

Body alterations

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Cosmetic surgery is the most common kind of plastic surgery nowadays. It consists on medical practices intended for enhancing one's appearance, maintaining it or embellishing it beyond an average level toward an esthetic ideal. Tattoos, piercings and any other ornaments are applications that also take the human's body as their final object. In his essay "The Body Jigsaw", Philippe Liotard states that cosmetic surgery and body alterations stand at opposite sides. In the following, I'm going to take a position relatively to the above statement, before analyzing the situation in my home society, Lebanon.

First of all, Liotard believes that body modifications are ways that one can use in order to look different from the common mass. For him, it is as expression of "refusal to comply with social norms" (Liotard, 264). So far, it's true that having a foreign tattoo or a piercing in a society that doesn't originally apply them commonly makes a person look out of the box. Moreover, different combinations of body alterations emphasize the uniqueness of each individual and reflect a mixture of cultures. On the opposite side, cosmetic surgery can be applied for several reasons.

One of them is looking for example as a certain idol, celebrity or any public figure. This aim is becoming very redundant between women who seek having this actress' nose or that singer's lips. From this way of thinking, we can say that cosmetic surgery promotes a kind of stereotype. For that, the uniqueness of each individual is abolished. For this way of interpretation, I stand on the same shore as the author. Moving to my home society, views and opinions concerning both "alternative" body alterations and cosmetic

surgery vary a lot. There's no single common way of handling these applications.

In fact, some alterations are rejected while others can be tolerated. For most Lebanese, a familiar thought is that piercing as well as others body ornaments or some techniques are not manly. For that, a man with a pierced ear is subject to negative connotations. On the other hand, tattoos for instance are accepted to a certain extend. Concerning cosmetic surgery, we encounter three main categories of opinions. There are some people who completely support these surgeries whereas others reject them completely while some have intermediate views.

As far as I'm concerned, I don't mind people having a tattoo even though I won't do it. I personally believe that the decision of having a permanent tattoo is based on mood or temporary convictions that can collapse with time. On the contrary, I'm not against having a temporary one. Also, about cosmetic surgeries, I support them when they aim to correct an inborn defect or an accidental one. A personal experience I had was when I broke my nose and the only solution was having a surgery to repair the bad appearance caused by the accident.

On the opposite side, I disapprove plastic surgeries when they are applied just to have someone else's nose, lips... To sum up, I agree that cosmetic surgery and "alternative" body alterations are philosophical antonyms even though they both affect the body. And, like in everything else, the best use of body alterations relies in moderation. As a Lebanese proverb says: "Every excess means less" Works Cited Liotard, Philippe. "The Body Jigsaw".

Shades of Gray. 2nd edition. Ed. Zane Sinno et al. Essex: Pearson, 2008.

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