

ILLUSTRATION OF BODY CONCEPT IN ANCIENT GREECE BY ARCHITECTUREL TEXTURE OF THE CITY

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*A state is not made up only of different kinds of men; for similars do not constitute a state.
Aristoteles, Politics*

Abstract

Urban space where the body moves is the leading indicator that defines the body and identity of the individual. The word democracy in Greek (demokratia) means that power of the state (kratos) comes from public (demos). Power of public was established on a thought based constitution. Body experienced and demonstrated its freedom as well as thought in the culture where thoughts were examined. In Greece, in the period of Pericles called “the golden age”, body of the young warrior was almost nude in art and this nudity was portrayed shrouded with shields and spears that reinforced the power of the hero. In Athens, young bodies wrestled in nude in gymnasiums and men represented themselves half naked in daily life. As stated by art historian Kenneth Clark; “An exposed nude body in Ancient Greece did not represent weakness; it pointed to existence of a strong and moreover a civilized individual”. Exhibition of the body in a culture signified approval of identity.

A style of demonstration founded by visibility, exposure or exhibition of body is reflected on the stone walls of Athens. Parthenon Temple, one of the flamboyant structures of the Pericles period is situated on a hill to command over the city. Citizen bodies shaped the public with their discourVOICE in the culture nourished by democratic thought system. Therefore, the period of Pericles is the indicator of rapport in which nude body is identified by stone. The stone shrouding the nudity of the male body and identity in temples is like the prison for female body. Women didn't wander around the city in nude and they were shadowed by stone in lightless inner spaces. Body image in Athens identified according to gender presents itself with respect to commands of the space or the stone.

Key Words: body image, gender, space, the concept of Ancient Greek city

I. INTRODUCTION

It is possible to cite a gravitational field in each part of our lives related to a classical era. For instance, the word “lesbian” is based on the life story of Greek poet Sappho who lived in Lesbos Island and liked women. One other concept related to classical heritage is “democracy”. Citizen bodies in Ancient Greece who fought and died for democracy made their statements in the large stone areas of the city instead of cold and dark houses. In this sense, the roots and principles of democracy have penetrated the architecture of ancient time and democracy has virtually permeated the city walls. The values that have defined the foundations of the Western culture for centuries burgeoned first in the agoras of the city, among the columns or in the most secluded parts of the city. Experiences related to demonstration, exhibition and exposing the nude body were perceived in the stone walls of Athens as well. “Our heritage from the ancient world starting from the classical columns in main roads to sweaty exercises in gyms and to our thoughts on how a perfect stomach should be is a part of the texture of daily modernity” (Goldhill, p:8, 2009).

In the book titled *The City of in History*, Lewis Mumford talks about how the history of the city and the common areas, city walls, fountains, streets and pavements shape the individuals that live there.

Bodily experiences of the city people in the Pericles period of the Ancient Greece whose projections are undoubtedly are still observed today are defined here via city culture. The relationship that the nude body has formed with the walls of Athens in its heyday and how these two concepts have shaped each other are questioned. Nudity in that age has acted almost like a badge that makes the individual strong and effective in city life. Nudity that has integrated with the stones of the city has existed by arresting an area of power for itself.

II. BODY CONCEPT

In general, the concept of body is defined as “body organism or substance ore as opposed to the mind or soul of the individual” (Cevizci, s:138, 2002). The term “body” has been regarded as the research question in the relationship between the mind and the body, a basic issue in the history of philosophy. There are two schools of thoughts which seek to explain the relationship between the mind and the body. The first type of these school of thoughts; “interactionism”; regards the body and the mind as two independent substantive existences that trigger one another and the second type of thought “parallelism” does not argue that there is interaction or meaningful ties between these two concepts. The concept of body which finds its meaning in the metaphysical process rather than being an independent value in philosophy has been questioned again with Rene Descartes (1591-1650), the founder of modern philosophy, who set off with the object rather than the existence. Descartes “adopted the belief that the understanding of soul as an immaterialized object or the real identity or the essence of the individual is in the mind” (Cevizci, p: 139, 2002) and regarded the relationship between the mind and the body as identical to the relationship between a ship and its captain. The value attributed to the body by Heidegger, who believed that the body was indispensable for the human being to call himself as an existence in nature and then a mortal, lost some of its meaning with liberalism which prioritized the rationality which was effective until the second half of the twentieth century.

When considered in liberal terms, unreserved satisfaction of desires was regarded as a threat to the control of the political order. “The traditional blindness against gender mainstreaming or the familiar offhandedness against women’s exclusion from politics in liberalism which brings the rational against the irrational, the mind against the body and the male against the female is believed to have caused by its bringing the reason, the mind and the masculinity together” (Cevizci, p: 219, 2002).

At the same time, while many comments can be made on the earthliness and the physicality of the body it is not possible to provide a commentary on the body in its pure and unshaped form. “Bodies, which

are personal, alive and without gender, are always shaped by unique and external force that inflict on them particular identities and religious-cultural body discipline, behavior, health and beauty expectations. Let alone being *tabula rasa*, our bodies are the spaces for cultural constructions” (Marcos, p:13, 2005). In this sense, the body shaped by the society has received distinction and value in universal, regional, local, temporal and religious terms. For instance, whether it is ancient or modern, female body is mostly molded with misery, pain and torture. “Different from the religions related to fertility and abundance of the soil, the religions of sacrifice include many things about partial mutilation or even annihilation of bodies through rituals, wars, submission or conforming of women and prohibitive social gender limitations...Religions that focus on the unmediated place more value on the body and the soil and therefore they are more women friendly” (Marcos, p:14-15, s:2005). City life in Athens where stone walls were dominant rather than soil was experienced in a manner full of democratic discourses far away from the soil. In this sense, rather than being equal, masculine-feminine body images were shaped based on the manner in which architectural structures were determined.

III. A SPACE THAT DETERMINED BODY DEVELOPMENT IN ANCIENT TIMES: THE GYMNASIUM SAMPLE

Pericles, a statesman from Athens, (about 495-429 B.C) lived in the period called Athens' Golden Age. As observed by the art historian Kenneth Clark “the body exposed among the Ancient Grecians pointed to a strong and modern individual rather than a weak body”(Clark, 1956). “Leaders of the young warriors were depicted in art almost completely nude and their unclothed bodies were covered only with shields and spears. He young men in the city wrestled in nude in the gymnasiums and the loose clothes they wore in public areas displayed their bodies”(Sennett, p:25, 2002). Exhibiting the body by the males in gymnasiums was based on their childhoods. Male children were sent to gymnasiums to train their nude bodies in the correct manner. The modern word “gymnasium” comes from the Greek word “gymnia” which meant “completely naked” (Joint Association of Classical Teachers, p: 174, 1984). Bodies of the children were starting to shape in the gymnasiums which taught the rules of nudity between the middle and late adolescence when the muscles appear on the surface of the skin; however the beard and the mustache, the indications of manhood, were not fully visible. The back and shoulder muscles of the adolescent who lifted the other male children developed during wrestling and the movements of the body tightened the stomach; the arm muscles stretched while throwing the javelin or the discus and the leg muscles stretched and buttocks tightened while running” (Sennett, 2p: 38, 2012)

In addition to strengthen the body with exercise, gymnasium was filled with work discipline that strengthened the voice as well. This way, males would be able to correctly express themselves with slogans of democracy in the spaces where the heart of the city pulsed. Gymnasiums in this era became spaces in which the walls resonated with the poems of Homer and in which awareness of citizenship was obtained along with bodily strength. “The boys were learning that their bodies were a part of a larger collectivity called polis and belonged to the city in the gymnasiums” (Sennett, 39, 2012)

Greek boys not only ensured physical development in gymnasiums but also were introduced to the relationship between the body and the pleasure. First love experiences of a boy were with a more mature adult who came to watch him in these structures. The love between the older (*erastes*) and the younger (*eromenes*) lover did not go beyond mutual attention giving and admiration experienced in the space. “Love also occurred on the surface of the body as parallel to the value given to the surfaces of the urban spaces” as the citizen of the same city”(Sennett, p: 41, 2002).

IV. PRINCIPAL CONCEPTS THAT DETERMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE SPACE IN ANCIENT GREEK: BODY TEMPERATURE AND VOICE

The figures carved in stone in the famous friezes known as The Parthenon Marbles which surround the outer surfaces of the Parthenon vocalized the beliefs about this city (Sennett, p: 33, 2002). This gateway -the sign of respect for the gods- used by the citizens to reach Acropolis after the foundation of Athens was moved to British Museum from its location on the hills of Acropolis two hundred years ago. While the frontal pediments of Parthenon depict the birth of Athena and the areas across depict the struggle between the goddess and Poseidon, the metope plaques depict the Centaurus, semi-horse, semi-human creatures in Greek mythology and the war between Olympus public and the giants. Human bodies in these friezes which are distinct in their depiction of images of god and the ordinary public side by side have perfect bodies observed in representations of the gods. As opposed to this physical perfection reflected in the depictions, the expression on the faces is uniform. As stated by the critic John Boardman, the effort to make the faces unexpressive “is idealized rather than individualized.... Belongs to the other world, the divine and the celestial has never been this human and the human has never been this celestial” (Boardman, p: 291, 1986).

The source of the pride felt towards the nude bodies in the friezes was associated with body temperature. Ancient Grecians who regarded the body temperature as a cause to determine gender believed that “well warmed embryos in the womb at the beginning of pregnancy were males and the ones that lacked this warmth were females. Lack of sufficient warmth in the uterus caused a creature softer than the males to be born which was more fluid, more humid and totally more shapeless (Rennett, p: 34, 2002)

The meaning attributed to nudity in the time of Pericles can be based on human physiology. Body temperature in the ancient times was cited with social dishonor and honor concepts. Feminine body was cold and passive whereas the masculine body was strong, aggressive and warm. Differences in the temperature determined by gender brought an understanding that held the males above females. According to modern historian Giulia Sissa “when the feminine and the masculine were included in the same space....the result was not a liberal acceptance of equality but casting aside of the feminine by considering them as obviously inferior to the masculine” (Sissa, p:80-81, 1992).

Another concept associated with urban life in Athens related to body and identity was the element of voice. It was believed that a rich voice was effective as much as physical appearance in the spaces established for individuals to discuss democracy and define themselves. When we look at common public areas in Athens, we first notice the agoras. The term Agora was used for “the wide open public spaces surrounded by all public buildings in Ancient Greek cities where all sorts of political, religious, commercial activities about the city were undertaken” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agora>). Agoras were areas of communication in which daily life activities were undertaken, where no citizen’s voice was more dominant than the others and all parts of it carried other conversations or commercial activities. In these environments abuzz with activity, words were shaped according to the structure of the agora and people were included in conversations which they came across. However, as different from the agoras people sat at the stones of the theatre in the theatres of the ancient city and listened to the person who chose to speak without any voice at all. The single voice that spoke at the theater declared his own dominance which echoed with the physical power of the Athens body and turned into an element of dominance over the large stone area. Although agora life continued in a space in which all citizens moved about regardless of financial status, the value that upheld the commercial life of the city depended on the activities of the slaves and the foreign classes. Architectural structure of classical agora in Athens points to many different sections such as the *orchestra* where religious dances were held, the *altar* called the Twelve Gods where religious holidays were celebrated abs the *stoa* where people ate their meals especially in the time of Pericles and watched the sellers and the

philosophers. The courts called *Heliaia* were majestic structures with five hundred capacity and low walls which let people watch what was going on inside. Athenians took the most serious decisions that could be taken in courts such as banishing an individual from the city in the open areas in the middle of the agora. "Possibility of exile provided opportunities for secret negotiations, deep gossips... during the two months allocated for thinking. When the citizens gathered together again, the individual under question would spend the next ten years in exile if there were more than 6000 votes against him/her" (Sennett, p: 47, 2002).

What determined the body wandering in Athens was *orthos* which was the two-headed sibling of three-headed guardian dog Kerberos that belonged to Hades, the god of the underworld in Ancient Greek mythology. The body that walked in the agora directed by Orthos moved as fast and determined as possible among crowds and kept eye contact with other bodies only when it was immobile. The Council House (Bouleuterion) was constructed in the western section of the agora for serious talks since the population and hence the citizen chaos increased by time. The building resembled the theatre and can be defined as a structure that lay in the shape of a funnel in which the speaker could stand in the middle areas and spoke to the listeners who were in the part that narrowed to the upper sections. As opposed to the court building, the walls of this building were high and it was closed to outside interaction. In the building which the speaker could establish dominance in the whole area, it was easy to determine what vote was given by the council members" (Sennett, p: 48, 2002). In this sense, discrimination among citizen bodies was experienced based on the seating plan of the Council House which was opposite of the arrangements in the agora where the large and open space without any ground elevation let everyone keep eye contact and the discourse was possible at the same plane. In this sense, a structure was born in which voters against or for an idea were easily observed when voting was necessary. Undoubtedly, one of the elements that affect voting is the ability of persuasion. According to ancient period democracy commentators, the power of rhetoric was what persuaded the citizens. "The power of rhetoric was the power of *peitho* which was the ability to get one's consent with the power of words, not with the power of weapons" (Sennett, p:53, 2002). The words used during speech increased body temperature and the political metaphors utilized during discourse directed the decisions of a group of listeners by provoking them. As opposed to the Council House in which different ideas were distinctly observed, the parliament composed by all citizens still got together in the agora to approve decisions regarding exile.

Another area in which the voice accessed the space and defined it was the theatre. The word theatre comes from the Greek word *theatren* which means "the space to see". Theatre carries a story form other times to the period in which it is voiced and presents the observer a work of art that can transmit between times. Ancient Greek theatres also had a seating plan that identified the spread and power of the voice as it was the case in the Council House. The voice increased acoustically while it traveled to upper sections in funnel shaped theaters. "The theatre which opened up like a fan is a strong design which placed the crowd in vertical lines, which let the single voice below grow, let everyone see the speaker and made the jests visible to all" (Sennett, p: 51, 2002). The individual in the center of the theatre could be easily seen from all parts and this seating arrangement opened its doors to the concepts that defined identity in the Greek culture. Sitting or standing had different meanings in the Greek culture. "Gods are generally in the sitting position in Pericles period, for instance, all celebrations in which the gods participated were sculptured. However sitting also meant surrendering, just like the surrendering of a young girl when she came to the house of her new husband or the urban slaves who were depicted as sitting..." (Bremmer, p:25-26, 1991). The citizen who watched the show by sitting on the stone steps of the city shared the same position with the character who depicted getting wounded or going to death on the stage. That is, bodies of both the audience and the actor carried a deep resignation towards the Greek laws and the urban identity which were higher than them both.

While the two elements of democracy, responsibility and self-control, characterized the concepts that belonged to public, “Kleisthenes declared to public that they had the power of *isegoria*, a concept that can be roughly translated as “equality in agora” when he made democratic reforms in 508 B.C. in Athens” (Loraux, p:113, 1986). Based on this; the nude and equal bodies who have a voice in matters standing in the large plane of agora could be exposed in the architectural structure of the stone walls of the theater space and the Council House. The dominant voice combined with the acoustic structure started to expose itself in these spaces during voting and sharing of ideas. This system of exposure shrouded the body with silence and changed the body who was scared of getting reactions against his discourse to a passive one.

V. ATHENS HOUSES, THE SPACES OF COLD FEMALE BODIES

The marriage of the males who were used to satisfy themselves with the interest of other males in gymnasiums in the Ancient Age could not go beyond the feelings of responsibility, duty and respect between husband and wife. “The family should continue along generations in the Ancient world and the security of the marriage is an inseparable part of this whole; but desire felt towards one’s wife could only be a tragic or comical error”. As summarized in a later period by the Latin moralist Seneca “making love with the spouse like a lover is as detestable as adultery” (Goldhill, p:63, 2009). The initial introduction ritual of the couple into the ancient period home which was the sanctuary of the marriages established based on mutual respect between the opposite sexes started with the young girl’s walk in the ritual path as a virgin. The groom on the left and a small-winged *Eros* on the right accompanied the bride in the entourage in wedding ceremonies. The age of marriage was generally fourteen-fifteen for young girls and thirty-thirty five for the males. “This difference in age helped the males to monopolize the responsibility. At that age, the girl is at the peak of her sexual attraction for her husband. However, all changes after the wedding day. The *Eros* of the male as a husband can be directed to a mistress or to another male” (Goldhill, p: 64, 2009).

One of the reasons for the lack of a single female voice that revealed its identity in the busy areas of the city was based on the fact that they withdrew to their cold homes starting with the marriage. The Ancient Greek homes had high walls and almost no windows. “The house had a similar system to the Muslim system of separating the males and females. Married women were never seen in *andron*, the room where guests were entertained.... The married women and the female children spent their time in the room r the rooms called *gunaikeion*” (Sennett, p: 63, 2002). As opposed to the male bodies that received the warmth of the sun in the sunny parts of the city, the woman bodies that spent all their time in the cold areas of the house, that contended themselves with the light beam that came through the window and got colder and colder day by day started to sport immobile, dull and passive identities. There were a few rituals that connected women to life and to each other. Thesmophoria which started as the fertility ritual was undertaken at the end of the fall when the seeds were planted under the safekeeping of Demeter, the goddess of harvest. This ritual was based on the burial of Demeter’s daughter Persephone and the mourning for a body that was united with the soil. Boars were killed in these rituals to address Adonis who were killed by a herd of boars in Greek mythology and were buried in the soil dug by the women. The women kept guard in these holes, hungry and thirsty, accompanied by the odors of board and turd. “They could get back to their husbands only at the end of the third day when they could get out of the huts filled with carcasses and grains. The cloak of the darkness in the soil, the cold of the holes and the closeness of death transformed the status of women identity. The women went back to light by affirming their dignity following their travel in the darkness” (Sennett, p: 61, 2002). Therefore, the women could find the space via this ritual to be citizens and to obtain identities in the walls of Athens where the males were dominant.

The attic was the most special are of use for the Greek woman who returned to the house that froze her body. The ancient woman identity that was shut down in houses due to physical flaws was able to become lively again in the roof as was the case in Adonai festivals. These festivals included a ritual that consisted of lamenting for the death of Adonis or a youth represents pleasure and planting lettuce seeds on the roofs of their houses.

“Roofs are spaces that sprout the feelings and desires....when these lettuce seeds start to die under the July sun, the festival dedicated to Adonis commenced. Lettuce seeds represented the death of Adonis since he was killed in a lettuce filed by a boar in his adolescence. It was not a ritual for mourning, it was a festival; a festival that provoked the desires and the needs, a festival in which the women voiced their desires and experienced them. When the darkness fell, women got together in the roofs and formed among themselves a temporary autonomous area in which they could experience sensuous and verbal pleasures accompanied with inciting smell of herbs and in the dim environment of the candle. Day light and public area were the spaces for men and only for a few days in the year the women transformed the roofs and the darkness for their own use and their merry laughter rose in the darkness of the night. The classical age expert John Winkler referred to Adonia festivals as the “laughter of the oppressed”. The bodies that freed themselves from the social and moral pull of the male space experienced the lightness of their existence in the roofs” (Öğdül, 2012).

VI. RESULT

In Ancient Greece, we are faced with cold bodies as opposed to warm bodies, clad females as opposed to nude males, sunny and spacious spaces in which masculine identities exist as opposed to female identities who can experience the warmth of life only on the roofs. In this sense, contrasts between the two genders determined the development of Greek urban identity. The powerful structure that represents the masculine identity on the one hand and the body attributed to slaves, women and foreigners to make passive and alienate them on the other hand were dominant in the Pericles period. However, the dominant identity that identified the city concept broke down in time due to plagues. When the doctors could not cope with cholera epidemic and the death toll started to increase, rebellion and lack of self-discipline became common in the public and the city transformed into a space of instant gratification rather than the single voice of the power. The epidemic did not discern the slaves, females, males, the young or the old. The warm masculine population started to die out as a result of the disease and the city became vulnerable to the enemy outside.

Spartans commenced raids to conquer the city and Pericles “forced the rural population to walk inside the city walls because of the war and then caused them to spread the disease to each other by leaving them in chaos like a cowherd by not giving them anything to do” (Plutarch, p: 201, 1960). Hence, the city walls that make up the city turned in to spaces that brought the death of the bodies. Regarding the nudity of the masculine body as a part of urban identity and civilization, training it in gymnasiums, displaying it as a work of art and presenting it as a city token was a source of pride for Pericles. However, this pride is now remembered as blended with the pain endured by the body in the city walls.

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