

HEGEL'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE CLASSICAL AESTHETIC IDEAL. A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

Introductory Notes. In the last decades many discussions concerning Hegel's aesthetics concentrated on the question whether its unique systematic nature leads unavoidably to the concept of the *Vergangenheitscharakter* of art. This concept became synonymous to the idea of the death of art¹, at least if one follows Hegel's line of thought. Many interpreters attempted to turn the tables and find ways of modernizing Hegel's aesthetics² and using it for the purpose of understanding modern art too. We agree with the opinion of A. Gethmann-Siefert³, who showed that this modernization of Hegel's aesthetics necessitates a withdrawal from the Hegelian systematic, which is unfair to Hegel's own intentions. With this article we present the systematic lines of reasoning that take us to the Hegelian concept of the classic Ideal, in order to defend the notion of the classicist nature of art in general.

A discussion of Hegel's aesthetics in general and his understanding of the Ideal of classic Art in particular is always very interesting and has to be taken into serious consideration for two reasons. Hegel offers a systematic approach to the problems of aesthetics making it possible to discuss many different forms and works of art with the help of only a few logical principles. The advantage of this approach is obvious, since one needs only to know the basic notions of his system to be able to understand his philosophy of art. On the other hand Hegel himself was a very good connaisseur of the history of artistic creation and has therefore managed to incorporate in his aesthetics the study and interpretation of a vast material, at least up to his time. In this sense one can assume that Hegelian aesthetics represent a good means for approaching the philosophical problems concerning classic art and the respective issues. The disadvantage of

1. See for example D. HENRICH, Zur Aktualität von Hegels Ästhetik, In: *Stuttgarter Hegel-Tage* (1970), ed. by H.G. Gadamer, Bonn, 1974, A. Gethmann-Siefert, Eine Diskussion ohne Ende: Zu Hegels These vom Ende der Kuns, In: *Hegel-Studien*, 16, 1981, p. 235.

2. Such attempts can be found in *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy*, ed. by W.E. Steinkraus and K.L. Schmitz, New Jersey, 1980, especially the article of T.M. KNOX, The puzzle of Hegel's aesthetics, pp. 1-10, and the article of C.L. CARTER, A re-examination of the "death of art" pp. 83-100.

3. A. GETHMANN-SIEFERT, Hegels These vom Ende der Kunst und der Klassizismus der Ästhetik, *Hegel-Studien*, 19, 1984, pp. 205-258.



Hegel's aesthetics lies therein, that it does not deliver a principle for understanding the artistic creation after its own time, since after Hegel's time the course and the interests and the ideals of art followed other directions than those conceived as essential by Hegel. The challenge therefore consists in conceiving systematic aesthetics that can incorporate art of modern times.

The Idea of Art Beauty. The Ideal. *1. The position of Art in Hegel's System of Philosophy.* Before we proceed to the actual investigation of Hegel's understanding of classic art, we have to present his basic ideas on art and his concept of beauty, without which no proper comprehension of the corresponding analysis of the forms and works of classic art can arise. In Hegel's thought every conceivable object of knowledge must find its way into the system or it must have an appropriate position in it; otherwise it cannot be regarded as properly understood. Only through systematization knowledge of things becomes comprehensible at all. Otherwise, a subject matter is reduced simply to a fact of experience, which denies logical analysis and proper understanding. Therefore, the forms and works of art must also find their place in the system, in order to be properly comprehended. «Systematic» in Hegel's connotation means that an object of knowledge can be understood as a category of the system of philosophy. A category has then a specific location in the system because it represents a moment of the Notion or of the so called «Absolute Idea» itself during its process of realization. Notions or categories are namely according to Hegel not contingent, there is not simply that notion and then the other; they are deduced through a method called dialectic, which has a very concrete meaning in Hegel's thinking. Through the dialectical method one can move from more abstract to more specific notions, in the sense that the specific notions are explications of what is entailed in the abstract ones. Thus, for example Hegel begins his Logic with the notion of «pure Being», which is the most universal category and for this reason the most abstract too. He then proceeds to the logical deduction of other categories from it that are supposed to be the concrete manifestations of the content of Being itself; but the content is, at least at the beginning, hidden and not apparent in the category «Being». The Logic concludes then with the category called the Absolute Idea, in which the full content of Being is revealed. In other words Being itself, when it becomes manifest, is the Absolute Idea.

Now, as far as Hegel's system *as a total* is concerned, it is well known that it has a triadic character. The system is divided in three spheres, called Logic, Nature and Spirit. Logic is concerned with the categories that are completely universal in the sense that they apply, as one can expect from logical categories, to all possible objects of knowledge. Categories like Being, Essence, Identity, Existence are notions applicable to everything that there is. Most of the categories in Hegel's Logic are the traditional Aristotelian categories, but some

of them are not very explicit logical notions, for example Life, the Subjective and the Objective Idea which also appear in Hegel's Logic. Now, it is not immediately clear, what kind of ontological status Hegel exactly attributes to the categories of Logic. Most people tend to understand them as pure subjective entities that reside in the minds of thinking beings. But Hegel seems to be understanding them in a more realistic sense as actual entities, which at least make up the essence of things. If one moreover considers the transition of the Absolute Idea to Nature in the end of the Logic, one cannot easily refrain from thinking that Hegel was actually regarding this transition as an actual one, in the sense that the Absolute Idea or God freely decides to become the Other of itself or nature. Nevertheless, nature is *logically* speaking the necessary opposite to the Absolute Idea, even if one does not wish to attribute real existence to the Absolute Idea. According to Hegel's dialectical method notions themselves produce their own opposites. The aforementioned realization of the inner content of abstract notions though more specific ones occurs namely because of the fact that every notion always leads to its opposite through logical analysis. In a sense, every notion *is* its own opposite. Therefore the actual content of a notion consists therein, that it is itself *and* its opposite. This is furthermore the reason why the process of concretization of notions goes through three stages. If a notion namely is actually itself and its opposite, then it is also the *unity* of the opposites. The first dialectical step consists in showing how a concept becomes its opposite, while the second consists in bringing about the unity of the opposites, which is then according to Hegel a *new* notion or category, a more concrete one, on which the same process can be equally applied.

Likewise, if nature in general is seen as the dialectical opposite of the Absolute Idea, then it follows logically that there is also the unity of these two main opposites of the system. This unity is according to Hegel the notion of Spirit. Now, one must keep in mind that there is a reason, why Logic culminates in the Absolute Idea, which in turn explains why the process and the dialectical movement must have an end. The Logic began with pure Being, which is the most universal notion and therefore the most abstract one, or in other words completely void of differentiation and definition. While one approaches the Absolute Idea, one obtains notions that carry more content or which are more differentiated in themselves. Finally then, with the Absolute Idea one arrives at the notion, which includes all content in itself in the sense that it is a *complete unity of opposites*. Every moment of the opposition is contained in it. The first complete notion is the Absolute Idea, and the only possible new opposite for it can be nothing else than becoming the simple *Other* of itself. The Other of the Absolute Idea is according to Hegel «Nature», in which the Logical is lost and can only be assumed as nature's *essence*. But the otherness of nature is at long last overcome in Spirit, where the Absolute Idea according to Hegel's concept *returns* to itself. Because the Other of the Absolute Idea, nature, is *essentially*

the same as the Idea, their difference is being overcome; actually it is furthermore logically necessary that they become unity as well. This unity exists as that which is called «Spirit».

Spirit, like the other two spheres of categories, is in itself differentiated or contains a multitude of notions that are deduced the same way one proceeds in the derivation of categories in the Logic and the Philosophy of Nature. According to Hegel, there is then three basic subspheres in Spirit: Subjective, Objective and Absolute Spirit. The first one can be seen as the usual notion of mind or subjective thinking. Objective Spirit has in Hegel's Philosophy the meaning of an external reality, which is shaped and exists as spiritual being; obvious examples of that are the human laws and institutions, the states and finally the whole of human history. But the relevant part for our considerations is the subsphere of «Absolute Spirit», which is subdivided in Art, Religion and Philosophy. These three forms of Spirit are special in the sense that all three of them are realizations of the perfect unity of the Absolute Idea with its Otherness, namely nature, and represent moreover its complete return upon itself. In this context Art, Religion and Philosophy are the concrete ways in which the Absolute Idea or God unites itself with its Other. At the same time this unity is also a unity of man as subjective spirit with God, because the actual realization of the unity of the Absolute Idea with its Otherness is being carried out by human activity in the history of mankind.

There is at last a difference between the three forms of the Absolute Spirit for the reason that the realization of the unity of the Idea with its Otherness can and must take place in three different mediums or elements. The first of these elements is sensible reality itself, the material things. This is Art, which is therefore to be understood as the sensible appearance of the Idea⁴. But there is an internal limitation in art which makes it at long last inappropriate for the full uncovering and depiction of the Idea. The Idea is namely notion, «Begriff», and the sensible world is essentially a foreign element for it. The Idea must therefore find that medium of realization, which is completely conform to itself. The second attempt to find this medium is Religion whose element is closer to that of notion itself, namely mental representation (*Vorstellung*). This element has left the sensual reality behind and exists in humans minds themselves, but is pictorial and still not completely compatible with notion itself. In Philosophy finally the Spirit arrives at the medium which absolutely coincides with itself, because it *is* itself. Philosophy is therefore according to Hegel both the culmination of human knowledge as well as the medium, in which the Absolute Idea reaches itself in its Otherness.

4. All citations are from HEGEL's *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969, vols. 1 and 2. In this case vol. 1, p. 151.

2. *The Idea of Beauty in General, the Ideal.* Bearing these systematic prerequisites in mind, we can now proceed to the elucidation of the Hegelian conception of Beauty. According to the German philosopher every existent thing possesses Truth only as far as its existence conforms to the Idea⁵. Beauty on the other hand means that an existent thing moreover *reveals* this conformity because it is immediately apparent to consciousness that a particular thing is in unity with the Idea⁶. Such a thing can be called beautiful according to Hegel, and when it represents the outcome of human work it is called a work of art. We see then that there is in Hegel's thinking both an identity as well as a differentiation between the True and the Beautiful. The identity consists in the presupposed unity of Idea and Existence in both cases. But the beautiful object has moreover the quality that its appearance immediately reveals to consciousness through the senses its conformity to the Idea. The object which contains truth is an expression of the Idea, but its truth or conformity with it can only be revealed by thinking, or otherwise it remains hidden.

There are then beautiful objects in nature too, according to Hegel. These objects are of organic nature, because Beauty represents the Idea as far as the Idea is apparent in an existent thing, and the only things of nature that are manifestations of the Idea are the living things, the organisms. Otherwise a non-living thing of nature can only then be beautiful, if its appearance is symmetrical and harmonic revealing thus a principle of inner unity. The beauty of such a natural object is not very extraordinary because the principle of unity is not very deep, it concerns actually only the superficial mathematical relations of its form⁷. Organic things offer the most complete revelation of beauty in nature, and the most elevated form of organism is the human body. Beauty of natural things is incomplete and imperfect in several ways. Firstly, there is a disagreement between the external form of the natural thing with its inner substance, which is the Idea itself. Secondly, natural things are subject to the multiple conditions of their physical existence and often also to the aims they are used for. Finally, things of nature are completely finite in their existence and belong to a species, therefore do not possess the character of selfhood and freedom⁸. Therefore, really beautiful is a thing only as a work of art.

The logical necessity of the work of art is derived, according to Hegel, from the fact that the True has to find a medium of existence, which is not liable to the imperfections of the beautiful objects of nature just mentioned. The true object, whose existence conforms to the Idea, has to be freed from the restrictions and the contingencies of nature and find a compatible medium of presentation⁹.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 178 ff.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

This medium is then free, because it exists for its own sake and is called work of art. Works of art comprise three aspects that have then to be taken into consideration. A. they represent the pursue of an ideal form, the ideal. B. The realization of the ideal is the work of art itself. C. the living carrier of the ideal is the artist.

The ideal is that form, which is worth depicting, because it is truly beautiful. It comes about through a purification process, which implies that the true object, actually a beautiful individual human being in its best actualization, is cleared from the above mentioned restrictions and contingencies. Through this purification a form comes about which corresponds to and manifests the spiritual inner or the soul of the individual and its substantial content. The ideal form has to be considered therefore as a reality which reveals the inner through an external thing, such as the living individual. Hegel writes that the ideal of art consists in «bringing back the external being into the spiritual, so that the external appearance becomes consistent with it and reveals the spiritual as well»¹⁰. This process has the disadvantage, at least in comparison to what philosophy can accomplish, that the conformity of inner meaning and external appearance does not reach the level of thinking, and thinking is according to Hegel the only really adequate medium for spirit. The ideal as it is depicted in a work of art is nevertheless a reality that has left the realm of individual restrictions and natural contingencies and has elevated itself to the level of universality, but a universality that exists as an external thing.

The most appropriate manifestation of the ideal takes place through the depiction of a living individual. With this is meant an individual subjectivity that carries in itself a substantial content, which it moreover brings forth and makes apparent. The substantial content does not appear in this case per se in its universality, but the individual itself is freed from its restrictions and natural dependencies, it is free to exist as universal being. Inner peace, contentment and self-sufficiency account therefore in the above mentioned respect for the depiction of a living individual that represents the ideal¹¹. Such manifestations of the ideal are represented for the same reason by deities and heroes, as this happens in the works of classic art. Gods and heroes are individuals that have overcome through the power of their individuality the opposing forces of nature and stand there peaceful in themselves even when they represent the outcome of a tragic collision.

The proper content of the ideal, and especially of the classic ideal, is therefore the Divine, as Hegel puts it. Art has to depict the Divine, because it alone

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 206 ff.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

corresponds to the conditions developed up to now. Of course the substance of the Divine can most of all be comprehended by thinking. For this reason it has a side, which can be considered as evading all concrete specification, and in this sense it cannot become an object of art, or it cannot be portrayed at all, as for example the Jews and the Muslims believe. But, according to Hegel, God has essentially and intrinsically in Himself qualities and attributes and can therefore be depicted¹². This is the work of the imagination that takes up the divine attributes and presents them in ideal forms or through the means of individual deities that are made to reveal the godly attributes. This takes place foremost in classic greek art, where the *one* divine substance is divided in a multitude of individual deities that carry, each in itself, some special characteristic of the one deity. The Divine is also present in the spirit of human beings, in their thinking and in their will, according to Hegel. Art can portray this presence of the divine content in humans through the depiction of heroic or holy persons. Such ideal persons are formed artistically to manifest their inner peace and calmness as they are actual existent things that have become fully consistent with the Idea itself.

Human individuals are called noble, excellent and even perfect when they are thought to have reached a status, where their will and their character is defined through the spiritual and the divine. Such an individual finds then his interests and his actions centered on the Godly, and it feels that God alone can satisfy its substantial needs. This leads us to understand that the Divine has a further realization in the actual world, through a series of actions of persons of the above constitution. This kind of *action*¹³ can moreover qualify as a model for the work of art, since it reveals an ideal content through the activity of a concrete individual person. So, the ideal represents the Divine, but the Divine itself is also activity and realization of itself. This realization however cannot happen without particularization and one-sidedness. The particular sides of the divine content stand therefore in a relation and often in opposition to each other. The same thing becomes apparent in art as well, for example through the illustration of the fights and the conflicts of the individual Gods, who oppose themselves to each other or take party.

The ideal which is manifested through divine persons has then to undergo a series of realizations and transformations due of its involvement with the surrounding reality. The divine person has to reveal its ideal character through its actions, and these take place in a non ideal reality. The divine person is surrounded firstly by a general reality, the world-situation¹⁴, like Hegel calls it, and then is embedded in special situation¹⁵, which it has to overcome in order to

12. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

reveal its inner divine substance, or its virtue. The special situation is namely characterized though a moral conflict, which arises on the basis of the clash between the dominant ethics in a society and a new moral spirit, represented by the divine person. All these aspects become objects of art, especially in its classic form.

3. Particularization of the Ideal. Classic Art. 1. The Art Species. Classic Art arises out of the *differentiation* or *particularization* of the general notion of the ideal as it was presented in the above. Hegel speaks of the *special forms* of art as corresponding to the development of the content of the general notion of the ideal¹⁶. There are three forms of art according to Hegel. First, the symbolic art¹⁷, in which the Idea is still *in search* of its appropriate expression, where therefore the work of art still does not manage to become a proper manifestation of the ideal. This form of art is abstract and indefinite and finds it expressive materials in accidental external objects and the contingencies of human life, which do not suffice to express the Idea. The symbolic form, which covers essentially the old Egyptian, Near Eastern and Indian cultures, is marked by an imbalance between the internal and the external, between Idea and nature, the imbalance being weighted toward the external, toward the object, toward nature. Then there is classic art¹⁸, which is art per excellence. In classic art there is a perfect correspondence between the Idea and its expression or a perfect unity between content and form. In it Spirit finds therefore for itself an adequate form, in which it can unite with an external reality, though the perfect medium of its existence would still be thinking or the spirit of an individual human being. This is the era, in which according to Hegel art most fully succeeds as bearer of Spirit in its return toward itself. It combines the Idea with the sensuous most adequately, something art must accomplish in order to most fully realize itself, since it is the domain of the subjective and the sensuous. Finally, when the artist begins to feel the inadequacy of art as such to express the Idea, but he is still confined to this form of consciousness and cannot ascend to the level of thinking comprehension, we have romantic art.

In Hegel's words is «classic art the middle point of art as the perfect unity of content with its completely appropriate form, which is developed to free totality.»¹⁹ In this respect the work of art represents a reality which identifies itself with the notion on beauty. What symbolic art could not find and realize, becomes real in classic art. Classic art brings therefore the notion of beauty to appearance, and the ideal provides in it both the content as well as the form. For

16. *Ibid.*, p. 389.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 390.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

19. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 3.

this reason classic art is, what art according to its notion ought to be. The object of classic art is a free totality or a being which develops itself in otherness and therein still remains with itself, or the inner that is related to itself in its objectivity²⁰. The above mentioned perfect unity of content and form denotes furthermore an identity between the meaning and its bodily incorporation, since there is no more any difference between the two as in symbolic art. Spirituality does not only suggest itself through the work of art, but is rather completely apparent at it. The work of Art portrays a particular individual, which is carrier of an Idea and even in such a way that its form is completely corresponding to the meaning of that Idea. This is the reason, according to Hegel, why greek art is often accused of anthropomorphism, which in this sense is by no means a shortcoming.

2. *Classic Art*. Greek art is obviously, at least in the way it is defined here, the most perfect example of classic art. Hegel writes that the historic realization of the classic ideal is to be found at the Greeks. Its multiple forms and materials is a gift given to the greek people, which has to be honored for contributing the highest form of art.²¹ Besides that, Hegel explains the reason why the Greeks were able to produce the highest form of art, by saying, that the greek nation stands, historically speaking, in the fortunate middle between moral substance (Sittlichkeit) and free self-conscious subjectivity, avoiding on the one hand the unfree despotisms of the east, where the individual is absorbed by the universal substance and has no rights as a person, and on the other hand the other extreme of the absolutely free and separated subjectivity of the west, which finds itself at least at the beginning in conflict with the universal substance, represented in the social institutions and the objectively valid morality, and has therefore to find a deeper way of reconciliation with it, which arises out of its own personality. In the greek nation the individual was *immediately* both free subjectivity and united with the vital interests of the society and the state.

Hegel goes after that to the examination of classic art itself in three steps: Firstly, he gives an account of the *emerging* of classic art. In opposition to symbolic art, which is, both historically and logically, the immediate form of art in the nations of the east, classic art arises through a historical and spiritual process of the greek nation. This process consists in overcoming the expressive media, for example several natural elements and animals, used in symbolic art and reaching the consciousness that real beauty arises through the depiction of a free subjectivity, whose bodily constitution utterly reveals the spiritual. Secondly comes the exposition of classic art itself with its Ideal finding its embodiment in the world of the different deities. Thirdly, Hegel discusses the vanishing of greek art, which accompanies the historical crisis of the greek

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

world and the preparation for a new spirit.

As far as the process of formation of the classic ideal is concerned, Hegel mentions the following as the most important factors²²: Firstly, there is a degradation of animal nature in greek culture. Asian nations have a much higher appreciation of animal nature as a symbol of vital powers, which led to the cult of specific animal species. The Greeks don't have such a high appreciation of animal nature as one can see in the fact that after animal sacrifice the victims were eaten. In mythology we find several depictions of heroic acts, where animals are considered as hazardous and get killed. In several other mythological narrations appears the degradation of animal nature through the metamorphosis of men into animals, whereas this transformation actually means a punishment and a deprivation of the higher human nature. A second factor playing a very important role in the formation of the classic ideal is the battle between the old and the new gods of the greek religion. Hegel assigns a great importance to this factor, because it implies the passage from the conception of the Divine through a personified force of nature to really anthropomorphic gods, where deities appear as real individuals with free subjectivity²³. After that the greek nation has found its real gods that become the highest ideal of its multiple works of art.

3. *The Classic ideal*. The Pantheon of the new gods represents therefore the most appropriate object for becoming the ideal of classic art. Hegel investigates the classic Ideal systematically and as usually in his works through the aspects of its general notion, its particularizations and its concrete individual forms²⁴.
- The idealized Human is both content and form of the classic ideal, denoting on the one hand the human body as the means of presentation, and on the other hand Spirit as the inner content²⁵. As the ideal of classic art comes to be realized only by the overcoming of preceding elements, the first point to develop consists in making manifest that it has truly arisen through the creative activity of human spirit, or that it has found its origin in the inner personal thought of the poets and of the artists. Hegel observes that the classic Ideal arises not immediately like in symbolic art, but as a result of the above mentioned process and is therefore a product of human activity and especially of poets and artists. Hegel means by that that it was actually Homer and Hesiod who gave the Greeks their Gods through a free creating artistic process. These Gods were conceived as concentrated individualities²⁶, meaning that their *content* is identical with their individual character. They are abstracted from all particu-

22. *Ibid.*, p. 27 ff.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 39 ff.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 66 ff.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

26. One could object that Greek mythology relies on ancient traditions and even the religious

larities or present us with a substantial individuality. Indeed, what we discover in them is their spiritual and immutable individuality. They stand away from the world of change and illusion, where want and suffering reign, away from the troubles which are connected to the pursuit of human interests, and retire within themselves resting upon their own universality as upon an everlasting foundation where they find their felicity and contentment.

The greek gods do not represent forces of nature, they represent spiritual beings with a special character and a concrete definition, with which they identify themselves. But their definition does not make them for this reason finite, because they are at the same time divine and universal, since they carry their distinctive spiritual feature as a universal feature. As Hegel mentions, this unity of universality and particularization in the deities is what gives the true classic ideal an infinite certainty and peace, a happiness without worries and filled with freedom²⁷. For this reason, this kind of stringent peace, which is not dead and cold, is the best form of presentation for these gods, and this happens in classic sculpture. Because the new gods constitute the beautiful in classic art, their special character is on the other hand not purely spiritual. It is revealed under an external and corporeal form which addresses itself to the eyes as well as to the spirit. This ideal no longer puts up with the symbolic element. Classic beauty causes spiritual individuality to enter into the realm of sensuous reality. It is born of a harmonious fusion of the outward form with the inward principle, which it animates. For this very reason, the physical form as well as the spiritual principle, must appear liberated from all the accidents that belong to outer existence, from all dependence upon nature. It must be purified and noble so that the appropriate qualities of the particular character of a certain god and the general forms of the human body will be in free accordance and in perfect harmony.

Polytheism is for Hegel an essential feature of classic art, because it displays the Divine divided in many special individualities, and because to this point of view belongs a multiplicity of forms. It is essential to the greek notion of divinity that it differentiates itself in several distinct moments, which all together build up the greek pantheon. These deities are not allegoric figures²⁸

doctrines of the peoples of the Orient. If one takes into consideration the Asiatic, Pelasgic, Dodonian, Indian, Egyptian, Orphic origins that went into greek religion, how can one say that Hesiod and Homer gave the greek people their gods? But in this case it is obvious that tradition has furnished the materials, but it was the poets who furnished the formatting idea of the greek Ideal and this is actually what Hegel means. Moreover the great poets even discovered the appropriate forms to address the Ideal. The point is that greek art is not immediate like the symbolic one, but is a result of the cultural evolution that took place in the greek people.

27. *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*. vol. 2, p. 74.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

according to Hegel, they rather represent real individual deities. Apollo is not an allegory of knowledge, he is knowledge itself and this is what makes him divine. The greek gods are therefore *divine individuals*. But because of the priority of the individuality in this kind of divinities the greek pantheon fails to reach a systematic unity and the gods are not always able to preserve and to conform to their special character. Hegel mentions for example that Zeus²⁹ is thought of as father of gods and humans who reigns over them, but then one sees in many instances that his power is not absolute, because in such a case it would hurt the individuality of the other gods that are considered equally divine.

The greek gods are therefore conceived as divine individuals and for this reason it was possible for classic art to depict them, especially through sculpture. The depiction of the gods according to the classic ideal takes place in such a way that their spiritual individuality is not portrayed in situations where they enter into relation with each other, and which might occasion strife and conflicts, but in their eternal repose, in their independence, freed as they are from all aspects of pain and suffering, and in their divine calmness and peace. This perfect calm which reveals nothing void, cold, inanimate, but is on the contrary full of life is the most essential element of presentation to the gods of classic art. When they are then thought to be taking part in the attainment of particular ends, their actions must not be such as to engage into or to engender collisions. Sculpture is that art which more than the others represents the classic idea with that absolute independence wherein the divine nature preserves its universality while united with a particular character. The calm of the plastic, which arises through formative activity onto a solid material, is the only one capable of bonding the sensual with a permanent or immutable form that expresses the divine character of the gods.

4. *The Dissolution of the Classic Ideal.* Unfortunately, displaying gods in their particular form leads to the consciousness of their finite side and limitedness. Gradually arises the deeper insight, that no form whatsoever, even the classic form, can be adequate for the Divine, and the greek gods are doomed to vanish³⁰. The reason of the disappearance of the greek gods lies in themselves, in their individuality, which at long last fails to bring the Divine, which is the absolute universal being, to knowledge. It is furthermore art itself that discloses the insufficiency of these gods. Thinking, which is according to Hegel the only appropriate form, in which god as absolute Spirit becomes equal to itself, cannot finally be content with the *exteriority* of art and its products. The consciousness of the insufficiency of the greek deities as absolute ideal arises in two forms: Firstly in the idea of destiny, which is conceived as a force

29. *Ibid.*, p. 84.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

superior to gods themselves, then through the anthropomorphism of the deities, which often takes the grotesque form of the quarrels and the fights of the gods against one another. The first feature is depicted itself artistically in tragedy and the second in satire.

We see therefore that the Hegelian conception of art and beauty makes it impossible to dismiss the historical character of both these notions. Accordingly, Hegelian aesthetics lead unavoidably to the conception of the classicist nature of art. This does not straightforward imply that art in our time is dead. It rather presents a challenge for modern art and modern culture in general to seek and find a modern ideal. In any case the incorporation of the nihilistic spirit of our time into the aesthetics of Hegel seems, *prima facie*, highly improbable.

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**Η ΑΝΤΙΛΗΨΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΛΟΥ
ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΚΛΑΣΣΙΚΟΥ ΑΙΣΘΗΤΙΚΟΥ ΙΔΕΩΔΟΥΣ.
ΜΙΑ ΣΥΣΤΗΜΑΤΙΚΗ ΠΡΟΣΕΓΓΙΣΗ**

Π ε ρ ί λ η ψ η

Τις τελευταίες δεκαετίες οί περισσότερες μελέτες γύρω από την αισθητική του Έγελου επικεντρώθηκαν στην εξέταση του ερωτήματος εάν ό συστηματικός της χαρακτήρας οδηγεί αναπόφευκτα στην έννοια του «θανάτου της τέχνης». Πολλοί έρμηνευτές επιχείρησαν να βρουν τρόπους να εκμοντερνίσουν την αισθητική του Έγελου, με στόχο να την αξιοποιήσουν προκειμένου να έρμηνεύσουν μέσα άπ' αυτήν και τη σύγχρονη τέχνη. Στο παρόν άρθρο προσπαθώ να διευκρινίσω μερικές βασικές ιδέες της έγγελιανής αισθητικής ακολουθώντας μια συστηματική και όχι άπλως έρμηνευτική προσέγγιση, δηλαδή έχοντας ως οδηγό τη διανόηση του ίδιου του φιλοσόφου. Αυτή ή συστηματική προσέγγιση οδηγεί, όπως διαφαίνεται μέσα από την ανάλυση του κλασικού ιδεώδους, στην έννοια του «κλασικού χαρακτήρα» της τέχνης εν γένει. Ό Έγελος κατανοεί την τέχνη ως παρουσίαση της Ίδέας δια του αισθητού κατ' αναλογία με τον τρόπο που ή θρησκεία και ή φιλοσοφία εκθέτουν, κάθε μία στο δικό της στοιχείο, την Απόλυτη Ίδέα. Με αυτόν τον τρόπο ή τέχνη καθίσταται συνιστώσα του συστήματος και αποκτά τον λεγόμενο παρελθοντικό χαρακτήρα (Vergangenheitscharakter). Η ένσωμάτωση έπομένως της έγγελιανής αισθητικής στη φιλοσοφική κατανόηση της σύγχρονης τέχνης, με δεδομένο τό μηδενιστικό πνεύμα της εποχής μας, αποτελεί σχεδόν αδύνατο έγχείρημα.

Παύλος ΚΛΙΜΑΤΣΑΚΗΣ

