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Reclaiming Beauty
Volume I

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Collected Essays in Political Anthropology

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Chapter 6

Beauty in the Political Sciences

Philipp Ruch

Beauty in the Political Sciences: The Insufficiency of Contemporary Accounts and the Premature Death of a Category

Philipp Ruch

Centre for Political Beauty

*'We do not consider a life
lived without great deed [...] a wasted one'*

Wilhelm v. Humboldt (Kessel, 1967: 150)

Introduction

For political theory, human nature behaves like sand. In the 20th Century, huge energy were invested into psychological, sociological and anthropological research. The result is a distorted understanding of human nature, supposedly striving for self-preservation, benefit, advantage – according to the more benign theories. Striving for low sensations, according to the darker ones. In particular political sciences

Philipp Ruch

took the shortest paths with presumed lasting certainties. Its premises were applied unexamined by its disciples. The descriptions of lower motives of the human nature fills libraries (Freud, 1955, Hobbes, 1991). But are these theories able to give a comprehensive account of the human nature? These images of man do not contain a human longing for the beautiful, good and perfect. Nothing is said about the longing for beauty, or if mentioned, it is discussed as a story of idealistic failure.

This paper examines two issues. Firstly, what does a category like 'beauty' signify, regarding the history of political science, especially in the second half of the 20th Century? Why was 'beauty' unacceptable, neglected, from human nature? Second, I would like to conclude with an outlook on what beauty in politics could be; what is 'political beauty'.

Beauty as a cause, need or goal?

The accusation, political science ignores an important feature of human nature, weighs heavy. Political theories are always held up like big, thick stencils between the student and the world. They recognise in reality what they see of it through the cut-outs. What is punched out through the board is recognisable. But this stencil however also covers certain phenomena. What the theoretician did not punch out, the stencil covers from sight. For obvious reasons, the believing disciples remain blind for the phenomena they have no terms and concepts to.

The fundamental claim of modern science is as proud as comprehensive: to see the world, especially human life, as it is (Strauss, 1965: 178). So what does political science 'see' in the nature of man? For most models of political

science, a basic assumption is that *causes* move human beings. Causes, such as sexuality, economy, food, religion, death, power, greed, fear or ego (Ingham, 1996).

On the surface, beauty was prevented from being an accepted category of political science because of two inherent problems of perception:

- 1 beauty was not regarded as a cause,
- 2 it was perceived as 'subjective', a threat to scientific objectivity. Beauty seemed to lack a binding definition.

To begin with [1]: the basic decisions, regarded as an established category in political sciences and what is excluded, present a collection of surprises. The accepted, plausible *categories as causes* of human nature are, as stated before, for example self-preservation, benefit, sex or power.

One may like or dislike this picture of human nature – these assumptions bare little secret of mankind. What do these accounts actually catch of human life? Does human nature not behave like sand in the hands of scientists that try to impose such theories on it?

One could argue, man is not exclusively moved by causes, but also by goals which were found on a different level than the unprosaic categories like sexuality, fear or greed. Higher aims literally do move people. What moves the body or mind of a person, however, always must be interpreted as a cause of behaviour. If it could be proven that the *need for beauty* moves a single human being, would it not have to be regarded as the cause of behaviour? The argument that beauty could (strictly speaking) not be regarded as a 'cause', seems to be an excuse. Beauty may

not exist as an object in a person but isn't it the same with 'sex', 'advantage' or 'power' which human nature is supposed to strive for? Do they not, logically as 'objects', have to exist outside of a person – Why do social and political sciences take it for granted to exclude beauty from being viewed as a major force in human life?

The scientific relationship to beauty has not always been as disturbed as in the 20th Century. In the 5th Century B.C., the power of the Beautiful (*kalos*) was seen, acknowledged and described in practice (Alexiou, 1995: 73). The phenomena existed. It was seen, felt and studied: 'The persuasion that truth, beauty and justice exist in the world, even though their appearance is largely hidden, is our ever-present heirloom from the Greeks, and even today the power of this conviction is unimpaired.' (Snell, 1953: 259)

Not only practically did the ancient Greeks come across the importance of the Beautiful. In their political theories, the tacit knowledge of a 'desire' for 'noble actions', a vital interest in 'moral nobility' (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* [NE]: 1169 a7), 'love' for beauty (Isocrates, *To Demonicus*: 10) and a longing for 'noble aims' (Isocrates, *To Nicocles*: 25). For ancient psychology not all drives and desires were low and nasty (Thucydides II. 40; Xenophon: *Memorabilia* III. 3, 13). It recognized a quest for greatness and higher grounds. It went as far to state that people longed to become better and nobler. For ancient political philosophers, 'beauty' was a commonly accepted category. What man did, seemed to be motivated by the Beautiful or the Ugly. Beauty and ugliness were two poles between which the story of human life unfolds. A person not joining the quest for beauty could not be human in the fullest sense. The focus on and search for the beautiful is somehow linked

to the human nature. The eyes of people become weary and lose an appeal, if they abandon to seek beauty. The soul breaks if its needs are buried in the sand of time.

Aristotle wrote of political science in the *Nicomachean Ethics* as prevailing science, 'the most authoritative of the sciences', because its ends determine 'the ends of all the others' (NE 1094 a28 ff.). According to him, only when states set the supreme end can they attain what kind of knowledge they have to bring forth in order to achieve the end. Political science determines what ought to be done by man. Since the goal of every action is 'to aim at some good' (NE 1094 a1), it eminently depends on the knowledge of what is good, more eminent than current social sciences would acknowledge. The centre of political science is the knowledge of the Good and as the 'objects' of it, Aristotle defines the beautiful, noble and righteous. Because beauty lacks the force of the laws of nature, it is evidently important for the legislators to know beauty (NE 1110 b9; 1180 a14-25). Aristotle emphasizes knowledge of beauty as the central subject of political science (NE 1095 b5).

As I will argue later, what differs with beauty in modern times from the respected 'mainstream' of categories has nothing however to do with its denied status as a fundamental need of human nature. The choice to regard a category as primary guides to the core issues of the history of science itself: it refers to the reasons of legitimacy and perception. What is 'accepted' (by a scientific community) as primary category, seems to have nothing to do with its functionality as 'root causes' for mankind.

On [2]: Another reason why beauty was discarded lies in the impossibility to agree on common objects. No other

topic seems to be in such a dispute, the answer to the question, what could — universally — be called beautiful. As Aristotle admits himself, 'inner beauty' does not affect mankind as violent as a natural law (NE 1110 b9; 1180 a14-25). Scientifically it seemed impossible to determine 'laws of beauty'. A long time a common content for a category seemed to be the requirement to legitimize its existence. What could not prove to have the same universal objects for all people lost — at least in the world of social science — its legitimacy of existence. The contingency (or 'subjectivity') of beauty seems to have prematurely scared the academic field to seek for and gain a fundamental category of human thought and feeling.

It is worth comparing beauty with established categories to prove that the degree of relativity, subjectivity, objectivity or impartiality of a category can have nothing to do with its acceptance. In order to understand the injustice with which 'beauty' has been treated, it is worthwhile to compare it with the major category of academic psychological studies: 'lust' (Freud, 1955: 8). If the concept of beauty has to face the fact, 'no two people' regard the same objects as beautiful, do psychologists really claim 'all people' gain lust from the same objects? The inability to define common objects of 'lust' did not mean to discard it as a main category.

Besides, does it seem possible to universally determine what people love or hate? Could this ever be an argument to reject love or hate as realities in human lives? When it comes to the hierarchical order of psychological categories, David Hume's plea of lust and love as 'attendants of beauty' seems promising (Hume, 2003: 213, 281).

No two political scientists share the same vision and notion of 'liberty' (Berlin, 1958). Still, 'liberty' is seen as a reliable, stable, valid category of political sciences. But is 'liberty' more solid than 'beauty'? Other major political concepts such as 'power' or 'advantage', fully explicated, do not seem to own the objective liability they are granted at first glance. To this day, political sciences argue about whether and how the basic categories 'power', 'identity', 'society' and 'state' can be defined. Everyone believes in the concreteness of 'power', but hardly anyone has ever seen it. It can be assumed that in a couple of centuries, scientists will share the same feelings on the accounts of today's main terms as we have on terms like 'god': words lacking concrete objects. What Shakespeare's Falstaff asks in *Henry IV* on honour, could be applied on contemporary political concepts as well: 'What is honour? A word. What is in that word honour? Air' (I, V, 1).

The existence of an emotion

People perceive beauty. That people perceive things as beautiful is a fact that once discovered, cannot be locked up again in the chambers of science. Beauty overwhelms, floods, and affects. It 'saves the day' of the ones it touches. It develops massive forces of attraction (as gravity), pushing and pulling. Only with an unhealthy dose of self-denial, can these effects be escaped consciously. The anthropologically fundamental question would not be what is perceived as beautiful — this is a rather boring question — but why the emotion exists at all. People do not only perceive beauty, but seem to have a need for it. The need has a lot of accepted expressions: spirituality, admiration, the sublime, mystical shuddering, honouring. These are possible forms of an urge for beauty. They do not exhaust its

possible forms.

This need is far too important to be excluded from studies of political anthropology. Beauty plays games. It attracts people to the most remote locations. It turns them into collectors, gathering it, keeping it close. It influences everyday life. Most people are familiar with feelings of beauty and ugliness. This reality is manifest. What moves history has to do with the great emotions of beauty and ugliness. Lastly, was the criteria of beauty not an engine for theoretical battles about the validity of theories (Kuhn, 1973: 205)? The more a deed seemed to contain beauty, the sooner it was recommended by Aristotle's political teaching (NE 1163 a20.). Are the feelings and dimensions of beauty actually able to stay hidden to political scientists?

It is not that sociologists, psychologists, political scientists or neuroscientists would behave themselves as their theories predict it. Because they are human themselves, they must have the desire to want to become better, act good and beautiful. But it seems as if the observation or experience of this desire left no traces in their theories. What does this say about the political sciences in 20th Century, instead of recognising the need for beauty, concealing it? — This naturally does not mean that one day a smart psychologist may come up with the idea of conceptualizing this desire as disease; the day people will feel ashamed of their need for beauty.

All new theories need thinkers who believe in the success and the potential of the new categories to solve problems (Kuhn, 1973: 208). Once we agree that beauty is a term to conceptualize a fundamental desire of human existence, this already fathoms and shortens the way to its full meaning.

Although it seems difficult to observe the properties and regularities of human beings striving for beauty, the project is not that difficult at all. Even Aristotle's opinion could turn out wrong that beauty does not affect as violent as a natural law. Only in the political sciences could one feel lonely studying beauty. Outside however, this phenomenon has been studied quite long and well. The continent of beauty knows a large amount of explorers: named writers and poets.

Literature has long seen, climbed, breathed, married, and killed beauty. Poets have left impressive evidence of its existence in writings. The poetic feeling surrounded the core area of beauty since the earliest days. If poetry is accepted to satisfy a fundamental longing of the human nature, beauty does so in a larger extent. Why does political anthropology not climb this mountaintop to see, what the panorama could provide for the explanation of mankind. What does it mean to act according to beauty, to act according to the laws of beauty, to seek beauty?

The term 'beautiful' is not an adjective. The political sciences, especially the social sciences simply excluded from their 'rational exploration' of the human soul, what they considered to be irrational: the emotions (Flam, 2002). A serious error. As we now know, all great ideas consist of — even stand on — greater passions and emotions (Damasio, 1994). Nowadays this error is attempted to be repaired without the bright light of the achieved knowledge from former centuries (Hobbes, 1991).

A good example for deciding not to investigate what appeared elusive is the feeling of strength. Although never studied psychologically, all human beings are permanently

aware in every moment of their life, whether they feel strong or weak. The human mind creates this awareness. Everyone immediately knows, whether he or she is in a strong or weak state. But what is this awareness of strength, body knowledge. No one would seriously deny its existence. But science does not even have hypotheses to explain what it is that makes a person feel strong, or even offer any guesses for causal effects. Where and how is 'strength' produced? We do know how to fly to the moon. But we do not have the slightest clue about man's biggest interest, his own strength.

Just a hint on causal effects and dependencies: words seem to play an important role in the accumulation of this strength. The right word spoken into a moment of intense exhaustion is able to make people rise again. Politics depends on this effect. It is why rhetoric was regarded as the most important school for politicians. But why was the ability of words to donor power never examined by the field of neuroscience in the last century? Poems can be shocking experiences. Why was the impact of poems on the human body never studied systematically? Wouldn't that be part of their field? Did not a single neuroscientist experience the power of words in his own life? Quite the contrary; but if a neuroscientist tried to talk about beauty, then only with a blushing face, as if it were a matter of total shame and embarrassment.

The feeling of superiority of modern sciences is astonishing if you look at its 'findings' on the human nature. Our science is able to produce matter and split atoms, fertilize oocytes technically. But what do we see if we look at ourselves with in the light of modern political, social or psychological theories? What do we see, given concepts

like 'psychic apparatus', the theory of traumata and the 'Oedipus complex', if not fragments of ugliness? Do these theories of human nature really make us understand who or what we are? It seems to be easier to study the universe, the formation of planets or the evolution, than to study the human heart. We focus to uncover the causes of the universe. But we do not have the slightest clue what goals we have, let alone, whether we would need to look into the sky to find them. Ancient civilizations would find it hard to understand why we knew so much about the universe and so little about ourselves.

We might know most of the elements the universe consists of. But do we know with pathetic triviality the themes of 'power', 'money' or 'sex', some of the elements that constitute our reality? This is not about denying the fabulous technological achievements of modernity. It is about denying that we have sufficient knowledge of the laws of anthropology. This could be a comedy plot. Imagine a modern man travelling back to antiquity, being able to show how to build food, cities and all kinds of gadgets. But about the most important, about himself, he believes to have an emotional cellar ('subconscious') in which 'uncanny' drives mix, direct and control him. Would he be asked to share a significant moment of his life, he would recall an incident in his childhood, where his parents denied him a piece of gum. His ancient hosts would be amazed about so much power, paired with so little knowledge.

Concerning 'beauty', universality and objectivity (and therefore further research) are possible in two respects. First, there is always a general phenomenology of an emotion, which includes observed laws and mechanisms. Second, there can be a morally reliable definition, i.e. a norma-

tive content of the emotion. The delineation of these two features may give cautious optimism to celebrate the future birth of a category. Beauty as a phenomenon seems to exist. It has a verifiable phenomenology. But whether it is accepted as a category does not depend on its status as a 'cause' or on its 'subjectivity'.

Considering the great drama of which the small word 'beauty' talks, the history of science is giving up too early. For political sciences, it is not apparent that the great thinkers actually saw human nature as vile and discarded, as they described it. As Edmund Burke put it: 'I considered how little man is, yet in his mind, how great!' (Burke et al., 1923: 84) – For reasons of simplicity, modern thinkers read just half the line. Greatness and beauty was dropped off too soon, too fast. Why it was discarded has nothing to do with the status of causes or grades of subjectivity. It has to do with the patterns of scientific perception itself; the crucial question, what is considered as science and what not.

I distinguish three patterns of rejection, the sensation of beauty was confronted with:

1. Inability to beauty,
2. unwillingness of beauty,
3. hatred against beauty.

On [1]: These are people who have never tasted the pleasures of beauty. More than a few people are untrained in the feelings of beauty. In 20th Century philosophy, beauty was put into another dubious category where it was, as a shadow of itself, allowed to survive: 'aesthetics'. Understood as separated from ethics, aesthetics was meant

to constitute an experience beyond politics and morality. Most philosophers behaved the way Moses Mendelssohn was criticized by Goethe: he "treats beauty as entomologists treat butterflies. He catches the poor animal, he pins it down, and as its exquisite colours drop off, there it lies, a lifeless corpse under the pin. This is aesthetics!" (Berlin and Hardy, 1999: 43)

Scholarship of aesthetics never had more to offer than second hand reports on beauty. The way beauty is treated in the academic field of aesthetics immediately reminds one to the criticism of Günther Anders (1986: 86 ff.) concerning modern love: 'For them, the analysis of love conducts like theoretical physics to engineering: they begin with theory; if they manage to keep up the classes until the day of appliance, is all but certain.' For Anders, students had never seen love. He criticized his students for being convinced to know everything about love before ever having experienced it.

Before theory could taste the magic of beauty, it was declared as opposite to political and ethical questions. The general reaction was then a transition or ignorance of the deep structure of the phenomena.

On [2]: While some might have been unable to perceive beauty, others were reluctant. The rejection of all other sciences dealing with the human nature was absolute: political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology. Not a single mainstream theory discovered 'beauty' as a systematically relevant category. This group was embarrassed or disappointed by the phenomena, leading to its conceal.

Modern science, disappointed about the archilochean declaration 'that different men have their hearts quickened in various ways' (Snell, 1953: 171) — exactly because not all people's hearts are warmed by the same beauty — came to the conclusion not to warm the heart at all, lacking a central experience.

On [3]: Ugliness and beauty are able to shock fundamentally (Schmitt, 1991: 70), like the beauty or ugliness of certain categorical assumptions on man. Very many people try to resist this experience. Beauty needs and deserves devotion and surrender. Experiencing beauty can become unbearable. It costs strength and willpower. Those who endure beauty can easily see their entire past life break into pieces. Understandable that people do not voluntarily want to dive into this 'reality of self-destruction' which may lie in radical acts of beauty. The fracture of what modern sociology calls 'identity' arouses deep-seated fears. Beauty is a risk. People must be willing to take these risks. Beauty must be risked.

I cannot prove the hypothesis on a large scale whether or why beauty is a major force and primary category in human nature. In question is the fundamental relationship between theory and practice, between description and effects. What I try to grasp is the modern conceptualization of man with its emphasis on moral ugliness. I try to explain why an opposing category is excluded. The modern image political sciences provide for the human nature is as hurtful as ugly. But why? Why was beauty's status as a basic modern political category denied?

The reason for the decisiveness of political sciences is grounded in a characteristic feature Saul Bellow reveals in Herzog.

Doubting the fundamental claim of sociology to observe and describe society 'as it is', Bellow grabbed a criterion for scientifically valid 'facts'. In an exhilarated dispute, Herzog asks his lawyer, Sandor Himmelstein: "Do you know what a mass man is, Himmelstein? [...] A man of the crowd. The soul of the mob. Cutting everybody down to size?" "What soul of the mob! Don't get highfalutin. I'm talking facts, not shit?" "And you think a fact is what's nasty?" "Facts are nasty?" "You think they're true because they're nasty." ' (Bellow, 2001: 86)

One might not share Bellow's perspective that exclusively ugliness, brutality and nastiness prevail as the scientific truth. But Bellow's intuition, disputing the authority of social sciences to describe man and society 'as they are', may shed more light on the reason why beauty was not concerned as a primary category of human life than all the false pretence arguments. Beauty has absolutely nothing cruel, despicable or ugly about it. If Bellow's Herzog is right, it is the proportion of the 'undelightful', that makes a category scientifically acceptable. The prospect of acceptance clear away if the concept does not promise to reveal 'undelightful truths'. It is exactly its very delight that could have prevented beauty from being a key category in 20th Century."

The problem is the level on which accepted patterns of human nature are resided: they all describe vile motives and are thus at the lowest level. Leo Strauss called this the 'low but solid ground' of modern political theory (Strauss, 1965: 247). The basic assumptions and categories about man are founded onto an ultimate certainty of the lowest level. No doubt is able to penetrate lower, beneath the modern ground. The principle is not just revealed by Leo

Strauss, but also in Thomas Hobbes' *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic* 'for they proceed from most low and humble principles, evident even to the meanest capacity' (Chapter I. VIII, 3). Political sciences tried to escape an infinite regress: man is unable to decline profoundly different from the modern image.

Beauty instead might be a cause of behaviour, but it is no mean motive, no low ground. Beauty has not derived out of baseness. It originates from the arsenal of ideals. It is conceivable to find something different beneath the surface. But would the assumption 'all men are moved by a need for beauty' really less certain or solid than the assumption 'all men are moved by fear'? While Edmund Burke once wrote: 'I considered how little man is, yet in his mind, how great!', – political and social sciences of the past century rebuilt Burkes' first observation of 'how little man is' into the basis of methodology, without reading the second part about the greatness of the mind. Concepts such as greatness, beauty or goodness had a difficult position in the second half of the 20th Century. We might be done with beauty, but beauty is not done with us at all.

What is 'political beauty'?

In one of the most unread ancient scriptures on beauty, *Helen*, Isocrates argues people would find the right words to adequately describe bumblebees or salt. But in trying to describe the good, the beautiful or 'superior moral [...] have all fallen far short of the possibilities which these subjects offer' (12). The Insignificant can be detected and exaggerated. In his times, a sophist in fact dedicated a text to the subject of 'salt', which caused a shock among the philosophers (Symposion 177b); 'while it is easy by elo-

quence to overdo the trivial themes', it is difficult to do justice to the greatness of beauty, Isocrates writes.

If one accepts the notion, beauty not being an aim by itself, but a fundamental need in man as well, — an appetite or thirst that must be satisfied — it can and should be interpreted politically. What does a need for beauty mean in the sphere of politics? What would a state, turned into a centre for political beauty, look like? What acts, decisions, deeds or scenarios deserve the name 'political beauty'?

An advice of the poet Simonides in Xenophon's *Hiero* seems promising: the ruler should not beautify his palace, but the city as a whole (XI). Most people do not approach the large, all affecting matter, the state with the same concern they approach private matters. The beautiful, noble and righteous are according to Aristotle not resistant. Their instability requires a degree of uncertainty in handling and questioning. It must be sufficient to indicate the right in outlines: 'We must therefore be content if, in dealing with subjects and starting from premises thus uncertain, we succeed in presenting a broad outline of the truth' (NE 1094 b19). He describes the concept of his own project of research, which led to the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

The proper procedure is to begin by making a rough sketch, and to fill it in afterwards. If a work has been well laid down in outline, to carry it on and complete it in detail may be supposed to be within the capacity of anybody; and in this working out of details Time seems to be a good inventor (NE 1098 a22).

The great achievement of science consists in the compendium, in the basic lines, the first sketch (*perigraphê*). Then the

missing (of the image) can be amplified. The rest even follows from the basic lines. Aristotle wanted to keep to the outline, as he puts it repeatedly: 'to speak in outline' (NE 1101 a28; 1104 a1; 1117 b22).

It is not only modern art, but also modern political sciences, working exactly the opposite way. In art, Wolfgang Högbe calls it *Beuysianism* (Högbe, 2011): artists listen into the material, stone for example, to have the stones will of how to smooth it. In a similar way, modern political science monitors reality to detect goals. But human nature is not just about empirical observations; it is as well about outlines, notions and ideas.

If one proceeds in outlining a clear notion of political beauty and participates in an architecture of anticipation — converting foreshadows into stable knowledge — one may discover the significance of honour in Aristotle's work. Honour tends to be synonymous with beauty in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1396 a13 ff.; 1389 b30). At least what is honoured can be 'classed' as the beautiful, 'since there seems to be a close resemblance between the two' (1367 b8-12). This may point to the work of people with an sensorium for beauty and shame — people like Varian Fry (Price, 2008), Peter Bergson (Wyman and Medoff, 2002), Roméo Dallaire (Dallaire and Beardsley, 2003), Raphael Lemkin (Lemkin, 1973), Soghomon Tehlirian (Hosfeld, 2005), Beate Klarsfeld or Simon Wiesenthal. If one defines moral beauty as political beauty, they all seem to hint to deeds of a superior beauty.

This belief is embodied for example in Varian Fry. Fry fought with the right of the strong for the right of the weaker. Fry used the privileges of his American citizenship

intentionally to allow 1,500 people in 1940 to escape the European death trap. He was a respected citizen of a superior and well recognized superpower. His memoirs *Surrender on demand* bear testimony to the respect brought to him just because of his nationality (Fry, 1945). His passport, actually a piece of paper, raised him above all the members of the European intelligentsia, them being so much smarter, more talented and more creative. But their talents were worth nothing in the face of 'an uncompromising generation' (Wildt and Lampert, 2009). What mattered was an American who risked his life to save thousands of people through illegal activities. Especially because Varian Fry was actually quite uninvolved he got through to ambassadors much easier. Instead of keeping away, he intervened to sabotage the terrible events of the 20th Century.

Conclusion

Where are the Varian Fry's today? For the last two decades Somalia has had great similarities of a sinking ship who's civilian population is trying to leave. What was the American passport for Fry in Europe could be the EU passport in Somalia: it guards tremendously. The Foreign Office would pay millions to rescue German citizens of 'collapsed states'.

Due to the high number of committed crimes, Varian Fry would now be thrown out any German human rights organization. Fry's 'work' consisted of a variety of crimes against the unjust regime of Hitler, for which he today, from the noble members of German human rights organizations would immediately be perceived as a threat to their 'image' – instead of its legitimacy. Even the classical forms of activism, termed trespassing, harassment and criminal damage by penal law, are now rejected by all the German

human rights organizations in principle. Amnesty International, by membership and donations the world's largest human rights organization, holds this principle with an unwritten law: under no circumstances break the law for the implementation of political goals. That may make one seem very integer but it does change very little for the people of Somalia, Libya or Chechnya. It even hurts them when international organizations maintain their grate image on costs of political effectiveness. Most German human rights organizations today are happy when newspapers publish a picture of their recent action. Organizing escape routes, ships, trains, airplanes, forge passports, bribing officials, saving lives? No one should proceed to a brute form of saving lives. But the acts of Varian Fry, historically reviewed, seem to be acts of an unimaginable beauty. The worst atrocities in history may reveal more about the conditions, terms and perceptions of contemporary patterns of beauty in politics than any other study.

It is the darkness that facilitates understanding. Precisely the darkest hours of humanity, human disasters, enormously help to recognizing what is and was (politically) beautiful. The darkness lets the actions of political and moral beauty flash, glitter and sparkle. The darkest hours are the most fertile area to study acts of political beauty.

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