

# The Return of Beauty

## The Force of Aesthetics in Political Economy

Hardy Hanappi

VIPER – Vienna Institute for Political Economy Research

[Hanappi@gmail.com](mailto:Hanappi@gmail.com)    [www.econ.tuwien.ac.at/hanappi/](http://www.econ.tuwien.ac.at/hanappi/)

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### Abstract

In the interwar period the reaction of some leading proponents of Marxist thought, who were shocked by the emergence of fascist state power, was a turn to aesthetics. Walter Benjamin started to encapsulate historical materialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in his Arcades Project [Benjamin, 2002, 1982]. Georg Lukács focussed his work on the study of forms, fetishism and class consciousness as the central problem of ideological warfare [Lukasz, 1967]. The reason for this reaction is the intuition that in the emergence of modern capitalism and fascism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, aesthetics – the technologically communicated pre-rational sentiment – becomes an overwhelming political force.

From a seemingly completely different angle the Nobel Prize winner in physics, Frank Wilczek, investigates his feeling that the most recent findings in theoretical physics are ‘beautiful’, why one finds them attractive, why these designs were helping their own discovery by certain aesthetic qualities [Wilczek, 2015]. Even in the realm of theoretical physics beauty plays a major role as a catalyst for the scientist’s intuition. This intuition becomes ever more important as science is more and more freed from standard reasoning by the takeover of AI, e.g. pattern recognition techniques.

The question of what beauty actually is, lurks in the gap between these two extreme instances. This paper tries to provide some preliminary answers and some consequences for progressive intervention into contemporary dynamics of political economy.

### Bibliography

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