

Aesthetic Awareness and the Problematics of Anthro-Civilisational Dimensions in Self-Practices

Dr.Ahmed Latroche*

University of Oran2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed- Algeria
E-mail: ahmedphilo25@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study explores the foundations of aesthetic awareness through a critical lens that intersects philosophical reflection, anthro-civilizational analysis, and self-practice. The study argues that aesthetic experience, far from being a derivative of sensory pleasure or ideological frameworks, functions as a metaphysical and epistemological modality that reconnects the self with the primordial dimensions of existence. Drawing on Kantian, Hegelian, and phenomenological perspectives, this work examines how aesthetic judgment transcends traditional dichotomies between reason and emotion, presence and absence, and self and object. It critiques the reification of beauty within sociocultural and ideological constructs while proposing aesthetics as an open, ethical space for human self-formation and historical engagement. Ultimately, the aesthetic subject becomes an agent of cultural renewal and ontological clarity when unbound by utilitarian or representational limits.

Keywords: Aesthetic Consciousness; Awareness; Anthropology; Beauty; Transcendence; Selfhood.

* Human Sciences Research Unit for Philosophical Social and Humanistic Studies, University of Oran 2 Mohamed Ben Ahmed (Algeria)

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Introduction

Since the subject of beauty is, above all, human beings, aesthetics has become an autonomous science by its very object. This implies that the logic through which judgments are formed concerning their subject is not prescriptive or imposed from above in a predetermined manner. Consequently, its aims cannot be unified functionally within a single object to form a nucleus of future aesthetic awareness. Its epistemological inferences, therefore, become culturally interwoven within an anthropo-civilisational framework, constituting a cognitive challenge in the perceptions and conceptualisations of the self. These are dimensions enacted in reality whose reverberations cannot be considered final; in other words, they represent a pathway towards truth in a reductive sense, articulated through the essences of the philosophy of beauty and the utopia of aesthetics.

Thus, it becomes evident that the aesthetic function does not derive from ethical reality. Instead, it is grounded in a reality defined functionally by the pleasure of beauty. It seeks to articulate the expression that may represent reality as it is through beauty. This logical delineation has contributed to the construction of aesthetic normativity. However, this normativity was soon found to be searching for possible laws that would render aesthetics a normative science.

However, from another perspective, we observe that normativity is closely tied to the laws of thought, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, its judgments are necessarily linked to the values of truth, goodness, and beauty in them. Since beauty is the most valuable of these subjects, its propositions are more complex (compound propositions) and more deeply embedded in conceptual frameworks that fall under subcontrariety. This finding indicates that aesthetic theory can be qualitative only.

Specialised studies in the science of aesthetics suggest that the subject of aesthetics becomes apparent only when a distinction is made between logical terms and logical propositions within the logic of aesthetic thought, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, when artistic ineligibles are addressed and an attempt is made to comprehend them. Studies within the field of aesthetics often highlight the level of dialogue governed fundamentally by rational principles, insofar as the principal subject of beauty is, in particular, the human being.

It has become evident that reflection on beauty is no longer merely reflection on the object and what pertains to it; the nature of the idea of beauty is no longer self-evident or axiomatic nor is its subject (art) in and of itself, its relation to the whole, or even the truth of its effects in existence. The infinite openness of beings, as they appear to contemplate, cannot substitute for perception or sensation. The loss of what can be enacted in a manner that lacks reflection upon pleasure remains unproblematised. This implies that the expansion of understanding among beings manifests itself across numerous intellectual and psychological dimensions. Any attempt to comprehend that which lies

beyond such possibility contributes to the diminishing and contraction of the desired sublimation and transcendence.

The concepts of beauty and art reside in the most faltering and transformative moments in the actual history of beings as they enact their existence. From this emerges a conception in the science of aesthetics that resists delimitation and definition. It is impossible to deduce its essence from an origin, as it was a foundational layer upon which all subsequent layers were built, and which would collapse if that first layer were removed. The problem lies in the following: if it is natural that human striving is an intrinsic concern and since such striving constitutes self-awareness (regardless of the type or form of intentionality) as a natural trait, what are nature's limits when expressing these inner concerns? Do they bear within themselves value? Moreover, when such value exists, at what point does it transform into elements of sublimation?.

1. The Principle of Thought in the Philosophy of Aesthetic Awareness

1.1. Aesthetic Awareness: Philosophy or Reflection?

Specialists in the field of aesthetic philosophy contend that the principle of reflection on beauty is subject to the sensitive self, where "sensitivity" refers to the multiplicity of spaces for imitation and appropriation and to the diversity of zones that may be illuminated and brought into focus simultaneously. Generally, this sensitivity contributes to the generation of natural beauty, insofar as there exist within nature spaces that simultaneously encompass both temporality and spatiality; that is, they express more than what they appear to be. Nature is undoubtedly characterised by silence, as is its language; in this regard, art seeks to give voice to the inhabiting silence of the self.

It appears that reflection on the generation of nature has contributed to the revelation of the nature of the self. This self bears traces of absolute truth on the one hand and, on the other hand, the capacity of this self to express its inner preoccupation. In this context, the artist can unveil the causes of the failure the self-encounters at the very least, in articulating its emergent anxieties. At the same time, it endeavours to liberate itself from the conventions of replicated existence. Hence, the idea of art lies in redeeming this most contradictory aspect of its accidental nature, in mastering its appearance as it manifests itself as a phenomenon, while simultaneously negating it as something unrealised.

This means that reflection on art permits the generation of nature or, more precisely, the attribution of a new meaning to nature. This has contributed significantly to enabling the self to realise the metaphysical significance of its existence. In this context, the artist may formulate a conception of this significance when he can sever entirely the entanglements of the self within a mute nature. However, this mute nature may nonetheless leave behind traces, and it is only those traces that we may describe as determinations of what manifests itself.

Subjective artistic traces become artistic in their engagement with the "excess" as they produce their transcendence. This specific form of transcendence cannot occur without the self-becoming the stage upon which it is enacted. Thus, once assimilated to nature, the self-separates anew from transcendence, which is produced in the pursuit of inner preoccupation. The domain of transcendence in natural beauty, however, arises from the interconnection of its moments and phases, insofar as the self-endeavours to follow the traces of natural beauty and encourages it to the extent that it adapts to it. This is the meaning of thinking with nature.

In this manner, aesthetic reflection becomes metaphysical reflection when it poses the question of artistic truth and only that. Within the framework of such truth, the elements of self-critique emerge through the mirrors of the self itself and from within. Since this self is incomplete within the known and determinate existence, the artistic work appears to be a catalyst for rethinking the self from without, even though the artist divests himself of all conventional modes of communication. This divestment becomes the natural gateway to a genuine dialogue with the world.

2.1. The Objectivity of Boundaries in the Principle of Transition from Aesthetic Reflection to Aesthetics

At times, the artist deludes the self with what is not an intensified illusion and objectively foregrounds the elements of perception in a manner detached from reality, in contrast with the self, without the self itself being aware. This occurs for no reason other than the self's refusal to transform. Any claim that natural artistic traces can depict both what may appear and what may not appear and not what we can make appear is, in truth, an attempt to escape and conceal oneself behind what is merely manifested.

It thus becomes clear that the becoming of artistic work cannot negate the potential for transcendent creative understanding (transcendent self-taste) and its unfolding within temporality and historicity. Temporality is infinite when it pertains to the realm of the possible. Since the possibility is boundless, especially when associated with space and given that historicity is confined within space, the aesthetic subject takes form.

This implies that temporality and historicity are the dimensions that render the artistic work suspect before the manifestations of the self on the one hand and, on the other hand, at the core of its internal structure if it surpasses the mere givenness of sensation. Accordingly, any absence of artistic identity signifies, at its root, that the object of its beauty was neither coherent nor grounded. This is the subject of the philosophy of aesthetics, which in turn allows for the development of the relationship between artistic work and artistic taste derived from nature as something natural. In this context, every

work of art is a pure sensation, nothing more. Thus, the artist remains devoted to and immersed in the saturating nature of his sensations and aesthetic tensions.

A common element exists between aesthetic studies and art theory as articulated by the pioneers of the Frankfurt School, particularly Theodor Adorno, Georg Lukács, and Max Horkheimer, through the development of the idea of artistic and objective critique. Their dialectical determinism distinguished between taste and sensation, and the relationship between the object of desire and pleasure was established. At this level, critical artistic studies have focused on tracing the mode of transformation in expression rather than observing or judging that transformation.

A significant portion of this project reveals the implications of the process of artistic practice across various spheres of reality to decode the mechanisms of domination. This renders aesthetics a materially conscious science devoid of rhetorical persuasion. For this reason, the artist's effort is marked by his selection of a language of argumentation, although argumentation itself is not the aim. The eloquence of persuasion lies in *discourse as a verbal activity intended to effect practical influence upon the other*, employing in the process of persuasion the speaker's ethos, the audience's pathos, and the logical arguments of the discourse. This pragmatic conception of discourse has allowed the rhetoric of persuasion to surpass the stylistic level (*elocutio*), which had been the principal focus of literary rhetoric, and which Gérard Genette would later describe as "narrow rhetoric."²

In this sense, the materiality of the artistic product is dialectical, adopting a direction that diverges from all forms of domination.

Aesthetics thus emerged as a response to the domination intertwined with aspects of the self, where the self has habitually subsumed all that is particular under the universal. This tendency led to the inflation of the principle of identity, which, in many instances, became dominant over the self itself, thereby overlooking the realm of the possible. As a result, the entire domain of possibility was transformed into absolute negativity. The role of aesthetics, in this context, is to transform what is familiar, permissible, and desirable into the nearest domain of awareness, whereby awareness means reasoned understanding.

"It appears that the crucible of reason which produces beauty delves deeply into the depths of personality, into the roots of our existence, and not on its surface. The authentic artist blends the conceptual with the perceptible in a natural and unconscious manner; the work takes place in the unconscious, and when it emerges into the light of consciousness, it appears as a complete and perfected creation as a direct, intuitive vision."³

² Gérard Genette, "La Rhétorique restreinte," in *Recherches Rhétoriques*, 233–253.

³ Walter T. Stace, *The Meaning of Beauty: A Theory of Aesthetics*, trans. Imam Abdel-Fattah Imam (Cairo: Supreme Council for Culture, 1st ed., 2000), 231.

This means that the characteristic of the unconscious disappears only when reason dares to diverge from the elements of beauty, which are closer to critiques of the *form* rather than the *content*, since the form is more susceptible to the illusion of normativity. Consequently, utopia emerges as a visible element within aesthetic work. Although familiar, it is nonetheless deceptive, despite most of its subjects being drawn from daily reality (from everyday suffering). However, unless it is subjected to shock, it cannot generate the vital, actual potential of the rational self in its natural state.

We may thus say that aesthetics, as a transcendent awareness of self-seeking to engage with the vital realm of the possible, has the potential to compensate for the faltering, suspended, and lost perspectives through the method of alterity. Although the "theory of alterity," as formulated by the Frankfurt School, urges reflection on what may constitute an ethical, literal art one that pierces the inertia of possibilities in their interiority (for even the human being may at times become inert), the very concept of art here shifts into metaphysical dimensions. This occurs, as it cannot regulate reflection upon the visible absolute in its totality. Artistic release, metaphorically speaking, and arguably in an ontological sense, is any contribution to flattened being, to use the expression of Georgi Plekhanov.

From this, we derive a form of negative alterity whose aim is to contend with the nonbeing, the indeterminate, the incoherent, and the nonidentical within a single origin, essence, or concept one that neither permits a priori intervention (which would render it ideological) nor allows a posteriori evolution (which would render it utopian). The characteristic of the a priori method is stability; the characteristic of the a posteriori method is transformation.

It becomes evident, therefore, that the aesthetic given lies in its pursuit of constants within the manifestations of the artistic work, aiming to trace the traces of natural aesthetic behaviour, something that the professional artist has failed to achieve, despite his overarching concepts. He has not attained what he claims to be a reflection on artistic beauty: a reflection transcending the fragile relationship between the a priori and the a posteriori within the entanglements of the self. In this context, Immanuel Kant states, "*In addition to beauty, there is the sublime.*" The sublime, a term sometimes translated as the exalted or the lofty, was first introduced into the realm of aesthetics by the English thinker Edmund Burke, who considered the sublime to be everything that arouses feelings of awe, danger, terror, and elevation in the soul. This contrasts with beauty, which involves the senses of sweetness, calm, and soft, pleasant emotions.⁴

The principle of aesthetic perception has transformed into a vessel for the transcendent self, within which the forces of expression toward the Other and attentive receptivity to nature emerge. Although nature does not fully disclose what lies within its totality, it occasionally vindicates the forces

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. Saeed Al-Ghanami (Beirut: Al-Jamal Publishing, 1st ed., 2009), 16.

responsible for natural transformation, in contrast to the relational structures founded on existential hierarchies among human beings. "What is most astonishing," as has been noted, "is that our consciousness does not appear to intervene in many of our actions except as a mere witness to them."⁵

This neutrality, at least in its conscious dimension, absorbs the hierarchy that emerges and matures under the dominance of hegemonic forces, which stem from the self's perception of its superiority. As the self-attempts to find avenues for expressing its interiority, it inadvertently allows the infiltration of hegemonic categories from the external world into its internal realm. This implies that, at a certain point, social, cultural, and political contexts are not very binding, as they are thresholds through which the degree of relationality is revealed, relationality that reveals the extent to which individuals are prepared to express their points of centrality rather than the degrees of power they possess.

The principle of subjective aesthetic perception assists in revealing artistic will as a force, not the force of will itself. In this context, reality may be stripped of its negativity. The thinker Baumgarten appears to have placed his wager chiefly on the sensitive individual who possesses the will to break free from the constraints of sanctity and the closed mental circuits entrenched within the negative self. In his view, aesthetics is a threshold that allows for discussing what is impossible to think of to render the artistic work acceptable.

Within this framework, aesthetics has come to be understood as an epistemic entry point for interpreting actual history in the lives of societies actively participating in historical movements. In its context, individuals transition from the stage of artistic reception to that of aesthetic encounter. Society is the open arena in which meanings take shape and are open to temporality rather than being confined within history.

Baumgarten reveals that the artistic arena, in its entirety, is both a reflection of the absolute and an expression of the presence of the absolute within the self. In many instances, it merely updates or reactivates partial artistic work. However, in its attempt to gather and activate these fragments, it produces the universal, thereby shaping an open space that receives, absorbs, and encompasses without being dominated by experiences that escape the bounds of interpretation.

Only through those experiences can aesthetic reality be revived and its voids filled. This liberates the horizon and enriches the capacity of the active self, which has long shattered the horizon of familiar or habitual temporality.

2. Aesthetic Reflection and the Principle of Establishing Subjectivism

⁵ Anika Harris, *Conscious: A Brief Guide to the Fundamental Mystery of the Mind*, trans. Ahmed Hindawi (United Kingdom: Hindawi Foundation, 1st ed., 2007), 24.

There is, without a doubt, a fusion between the active self and the social contexts in which it exists; the self is ever present within the collective unconscious. This explains why Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser sought to intensify the artistic sphere by granting an applied and relational dimension to artistic texts. Here, artistic texts are explicitly understood as those that carry a genuine rebellion against the temporal circle on the condition that such rebellion does not devolve into a compounded ideological awareness that burdens the domain of rational representation within the imagination without justification, thereby transforming the field and context into vessels where freedoms become hostage.

Since artistic work is charged with revealing elements of awareness, it is undoubtedly responsible for the mechanisms of dialogue and the mechanisms for expressing inner preoccupation. "Discussion," in this regard, "means claiming to understand an experience that is not rational from a rational point of view, and discussions end where emotion begins; the latter is never rational."⁶ This stands in contradiction to the principles of contemporary scientific inquiry, which alone is capable of reconciling our rationalised and reasoned representations. This is precisely what Arthur Schopenhauer sought to reinforce, for he believed that we conceive of the world of nature, first, as representation, and then as understanding, so that we may think about reality, not merely the relations produced by reality. Anything beyond this distorts our vision of the world and of life itself, which alienates the artist.

The notion of alienation here signifies an approach to Mother Nature and a deep excavation into her elusive representations within the realm of the self. For this reason, proponents of aesthetic theory hastened to advance Baumgarten's project on the basis of a new conception: the contribution of the receiver in intensifying the process of semantic production generated by procedural texts within aesthetic consciousness.

In this context, we find Wolfgang Iser's position, which holds that the author, regardless of his craft, is within the reader's consciousness. This consciousness enables one to discern the modalities of understanding. At this level, the function of understanding becomes the facilitation of methods and mechanisms of expression and acquisition, even though acquisition itself is fundamentally a paradigmatic outcome of a given community.

"When the individual subjects their functional subjectivity to control within their group, thereby aligning themselves with the trajectory of their civilisation or the style it demands, they are, in that moment, socially integrated. As for those who maintain a considerable degree of personal independence, they inevitably become inhabitants of one of two places: prison or a mental asylum."⁷

⁶ Laurent Fleury, *Max Weber*, trans. Mohamed Ali Moqalled (Lebanon: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Jadid Al-Muttahid, 1st ed., 2008), 31.

⁷ Clyde Kluckhohn, *Mirror for Man: The Relation of Anthropology to Modern Life*, trans. Shakir Mustafa Salim and Ghawth Al-Ansari (Baghdad/New York: Franklin Printing and Publishing, 1st ed., 1964), 32.

This inevitably compels us to seriously reconsider the anthropo-cultural approach advanced by the pioneers of the "Constas School," particularly in their defence of the principle of self-perception when entering the realm of the imaginary. While the concept of the imaginary expands to encompass all that signifies a bold engagement with the world of the self and nature simultaneously, it does not refer to the mere functionality of imagination. Accordingly, each type of society has subjective characteristics.

3. The Turn Toward the Freedom of Aesthetics

Undoubtedly, presenting a philosophy of beauty is no simple task, nor is it easier to articulate it within sociocultural frameworks that have already been shaped by a particular aesthetic model within their historical trajectories. Even more challenging is mastering a language marked by numerous turns and anthropo-civilisational displacements, precisely because its aesthetic experience has not yet reached completion.

This may be attributed to the convergence and interplay of several factors, the most significant of which is the methodological factor. It is not readily possible to identify fixed archaeological elements within the rational structure of aesthetic epistemology throughout the history of philosophy, at least as it is understood in the Arab world. This epistemic challenge is, in general, the primary reason that precludes deep excavation, overturning, and temporal deconstruction due to the sheer vastness of human heritage (with Arab thought being temporally absorbed within the cyclical frame).

Given that the human being constitutes an objective unit within the science of aesthetics, the risk becomes even more significant, one rooted in the very concept of the human, wherein the anthropo-civilisational struggle has undermined the efforts of aesthetic reason and immersed human rationality in ideological discourses. The difficulty is thus twofold: a difficulty in confronting history, a difficulty before the accelerating temporality of the present, and a difficulty in defining the most essential human trait, namely, intuition.

In this regard, Anika Harris observes, *"Our intuition has largely been shaped by natural selection to provide us quickly with information that could save our lives, and this same intuition, developed in the past, can still continue to help us in modern life."*⁸ Accordingly, there is no repeated or uniform answer to the same question, namely, the practice of aesthetics in the present.

Undoubtedly, this practice in the present moment is a unique, conscious emotional state that cannot be translated for others. At its core, it comprises moments that express *process* rather than *becoming*. From this premise, the difficulty in defining an Arab science of aesthetics arises, particularly in delineating a neutral methodological framework for description, expression, or the timely

⁸ Anika Harris, *Conscious: A Brief Guide to the Fundamental Mystery of the Mind*, trans. Ahmed Hindawi (United Kingdom: Hindawi Foundation, 1st ed., 2007), 12.

articulation of necessary and objective aims for such a field. Even the notion of necessity is not self-evident; *the necessary yet insufficient stage for philosophical transformation is the transcendent stage. The power of transcendent thought is dual: it lies first in the selection of self-evidence, and this self-evidence is precisely what that power (latent within Arab intellectual history) seeks, as it investigates the possibility of knowledge. Moreover, we can only condemn the reduction of human beings to knowledge alone to the extent that we can.*⁹

Here, the degree of need for epistemic accumulation in selecting and refining the sociohistorical framework of a given concept becomes apparent, especially when we are attempting to trace the principle of *aesthetic ethics* in the artistic sense.

Accordingly, aesthetic thought remains incomplete owing to the expansive nature of human truth propositions. In this context, the Arab human condition feeds on inverse relations (inverse ratios). In this sense, the Arab aesthetic sphere continues to expand within the broader domain of human existence. Since human beings are characterised by movement, their existence is simultaneously marked by unity (where unity signifies uniqueness) and multiplicity. *"Every analysis (of Arab beauty and art) is nothing but a prelude."*¹⁰ And a form of aesthetic awareness.

Thus, the science of aesthetics understood in its epistemic totality emerges as a means of articulating what is given from human truth, a truth that does not adhere to Kant's *noumenal* realm of truths (*noumena*) but instead follows the sphere of *phenomena*. This is why it becomes difficult to observe and grasp the moment of initial emergence due to the proliferation of interpretative and approximative sequences and, at times, reductive ones. This, in turn, shifts the focus away from the logical sequencing of the epistemic structure within the field of aesthetics.

With this epistemological condition, it becomes possible to trace the semantic meaning of the concept of beauty sequentially within the theory of knowledge. Since the sequence of all forms of knowledge is, by nature, logical, so is the sequence of theories concerning the relationship between beauty and the other sciences. The same applies to *nonknowledge* (metaphysics): *whoever is capable of constructing a science must also be capable of constructing a nonscience, and whoever can render something comprehensible must also be able to render it incomprehensible.*¹¹ Only here can we begin to measure Arab aesthetic awareness as it appears and when it appears as a singular experience.

In this way, Arab aesthetics within epistemology logically present itself as a mediating sphere between the virtues of truth and the supreme good. This does not imply, however, that it is in its nature

⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Philosophy of the Will: Fallible Man*, trans. Najib Al-Din (Casablanca: Arab Cultural Center, 2nd ed., 2008), 45.

¹⁰ Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason: The Philosophy of Life*, trans. Elias Marqus (Lebanon: Dar Al-Haqiqa, 1st ed., 1982), 98.

¹¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Philosophy of No: A Philosophical Inquiry into the New Scientific Mind*, trans. Khalil Ahmad Khalil (Lebanon: Dar Al-Hadatha for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1st ed., 1985), 155.

to accept the misplacement of things. Here, the notion of the *middle* may either enable moderation or obstruct the self's pursuit of the desired moderation. Moreover, moderation, in this sense, is a fundamental principle in realising the individual self within the realm of virtue.

From this perspective, beauty possesses the quality of existence in and of itself. Thus, distinguishing between the dynamism of the self and its functions is necessary from the outset. This distinction enables a clearer understanding of the artist's role when imitating nature, even though nature does not possess intrinsic value. Because of this, the artist sought to capture the traces of beauty found in nature rather than imitate natural beauty itself, as Henry Moore attempted to express through his distinction between aesthetic feeling and aesthetic judgement.

The aesthetic function of the fine arts derives its value from moral life. This does not, however, mean that moral life holds value in and of itself. For this reason, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762), in his project *Aesthetica*, sought to offer a realistic and objective description of the nature of first (or higher) perceptions as they articulate our sensory world and as they guide our sensuous perceptions toward virtue and the attempt to reveal it *heuristically* and within the limits of perception.

4. Aesthetic Awareness as the Foundation and Principle of Ethical Responsibility

Contemporary aesthetic theorists strive to draw profound benefit from the interrogations of *Immanuel Kant*, mainly through the distinction he makes between aesthetics, ethics, and the sciences concerned with the expression of pleasure and its perception. Often marked by ideological excess, these theorists firmly believe that aesthetics are fundamentally grounded in emotional feelings. This conviction establishes a kind of assurance regarding the possibility of a link between immediate pleasure and pure feeling, an idea with which they fully agree with Kant. That is, the experience of pleasure, in its original essence, is a specific form of intellectual apprehension. Insofar as this is the case, it enables us to proceed along the path of ideal models and, thus, the path of the sublime.

The sublime, in turn, contains the initial elements of direct experience. Accordingly, “*for every empirical concept, one of three acts of the faculty of spontaneous knowledge applies: (1) the intuition of multiplicity in appearance; (2) the comprehension, that is, the synthetic unity of the awareness of this multiplicity within the concept of the object (appereceptio comprehensiva); and (3) the presentation or exhibition (exhibitio) of the object that corresponds to this concept within intuition. Imagination is required for the first act, understanding for the second, and for the third, the faculty of judgement, which becomes the determining faculty of judgement when an empirical concept is fulfilled.*”¹²

The same applies to the philosopher *Friedrich Hegel*, who considered that the value of beauty is determined by the extent to which it can enter the sphere of the absolute spirit. This means that the more the artist liberates himself from the world of matter, the more he empties the imagination of false

¹² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. Saeed Al-Ghanami (Beirut: Al-Jamal Publishing, 1st ed., 2009), 51.

realities. Similarly, the more he intensifies the introduction of new, abstract concepts into the realm of things, the more he simultaneously contributes to refining both the categories of condemnation and praise. According to Hegel, the value of the aesthetic experience lies in its capacity to suspend the questions that provoke doubt.

Excessive doubt, in essence, undermines absolute spirit when it engages with the realm of reality. In this context, the neuroscientist *David Eagleman* stated, *"Your perception of reality is the final result of a clever edit that conceals from the brain the differences in arrival times. How? What your brain presents to you as reality is in fact a delayed version of it. Your brain gathers all the information from the senses before creating a story about what is happening. The strange outcome of all this is that you live in the past: by the time you think this moment is occurring, it has already ended long ago. The cost of synchronising sensory inputs is that our conscious perception lags behind the material world."*¹³

In this context, *Edmund Husserl* also emerges as one of the most insistent modern thinkers in defining doubt through the approach of *"epoché"* or the *suspension of judgement*. This method makes it possible to purify the field of the senses and, subsequently, the senses themselves. The aim is not to engage in a debate with the civilisational achievements produced by the vital experience of humanity; instead, in Husserl's view, it occurs after comprehending how subjective intuition functions about primordial existence. This entails freeing oneself from all forms of historical argumentation concerning individual experience. Reaching this state, in itself, constitutes a form of direct intuition.

Thus, aesthetic subjectivism can locate and convey the most truthfully objectified moments. In this sense, the operations of the self-become apparent as it attempts to saturate reality with new modes of aesthetic experience as a method of inner, subjective argumentation. Even though the function of argumentation lies in the construction of inferential sequences within discourse,¹⁴ every artistic discourse is, therefore, a form of direct intuitive experience added to reality, *not* derived from it.

We understand that existentialism, in its attempt to reclaim the place of immediate intuitive certainty, produces new dimensions within the sphere of the self. It restores certainty precisely when doubt can no longer persist in overwhelming consciousness with utopian visions. Undoubtedly, this recovery has relied on contemporary epistemology, which has expanded the boundaries of possibility in the realm of the possible through the senses. This has enabled a reorientation of pure consciousness toward the self-first and subsequently toward sensation, at least within the most concrete (human) experiences.

Once again, we must acknowledge that existentialism is a philosophy of overflow, and there is no doubt that Kantian critique, in its attempt to reconcile reason and sensation, contributed significantly to

¹³ Anika Harris, *Conscious: A Brief Guide to the Fundamental Mystery of the Mind*, trans. Ahmed Hindawi (United Kingdom: Hindawi Foundation, 1st ed., 2007), 23.

¹⁴ Abou Bakr Al-Azzawi, *Language and Argumentation*, (Beirut: Al-Rihab Al-Haditha Publishing, 1st ed., 2009), 7.

enriching the existential meaning of the self. This resolution is embodied in the principle of transcendence over the individuations of existence, as they appear, and yet, it always aims to link them. Since this reconciliation serves as a means of cutting off the path of doubt, in Kant's view, the world ceases to be seen as a totalising idea.

This implies that there is no place for *innate ideas*, as René Descartes attempted to conceive them. The innate idea, in essence, is an attempt to connect scattered phenomena; however, the aesthetic experience is a quest to rediscover existence, not to replicate its original boundaries. The artist must step outside the confines of form and extension, lest to imprison or suppress the inner forces, given that the natural inclination toward aesthetic selfhood is organic.

*"For this reason, the aesthetic judgement can generally be defined as that kind of judgement whose predicate cannot be cognitive that is, cannot contain a concept of the object even though it may contain the general subjective conditions of knowledge as such."*¹⁵

The philosophical debate surrounding the nature of aesthetic judgement often provokes tension between epistemological theories and theories of epistemic possibility. While the theory of the possibility in the realm of things allows for the measurement of objects according to standards of the beautiful and the ugly, it may, on the other hand, fail to establish the entire presence of pure emotion within its natural and affective vessels and, on a higher level, of *intuition*, as Kant consistently maintained.

In truth, the science of aesthetics, from this perspective, was not founded upon considerations of need or desire. Instead, it emerged as a means of redeeming human nature from its destructive inclinations, inclinations that erupt within the domain of emotion and continually renew themselves. These tendencies often move in a unilateral direction, leaving their subject unable to turn back and incapable of recognising the limits of gratification.

In this sense, motivation may not dominate the artist's work, yet it may, in essence, carry motivation. Within this framework, the self is liberated from unfamiliar and unconventional forces. It is precisely here that the self dares to live the experience of power within itself, even if only temporarily. Suppose that one of the meanings of *power* is the capacity to negate. In that case, negation here does not carry connotations of rejection or deficiency in acknowledgement, whether internal or external to the self.

In general, the artist does not need to interpret notions of clarity or ambiguity, acceptance or refusal, progress or delay, hesitation, expression, or other conventional value-laden concepts. The artist does not claim that he cannot be, nor must he be, first and foremost, a space or field for modifying human nature. Instead, human nature is in essence immutable within a realm that accepts the

¹⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. Saeed Al-Ghanami (Beirut: Al-Jamal Publishing, 1st ed., 2009), 54.

temporary meaning; it is eternal. In Plato's words, it possesses *the capacity for* recognition—the renewal of essence.

Naturally, the idea of *capability* (or receptivity), in and of itself, is a symbolic one wherein the dimensions of existence intersect with those of primordial, active being. The determinants of this receptive inclination emerge as a form of authority that does not vanish within any given existence or under the dominance of bolder, more daring experiences and practices. It is, quite literally, a force that crafts the elements of human life through a continually renewed tradition. It can renew rituals, customs, and interactions within a singular unity that does not permit fragmentation. It also does not view this vitality through the lens of struggle but rather through an affective attachment to the present as a centre and the future as an end *in and for* itself, not merely *in itself*.

For the artist, the principle of purification transcends that of sublimation. In this context, the artistic experience becomes a dimension capable of expansion only when the self becomes entangled with the worlds of existence. This implies that the world of things holds no place within the world of the free self. Moreover, freedom does not accept the residues of actions born from contention. By *contention*, we mean any force that prevents the self from immersing fully in the realm of the ego. The *ego*, perhaps, is the thing-in-itself; the realised unity stands apart from the purposes of the self, a singularity in its orientation that does not admit confrontation.

This assumption does not suggest that artistic practice is engaged in a battle to gain power worldwide. Instead, it is a path that enables the advancement of the human species and its persistent quest for a medium to navigate the overwhelming density of a world marked by diversity. It also reflects the attempt to comprehend the meaning of various ways to express emotions, the inner life of individuals, and, by extension, entire peoples.

Aesthetic inclination has nourished the authority of symbolism on the one hand and intensified the pursuit of moral endeavour on the other, aiming to position the human being *as* a centre within the universe rather than *the* centre of it. This stems from its deep immersion in philosophies of moral and ethical purification. Undoubtedly, doing so strengthens the bond of human empathy, with its role and function being to define that which cannot perish using that which does. In other words, it can stabilise the artificial system of needs primarily through simple acts in the present moment.

Aesthetics organises *measurements*, not sensations, since sensations are never genuinely isolated, reciprocal, or merely individual feelings. Instead, they are profound desires and dispositions embedded within the world of the self, beautiful selves, and the beauty of the self.

Conclusion

Despite the efforts made by aesthetic discourses to extract ideological structures from the open-ended meanings embedded in artistic work, they ultimately remained captive to this very distancing. This is due to their neglect of the intense presence of customs and traditions on the one hand and, similarly, their oversight of the original configurations of the self on the other, a self-rooted in loyalty and dialectical closeness to the authority of the present. This present is deeply engaged in the continual reproduction of culture as meaning and as a powerful indication of the desire to reconnect with the reference point, even though that very reference is among the underlying causes of the inflation of the system of desires.

The connection between artistic discourse and aesthetic feeling does not originate from the artistic experience itself but, at the very least, stems from the historical relationship between the noble function of rational inclination and the natural functionality of the world of things. This relationship cannot be confined to metaphors, ideological discourses, or utilitarian usages that deviate from the essential meaning of human existence in this world. In other words, the nature of the artistic product does not permit excessive definition, approximation, or exaggerated description of sensation in pursuit of dominance over collective feeling. Within this lies a conscious dimension of existence and the path toward primordial being. Accordingly, the aesthetic being within human life has a degree of will and receptivity that remains intact so long as its intentionality is not altered.

Aesthetic discourses are unaware of the extent to which they are influenced by ideology. This indicates that they have succumbed to the phenomenon of *reification*, a concept that, in its epistemological origins, aimed to liberate the human being from a false relationship with the world of things. Second, it sought to dismantle the constructed relationship between the self and the object as designed within the totalising model, a model that, in turn, eliminates all modes of self-recognition.

When the self attempts to escape this barren performativity, it becomes captive to it precisely because it always strives to articulate its initial movement about primordial existence. This does not mean, however, that it has failed to restrict the inflated notions of *care* that have infiltrated the boundaries of the self.

Indeed, from the moment that artistic work emerged within the realms of power, justice, obedience, duty, desire, and provocation, it has consistently struggled to participate in the bold articulation of the relationship between the knowing self and the perceived object. It is precisely here that we come to grasp the weight of tradition, which has become a distinctive and privileged consideration within the social condition, as opposed to the artistic behaviour itself, not the artwork.

In this context, observing, confronting, or keeping pace with the potential existential condition of artistic action becomes difficult. Consequently, this hinders participation in the reanimation of the principle of *commitment*, rather than the principle of *equilibrium*, in understanding human

relationships and the need to interpret the pleasures of selves and their turning points or to engage with their aesthetically sound qualities in terms of *being*, not necessarily their correctness in terms of *existence*.

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