

**AESTHETICS OF LIVING : THE DIALECTIC
OR ON HEGEL'S INTRODUCTORY LECTURES ON
AESTHETICS***

Ayşen FURTUN**

**I. THE CONCEPT OF ART (OR ON WHAT ART IS) İN
HEGELIAN TERMS**

a) First of all art manifests itself in and through sensuous modes like painting , music and poetry; painting is visible for us , music and when it is voiced poetry are audible .Yet on a larger scale when sensuous modes of apprehension are concerned there exists also other types of artistic bestowal such as sculpture and architecture .

For the being who senses all these different types of artistic “work” and the other being who creates them all i.e. who puts something into existence which did not exist before there must be something in common to be shared reciprocally in between if we are to draw some\or any kind of boundary in intellectual realm to be called “artistic portrayal” which is generally acknowledged to be the “**Aesthetics**”.¹

When we ask what this shared community is or maybe or rather if we can ever find a true answer to the question we simply have to search for the mission and function art does employ for itself or for the beings who take part in it on a realistic and again sensible point of view- without necessarily going so far as to

* Hegel, G.W.F, Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics, translated by Bernard Bosanquet, edited by Michael Inwood, Penguin Books, 1993

** Asst.Prof.Dr., Kırkkale University, Faculty of Law

¹ Art. (I)-(III) pp.3-4, cf.Introduction, xi-xix

what “purely” idealistic points of view maybe to the same question- with the various consequences of participants’ personal acts taken into consideration.²

Therefore taken in its mission art in all its apprehended forms starting from the grand level up to the minimal scale provides for all such effective portrayal through different sources and dimensions. Both the creator and the apprehender of art refer to it whether it be through painting , music , poetry or sculpture and even architecture in order to find peace and relaxation amidst the confusion surrounding themselves , to find joy and contentment when living conditions seem to be dull and evalescalent , to find meaning and truth when happenings and incidents of a newly encountered stage seem to be indefinite and obscure and even vicious.

For instance architecture “bestows hard-toil upon existing nature in order to disentangle it from the jungle of finitude and abortiveness of chance”³by securing a “**place**” for the external surroundings –and even human beings maybe!- to have permanence and definition . “Therefore architecture **purifies** (Hegel must have had in view the architecture of the western societies in meaning this purification as he certainly did with the religious aspect studied below !) the external world and endows it with symmetrical order and affinity to mind”.⁴

“The spirit which sculpture represents is on the other hand solid in itself and is not broken up in the play of trivialities and of passions , and hence its external form, too is not abandoned to any manifold phases of appearance , but appears under this one aspect only , as the abstraction of space in the whole of its dimensions .”⁵ In other words sculpture purifies the (human) existence in all of its aspects of multitudeness and concentrates in one unique form enduringly attainable at its most no matter what the surrounding conditions maybe .The same permanence and definition this time plies for the human form in sculpture as observed above in architecture for the external surroundings !

Following further ,in painting “the visibility and the rendering visible have their differences in a more **ideal** form in the several kinds of colour and they liberate art from the sensuous completeness in space as observed in sculpture which is attached to material things by restricting themselves to a plane surface. On the other hand the content also attains the most comprehensive specification”⁶ .

Now as even could be seen in this intermediate stage of scaling at the begin-

² Art. (XLVIII) p.35 cf. Art. (VI)-(XIII) pp.5-10, Art. (XXI)-(XXII) pp.14-16

³ Art. (CIX) (a) p.90

⁴ Art. (CX) (b) p.91

⁵ Art. (CX) (b) p.92

⁶ Art. (CXII) (i) p.94

ning of the process we first created a space permanent and definite amidst natural indefinable minute incidents . Following we confirmed this space attained at the varying multitude of circumstances of existence in all or whatever shape or form it might have .And at this very stage we restrict and in a way crystallise space within itself on a plane surface enriching its content by the elements which could not be attainable in the previous stages by diminishing the matter and therefore space into its very essence .

Therefore in the following audible stages of music and poetry “an inchoate ideality of matter appears no longer as under the form of space but as **temporal** (yet!) ideality liberating the ideal content from its immersion in matter”⁷ ; that is matter is truly transformed in a newly encountered spatial stage as a motion and tremor of the material body within itself and its relation to itself .

In poetry yet “sound , the only external matter which poetry retains , is in it no longer the feeling of the sonorous itself , but is a **sign**, which by itself is void of import .”⁸

“The merely negative point up to which music had developed now makes its appearance as the completely concrete point , the point which is **Mind**, the **self-conscious** individual , which producing out of itself the infinite space of its ideas unites with the temporal character of mind . Yet this sensuous element , which in music was still immediately one with inward feeling is in poetry separated from the content of consciousness . In poetry the mind determines this content for its own sake and apart from all else , into the shape of **ideas**”⁹.

“ Thus considered sound may just as well be reduced to a letter for the audible , like the visible is thus depressed into a mere indication of Mind”¹⁰

And as an answer to our initial question , as we have followed the Hegelian pattern as an explanatory scheme , Hegel has right to claim that “for this reason the proper medium of poetical representation is the poetical **imagination** and intellectual portrayal itself”¹¹ of sensuous modes in concrete of the human being as the mission and function of art concretely observed in the process .

He goes on , “and as this element is **common** to all types of art , it follows that poetry runs through them all and develops itself independently in each . Poetry is the universal art of the **mind** which has become **free** in its own nature

⁷ Art. (CXIII) (ii) p.95

⁸ Art. (CXIV) (iii) p.95

⁹ Art. (CXIV) (iii) p.95

¹⁰ Art. (CXIV) (iii) p.96

¹¹ Art. (CXIV) (iii) p.96

and which is not tied to find its realisation in external sensuous matter but expatiates exclusively in the inner space and inner time of the ideas and feelings”¹²

Therefore we conclude all art manifestations of various sensible forms are all actually expatiated in the inner space and inner time of the ideas and feelings of the human beings taking part in this artistic portrayal either as creators or apprehenders of it !

b) Now the second question of our inquiry proceeds as follows ; as we draw the sphere of existence for art(istic portrayal) thus , amongst these forms of art which we studied above in their mission at varying stages of scaling analytically is there one form superior to the others at times in carrying out this mission also **normatively** that is in its **essence** , in its **depth** also finding its presence as why one artist prefers one type of artistic form –sympathetic for himself – in expressing his ideas and thoughts rather than another ? or the same perhaps for the apprehenders of different types of art !

Can it have any relevance with the **content** employed in the very form to determine the answer to the question or vice versa is or can one artist \ or apprehender of art as in art scholarship be superior to another in virtue of the content , essence , depth of his ideas versus or in relation to other ideas of other contents or even in time schedule in certain periods and ages of intellectual creativity?

Now the answer probably lies in the key points of the Hegelian theory¹³ which can be summarised as follows ;

Art is actually the **Idea** presented in its **concreteness** through human sentiments being sensed thereupon.¹⁴ Even the difference between men and animal is that men being **aware** of its physical being by his very conscience realises that this awareness is merely a **representation** in concrete of a higher being which he has actually by discovering his physical being come upon thereby through this very discovery which opens and leads the way to a larger path to be discovered !

So physical senses and even sentiments merely function in the way of lightning up the way to a higher sensibility which manifests itself at this stage physically yet at the next stage following this one encompassing the two of the stages ; the one in concrete and the one in abstract which the concrete had led the way to but yet without any substance i.e. sense or sentiment to be perceived but merely the mechanism opening up the process to be fulfilled with the required

¹² Art. (CXIV) (iii) p.96

¹³ Ch III, The Conception of Artistic Beauty, Art. (XXXVIII)-(LXXV), pp.27-61 Ch IV Division of the Subject Art. (XCIV)- (CXV) pp.76-97 cf.Introduction, pp.xix-xxxii

¹⁴ Cf.Art. (XXXVIII)-(XLI) pp.27-30

substance in the third and final stage of synthesis covering up the whole scheme both with frame-work and substance there within ¹⁵.

Regarding “human” entity on the universe then humanity first became aware of its being through physical processes of his own differentiating himself from that of animal form and then at this very moment realised that this differentiation meant something further to be even physically acknowledged but yet in the third final stage .Before this stage to be evolved and concluded there required yet another stage of (t)his acknowledgement in between , the stage merely that of abstract mechanical built-up of the procedure which provided for the so-called third stage !

Actually this seeming to be indeterminate and therefore abstract stage was the **very** definite and determinate stage of abridgement upon and of human grasp!

Hegel claimed even in his time that the mistakes committed in grasping the essence and the whole frame-work of this stage of the whole mechanism encompassing it there within led to **vital** follies in human acknowledgement like certain modes of artistic and even religious patterns as he refers to the primitive notions of art observed in eastern societies and the religions of Jews and Muslims¹⁶ ; for they took this intermediate very stage without referring to its first and third counter-parts i.e. starting and concluding stages of development and therefore took it partially yet exaggerating and even mystifying , sanctifying this very stage at a frozen level of perception leading to no further or counter confrontations it might bear up to ! ¹⁷

That is in Hegelian terms primitive notions of Art sanctified and froze up Nature in its physical apperception --which actually in no way could be achieved in the dynamic and viable nature of human grasp in its very essence –and yet tried to inject superficially some higher meaning upon it which it would only be reaching gradually in a further stage of development as seen above!¹⁸ Equally the human physical being reaches up a notion of morality and aesthetics in the gradual evolving of the mechanism in the third stage where he **reflects** upon his very being by the reflective talent he has adopted in the second stage crossing the bridge from indeterminateness to the very determinate , definite being of his very own losing sight of incapability and inefficiency i.e. static , frozen and

¹⁵ cf.Art.(XLVIII)-(L)pp. 35-36, Art. (LVIII)-(LX) pp.43-46

¹⁶ cf.Art. (LXI)-(LXIII) pp.46-50, Art.(XCVI) pp.76-77

¹⁷ cf.Art. (LXIV)-(LXV) pp.50-51

¹⁸ cf.Art.(LXVI) (LXVIII) pp.51-55

given nature of the very nature he has and developing plasticity to be transformed by the humanity !¹⁹

Therefore once human form has realised that he cannot alter or plastically re-shape Nature has he begun to discover another realm which is actually his very own **dwelling** –the realm of the **Idea** yet this time opening and securing room for its subject , the **human** who has come to call upon its door and luckily found a place for itself ! Human form did actually even along the way consumed this very realm within its very being together even with the static nature he could not alter , grasp and place appropriately there within .So Hegel interpreted Christian belief likewise ²⁰ as the unification of the human being with the Idea which he was once abstracted from while misdwelling in Nature and trying to get unified with it in vain but now placing both nature and himself where they really belonged to !

So again in Hegelian terms art in symbolic form meant this very inefficiency of unification capacity that of Nature and human in metaphysical bonds merely observed at the level of physics as in Architecture !²¹ Yet sculpture opened up the way for the perfection of human form reached to be within **Intellectual** realm bearing an inner and higher meaning thrust upon its representations to be interpreted by those who undertook the difficulties of aesthetic notion in the realm of the Idea which they were enrolled within .²²

Yet this Idea manifested itself even without referring to any physical component outwardly acknowledged but **intuitively** sensed within as in romantic arts of painting , music and poetry !²³ Thus the unification mentioned above got **invested** on the subject of this process as a human being with creative and re-shaping capabilities of aesthetic **portrayal** .

Therefore we can conclude—as an answer to our initial question in regards the human beings’ and their physical beings’ artistic quests to be considered to have some **worthy content**—that human form first searched for its frame-work in symbolic forms in Nature as in architecture which had no plasticity at all to be enrolled within . Later it got hit upon the idea of its most appropriate exact framework in classical forms of sculpture which perfected the human form abstracting the follies and weaknesses of physical apperceptance from it . And finally human form **transcended** the precision transforming itself within its very framework as in romantic arts of painting , music , and poetry bearing and

¹⁹ cf.Art.(LXIX)-(LXXV) pp.55-61

²⁰ cf.Art.(XLVII)pp.34-35, Art. (XCVI) p.76-77, Art.(XCVIII) p.78

²¹ cf.Art.(C)- (CV) pp.79-83

²² cf.Art.(CVI)p. 84

²³ cf.Art.(CVII)pp.85-88

thrusting upon a newly created **realm of finite perfection** within itself exchanging the content-framework pattern with the framework-content pair and therefore becoming itself the **very framework** to encompass the **content** , substance whatever to be physically acknowledged around or within itself.

This actually makes it possible for the subject of this mechanism , the very human being to live a life of billions and billions of lives of whatever essence you might find in concrete in\around\within\ and on itself in one human being, being the framework itself of all this mechanism capable of bearing any content whatever all at the same time in its abstracted perfection yet in concrete moments as it chooses . So this is why perhaps art functions in different roles and different modes for all human beings, for artists and art scholars , for art apprehenders !and everybody in all its viability creating life for itself and creating life **for life** to be **enlived**.

II.The Development of Dialectic Thought (And Where It is \Or Should be Found)

Hegel in his “Lectures on Aesthetics” traces back the foot-steps of this dialectical thought up to the Kantian philosophy²⁴ whereby a **strict** differentiation is built up between the two ultimately separate realms of **Practical** and the **Theoretical** in the plying of **Reason** which according to Hegel is the exact starting point for a new discussion developed on how this differentiation may be worked over to be overwhelmed by a **unison** of the very **Reason** confining in it its **initial** wholesome unity and therefore particularity.²⁵

In the light of this very discussion Hegel refers to other creative sources in the dialectic processing of the reason in the very beings of philosophers such as Schiller and Schlegel; a process which **is** actually present in almost every sphere of life even in its minuteness or in its universal phrasing such as the creative minds of the philosophers discovering the very process how their minds work up and upon to no matter what the essence it might be drawn !²⁶

Therefore Hegel believes once this differentiation is overcome a synthesis of **original** apprehension could and would be brought forward such as the **universal** differentiating within itself to become the **particular** and yet this time **the very particular** once more going through the same metamorphological process of differentiation to become the **universal in the particular** differentiating itself from the isolated particular torn apart from any kind of relation with its univer-

²⁴ cf. Art.(LXXVII) pp. 62-64

²⁵ cf. Art.(LXXVIII)-(LXXXII) pp.64-66

²⁶ cf. Art.(LXXXIII)-(LXXXIV) pp.67-68

sal form which it has ascended (to be) from and actually become “the particular”.²⁷

Hegel says it was Solger who first discovered this dialectical **core** at the heart of all living mechanisms and how they kept their **entity all in one unity** escaping the hazards of inconsistent modes of differentiation observed in various perspectives to which no **essential** meaning could be ascribed to without reference to the **main structure** behind the scheme yet unsolved and even unapprehended at times!²⁸

Thus we might say the main reason why Kant made such a **strict** separation rather than any differentiation between the realms and kept strictly to it is that he was determinate not to fall into the catapult of Plato whereby every ideal thing is **merely** composed of an **ideal** thought and **not of a physical entity** to be apprehended in its particularity. Kant in the least wanted to **secure** a determinable sphere for any such realm of physical entities without reference to idealistic schemes of thought by keeping these very schemes under strict control under the very realm of the **Practical Mind** which was never to be intermixed or even to be confronted with the **Theoretical** version.²⁹

Hegel, in these efforts of Kant, paid his tribute to his apprehensive starting point and went on to introduce a certainly better solution to the problem as such; what he did was as—observed in the dialectical process above—taking the **Theoretical** Mind at hand and letting it to differentiate and evolve itself to the very **Practical Mind as in the above *universal-practical and synthetically practical within the universal formulae*** and most important of all in the final determinative stage plying the process once more again to let the “Practical Mind” overwhelm its isolated partiality to become once again the expounder and presenter of the “Theoretical Mind” in its very “Practical Being”!³⁰ This is similar to the pattern observed in the paragraphs above in the human beings’ behaviours carrying and presenting within themselves the whole universe both of ideas and physical things yet in their own physical beings but with a unique faculty of Reason plying within in the process.

Even the very Reasoning **faculty** of ours providing for all this richly en-sourced apprehensions no matter of what essence at what level macro-micro, abstract-concrete etc thus **reveals** itself and its plying process in the very dialectical fashion for our good or not!? as one might be dazzled to discover in his astonishment the content of all this creativity.

²⁷ cf. Art.(XCII)pp.74-75

²⁸ cf. Art.(XCII)pp.74-75

²⁹ cf. Art.(XXXVI)-(XXXVII)pp.25-26

³⁰ cf.Art.(LXXXVII)pp.62-64, Art.(LXXXII)p.66

Just at this point of “human” exposure of this enormously great activity of apprehension we can also refer to **Irony**³¹ sometimes compared and contrasted with the dialectics .In irony **I** as the human being take in every comprehensible subject of essence either in thought or being **form** and annihilate it within its very self to assure a dominant creative power over by determining its ultimate annihilance whether of worthy essence or of mere rubbish as observed in **comedy** .³² This is similar to a perception of God annihilating for its own sake without the referential idea of it **inherent** in the process which actually corresponds to the very dialectical process at the stage where “the particular or the practical” not on its own but as a vital instrument in revealing and presenting the original “universal and the theoretical” is transformed and evolved to carry out its mission in full !³³ Therefore anything **I** would annihilate would be taken in and to be annihilated to present and reinforce the **I** this time in the **concrete** not merely for the sake of annihilation!

As one last concluding word for this enquiry I would like to assert that perhaps every living mechanism should acknowledge that what and how it is doing something and that very thing and even further its reason of being as a being capable of doing all these and similar things is not for the sake of this and that (thing) or even the sake of being but the very dialectical mechanism covering the being and everything to **reveal** its being and even to reveal the very mechanism through its mechanical running at this or that point in an indefinite yet determinative path !

I conclude this is how Hegel , the one single runner of the mechanism running it thus understands and reveals Dialectics to us !

³¹ cf.Art.(LXXXVII) p.70

³² cf.Art.(LXXXVIII) pp.70-71, Art.(XCI) pp.73-74

³³ cf.Art.(LXXXIX)-(XC)pp.71-74