropriate to perform a certain job or action, such as appropriateness to run or fight.

In the development of dialogue, the bodily (material) beauty as appropriateness gives way to the beautiful as the property to cause pleasure during the visual or auditory perception, "the perception which we have through hearing and sight" (Plato, 1999, p. 99). This property reunites all animate and inanimate things: "beautiful human beings, ..., and all decorations and paintings and works of sculpture which are beautiful, delight us when we see them; and beautiful sounds and music in general and speeches and stories do the same thing" (Plato, 1999, p. 99).

Thus, contemplation of a beautiful body is a pleasure. It is worth noting that all these inanimate objects are of anthropic origin: they were created by human. In the context of aesthetic characteristics, we are not talking about natural objects.

The beautiful is discussed in *The Banquet*, another dialogue of Plato, through the distinction between the beauty of the body and the beauty of the soul. The latter rhapsodizes over the beauty of the body due to the fact that with its "help" it is possible to comprehend the absolute beautiful, the beautiful as an idea. The body is not endowed with such a property. However, this does not contradict the fact that on the sensory-empirical level, beautiful is objectified in the body. And it is the contemplation of beautiful bodies that starts the path of knowing the beautiful. Therefore, a beautiful body is a stimulus to the process of cognition, and the perception of its "beauty" is the first step on this path.

But a beautiful body is an object, not a subject of knowledge of the beautiful.

He who aspires to love rightly, ought from his earliest youth to seek an intercourse with beautiful forms, and first to make a single form the object of his love, and therein to generate intellectual excellences. He ought, then, to consider that beauty in whatever form it resides is the brother of that beauty which subsists in another form; and if he ought to pursue that which is beautiful in form, it would be absurd to imagine that beauty is not one and the same thing in all forms... In addition, he would consider the beauty

which is in souls more excellent than that which is in form. ...it might be led to observe the beauty and the conformity which there is in the observation of its duties and the laws, and to esteem little the mere beauty of the outward form. ... he might look upon the loveliness of wisdom; and that contemplating thus the universal beauty... (Plato, 2018, p. 101)

Thus, anthropological aesthetics in the Socratic-Platonic interpretation transcends its own boundaries and becomes epistemology.

..such as ... are conducted ... to ascend through these transitory objects which are beautiful, towards that which is beauty itself, proceeding as on steps from the love of one form to that of two, and from that of two, to that of all forms which are beautiful; and from beautiful forms to beautiful habits and institutions, and from institutions to beautiful doctrines; until, from the meditation of many doctrines, they arrive at that which is nothing else than the doctrine of the supreme beauty itself, in the knowledge and contemplation of which at length they repose. (Plato, 2018, p. 102)

Speaking in the shell of epistemology, anthropological aesthetics raises the question of what exactly is a beautiful body?

First, it is juvenile. A beautiful body is the body of a young man.

"So that one endowed with an admirable soul, even though the *flower of the form were withered* (italicized by O. G.), would suffice him as the object of his love and care, and the companion with whom he might seek and produce such conclusions as tend to the improvement of youth" (Plato, 2018, p. 101).

Thus, there is no beauty in a "withered" body, one should look for the beauty in a man with a "withered" body in another – in his "admirable" soul. And this is not only the opposition of the beauty of the body and the beauty of the soul, but also the implicit recognition that when one gets older, the beauty of the body deteriorates. Therefore, the natural body of a man is beautiful only at a young age.

Secondly, the beautiful body is masculine, it is the body of a young man, and the canons of the bodily beauty are the canons of the beautiful male body. The body of a woman is not discussed either as an object of desire or as a carrier of the characteristics of a beautiful "natural body". A woman simply has no place in these intellectual entertainments of male society.

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Therefore, it can be argued that anthropological aesthetics in the philosophy of Greek antiquity is masculine aesthetics, it is the aesthetics of the male body.

They also talk about the subject of knowledge of the beautiful as exclusively a male. That is, the ability to become an epistemological subject is the competence of men. And only the body of the epistemological subject is endowed with the ability to know the beautiful as an idea.

The ability to become an epistemological subject also means the ability to become a "cultural body". Therefore, the "cultural body" as a "product of culturally appropriate formation and the use of human corporeal principles, as the quintessence and completion of the transition process from "impersonal" natural and bodily preconditions to the actually human" (transl. by O. G.) (Bykhovskaya, 1998), i.e. not only socio-functional but also the personal existence of the corporeality – only a man has such a body.

At the same time, the exclusion of a woman from epistemology (as the subject of knowledge of the beautiful) means that woman remains at the level of "social body", i.e. the body as a tool for social activity.

Socrates' ideas continued the development of Stoicism in philosophy, particularly, in Chrysippus, the philosopher of the 3rd century B.C.

Chrysippus defines bodily beauty through the proportionality of the members and comeliness of the face. These are the characteristics of the natural body. However, their lack can be overcome by transforming the carrier of bodily imperfection into an epistemological subject: "And he in whom, through the pursuit of wisdom and virtue, the divine precepts are rooted, even if he surpasses Silenus in bodily abomination, will still be wonderful if needed" (transl. by O. G.) (Stolyarov, 2007, p. 233). That is, the "cultural body" of a wise man is more beautiful than any beautiful natural body.

As for a woman, her corporeality, as in the philosophy of Socrates-Plato, does not rise above the social body:

However, one should not think that in this case beauty is corporeal, identical to the external attractiveness we talked about, which consists in the proportionality of the members and comeliness of the image. After all, the prostitutes have it, but I will never call them beautiful, but, on the contrary, ugly; this is the name that suits them. (transl. by O. G.) (Stolyarov, 2007, p. 233).

Thus, Chrysippus introduces the concept of morally beautiful, antonymous to which is morally disgusting.

Let us note that when Chrysippus speaks of prostitutes, under the guise of a natural body, it implicitly comes to the social body of a woman, because the prostitute's body is the result of conscious adaptation to the goals of functioning, i.e. the instrument. It is derived from a deliberate societal influence that stimulates reactive and adaptive "responses": adapting the natural body for the sexual needs of the male part of ancient Greek society.

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However, a virtuous woman does not rise to the cultural body either. There we can also speak only about the social body as a result of the interaction of the human body given by nature (natural body) with the social environment and its reactive and adaptive "responses": to be a wife and a good housewife.

The limitation of women to the social level of corporeality is clearly characterized by literary and legal memoirs, such as, for example, the speech of Euphiletus, written by Lysias, a logographer of the 5th century. B.C. in the case of the murder of Eratosthenes. Euphiletus says everything about his wife except "I love her": after all, "the best of all wives" in his understanding is a "frugal" housewife who prudently runs the house (Carey, 2007, p. 2).

In general, rhetorical memoirs also talk less about the beauty of a woman's natural body than that of a man's natural body.

In *Helen*, the speech of Isocrates, there is nothing about Helen except the epithet "beautiful". On the contrary, Theseus is bragging about against her – a man whose characteristics set the perception of Helen: he was fascinated by her despite the fact that he "accustomed as he was to subdue others" (Isocrates, 2016). The perception of Helen is also given through the competition of men for her, until the war started under this pretext.

In the second case, a woman is characterized only by the sexual attraction of man to her, which means that she acts as a *natural body* (and unlike Chrysippus' prostitutes, not even as a social body).

The insignificance of the female corporeality sometimes reaches such a low level that even to the natural woman's body the aesthetics of the male body is extrapolated. And often only when her natural body is a substitute for the male body, it is subject to aesthetic evaluation.

Lucian of Samosata tells of the impressions of one of his companions from Aphrodite of Cnidus by Praxiteles.

And so we decided to see all of the goddess and went round to the back of the precinct. Then, when the door had been opened by the woman responsible for keeping the keys, we were filled with an immediate wonder for the beauty we beheld. The Athenian who had been so impassive an observer a minute before, upon inspecting those parts of the goddess which recommend a boy, suddenly raised a shout far more frenzied than that of Charicles. "Heracles!" he exclaimed, "what a well-proportioned back! What generous flanks she has! How satisfying an armful to embrace! How delicately moulded the flesh on the buttocks, neither too thin and close to the bone, nor yet revealing too great an expanse of fat! And

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as for those precious parts sealed in on either side by the hips, how inexpressibly sweetly they smile! How perfect the proportions of the thighs and the shins as they stretch down in a straight line to the feet! So that's what Ganymede looks like as he pours out the nectar in heaven for Zeus and makes it taste sweeter. For I'd never have taken the cup from Hebe if she served me". (Lucian, 1967, p. 171)

The philosophical narratives that Plato's dialogues are rich in also do not apply to the natural body of a woman capable of arousing the opposite sex. Unlike a man who, if he is an epistemological subject (sage), reaches the level of a beautiful "cultural body" despite the ugliness and abomination of the natural body.

Thus, according to Helenius Acron, the Roman grammarian of the 2nd century A.D.: "The Stoics believe that a sage is rich, even if he is poor, noble, even if he is enslaved, and beautiful, even if he is extremely disgusting in appearance" (transl. by O. G.) (Stolyarov, 2007, p. 235).

Thus, the anthropological aesthetics of Greek antiquity, if characterized in the coordinates of the philosophy of corporeality, appears as a gender asymmetric discourse.

The canons of the corporeal beauty are the canons of the beautiful male body. Only a man has a "cultural body", a woman remains at the level of a "social body", i.e. as a tool for social activity.

The philosophical narrative (Socrates, Plato, Chrysippus) concerning the beautiful male body is the narrative of an epistemological subject who becomes a beautiful "cultural body" by achieving a certain level of knowledge, which removes even the aesthetic abomination of his natural body.

The philosophical narrative (Chrysippus) concerning the female corporeality limits it to the level of the social body and even denies the aesthetic attractiveness of her natural body due to "moral abomination" – the assessment made by individual subjects of "cultural corporeality" who do not like one of the adaptive reactions of a woman as a social body, and who would like to see the narrative of the social body of a woman as a good housewife.

Thus, in the context of the aesthetic and anthropological narrative of ancient Greek philosophy, the cultural body, as the highest level of beautiful corporeality, is available only to men.

### Originality

The originality of the analysis performed in the article lies in the explication of the peculiarities of aesthetic and anthropological discourse in ancient Greek philosophy not only through the prism of the dichotomy of "soul" and "body", but also through the triad of "natural", "social" and "cultural" body. This allows re-thinking the narratives about a "beautiful human" of the period of formation of European anthropological aesthetics in ancient times.

### Conclusions

The anthropological aesthetics of Greek antiquity is masculine aesthetics, the aesthetics of the male "cultural body". The explication of hidden intentions of ancient Greek philosophy testifies

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that if a man is the gnoseological subject, despite the ugliness and abomination of his natural body, he is able to reach the level of the "cultural" body, the level of "personal existence of corporeality", where the aesthetic abomination of natural corporeality is removed and the highest level of beautiful corporeality, the cultural body, is acquired. As for the female corporeality, since ancient Greek philosophy does not provide for the possibility of a woman to act as an epistemological subject, her status does not exceed the level of "social body".

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## Антропологічна естетика грецької античності як наратив філософського дискурсу

**Мета** статті полягає у визначенні філософських наративів щодо "людини прекрасної" грецької античності в координатах триади "природне", "соціальне" і "культурне" тіло. **Теоретичний базис.** При досягненні визначеної мети авторка спиралась на концептуальні положення філософської антропології Г. Плеснера, зокрема, про ставлення обмеженого тіла до своєї межі як емпіричного осягнення людиною себе і світу. Розвиваючи положення про тіло як соціокультурний феномен і виходячи з визначення тілесності як "перетвореного під впливом соціальних і культурних факторів тіла людини, що має соціокультурні значення і сенси і виконує певні соціокультурні функції" (І. Биховська), в якості методологічної основи для аналізу предмету дослідження було використано триаду понять "природне", "соціальне" і "культурне" тіло. **Наукова новизна** полягає в експлікації особливостей естетико-антропологічного дискурсу в давньогрецькій філософії не тільки крізь призму дихотомії "духа" й "тіла", але й через призму триади "природне", "соціальне" і "культурне" тіло, що дозволяє по-новому осмислити наративи щодо "людини прекрасної" періоду становлення європейської антропологічної естетики за часів античності. **Висновки.** Антропологічна естетика грецької античності – це маскулінна естетика, естетика чоловічого "культурного тіла". Якщо чоловік виступає гносеологічним суб'єктом, він здатен, попри потворність та огидність його природного тіла, досягти рівня тіла "культурного", рівня "особистісного буття тілесності". Щодо жіночої тілесності, через те, що для жінки давньогрецькою філософією не передбачено статус гносеологічного суб'єкта, вона залишається на рівні "соціального тіла".

*Ключові слова:* антропологічна естетика античності; природне тіло; соціальне тіло; культурне тіло; гносеологічний суб'єкт

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