DIFFERENT LANGUAGES: PHILOSOPHY AND ART

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РАЗЛИЧНИТЕ ЕЗИЦИ: ФИЛОСОФИЯ И ИЗКУСТВО

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ABSTRACT: Humans’ efforts to understand themselves and the "world" have never ceased throughout the history. Being a creature which is in search for a meaning, humans try to find their path in a struggle to give a meaning to its creation within the eternal universe. Discussions on the meaning of creation have always been one of the main discussions of philosophy. In relation with these discussions, philosophers have tried to solve metaphysical problems regarding whether there is an absolute truth and if it is possible to reach this truth. If we look at the history of philosophy, it is possible to see that many philosophers had thought about metaphysical problems regarding the creation of humankind and that they had exhibited different attitudes towards this issue. Even though attitudes exhibited towards metaphysical problems vary within the field of philosophy, it wasn't only the philosophers who were interested in these problems. Many artists from different branches of art have also questioned the meaning of the creation of humans; this has even been one of the most prominent subjects of art.

In this study, we will analyze how the "same" issues are dealt in the fields of philosophy and art and we will compare the language of philosophy and art within the framework of examples.

Keywords: philosophy, art, meaning, metaphysical problems, humankind, language, truth

"For the artist is a being who strives to master ultimate truth.
The artist masters that truth every time he creates something perfect, something whole."
(Andrei Tarkovsky)

Efforts of human beings to understand themselves and “the world” never ceased throughout the history. As creatures that look for a meaning, human beings are in struggle for making sense of their own existence in a universe that reach out the eternity for thousands of years. Meaning or meaninglessness of the existence has been one of the most basic problems of the philosophy. In relation to this problem, whether there is a final truth or not or how we will reach that truth have kept philosophers busy since the beginning. When the history of philosophy is examined it is possible to see that many philosophers have questioned the meaning of existence and put forward different understanding regarding the limits of mind. One of the prominent approaches regarding these issues belongs to Immanuel Kant. Kant has suggested that, even if it exceeds the limits of human mind, philosophy cannot quit dealing with these issues by very nature of human beings.

In the prologue of first publication of Critique of Pure Reason, Kant indicated that human beings cannot find satisfying answers to all their questions by merely using their minds. According to him, “A man’s mind is against a special destiny in a certain kind of his knowledge: Man is disturbed by such questions that he cannot ignore these questions since these result from his very own nature and he cannot answer them, in spite of that fact, because these questions exceed the whole capability of a man’s mind”

The mind is not to blame for that situation. The mind can neither answer nor disown these questions. Kant calls this never-ending battleground ‘metaphysics’. Kant realizes that a man cannot escape from that metaphysical questioning. Kant is simply like he is stating how man is desperate but also as much determined in this questioning. According to Kant, the questions which the mind cannot help up asking are related to three ideas that are freedom, God and immortality. These ideas, which are the products of mind, are the transcendent principles beyond the limits of possible experiments; that is to say, the reality of these

ideas is not within the domain of theoretical mind, knowledge domain. By means of this limitation, Kant has tried to make room for domain of belief. Another approach regarding the metaphysics discussions in philosophy domain is the positivist approach that suggests such kind of questionings can never exist within the philosophical domain. According to Roger Carnap, who is one of the neo-positivist philosophers that wants to sort such kind of questions out of philosophy, metaphysics replaces theology in systematic-conceptual thinking stage. When examined closely, metaphysics, which has the same meaning with myth, results from the need to reveal emotions of life and emotional attitude against destiny. According to Carnap, some people form a special expression manner for their own living emotions. Such kinds of people express themselves by producing a work of art if they have artistic abilities. According to Carnap, not metaphysics but art is appropriate for living emotion. “A metaphysician makes definitions for the sentences that he used while defining the living emotion, he wishes them to be confirmed and tries to shake thoughts of other metaphysicians by using them. An artist, on the other hand, does not deal with another artist’s sentences, because he realized that he is in domain of art.” Carnap excludes from the domain of philosophy the metaphysic problems that Kant reorganized to keep within the domain and addresses art.

Although it seems like another philosopher Albert Camus addresses domain of art as the domain of metaphysical problems, this results from a reason other than Carnap. Camus states: “Universe is inharmonious and unknowable. Here, we hear the rigidness of a tree. We have to be contended with that. Science will mention an invisible group of planets where electrons are gathered around a core. That is an assumption. Thus, we understand that we came to the domain of poetry in the end and we cannot know anything.” With these words, Camus seems to address the purpose of a man, his desperation in a universe the meaning of which he cannot understand and also the limits of philosophy and science.

A man’s effort to question his existence and the existence of the world has been the point of interest also for people other than philosophers. Philosophers, theologians, theoretical physicists and artist have carried on their questionings to explain why “the world” exists and to make sense of our existence in their own ways. Artists have a more advantageous position in this questioning because they are not limited in terms of tools. While philosophers have to remain within the framework of a conceptual grounding, the scientists have to remain within the framework of evidences and proofs and theologians have to remain within the framework of a certain holy book, artists have the chance to express themselves in an unlimited manner by the materials he uses. The fact that some philosophers address the art when dealing with metaphysical problems will be more clearly seen when the nature of the art is considered.

While looking for nature of art and literature, Aristotle compares history with poetry and literature (poesis) and he states that poetry and literature is “more philosophical” when compared to history since it gives information regarding “the general one.” Sir Philip Sidney compares the poetry or literature with philosophy and considers poetry and literature superior when compared to philosophy. According to Sidney, both a philosopher and a poet teaches about the truth but what a philosophy teaches can only be comprehended by educated people because he teaches that in an obscure manner. “However, poetry is the food for weakest stomachs; a poet is the true philosopher of people.” According to Sidney “a poet teaches the highest and perfect truth and progress towards it: he makes benevolence and justice to shine among complicated concerns and blurry desires.”

It can be seen that Schopenhauer stated an opinion for general arts, for all the branches of art that existed during his time, which is similar to Sidney’s that suggests literature expresses some basic truths regarding human beings, which are the subjects of philosophy, in a way that everyone can understand them more easily. According to Schopenhauer who stated “the only resource of art is the knowledge regarding ideas and its mere purpose is to transfer this knowledge” and “knowledge for idea is the pur-

6 Schopenhauer, Arthur. The World as Will and Representa-
pose of all arts”⁸, “it is easier for idea to come from a work of art that it comes directly from the truth, the nature, the real world.”⁹ According to Schopenhauer, the reason for this ‘easiness’ is that the artist “who recreates a pure expression in a clear way in his work” has abstracted it from the reality and he has excluded all the randomness that created problems from that work”.¹⁰

The fact that philosophers address the art when the domain of metaphysics is in question is more understandable if we consider artist such as Andrei Tarkovsky. According to Tarkovsky, “establishing a relation with the truth” is the purpose of artistic activity. According to him, an artist can understand the poetic structural qualities of the existence. By exceeding the limits of plain logic different essence and all the complexity of fragile relations and all mysterious appearances of life with all its reality can be reflected as they are.¹¹

Tarkovsky states that “without a doubt, the purpose of art is to explain the meaning of the existence of life and men to oneself and to people around, that is to say, to show the mankind what the reason and purposes of their existence on our planet is”¹². According to Tarkovsky, just like Sidney or Schopenhauer, who suggests that, when compared to the scientific or informational disciplines, the art has less preconditions for transferring the basic truths regarding human beings or for presenting them for thinking, when a person wanted to participate in a scientific system he has to have a good grasp of a certain educational system, to understand it. On the other hand, the art is for everyone, it expects to make an effect, to create an emotional shock that can be felt by everyone and to be accepted. “Rather than rigid rules of logic, the art expects people to give into spiritual energy that is transmitted by the artists. Even if it is in the most logic meaning, it does not demand an educational basis but a spiritual experience.”¹³

Tarkovsky also uses the concept “catharsis” (purification) which has been mentioned by Aristotle as the purpose of a tragedy in his work Poetica. Aristotle has suggested that, by means of tragedy, the spectators review their personalities and purifies themselves from destructive desires (Poetica, Chapter 6, 1449b-1450). Similarly, Tarkovsky states that when a person encounters a masterpiece he starts to hear the voice that inspired the artist and that a spectator feels a deep shock, kind of cleaned him when he saw such a masterpiece. According to Tarkovsky “within the area of that special tension established between an artistic masterpiece and people who perceived it, human beings get aware of their existence, the best part of themselves which starts to presses to be free since that specific moment. At these moments, before the endlessness of our possibilities, we recognize ourselves in the depth of our own feelings, we discover ourselves.”¹⁴ Tarkovsky determines a common purpose for all branches of art. This purpose is to explain the meaning of life and the existence of human beings to himself and the people around him, that is to say, to show the mankind the purpose and cause of existence in our planet. Moreover, the art should make people face “this question” directly without needing an explanation.¹⁵

Tarkovsky considers the art as "a kind of knowledge" that will shed light to people while they are trying to comprehend their existence in this world. But the fact that art is a kind of knowledge does not mean that it is a “teachable” knowledge as in the case of a scientific knowledge. Knowledge of life is unique to itself. The art calls out to a man’s soul and shapes his spiritual life but it does not do that by sermonizing. Tarkovsky, who question the meaning of the existence of human beings, considers the art to be same with science, as a tool for analyzing the world, a tool of knowing during a man’s journey towards the thing called “ultimate truth”.¹⁶ But, according to him, that is the only common point between these two expression manners of a creative human genius. Creativity is not a byword for discovery but for creating something.

According to Tarkovsky, there is a difference of principle between the scientific and estethical forms of enlightenment: In terms of art, a person owns the truth as a result of subjective experiences. In terms of science, on the other hand, a person climbs up the steps of never-ending stairs and the knowledge about world leaves their places for the new ones with every new step that is taken. Artistic perception emerges as a “hiero-

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glyph” of the ultimate truth, a new and unique image of the world each time and it presents itself as a revelation. Art is the desire of an artist to grasp all the laws of the world in intuitional meaning. According to Tarkovsky, the art renders testable some concepts that cannot be expressed or defined with words such as “eternity”; thus, with the spiritual experience it made a person to gain, the art enlightens the meaning of a person’s existence in the world and transforms the human soul to a better one.

Considering the art as “a special kind of enlightenment” for people cause it to be deemed in a more advantageous position when compared to philosophy and science, domains which have to not to break their relations with rationality, when metaphysics and existential problems are in question. Because as Tarkovsky stated very pertinently “human life has some parts which can be reflected as they are only with the help of poetic tools.” Relentlessly, mankind tries to establish a relation with the world; it pines for owning this world and to create a harmony between itself and the world. At this point, as Schopenhauer stated, the successes that art presented and artistic works are as real as life and they show a truth flat-out. Because an artist’s object “remains within certain limits as clear and enlightened and does not leave him: for this, he displays the idea to us loud and clear on the mirror of thinking and the thing described by him is true as life up to the slightest detail.”

Finally, it will be pertinent to listen to Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein states: “Solution of life inside time and space lies outside time and space.” Wittgenstein, who states that the question of a non-effable answer is also non-effable says “but still, non-effable things exist” because “it displays itself, it is the mysterious one.” Wittgenstein, states that the right method in philosophy is “to keep silence about a subject which cannot be discussed” but the artist is the person who does not have to be quiet at this point. The art screams, it does not keep silence at the point when the philosophy keeps silence. We will keep listening to the screams of many artists such as Dostoyevsky, Tarkovsky and Edward Munch for ages.

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